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Writing from the Margins: Autobiographical Writings by American Minority Women

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Writing From the Margins : Autobiographical Writings by American Minority Women

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all those who have made the journey

Abstract

This thesis examines the autobiographical works of American ethnic minority women. An important corpus of works by such writers was published in the twentieth century, but their contributions to American literature began to be fully recognized only in the last decades. Though they wrote out of their particular cultures, they were all influenced by the social and political forces that were affecting their respective communities. Minority women's autobiographical writings do not actually accept the discourses of power and oppression determined by the dominant white culture; instead, they signal and reveal experiences chosen to deconstruct the stereotypes and limitations entertained by the dominant culture. This thesis explores the rich tradition of minority women writers and the ways in which they have expressed their sense of identity through their autobiographical writings. The selected autobiographers belong to different ethnic groups, and the selected texts are: Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861),and Zora Neale Hurston's *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942) for African Americans, Zitkala Sa's *American Indian Stories* (1921) and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller* (1981) for Native Americans, and finally, Cleofas Jaramillo's *Romance of a Little Village Girl* (1955), and Norma Elia Cantu's *Canicula: Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera* for Chicanas. Because of the different historical and cultural experiences of the different ethnic groups discussed here, we cannot approach ethnic writers from a unilateral perspective, therefore, I will use specific approaches specific to each writer and ethnic group, namely African American criticism, Black feminism, Native American autobiography theory, and Chicana feminism. Furthermore, I will rely on Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's theory on minor literature. Although written out of a European context, Deleuze and Guattari's Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature offers a promising critical framework for discussing ethnic autobiographies. This study argues that these women writers subvert the autobiographical genre and use it as a rhetorical strategy to redefine their identities. Minority women autobiographers do not create a monolithic self, but rather present the construction of the self as a member of multiple oppressed groups, whose political identity can never be separated from her conditions. The subject created is at once individual and collective. These writers have chosen the autobiographical genre in order to claim spaces that can work to uncover mechanisms of oppression and lay out paths toward political and social change.

Key Words: Autobiography, Ethnicity, Minority Literature, Identity, Gender, African Americans, Native Americans , Chicanas

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Abstract Arabic

Introduction

Introduction

Up to recent times, American literature has been restricted in compass to the experiences explored within the literary canon, represented by white Europeans from the mainstream of society. Rarely was the voice of a writer from another ethnic background heard in the past.

The 1960s witnessed what some scholars labeled an "ethnic revival" in America. Previously, the civil rights movement of the late 1950s had made visible African Americans. As thousands of protesters marched across the streets, Middle America realized that these people too resided in America. This era was a watershed for all Americans as excluded and marginalized citizens who asserted that second class status by virtue of one's race, creed or origin was unacceptable. This inspired other historically excluded groups to protest and demand a hearing. By the early 1970s, minority groups such as Native Americans, Chicanos/as and Chinese Americans aligned under the banner of pan-ethnicity and asked for equal access to American opportunities; they began to speak for themselves and what they had to say was presented in their emerging literatures.

Literary representations of ethnic identity are to be observed through historical and sociological factors of the times that influenced the experience of people identifying with a particular ethnic community or group affiliation. For example, identity in African American literature of the 19th and 20th centuries is portrayed in relation to socially oppressive systems, such as slavery, and racial as well as gender discrimination. Likewise, ethnic identity in Chicano literature of the 20th century draws upon the experience of discrimination faced through exclusionary, prohibitive immigration laws, as well as racial and gender discrimination.

Ethnic American literature deals with issues of identity in relation to an American mainstream consensus. The people in such literature are represented as desperately seeking meaning as minorities, struggling with their circumstances of cultural displacement, or learning to maintain a balance between an ethnic heritage of the past and their identities adapting to the mainstream culture around them. Moreover, their writing is commonly categorized as based on ethnic identity as in Asian American,

African American, Native American, and Chicano literatures. Respectively, these branches of ethnic literature depict struggles and challenges faced by those of a particular ethnic identity. For example, in African American literature the vast range of experiences are drawn from slavery in the slave narratives, the oral transmission of folklore and myths. African American writing of the Harlem Renaissance, the Civil Rights Movement, and the modern-day call for acknowledgement of a strong African American identity in multicultural America.

Despite the impressive achievements of minority women writers, the latter remain virtually unknown to most students of literature. Their works are neglected by anthologists, while those few who are regularly anthologized suffer because the same works are selected over and over again. Moreover, their books tend to go out of print and become inaccessible. All of this leads to a common assumption that there is no literature established by minority women in America. Accordingly, the purpose of the present study is to demonstrate just the opposite – that there is a rich body of literature by minority women that has developed within a historical and cultural framework. More importantly, it is to explore how these writers have sought to emphasize their gender status.

My interest in minority literature began when I discovered Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Knowing little about slavery other than what conventional history texts presented, I looked further and read accounts of other writers, intuiting even then the importance of personal stories in supplementing historical record. The issue was to inquire about the fate of countless other enslaved black women like her, and how their stories could have been recorded. How different were their stories? How incomplete would be our understanding of American history if we were not afforded the opportunity to place their lives and their stories side by side with other tales of heroic American masculinity?

In the last years, women autobiographies and autobiographies written by ethnic minorities have proliferated, and the genre has been a fertile ground for experimental writing. The reasons behind that interest are many, but one important element is that autobiography, in its various shapes, captures and addresses many contemporary

concerns like the status of the subject, the relations and representations of ethnicity and gender, and perhaps most importantly questions the individual's relationship with the past.

As I began to read autobiographical writings by women who were positioned racially on the margin, I sensed a commonality of concerns: self-representation, the cost of living between two cultures, the construction of identity and history rewriting.

Autobiographical writings by often marginalized women —African-Americans, Native-Americans, Mexican-Americans—reflect an interest in the question of one's speaking subject's relation to society at large. Twice marginalized as women and as minorities, denied access to privilege and power controlled by a "white" patriarchy, women who choose to express their lives through autobiographical writing also refuse to be silenced or denied access to an empowering voice in the dominant culture. The question thus becomes, what is the investment of these "non-privileged" voices in autobiographical writing? and why is autobiography the medium they have chosen to seek their empowerment?

The object of bringing and studying together such texts is to point out the literary and imaginative potential of the above- mentioned women writers and their sophisticated modes of writing. It is in this way that the cultural and feminine landscape of so called minority groups are effectively rendered, as will be examined in the following chapters.

Autobiographical studies emerged as a field in the 1960s, when Georges Gusdorf's proclaimed autobiography to be a genre in his seminal essay *Conditions and Limits of Autobiography* (1956). According to him autobiography was culture-specific, and that women and other minority cultures were devoid of self and hence cannot enter into the autobiographical pact, the privilege of self-representation permissible only to those cultures that are dominant (qt in Olney30). This led to the growing body of critical writing in feminism to devote itself to the life writings of women in general and of minority women in particular.

The objective of an autobiography used to conform to a very simple formula: White men would write the story of their lives, displaying their success stories and the universality of their human experience. Nowadays, voices other than those of the white male have turned to autobiography and a critical battle over what constitutes a "true" or "good" autobiography is being fought. However, it seems that no matter the standards, women and minority women in particular are always writing just outside the "acceptable" boundaries. Pre-modernist conceptions of ''good'' writing required unity of plot, character, and theme. During the modernist and postmodernist period the privileging of fragmentation and alienation has carried over into the assumption that abstract and depersonalized writing is the superior model. But it is Western, white men who claim the death of the author, not marginalized voices that have not yet been given authority (Fox-Genovese 162–163). Clearly, the same rules should not apply to women and minorities who have only recently been given the space for their voices to be heard. Because social and historical conditions play an important part in women's and minorities' lives, they must necessarily also play a part in autobiography. In other words, the context and the voice change the type of autobiography, and the same criteria cannot apply to all forms.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, theories on autobiographical writing by women and ethnic women have questioned and undermined the ideology of the autobiographical tradition, proving that "illegitimate speakers have a way of exposing the instability of forms" (Smith and Watson xx).Moreover, feminist theorists have noted the importance of analyzing the ways in which minority women have experienced and shaped the intersections of systems of domination in the United States. Their works have revealed many of the connections between gender and race as socially constructed categories and have provided suggestive frameworks for analyzing those connections. In particular, they have called for a respect for the specificities of racial ethnic women's experiences and have noted the ways in which they have been, as Kimberle Crenshaw suggests, "unassimilable into the discursive paradigms of gender and race domination" (177). An

exploration of their experiences, therefore, provides an opportunity to reconceptualize those paradigms while developing a fuller understanding of the lives of minority women.

In her work *Aesthetic Autobiography*, Suzanne Nalbantian notes: "The historical treatment of the subject has been supplanted of late by gender and ethnic orientations to the genre as representative of certain collectivities reflecting multicultural diversity" (40). If the tradition of autobiography was only white, western and male then the texts written by women or ethnic minorities raise questions of difference between male and female on one side and traditional and minority autobiography on the other side.

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson in *De/Colonizing the Subject* have emphasized the multiplicity of identities formed as a result of race and class. Gayatri Spivak's provocative question 'Can the subaltern speak?' posits the marginalized subject in a territory where she is doomed to silence. By adopting discursive strategies, minority women write autobiographically voicing their resistance to authoritarian structures of domination.

Critics who study the autobiographical writings of the "disesteemed", to use James Baldwin's phrase, have striven mainly to describe and valorize its collective difference from that of the privileged. For example, feminist critics such as Estelle Jelinek observes that women have long written personal disjunctive works, rather than the more public, linear accounts that have predominated in the masculine tradition of autobiography (15, 17, 19). She also recognizes exceptions on both sides, and recently more instances of personal and formal openness in men's life writing (7, 20). In *Autobiographics*, Leigh Gilmore concludes "while I am specifically interested in how women have negotiated these discourses, I do not assume that all women will negotiate them the same way"(xiv) and that "generalizations about the nature of women's lives are difficult to sustain when class, race and sexual orientations are…incorporated into analysis" (x).

The “self” in ethnic texts does raise one of the crucial questions of contemporary autobiography criticism. Shari Benstock cites Regina Blackburn as defining the “self” of black autobiography as “a conscious political identity, drawing sustenance from the past experience of the group” (Benstock 34). Similarly, Arnold Krupat's description of Native American autobiography as a tradition in which “the self most typically is not constituted by the achievement of a distinctive, special voice that separates it from others, but, rather, by the achievement of a particular placement in relation to the many voices without which it could not exist” (133-134). This contextualization is a crucial revision of earlier versions of subjectivity which refused to recognize how the “I” is implicated and informed by circumstance. My own study builds upon this reevaluation of autobiographical texts. Critics like Blackburn and Krupat, as well as other scholars such as William Andrews, Françoise Lionnet, Genaro Padilla, Joanne Braxton, Hertha Wong, have already replied to restrained definitions of the genre by presenting traditions of their own using more politically and historically engaged criteria of inclusion.

Thinking along the same lines about the autobiographical writings of the excluded and colored, Sidonie Smith finds that “coming out of a complex experientially based history…the autobiographical subject…[is] severally situated within diverse, sometimes congruous, often competing, even contradictory discursive fields” (Smith 20, 21) as of course is the autobiographer. The kind of textual selves they construct displays the multiple, competing identities they must negotiate. Such contradictions are well described by W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, who speaks of the black American’s struggle both to overcome the cultural legacy of “double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” and to reach a sense of wholeness and self-respect (Du Bois 45).

Bonnie Zimmerman, reading narratives by ethnic women, claims that these works offer an alternative vision of the self that “provides an opening between the Scylla of monolithic identities and the Charybdis of endlessly fragmented ones”. It is a vision that “meets the needs of individuals already split into pieces by the various oppressive

systems of American society". This "multivalent self", as she calls it, has integrity, but is open to the interrelating that allows for social transformation and multicultural community (Zimmerman 196, 200,201). In various ways, all these critics recognize the urgency and complexity of self-representation by those whom society marginalizes or misrepresents.

The following chapters examine the autobiographies of women from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and historical periods and show how these writings transcend any limitations or expectations constructed by the hegemonic culture. Their writings reveal a set of overlapping concerns like: the legacy of slavery, construction of identity of marginalized groups, re-appropriation of one's history and culture and the cost of living between two cultures. Autobiography, I argue, has been recognized as the tool with which marginalized writers can disrupt current beliefs by revealing gaps of experience ignored by the hegemonic culture. This mode of writing and the texts I will consider reflect the desire of these women writers to speak and tell their own stories, in a sense, to reclaim not only their narratives and histories, but their lives as well.

Through the close reading of autobiographical writings by authors such as Harriet Jacobs, Zora Neale Hurston, Zitkala Sa, Leslie Marmon Silko, Cleofas Jaramillo and Norma Elia Cantu, I will explore the theme of "identity", an issue of central concern to Native Americans, African Americans, and Mexican Americans living in the United States. Defining one's identity can mean either the complete rejection of one's culture of origin, i.e. the culture in which one has grown up, and accepting that of the present environment, or can rather result in a partial acculturation, and in a split cultural identity.

The texts selected for this study are written by and about individuals whose experiences of selfhood have not always been valued either in the dominant culture or in the dominant literary culture of autobiographical studies. These writers have chosen the autobiographical genre in order to claim discursive spaces in which they might write an "I" and often a "we", that can work to uncover mechanisms of oppression and map

out paths toward political and social change. Yet, in doing so, it is important to keep in mind William Boelhower's warning that: "There is no parthenogenesis of ethnic codes. One ethnic novel or a particular ethnic encyclopedia does not account for the production of another. In truth, there is no unilateral aesthetic starting point for the multi-ethnic critic" (Boelhower 35). In other words, we cannot approach ethnic writers from a unilateral perspective, and we must always keep in mind the different historical and cultural experiences of each ethnic group as well as the difference among individuals. Boelhower asserts that it would be self-defeating to promote a "rival myth", to replace an erroneous mono-cultural paradigm with a multiethnic one that assumes "the formal paradigm attributes of [its] melting pot predecessors" (23).To avoid this pitfall, the present work utilizes theoretical approaches specific to each ethnic culture and writer.

Women of the world do not speak in one voice nor share one common experience. As Francoise Lionnet writes in *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self – Portraiture*:

> We women are so diverse and live in such varied cultural, racial and economic circumstances that we cannot possibly pretend to speak in a single voice. It is by listening to a plurality of voices from various corners of the planet and across centuries that we will strengthen our ability to resist demeaning power structures (Lionnet xi)

By placing the analysis of women's autobiographical writings in the context of a plurality of women's voices from disparate races and cultures, I hope to contribute to the discussion Lionnet suggests. The women writers discussed here use their voices to resist "demeaning power structures" at work in America. And by paying close attention to those voices and to study how these women use their autobiographical writings to uncover and resist mechanisms of oppression, one can achieve a greater understanding of how autobiography can convey socio-political claims.

My reading of these various life narratives demonstrates how these authors "operate along the moveable boundaries of genres" (Zamora 6), at the same time that their characters seek to define and construct a self created at the intersections of different discourses of identity.

Both the form and the content of the six works being discussed here subvert conventions of canonized autobiographies. In the Tradition of Women's Autobiography (1980) Estelle C Jelinek highlights differences of content and style in the autobiographies of men and women. One difference she notes is the degree of orderliness in the self-portraits; men's works generally are presented as chronologically linear wholes, while women's stories tend to consist of fragmented, disjunctive units. Recent autobiographies written by women of color, in addition to possessing these characteristics, tend to mix genres in a manner we have not seen in mainstream autobiographies. In all six, to a greater or lesser extent, there is no attempt to privilege any of the various genres. Public and private history, myth, fiction and fantasy are all juxtaposed. As such, these works are a fundamental subversion of mainstream autobiographies' traditions and conventions.

The authors discussed in this work do not cover all the minor groups writing in America between 1865 and 1995, however, they represent a significant cross-section of ethnicities and perspectives. As to the methods I have selected to analyze these texts, I think that the approach in autobiography studies that proves to be more helpful and productive is that which is specific to particular American cultural traditions. As Albert Stones reminds us: "the whole oratorio [of American autobiography] is …composed of separate Songs of Myself" and that we must "learn to read these scores as individual stories and cultural narratives" (26-27). Moreover, I will rely on Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's theory on minor literature. Although written out of a European context, Deleuze and Guattari's *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* offers a promising critical framework for discussing ethnic autobiographies.

Deleuze and Guattari list three characteristics of minor literature: "in it language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization" (592); "everything in [a minor literature] is political" (592); and "in it everything takes on a collective value" (592). These characteristics shall be verified in my analysis of the selected texts.

The present work is divided into four chapters in addition to the general introduction and conclusion.

The anchor chapter of this project, "Empowering Ethnic Groups through Autobiography" aims at clarifying and defining the terms used in the analysis and addresses some major issues in the ethnic debate and ethnic autobiography. In fact, a predominant question about identity in ethnic American literature is whether it is changeable or fixed. For instance, can anybody become American by just crossing the border or is there more to acquiring an American identity? In terms of literary representation, such questions point to the so–called politics of identity. One more vital question is whether a specific ethnic/minor group can be represented in only one way or are there other possible ways of representing it? When some ethnic writers represent ethnic concerns differently they are seen as attempting to claim Americanism or pandering to Western ideology (as was the case of Zitkala Sa and Zora Neale Hurston). Likewise, if some ethnic writers represent their ethnic/minor group as "too ethnic", they are not fully accepted as Americans. Thus, important questions arise relating to how much of one's ethnic background should be abandoned to become truly American. It becomes equally important to create an identity that is both ethnic and American at the same time.

The second chapter, entitled "African American Women Autobiographies" discusses first the slave narrative of Harriet Jacobs: *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) and then Zora Neale Hurston's *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942).

Incidents has become a much-cited slave woman's narrative because it is the first autobiography told from the perspective of a female slave that focuses on how slavery degraded the black female slave. In her narrative, Jacobs brilliantly combines the narrative pattern of the slave narrative genre with the conventional literary forms and stylistic devices of the 19th century sentimental novel in an attempt to subvert and transform the so-called "cult of true womanhood" and to persuade the women of the north to take a public stand against slavery.

Hurston's *Dust Tracks* represents the first generation of female autobiographies that turns away from the restrictions and limitations of the slave narrative genre. It also

extends the quest for a dignified and self -defining identity to include a search for personal fulfillment.

Dust Tracks is a paradox among Black American autobiographies. Hurston avoids issues of politics and race, and minimizes their effects on her life and in her autobiography. Moreover, the narrative does not follow the traditional autobiographical structure and a focused projection of the autobiographical persona. It focuses rather on Hurston's imagination, on retelling community stories, and on Hurston's ambiguous attitudes towards race.

In the third chapter "Native American Women's Autobiographical Writings", I argue that autobiographical writings by Native American women share the same concerns of other minority women writers and signal the creation of discursive acts of subjectivity. Because they are caught between the traditional and the dominant culture, their texts explore the importance of accepting one's cultural legacy and the need to be accepted as "subject" by the dominant culture. Moreover, their autobiographical writings result in similar assertions of the self and a politicized identity. I will focus on Zitkala Sa's *American Indian Stories* (1921) and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller* (1981). In those unusual autobiographies in the traditional sense, both writers subvert the genre by combining personal narrative with oral storytelling, essays and even photography for Silko.

The fourth and last chapter **"**Chicanas' Autobiographical Writings" discusses Cleofas Jaramillo's *Romance of a Little Village Girl* (1955), and Norma Elia Cantu's *Canicula: Snapshots*. *Romance* documents Jaramillo's personal history and the social struggles of her family and community. Each chapter begins with a Spanish romantic ballad, which helps readers to place her narrative within a tradition of Spanish epic poetry. This combination of poetry and narrative, romance and family history, cultural history and creative autobiography was common in Hispanic storytelling. Jaramillo's use of various genres within her autobiography parallels the collective ways of her community. Cantu's *Canicula*, on the other hand, is an unusual autobiographical text

that combines family history, oral history, folklore, autobiographical narrative with actual photographs and documents. By doing so, Cantu challenges categorization and counters the traditional definition of autobiography.

Chapter I

Writing Themselves out of the Margins: Ethnic Autobiography

Introduction

The United States has grown remarkably diverse over the past fifty years. In 1965, the U.S population was 84% white, 11% black, 4% Latinx and 1% Asian. Less than 5% of the population was born in another country. In the years that followed, waves of immigration changed the makeup of the United States; from 1965 to 2015, half of all U.S immigrants came from Latin America and one quarter came from Asia. As a result, in 2015 the U.S population was 62% White, 18% Latinex, 12% Black, 6% Asian and 2% other races. There is still a long way to go before the United States gives full status to all of its people; however more and more Americans are in favor of the country's growing diversity and say it makes the U.S a better place to live in.

This first chapter aims at defining the terms and concepts used in the analysis. Besides the necessary definitions, a brief overview of autobiography, ethnic autobiography and criticism will be provided.

1- Ethnicity

The origin and definition of ethnicity is complex by its interrelations with race, nation, culture, geography, by migration, immigration, discrimination, dominance and control, and by historical and cultural values of the times.

There are two sources from which the word "ethnic" is derived. From the Greek *ethnos*, meaning "nation" or "people". In this context we have the sense of community. Another Greek word *ethnikos*, however, has the designation of "heathen" or "other". In English usage the word first emerged in the fifteenth century and meant 'pertaining to nations not Christian or Jewish; Gentile, heathen or pagan' (OED). In other words, ethnic meant foreigners.

In his classic study of immigrants in Newburyport, Massachusetts, titled *Yankee City*, sociologist W. Lloyd Warner in 1941 defined an ethnic as "any individual who considers himself or is considered to be a member of a group with a foreign culture and who participates in the activities of the group" (qt in McKee 275). The argument that American ethnic groups should not be considered foreigners can be traced back to Walt Whitman's statement that America is "a nation of nations." This notion that all

Americans are ethnics is related to the concept of "cultural pluralism," a term coined by the Jewish-American philosopher Horace M. Kallen in the 1920s and popularized by the Slovenian-Adamic in the 1930s. Rather than distinguishing between Americans and foreigners, cultural pluralism meant that one who came to settle in America was an American. In the late 1930s, cultural pluralism became part of the official ideology of the New Deal, which found expression in New Deal cultural programs, especially the WPA Federal Writers' Project (Cohen 324).

Tracing the etymology one-step further, Werner Sollors finds that the contrast between *heathen* and *chosen people* in traditional Christianity, when used in the American context, becomes ethnic versus American. An "ethnic" then is "nonstandard" or in America…not fully American" (Sollors 25). In other words, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants are the norm and ethnics are the "others". In fact, race and color as a basis for national identity, and equal rights characterized the political ideology and social, economic, and cultural practice until well into the 20th century.

In his 2001 *Whiteness of a Different Color*, historian Matthew Frye Jacobson traces the nation's first legislation as alleging whiteness to citizenship. In their 2003 *Changing Racial Meanings: Race and Ethnicity in the United States,1930–1964*, Thomas A. Guglielmo and Earl Lewis argue that the race ideology, often through legal means, restricted nonwhite Americans' from equal access to quality education, housing, employment, citizenship rights, land ownership, trial by jury, and interracial marriage. Moreover, influential philosophical, scientific, and social science research of the 1930s and 1940s led to a dramatic shift in American conceptions about race and the rejection of racism as a justified system of human classification and institutional practice. Anthropologist Franz Boas challenged the validity of the idea of race by replacing genetics with the concept of culture and environment. Works of leading social scientists of the time continued to challenge racial thinking, including the rise of Nazi racism in Europe. They asserted the unity among humanity and disqualified race as an indicator of intelligence, psychology, or character. These exemplary works included Ruth Benedict's *Race: Science and Politics* (1940), Ashley Montagu's *Race: Man's Most*

Dangerous Myth (1942), and Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* (1944) (Greenwood Encyclopedia 193).

During and since the World War II, "ethnic" and ethnicity emerged as new social scientific categories, sometimes differentiated from and sometimes connected with race. According to Sollors, the term "ethnicity" first appeared in 1941, in a five-volume community study *The Social Life of a Modern Community* (23).

Authors Warner and Lunt designated eight groups (all non WASP) plus "Negro" as ethnic in contrast to "Native" or "Yankee". Sollors does not make the connection, but the use of ethnicity here seems to be a substitution for the prevalent use of "race". In fact, since the researchers placed both black and white people as ethnics, culture rather than color determined ethnicity. Lloyd Warner also made a distinction between racial groups and ethnic groups in his 1945 publication, *The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups*, defining the latter as recent European immigrants to America and lower class, with the promise of joining the American mainstream culture.

Steven Fenton, in his *Ethnicity* (2003), credited Max Weber for predating American sociologists in his examinations of ethnicity. Weber discussed three elements of ethnic identity: the *belief* in common origin rather than common descent, ethnic identity as based on cultural and physical differences, and the idea of an ethnic group as the basis of political action (Greenwood Encyclopedia 193). Fenton placed Weber's ideas close to "political ethnicity" of the 1960s America where groups were mobilizing shared ethnic origin for political activism.

Meanings we associate with the word today emerged in the late nineteenth century: "pertaining to or having common racial, cultural, religious, or linguistic characteristics, especially designating a racial or other group within a larger system" (Oxford English Dictionary). Since World War II, the term has come to mean racial and cultural difference, as the term ethnic minority refers to "a group of people differentiated from the rest of the community by racial origins or cultural background, and usually claiming or enjoying official recognition of their group identity" (Bergland 71). In fact, in an often-cited source, David Riesman's essay *American Scholar* (1953) identifies as

"ethnic victims" Indians, Mexicans, Spaniards, and Japanese (qt in Sollors 22). It is important to note here that these references to ethnicity did include people of color.

In discussing the issue of ethnicity and race, Sollors refers to an interesting observation made by Oscar Handlin in 1957 essay "What Happened to Race?" in Sollors words:

> …before the rise of the word "ethnicity", the word "race" was widely used to refer to larger and smaller groupings of mankind: for example, the Irish race or the Jewish race. In fact the National Socialist genocide in the name of "race" is what gave the word a bad name and supported the substitution of "ethnicity" (38).

By pointing out that "ethnicity" replaced "race" in postwar American usage, Handlin suggests that the two terms had been considered interchangeable. From this observation, Sollors concluded that since "race" was "a heavily charged term", it was better to see it "as one aspect of ethnicity" (39).

Some historians and sociologists see ethnic groups as subcultures in a predominantly White Anglo Saxon Protestant America. They use the term ethnic to mean "minority" as distinct from a vague construct called "mainstream" American culture. While it is true that there is a mainstream culture that cuts across class, religious, racial, and ethnic divisions, this popular culture is not necessarily the culture of a single ethnic group (Cohen 8).

Issues revolving around the meaning American identity fall into four brief propositions: 1) all Americans are ethnic; 2) people of color are ethnics; 3) ethnics are cultural groups, distinct from racial minorities; 4) ethnic groups (whether cultural or racial) must be seen historically and in structures of power (Bergland 71).

Within the first position, scholars conceive ethnicity as broadly including both nationality and racial categories. The best example of this position can be found in *The Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (1980) which lists fourteen different criteria for ethnicity and includes 104 different ethnic groups in America, including 'Southerner' and 'Yankee'.

Another example can be found in Werner Sollors's, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (1986). Frequently, this position ignores the historical,

economic, and political policies of racial discrimination and the differences among ethnic groups.

Werner Sollors uses ethnic literature as a means of providing the reader with "the central codes of Americanness" (8). Sollors identifies 'descent relations' as "those defined by anthropologists as relations of 'substance' (by blood or nature)" and 'consent relations' as "those of 'law' or 'marriage'"" (6). He argues that the inevitable tension between these two types of social bonds-"the conflict between contractual and hereditary, self-made and ancestral, definitions of American identity-between consent and descent"-constitutes "the central drama in American culture" (5-6).

Sollors begins by examining the roots of the term 'ethnicity' relying on Frederik Barth's *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969). "For Barth," Sollors writes, "it is 'the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses'" (27). Sollors carries this view of ethnicity as primarily a process of boundary-making even further:

> Barth's theory can easily accommodate the observation that ethnic groups in the United States have relatively little cultural differentiation, that the cultural content of ethnicity (the stuff that Barth's boundaries enclose) is largely interchangeable and rarely historically authenticated. From such a perspective, contrastive strategies—naming and name-calling among them—become the most important thing about ethnicity (28).

Thus, rather than a biological fact or a legal construct ethnicity might be best perceived as a way of categorizing oneself, of defining one's membership in one group or another.

A second position, which will be adopted in this work, identifies ethnicity only with those groups systematically oppressed: those conquered (Native Americans), enslaved (African Americans), occupied (Chicanos), or excluded and institutionally discriminated against (Asian Americans).*Ethnic Studies,* for example, contains certain selected course outlines and reading lists from American colleges and universities: the first volume focuses on cross cultural, Asian, and Afro-American Studies and the second volume focuses on Chicano and Native American Studies.

A third position distinguishes between race and ethnicity, associating minorities with race, and ethnics with national, religious, or cultural differences. Candace Nelson

and Marta Tienda explain the difference between race and ethnicity, identifying a minority as “a group whose members are subjected to unequal treatment through prejudice and discrimination by dominant groups”. On the other hand, ethnic groups are not systematically oppressed but may remain culturally linked: “a collectivity sharing common cultural norms, values, identities and behaviors and who both recognize themselves and are recognized by others as being ethnic”. In this view, 'ethnicity' is considered as the term to be chosen instead of ‘race’. Indeed, racial identity is seen as given to a group by those in power. Thus, from this perspective Italian Americans would be ethnics and African Americans would be identified as racial minorities (49-74).

The fourth position emphasizes historical contexts and relationships between and among ethnic groups in structures of power. These ethnic groups still share cultural values and tradition, religion and exclusions. One example of this paradigm of ethnicity in reference sources is Wayne Charles Miller, *A Comprehensive Bibliography of the Study of American Minorities* (Bergland 74).

It seems thus that the terminology to be used can be problematic when we discuss who is or what is “an American”. In a sense, the difficulty with the word lies in its “ethnic” inclusiveness. In a way, all American writers are ethnic, the sons of immigrants, since - with the exception of the Indian - there is no basic American stock. In other words, all Americans were at one time strangers to the American shores. But if we understand the word “ethnic” to mean immigrant groups speaking a language and possessing a culture other than English or belonging to a race other than the Caucasian, then it is evident that the distinction between American culture and its ethnic sub-cultures has been a very real one since colonial times. Indeed, during the colonial period the open spaces allowed those immigrants who wished to cling to their own language and customs to do so without seriously disturbing the established American community. Blacks - living in bondage, widely dispersed throughout the agrarian South, and without unifying leadership - did not then seem likely to disturb the traditional features of American life. But in the last decades of the nineteenth century, huge tides of foreign immigration flowed into America's big cities. At about the same time, large numbers of

Blacks emigrated to urban settings. These movements produced the first massive confrontations between the Native Americans and the newest ethnic communities at the very time when the early industrial capitalists were producing nation-wide economic instability. Living in increasingly congested cities with these new ethnic communities, the Native American often felt that his heritage and his way of life were being threatened. Nativist organizations were quick to declare their hostility to the larger of these ethnic groups - e.g., the Irish, the Jews, and the Negroes.

1.1 Ethnicity and Literature

Few historians and critics of American literature have paid attention to the presence of ethnic literatures. As Joan Sherman has stated in her book, *Invisible Poets. Afro Americans in the Nineteenth Century* (1974), "none of the early [black] poets is mentioned in American literature, biographies, and literary histories . . . The poets are invisible in white magazines and poetry anthologies" (qt by Leal 4), And Evelyn Gross Avery, in her study *Rebels and Victims: The Fiction of Richard Wright and Bernard Malamud* (1979), states in the Preface:

> Thirty years ago [1959] when I was an English major at Brooklyn College, ethnic literature was virtually invisible. We studied frontier comedy, but not ghetto humor, Colonial diaries, but not slave narrative. Richard Wright and Bernard Malamud were names in library catalogues, but rarely in American literature courses (4).

And the same can be said about the literatures of Asian Americans and Native Americans. Their voices were unheard and their existence was never acknowledged. They were excluded from virtually all standard works of reference.

Critics of American literature seem to be so conditioned that when they review books of minority authors the only values they find are ethnological. In fact, this tendency has a long history. As early as 1919, when Louis Untermeyer reviewed a collection of translations from Indian oral poetry, he said that the book was a document valuable chiefly for its ethnological interest, ad ding that the collection, for the man of letters, was "a crude and top-heavy monument with a few and even lively decorations" (qt in Leal 5). Mary Austin, one of the few critics who found aesthetic values in American Indian poetry, observed:

> Untermeyer describes himself as a 'mere man of letters'...but it begins to be a question in America whether a man is entitled to describe himself as a man of letters at all who so completely confesses his ignorance of and inability to enter into the vast body of aboriginal literature of his country qt in(Leal 5).

Another issue encountered by ethnic writers was editors and editorial houses. In his study *American Indian Fiction* (1978), Charles R. Larson states that:

> The earlier novels by Native Americans had met with much the same reception that encountered the works of Afro-American writers. For the most part, they were shunned or politely ignored. Publishers were not especially interested in these books . . . When novels by American Indians did appear, they were often published by obscure publishing houses in unlikely locations ... In at least one instance an author decided to pay for the publication of his novel by a vanity press, which meant that the book was ignored by the normal reviewing channels (Larson 2, 3).

The same thing has happened with Zora Neale Hurston, who will be discussed in the second chapter.

While the debate continues about what exactly constitutes ethnic literature, in most contexts the term refers to stories, and poems that relate to groups that have been traditionally marginalized or disenfranchised in American society-- African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and Asian Pacific Americans. It is a literature that authentically reflects non-Western cultures, with characters and content other than those of mainstream society.

Ethnic American literature deals with issues of identity in relation to an American mainstream. People in such literature are represented to be desperately seeking meaning as minorities, and struggling to maintain a balance between an ethnic heritage of the past and their identities while adapting to the mainstream culture. Whereas ethnic heritage is represented through the shared historical past as in the circulation of folk-tales, myths or legends, and the passing on of different cultural values, the adaptation to mainstream culture is expressed through a multicultural approach that accepts the American ideals also.

The earliest ethnic writers wrote primarily for their own people. Later, when they began to write for the American public, they had a common tendency to cast themselves in the role of good-will ambassadors.

During the Depression, it was ethnic writers like Mike Gold, James T. Farrell, and Richard Wright who were in the vanguard of proletarian literature, in which they articulated their common hardships. Yet, later, in the 1950's and 1960's , ethnic writers like Ralph Ellison, Saul Bellow and James F. Powers were similarly preoccupied with the search for identity in a world nearly vacant of genuine community, and they used their ethnic experience in America to conduct that search definitively.

If the 1960s were characterized as a decade of social movements for change and justice, then the 1970s was surely the decade that witnessed the first fruits of those struggles. In the context of academia and scholarship, many radical changes began to take place. One of the most significant tasks in the 1970s was the recovery of "lost" or "forgotten" texts by scholars. Feminist scholars in particular played an important role in unearthing and republishing works like Rebecca Harding Davis's *Life in the Iron Mills* ([1861]1971), Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* ([1892]1973), Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself* ([1860]1973), Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* ([1937]1978), and many others. By republishing these works, scholars brought into focus the social and sexual politics that had been largely responsible for the demise of these works in the past. Similarly works by writers of color like John Okada's *No-No Boy* ([1957]1976), D'Arcy McNickles's *The Surrounded* (1978), Jean Toomer's *Cane* ([1923]1975), and Jose Antonio Villarreal's *Pocho* ([1959]1970) among others were given attention and were republished. It was then critical to establish the presence of these works as the process of redefining American literary history began in a serious way.

In an ongoing effort to produce and make available works by contemporary women and writers of color, and works that had been ignored or silenced in the past, academics and scholars put together several new anthologies. In fact, scholars saw the importance of anthologies and rightly believed that in many ways anthologies were key to bringing about change in syllabi and reading lists. Some of the most significant

anthologies in the 1970s were: Abraham Chapman (ed.) *New Black Voices: An Anthology of Contemporary Afro-American Literature* (1972); Luiz Valdez and Stan Steiner (eds.) *Aztlan: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature* (1972); Frank Chin, et al. (eds.) *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (1974); Mary Helen Washington (ed.) *Black-Eyed Susans: Classic Stories by and about Black Women* (1975); and Alan Velie (ed.) *American Indian Literature: An Anthology* (1979). Each of these anthologies contributed to the growing need and demand for a body of literature that was conspicuously absent in the influential and popular *Norton Anthology* through much of the 1970s. For instance, only one African American writer, Le Roi Jones (Amiri Baraka) was given the last two pages of the 1,906 page *Norton Anthology* (Hemenway 65).

Gradually, publishers both large and small started publishing more works by minority writers, some who have gained canonical status today. Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1973), and *Song of Solomon* (1977), Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Childhood Among Ghosts* (1976), Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977), and Ernest Gaines's *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (1972) were published. In addition, The Feminist Press and Broadside Press dedicated themselves to publishing works by minority writers. Quinto Sol publishers did much to promote Chicano literature and published Tomas Rivera's *. . . y no se lo trago la tierra / And the Earth Did Not Part* (1971); Rudolfo A. Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972); and Rolando Hinojosa's *Estampas del valle y otras obras: Sketches of the Valley and other Works* (1973) (Bona and Maini 4).

With the publication of a large number of works by women and ethnic writers, it was inevitable that there would be a growth in the scholarship and research of these writers and their works. The 1970s saw the emergence of new critical methodologies as scholars questioned the validity of imposing so-called universal critical paradigms on works by "minority" writers, and sought to formulate diverse strategies that would allow them to take into account differences in gender, race, ethnicity, class, culture, location, and sexual preference. Some of the groundbreaking work in this area began with theorizing vernacular and oral traditions, narrative and language, folklore and myth,

genre and form. Addison Gayle's *Black Aesthetic* (1971), and Robert Stepto's *From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative* (1979) started this process, which gained power in the 1980s with Houston Baker's *Blues, Ideology, and African American Literature* (1984), and Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism* (1988). Chicana critic Tey Diana Rebolledo has been fundamental in developing a critical corpus on early Hispana/Mexicana writers, claiming a space for female writing that predates the Chicano movement politics of the 1960s and 1970s.

Critical anthologies like Joseph Sommers and Tomas Ybarra-Frausto (eds.) *Modern Chicano Writers: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1979), and Charles R. Larson (ed.) *American Indian Fiction* (1978) helped theorize and contextualize works by Chicano and Native American writers (4).

Academic scholarship in the field of race and ethnicity continues to increase exponentially. One of the most-often cited texts in ethnic and American studies is *Racial Formation in the United States: From the* 1960s *to the 1990'S* (1994), in which authors Michael Omi and Howard Winant trace the link between race and the American nation-state. Some influential texts, such as bell hooks's *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (1992), examine in new ways the representation of race in American culture. On the other hand, other studies of ethnic American literature concentrate on specific ethnic groups. Rachel C. Lee's *The Americas of Asian American Literature: Gendered Fictions of Nation and Transnation* (1999) and *The Black Columbiad: Defining Moments in African American Literature and Culture* (1994), edited by Werner Sollors and Maria Diedrich, exemplify this group. *The Ethnic Canon: Histories, Institutions, and Interventions* (1995), edited by David Palumbo-Liu, is one of the few critical works to focus on more than one ethnic literary tradition. *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature* (2000), edited by Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt, specifically examines the relationships between American literature and racial and ethnic studies, using a single theoretical approach, post-colonialism, rather than analyzing broadly and comparatively among literary approaches.

Some of these studies interrogate the changing concepts of "race" and "ethnicity" in theoretical and cultural terms, but do not focus specifically on concrete texts. Others examine race and ethnicity in American texts but with little attention to the fluidity of the terms themselves. Still, others focus only on what has traditionally been called "ethnic" American literature or only on racial constructions in European American (i.e.,so-called "non-ethnic") literary works.

By about 1980, it had become possible to think of producing an anthology that significantly represented the many cultures that, together, constituted the newly emerging multicultural conception of American literature. The *Heath Anthology of American Literature,* for example, became part of a general shift in the study of American literature from its earlier narrow focus on a very limited number of authors, texts and literary forms, to a much more diverse and pluralistic conceptions characteristic of American literary study today.

The 1980s witnessed a huge influx of works by women, writers of color, and voices that had been silenced or ignored over the years. It is no exaggeration to state that Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), which won the Pulitzer the following year, "placed the entire group [of black women writers] within a new dimension in the national consciousness" (McKay 249). In fact, many black writers won the Pulitzer those years: August Wilson for his play, *Fences* (1987); Rita Dove for her poetry collection, *Thomas and Beulah* (1987); and Toni Morrison for her novel, *Beloved* (1988). In addition, the National Book Critics Circle awarded its annual prize to Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine* (1984), and Bharati Mukherjee's *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988) (Bona and Maini 10).In addition, one of the major publishing events that further helped to propel this appetite for multiethnic works was the first edition of *The Heath Anthology of American Literature* in 1989. The first anthology to include a multiplicity of voices and genres, the *Heath* played a pivotal role in canon expansion and transformation. John Alberti, one of the editors of the *Heath,* asserts:

> revising the canon of American literature and developing multicultural curricula . . . represent not just a rethinking of what texts to include on a syllabus,or the simple replacement of one group of privileged texts with another, but a fundamental re-examination of the purposes and practices of literary study as a whole and of American literature in particular" (Alberti xv).

Being the most multiethnic of all the American literary anthologies, *Heath* continues to define American literature through the lens of multiethnic voices.

1.2 Characteristics of Ethnic /Minor Writings

In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari list three characteristics of minor literature: "in it language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization" (16); "everything in [a minor literature] is political" (16); and "in it everything takes on a collective value" (16). Via the first characteristic the concept of minor literature engages the "language question," which has been at the centre of many discussions. According to Deleuze and Guattari:

> A minor literature is not the literature of a minor language but the literature a minority makes in a major language. But the primary characteristic of a minor literature involves all the ways in which the language is affected by a strong co-efficent of deterritorialization (16).

Deleuze and Guattari use the term 'Deterritorialization' to explain that a minor writer uses the language of the majority to subvert from within the culture created and supported by that language. With this subversive power, the minor writer has control over that language by imprinting it with minor stylistic features, form and ideas.

Deleuze and Guattari's idea that a minority can create new linguistic forms "within a major language" as happens with Spanglish, for instance, can help us to arrive at a better understanding of the way "minor literature" functions within the mainstream culture.

This is also very applicable to African American literature. Novels such as *The Bluest Eye* are a good example to the ways Deleuze and Guattari conceive 'deterritorialization'. Toni Morrison is writing from within a minority group that faces racism and segregation. Yet that same group lives within the larger society. It is a story that can only be told from this group and that can only be told in the language of the oppressor.

Bilingualism, something that Deleuze and Guattari mention only in passing, is an important element in Minority literature. The question generally posed by ethnic writers is that of language itself: whether to write in his/her mother tongue, in the "adopted"

language or even in both. All the writers to be discussed in this dissertation subvert the language of the oppressor either by using dialect (like in the case of Harriet Jacobs, Zora Neale Hurston, Zitkala Sa and Leslie Marmon Silko), or incorporate words in Spanish like for Cleofas Jaramillo and Norma Elia Cantu.

Most of the time, the question of language choice has a lot more to do with one's affective relations to a language than with linguistic competence. According to Gustavo Pérez Firmat: "The true bilingual is not someone who possesses 'native competence' in two languages, but someone who is equally attached to, or torn between, competing tongues" (4). He adds:

> Tongue ties have little to do with linguistic competence. Affective rather than cognitive in nature, tongue ties do not presuppose mastery of a language. Just as it is possible never to have met one's parents, it is possible to be ignorant of one's mother tongue. The maternal denotes attachment, not skill; affinity, not fluency; familialness, not familiarity (4).

For Judith Ortiz Cofer, for example, English is the language of her formal education, and thus the language in which she writes, while Spanish is her affective language. On this point, Perez Firmat reports:

> U.S. Latino writers habitually pledge allegiance to a mother tongue that, for the most part, they no longer possess. Swearing loyalty to Spanish in English, they do not bear false witness, for even when the words have become unintelligible, even when the attempts at Spanish are riddled with solecisms, the emotional bonds remain unbroken (4).

Bilinguism can be seen as a means of expression that has been an important and ever-present element in the production of ethnic literature in the United States. In addition, bilingualism in the United States can be described as a literary practice aimed at documenting a minor culture and as a way of using a subordinate language to contest the imposing constraints of the monolingual, mainstream (and thus, dominant) culture (Greenwood Encyclopedia 97). In particular, bilingualism in ethnic literature documents the processes by which determined communities change/adapt to and learn or negotiate their new lives. By the same token, bilingual literature in the United States also documents the clashes between the minor/ethnic groups those who have lived in the United States for many generations, and the mainstream Anglo culture. In the end,

bilingualism contests mainstream efforts to eradicate the mother tongue from those communities. Or in many cases, that which has become the second tongue, as second and third generations of U.S.-born minorities oftentimes learn their parents' and grandparents' mother tongue as a second language.

In any case, U.S. ethnic writers from different backgrounds have countered for decades (purposely or not) "English only" efforts by expressing themselves in their literature with words that are "foreign" to the English language, but are reflective of their ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, American ethnic literature provides a unique perspective by using English in conjunction with another distinct language and by sometimes merging both languages, as in the case of Spanglish. In many cases, the texts are written primarily in English with some passages in Spanish. In these instances, the words in Spanish used by the authors are meant to establish two specific links: first, a connection with a specific ethnic group at a personal level (and thus establishing a particular heritage); and second, a broader cultural connection between the author, the community to which he or she belongs, and their heritage.

Bilingualism, consequently, serves to highlight the paradox by which these authors belong to two distinctive cultures, yet they also belong to neither. This point is brilliantly illustrated by Sandra Maria Esteves in her poem "Puerto Rican Discovery #3 Not Neither."

Bilingualism in U.S. ethnic literature also documents the creation and maintenance of a new hybrid culture that communicates using a "new" language, a language that reflects the experiences of this in-between culture. An illustration of this phenomenon is the poetry of Lorna Dee Cervantes. In her poem "Poema para los californios muertos" (Poem for the dead Californios), Cervantes writes in English and Spanish, using Spanish mainly to emphasize the historical commotion and sense of loss of the original Mexican settlement in the state of California. For instance, she uses Spanish when talking about the land: "Husbands de la tierra" (husbands of the land) and "tierra madre" (mother land). She also uses it when talking about ancestors and their struggles (Greenwood Encyclopedia 99).Finally, bilingualism (as a practice in U.S. ethnic literature) provides a tool by which the lives of the members of ethnic

communities are highlighted and the reality they live within the broader society is problematized.

The second attribute of a minor literature is its production of political themes. Political literature is not just that which addresses immediate political concerns. Instead, it concentrates on the needs of the whole minority group. Zora Neale Hurston, for example, rarely portrayed blacks as victims of the oppression and racist attitudes held by white society and instead represented blacks as autonomous beings, proud of their folk culture. Nonetheless, this representation was an anomaly in Black literature at that time, and Hurston was severely criticized throughout the 1930s and 1940s by writers such as Richard Wright who experienced a more common upbringing in the segregated South and whose work spoke to the inequalities inherent in American society.

The last attribute of minor literature is its collective value. Indeed, a minor literature does not have much freedom in terms of individuality. It is only thus that any literature can actually become a tool for collective expression; only thus it is able to address issues properly (Deleuze, Guattari 25).

2- The Tradition of Autobiography

American autobiography has been the subject of major scholarship and criticism since the 1960s. After the Second World War, two valuable bibliographies of autobiography were published: William Matthews' *British Autobiography: An Annotated Bibliography of British Autobiographies Published or Written Before 1951* (1955) and Louis Kaplan's *A Bibliography of American Autobiographies* (1961). There followed in 1964 Robert F Sayre's *the Examined Self: Benjamin Franklin, Henry Adams, Henry James* and Daniel B. Shea's *Spiritual Autobiography in Early America* (1968).

Sayre noted the relationship between the emergence of recognizing autobiography as a distinct genre and the establishment of the United States as a political entity, arguing that "the founding of autobiography as a designated and conscious genre fell within the early years of the Republic, and its growth, coinciding with the spread of the romantic movement, has also coincided with the growth of the United States (33).

Basing his generalizations about American autobiography on personal narratives of notable persons, Sayre found the *Confessions of St Augustine* and *the Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* to be "the most important models for autobiography in America" (3).

Shea on the other hand, hesitates to generalize about early American autobiography, noting that "General descriptions (of personal narratives) may well remain useful; yet they may also seem empty or stale when applied to the persistent singularity of many individual narratives" (vii). He further cautions us to remember that "literary conventions are always more apparent from a distance" (ix). However, in these works, few autobiographies by women are mentioned. In his classic *English Autobiography,* for example, Wayne Shumaker covers many famous autobiographies like Augustine, Yeats, Mill, and Trollope. While Shumaker discusses some female autobiographers of the 18th century, in his survey of the period up to the Second World War, he treats briefly and only three 19th century women: Margaret Oliphant, Harriet Martineau and Annie Besant. In *Design and Truth in Autobiography,* though Roy Pascal discusses Teresa's Life in the context of post-Christian autobiographies, for the modern period he discusses all the major male autobiographies and includes the 20th century life studies by Freud, Trotsky, Yeats, O'Casey, Collingwood, Gosse, Churchill and Gandhi, but refers briefly to the autobiographies by Martineau and Beatrice Webb. James Olney, a senior critic in the field of autobiography is interested in why men write autobiographies and in why we continue to read them (vii). From autobiography, he says, we can learn "what man has been, what forms have proved possible to humanity, which is knowledge that one seeks with the intention more particularly of knowing what man is" (xx). However, all the lives Olney chooses to study are men: Montaigne, Fox, Darwin, Newman and Eliot. Obviously, Olney negates the experiences of women who too wrote autobiographies.

Francis R. Hart's *Notes for an Anatomy of Modern Autobiography* (1970) touches on Nin's diaries, but his centre of focus is on Gibbon, Wordsworth, George Moore, Gosse, O'Casey, Wells, Goethe, Gide, Sartre and Malraux, plus a number of Americans like Hemingway, Nabokov, Dahlberg, Wright and Cleaver.

In his 1979 book, *American Autobiography: the Prophetic Mode*, G. Thomas Couser works beyond the usual focus on self-writings of elite white males and deals with a relatively diverse range of American autobiographical writings, including works of Frederick Douglass, Gertrude Stein, Malcolm X and many others. Couser finds the particular characteristics of the self-writing tradition to derive from the writers' tendency "to assume the role of prophet in writing autobiography" and notes that the "tradition of prophetic autobiography can be located in their Puritan attitudes toward themselves and their history" (3).

In *The Art of Life* (1977), Mutlu Konuk Blasing deals with the question of relationships between Puritan and secular colonial self-writing and later American autobiography:

> The range of such possible connections suggests that in tracing a tradition of personal literature in America, one is dealing less with direct influences and more with a series of responses to essentially similar social, spiritual, and literary experiences (xii).

This seems to suggest that similarities between post-colonial American personal narratives, such as those discussed by Couser that point to the Puritan heritage, may derive to some extent not from direct influence but from production under similar social circumstances.

Blasing defines autobiography as a work "in which the hero, narrator, and author can be identified by the same name" (xi). This allows her to address poetry, such as Whitman's "Song of Myself" and other works not generally included in studies of autobiography. Moreover, her view that "the term 'autobiographical'…does not imply any particular standard of 'truth' to the 'facts', since the recording of a life necessarily represents…fictionalization—to a greater or lesser degree (xi) places her with the trend in recent autobiography studies that erode the distinction between fiction and non-fiction.

In his *Autobiographical Occasions and Original Acts: Versions of American Identity from Henry Adams to Nate Shaw* Albert E. Stone has shed light on why earlier works on autobiography lacked depth and completion. Indeed, in a passage he describes earlier attempts on the field as involved in "building generalizations about American

autobiography and culture on the foundation of a relatively few classics, a single theme, rhetorical stance, or historical period. In this process certain texts become elevated to the status of canonical works" (18,19). In a more general way, Stone provided an example of how to select and study autobiographies of Americans of extremely diverse social and cultural backgrounds.

In line with the recent trend of applying poststructuralist approaches to criticism of American Autobiography, two studies are particularly notable: Joseph Fichtelberg's *The Complex Image: Faith and Method in American Autobiography* (1989) and Couser's *Altered Egos: Authority in American Autobiography* (1989). Of the two, I think that *Altered Egos* is more scholarly satisfying in its approach to autobiographies springing from diverse American cultural groups. Indeed, after exploring the problematic of "authority" in a selection of autobiographies springing from different ethnic groups, Couser concludes: "the authority of autobiography never resides exclusively in the text or the self, or even in the correspondence between them; rather it is something negotiated and renegotiated, between the autobiographer and others—collaborators, editors, critics, biographers, historians, and lay readers" (Altered 253). Using an approach which takes into account varied American traditions, Couser deals with such particular issues as collaboration in relation to Native Americans and Black Americans in their slave narratives as well as problems associated with "biculturalism" in Chicano and Chinese American autobiography.

At present, the approach in autobiography studies that proves to be more helpful and productive is that which is specific to particular American cultural traditions, as evidenced by such important works such as William L. Andrews's *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865* (1986), William Boelhower's *Immigrant Autobiography in the United States: Four Versions of the Italian American Self* (1982), Joanne M. Braxton's *Black Women Writing Autobiography: A Tradition Within a Tradition* (1989), H. David Brumble III's *American Indian Autobiography* (1988), and Arnold Krupat's *For Those Who Come After: A Study of American Indian Autobiography* (1985). None of these works proposes

an inclusive paradigm for "American Autobiography" as a "whole", but rather exemplifies scholarship and criticism that take into consideration both the "cultural narrative" and "individual story", to borrow Stone's words again. In addition, it seems that by reading ethnic autobiographies side by side with "canonical" autobiographies, we run the risk of implying that "ethnic" writing is not only highly indebted but also secondary to "mainstream" literature. In other words, our critical work may suggest that "these satellite literatures are essentially fringe phenomena, derivative," mere offshoots lacking "originality" (qt by Simal 12). It should not also be ignored that the dynamics between dominant and "minority" cultures is not unidirectional, but one of reciprocal influence (qt by Simal 9). Such mutual influence and interaction can aptly be described as a dialogue, even if those voices belonging to the hitherto marginalized ethnic communities have had to make an effort in order to be heard, after decades or centuries of enforced silence, or, at best, after long periods of being confined to mere whispering.

An analysis of ethnic literature shows how these groups through the use of certain distinctive stylistic features can find a distinctive mode of expression, which would reflect the combination of the specific and the dominant culture in their identity.

Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Houston Baker Jr., for example, have called attention to the importance of the *Signifying Monkey* in African American cultural productions of many kinds. As Gates puts it, "the *Signifying Monkey* exists as the great trope of Afro-American discourse, and the trope of tropes, his language of Signifyin(g) is his verbal sign in the Afro-American tradition." (21). "Signifyin(g)" is the practice in black vernacular of using innuendo ridiculing, parodying a previous statement to put down an opponent, to gain status and attention, or to establish one's voice as potent .

In recent years, the "Borderland" has come to name not just a geographical space but a state of consciousness, a *mestizaje* sense of between-ness. The concept was first introduced by Gloria Anzaldúa in her book *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987). Anzaldúa defines it as follows:

> A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is a constant state of transition. The prohibited and the forbidden are its inhabitants. Los *atravesados* live here: the squint-eyed, the perversa, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over the confines of the "normal" (13).

Thus, the inhabitant of the "borderlands" comes to represent hybridity not only in terms of nationality but of gender, sexuality and ethnicity. And the language spoken or written by such a *mestizaje* figure is, not surprisingly in this instance, English and Spanish.

A recurrent stylistic feature in Native American texts is repetition, and the fundamental trope is one of disorder and efforts to restore balance and eventually healing. In Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony* (1977), for example, the protagonist Tayo participates in a series of ceremonies designed to cure him of the violence, and decline imposed by absorption in white culture, and particularly in war. Analogous patterns emerge in other contemporary Indian fictions, such as Louise Erdrich's (Chippewa) *Love Medicine* (1984) and N. Scott Momaday's (Kiowa) *House Made of Dawn* (1968).

2.2 Ethnic Autobiography

There has been some scholarly discussion of what constitutes autobiography, and a definition of this genre has yet to be formulated in clear terms. Philippe Lejeune writes in "The Autobiographical Contract" that a work can be called an autobiography if the author of the work, the narrator, and the subject of the work all have the same name, and if the author claims to be telling the truth. He defines autobiography as "a retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality" (qt in Anderson 2). According to Lejeune, this definition is realized as long as four criteria are met: 1) that the autobiography is told as a prose narrative 2:) that its subject is an individual life/personality 3:) that the author and narrator of the autobiography are the same *true life* person 4:) that the narrator and the protagonist are identical and that the autobiography is told in retrospection (4). If a work does not meet all four of these criteria, then they are not true autobiographies. Lejeune argues that examples of autobiographical works that do not meet the *true* standards of autobiography, as he outlines them, are the following: memoirs, biography, the personal novel, autobiographical poems, journals/diaries, self-portraits or essays (4).Therefore, because memoirs are not limited to the story of only one individual or personality they do not

meet Lejeune's second requirement. The personal novel does not fulfill his third requirement. The autobiographical poem is not in prose and the self-portrait or essay is not necessarily in narrative form; nor, are they generally told in retrospection.

Lejeune's definition is obviously narrow, because if we take it to the letter, none of the texts considered in this study would be called autobiographies except for Zora Neale Hurston's *Dust Tracks.*

Francoise Lionnet argues:

> For those of us who are natives of the so-called Third World, it has become imperative to understand and to participate fully in the process of re-vision begun by our contemporary writers and theorists...We have to articulate new visions of ourselves, new concepts that allow us to think *otherwise*, to bypass the ancient symmetries and dichotomies that have governed the ground and the very condition of possibility of thought, of 'clarity', in all Western philosophy. *Métissage* is such a concept and a practice: it is the site of undecidability and indeterminacy, where solidarity becomes the fundamental principle of political action against hegemonic language (*Autobiographical* 5-6).

For Lionnet, memory is crucial for survival as well as to have access to one's history, and this articulation of *métissage* insists that the formation of autobiographical selves is based on relationality. In other words, our self is known by its relation to community. Therefore, Lejeune's individual, hegemonic Euro-American subject is an inadequate model for the relational self.

Moreover, Lejeune notes that the conventional reason to tell an autobiography is to tell the story of an individual life/ personality (qt in Anderson 5).However, "natives of the so-called Third World" use autobiography to question the authority of Euro-American dominance in history and culture. By questioning this authority, they question the veracity of the claims the mainstream culture has made about their histories and cultures. In this vein, Genaro Padilla argues:

> Autobiographical authority . . . issue[s] . . .from . . . a deep human desire to shape and control narrative, to modulate its articulation by that small stubbornness of voice that insists on its own story and that reconstructs the past in a register that claims ownership of the past, especially, when ownership of the present is endangered (Recovering 171).

Although in this passage Padilla refers specifically to the "endangered present" of the post-1848 moment in California, for Mexican Americans the present is always a dangerous moment.

The appropriateness of autobiography as a genre for individuals who view themselves as, or are regarded as being, outside of the western European writing tradition has been explored by a number of theorists. David Brumble discusses this issue as it relates to the oral tradition of most Native American tribal groups in his book *American Indian Autobiography*. He examines specific examples of types of stories which he would describe as autobiographical in nature even if they do not conform to what is considered to be the western autobiographical tradition, and, therefore, finds that autobiography is a natural means of expression for Native Americans.

Frank Chin, in his provocative article, “This is Not an Autobiography,” argues that autobiography is an inappropriate form for American writers of Chinese descent. He identifies autobiography with the Christian confessional tradition as exemplified by St. Augustine, and sees no place for Chinese American writers within this tradition.

Susanna Egan makes a powerful case for the power of autobiography as a survival tool for members of marginalized groups, including racial minorities, women, the working class, and gay and lesbian individuals. In her article, "The Changing Faces of heroism," she describes the typical autobiography of an earlier era typified in the United States by the autobiographies of Ben Franklin, Henry Adams, and Henry David Thoreau. These men wrote toward the end of their lives when their reputations and value to society were already established. They were members of the ruling class. They assumed themselves to be the inheritors, as well as the conduits of a rich cultural heritage, a heritage which, without doubt, would be shared by their readers. In contrast, the new autobiographer, as described by Egan, does not come from the elite. According to Egan, “we now find literary talent and a strong autobiographical impulse emerging from all walks of life. . . . The palm has passed from white, middle class men of distinction to the . . .minorities of our culture who write precisely because of their lack of other kinds of power and their need to be heard” (23). These authors write about rebellion and survival. Rather than looking back on a heroic journey, they are most likely writing in the midst of their lives. The end of the journey is yet to come, the problems they confront are still unresolved, and their success or failure remains unevaluated. By writing, they establish their place in history, making their particular experiences, thoughts, and actions part of the permanent written record. Egan maintains that the very act of writing

for "this modern crop of autobiographers . . . is not a matter of explanation, apology, or clarification of public record, but entirely a matter of survival" (27).

Because most ethnic autobiographies are political in nature and resist notions of national unity, they have also generated intense debate. The intensity of the debate is manifested in issues surrounding multiculturalism and its meaning in American society. Indeed, when the founders of the United States selected "*E pluribus unum"* as the motto on the new nation's Great Seal, they were very likely thinking of 13 different colonies being bound together into a single nation; this nation was constituted ,as J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur wrote in 1782, of a "mixture of English, Scotch, Irish French, Dutch, Germans, and Swedes." "From this promiscuous breed," Crèvecoeur continued, "that race now called Americans have arisen." These people were differing in language, religion and attitudes toward the land and they were often engaged in struggles over power, property, and cultural authority. By the time the United States was constituted as a nation in 1776, about 10 percent of its population came from Africa. These people, too, came from differing nations or tribes in west and central Africa, and carried with them differing languages, customs and religions (Lauter xvii).

Today, in the United States, multiculturalism needs to be seen in the displacement and often, extermination of native peoples, the capture, transportation, and enslavement of Africans; the struggles over land ownership also occurred between Spanish- and English-speaking peoples in the Southwest and in California among many other events.

However, multiculturalism does not mean the study of conflict and oppression. In part it has to do with the celebration of what is or was distinctive in the cultures and histories of these minorities. In his essay "Trans-National America" (1916), Randolph Bourne wrote:

> Each national colony in this country seems to retain in its foreign press, its vernacular literature, its schools, its intellectual and patriotic leaders, a central cultural nucleus….. The influences at the centre of the nuclei are centripetal. They make for the intelligence and the social values which mean an enhancement of life. And just because the foreign-born retains this expressiveness he is likely to be a better citizen of the American community (qt in *Heath* 1720).

Arthur Schlesinger Jr, a critic of multiculturalism among many, calls for the reaffirmation of Anglo-Saxon culture and the silencing of differences. In his essay "*The Cult of Ethnicity, Good and Bad*" (1991), he argues that non-Anglo whites and non-white minorities have created a 'cult of ethnicity' in order to denounce the idea of a melting pot and promote ethnic and racial separation. Claiming that 'the ethnic interpretation of American history' remains 'fatally misleading and wrong when presented as the whole picture' (214), Schlesinger finds especially disturbing the notion that ethnic studies reverse 'the historic theory of America as one people - the theory that has thus far managed to keep American society whole'. However, Schlesinger also recognizes that ethnic histories are 'therapies' that raise minority 'self-esteem' (214).

In *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (1998), Schlesinger recognizes that there can be both benefits and dangers in ethnicity awareness. The benefits include the new recognition of minorities in academic and cultural spheres. "But pressed too far, the cult of ethnicity has bad consequences too…. Its underlying philosophy is that America is not a nation of individuals at all but a nation of groups, that ethnicity is the defining experience for Americans…" (20). He goes on to say that "The multiethnic dogma abandons historic purposes, replacing assimilation by fragmentation, integration by separatism. It belittles "*unum"* and glorifies "*pluribus"*.

Despite general references to the cultural contributions of various ethnic groups to the formation of the United States, he reveals a strong bias in his presentation of history. When he claims that few African-Americans have felt any cultural tie to Africa, he ignores the 500,000 imported slaves who were uprooted and denied their normal lives in this country. We may wonder whether he seriously believes that all connection to their African culture died out before they could pass it on to their children. Moreover, in his efforts to justify cultural assimilation on the grounds of chosen immigration, Schlesinger Jr fails to acknowledge that Native Americans and many Hispanics did not immigrate to the United States. They neither sought Anglo-America nor desired assimilation. Rather, the United States demanded conformity and compliance with their socio-political establishment.

The author also evokes the ethnic divisions happening around the world, even in democratic countries like Britain, France, Belgium, Spain and Canada and says, "In a world savagely rent by ethnic and racial antagonisms, it is all the more essential that the United States continues as an example of how a highly differentiated society holds itself together" (25). He devotes a chapter to the use of history as a weapon and claims "The result has been a reconstruction of American history partly on the merits and partly in response to gender and ethnic pressures" (71). Further, he reminds us that what has held the American people together was "a common adherence to ideals of democracy and human rights", quoting Theodore Roosevelt when he said:

> The one absolutely certain way of bringing this nation to ruin, of preventing all possibility of its continuing to be a nation at all, would be to permit it to become a tangle

> of squabbling nationalities, an intricate knot of German-Americans, Irish-Americans, English-Americans…,each preserving its separate nationality" (124).

Obviously, Schlesinger Jr fears that the "cult of ethnicity" manifested in ethnic awareness and the continuing attack on the historical and literary canons will lead to increasing racial hostility, a loss of common values, and national disintegration. I think that the case is rather the opposite. In their efforts to undermine the original notion of the United States as a nation governed by and for a certain class of white men, multicultural scholars, feminists, and others are trying to heal the wounds that truly disunite America.

In *Rough Writing: Ethnic Authorship in Roosevelt's America* (2008), Alviva Taubenfeld's study offers new information and insights. She documents the "surprising place and implications of the immigrant and of ethnic writing in Roosevelt's America and American literature" (4). This is surprising for her, because Roosevelt believed that the influx of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe threatened to destroy what he believed to be an exceptional culture established by the country's northern and western European forefathers. The result of Taubenfeld`s research is an interesting account of how the symbol of manly American nationalism and opponent of hyphenated Americans championed works by Israel Zangwill, Jacob Riis, Elizabeth Stern, and Finley Peter Dunn. These writers, in turn, publicly praised Roosevelt, dedicated their books to him, yet they resisted and even undermined the nationalist and racialist ideas that Roosevelt proclaimed. Though he tried to control them and perhaps exploit them for his political purposes, they "push[ed] him and the nation he represented to confront the realities of their [multicultural] America" (11).According to Taubenfeld, Roosevelt was influenced by neo-Lamarckian views on race and genetics and believed that psychological and physical characteristics were shaped by the cultural as well as physical environment and then transmitted genetically to the next generation. Therefore, according to this theory, European immigrants, but not racial minorities, could be assimilated into the American "melting pot" and then literally pass cultural tests developed in America before full integration. Thus, it was imperative to Roosevelt that

the immigrants absorb the "true" American ideals, and literature was a major vehicle for instilling these principles.

However, it is important to note that Roosevelt had no desire to erase the color line, nor to support African- American writers who believed in racial equality. Indeed, in 1905, W.E.B Du Bois invited President Roosevelt to meet students at Atlanta University during a scheduled visit to Atlanta, but Roosevelt declined. Du Bois soon became convinced that Roosevelt was, despite his progressive rhetoric, a racist, and he began attacking him in his essays: "Theodore Roosevelt does not like black folk. He has no faith in them. I do not think he really ever knew a colored man intimately as a friend" (qtd in Taubenfled 339).

While ethnicity remains a site of intense controversy and debate, at the same time, some scholars view ethnic autobiographies as a rich arena for understanding postmodern cultures. Michael M. J. Fischer, for example, has argued that "ethnic autobiography and autobiographical fiction can perhaps serve as a key form for exploration of pluralist, post industrialist, late twentieth-century society". He presents three reasons: ethnicity is dynamic and is constantly reconstructed with each generation, there are no role models for hyphenated Americans; and ethnic autobiographers are forced to find a language that incorporates the various dimensions of identity. He also argues that we must consider the self as 'pluralist, multidimensional, or multifaceted' , and one which might be a 'crucible for a wider social ethos of pluralism (qt by Bergland 133-134).

In *The Ethnic I.: A Sourcebook for Ethnic-American Autobiography*, James Craig Holte examines twenty-nine autobiographies. It includes for each: a biography, a discussion of the autobiography, a critical assessment and a bibliography. It contains autobiographies of Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans--immigrants and descendants, Latinos, first-generation European immigrants and second-generation European immigrants. Overall, the listing includes both men (20) and women (9).

The ethnic writer often assumes the role of outsider when he begins to write about his experience in America. Ethnic Americans recognized the pluralistic nature of

American culture from daily experiences, while official ideology continued to proclaim the unitary nature of the society. Facing the pressures of Americanization - the pressures to abandon a language, a community, a religion, and a tradition, confusion, anger, and resistance were felt by many, while others ostensibly accepted the challenge and, in various degrees, adapted. According to Holte, the ethnic autobiography takes many forms, but two common patterns can be discerned:

> In the first pattern is the "success narrative", in which either he/she is transformed from outsider to insider, from immigrant or ethnic to American "as is the case with Mary Antin, Edward Bok, Andrew Carnegie, and Frank Capra". In the second pattern, the writers remain outsiders because "the dominant culture keeps them out for reasons of race, sex, class or language", yet, they remain determined to survive racism, sexism and exploitation as is the case of Emma Goldman, Malcolm X, and Black Elk (7).

Another approach to ethnic autobiography is found in the work of William Boelhower, who draws upon post-structuralism and semiotics to explore paradigmatic structures of ethnic autobiographies. In his *Immigrant Autobiography in the United States*, Boelhower attempts to examine autobiographies of immigrants and to provide "a clear ordering of the unique narrative laws that characterize such types of literature" (22). He also argues that immigrant autobiography revolves around the opposition between the old and new worlds, and the promise of the new world embedded in dominant cultural discourses. Beginning with a mythic moment of "dream anticipation" (6), the protagonist undertakes a journey from the Old World to the New World, and during the process of "transformation" or "Americanization", the protagonist "is forced to confront the utopian grammar of the New World for what it actually represents", so that immigrant autobiography "must organize *two* cultural systems, a culture of the present and the future and a culture of memory, into a single model" (6-7). Boelhower further asserts that the model he presented "can serve as the real epicenter for the larger category of ethnic autobiographies (2).

After he examines four Italian-American autobiographies: Constantine Panunzio's *The Soul of an Immigrant* (1921); Pascal D'Angelo's *Son of Italy* (1924); Emanuel Carnevali's *The Autobiography of Emanuel Carnevali* (compiled by Kay Boyle, 1967); and Jerre Mangione's *Mount Allegro* (1943), he maintains that the range of cultural strategies presented in the four works namely: confirmation, variation,

negation and substitution of the codes of the dominant culture, could just as easily have been illustrated by other ethnic groups (20).The immigrant model, however, may have limited value for women. Moreover, his approach tends to mask historical differences among groups by conflating racial and ethnic categories. The meaning of "ethnic" remains undefined, and the words immigrant and ethnic, often used interchangeably, frequently appear bound together: “immigrant/ethnic autobiographies" (127), "immigrant/ethnic self" (133, 134). Generally, ethnic refers to the European immigrants, mostly turn-of-the- century, but he alludes to other groups -those who immigrated involuntarily and those conquered, namely, African "prisoners" (135) and Native Americans (135-36). Further, one wonders how the macro-text of the New World/Old World applies to conquered peoples or involuntary immigrants.

2.3 Ethnic Women’s Autobiographies

In a recent wave of feminist writings about women's autobiographies, male criteria for the construction of the autobiography are also being challenged. Susan Stanford Friedman (1988), for instance, argues that the traditional approach to autobiography which emphasizes the individual as a supreme and unique being is inappropriate to explain the creation of the female or "minority" self. Such an approach does not consider the externally imposed cultural identities of women and other oppressed groups and the particular socialization processes that women and people of color undergo in a racist and sexist culture. Women can never assume an individual identity because they are at every moment reminded of their gender (and color if they are not white). Meanwhile, since they personify cultural categories privileged in Western culture as human, those who are white, male, and heterosexual can consider themselves as individuals. Susan Stanford Friedman states: “The emphasis on individualism as the necessary precondition for autobiography is thus a reflection of privilege, one that excludes from the canons of autobiography those who have been denied by history the illusion of individualism” (qtd in Mohanty and Russo 274).

Ethnic women autobiographers do not create a monolithic self, but rather present the construction of the self as a member of multiple oppressed groups, whose political

identity can never be separated from her conditions. The subject created is at once individual and collective. For people who have been marginalized or who have not had the power to tell their own experience, the autobiography, is a means with which to project its own image on to history. This is, of course, far removed from the dominant and traditional autobiographical construction of the "superior" individual who seeks to separate himself from his community and perhaps, in part, accounts for why the works of women of color have been marginalized by the white, male, heterosexual literary world.

Women's autobiographies generally challenge the male-imposed construction of their identity. As Sidonie Smith states in *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography*, "women approach autobiography from the position of speakers at the margins of discourse" (44). If this is true for white, heterosexual, middle-class women, what does it mean for the construction of self in the autobiographies of ethnic women? It is not enough to speak of double oppression; rather, women of color are themselves theorizing their experience in radical and innovative terms. Their condition as women, and as people of color, has led them to reject social, and political theories such as middle-class, white, mainstream feminism and Marxist socialism that have failed to develop an analysis sensitive to the simultaneous oppression that ethnic women experience. Rather, third world women are making connections between the forces of domination that affect their lives daily and are actively participating in the creation of a movement committed to radical social and political transformation at all levels.

In the 1990s, the Third Wave of feminist criticism of women's autobiographies has moved to, what Susan S. Friedman calls, "'Beyond' Difference". In the 'Introduction' to her book *Mappings* (1998), Susan S. Friedman leads the theory of women's autobiography to "'Beyond' Gender", "'Beyond' White and Other" and "'Beyond' Difference" (10). She explains that "feminism has moved to a concern with location, the geopolitics of identity within differing communal spaces of being and becoming" (3). Friedman, , further, explains the term *beyond* in the light of what Homi Bhabha refers to about cultural studies in general. Bhabha writes:

> The 'beyond' is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past... [There is] a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the 'beyond' : an exploratory, restless movement caught so well in the French rendition of the words *au-dela* -here and there, on all sides, *fort/ da,* hither and thither, back and forth (qtd in Friedman 10).

Friedman argues that, with globalization, feminists need such type of terrain in order to understand the contradictory, fluid, and complex nature of identity. Thus, "locational feminism" marks an important shift from developmental to geographical ways of thinking about identity.

An important work of reclaiming African American autobiography contributed to honing the critical lens of women's autobiography theory. Works by critics and scholars like William L Andrews, Hazel V Carby, Joanne M Braxton and Frances Smith Foster among others, on African American women's autobiographical writings have reframed the foundations of American Women's autobiography.

The theorizing of ethnic identity in women's autobiography continues by critics as Tey Diana Rebolledo and Lourdes Torres on American Latina women's autobiographies, and Hertha D Sweet Wong on Native American autobiographies. One should also bear in mind the important role of such critics as Henry Louis Gates Jr, Houston Baker, William L Andrews, Genaro Padilla, Ramon Saldivar, Greg Sarris and Arnold Krupat, whose theoretical studies in autobiographies of women of color have made major contributions to revising the canon.

As they established a communal tradition and proposed counter-texts to the canon, women of color argued the instrumental role of autobiographical writing in giving voice to formerly silenced subjects.

Many scholars of women's autobiography have been engaged in exploring texts and theorizing about their differences. In "The Narrative Self: Race, Politics and Culture in Black American Women's Autobiography", Nellie Y. McKay suggested that African American women's writings need to be read within a historical paradigm with a consideration of the imbrication of gender and race. In the nineteenth century slave narrative, McKay argued, African American women asserted models of selfhood different from those of both middle-class white women and African American men. In the twentieth century, however, their autobiographical writings both chart and resist

victimization while moving beyond protest narrative to autobiographically bear witness to the costs of their psychic and political survival (Qtd in Smith and Watson, Women 96).

Hertha D, Sweet Wong argues in "First–Person Plural: Identity and Community in Native American Women's Autobiography" that "relationality" and "community" mean different practices and values in Native American and feminist contexts. Wong investigates the possible "double relationality" of Native women and suggests terms for reading their autobiographical writing as something different from a narrative of tragic loss (qtd in Smith and Watson, *Women* 168-178).

Scholars writing on Chicana and Latina women's writing address a rich autobiographical tradition that includes nineteenth –century histories as well as the proliferation of contemporary voices. In "The Construction of the self in U.S. Latina Autobiographies", Lourdes Torres considers Latina autobiographical writing as both revolutionary and subversive. Indeed, Latina autobiographers by appropriating a new literary space in which they can assert their *mestiza* identity, write the contradictions of their multiple identities in ways that enable women of color to reshape the paradigms and politics of identity in narrative.

In rethinking autobiographical narratives in terms of politics of difference, scholars have accordingly developed a critique of Western individualism and the expectation that narrated lives conform to dominant cultural models of identity. They have also challenged theories that conceive of a universal woman as obviously white, Western and coming from the bourgeoisie, and that purports to speak for herself. This challenge has been strongly directed at white feminists who complacently consider the "white woman" as normative. In *Making Face, Making Soul,* Anzaldua critiques mainstream feminism's tendency to put the concerns of all women into the category of "woman". She also shows the need for minority women to wear masks to deny their needs and identities to be recognized by the dominant feminist theories. "Making face" is a metaphor for constructing one's own identity and to move from the object position to the subject position, and thus being able to occupy the theorizing space instead of being theorized by others.

In *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Chandra Talpade Mohanty offers a study of the challenges that "third-world" women pose to mainstream feminism. These challenges include an integration of the categories of race and postcolonial discourse and a reconceptualization of the ideas of resistance, community and agency in daily life (3).To be able to foreground the category of "third-world" Woman as an analytical and political entity, Mohanty draws on Benedict Anderson's concept of an "imagined community" of "third-world" women where the oppositional struggles invite "potential alliances and collaborations across divisive boundaries" (4). However, she insists that relation to, and focus on, particular struggles must depend on different, sometimes conflicting, locations and histories, and argues that third world feminists have engaged in the "rewriting of history based on the specific locations and histories of struggle of people of color and postcolonial peoples, and on the day-to-day strategies of survival utilized by such peoples" (10). Moreover, Mohanty demonstrates how mainstream feminism has historically focused on gender as the only axis of struggle and ignored the racial, class, and sexual components of oppression. In her essay "Under Western Eyes", Mohanty suggests two distinctions made on the basis of the privileging of a particular group as the norm or referent: the "third-world" women represented as poor, uneducated, dependent, traditional, domestic, sexually restrained, family-oriented, victimized,…etc and Western women as educated, modern, having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and free to make their own decisions (56-57). This process of "othering" echoes Edward Said's "Orientalism".

Jordan and Weedon's text, *Cultural Politics*, discusses how women in general are marginalized and how women of color are marginalized in particular due to their gender, race and class within the Western World. The authors assert: "Feminist politics have always been a response to women's actual position in society" (177). The authors affirm that Black and Third World (women of color) feminists challenge patriarchy and unequal gendered power relations within their politics. The authors maintain:

> Black and third world feminist cultural politics insist on the centrality of racism and colonialism to understanding gender relations. As such they emphasize cultural and historical specificity, challenging the Eurocentric tendency of much feminism to

> privilege Western norms as universal. They call for a recognition of difference which acknowledges and challenges the oppressive power relations that constitute differences in a racist and (post-colonial world). (185-186)

Jordan and Weedon claim that cultural differences and racism are the basis for the marginalization, oppression and subjectivity of Third World women and/or women of color. Black and Third World feminists resist the effects of cultural difference and racism by exposing the sources of their oppression, and by positively affirming their cultural differences. In this way, they empower women of color by promoting social and political equality.

2.4 Representing Ethnic Identity in Autobiography

Historically, the question of American identity has been at the centre of ongoing debates in American society. In the eighteenth century, J. Hector St John de Crevecoeur asked the question often repeated in the twentieth century: "What is the American, this new man?" to that he answered: "He is either a European or the descendant of a European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country" (qtd in Bergland 39). Thus, from the late eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, this representation of American identity in autobiographies meant to be from European ancestry, along with other signifiers such as Protestantism, whiteness, and maleness. The traditional models of the American autobiographical subject, Benjamin Franklin, Henry David Thoreau, Henry Adams, were also powerful and public figures, occupying positions of authority. So when the not-male/not-European autobiographical subject would identify with America, he/she "needed to persuade the reader of the veracity of that alignment by speaking from positions identified with America or power: schools, pulpits, and discourses of patriotism" (Bergland 77)

Discussions regarding ethnic identity in America center on two existing characteristic models. The first model is commonly identified as the "melting pot" metaphor of assimilation that principally panders to a Eurocentric notion of race mixing. Derived from Israel Zangwill's 1922 play *The Melting Pot,* the term refers to

assimilationist urgency wherein old ethnicities are abandoned in favor of a new Anglophone American identity. In this case, the original ethnic identities “melt” and give way to an Americanized identity. The assimilationists thus believe that the minorities in America must renounce their inferior racial/ethnic traits in order to be fully accepted in the American mainstream. However, a growing awareness of American multiculturalism has caused some Americans to challenge the earlier notions of the nation as a “melting pot” and to reconsider other models of identity that would strive to maintain a balance between one’s ethnic identity and one’s interaction within the American society. Consequently, the second model of multiculturalism is based on cultural pluralism and strives to maintain diversity by preserving ethnic affiliations and differences. Commonly identified with the “salad bowl” metaphor, the second model, by preserving differences, hinders complete acceptance in the American culture.

Historically, western discourses have represented Native Americans as savages (noble or not), African Americans as less-than-human beings (justifying slavery), Chicanos as outlaws (especially along the Mexican-American border), and Asians as the yellow peril. Thus, what is at stake in ethnic autobiography is the possibility of ethnic groups telling their own stories, presenting their own histories and identities. Hence the act of writing autobiography by ethnic minorities becomes a measure of resistance against oppression and hegemony. It is an act imbued with political connotations.

Marie Louise Pratt's concept of “linguistics in contact” acknowledges that cultures are not intact, homogeneous groups, but are, instead, heterogeneous and changing. This is the case for Native Americans, African Americans and Chicanos cultural identities .Moreover, the hegemonic culture which considered the country as a unified entity based on European patterns, ignored the specificity of its minority groups. Due to this, those minorities had difficulty in reconciling their own cultural heritage with the culture common to the entire country. Thus, their identity was formed with elements from both cultures.

In ethnic autobiography, the speaking subject 'I' is perceived generally to represent the ethnic community. However, this does not mean that ethnic

autobiographers cannot write autobiographies whose major point of focus is the individual's private life rather than the public concerns of the community.

The contestation over the nature of ethnic identity represented in autobiographies can be illustrated in the autobiography by Mexican American writer Richard Rodriquez, *The Hunger of Memory.* This work has been generally celebrated by the Anglos, while it has received hostile reviews from most Chicano critics. The autobiography recounts Rodriquez's life as a second-generation Mexican American living in Sacramento, California in the I950s, and emphasizes his education from English-speaking school to graduate programs and research on English Renaissance literature in the British Museum in London. In his Prologue, entitled a "Middle-Class Pastoral", he writes:

> Aztec ruins hold no special interest for me. I do not search Mexican graveyards for ties to unnamable ancestors. I assume I retain certain features of gesture and mood derived from buried lives. I also speak Spanish today. And read Garcia Lorca and Garcia Marquez at my leisure. But what consolation can that fact bring against the knowledge that my mother and father have never heard of Garcia Lorca or Garcia Marquez? What preoccupies me is immediate: the separation I endure with my parents in loss. This is what matters to me: the story of the scholarship boy who returns home one summer from college to discover bewildering silence, facing his parents. This is my story. An American story (5).

It is interesting to note that Rodriguez is interested in British Renaissance literature rather than Aztec ruins. Moreover, in claiming this narrative as an 'American story', Rodriquez implies a necessary break from ancestral roots for immigrant and ethnic children. He also implies that his story is representative of his community. Raymund A. Paredes argues that Rodriquez "refuses to question the political and social motives of the educational system that shapes him" (qtd in Bergland 289); consequently, Rodriquez "does not recognize, however crudely, that education, books, and language can be used as tools of domination. In the end, Rodriquez's autobiographical persona resembles perfectly the self-loathing colonized figure described in many recent Third World cultural studies" (292)

Many Chicano scholars resist that representation of Chicano subjectivity and its representations of the ethnic community. Ramon Saldivar, for example, has argued in '*Ideologies of the Self: Chicano Autobiography', in Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference* that Rodriquez has come to serve the interests of the Right, both in his

autobiography and in journalistic essays where he has attacked bilingual education and affirmative action. Saldivar writes:

> He emphasizes the absolute separation between the private and the public life of men and women, the priority of the individual private inner self over the social public outer self. As a consequence, he feels himself capable of functioning only as an isolated and private individual deprived of any organic connection with his ethnic group, his social class, and finally even his own family (158).

Because the ethnic 'self' is generally associated with male subjectivity, representing the ethnic subject seems to be more complex when the subject is a woman.

Maxine Hong Kingston's Woman Warrior, for example has generated an intense debate about ethnic identity, complicated by gender politics. Sau-Ling Cynthia Wong discusses the polemic she describes as the 'pen wars', noting that Chinese-American critics have charged the work with misrepresenting the Chinese language, culture and traditions. For example, critics argued that Kingston's *Fa Mu Lan* story is a greatly distorted version of Chinese folklore. In addition, Hong Kingston is attacked for stereotyping Chinese, emasculating Chinese men, being too personal, and being 'fashionably feminist' (Wong 255-56). Wong writes: “In the final analysis, the main reason the critics attack *The Woman Warrior* is not that it is insufficiently factual but that it is insufficiently fictional: that the author did not tamper more freely with her own life story” (26o). Wong suggests what the critics really wanted was the 'Chinatown tour', a Chinese-American autobiography which would represent the Chinese-American community.

These examples illustrate the complexity of ethnic representation, the contested nature of ethnic identity.

Chapter II

African American Women's Autobiographies

Introduction

Black women's autobiography has not been treated with much interest until the 1970s. In fact, two books promoted the black autobiographical tradition and provided some notice of works by women. In 1974, Stephen Butterfield's *Black Autobiography in America* asserted the parallel development of the slave narrative with colonial and early memoirs and diaries, and noted the apparent influence of the founding fathers on the slave narrators' use of Christian rhetoric. Moreover, Butterfield described black women's autobiography as a "high course of literary interest different from one pursued by males" (49). Sidonie Smith's *Where I'm Bound* (1974), examined the thematic and structural model incorporated in slave narratives, which recur in subsequent autobiographies.

By the 1980s, the autobiography of African American women had begun to win the critical attention it deserves. The critic James Olney saw this "sign of the critical/cultural times" as paradigmatic of increased interest in the genre and concluded that "literary enfranchisement has been won by black writers, women writers, and autobiography itself" (15-16). For instance, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Nikki Giovanni, Gloria Naylor, and Angela Davis have become familiar to both white and black Americans.

The literary tradition of African American women differs considerably from that of both white and African men. The literary texts of males generally mark a sense of competition with their literary predecessors. Mary Helen Washington supports the notion of single precursors when she addresses the male African American literary tradition. She states: "Every anthology of the Afro-American literary tradition has set forth a model for literary paternity in which each male author vies with his predecessor for greater authenticity, greater control over his voice, thus fulfilling the mission his forefathers left unfinished" (qtd in Mitchell 445).

Unlike male model with a single precursor, the African American woman writer willingly acknowledges and validates multiple predecessors. In her book *In Search of Our Mothers'Gardens*, Alice Walker discusses the early influences and models in her writing life. She acknowledges Zora Neale Hurston as her literary foremother (86).

In addition to Hurston, Walker cites other precursors such as Rebecca Jackson, Phillis Weatley and Ida B.Wells-Barnett as being among the earliest African American feminists in the United States.

While joining their predecessors, African American women writers do modify and revise previous texts. According to Henry Louis Gates Jr., the practice of revising or "signifyin(g) upon the literary works of predecessors is firmly established practice within the African American canon" (xxii). For Joanne M. Braxton, the voice of the African American woman has been preserved in oral tradition and has been recounted from one generation to another: "By passing along cherished recipes to subsequent generations, by testifyin', by telling the story of their religious conversions, or by singing the spirituals or the blues, black women helped to revise and extend this oral tradition" (Wild 2).

In this chapter, I will examine the autobiographies of two African American women: Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, written in 1861 and Zora Neale Hurston's *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942).

Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents* started the tradition of black women's autobiography in a thoughtful examination of the relation between power, morality and sex within the slave system. The text subverts generic expectations in more ways than one.

Zora Neale Hurston's *Dust Tracks* is an uncommon black autobiography as she examines the personal self through structures that depart from African American autobiographical tradition. As an anthropologist and writer, Hurston offered a nontraditional description of the black female self. Her autobiography acutely encapsulate the dilemmas that challenged black women writers or literati of her time. She separates all but her intellectual self from her autobiography by remaining discreet on some of the most determining events in her young adult life. Her autobiography fails to provide an accurate recounting of her life.

I- Harriet Jacobs *Incidents* and the Slave Narrative Genre

In her autobiographical narrative, Harriet Jacobs recounts the lies slaveholders tell their slaves, in a chapter entitled "What Slaves Are Taught to Think of the North." She tells a story heard from a slaveholder about a female slave fugitive, asserting she met the slave woman another time in New York and discovered the slaveholder's story to be totally distorted. Jacobs's insistence on the deceptiveness of the slaveholder's "master narrative" indicates the certainty that the slaves themselves can best convey the truth about slavery. Her words warn us "against believing interpretations that fail to take into account multiple perspectives," especially the ones coming from silenced voices. Jacobs's alternative narrative has then also a crucial role in putting an end to the marginalization of black women in American literature. Actually, critics such as Hazel Carby argue that the women slave narrative tradition had a substantial influence upon the emergence of black women novelists.

Incidents inaugurated the tradition of black women's autobiography with an examination of "power, sex and morality within the slave system" (Andrews 226). In the narrative, Harriet Jacobs recounts the story of her life, from her childhood till the moment her freedom is secured by her employer in the North, under the pseudonym "Linda Brent". Her narrative also comprises a description of her exposure to sexual harassment at the hands of her master, Dr. Flint, and how she escapes his schemes by having an affair with a white man, Mr.Sands, with whom she has two children. To escape from her master and save her children from slavery, Linda leaves them behind and remains unseen for seven years in her grandmother's garret. Misleading her master into believing she has left the South and with the help of her family, Linda devises the selling of her children to their father. Eventually, she is able to run away to the North, where she regains her children. As most critics have observed, the narrative focuses on the description of the particular experiences of a female slave, mostly sexual harrassment by her master, and her incapacity to satisfy society's assumptions of womanhood and motherhood.

Incidents was first published in Boston in 1861, and the next year in England under the title *The Deeper Wrong: Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself*. Like all former slaves, Jacobs needed the recommendation of a white editor (Lydia Child) that would "authenticate" her work, and used the tradition of the sentimental novel as well as of the slave narrative. Consequently, the authenticity of her slave narrative was suspected and rejected.

In 1981, Jean Fagan Yellin exhaustively authenticated both the authorship and the existence of this former slave. Indeed, Yellin found letters from Jacobs to Child which talk about Child's editing of Jacobs' manuscript (Yellin 479-86). In the 1987 edition of *Incidents***,** Yellin cautiously gathered thourough historical data that detailed each real-life character behind the false names given in the text. Yellin carried on her work to publish a biography of Harriet Jacobs in 2005 and the *Harriet Jacobs Family Papers* in 2008.

Yellin's discovery is paramount as it proves *Incidents* to be the first case in which a slave narrative describes a female slave imploring slavery and the sexual exploitation of slave women. In my analysis, I consider that Jacobs's narrative enacts a double combat against slavery and patriarchy, inclined by a desire to prove herself a courageous black slave mother and to assist the cause of abolition protesting especially against the Fugitive Slave Law (1850).

To arise as the most representative account of an African-American female slave's life, this 19th century slave narrative has been the subject of an important critical attention. Thanks to Yellin's work, scholars have admitted the complex sociopolitical conditions of the slave narrative production and focused on issues relating to authenticity and authorship, the genre of slave narratives, and the meaning of silences in the narrative, among other subjects. However, no one has yet thoroughly examined the part played by Jacobs in rewriting the history of slavery through the subversion of the autobiographical genre. This chapter examines how Jacobs uses strategies in her narrative to revise the official transcript of slavery. In order to make a multilayered reading, I rely on different theories, drawing from black feminist criticism and

psychoanalytical theory. I examine the slave narrative genre, examining the author's narrative strategies of claiming authorship while recalling and describing the self in slavery. In this context, I consider the psychoanalytical view of the narrative as redemptive as I discuss Jacobs's search for her identity as an author. In addition, to invistigate how this rewriting is carried out, one must first go through the history and criticism of the slave narrative as a genre. This will require an examination of the autobiographical genre, to show how the authors of slave narratives conform to the autobiographical model while at the same time employ strategies of their own.

Thus, studying the slave narrative genre will concede a better understanding of texts such as Jacobs's *Incidents,* which both exploits and subverts the principal conventions of the genre.

1. The History and Criticism of the Slave Narrative Genre

Slave narratives are generally described as accounts of slavery provided by the slaves themselves. By writing their narratives, black authors proved that they were endowed with reason and that, therefore, they had to be regarded as human beings. Their narratives demonstrated their right to freedom too accordaning to the *Declaration of Independence* (1776): "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, *Liberty* and the pursuit of Happiness".

During the eighteenth and nineteenth century, there emerged in the United States written and dictated testimonies of black slaves. Yet the texts usually analyzed by literary critics are the ones written and published as a genre before 1865, the year in which slavery was abolished in the country. In the introduction to *The Slave's Narrative,* Charles Davis and Henry Louis Gates argue that after that year, the main objective of the texts was not to prove the humanity of the slaves, and therefore the generic expectations of these texts as a genre changed drastically (xiii). William L. Andrews and Frances Foster explain that after 1865 the narratives did not look back on the horrors of the slave experience, but on blacks' contributions to American society and their possibilities for integration. Andrews who has studied intently the differences between

ante-bellum and post-bellum narratives, discusses the reproving ignorance of postbellum narratives, and has showed the need to explore the rhetorics and depictions of slavery in writings from different periods. Consequently, he compares Jacobs's use of the moral discourse of true womanhood in her antebellum narrative with Elizabeth Keckley's focus on a discourse of economic materialism in her postbellum narrative. In addition to antebellum and postbellum narratives, there are also oral slave narratives transcribed in the twentieth century, which have achieved critical consideration in the last decades: the Federal Writer's Project Slave Narrative Collection. Between 1936 and 1938 the Federal Writer's Project collected thousands of oral narratives (2,194 interviews) from black men and women who had once been enslaved.

The compilation of slave narratives most studied includes the years from 1760 to 1865. *A Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and Surprising Deliverance of Britton Hammon, A Negro Man* (1760) is often considered as the commencement of this tradition, yet there is still argument about the narrative's authorship (Foster 40). Since 1760, many pre-nineteenth-century texts were published, but most of them were dictated to an amanuensis, such as *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, An African Prince* (1770). Before the early nineteenth century, there seems to be only one autobiographical slave narrative, *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, published in London in 1789. Though often considered as the originating text, its author was a British citizen who spent only two years in North American colonies, and was for the most part a witness to the horrors of slavery in the West Indies. Therefore, Equiano could be considered as "an Anglo-African writer" instead of an Afro-American autobiographer (Andrews 57).

The 1840s witnessed the publication of the most famous slave narratives (all written, not dictated, by ex-slaves) such as *The Life of Josiah Jenson, Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada* (1849), whose author was said to have inspired Harriet Beecher Stowe's character, uncle Tom in her bestselling novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1851). We can also mention the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (1845), *Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive*

Slave (1847) and *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb* (1849). Within this substantial corpus, there are several female-authored slave narratives (among which *Incidents* stands out as the best known), though women wrote less than 12 percent of the narratives (Davis and Gates 83). There is also a broad volume of narratives published after the Civil War, including Brown's final memoir *My Southern Home* (1880) and Douglass's second and third versions of his narrative, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) and *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881). Among the postbellum slave narratives written by women the most frequently studied is Elizabeth Keckley's *Behind the Scenes. Or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House* (1868).

The period also witnessed the emergence of black women slave narrators such as Harriet Jacobs, Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth. These authors gave new magnitude to African American literature, bringing a black woman's vision and perspective to prominence in a way that male authors had previously failed to do (qtd in Norton Anthology 159-160). Indeed, scholars like Joanne M. Braxton have strongly urged "reconsidering the criteria used to define the genre in such a way that the works of women might be included" (18).

Deborah Gray White delineates a series of ways in which slave women's lives differed from those of men. She asserted that the double predicament of race and sex made slavery a completely different experience for black women that can never be properly compared to accounts from white men and women or even black men. (62) She explains too the ways that being a woman added burdens to a slave's life but also furthered the "cooperation and interdependence" necessary for a woman's survival (124).

Hazel Carby, a cultural historian and feminist, suggested that the black female perspective lies on the periphery of the already marginal women's studies (11). Her book *Reconstructing Womanhood* examined the growth of 19th century black female novelists and how they challenged an ideology of womanhood that refused them access to the same privileges ensured by white women (6). By investigating literary works, diaries and other works of fiction written by black women, Carby explained that race

and gender conflicts created power struggles that left black women tasked with finding their own identity (19).

The use of the slaves' written accounts of slavery as historical data seems to offer a large scope in testimony. Yet Davis and Gates argue that until the 1970s historians treated these texts "with a pernicious double standard, finding 'bias' in the slave's text and 'objectivity' in that of the master" (xii). In his work *Life and Labor in the Old South* (1929), Ulrich B. Phillips stated that "the ex-slave narratives in general…were issued with so much abolitionist editing that as a class their authenticity is doubtful" (219). Blassingame indicates that between the years 1902 and 1972, only three out of sixteen studies drew briefly on the slaves' testimony (qtd in Davis and Gates79). Then in 1972, two studies that were published defended the use of the slave narrative to reconstruct the history of the antebellum South from the slave's point of view. One was John W Blassingame's *The Slave Community* (1972), which retold the life of the slaves through their testimony.The second work was George P. Rawick's collection The *American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (1972). Indeed, after Rawick's work several historians began to consider the interviews as a more trustworthy source than the written narratives.

Despite the recognition of limitations in using slave narratives, their value as historical data has been largely explored since the 1960s and 1970s. At this time, the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements emphasized the importance of listening to the slave's voice in the process of understanding black consciousness and culture. Hence, many studies that relied on the slave narrative as documentary evidence were published, such as Eugene Genovese's *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The Worldthe Slaves Made* (1974). At the same time, anthropologists and sociologists started to be interested in slave narratives and considered them to have an important role in American literary history.

Concerning the literary value of slave narratives, critics generally consider them as examples of autobiographical writing, or even as a genre unto itself. To defend the last idea, scholars have examined the repetition of certain elements in the texts which

consist of the same form (episodic narrative), the same theme (necessity of abolishing slavery), and content (events and descriptions of the horrors of slavery)

James Olney, a known scholar of autobiography, considers most slave narratives too formulaic to be considered autobiographies, with exceptions such as the literary achievement of Douglass's narratives. Olney makes an interesting comparison between classic autobiography and the slave narratives as autobiography: "The slave narrative, with a few exceptions, tends to exhibit a highly conventional, rigidly fixed form that bears as much the same relationship to autobiography in a full sense as painting by numbers bears to painting as a creative act" (I Was Born149). Nevertheless, supporting Olney's assertion, Frederick Douglass's *The Life of Frederick Douglass,* is probably considered as the best slave narrative, because it departs the most from the typical slave narrative. Olney demonstrates how the typical slave narrative can be "fitted to a pre-formed mould" with "obligatory figures, scenes, turns of phrase, observances, and authentications."

Olney cites twelve types of content that are found within the narrative, what he calls the "master outline" for the slave narrative, presenting the features they all have in common. As the first type he lists, "I was born," to cruel masters or overseers, to descriptions of escape. It would take too long to repeat Olney's twelve types, but I think that those similarities can be related to a slave's experience and are common features of the institution of slavery.Indeed, all slaves had masters, were auctioned, were whipped, or witnessed whipping, had difficulties with the barriers to becoming literate. In addition, Olney argues that slave narrators must not merely explain their reasons for writing, as autobiographers do, but affirm their existence and identity. Clearly, Olney's article is crucial in identifying similarities in most slave narratives, but I think he is mistaken in concluding that these similarities make the slave narratives not literature. Indeed, the idea that a person's writing needs to be supported to be believed, does not indicate an inadequacy on the part of the writer, but rather suggests there are issues with the audience's acceptance of a black author.

Either as an example of a slave narrative or an Afro-American autobiography, Jacobs's narrative epitomizes the inconstancy of these genres. In fact, scholars like John W. Blassingame considered Jacobs's narrative as inauthentic because it did not conform to the model established by "representative" narratives like Douglass's (233-234). Nevertheless, once Yellin determined the authenticity of the narrative in 1981, black feminist critics started to explore the implication of Jacobs's gender in relation to the content and form of the whole genre of slave narrative and the Afro-American autobiographical tradition. Thus, Deborah McDowell insists on the importance of studying the relations of the slave narrative as genre to "the inscription of gendered ideologies of masculinity and femininity" (58). Deborah Gray White describes a series of ways in which slave women's lives differed from those of men. She asserts that the double bind of sex and race makes slavery a completely different experience for black women that can never be properly compared to accounts from white men and women or black men (62).

Contrary to Douglass's, Jacobs's narrative is not so much a life account as a disclosure of specific "incidents" in her life. In fact, Jacobs does not want to make her private life public because she cannot write about her life without including her sexual experience. Thus, she tells her story not as a way to stand, but as a political statement, a way of "arousing the women of the North to a realizing sense of the condition of two millions of women at the South." (4)

As we shall see with more detail later, to discuss the theme of sexual abuse Jacobs included the rhetoric of the sentimental novel. For that reason, explaining Jacobs's use of the slave narrative genre, Valerie Smith asserts that the author "was doubly bound by the form in which she wrote, for it contained a plot more compatible with received notions of masculinity that with those of womanhood" (28). The autobiographical genre has also been challenged by the limits of gender. Additionally, Hazel Carby analyzed the expansion of 19th century black female novelists and how they resisted an ideology of womanhood that refused them access to the same privileges secured by white women (6). By investigating literary works, diaries, and other works of fiction written by black

women, Carby explained that race and gender conflicts created power struggles that left black women tasked with finding their own identity (19).

On the other hand, scholars like Elizabeth Fox-Genovese have analyzed the uniqueness of Afro-American women's autobiographies as a discourse. Defining the strategies used by writers such as Jacobs, Fox Genovese argues that scholars have to take into consideration the extra-textual conditions under which the texts were composed. This would entail examining how the interactions of race, class and gender affect the authors' concern to prove their being worthy black women. Still, many black women's texts resist classifications. In fact, the autobiography of Zora Neale Hurston that will be discussed in the second part of this chapter, challenges many of the assumptions established in our discussion: her text, *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942), does not aim to bear witness to a collective experience, nor is it "grounded in the experience of slavery and the literary tradition of the slave narratives" as other black women's autobiographies examined by Fox-Genovese (179).

To speak as subjects, women writers were constrained to inscribe their writing selves within conventional models. In Jacobs's case, authorizing her testimony entails also a set of restrictions in the way she tells her story. Therein, Karen Sanchez Eppler examines Jacobs's intricate claim to "presentable representiveness", commenting on the difficulties the author had to face when depicting the decadence slavery caused slaves, while introducing herself as a presentable author (86). To deal with the situation, Jacobs relies on some strategies to subvert the conventional model within the autobiographical genre.

2. Subverting the Autobiographical Genre

Margaret Lindgrem defines Incidents as "a hybrid, that owes something to the sentimental fiction, something to the slave narrative, something to the spiritual biography and something to the demands of the abolitionist movement" (24). Many critics have explained that this association of genres indicates Jacobs's need of discursive strategies that would accurately convey the content of the text.

2.1 Incidents and the Discourse of Abolitionism

It is part of the conventions of the slave narrative genre to rely upon authenticating documents such as prefatory letters, prefaces or notes by abolitionists or editors. Such documents served as protective shields against the ceaseless attacks directed toward the precarious emerging black self.

As a female slave narrator, Jacobs follows the conventions of the abolitionist discourse and uses documents to support the veracity of her narrative. However, she prefers to be supported not by influential white male figures, as it was frequent in most slave narratives, but by two personal friends, a white woman, Amy Post, and a black abolitionist man, George W. Lowther.

Jacobs reframes and reshapes the slave narrative sub-genre by highlighting the similarities and differences between black women and black men's discourses in these narratives, and attempts to stress on the specificity of black women's experiences in slavery. She states: "Slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women. Superadded to the burden common to all, they have wrongs, and sufferings, and mortifications peculiarly their own" (77). This does not mean that slave men did not suffer. American slavery was a terrible experience for everyone in bondage. Enslaved women, however, carried a "double burden." Like slave men, they were inflicted physical abuse, difficult work conditions, and psychological deprecation, but many of these women also endured continual sexual molestation from lustful white men, blame being placed upon them by jealous white women, and countless trials revolving around the natural desire to be mothers while being required to restrain that inner longing by the force of slavery's oppression.

In the same vein, Jacobs is critical of the capacity of the abolitionist to truly understand what slavery really is. She states: "Notherners know nothing at all about slavery" and expresses her desire to "convince them of what slavery really is" (Jacobs 2).

From the start, Jacobs is gender specific about her audience and cause, as she states: "I do earnestly desire to arouse the women of the North to a realizing sense of the conditions of two millions of women at the South, still in bondage... (xiv"). This strategy

was actually judicious because northern women were largely from middle-class households and were among the abolitionist movement's most commited participants.

Surely, the large participation of women in the great debate over slavery was an exceptional break with the sexual status quo; within the abolitionist movement itself, their efforts often met with brutal opposition. For many women, the anti-slavery cause was a matter of conscience that disregarded convention. Like Lydia Maria Child, Jacobs' editor and literary sponsor, they felt its removal required "every heart and head in the community" (226). Angelina Grimke's *An Appeal to the Women of the Nominally Free States*, an influential pamphlet issued in 1837 by an anti slavery convention of American women, expressed the special sense of responsibility and commitment these women brought to "the cause of immediate, unconditional, and universal emancipation," condemning the "vast system of oppression and robbery and heathenism" that was slavery and suggesting how best to fight it. Above all, Northern women were encouraged to educate themselves to the real nature of slavery by reading and subscribing to anti-slavery publications.

For the Northern women who joined the movement, the fundamental text, after the Bible, was the slave narrative. With the sensational melodrama they inspired, slave narratives were the most effective weapons in the abolitionist arsenal. As political argument, the simple fact of a slave autobiography, with the assurance "written by himself" on the title page, was a response to racist ideology.

Obviously, Jacobs identifies a specific audience. By urging the "careless daughters" to listen to her, Jacobs anounces that she wants to instruct them with her story and to mobilize them to her cause. Moreover, through Isaiah's exhortation she subverts patriarchy by affirming her authorial voice and authorizing herself as the creative voice of the narrative. By writing her own narrative, Jacobs doubly challenges the patriarchal prescriptions against women's and slaves' right to have a voice of their own.

In her preface, Jacobs expressly addresses a female readership in order to unveil, in Lydia Maria Child's prefatory words, "a peculiar phase of history" yet unknown to these women of the North (xx):

> Neither do I care to excite sympathy for my own sufferings. But I do earnestly desire to arouse the women of the North to a realizing sense of the condition of two millions of women at the South, still in bondage, suffering what I suffered, and most of them far worse (xvii).

This passage stresses the focus of Jacobs's *Incidents* on the experience of the female slave.

Jean Fagan Yellin reminds us that *Incidents* was published in the face of taboos preventing women from discussing their sexuality, and their sexual exploitation in print (Davis and Gates 276).Therefore, by presenting her controversial narrative, Jacobs is defying the rules of sexual, social and cultural propriety. From the very first pages on, Jacobs makes the reader have an apprehension of the real nature of slavery, without leaving out the specifities of the female slave experience.

In the chapter "Sketches of Neighboring Slaveholder", Jacobs describes the situation of women-- free and enslaved--within an institution as patriarchal as it is peculiar. The common call to interracial sympathy are not slighted: "No pen can give adequate description of the all-pervading corruption produced by slavery. The slave girl is reared in an atmosphere of licentiousness and fear. The lash and foul talk of her master and his sons are her teachers (51).Still, in emphasizing just how omnipresent the corruption can be, Jacobs crosses the color line:

> Nor do the master's daughters always escape... .The white daughters early hear their parents quarreling about some female slave. Their curiousity is excited, and they soon learn the cause. They are attended by the young slave girls whom their father has corrupted; and they hear such talk as should never meet youthful ears, or any other ears. They know that the women slaves are subject to their father's authority in all things; and in some cases they exercise the same authority over the men slaves. I have seen the master of such a household whose head was bowed down in shame; for it was known in the neighborhood that his daughter had selected one of the meanest slaves on his plantation to be the father of his first grandchild (52).

In a way, Jacobs is just using basic rhetorical strategy which is to know her audience and to dialogise with it. It is true that by having few illusions about the white

Northerner's aptitude for interracial compassion, slave narrators used to fight slavery on two fronts, exposing it as a system corrupting both whites and blacks alike.

Having defined her "target group," Jacobs adopts appropriate rhetorical strategies. She always addresses the reader as a (sexual) equal; she always exploit values and emotions having a specefic power and immediacy for female readers. "Slavery is terrible for men," she states, "but it is far more terrible for women. In one passage, she contrasts the free women's New Year's Day with that of a slave mother:

> 0 , you happy free women, contrast *your* New Year's day with that of the poor bond-women! With you it is a pleasant season, and the light of the day is blessed. Friendly wishes meet you every where .. . Children bring their little offerings, and raise their rosy lips for a caress ... But to the slave mother New Year's day comes laden with peculiar sorrows. She sits on her cold cabin floor, watching the children who may all be tom from her the next morning~ and often does she wish that she and they might die before the day (14).

This sharp comparison would certainly arouse sympathy from mothers in the North. Jacobs tries to construct a bond among all women, a bond that can "aspire to the complete and reciprocal communication of feeling because it believes in universal sentiment, native human responses that are not bound by circumstance" (Nudelman 945).

Jacobs is cautious not to offend the white female abolitionists by offending their sisters in the South. She denounces the behaviour of female slave owners, but her call to a white female audience restrains her from denouncing them as freely as she does with male masters. She is careful to express her gratitude toward a white benefactress who helped to shield her from Dr. Flint. Jacobs wants to show that some white women can be moved by her predicament and help her. Her narrative aims at demonstrating that differences between black women and white women are fostered by a racist society. Still, the reference to some benevolent white women suggests that it is possible to bridge the gap between these women.

As the indefinite article of her narrative seems to imply, "a Slave Girl", Jacobs's experience could have been that of any female slave. She identifies with the "two million of women at the south, still in bondage, suffering what [she] suffered" (Preface, iv) and

consequently her narrative has a collective value as it represents a community of black women linked by a common fate.

Black women constructed strong bonds of loyalty to one another. Deborah White argues that "rather than being diminished, their sense of womanhood was probably enhanced, and their bonds to one another made stronger" (*Ar'N't I A Woman?* 120).She describes enslaved black women's community as a singular network:

> Treated by Southern whites as if they were anything but self-respecting women,many bonded females could forge their own independent definition of womanhood though the female network, a definition to which they could relate on the basis of their own notions about what women should be and how they should act (140)

Enslaved women helped each other by sharing their resources, looked after each other's young slave children and cared for older female slaves.

Sisterhood is sometimes suggested between black women and white women; however, there are always reservations to mar this relationship. For example, Jacobs's mother and her former mistress are described as "foster sisters", but Jacobs's mother is not simply a sister, she is also a servant. In another excerpt, she notes that social barriers prevent sisterhood of black women and white women:

> I once saw two beautiful children playing together. One was a fair white child; the other was her slave, and also her sister. When I saw them embracing each other, and heard their joyous laughter, I turned sadly away from the lovely sight. I foresaw the inevitable blight that would fall on the little slave's heart... Scarcely one day of her life had been clouded when the sun rose on her happy bridal morning. How had those years dealt with her slave sister, the little playmate of her childhood? She, also, was very beautiful; but the flowers and sunshine of love were not for her. She drank the cup of sin, and shame, and misery, whereof her persecuted race are compelled to drink (29).

Clearly, slavery acts as an obstacle to the establishment of sisterhood between black women and white women as racial prejudice is too important to draw connections between them.

Acting as an interpreter Jacobs attempts to construct a bridge that would help Northerners to understand the reality of black people's hardships, by emphasizing and comparing similarities and differences between black women and black men, and black women and white women.

The second sub-genre that Jacobs reclaims and revises in her text is the Sentimental Novel.

2.2 Incidents and the Sentimental Novel

One of the main literary influences on Jacobs's narrative, and the sub-genre that had the strongest influence on her work, is that of the sentimental novel .This sub-genre was very popular during Jacobs's time, therefore, it is not extraordinary that many educated slaves, being familiar with the tradition of the sentimental novel, chose to write their experiences of slavery under the literary influence of this popular sub-genre.

According to Valerie Smith, Jacobs uses the sentimental novel to confess about her sexual transgression because the slave narrative could not appropriately depict these circumstances. In the sentimental novel, the female protagonist aspires to purity and hopes for marriage and family, whereas Jacobs is in a position in which neither purity nor family or marriage can be attained because she is a slave (Smith xxxi). Being a female slave meant being subject to sexual abuse. Jacobs presents herself as a victim so that her readers can identify her as such, and feel compassion for her. She is threatened by Mr. Flint who wants to abuse her sexually; she is abandoned by Mr. Sands, her lover, who promises her freedom but cannot keep his promise, and she is the victim of slavery.Therefore, Jacobs puts herself in a weak position in society so that her expected audience—"the women of the North" (6)—could show compassion with her situation, if not as a slave, at least as a woman, weak and helpless like the heroines of sentimental novels. Jacobs is a black woman who writes a book addressed to white women in the North. As Smith observes:

> Jacobs's class affiliation, and the fact that she was subjected to relatively minor forms of abuse as a slave, enable her to locate a point of identification both with her readers and with the protagonists of sentimental fiction. Like them, she aspires to chastity and piety as consummate feminine virtues, and hopes that marriage and family would be her earthly reward (Self Discovery 219).

The problem with Jacobs is that she is not the owner of her life and her options are therefore limited. She wants to be a pure and a respectable woman, but she is contrived to take another path in her life. Contrary to the heroines of sentimental fiction, she is not

free. But despite the restraints, Jacobs is able to draw on the plot of the sentimental novel in *Incidents*.

In *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870,* Nina Baym's follows the development of women's fiction. Typically, it is "the story of a young girl who is deprived of the supports she had rightly or wrongly depended on to sustain her throughout life and is faced with the necessity of winning her own way in the world"(11-13). Yet it is a success story: in the end the heroine achieves economic security usually by means of a happy marriage.

Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents* follows many of the characteristics of women's fiction over plot, however, she adapted the features of the genre to her needs by modifying some of its dynamics.Indeed, in her first chapters, Jacobs depicts the protagonists in primary sentimentalist colors: Linda, the steady young woman of low estate; Dr.Flint, the despicable villain from the upper class. To Flint's first advances, Linda retorts in pure Richardsonian tones:

> When he told me I was made for his use, made to obey his command in every thing; that I was nothing but a slave, whose will must and should surrender to his, never before had my puny arm felt half so strong_The war of my life had begun; and though one of God's most powerless creatures, I resolve never to be conquered. Alas, for me! (16-17)

Described as a villain "whose restless, craving, vicious nature roved about day and night, seeking whom to devour" (16), Dr. Flint also conforms to generic expectations. Like sentimentalist womanizers, Dr. Flint requests his victim's compliance, favoring psychological, not physical, pressure. Thus, though "(he) sought in every way to render (Linda) miserable,...he did not resort to corporal punishment, but to all the petty tyrannical ways that human ingenuity could devise" (17).

It is clear that *Incidents* shares many similarities with works by American women of the nineteenth century like Catharine Sedgwick and Louisa May Alcott. However, unlike white women, African American women could not assume a readership exclusively of women like themselves. Frances Smith Foster notes that among the most prominent African American writers of the antebellum period such as Nancy Prince, Harriet E. Wilson, Jareena Lee and Frances E. Harper, Jacobs is the only one who

explicitly directed her writing to women (Foster 83). This reveals the importance she gives to her audience, as well as her awareness of the dominant culturalcodes of nineteenth century America.

According to Foster, the sentimental novel highlighted the cultivation of sensibility, the glorification of virtue, the preservation of family life, the revival of religion, and the achievement of a utopian society (64). These features of the sentimental novel are present in most slave narratives, but most especially in Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

Firstly, "The cultivation of sensibility" can be related to slaves' desire to achieve a basic education so as to be considered full citizens of the United States. Thus, telling all the atrocities they went through plays an important role in their personal histories. It may also mean the expression of feelings and emotions. In fact, most of the content of the opening paragraphs is designed to contrast domestic and marketplace values to demonstrate the nonhuman nature of slavery:

> *His* [her father's] strongest wish was to *purchase his children];*but, though he several times *offered his hard earnings* for that purpose, he never succeeded.. . . They lived together in a *comfortable home;* and, though we were all *slaves,* I was *so fondly shielded that* I never dreamed I was *a piece of merchandise*, *trusted* to them for *safe keeping,* and *liable* to be *demanded* of them at any moment. (Jacobs 5)

Jacobs's argument is as much in her diction as in her logic; cleverly, she juxtaposes words relating to family like "children", "home", "shielded" with words and phrases relating to market economy and commodity like "piece of merchandise", "slave" and "trade" , highlighting the existing contrast between the homely language of domesticity and the language of market-place, and thus, raising questions about the human value around which the narrative revolves.

Secondly, the concept "the glorification of virtue", is related to both morality and purity and both are distinctly present in slave narratives. As Carby notes, black women writers "had to define a discourse of black womanhood which would not only address their exclusion from the ideology of true womanhood, but as a consequence of this

exclusion, would also rescue their bodies from a persistent association with illicit sexuality" (32).

In order to lessen the supposed indecency of revealing morally unacceptable incidents, Jacobs employs many of the conventions of the sentimental discourse to make her narrative more tolerable to her white audience's sensibilities.In other words while Jacobs does not assume a white woman's persona, she uses the literary conventions that would help her establish a relation of confidence with her Northern white women readers, who she hoped, would be responsive to her call (Mitchell 28). Thus, women's slave narratives, such as Jacobs's evolved in part out of the codes and conventions of white anti-slavery fiction, especially the work of white women, whose developing feminism was patterned upon abolitionism.

The title of the narrative, *Incidents*, locates the perils encountered by female slaves at an early age. Sexual maturity certainly traced a crucial turning point for most young slave women, as Jacobs notes in the early development of the narrative: "My master began to whisper foul words in my ear. Young as I was, I could not remain ignorant of their import. I tried to treat them with indifference or contempt". (Jacobs 26-27).Without any protection, young Linda Brent appears to have no other recourse.

Linda Brent is not the common heroine of the sentimental novel, because she cannot conform to the ideal of purity. Hazel Carby argues that "Linda Brent's decision as a slave, to survive through an act that resulted in her loss of virtue, placed her outside the parameters of the conventional heroine" (Carby74).Still, Jacobs wants to explain her loss of virtue to her audience by arguing that it was slavery that obliged her to act in that way. As Joanne M. Braxton observes, " *Incidents* demonstrates that it is impossible for " true womanhood" to flourish under slavery because slave women are not allowed to practice the virtues of modesty, chastity, and domesticity" (26).

After recounting her sexual transgression, Jacobs writes: "Pity me, and pardon me, O virtuous reader! You never knew what it is to be a slave; to be entirely unprotected by law or custom; to have the laws reduce you to the condition of a chattel, entirely subject to the will of another (Jacobs 86).

After explaining her decision to engage in an illicit sexual relationship, Jacobs apologizes for what she has done, but also asserts her autonomy and articulates her realization that true womanhood could not pertain to slaves because they exist outside the definition of womanhood. She questions the constructs of the "cult of true womanhood" and the fact that it existed at the expense of "othering" black women. However, her narrative was mainly written for a white feminine audience, consequently, she is sometimes compelled to conform to the ideology of true womanhood in order to meet her readers' moral expectations When recounting her sexual history, Jacobs transgresses one of the codes of true womanhood, she tries to obtain the reader's understanding by noting:

> It seems less degrading to give one's self, than to submit to compulsion. […] moreover, the wrong does not seem so great with an unmarried man, as with one who has a wife to be made unhappy. There may be sophistry in all this; but the condition of a slave confuses all principles of morality and, in fact, renders the practice of them impossible (55).

Clearly, it is extremely difficult for Linda Brent to maintain a moral lifestyle.

The chapter entitled *Perilous Passage in the Slave Girl's Life* focuses on two different aspects: the first one presents Linda Brent's constant subjection to her master's sexual aggression and oppression as unavoidable, and at the same time it highlights her resistance.

Dr. Flint asserts that he wants to offer Linda the opportunity to become a "true woman and to build a house for her": " […] he talked of his intention to give me a home of my own, and to make a lady of me…he told me that he was going to build a small house for me, in a secluded place, four miles away from the town. I shuddered; but I was constrained to listen".(57) Obviously, the reason that pushes him to build a house for Linda is to have her at his mercy, away from the eyes of the neighbors. She is forced to submit to her master in appearance, but in reality she is highly determined never to live in that house:

> I vowed before my Maker that I would never enter it…I was determined that the master, who I so hated and loathed, who had blighted the prospects of my youth, and made my life a desert, should not, after my long struggle with him, succeed at last in trampling his victim under his feet. I would do anything, everything, for the sake of defeating him (57).

Harriet Jacobs advocates certain aspects of the ideology of true womanhood such as purity and virtue to show that black women were not morally corrupt, but she also wants to demonstrate that this concept is a fallacy when concerning white women. Mrs. Flint seems to fit perfectly into the "Cult of True Womanhood" by being delicate and "totally deficient in energy" but, as depicted in the narrative, she is rather cruel.

Most of the time, Black women were associated with overt sexuality and taboo sexual practices. As Frances Smith Foster has argued, in *Witnessing Slavery: The Development of Ante-bellum Slave Narratives*: "the black woman became closely identified with illicit sex. If the "negress" were not a hot-blooded, exotic whore, she was a cringing terrified victim. Either way she was not pure and thus not a model of womanhood" (131). Thus, in her narrative Jacobs tries to deconstruct the traditional stereotypes attributed to black women. Even if she has become an object of desire for Dr. Flint, she does by no means want to be the Jezebel. She has plotted against him in her grandmother's attic, but she has never allowed him to touch her.

Jacobs refuses to accept the traditional gender roles demanding male supremacy and female inferiority. Not only does she want to be a free woman, but she also wants to be free to develop her own opinion about the way a woman should behave. She refuses to adopt the codes of true womanhood.

The sexual intercourse she has with a white man amounts to a breaking of the traditional code of chastity central to the ideology of true womanhood. Having an affair with this white man aims, in a way, at showing Dr. Flint that he cannot have any control over her body. She had rather die than surrender to her master.Hence, Jacobs subverts the traditional role of women as domestic and passive creatures by presenting a brave strong black woman restrained by the system of slavery.

Another concept of the sentimental novel is "the preservation of family life" (Foster 64). It is common for all slave narrators to describe particularly dramatic scenes of slave auctions in which children are taken away from their families, by being sold to different masters.

Jacobs presents a deep admiration for her grandmother, however, there is a significant clash between the values embraced by Aunt Marthy and Linda's more

antagonistic response to slavery. Although Aunt Marthy constantly struggles to preserve and care for her family, she thinks that slavery emanates from "the will of God" and "though it seemed hard," she instructs her children "to pray for contentment" (17).

In *Incidents*, Jacobs demonstrates the total opposition between human servitude and the family unit, and this opposition positions the mother as the obvious antipode to slavery. Being conscious of the rhetorical power and political potential of motherhood, Jacobs intentionally conceives her narrative to appeal to the consciousness of a largely white, female, middle-class audience. By addressing her audience as women and especially as mothers, Jacobs exhorts them to take political action and abolish slavery. Her opening appeal, "to arouse the women of the North to a realizing sense of the condition of two millions of women at the South, still in bondage, suffering what I suffered, and most of them far worse" (1), assumes a common womanhood between different groups.

Jacobs mentions stories of mothers separated from their children to expose the horrors of slavery and establish an important point of identification with her audience; still, she is completely conscious that the story she tells does not conform to dominant domestic values. Hazel V. Carby argues that Jacobs's narrative can be assumed as "an exposition of her womanhood and motherhood contradicting and transforming an ideology that could not account for her experience" (49).

In another instance, she notes: "I was born a slave; but I never knew it till six years of happy childhood had passed away" (5). Linda learns she is a slave after the death of her mother. The confluence of these two events demonstrates the power of a mother to protect her children from the hardships of life and establishes the text's central opposition between maternal care and slavery (5).

Linda's mistress is a good woman described as having "been almost like a mother to me" and who was "the foster sister of my mother; they were both nourished at my grandmother's breast" (6-7). Linda describes her early childhood as filled with "happy days" (7), in part due to the benevolence of her mistress.

"The revival of religion" is another concept of the sentimental novel described by Fances Smith Foster. Religion was used to serve white people's interests. Sermons saying "if you disobey your earthly master, you offend your heavenly Master" were good means to keep slaves under control. Moreover, slaves tried to be good Christians because they believed that by enduring a difficult life with a truly Christian spirit, they would savor immense rewards in an afterlife.

Slave narratives emphasize the hypocrisy of slaveholders as regards Christian values. In *the Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American slave .Written by Himself,* Douglass insists that "of all slaveholders with whom I have met, religious slaveholders are the worst. I have ever found them the meanest and basest, the most cruel and cowardly, of all others" (Douglass 103). In another excerpt, he illustrates the evil nature of what he calls "slaveholding religion": "I love the pure, peaceable and impartial Christianity of Christ: I therefore hate the corrupt, slaveholding, women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this land" (153).Similarly, Jacobs considered Christianity critically. She shows no signs of having had an evangelical conversion experience. Moreover, her harsh remarks about southern white church life and her rejection to join a white church suggest that her interest in Christianity was uncertain. For instance, she makes this observation about Dr. Flint: "when I was told that Dr. Flint has joined the Episcopal Church, I was much surprised. I supposed that religion had a purifying effect on the character of men; but the worst persecutions I endured from him were after he was a communicant (74).

It is interesting to note how Jacobs' text relates to confessional narrative. According to Jean FaganYellin, *Incidents* "confessional aspects- the account of sexual error, guilt, rejection and at least partial acceptance- are …unique" (Written 271). They are unique, because these aspects do not occur in other slave narratives. Jacobs' *Incidents* thus presents a new viewpoint in this type of narrative. For Joanne Braxton, the use of the confessional mode serves Jacobs as "a kind of expiation" of her sexual sin (Black 33). She argues that through her "confessional narrative Jacobs begins to expiate

her guilt and to find a physical and spiritual community where her humanity and sensitivity will be valued and where she can rise above her painful past" (25).

The path from transgression to rebirth in spiritual autobiographies is equated by the progress from slavery to freedom in slave narratives. However, Jacobs's *Incidents* is different in this sense as her sin is not only to be a slave, as was the case with other male slave narrators; her sin is also to have had an affair with a man to whom she was not married and borne two children of him. Thus, the religious terminology of sin and confession provided Jacobs with a way of conceiving her latent need to relieve her repressed feelings to somebody she could trust, while at the same time admitting how challenging it was for her to express her feelings to someone whose affection she needed so badly. In another instance she says:

> My conscience approved of it but my stubborn pride would not yield. I have tried for the past two years to conquer it and I feel that God has helped me or I never would consent to give my past life to anyone, for I would not do it without giving the whole truth. If it could help some other from my fate, it would be selfish and unChristian in me to keep it back. (84)

Obviously, Jacobs has repented for her sins, however, we can see that she still struggles with feelings of shame.

Eventually, Jacobs becomes free; liberation from physical slavery is the culminating point of slave narratives as deliverance from sin is the climax in spiritual autobiographies. At the end of her narrative, Jacobs is emancipated by her new mistress, thus gaining freedom both from slavery and from her sins.

The last feature of the sentimental novel discussed by Frances Foster Smith is " the achievement of a utopian society". A utopian society for slaves would be a free America, where they would enjoy the same rights as white people. Indeed, they tried by different means to abolish slavery: writing their testimonials, participating in abolitionists' meetings…

2.3 Subverting the Sentimental Novel Genre

The narrators of sentimental novels often move the readers by addressing them directly and representing the sad fate of the characters, with a melodramatic description

of death and separation scenes. Jacobs, in her opening chapters, paints the characters in primary sentimentalist fashion: Linda, the slave maiden, struggling to escape to the north and save her children and Flint, the villain "whose restless, craving, vicious nature roved about day and night, seeking whom to devour" (16).

There are also some differences between *Incidents* and the sentimental novel. Indeed, when Jacobs claims that the incidents described in her narrative are true, it eventually excludes her text from the sentimental novel, a sub-genre of fictional events and fictional characters. According to Valerie Smith:

> [W]hen Jacobs asserts that her narrative is not fiction, that her adventures may seem incredible but they are nevertheless true, and that only experience can reveal the abomination of slavery, she underscores the inability of her form adequately to capture her experiences (Loopholes 222).

Moreover, the heroines of the sentimental novel pride themselves on their chastity, whereas Harriet Jacobs has to explain and express regrets for her extramarital affairs.

The heroine, Linda Brent, does not get a conventional happy ending and get married at the end of the book: "Reader, *my story ends with freedom; not in the usual way, with marriage* (302). Indeed, for the sentimental heroine the traditional award for virtue and unfair suffering is either marriage or heaven, the classic conclusion having the protagonist either wedded to her lover or triumphant over him in the next, better world. For the slave heroine, however, neither ending is possible if the author is to remain true to her abolitionist agenda. Jacobs may adopt the trappings of sentimental fiction, but not its guarded moral universe. Thus, Jacobs undermines the nineteenth century ideology of marriage as woman's "sacred absolute" by opposing freedom and marriage. Moreover, by affirming that freedom does not have the same meaning for black slave women that it has for free white women, she challenges us to think about freedom as specific and contextual, not as abstract and universal, to think about freedom, as she puts it, "not in the usual way."

Linda Brent's freedom at the end of the narrative is complex and ambiguous. Although "free"—"as free from the power of slaveholders as are the white people of the

north" (201)—her wishes remain unfulfilled. "The dream of my life is not yet realized,"she writes (201). "I do not sit with my children in a home of my own. I still long for a hearthstone of my own, however humble" (201). Hence, Jacobs's dream of a home of her own represents a refuge, not only from social conventions but also from the social relations entailed in her obligation to serve the northern white woman who has helped obtain her freedom.

Because she was aware of the limits of the sentimental genre to express her peculiar experience as a female slave, Jacobs reshapes and challenges these conventions in her representation of both black and white womanhood.

Finally, it must be stated that the originality of Jacobs' *Incidents* lies in the combination and subversion of very different genres, bearing in mind one purpose: the abolition of slavery. Moreover, her sexual transgression is the sin she has to expiate in the context of confessional literature; it is also what separates this work from the sentimental novel.

3. Reclaiming One's Voice

Joanne M. Braxton and Sharon Zuber call the slave woman "the most systematically silenced segment of antebellum America" (146). In this sense, her coming to voice signals the importance of reexamining the writings excluded from the literary canon of the antebellum period.

An attentive analysis of the manner in which Jacobs utilized her voice lends more important consideration of her text. Jacobs's control of her narration is defined through her first-person narrative, which allows her to have complete authority over how her story is told. As the subject of her discourse she creates a voice that would enable her to criticize the institutions that oppress her. Jacobs chooses to reveal her story by herself; She asserts: "Poor as it may be I had rather give [my story] from my own hand, than have it said that I employed others to do it for me" (Introduction, xix). Jacobs's need to tell truth also involved the style of her writing, for she resolved to use African American English while describing the speech of some of her slave characters. Even though a number of slave narratives had been published before Jacobs', the majority did not use African American English at all. AAE was used in many publications

during Jacobs' time, but it was for the most part confined to novels about slavery by white authors (Tricomi 619). Frederick Douglass, for example, did not use AAE in his first autobiography, but when he alluded to it in ulterior editions, he made "every effort to separate himself from the speech patterns typical of the slave community" (Sundquist 80). Obviously, Douglass associated African American English or "plantation speech" with ignorance.

In his Article "Dialect and Convention: Harriet Jacobs' Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl", Andrew Levy argued that Jacobs was inconsistent in her use of AAE, and called into question the authenticity of her dialect.He even charges Jacobs with using dialect as a way "to manipulate set responses from her reader" (210).

Certainly, Jacobs used dialect for purposeful reasons, but one can argue that she was not simply manipulating a conventional dialect. Jacobs was writing her narrative during the antebellum period and this period had a rominent literary star: Harriet Beecher Stowe. Stowe's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, was greatly influential in abolitionist circles, and Jacobs was probably familiar with the book. Harriet Beecher Stowe's adoption of African American English in her novel is characteristic of most white abolitionist writers of fiction of the antebellum period. To many of these writers, the tragedy of slavery was not that the "Negro" was enslaved, but that "innocent whites were sometimes abducted into slavery, or that mulattos, quadroons, and octoroons" were enslaved (Levy 265). Stowe instilled her character Tom with racist features that were prevailing in abolitionist writings. Uncle Tom had "the soft impressible nature of his kindly race, ever yearning toward the simple and child-like" (Stowe 231). Stowe's black characters are childish, lazy, illiterate and content with slavery. Their speech is often descibed as funny.

In Jacob's narrative, on the other hand, nobody in her family spoke in dialect. She accurately wrote of their literacy and this may be one reason her family's speech was cautiously delivered in General American English. Yet except for Jenny, all of Jacobs' dialect speakers are described as honest and kinf characters. In each of their utterances, with the exception of Jenny, there is an evident purpose to subvert the

stereotype of the illiterate, funny, or satisfied slave. Jacobs was "signifying" on the usage of African American English in sentimental novels such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin.*

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. defines signifying as "the figure of the double-voiced" (xxv). Signifying involves a conscious and playful use of language in which words are subjected to a change of meaning. It was adopted by slaves to prove their ability and wit using the English language, and to feel they had some power over their white masters, the power of understanding the slaves' linguistic code, incomprehensible to whites.

In his essay "The Blackness of Blackness: a Critique on the Sign and the Signifying Monkey," Henry Louis Gates, Jr. says that signifying requires one to "dwell at [a] place between two linguistic domains" (Gates 245). To successfully operate between those territories safely, Jacobs required linguistic skill and an important knowledge of the issues inherent in representing both the language of authority and the language of the oppressed.

Johnnie Stover argues that Jacobs' narrative is a singular social discourse that adopts some of the characteristics of the speech of black women as a "subversive communication tool" (Stover 135). Jacobs wrote as a "product" of her "resistance to various oppressions" and used "the language of the oppressor to express that resistance" (137). Stover believes that Jacobs used "bits and pieces of communicative tools that she consciously and unconsciously adopted" (138) from her "mother tongue"(139)—a tongue which "grew out of a need to speak subversively" (140)—to compose her outstanding work of resistance, which is precisely "deterritorialization".

According to Gabrielle Forman, Jacobs endorses a certain degree of control over her narrative by "creating gaps and silences" (317). Foreman interprets these gaps as evidence of Jacobs's struggle against the "usurping agency" of her editor, Lydia Maria Child, whose editing of Jacobs's book seems to reflect a "patron-child hierarchy" between the two (317).

Jacobs does not have to negotiate with her audience by compromising her body. She asserts authority over her story when she tells her audience:

> You never know what it is to be a slave; to be entirely unprotected by law or custom; to have the laws reduce you to the condition of chattel, entirely subject to the will of another. You never exhausted your ingenuity in avoiding the snares, and eluding the power of a hated tyrant; you never shuttered at the sound of his footsteps, and trembled within hearing of his voice (55).

Jacobs recognizes the importance of sharing her experiences with her audience, as she declares that other slaves are "too much brutalized by slavery to feel the humiliation of their position; but many slaves feel it most acutely and shrink from the memory of it" (28). Indeed, breaking her silence after so many years would certainly create a space where Jacobs felt constrained to use her voice in her own way while speaking for those who have suppressed their own voices.

Jacobs opens her preface with an assertion of the truthfulness of her story and her objectivity as a narrator: "Reader, be assured this narrative is no fiction. I am aware that some of my adventures may seem incredible; but they are, nevertheless, strictly true (1). Jacobs certainly anticipated that some people of her audience would not accept her story as truth. Thus, she requests their confidence and " to excuse deficiencies in consideration of circumstances"…as her time as a slave has not left [Jacobs] much leisure to make up for the loss of early opportunity to improve [herself] (1).

In her examination of Jacobs's voice and control of her narration, Jocelyn Moody identifies the conflation between Jacobs's self-assertion and her lack of self-identification through the use of pseudonyms (634). Robin Dizard explains the lack of identification to Jacobs's need to conceal her name, and the name of her children's father and his other family (Native Daughters 154). This concurs with Jacobs statement when she asserts that secrecy is essential to understand the harsh truth of slavery. She tells her readers:

> If you want to be fully convinced of the abominations of slavery, go on a southern plantation, and call yourself a negro trader. Then there will be no concealment; and you will see and hear things that will seem to you impossible among human being with immortal souls (52).

Jacobs creates a new identity that allows her reminiscences to take place through Linda Brent, her alter ego. According to Lauren Berlant, the pseudonym "Linda Brent" serves

as protection from two specific experiences revealed on a national level through Jacobs's narrative. Berlant identifies the first experience "through the many conscriptions of her body" and the second experience as a "psychic rage at America for not even trying to live up to the conditions of citizenship" promised in law and ethics" (94). Hazel Carby argues that Jacobs's use of pseudonyms eventually functioned as a mechanism of self-protection and defiance of convention (50). We may also suggest that Linda Brent stands in to represent the multitude of other oppressed slave women.

As discussed earlier, Jacobs' story is told within the confines of the "Cult of True Womanhood" and to discuss her sexuality was unacceptable to women within this cult. Consequently, her text is laden with her own personal conflict between disclosing everything and suppressing the actions she initiated as well as the actions inflicted upon her by others. To avoid her own shame, Foreman suggests Jacobs is not explicit and "undertells" her story (qtd in Garfield and Zafar 81).Then, the coming from silence into public self-expression allows Jacobs to get away from concepts of womanhood that once generated inner turmoil and to stand apart as a brave, independent woman.

One of the most powerful addresses to her audience comes before she admits her relationship with Mr.Sands, the white lawyer with whom she has two children:

> And now, reader, I come to a period in my unhappy life, which I would gladly forget if I could. The remembrance fills me with sorrow and shame. It pains me to tell you of it; but I have promised to tell you the truth, and I will do it honestly.I will not screen myself.Neither can I plead ignorance or thoughtlessness. I knew what I did, and I did it with deliberate calculation (53-54).

Here, the reader is directly confronted with Jacobs' conflict between insurgence against her master and the guilt she feels from her actions. Yet, Jacobs asserts her voice and controls her narration by suppressing her embarrassment and revealing her affair with this man.

Eventually, Jacobs's negotiations of representation grant her the space to speak plainly and fairly, making her narrative a compelling contribution and inspiration to the rhetoric of oppressive circumstances.

4. Constructing the Self in Jacobs's *Incidents*

In writing her autobiography, Jacobs was forced to contend not only with the expectations and impositions of the white hegemonic society, but also with the essentializing genre of the slave narrative, modelled upon the traditional form of male autobiography.Indeed, Jacobs's narrative shares some concerns of male slave narrative, but as Margo Culley argues, her construction of a speaking subject differs greatly:

> As a narrative of self-determining agency, Jacobs's text participates in the tradition of the male slave narrative. But other positionings toward "selfhood" in the text cause Jacobs's narrative to deviate from that androcentric paradigm. For unlike the male slave narrator Jacobs has to attend as she writes to another story of "selfhood". Not only does she confront « Brent's » enstrangement from "metaphysical selfhood" ; she confronts synchronously her enstrangement from « true [white]womanhood » and its sentimental narrative frames. (94)

The self constructed by the male slave narrative is a self that is striving to insert itself into the parameters of white male society, achieving independence, education, ownership, aspects denied by the slave-holding society. Conversely, the self constructed by the female slave narrative is a self that is trying to subvert the parameters of white society and that represents the collective experiences of the black community.

Jacobs's community plays an important role in her escape from bondage. Indeed, through their words and actions, she shows the possibilities and pitfalls of developing a supportive network of women who could have a significant effect upon the lives of the two millions of women in the South, still in slavery.

In her preface, Jacobs reveals the motives that pushed her to write her narrative: "I have not written my experiences in order to attract attention to myself ; on the contrary, it would have been more pleasant to me to have been silent about my own history" (Jacobs xvii). In the same vein, Nellie Y. McKay notes:

> In constructing their personal narratives, black women negotiate the dangerous shoals of white male and female role and class oppression and white and black sexism. Connected to black men by the history of class and race, to white women by sex and the configuration of gender roles, and to both by the politics of writing from the outside, they have, from the beginning, created unique selves-in-writing to document their individual and collective experiences. (qtd in Brodzki177)

In minority literature, everything is expressed in collective terms and everything takes a collective value. Former slave women respond to the common experiences they share

with former slave males to fight for freedom and with other women to consider themselves as connected to community.

As said earlier, in the first chapter, Caren Kaplan examines traditional autobiography's fixation on "nationally identified" subjects as problematic when national borders are being redefined. Kaplan suggests that genres such as collaborative autobiographies written by minority women can reevaluate this autobiographical practice. Relying on these arguments, we can consider the slave narrative as an "out-law genre," which attempted to write a form of nationhood in nineteenth-century America, where identities were not constant, and racial diversity and gendered communities complicated the established notion of an American citizenship.

Jacobs' persona embodies the tension of being representative of Afro-Americans as well as being American, and her text demonstrates the difficulty of claiming the black other in relation to the white American self. The tension is described by W. E.B. Du Bois as "double consciousness". He writes in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903):

> It is a peculiar feeling, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (215).

Du Bois's notions about the dichotomy experienced by Americans of African descent are present in the slave narratives; but because Jacobs wrote before the civil war complicates more her fragmented or double identity, as she writes in a nation also divided between North and South.

I will examine the notions that Jacobs draws upon in her attempt to create a textual or fictional identity for herself. In the process, I argue that nineteenth century norms of identity development follows the psychoanalytic constructions of identity described by Freud, Lacan and their revisionists.

Hortense Spillers describes slavery as "one of the richest displays of the psychoanalytic dimensions of culture before the science of European psychoanalysis takes hold" (Spiller 77).Spiller describes the way slavery undermines the slaves ability to develop his/her identity in the way described by Lacan: "under the pressure of a

patronymic, patrifocal, patrilineal, patriarchal order", the slave child's "human and familial status" is distorted (Spillers 74).

In American culture, the psychoanalytical model is based on ideologies of autonomy and individualism for men and on the "Cult of True Womanhood" for women.For slave women, the fulfillment of female models of identity was unattainable. In Freudian interpretations of female selfhood, the girl must abandon the mother in order to take her place as a wife. These models are constructed as a means to reflect patriarchal values of female compliance and dependence and are represented in the American "cult of domesticity". In this cult, a woman is worthy for her virginity and femininity and must entirely be dependent on her father or husband. As the slave woman was dependent on her master and was contrived to work like a man and to breed like an animal, she was then denied to possess feminine features. Therefore, to adhere to what white society considers "normal", she would attempt to re-create herself in her narrative in a way that will be acceptable to white readers. Yet, Jacobs wishes also to remain true to her experience under slavery, which was certainly not "normal". Thus, to balance these two goals, Jacobs transgresses the strict separation between gender roles found in Western ideology and manipulates them.

Jacobs must make use of the "masculine" model of autobiographical representation, since it is the only one available; still she must adhere to a female version of the American myth of identity formation. Kimberly Drake explains,

> [Jacobs] must reconcile between, on the one hand, her need to portray a "masculine" self who throws off societal restraints and "breaks" with the past and the "mother" (or the maternal slave community) in order to free herself and start a new life, and, on the other hand, her desire and need to maintain a connection to that community (95).

The male model proves relatively impossible for Jacobs to attain because her children are living reminders of her slave past. Even after her escape, Jacobs must at once affiem her dependency and her devotion to standards of womanly behavior, while also asserting that she, as a representative African American woman, has the right to be free.

Carroll Smith Rosenberg observes that in the nineteenth-century female communities provided "a milieu in which a woman could develop a sense of inner security and self-esteem" (qtd in Drake 60-64). Likewise, slave communities provide

some physical and psychological support within a context of the worst mortification and hardship imaginable. Jacobs acknowledges the value of female interdependence, but she does not want to rely on white women too heavily. Eventually, she demonstrates that her community is essential for her survival but must not hinder her independence and individuality.

Jacobs' narrative constitutes an inherent critique of the Freudian model of female sexual development. Indeed, desires of autonomy are considered to be "normal" in males, and as deviations in females. Yet, Jacobs emphasizes that without a degree of autonomy, women of color are easily enslaved. For her, the community provides safety in her search for freedom. Nancy Chodorow's model of ego development makes this coherent: the component which allows the self to develop a "quality of wholeness" is the experience of "continuity that the mother or caretaker helps to provide, by protecting the infant from continually having to react to and ward off environmental intrusions and from being continually in need" (35-36). The community is then a resource used by slaves to fight their oppression, and at the same time to help them in becoming somehow autonomous.

Jacobs concludes her narrative with another subversion of female models for development, stating: "Reader, my story ends with freedom; not in the usual way, with marriage" (201). This proves her understanding that she has not followed the "normal" path for women but rather that for men. Indeed, she is independent and while she "longs for a hearthstone "of her own, she does not envisage to marry in order to achieve it. Moreover, her idea of motherhood does not necessitate dependence on a man; instead it urged her escape and serves as a connection between herself, her family and her readers. Thus, her departure from psychological and cultural norms of female development, far from reflecting any pathologies, indicates a quest for a successful life.

To conclude, through the use of the autobiographical genre, Jacobs constructs her own history and subjectivity through an alternative discourse. This discourse enables her to move from the position of the "other", the marginalized black woman, to that of the speaking subject, and through the personae of Linda Brent, she was able to criticize

the institutions and the discursive acts that oppressed her and denied her self-contructed subjectivity.Being positioned on the margin provided Jacobs with the perspective to criticize and disrupt existing discursive acts that sought to silence her.

The next part demonstrates the importance of alternate discourses of subjectivity through the exploration of Zora Neale Hurston's autobiographical self in *Dust Tracks on a Road*.

II- Zora Neale Hurston's *Dust Tracks on a Road*: Black Autobiography in a Different Voice

African American women sought to emancipate the Negro race from its ties to the ugly past of slavery and from its entrapment in wrongful stereotypes. Yet, they had no place from which to speak. Negro men often degraded black women and white women often ignored and excluded them. Therefore, Harlem Renaissance women would have to be creative and sadly solitary in their constructions of identity.

Black women's identities include the overlapping experiences of race, class and gender, so black feminism is of particular use in this part since "black women intellectuals have long expressed a unique feminist consciousness about the intersection of race and class in structuring gender" (Collins 7).

Although critics have given some critical attention to *Dust Tracks*, there has been no extensive analysis that focuses specifically on the text as narrative and on how one might view an autobiographical self that will not necessarily conform to a mimetic representation. I will then focus on the text itself, examining the multiple narrative strategies and the different discourses Hurston uses to construct her identity. And because Hurston depicts "truth" in terms of its multiplicity and its instability, I will explore how her work and her self elude definition and thus make her identity ultimately perplexing.

1. Dust Tracks and the Tradition of Black Autobiography

1.1 The Autobiographical Statement

Black American autobiography is a genre in which autobiographers construct their identity despite attempts to deny them a sense of personal worth. Moreover,the autobiographical account is presumed to contain both lessons for black people—how to combat racism, how to affirm the self—and indictments for whites.In Black Autobiography, Stephen Butterfield argues that:

> [the typical black autobiographer]is generally not an individual with a private career, but a member of an oppressed social group with ties and allegiances to the other members. . . .[This autobiography] is characterized by political awareness, empathy for suffering, knowledge of oppression, and a sense of shared life, shared triumph,and communal responsibility" (3).

For Butterfield, traditional black autobiography is both a bid for freedom and an effort to inform what whites have done. *Dust Tracks* contains some of these elements, but they are not the focal point of Hurston's text. *Dust Tracks* resists two important practices of autobiographical representation: traditional autobiographical structure and formal organization, and a centered projection of the autobiographical persona.Only in the first part of the text does Hurston produce a traditional autobiography; she creates a sense of the communal life she knew in Eatonville as a black child.

Hurston is not writing an autobiography specifically to discuss a political issue as stated by Deleuze and Guattari or by Butterfield. In fact, Hurston is "an individual with a private career", and as such she is using her narrative to advance the development of her text as an artistic work. This fact establishes a point of departure from Jacobs's narrative and the nineteenth century black women's autobiographies in general.

Hurston begins her autobiography by setting her own characteristics of a personal history:

> Like the dead-seeming, cold rocks, I have memories within that came out of the material that went to make me. Time and place have had their say. So you will have to know something about the time and place where I came from, in order that you may interpret the incidents and directions of my life (3).

For her the facts of one's personal history are open to interpretation.

Dust Tracks has received some of the most negative criticism because of its apparent its inconsistency, its unreliability and its seemingly assimilationist racial politics. Nellie Y. McKay states that Hurston's *Dust Tracks* breaks with the rhetorical patterns of the traditional black women's autobiographies, namely the slave narrative, and opens the way for new experiments with form and content (qtd in Brodzki and Schenck 180). For example, instead of claiming authentic self-representation like in slave narratives, she offers a text as "the statue of the self" she wishes the world to see. She notes:

> I did not know, as I know now, that people are prone to build a statue of the kind of person it pleases them to be. And few people want to be forced to ask themselves, "What is there is no me like my statue?"The thing to do is to grab the broom of anger and drive off the beast of fear (Hurston 34).

In fact, Hurston creates a multitude of contradictory personae. At times she was accused of playing the "happy darkie" role to entertain whites: "To many of her white friends, no doubt, she was a perfect "darkie", in the nice meaning they give the term—that is a naive, childlike, sweet, humorous, and highly colored negro…" (Hughes 238-239). At other times, she presents a serious face as does throughout "of Mules and Men". In all these cases, Hurston seems to defy categorization which makes readers wonder who the real Zora is and what parts of her autobiography are real and what are those which are only fiction.

One can see that the explicit fragmentariness that arises out of the five final chapters of *Dust Tracks* is not a structural mistake. In fact, the last five chapters act like an appendix, and appendices have a significant history in the tradition of African American autobiography. Actually, Hurston's appendices serve as a play on the slave narrative appendix and serve as a political act. To put it as Henry Louis Gates, Jr., might in *The Signifying Monkey*, she signifies on the convention of the slave narrative to add appendices and implies that even an African American female writer can assert her own authenticity.

Concerning the inconsistency and unreliability of the text, it is true that *Dust Tracks* is not consistent with the conventions of African American autobiography, not with the facts of Hurston's life and even about her actual position regarding racial politics. In fact, Hurston has always rejected any expectations to be considered as "representative" about race issues in her texts, just as she refused to disclose details about her private life. She has always repudiated those expectations of what she had to disclose about herself. Robert Hemenway discusses Hurston's well-known bent to protect her private life: "She had told neither of her sponsors about [her] marriage, maintaining a closeness about her private affairs that she would persist in all her life" (Hemenway 93). For instance, in the chapter titled "Love" in which she discusses her relationship with A.W.P, she reveals that here was "the man who was really to lay me by the heels," and she acknowledges, "I did not just fall in love. I made a parachute

jump" (183). Obviously, it was a difficult relationship and not only does Hurston suggest that she does not know how it will end, but she curtly tells the readers, "And even if I did know all, I am supposed to have some private business to myself. Whatever I do know, I have no intention of putting but so much in the public ear" (189).

One is never quite sure whether Hurston is telling the truth or just inventing facts. She herself asserts that she was born in a culture in which the people not only define their experience by passing "this world and the next on through their mouths, "but in which there are 'lying sessions.' That is, straining against each other in telling folk tales" (63).

Pam Bordelon tried to uncover the" truth" about Hurston's life through an interview she conducted with Winifred Hurston Clark, the daughter of Zora's eldest brother, Hezekiah Robert. Winifred is the eldest of Hurston's eight surviving nieces and nephews, and the only one of them who lived with her. Her testimony and a key document she possesses, "the Hurston family bible", provide a deeper comprehension of Zora Neale Hurston's life.

Zora was born as the sixth child on January 15, 1891. Hemenway who tried to make sense of all of Hurston's claims presents her birthdate as January 7, 1901 (Hemenway 32). Moreover, her name appears in the "Family Record" as "Zora Neal Lee Hurston." (There is no "e" following "Neal.") The "Family Record" presents Hurston's birthplace as Notasulga, Alabama, which contrasts Hurston's life-long claim that Florida was her native state. In *Dust Tracks* Hurston wrote, "I was born in a Negro town. I do not mean by that the black back-side of an average town. Eatonville, Florida, is, and was at the time of my birth, a pure Negro town ..."(1).

Yet, as a cultural anthroplogist, Hurston is convinced that truth was a matter of perspective and relativity. She states: "Nothing that God ever made is the same thing to more than one person. That is natural. There is no single face in nature, because every eye that looks upon it, sees it from its own angle" (45). Truth is also a time-dependent phenomenon for her:

> Under the spell of moonlight, music, flowers, or the cut and smell of good tweeds, I sometimes feel the divine urge for an hour, a day or maybe a week. Then it is gone and my interest returns to cornpone and mustard greens, or rubbing a paragraph with a soft

> cloth. Then my ex-sharer of a mood calls up in a fevered voice and reminds me of every silly thing I said .... Accuses me of being faithless and inconsistent .... There is no inconsistency there. I was sincere for the moment in which I said the things. It is strictly a matter of time.... No two moments are any more alike than two snowflakes. Like snowflakes, they get the same look from being so plentiful and falling so close together. But examine them closely and see the multiple differences between them. (263-64)

Thus, truth is understood to be partial and relative to the speaker and listener Therefore, when Hurston "lies" about certain facts in her autobiography, one should simply consider as fictionalizing her life, refusing to present the real Zora.

Dust Tracks does not conform to the traditional autobiographical structure and a centered projection of the autobiographical persona. It focuses rather on Hurston's imagination, on retelling community stories, and on Hurston's ambiguous attitudes towards race. In doing so, *Dust Tracks* portrays "an individual persona that resists reduction to a coherent, consistent unity and instead portrays a person of many moods who is in tension with the world in which she moves" (388). In addition, *Dust Tracks* seems to be structured around a prophetic moment: when Hurston has a vision which is fulfilled by the end of the story. In the fourth chapter of her autobiography, Hurston describes the visionary experience she had at the age of seven:

> There was some cool shade on the porch, so I sat down, and soon I was asleep in a strange way. Like clear-cut stereopticon slides, I saw twelve scenes flash before me, each one held until I had seen it well in every detail, and then be replaced by another. There was no continuity as in an average dream. Just disconnected scene after scene with blank spaces in between. I knew that they were all true, a preview of things to come, and my soul writhed in agony and shrunk away. But I knew that there was no shrinking. These things had to be. (Hurston 57).

She described some scenes in detail, emphasizing that "Time was to prove the truth of my visions, for one by one they came to pass" (59). Hurston gives the impression that she will organize the events of her life within the text around those visions, but their use is rather confusing as she does not ascertain their organic function. For Robert Hemenway the fact that Hurston's visions either do not come to pass or are not described as having done so altogether is frustrating. He notes:

> Although meant to explain Hurston's life, the visions do not successfully structure the autobiography. They fade into insignificance as the story unfolds. Although visions one and two serve as chapter endings, vision three is given only a single sentence; we encounter no further visions until Zora suddenly announces that six visions have now

> passed. The seventh vision is of her brother's house .... There is no mention of the eighth. The ninth vision, the meeting with Mrs. Mason, is not identified .... Visions ten through twelve are nowhere in sight, perhaps because-while claiming to see "twelve scenes flash before me"-her list ends with Godmother and number nine .... Did the visions occur? Probably. But if they were confirmed by subsequent events, why are they not more prominent? (282-83)

I argue that as the multiple employment of sermonic rhetoric in her works demonstrate, Hurston's visions seem rather to serve to describe herself as a special individual who, in the following part of the narrative achieves the destiny the visions predict. This will be discussed in detail in the title "Folk Sermon Form in *Dust Tracks*"

A subversive element in Hurston's narrative is her use of dialect and black folk idiom. Their simple presence, as Sidonie Smith has argued, can be perceived as the autobiographer's "refusal to 'clean up' or to 'whiten' her language by erasing all color [. . .] from it" and thus as her "criticism of the denuded quality of the dominant and neutralized language" (119). Deleuze describes deterritorialization as the "impossibility of not writing" (16). It is tied up with issues of finding a voice within a language that is both alien and familiar. Hurston is writing from within a minority group that faces oppression, racism and segregation. Yet that same group lives and operates within the larger society. The impossibility of not writing from this point of view is strong. It's a story that can only be told from this particular group, and yet it is also a story that can only be told in the language of the oppressive society. Deterritorilization of the language through African American dialect and writing phonetically in an accent and voice of an uneducated African American woman is a way that Hurston adopts to negotiate her access to writing. She wrote in a language both her own and not her own.Like Jacobs, Hurston looked for "new inscriptions of black resistance" in the "codified discourse of [. . .] folk and formalized-folk idiom" (Lewis 319). As Nghana Lewis suggests, "Hurston seems to have expected white audiences to read and black audiences to decipher her discourse" (319-20).

2. Critical Reception of *Dust Tracks*

At the time of its publication, the autobiography enjoyed commercial success and popular approval, winning the *Saturday Review's* Ainsfleld-Wolf Award in 1942 for its "contributions to the field of Race Relations" (qt in Hemenway 22). It also earned the contempt of black critics who found the autobiography pandering to a white readership. Arna Bontemps notes: "Miss Hurston deals very simply with the more serious aspects of negro life in America- she ignores them" (Qt in Hemenway 289). Harold Peerce called the book "the tragedy of a gifted, sensitive mind, eaten up by an egocentrism fed on the patronising admiration of the dominant white world" (qt by Hemenway 289).

Many scholars and critics of African-American literature and culture evaluate the success of the autobiography differently. For instance, Nathan Huggins and Darwin Turner assert that in the autobiography, Hurston's "folksiness eventually became both style and substance" (Hemenway 277). For Elizabeth Fox Genovese, "Hurston's autobiography singularly lacks any convincing picture of her own feelings" (qt in Benstock 78-79).

In "*The Politics of Fiction, Anthropology, and the Folk: Zora Neale Hurston*," Carby explores the cultural meanings of Hurston's work in the 1920s and 1930s and then in the 1970s,1980s, and 1990s. She notes:

> In *Dust Tracks on a Road*, an *apparently* autobiographical work, Hurston ignores her earlier attempts to represent the complexity of the relationship between public and private constructions of self. She continues, however, to displace the discourse of a racist social order and maintains the exclusion of the black subject from history. This is the gesture that eventually wins her the recognition and admiration of the dominant culture in the form of the Ainsfield-Wolf Award for the contribution of Dust *Tracks on a Road* to "the field of race relations." (38)

Even for Alice Walker, an admirer of Hurston, the book was "the most unfortunate thing Zora ever wrote is her autobiography. After the first several chapters, it rings false. One begins to hear the voice of someone whose life required the assistance of too many transitory 'friends'"*(Dust Tracks* Foreword xvii). Cheryl A. Wall, a well-known Hurston scholar, states: "Hurston's muddled perspective in *Dust Tracks* inspired no adherents. The fact that the book won the Anisfield-Wolf award (sponsored by Saturday Review) for its contribution to race relations says more about the state of race

relations than about the clarity of Hurston's views [. . .] most of the book's glints and gleams shone less brightly" (198). She argues that no editor could have found a constant perspective within the materials that Hurston submitted. Mary Helen Washington writes that *Dust Tracks* is a "strangely disoriented book", and describes it as a "study of subterfuge". She writes that Hurston "used all sorts of manipulative and diversionary tactics in the autobiography to avoid any real self-disclosure (I Love Myself 19-20).Though Washington makes this important point, she does not fully describe the tactics that were used. According to Maya Angelou, "It is difficult, if not impossible, to find and touch the real Zora Neale Hurston" (xi-xii).

Many critics read the inconsistencies in both content and form as confirmation of Hurston's decision to accommodate her white audience's expectations. Actually Hurston is inconsistent about her age, giving her date of birth as1898, 1899, 1900, 1901, 1902, 1903 and 1910 depending on the context and claims she was sixteen upon entering high school when she was already twenty six. Moreover, she conceals information about her marriages and structures her text through mythical visions that disappear halfway through her story, and also her refusal to treat the race issue directly. Robert Hemenway, Hurston's biographer and most sympathetic critic describes *Dust Tracks* as "an autobiography at war with itself" (277-78). But this "war" is never completely described, nor is the text examined to reveal the different conflicts which constitute the "war". This "war" seems to be between Hurston's work and the tradition of Black autobiography that it evades. In fact, Hurston must struggle between a number of opposing forces in telling her story. Some of the main conflicts involve her opposition to the traditions of race, gender and class. These criticisms presume that there is such a thing as a "real Zora Neale Hurston," to use Angelou's words, which one can discern from other "Zora Neale Hurstons". The possibility to represent the "real Zora Neale Hurston" presumes that she is a single, autonomous, homogeneous unity. Nevertheless, the type of individual that *Dust Tracks* depicts is heterogeneous and inseparable from her environment, since it is in her relationship to her environment that the individual is defined. For Michel Foucault, someone like Angelou expects unity, consistency, narrative continuity, and coherence not because the subject of a story is necessarily

homogeneous but because the expectation of homogeneity is the product of Cartesian philosophy, which has been ruled by "the sovereignty of the subject" (qtd in Walker Post Modern 12). Actually, under the Cartesian or Enlightenment paradigm, the unity of the individual and the unity of the story go together. Thus, because Hurston's autobiography resists both of these unities, it can disappoint readers with conventional expectations about autobiographies.

Hurston has also written her autobiography with a certain audience in mind. These and many other factors enter into consideration in the study of this text.

3. Mediating a Dual Readership

It is essential that we focus on problems such as an author's relation to her readership and literary tradition through careful readings that pay attention to the ways in which these problems are constructed in the texts themselves. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese importantly argues that some African-American women authors problematize their relationship to the forces which most shape their discourse: their readers and their traditions. She argues that for authors like Zora Neale Hurston ". . . the identity of the self remains hostage to the history of the collectivity. . ." (qtd in Benstock70). Hurston, for example, seeks to authenticate "a statue of herself," or "a public self," which is "beyond the horizon of everyday life, beyond the boundaries of her immediate community, beyond the confines of her gender" (64). She adds that the first element to consider to understand the ways in which black women construct their autobiographical selves should be the relationship between author and reader: "The tension at the heart of black women's autobiography derives in large part from the chasm between an autobiographer's Intuitive sense of herself and her attitude toward her probable readers. Imagined readers shape the ways in which an autobiographer constructs the narrative of her life" (74).

My analysis takes this position as a point of departure.

The first draft of *Dust Tracks* was produced by 1941, but the revision took a year, which was unusual for Hurston. This may indicate her uneasiness about disclosing personal information. This may also suggest the difficulty she met in negotiating

editorial preferences. Indeed, after comparing the published edition of *Dust Tracks* with the manuscript, Robert Hemenway and Claudine Raynaud found that the printed version had been "accommodated" to Hurston's publisher's demands, her self- imposed limits of personal disclosure and her own presumptions about the expectations of her white publishers.

The transition from the original manuscript to the typed text to the 1942 edition of *Dust Tracks* reveals "a gradual slippage from [the writer's] original intent to the final acceptance of a public self/text mediated by editorial pressures" (Raynaud 56). According to Raynaud, the excised passages about the negative effects of sexism, racism and class distinctions introduce a resistance in Hurston's text that was overlooked in 1942.

In a 1984 edition, Hemenway prepared an appendix that restores much of the original manuscript. It includes three chapters either omitted from the 1942 edition or published in an altered form: "*My People! My People*!", "*The Inside Light Being a Salute to Friendship*" and "*Seeing the World as It Is*" (Braxton 151).

As a black woman, Hurston was subjected to both racism and sexism of the male members of the households in which she was employed as a maid. In a section in folder 13 that had been omitted, she relates that she worked for a Mrs. Moncrief who had a baby and who was bedridden. Her husband took the habit of "waylaying" Hurston, and even asked her to escape with him to Canada. When she told Mrs. Moncrief the woman responded:

> You have nothing to cry about Zora. You haven't been lying here for three years for somebody hoping to find you dead every morning. You don't know what it means for every girl who comes within hailing distance to be mixed up in your life. You don't know what it means to give birth to a child for your husband and find that your health is gone the day the baby is born and for him not to care what becomes of the baby or you either.God! Why couldn't he leave *you* alone? (Folder 13, 120-121)

The next day, Mr. Moncrief came over to her place and told her: "All I need is a young, fill-of- feeling girl to sleep with and enjoy life. I always did keep me a colored girl. Last one moved off to Chicago and sort of left me without. I want a colored girl and I'm giving you the preference". (Smith and Watson 44). Here, Hurston exposes the image

of the young black girl who submits to the racist and the sexist impulses of the white male gaze.

bell hooks observes "Sexist ideology teaches women that to be female is to be a victim"(*Ain 't* I *a Woman, 85***).** But, it is not the case for Hurston; instead of describing herself as a passive victim who submits to the racist and sexist ideologies of the time, she pretends to have affection towards Mr. Moncrief, and fixes a date to move to Chicago with him. In the meantime, she decides to quit her job.The omission of this passage contributes to the confusions of the readers about Hurston's persona.For Raynaud, such exposure of sexual and racial tensions and prejudices would have cost the book the Anisfield-Wolf Award for the improvement of race relations (Smith and Watson, Women 44).

Editorial intervention also appears when a whole chapter was deleted and others reordered. In an episode depicting the relationship between Hurston's parents originally in chapter 12, "My People! My People!" (dedicated to the question of race) and now part of chapter 2, "My Folks", Hurston wanted to contrast two kinds of African Americans: those who are determined to improve themselves like her mother and those who are resigned like her father. She depicts one of their fights:

> But everytime mama cornered him with her tongue, he would seize a chair and threaten to wring it over mama's head. She'd keep right on asking him questions about his doings and then answering them herself until papa slammed out of the house. He would put the chair down and ease on out like he had been whipped all over with peach hickories…I think that this was his way of asserting his lordship over his home, and denying himself that he had beenbworsted by a woman…I saw this conflict between what papa wanted for his family and what mama wanted him to want, going on from my earliest remembrance. It was not too clear, but mixed up somehow withj the other things that cofused me about what Negroes were supposed to be. (MS, folder 10, n° 5 in *Decolonizing the Subject*, 54)

Obviously, Hurston's confusion about racial identity dates back to her parents who embody two attitudes: one of determination and of resignation but it also shows how they are engaged in a war of sexes.

Hurston's opinions on politics have also been deleted: after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, Hurston's editors found her comments about American imperialism too provocative for publication:

> Hurston wrote a series of essays and articles where she could address her two readerships separately: one voice promotes an integrated society and interprets the black subject to the white audience. Race matters are treated rather with humor and wit (Hemenway 293-294).

The other voice is rather critical and direct about racism and it addresses a black audience. Her article: "My Most Humiliating Jim Crow Experience" (1944) describes her personal experience of a doctor's racism. She was placed in a closet-like waiting area with soiled towels and uniforms; she was then examined in a rushed manner: "the doctor came in immediately and began in a desultory manner to ask me about symptoms. It was evident he meant to get me off the premises as quickly as possible" (*Negro Digest* 935).

Hurston's statements on race relations, democracy, and America prove that she was socially and racially conscious.In her essay: "*What White Publishers Won't Print*" (1950), Hurston notes:

> Publishing houses and theatrical promoters are in business to make money. They will sponsor anything that they believe will sell. They shy away from romantic stories about Negroes and Jews because they feel that they know the public indifference to such works…They know the scepticism in general about the complicated emotions in the minorities. The average American just cannot conceive of it, and would be apt to reject the notion, and publishers and producers take the stand that they are not in business to educate, but to make money (Aguirre and Lempert 55)

Hurston knew that publishers considered the readability of a text as well as the readers' response, and not necessarily integrity or even truth. She told a journalist from the *New York Amsterdam News* in 1944 "rather than get across all the things which you want to say you must compromise and work within the limitations [of those people] who have the final authority in deciding whether or not a book shall be printed" (Hemenway 286-287).

Hurston understood the need for self-censorship long before she wrote *Dust Tracks.* In a letter dated October, 1929 and addressed to her friend Langston Hughes she discusses the submission of her manuscript *Mules and Men* to her patron Charlotte Mason. She writes: "Godmother says the dirty words must be toned down. Of course I knew that, but first I wanted to collect them as they are" (Hemenway 129). As an anthropologist, Hurston collected folklore and recorded it without changing or editing

anything in it. Yet she knew she would have to change it. This awareness of editorial process has probably extended to the writing of her autobiography.

4. Autoethnography:Connecting Life and Research

In her study "Autoethnography: The An-Archaic Style of *Dust Tracks on a Road*", Francoise Lionnet characterizes Zora Neale Hurston's autobiography as an autoethnography, which she understands as "the defining of one's subjective ethnicity as mediated through language, history and ethnographical analysis (qtd in Gates *Reading* 382). Her definition focuses on the constructed nature of ethnicity and the relationship between concepts of self and collectivity.

Like Harriet Jacobs, Hurston begins her autobiography by giving attention to others, rather than focusing on herself. The first two chapters of *Dust Tracks* are titled "My Birthplace" and "My Folks" and place the autobiographer first in a large historical context of her home community – Eatonville, Florida – and then into a narrower context of her family tree. Hurston sees her life as a result of, what she calls, "the material that went to make me" and considers it important that the reader knows "something about the time and place where I came from, in order that you may interpret the incidents and directions of my life". Even though Hurston did not live her whole life in Eatonville, its culture and its communal warmth left their permanent imprint on her artistic sensibility, creating "autoethnography". Reed-Danahay says that, "autoethnography is defined as a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context. It is both a method and a text as in the case of ethnography" (Danahay 9). That is to say, when ethnography transcends its role as a means to describe non-western culture and society and when it acquires a new role as a medium to see both ourselves and others, it begins to emerge somewhere between ethnography and autobiography and makes a hybrid space in literature.

In "*Collecting Ourselves at the End of the Century*", Mark Neumann observes the following about autoethnography:

> . . . this joining of auto and ethno, of self and culture, can critique the conditions of the culture in which the self is located. In this sense, autoethnography is more than a telling of one's experience; it is a critical looking outward at power relations in acultural space that constrains the meanings available for understanding the writer's (i.e. one's own) life and text (89).

Thus, as an ethnographer, Hurston writes her autobiography using the tenets of ethnography and presents the cultural circumstances of African Americans in an American ethos.

A highly pertinent argument by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson regarding the act of life-narration by the life narrator needs to be considered here. They affirm that the autobiographer or the autoethnographer becomes divided into "both the observing subject and the object of investigation, remembrance, and contemplation" (1). As a trained anthropologist, Hurston's Barnard College education plays a crucial role in deciding the course of the "Narrating I" in her autobiography. Indeed, Hurston benefits from insights and observations gained from her anthropological research in composing her autoethnography which combines autobiography, the story of one's own life, with ethnography, and the study of a particular social group.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a time when the segregationist stance was at its highest level, the African Americans were looked down as violent, ignorant, and lazy. Americans also felt that the African Americans blamed everyone else especially the white Americans for their predicaments.Through the description of her hometown Eatonville, Hurston undermines the myth regarding the need of white Americans to help black communities and draws attention to the fact that there were African American communities in the early twentieth century that thrived on their own despite cruel discrimination. By emphasizing this, she disparages the stereotypical image of the enslaved African American community of the 1800s as reliant on the mercy of the whites. In another episode, she describes the African Americans and the white Americans as living alongside each other serenely. She writes: ""White Maitland and Negro Eatonville, have lived side by side for fifty-five years without a single instance of enmity" (6**).** By doing so, Hurston revises the conventional

classification of African Americans as the enslaved, by intentionally projecting the theme of how white Americans could live content in "separate but equal" colonies.

In the chapter describing her birth, titled, "My Birthplace,"she explains how an old white man "of many acres and things" "decided to drive the five miles and bring a half of a shoat, sweet potatoes" (20). When he arrived, he assisted her mother who was unattended after labor by "cutting the navel cord" (21). In keeping with her presentation of the "separate-but equal" status, she chooses this incident claiming, "This is all hearsay" (19). Thus, the "*Narrating* I" attempts to present the idea that the people of Eatonville considered white Americans as normal people like themselves but under the "separate-yet-equal" status.

As a trained ethnographer, Hurston addresses directly her white audience, as in the description of her father stating, "A little of my sugar used to sweeten his coffee right now.That is a Negro way of saying his patience was short with me" (19). Here, Hurston assumes the role of a translator who wants to preserve her folk culture by interpreting the African American dialect to the probable non-African American audience.

The death of Hurston's mother leads to dramatic and decisive moments in her life. Joanne Braxton states: "When her mother dies, these ties are cut, and Hurston's link with place and tradition is broken; the magical inner world of Eatonville is destroyed" (147). The mishap also calls attention to the integration of cultural practices adapted from West Africa. When she speaks of her mother in her death bed, Hurston notes: "That day, September 18^{th,} she had called me and given me cerain instructions. I was not to let them take the pillow from under her head until she was dead. The clock was not to be covered nor the looking- glass"(63). As an ethnographer, Hurston foregrounds the African American folk custom consisting of veiling the mirror so that the dead may rest in peace and not trouble the living. Her mother's request "not to veil the looking glass" is to leave their imprint on the memory of the living so that they may live in peace and remember her. Here, Hurston highlights the relationship of the African Americans to their culture and their own ancient history.

Joe Clarke's General Store served as the place where the culture was transmitted within the African American community in Eatonville. Robert Hemenway notes:

> The men and women on the Store porch were not a function of time, history,population changes or even Joe Clarke's dying and the Store's going to Lee Glenn, their lying sessions were constant verbal rituals contributing order,beauty, and poetry to the community's life (12).

Obviously, the porch played a very important role in Hurston's text, She describes it as the "heart and spring of the town," the place where people sat around on boxes, benches and nail kegs and "passed this world and the next one through their mouths" (69). Through storytelling, history was conveyed, and lifelong lessons were taught and learned. Accounts of slavery were also narrated and these accounts were passed on orally through many generations. I think that for Hurston, the porch served as a stage where the life and culture of the African Americans were performed.

5. Folk Sermon Form in *Dust Tracks*

Another literary genre used by Hurston in *Dust Tracks* is the folk sermon. Hurston was inherently impressed with the beliefs and traditions of the Afro-American Southern Baptist religious tradition. In fact, her father was a traveling Baptist minister and her mother the superintendent of the Sunday school.

A lot of of the characteristics of that tradition, especially of the folk preacher and the folk sermon, are present in her autobiography. The protagonist in *Dust Tracks* is similar to the folk preacher, and the narrative is comparable to the folk sermon.

In general, the folk preacher must have rhetorical skills which are derived from the community. Hurston's writings are filled with an oral quality that speaks to the reader. In *Dust* Tracks, she uses different examples of rhetoric derived from the community. Like the folk preacher, she tells stories, folktales, and provides interpretations of prayers and sermons. Hurston's use of folk elements is not only traditional, but it also serves an essential purpose. As Arna Bontemps explains in his introduction to *The Book of Negro Folklore*, "The Negro preacher has had a vital role, not the least important of which has been the awakening and encouragement of folk

expression" (Hughes and Bontemps xiii). And so did Hurston; as a compiler of Afro-American folklore, she acknowledged and promoted the use of Black folk expression.

In *Dust Tracks*, the lore Hurston presents is also notably humorous. Like the folk preacher, she believes that humor is a vital part of the folk community, and any representative of "the people" must have a sense of humor. Bontemps writes that the preacher had to be entertaining and "comic when comedy was needed" (xii). Yet, his role as shepherd of the flock also required him to teach, inform, admonish, and lead his congregation as well as inspire and uplift them (xiii). These characteristics that are considered attributes of the folk preacher, and of Hurston, could describe any leader within the folk community; however, the one important attribute that distinguishes the folk preacher from the civic leader is that the folk preacher's authority to lead is derived from God; he must receive "the call," the divine summons. The narrator in *Dust Tracks* said she did receive the divine call. According to Deborah Plant, receiving the call "requires visions, confusion and resistance to the call, suffering, and finally conviction and/or acceptance" (9).

We can better understand Hurston's use of these conventions by comparing her story of visions to that of actual preachers in Langston Hughes' and Arna Bontemps' *The Book of Negro Folklore*. In the book, a preacher asserted that in seeking God he spent "seasons at fasting and praying." But it was only when God called him that he began to change. "God started on me when I was a little boy"; then God "began to show me things": "Once while I was sick I saw in a vision three people and one was a woman. They looked at me and said, "He is sick." The woman said, "I can cure him". So speaking she took out a little silver vial, held it before me and vanished (258). After his visions, God directed him to "Go preach my Gospel".

Hurston relates similar experiences in *Dust Tracks*. To avoid punishment for a childish trick, she came to an unoccupied house where she had her visions:

> I had not thought of stopping there when I . . . set out, but I saw a big raisin lying on the porch and stopped to eat it. I sat and soon I was asleep in a strange way. Like clear stereopticon slides, I saw twelve scenes flash before me, each one held until I had seen it well in every detail, and then be replaced by another.. . . I knew that they were all true, a preview of things to come, and my soul writhed in agony and shrunk away. . . . I did

> not wake up when the last one flickered and vanished, I merely sat up and saw the Methodist Church, the line of moss-draped oaks, and our strawberry patch stretching off to the left (57).

It is important to note that many elements in Hurston's vision correspond to those found in religious tradition: The eating of a fruit, falling asleep, a general view of events and religiously symbolic numbers. According to Deborah G. Plant, the twelve scenes which flashed by may be symbolic of the twelve disciples or the twelve gates to the city (6).

Firstly, the call and the visions generally occur when the individual is by himself, generally in some isolated environment. And these experiences usually appeared during childhood. "I do not know when the visions began," Hurston writes. "Certainly I was not more than seven years old, but I remember the first coming very distinctly" (56). Secondly, Hurston's visions occurred for a long period of time, and just like the preacher, she resisted the "call"; she notes: "I was weighed down with a power I did not want. I had knowledge before its time. I knew my fate. . . . Often I was in some lonesome wilderness, suffering strange things and agonies . . . I asked myself why me? Why? Why? A cosmic loneliness was my shadow. Nothing and nobody around me really touched me (57- 60). Nevertheless, she writes:

> Oh, how I cried to be just as everybody else! But the voice said No. I must go where I was sent. The weight of the Commandment laid heavy and made me moody at times. I would hope that the call would never come again. But even as I hoped I knew that the cup meant for my lips would not pass. I must drink the bitter drink (59).

In this passage, Hurston acknowledges the voice and resolves to consider it. Like most Afro-American preachers and believers she compares herself to Jesus Christ, overburdened with the sins of the world but at the same time accepts her fate, saying, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (qtd in Plant, 6).Hurston also considers all she had to suffer as trials, and that the end of her trials would bring the beginning of a new life for her:

> *I knew* that *I* would be an orphan and homeless. I *knew* that while *I* was still helpless, that the comforting circle of my family would be broken, and that I would have to wander cold and friendless until I had served my time. . . . There was no turning back. . . . And last of all, I would come to a big house. Two women waited there for me. . . . When I had come to these women, then I would be at the end of my pilgrimage, but not the end of my life. Then I would know peace and love and what goes with these things and not before (57-58).

The two women who would signify Hurston's "resurrection" are analogous to the women in the preacher's vision.

The last vision revealed that the author would have promising experiences, the beginning of her professional career. The woman in the vision, declared to be Mrs. Osgood Mason, had "the key to certain phases of my life. . .in her hand" (309). The key represented the financial support she needed to finance her folklore collecting expedition and her career under way.

Many of the features of the folk sermon discussed above are found in *Dust Tracks.* However, I do not suggest that the text conforms to every element of the folk sermon form, nor that it was intended to. It is not apparent whether Hurston planned to write a sermon, but because so many sermonic features define the narrative, it is evident that the author's knowledge of religious practices, specifically that of the sermon, has definitely directed the structure and nature of the autobiography.

Biblical diction is one of the linguistic features of *Dust Tracks* which is characteristic of the ways in which the folk sermon influences the narrative. These features are most visible in the chapter on religion, but they appear frequently throughout the narrative. "God," "Old Maker," "the "Devil," "Commandment". Sentences and phrases of Biblical diction and allusion are also abounding: "Strange things must have looked out of my eyes like Lazarus after his resurrection" (117); "king of kings" (170); "Just because my mouth opens up like a prayer book, it does not just have to flap like a Bible" (265); "He could not sing like Peter,and he could not preach like Paul" (276).

In vocabulary, grammar and syntax, the folk sermon is rather simple. *Dust Track,* too, is stylistically uncomplicated on the surface. The text is written in the language of the folk as Hurston addresses her audience in the vernacular. Moreover, proverbs, metaphors and similes are an essential and significant part of the narrative.

Phrases related to self-empowerment are very recurrent in the text: "with sword in hand," and "I stood on the mountain" are stock phrases which are significantly present

in Hurston's work and in folk sermons based on the Old Testament.They each suggest metaphors symbolic of strength and power. "Zigzag lightning-thunder" phrases occur most frequently in *Dust Tracks*; for example "You, who play the zig-zag lightning of power over the world, with the grumbling thunder in your wake, think kindly of those who walk in the dust" (286), or "The symbol of lightning was painted on my back. This was to be mine forever" (192).

Phrases containing the word 'sword' also occur in contexts dealing with power and strength. For instance, Hurston uses this typical phrase in reference to herself: "I am in the struggle with the sword in my hands"; and, "I am still in there tussling with the sword in my hand" (280). The sword is symbolic of combat and the spirit of struggle. The mountain is symbolic of strength and endurance. Combined in this statement, they indicate the author's sense of self-empowerment: "I have stood on the peaky mountain wrapped in rainbows, with a harp and a sword in my hands." Indeed, each chapter in the text emphasizes individualism and self-empowerment. Hurston, in the posture of a folk preacher, urges the individual to provide for oneself and to work for what he wants. She even blames Afro-Americans for complaining about their situation and suggests that her people follow her example: "I do not pray. I accept the means at my disposal for working out my destiny" (278). For Hurston, the power for change is individual and internal. She strongly defends these beliefs in the chapters "My People! My People!" and "Religion." In addition, she maintains that in order to achieve individual power, it is imperative for Afro-Americans to renounce the past of slavery and Reconstruction, as sinners had to renounce their worldly ways, and "settle for from now on" (284). That is to say that by liberating themselves from history, they could strive and make their own destiny. They could be free and autonomous.

Thus, in the *Dust Tracks* sermon, Hurston, as folk preacher, exhorts the values of individualism and fulfilment as imperative to the struggle for freedom and equality.

6. Race and Ambiguities of the Self:

6.1 Constructing an Identity

According to Butterfield "the self belongs to the people and the people find a voice in the self" (3) and this concurs with Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the collective value in minor literature. However, the voice in black autobiography is not always a consciously political voice, and not every black self is, as he suggests, "a soldier in a long, historic march toward Canaan" (3). Indeed, the self in Zora Neale Hurston's *Dust Tracks on a Road* is one example of a black American who describes herself in her narrative in terms other than soldier or black activist. In contrast to Harriet Jacobs and to often cited African American narratives by Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Ida B. Wells, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and Maya Angelou-- all of which fit Butterfield's description-- the text of Zora Neale Hurston (which Butterfield never mentions) suppresses the interracial conflicts prevalent in the United States in the interest of a positive exploration of black culture.

It is important to mention that Hurston was born fourteen years after the end of Reconstruction, so she was rather distanced from stigmatising experiences of slavery or personal memories of Reconstruction. She hailed from the town of Eatonville, the first incorporated all-black American municipality in which black people held positions of authority and in which her father played a an important civic role as establisher of the town laws, thrice mayor, and Baptist minister. She even exceptionally witnessed a black being made a Mayor in Maitland:

> The Whites nominated a candidate and the Negroes, under the aggressive lead of Joe Clarke, a muscular, dynamic Georgia Negro, put up Tony Taylor as their standard bearer. I do not know whether it was the numerical superiority of the Negroes, or whether some of the Whites, out of deep feeling, threw their votes to the Negro side. At any rate, Tony Taylor became the first Mayor of Maitland with Joe Clarke winning out as town Marshal. This was a wholly unexpected turn, but nobody voiced any open objections. The Negro Mayor and Marshal and the White City Council took office peacefully and served their year without incident (5)

Given that white people allowed black people to designate their candidate to compete for the position of Mayor suggests that not all the white people in America considered blacks as sub-human. Many blacks came to Eatonville, including Hurston's

family.Growing up in a community of black people who proved their ability to govern themselves played an important role in the development of Hurston's personality.

Hurston undertook in writing her life story very reluctantly. Moreover, the autobiography's title suggests that what the reader will be getting in the story is the traces, rather than the substance, of a self and a life. Clearly, if one looks for a cohesive, homogeneous subject with constant stances in *Dust Tracks*, one will have challenges discovering it and might thus consider the book to be a failure. However, when considered from a post-structuralist perspective, the self that Hurston presents in *Dust Tracks* seems to be typically postmodern and thus lacking in "consistency, coherence, and unity" (Walker 388). From a postmodern prism, *Dust Tracks* far from being filled with lies, does not pretend to having figured out the essential nature of the self, but rather openly admits that "there is no one, single, hidden, inner, real self to reveal" (Walker 394). However, if one disregards postmodernist theory as an inadequate means for reading African American and other minority literatures, as some scholars indeed do, Gates, Jr.'s explanation of Hurston's secretiveness about some aspects of her life might be helpful. In his review of *Dust Tracks*, Gates, Jr. asserts that Hurston deliberately decided to leave some events from her past to herself as a means of protection against "traditional black male autobiographers [...] [as well as] a potentially hostile readership" (A Negro 43). He goes on to say: "She censored all that her readership could draw upon to pigeonhole or define her life as a synecdoche of 'the race problem'" (A Negro 43). In the same vein, Sidonie Smith asserts:

> Hurston does not position herself as the victimized black subject since she does not locate the origins of her subjectivity in the history of oppression or the violent psychology of race relations in America. In this way, she eludes being assigned any provided subjectivity and foils any attempt on the part of the white reader to fix her as a 'representative' of her race" (*Subjectivity* 110).

Hurston may have wanted to be appraised more as a human being than specifically as a black female writer, in racist America. She has then composed a narrative wherein the persona constructed transcends the repressive conditions of society and holds power over self. Then what some have read as Hurston's secretiveness, insincerity and assimilation could thus, on the contrary, be read as "a testimony of survival and an act

of resistance" (Plant 10). Hurston has deliberately concealed her unhappy past experiences of racism, sexism and classism, since, in Plant's words, "acknowledged pain, fragility, timidity and fear are all considered forms of weakness and impediments to self-empowerment" (16).

Hurston's construction of her identity as a black woman carries an incompatible contradiction, as the segregated South is a home that is unhomely ("unheimlich" in the Freudian sense) for the African-American woman.

According to Freud, the German term "Heimlich" has a double meaning: it means that which is familiar and comfortable like one's home, and that which is secretive and forbidden. The negative term "unheimlich" (unhomely) estranges the home to make it "uncanny." In his essay on "The Uncanny," Freud explains that:

> the German word "unheimlich" is obviously the opposite of "Heimlich" ("homely"), "heimisch" ("native")? the opposite of what is familiar; and we are tempted to conclude that what is "uncanny" is frightening precisely because it is not known and familiar. Naturally not everything that is new and unfamiliar is frightening, however; the relation is not capable of inversion (220).

Then, 'the uncanny' is that kind of frightening which, according to Freud, "leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (220). What has constructed Hurston's particular identity politics in *Dust Tracks* is actually location - the unhomely home - and her seemingly paradoxical identification with that "home". Indeed, at the beginning of *Dust Tracks*, Hurston reminds the reader that the evolution of the individual is linked to time and place, and that our comprehension of the "Self" cannot be separated from the larger ideas of history and community. Hurston reconstructs her black hometown, Eatonville, in order to stress the influence of this autonomous black community on forming her character and her racial politics. Barbara Christian reflects on the importance of place for the African-American writer: "Perhaps African-American writers have been particularly interested in setting, because displacement, first from Africa and then through migrations from South to North, has been so much a part of our history" (348). Just in opposition to the paradigm of displacement, Hurston, however, emphasizes the exclusive historical origins of the Eatonville community.In fact, the black people who arrived in Eatonville came out of their own will attracted by the "boom

in South Florida" and the promise of "no more fear of the fury of Reconstruction. Good pay, sympathetic white folks, and cheap land soft to the touch of a plow" (Hurston 8).

Even though race relations are to some extent idealized in this text, Hurston's main objective is to demonstrate that Eatonville is a functioning black community with rural roots and cultural integrity. Hurston's exploration for cultural "roots" in the South negates the exile of many African Americans who migrated to the North. In reclaiming the South as a home, Hurston affirms it as she imaginatively reconstructs it. This reconstruction created out of the collective experiences of racial subservience is part of Hurston's political agenda. Indeed, Hurston's stress on black culture in the South challenges the status of the South as a single definable reality with clear ideological boundaries, and recreates it differently.

6.2 Zora, the Anthropologist

Hemenway believed that Hurston developed a "vocational schizophrenia" because she was part artist and part scientific researcher. In fact, when Hurston first crafted the *Eatonville Anthology* in 1926, Hemenway stated that it was "hardly fiction at all. It is pure Zora Neale Hurston: part fiction, part folklore, part biography, all told with great economy, with an eye for authentic detail, and a perfect ear for dialect" (70). Thus, Hurston may have faced the same dilemma to subject her autobiography to an artistic paradigm or to the perspective of an anthropologist.

In 1903, Du Bois wrote: "One ever feels his twoness - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (*The Souls* 3). But Hurston seems to suffer from more than twoness: she is black American, a woman, an anthropologist and an artist. Then, it is necessary to discover the sense of self that anthropology gave to Hurston and the way it helped her to shape her autobiography.Usually, ethnographic researchers go into another culture as strangers and try to negotiate their acceptance into this new culture. However, it was not the case with Hurston as she was already incorporated in the group she was studying.

In their article "*Observations on the Mystique of Anthropology*", Braroe and Hicks discuss the anthropologist's view of primitive life as well as his/her self image. For them, anthropologists tend to romanticize the primitive, and see the primitive life as a utopia (175). They also note that American anthropologists have highlighted the unity of each culture they studied, and have often written of the homogeneity and integrity of primitive life in implicit contrast to the disorder of heterogeneous civilization (176). The traditional view of the self held by the anthropologist, is rather intriguing. It is that of an eccentric, dauntless adventurer, and a disarmingly nonconformist academic. His behavior is derived from the mystique. The anthropologist often comes upon this image of himself in his work, his style of life, and he himself cultivates it (Braroe and Hicks177). More importantly, they note:

> As a profession, anthropology offers women who are resentful of traditional bonds an opportunity to exercise their talents in a science whose hallmark is marginality. Like others for whom their own culture is strange and imperious, women in anthropology find a workable solution to the problem of being unavoidably in one's society, yet not fully committed to its culture. In the academic world, even at present, the claims of women to status and prestige are more likely to be recognized in anthropology than in most other specialties (Braroe and Hicks179).

Obviously, Hurston was affected by many elements of "the mystique" cited above. Besides, there are many examples in the autobiography that embody that. For instance, in her portrait of the rural South, Eatonville, her primitive society is described as utopian in nature. Of her patron Mrs. Charlotte Mason's relationship with the Southern black she says: "she is altogether in sympathy with them, because she says truthfully they are utterly sincere in living" (*Dust Tracks*, 177). In addition, in her "Polk County section" Hurston emphasizes both the spirit of adventure and her understanding of the primitive. She concludes by saying: "that is the primeval flavor of the place, and as I said before, out of this primitive approach to things, I all but lost my life" (185).

In her article: "*The Transformation of Eatonville's Ethnographer*", Marion Kilson suggests that Hurston's writing can be seen to have three distinct stages: Ethnographic Experimenter (from 1924 to 1931), Ethnographic Artist (1933 to 1942), and Critical Ethnographer (1934 to 1951). Kilson notes how Hurston changed and developed as an artist and anthropologist. Interestingly, she places *Dust Tracks* under

the category "Ethnographer Artist", under fiction instead of essay. She argues that the content of the autobiography does not differ qualitatively either in substance or in attitude from Hurston's novels and stories (Kilson 114). During this period, Hurston's work was ethnographic in content and perspective. She avoided the problem of intercaste relations in American society by "concentrating upon self-contained black worlds and by stressing individual situations". In depicting life situations, race per se was not a relevant variable for her. "My interest lies in what makes a man or a woman do such-and-so, regardless of his color" (*Dust Tracks* 214).

Thus, we may assume that as an ethnographer who adheres to the mystique of anthropology, and as an artist committed to her art, Hurston attempted to reconcile both art and anthropology in her autobiography, which is a difficult enterprise in a traditional autobiography.

Hurston's posture as a woman writer is best outlined in the chapter entitled: "Research". As she explains:

> I needed my Barnard education to help me see my people as they rally are. But I found that it did not do to be too detached as I stepped aside to study them. I had to go back, dress as they did, talk as they did, live their life, so that I could get into my stories, the world I knew as a child (196).

Thus, Hurston's education at Barnard College, her acquisition of its language and lifestyle helped her to re-enter the lives of her people and see them frm a different perspective. According to Hemenway, this pull between two worlds made it impossible for Hurston to become a professional anthropologist. He notes:

> Zora never became a professional academic folklorist because such a vocation was alien to her exuberant sense of self, to her admittedly artistic, sometimes erratic temperament, and her awareness of the aesthetic content of black folklore. If there is a single theme which emerges from her creative effort during the thirties[…]it is that eventually immediate experience takes precedence over analysis, emotion over reason, the personal over the theoretical (213).

Hurston may have not become a professional researcher, but both her experience in anthropology and her education at Barnard College enabled her to be very creative and grant her the confidence to write her life story with a new perspective.

Hurston traces the development of her racial consciousness in different episodes. On one occasion Zora asked her father to buy her a horse, she explains how her father retorted to her in anger:

> "I want a fine black riding horse with white leather saddle and bridles," I told Papa happily. "You, what?" Papa gasped. "What was dat you said?" "I said, I want a black saddle horse with…. "A saddle horse!" Papa exploded. "It is a sin and a shame! Lemme tell you something right now, my young lady; you ain't white. Riding horse!! Always trying to wear de big hat! I don't know how you got in this family nohow. You ain't like none of de rest of my young'un" (29).

John Hurston seems to share the attitude of the majority of Southern black parents who were so concerned with the safety of their children who seemed to be stepping outside the realm of whites that they tried to modify their aspirations and behavior. Her father served as mayor and had even written the Eatonville town laws. However, he did not do much for his children saying that "It did not do for Negroes to have too much spirit". Hurston notes:

> He predicted dire things for me. The white folks were not going to stand for it. I was going to be hung before I got grown. Somebody was going to blow me down for my sassy tongue. Mama was going to suck sorrow for not beating my temper out of me before it was too late.Posses with ropes and guns were going to drag me out sooner or later on account of that stiff neck I toted. I was going to tote a hungry belly by reason of my forward ways. (21)

Hurston expressed thus her rebellion against the widespread stereotypes about the proper demeanor of black women in America be it in all-black town.

Female autobiographers tend to recognize the positive influence of the maternal figures in their lives and devote a significant amount of attention to the characters who served as strong maternal influence in their lives and without exception describe these characters in positive terms, as sources of great emotional and psychological support. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese asserts that "black women's autobiographies abound with evidence of or references to the love that black female autobiographers felt for and felt from their female elders" (To Write 166).In a traditional sense of a "self-in-relation," Hurston talks about the importance of women in her life.Lucy Hurston was Zora's first role model. She was the one who encouraged Zora to reject stereotypes and to retain her individuality despite the restrictions society placed on women. Indeed, Lucy did not

allow the racism and sexism of American society to hinder the spontaneity of her daughter's vision of life, Lucy defends her "lies" (the stories Hurston makes up) and her "tendency [...] to stand and give battle" (Hurston 32). Hurston's sense of her gender identity clearly comes from her mother's example (qtd in Smith and Watson 184). Having witnessed her mother's refusal to be treated by her husband according to the laws of patriarchy, Hurston herself does not allow men to determine her existence. Furthermore,the character of Lucy Potts Hurston can be read on a more symbolic level as "not only the personal mother but also the representative mother-culture, that culture suppressed in the dominant white culture [. . .]where it is considered inferior" (Sidonie Smith 116). Throughout her literary and anthropological career, Hurston continues, following her mother's advice, to carry further her culture's essence and spirit.

Besides her mother, Hurston forged her gender identity from other strong women. In the chapter "My Folks", she celebrates women who successfully assert themselves in a men's world. Friendship in *Dust Tracks* is presented as an empowering force and in Hurston's own phrasing: "It seems to me that trying to live without friends, is like milking a bear to get cream for your morning coffee. It is a whole lot of trouble, and then not worth much after you get it" (142). Still, despite all the human networks that Hurston discusses in her autobiography, Rayson has described her persona as "Melvillian isolato on a continual search for an unknown kind of holy grail" (42). Actually, while discribing the women of the black community she is supportive, but she but cannot easily identify with them. According to Elizabeth Fox Genovese:

> She [Hurston] refuses the double role of victim and warrior that Jacobs constructs for herself. For Hurston, to admit the conditions or causes of her possible victimization is to belittle herself. But her goals for herself - her statue - remain shaped by that refusal: she aspires, in some way, to transcend the constraints of group identification. By insisting on being a self independent of history, race and gender, she comes close to insisting on being a self independent of body (qtd in Benstock 197).

In this sense, she is a pathbreaking autobiographer who refuses to accept that she is a part of the "collective identity" that defines the "black female self", as a self that is caught up in racial and gender oppression. Portraying herself as one singled out from the mass, especially for a woman, is rather uncommon. Hurston was indeed an

individualist, but she did not, as some have claimed, comply with a philosophy of individualism that promotes egotistic isolation from community. On the contrary, Hurston believed that she had a moral obligation towards her community, and that obligation was achieved in her work as an artist and folklorist and in her everyday life.

7. Race Matters

Many critics have reacted negatively to Hurston's *Dust Tracks* because of its lack of racial resistance. It is true that Hurston's views on "race" seem to be pursuing some kind of "raceless ideal", but actually she wants to expose, as Hemenway explains, "the inadequacy of sterile reason to deal with the phenomena of living" (213). Hurston's philosophical position is in fact reiterated more than twenty years later by Frantz Fanon in the *Wretched of the Earth:* "this historical necessity in which the men of African culture find themselves, that is, the necessity to racialize their claims and to speak more of African culture, than of national culture will lead them, up a blind alley" (8). Reminding that the undefined entity "African culture" was a creation of European colonialism, "and it is also true that those who are most responsible for this racialization of thought, or at least of our patterns of thought—are and remain those Europeans who have never ceased to set up white culture over and against all other so-called non-cultures" (214).Similarly, Hurston's purpose is to dismantle the white stereotype of black "*inculture*" not by focusing on "blackness" as an oppositional category to "whiteness" in culture but by demonstrating the vitality and distinction of non-white cultures.Obviously, Hurston was led to believe that the only way to settle this confusion was not to think in terms of race at all, but only to consider individual and individual faults and merits. "I began to laugh at both white and black who claimed special blessings on the basis of race. Therefore, I saw no curse in being black, nor no extra flavor by being white" (235). Hurston does not base her argument upon her anthropological training, but rather refers to her experience as a folk-observer of community behavior.

In some situations she seems to remain neutral; for instance, in an episode in the same chapter , Hurston supports herself by working as manicurist at a barbershop, a

stylish establishment, owned and managed by blacks, but catering exclusively to white "bankers, Senators, Cabinet Members, Congressmen, and Gentlemen of the Press" (131). One day, a man, a "Negro," came into the shop and asked for a haircut and shave. In fact, he wanted to exercise his "right to be waited on wherever [he] please[d]" (135). With the help of all the other black employees, Banks, the black manager, throw him out of the shop. Hurston was offended by the man's insistence: ". . . I wanted him thrown out, too." Later, she realized that her anger at the man "was giving sanction to Jim Crow, which theoretically, I was supposed to resist." But after more reflection, Hurston concluded that she and her colleagues could not have acted otherwise: "Off-hand, you might say that we fifteen Negroes should have felt the racial thing and served him. He was one of us" (136). Nertheless, she thinks that such a behavior would have led to the ruin of the business and to her and her colleagues' joblessness: "Then we could all have gone home to our unpaid rents and bills and things like that.... The 'militant' Negro who would have been the cause of it all, would have perched on the smuddled-up wreck of things and crowed" (165). It seems here that economic concerns take priority over racial solidarity. It is easy then to see why assertions of this nature brought Hurston under the label of an assimilationist. In the time when African Americans still endured different manifestations of American racism and black writers were expected to produce works of protest, Hurston's request to be judged more generally as a human being and a writer, rather than specifically as a black female writer in racist America, could have been seen as considerably bold.

Hurston holds a different position in some chapters of the manuscript version of *Dust Tracks*. In the most political chapter of the autobiography entitled "*Seeing the World as it is",* Hurston discusses race prejudice and strongly criticizes international politics and democracy as practiced by the United States. For example, at one point she writes: "I know that there is race prejudice, not only in America, but also wherever two races meet together in numbers. I have met it in the flesh" (248). Or in another instance: "President Roosevelt could extend his four freedoms to some people right here in America before he takes it all aboard, and, no doubt, he would do it too, if it would bring in the same amount of glory" (254). Such comments were to a large degree excised from the original version of *Dust Tracks* by Hurston's editors "as irrelevant to the

autobiography" (Brantley 223). Hurston understood well the obstacles against which she was working as a black female author in a world dominated by white men and decided not to alienate her white audience. Instead, she adopted strategies that she thought best suited her needs. This strategy has been examined by a number of literary scholars and has received different names: feather-bed resistance" (Reith), "hitting a straight lickwith a crooked stick" (Meisenhelder), "trickster" strategy (Meisenhelder, Snyder), etc. What the strategy in question tries to do is produce a text which implicitly and indirectly resists and criticizes the *status quo* and yet, when read superficially, does not seem to be a direct protest. Meisenhelder comes up with an expression of the tactics in question in Hurston's "casting her story in the form of timeless myth"(148). As she explains:

> Its language and tone [the story's] evoke the placidity and universality of fairytale, a world seemingly unsullied by mundane social problems. As Hurston uses this mythic material, however, it is just as rooted in the sociopolitical realities of race and gender as the folktales in *Mules and Men*.Myths function as both mask and vehicle for her racial analysis and for her treatment of specific whites in her life. (148-49)

Nicole E. Reith, on the other hand, looks for the "feather-bed resistance" in some episodes that seem innocent and harmless at first glance, but, in fact, are revealed to be critical when looked at more attentively. One example is when Hurston uses the terms "stud" and "buck"when talking about her father's youth (568). According to Reith, the use of these particular terms is associative and pulls "the [slave] history of blacks [and thus its criticism] into sharp focus" (79).

To conclude, we say that the autobiographical texts of both Harriet Jacobs and Zora Neale Hurston exemplify the need to question and disrupt socially constructed discursive acts of subjectivity.The common literary strategy of establishing some form of counter-discourse transcends the different historical and cultural positioning of Jacobs and Hurston and delineates the connection between these writers and their texts. Speaking and writing from the position of multiple margnalizations, as African Americans and as women, these writers acknowledge and explore the discourses of oppression that have perpetuated such a positioning and construct their subjectivity.

Harriet Jacobs is in many ways a reluctant autobiographer; she writes her story not to attract attention to her own life, but as a political statement. Thus, in her text, she must negotiate the tension between her private life and her political purpose.

Jacobs has to resort to a certain number of strategies so as to reveal the truth about her life and personality. While she creates the illusion that she has integrated traditional white discourses, she has actually subverted them. Indeed, Jacobs rewrites every narrative convention that inspires her text in order to provide her own story of slavery, the particular story of a slave girl. Moreover, Jacobs represents herself as dependent of the support of her community; yet to read Jacobs only in relation to others is to overlook her self -reliance and natural drive to be a free individual. Politically, Jacobs' individualism challenges the ideologies that sustained slavery and discrimination, and also disrupts "True Womanhood" by daring women to seek liberty.

In *Dust Tracks,* Hurston breaks with the rhetorical patterns of the traditional black women's autobiographies, namely the slave narrative, and opens the way for new experiments with form and content. In addition, she does not present herself as a victim of race and gender but instead considers her autobiography to be concerned with the "self" and not constrained by gender and condition. This position places her outside of the literary expectations of her peer group. In fact, her autobiography was not esteemed by the black intellectual community because they felt that due to its uncommon approach the work would defeat the black struggle against racism.

Hurston did not start writing in order to define herself in relationship to an antagonistic world like her predecessor Jacobs; she rather departs from the theme of racial and gender oppression that prevails in African American autobiography and moves towards a self that celebrates itself. This different version of the black female self has occured as a reflection of the changing times. Times have changed and the racially and sexually oppressed female self has become empowered and has started aspiring towards "individualistic selfhood". While Jacobs has established a discourse of black womanhood by undermining the ideals of true womanhood and redefining the black female self in their own terms, Hurston goes a step further and defines the black female self as an "individual".

Chapter III

Native American Women's Autobiographical Writings

Introduction

In this chapter, I argue that autobiographical writings by Native American women share the same concerns of other minority women writers and signal the creation of discursive acts of subjectivity. Because they are caught between the traditional and the dominant culture, their texts explore the importance of accepting one's cultural legacy and the need to be accepted as "subject" by the dominant culture. Moreover, their autobiographical writings result in similar assertions of the self and a politicized identity.

I will analyze an early Native American autobiography, Zitkala Sa's *American Indian Stories* (1920), and contemporary autobiography by Leslie Marmon Silko, *Storyteller,* using primarily Postcolonial critiques and New Literacy Studies, "which are based on the view that reading and writing only make sense when studied in the context of social and cultural (and we can add historical, political and economic) practices for which they are but a part" (Gee 180).

The selected texts also match the three characteristics that Deleuze and Guattari attribute to minor literature (18). First, language in this type of literature shows a certain degree of deterritorialization. For these Native American writers, such deterritorialization is characterised by a standard usage of English with minoritizing regional markers derived from the diverse tribal cultures, as well as with patterns originating in Native oral traditions.Second, their writings are politically determined by the imperial history experienced by their communities in the US. In addition, these writers incorporate the socio-cultural and political struggles of their nations into their works, giving them a prominently political meaning. Third, Native American authors, drawing from a long tradition of oral storytelling in Indian communities, achieve in their works the collective expression of minor literature as well as communal solidarity.

In the late twentieth century, Native Americans did look to preserve and renew their cultures, and writing was one avenue of expression. What Kenneth Lincoln calls a "Native American Renaissance" is "a written renewal of oral

traditions translated into Western literary forms" (8). This movement set the perfect stage for Native Americans writers like Silko to own their writings, this changed the landscape of Native American women's autobiographies.Indeed, these writers began to write ever more like the storytellers of their oral cultures. Arnold Krupat includes this kind of writing in a category he calls "cosmopolitan literature," a literature that uses "local, internal, or Indian modes of literary expression within texts that externally fit the Western typology of 'novels,' 'poems,' and 'short stories" (*Voice* 214).

To use the terms used in Stephen Tyler's postmodern theory of anthropology, many Native Americans abandoned the task of"representing" Native American culture, which was trying to teach it, explain it, justify it; and instead began to "evoke" Native American culture, creating works that were their culture instead of about the culture. Western concepts associated with writing were being replaced with Native American ones. Western genres, including autobiography, merged and expanded, authors turned into storytellers, texts turned into stories, and readers turned into participants.

1- Native American Autobiography

Until recently, literary critics have viewed Indian American autobiography as self-contradictory, because if an Indian was literate he was considered as assimilated and therefore could not write as a real Indian. On the other hand, engaging in life-writing was viewed as a sign of the annihilation of the Indian identity because the concept of autobiography was viewed as a Euro-American tradition.This logic led literary critics to question the "Indianness" of anyone using this Western form. This means, the more "Westernized" the form, the more assimilated the author; the more "Indian" the form, the more traditional, conservative and Indian the author. Critics have applied this essentialist understanding of the relationship between identity and form to both early and contemporary American Indian autobiography (Katanski133). They have assumed that Native American writers were automatically transformed by

contact with the English language and were thus bound by a certain literary form rather than having a choice from a range of options within a specific context to represent a chosen version of themselves.

Native American women's autobiography defies definition and challenges the boundaries of literary genres. Gretchen Bataille and Kathleen Muller Sands, prominent critics of Native American women's autobiography, argue that it may "best be addressed and analyzed in terms of the process of its creation rather than an as established genre" (*American Indian* 3). They also say:

> Each personal narrative by an American Indian woman is unique in content, mode of expression, and intention. Each demands to be judged on its own terms; yet collectively these autobiographies give structure to the fragmented nature of human lives in a way that is both recognizable as both specifically female and specifically Indian" (129- 130).

As discussed in the second chapter, many critics claimed that indigenous people were too "primitive" to have a sense of the self and to be able to represent it through writing. Others believed that autobiography is originally a Western genre and therefore Native Americans were not interested in using it as they transmitted their stories orally (Sweet Wong 126). However, critics like Gretchen Bataille, Kathleen Mullen Sands, David Brumble III and Arnold Krupat, although recognizing autobiography as a Western genre, still I argue that Native American writers use the genre by modifying it and introducing new cultural dimensions.

Early Native women's autobiographies were all written in order to help improve the conditions of Native Americans in general and their particular tribes. Because of the dire situations facing Native Americans, these autobiographies also had to be protest documents that would make non-Natives take steps to change specific actions and/or laws concerning Natives. The results were autobiographies that worked for Native Americans, while written for white audiences. Kathleen M. Sands calls them "acts of narrative resistance" (Cooperation136). They are texts of resistance because even though Native American women used the autobiographical genre, they were subverting the

genre by incorporating Native American stories, songs, rituals, and beliefs that were part of their oral traditions.

According to Edward Said, Native American woman's "strategic location", his term for the "author's position in a text with regard to the…material he writes about," was that of a defender writing to denounce past oppression and stop future oppression (20). They had much to teach and correct about themselves as women and as Native Americans; they also had much to defend, their very lives in fact.Gayatri Spivak, drawing upon Neitzsche's "will to power," says that the drive to explain facts is the drive to control them. There was very little in their interactions with Euro-Americans that Native American women could control, so they were driven to express in writing their hopes of gaining some control over their status in society.

Early Native American women's writings were for non-Native English readers. Thus, for those works to be marketable, they needed to be written in standard English and in a familiar form. According to Kilcup, early Native women autobiographers would often "ventriloquize a white editor, either consciously or unconsciously, for the purpose of creating a narrative bridge between themselves and their white audience—in effect a kind of translation" (20). These early writers were struggling between two spheres of discourse, defending their culture while trying to produce "good," EuroAmerican writing. "They are moving away from the victim role into "participants [of] two rich cultural traditions" (Ruppert 3).

In a statement**,** Paula Gunn Allen foregrounds the importance of autobiographical writing. She notes: "Native women must contend with yet a third fact, one more difficult to notice or tell about: if in the public and private mind of America Indians as a group are invisible in America, then Indian women are non-existent" (*Spider* 9).Thus, by writing their own lives and telling their stories, Native women try to establish their history and subjectivity by exploring and disclosing their singular and often overlooked culture. In fact, being positioned on the margin of the hegemonic culture enables Native women to

disrupt its dominant practices and constraints and to include texts that are alien to the traditional canon, like oral elements, rituals, ceremonies and traditional teachings.

In addition, the autobiographical writings of Native women reveal a renewed interest in the rituals and ceremonies of their ancestors.The image and teachings of Spider Woman are important for many Native Americans as demonstrated by the title of Allen's text *Spider Woman's Granddaughter*. Allen asserts that "Native writers write out of tribal traditions and into them. They, like oral storytellers, work within a literary tradition that is at base connected to ritual and beyond that to tribal metaphysics or mysticism (Allen 5). Then, the Spider woman is a weaver who connects people with their culture and legacy.The Spider Woman, Indeed, serves as a metaphor for Native American writers who seek to connect their people and their culture through their writing. For this reason, the writings of Native Americans do not display a great emphasis on individuality common to traditional Western autobiography; instead they reflect the concerns of the whole community. As Arnold Krupat notes in *the Voice in the Margin*:

> In Native American autobiography the self is most typically not constituted by the achievement of a distinctive, special voice that separates it from others, but rather, by the achievement of a particular placement in relation to the many voices (133).

The form of Native American autobiography does not conform to the traditional Western autobiography and does not necessarily follow the chronological growth and maturation of the individual; instead, it combines the development of the individual with the teachings of the tribe and emphasizes the importance of traditions for the survival of the community.

I- Zitkala Sa's *American Indian Stories*

Like most women minority writers, Zitkala Sa was overlooked for two reasons: she was a woman, and she was a mixed-blood Yankton Dakota, an Indian. As such, she was supposed to be submissive, invisible and silent. Instead, according to the preface of the Norton Anthology, "she achieved notoriety through her writing, oratory, and musical skills and was highly vocal and

aggressive in pursuit of her own development and the legal, economic, and cultural rights of Native Americans" (1792).

Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, later to change her name to Zitkala Sa (Red Bird), was born in 1876 to a Yankton/ Dakota woman, Ellen Tate Iyohinwin (Reaches for the Wind) a full blood Sioux, and to a white trader, Felker, who deserted the family before she was born. She lived with her Mother and an older brother on the Yankton reservation where she was raised in a traditional way until her eighth year when missionaries visited her family, convincing Gertrude's mother to send her daughter away to school. Ellen resented the missionaries and contended that "the palefaces, who owe us a large debt for stolen lands, have begun to pay a tardy justice in offering some education to our children (Zitkala Sa 47). However, she failed to dissuade her daughter from obtaining a "white man's education".

Zitkala Sa's life was also marked by political activism : she took a post as secretary of the Society of American Indians in 1916; edited the *American Indian Magazine* from 1918 to 1919; founded her own political organization, the National Council of American Indians of which she was the single president, in 1926; and lectured and campaigned across the country for Indian citizenship, employment of Indians in the Bureau of Indian Affairs, equitable settlement of tribal land claims, eradication of peyote use, and stabilization of laws relating to Indians until her death in 1938 (Hafen xx-xxi).

1.1 Zitkala Sa's *American Indian Stories* and the Tradition of Autobiography

Many late nineteenth century and early twentieth century ethnic autobiographies were modeled on the conventions of Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, demonstrating that those who "assimilate" into mainstream culture can succeed. However, for scholars like Houston Baker, minority writers often have chosen a voice of reconciliation precisely because they know that they

are part of the disempowered group and that it was a strategy to become "effectively articulate" (Baker 93).

Zitkala Sa's autobiographical writing does not strictly conform to the traditional notions of autobiography. She subverts the genre by combining elements of personal narrative, Western autobiography, essayistic explorations and oral storytelling, and she incites her audience to oppose unjust treatment and even militates for social change. Moreover, while her text is written in English, she undermines the supposed primacy and authenticity of this written language by using it to concede a veiled attack. Therefore, she established herself as a recognized literary trickster.

American Indian Stories was published in 1921. Much of this work was published separately mostly for *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's Magazine.* The first three autobiographical essays "*Impressions of an Indian Childhood," "The School Days of an Indian Girl*," and "*An Indian Teacher Among Indians*" were first published in 1900 while she was a violin student at the Boston Conservatory of Music. According to Laura Wexler, Zitkala Sa succeeded in finding a publisher who thought her work was suitable for "the genteel tradition in American letters" that the Atlantic represented because she had been influenced in white-run American Indian schools by the prevailing "sentimental culture".

Two new pieces "*A Dream of Her Grandfather*"and "*The Widespread Enigma Concerning Blue-Star Woman*" were added, along with the political essay, "*America's Indian Problem*" , parts of which were taken from an article she wrote for *Edict Magazine,* with her own added commentary.

Most critics agree that the first three essays are autobiographical in nature, but disagree as to whether the work as a whole should be classified as autobiography. In 1983, Paula Gunn Allen calls the work an autobiography and implies that the traditional stories are part of the autobiography. She notes:

> Among the very few autobiographies of Indian women during this period is that by Zitkala-Ša [Gertrude Bonnin], *American Indian Stories.* In essays originally published between 1900-1902, Zitkala-Ša recounts her girlhood and school experiences and retells traditional stories (*Studies* 302).

On the other hand, in 1984, Bataille and Sands in their *American Indian Women Telling Their Lives* do not consider the whole work as autobiography ; they speak of Zitkala-Ša's "youthful recollections in a series for *Atlantic* Monthly" (12).

In 1985, Dexter Fisher republished *American Indian Stories* and in her foreword, originally an article for a 1979 edition of *American Indian Quarterly;* she writes:"*American Indian Stories* is an important collection because it represents one of the first attempts by a Native American woman to write her own story without the aid of an editor, an interpreter, or an ethnographer" (vi). Although Fisher in her 1979 classification of the work as "autobiographical" is just referring to the first three autobiographical sketches," she does acknowledge the autobiographical nature of the stories that follow. Furthermore, this edition was published around the time when the works of N. Scott Momadays's *The Names (*1976) and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller*, (1981) were published. *Names* is subtitled "A Memoir," and *Storyteller* on its back cover informs the readers that the work includes "stories of her own family."

However, critics called these works autobiography even though they do not adhere to the strictly Euro-Western ideas of autobiography.Therefore, under this new understanding, *American Indian Stories* as a whole could be easily classified as autobiography.

In 1988, David Brumble includes Zitkala-Ša's work in his list of autobiographies, but doesn't discuss her work in detail. Then, in *The Voice in the Margin (1989) Arnold Krupat* does not mention *American Indian Stories* specifically, but he does call Silko's *Storyteller* an autobiography, arguing that "Silko's relation to every kind of story becomes the story of her life" (164). This same argument can be made for the "stories" in *American Indian Stories.*

In *Native American Women's Writing 1800-1924 , an Anthology* (2000), Karen Kilcup includes parts of *American Indian Stories*, but the introduction to the section of Zitkala-Ša's writings makes a distinction between the autobiographical works and the stories (295). Another recent critic, P. Jane

Hafen in 2001 calls the work an "anthology" and a "compilation,"suggesting that it is not a unified whole (ix).

Recent critics tend to divide *American Indian Stories* into autobiographical essays and fictional stories. In their introduction to the 2003 edition of *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings,* Cathy Davidson and Ada Norris explain: "Zitkala-Ša's *American Indian Stories* takes some basic autobiographical material, melds it with stories of other Native Americans who have been sent away to boarding school, then shapes it into a narrative" (xxix).

American Indian Stories is broken down into ten chapters including " *America's Indian Problem*" which is obviously a political tract. However, even though the last six chapters do not seemingly conform to the tenets of traditional autobiography, *American Indian Stories* still can serve as a coherent autobiographical work when read as a unified whole. As Roumiana Velikova suggests, Zitkala Sa indeed vacillates between political and autobiographical discourses, sometimes significantly blurring the divisions between the two (51). The historical and culturally inflected stories that follow the four introductory chapters of the autobiography enhance Zitkala Sa's allegations concerning the "white man" who has attacked the integrity of her people and undermined an entire culture.

1.2 Zitkala-Sa'sAutobiographical Strategies

Like Zora Neale Hurston, Zitkala Sa attempted to preserve her people's oral tradition by transcribing oral tales into written English, as well as transcribing her life story into autobiography.And like Hurston, Zitkala Sa found herself caught between the role of observer and participant. However, contrary to Hurston who rejected, in a way, political commitments, especially to the cause

of "racial solidarity," Zitkala-Sa wanted to show how her life was transcribed in the cultural life of her people. Then, for Zitkala-Sa, the private self is also a cultural construct. To establish her cultural identity, Zitkala-Sa put on her own autobiographical strategies, declining, on the one hand, the predominant assimilationist autobiographical mode of her time as well as, on the other hand, the nostalgic stance of Western ethnographers who would see the Native American as a vanishing race.

Many late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century ethnic autobiographers wrote autobiographies modeled on the conventions of Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, proving that people who work hard,become educated and assimilate into American society , can succeed in the majority culture, overcoming even the barriers of race, class and gender. Scholars, however, have argued that in such autobiographical works as Washington's *Up from Slavery*, minority writers often have chosen a voice of reconciliation and accommodation precisely because they understand that they are part of a disempowered group; strategically using an encoded language of accommodation, they seek what power they can get from a dominant culture which might otherwise silence them.

Zitkala Sa challenges the basic assumptions of Franklinian autobiographies. Indeed, in an edition o*f The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, Zitkala Sa's autobiographical writing is included, with the comment that "it satisfies none of the conventional expectations of male autobiographies (typically narratives of triumphs of the will) or of female autobiographies (typically narratives of victories of love and domesticity)" (864). Zitkala-Sa's writing does not, indeed, conform to these expectations and disrupts traditional notions of autobiography on two levels: it does not offer a model of triumph and integration, nor does it emphasize the importance of language in the process of self-authentication.

Zitkala Sa published her autobiography under her self -given Lakota name. By choosing a Lakota name and using the English language in her text,

she reminds readers that she has replaced "the narrow monocultural Euro American lens with a more inclusive bicultural lens through which they can now view the life of an American Indian woman" (Spack 28). As Dorothea Susag suggests, with rhetorical moves such as this, Zitkala-Sa contradicts the "myth of bilingualism as a handicap (21). With her first sentence, "A wigwam of weather-stained canvas stood at the base of some irregularly ascending hills", she announces that the English language could and would be used by an American Indian effectively to describe American Indian life in American Indian terms.

As in traditional autobiographies, Zitkala Sa's first three essays take the form of a linear journey, from innocence to experience. In the first essay, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," she describes her childhood in the resevation and then relates the events leading to her departure from the reservation to go to school. However, she does not describe any rite of passage common to all Indian children.

Zitkala Sa's autobiographical essays are chronological, but they do not present a progress from confusion to organization. The first essay, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood", portrays a world of perfect peace between humankind and nature. In the final part of the first essay, missionaries convince Zitkala-Sa's mother to allow her young daughter to go East to be educated. The next essay, "The School Days of An Indian Girl," describes Zitkala-Sa's progress towards acculturation and maturity in what is clearly a rough American world. Zitkala-Sa eventually submits to white man's customs and decides to stay in the school. Nevertheless, throughout this section, Zitkala-Sa shifts between two worlds-the world of her mother, and the white man's world. For example when her hair is cut, Zitkala-Sa feels bereft: "Then I lost my spirit.... I moaned for my own mother, but no one came to comfort me. Not a soul reasoned quietly with me, as my mother used to do; for now I was only one of many little animals driven by a Herder" (56). Zitkala-Sa feels the loss of her mother's presence and her anxiety does not diminish when she acquires a new language and a new culture: "The melancholy of those black days has left so long a shadow that it darkens the path

of years that have since gone by" (66). The pain of being brutally stripped of her Native American identity does not lessen as time passes.

In more standard autobiographical writing, the difficult adolescence period would be rewarded by a maturity of acceptance and integration. However, in Zitkala-Sa's third and final essay, "An Indian Teacher Among Indians," Zitkala-Sa has not chosen the white man's world, nor has she achieved a cohesive sense of belonging.When she returns to the west, she is angry when she realizes her family's disempowerment and poverty; she states: "Let us not look for good or justice: then we shall not be disappointed" (92). In the final section, then, Zitkala-Sa still oscillates between two pain-filled worlds, unable to achieve comfort in either.

Concerning the structure of the narrative, these three essays do not depict a movement from chaos to identity. The retrospective reconstruction of events, so important to autobiography as a genre, is present nonetheless. Nevertheless, the final chapter, ironically titled "Retrospection," depicts loss, rather than a record of achievement:

> For the white man's papers I had given up my faith in the Great Spirit.For these same papers I had forgotten the healing in trees and brooks. On account of my mother's simple view of life, and my lack of any, I gave her up, also. I made no friends among the race of people I loathed. Like a slender tree, I had been uprooted from my mother, nature, and God. I was shorn of my branches, which had waved in sympathy and love for home and friends. The natural coat of bark which had protected my oversensitive nature was scraped off to the very quick. (97)

Certainly, this passage does not suggest that Zitkala-Sa was seeking a coherent identity. The retrospection is rather a harsh allegation against a dominant ideology which forces acculturation at the expense of self. Moreover, this conclusion undermines the traditional retrospective stance of the autobiographical genre by denying the presence of any form of coalescence in the events of the autobiographer's life. Roy Pascal remarks that the "best" autobiographies "suggest a certain power of the personality over circumstance...in the sense that the individual can extract nurture out of disparate

incidents and ultimately bind them together in his own way, disregarding all that was unusable" (10-11). Zitkala Sa refuses to bind together the events of her life, "disregarding all that was unusable" (all that she could not reconcile), because to do so would undermine the impact of her painful experiences.

Zitkala Sa's autobiography conforms to the expectations of a "conversion narrative" as it relates her life from a traditional Sioux childhood in the West to her conversion to christianity, then to her American education and concludes with her residence in an Eastern city. However, she disrupts readers' expectations by constantly denouncing the hypocrisy of the American institutions. While acknowledging her aquisition of literacy and other markers of civilization, the autobiography also shows Zitkala Sa's ambivalence toward the boarding school educational approach.In a correspondence with Carlos Montezuma, for example, she considers that vocational training at Carlisle was intended to relegate students to the status of slaves; She notes:

> I do not wish to see them drudges for that is worse than their own condition. ... I will never speak of the whites as elevating the Indian! . . . Until Colonel Pratt actively interests himself in giving college education to Indians I cannot say his making them slaves to the plow is nothing other than drudgery! And drudgery is hell- not civilization!(Sentimental Education 219)

Concerning both structure and content, then, this work disrupts the presumption that an autobiography will establish a pattern of power over circumstances, thereby unifying the individual consciousness. Furthermore, while most autobiographies use language to achieve self-authentication, Zitkala-Sa intentionally rejects both the white man's language (English), as well as the basic discursive principles which support it. According to Janet Varner Gunn, autobiographical writers construct a self through language and writing: "The autobiographical perspective has...to do with taking oneself up and bringing oneself to language" (qtd in Benstock16). Moreover, autobiographers usually achieve subjectivity by contrasting the autobiographical self with an oppositional, non-literate "Other," as Arnold Krupat explains:

> the American self tended to locate its peculiar national distinctiveness in relation to the perceived opposition between the European, the "man of culture," and the Indian, the "child of nature"... These autobiographers were conscious of

> themselves as writers where it was writing that precisely distinguished the European "man of culture" from "nature's child,"-the Indian-who did not write. The classic eastern autobiographies include scenes of writing (and reading) as important to self-definition. (*For Those* 32-33)

American autobiography, then, is a genre which finds its subjectivity through the act of writing, and through the distinction between a literary (i.e., written) self and a non-literary "Other"--an "Other" who is frequently figured in American writing as racially distinct.Sands claims that Native American autobiography respects and uses the power of words:

> Even when the narrator delivers the story in English, the reverence for the sacredness of the word, which marks all American Indian literature, is evident, often along with distinctive patterns of language that...establish a recognizably Indian voice in the work (*American* 57-58).

Certainly, for Native American writers of the nineteenth century, the written word became a new weapon for survival, but as noted earlier by Deleuze and Guattari, language is an ambivalent tool, both the sign of oppression, and the means of escaping it. In the same vein, Cheyfitz observes that a colonized person can master the colonizer's language not to "be white," not to attain power, but to "explode" or "expose" the colonizer's power position (126). Such a stance challenges the notion that the colonizer owns the language: "In the revolutionary situation... [t]he native speaker... does not so much master the master's language as take possession of it, or more precisely, take up his [or her] rightful place in it" (126). In taking possession the colonizer's language to denounce violence and undermine the myth of Euro-American superiority that the language has perpetrated, Zitkala-Sa demonstrates that a language belongs to whomever uses it and can fulfill "the political needs of any people who must speak it" (Cheyfitz 127).

The intricate relationship of the Native American writer to language is recognized by Zitkala-Sa herself, for she recognizes that "Language is only a convenience, just like a coat is a convenience, and it is not so important as your mind and your heart" (154). For her, language is like something to be used for

the sake of convenience-but not something to be trusted in the same way a mind or a heart can be trusted.

Language was not always "convenient" to Native Americans, for English was used to destitute them of their land and further their cultural disenfranchisement, as Krupat explains: "For the whites, the 'advance' of the 'frontier' always meant domination and appropriation, and the movement westward was achieved not only with the power of the sword but of the pen as well" (*Indian 26*). According to him, to conquer the continent required not only troops but a discourse "of what Foucault would call assujetisserment, of—in Edward Said's description, --'the subjugation of individuals in societies'" (26). Given this background, it is no wonder that Native American writers like Zitkala Sa have an ambivalent relationship to the process of self construction in and through their writings. For these writers, English was certainly the language of literacy if they wished to be read at all. Zitkala-Sa seems to believe that the white man's language is a means to power, but through a series of incidents involving English she discovers its problematic and untrustworthy nature.

The next section shows how Zitkala Sa uses language and deterritorializes it to resist Carlisle's educational plan.

1.3 Resisting the Script of Education

Most prevalent was the idea that Native Americans were just not civilized.According to Edward Tyler, the founder of modern anthropology, "The savage state in some measure represents an early condition of mankind, out of which the higher culture has gradually been developed or evolved" (qtd. in Wilson 14). Euro-Americans tried to help the "savage" Natives evolve by making them more like their "civilized" EuroAmericans selves. Colonizers believed the most important way to evolve Native Americans was to educate them, particularly to teach them to write.

To understand the development of the government's English –only program, it is crucial to recognize that it was situated in a colonial context. As in

other instances of colonialism, control over language served as an important instrument in political as well as cultural exploitation, because it could be used to represent indigenous people's lives in such a way as to undermine claims to Native sovereignty. As Eric Cheyfitz notes, Europeans used language to transform Native identity by representing indigenous peoples as "barbarians" or "savages" and thereby justified (to themselves) establishing structures of domination and subordination in foreign lands (14). Such rhetorical constructions were manifest not only in politics, but also in education. For instance in Africa, English was used in colonial schools to frame students as inferior and to denigrate their native tongues. Ngugi wa Thiong'o recalls that if students at school in Kenya were caught speaking Gikuyu, they were physically beaten or forced to wear a metal plate around their necks carrying a message such as "I am stupid" or "I am a donkey" (Chetfitz 15).The English language was thus used to control the way colonized people perceived themselves and their relationship to their own languages and associated cultures.

Zitkala Sa was part of a generation of Native Americans that witnessed the government's educational plan for Indian assimilation. As part of this governmental plan, she left her home in the Yankton Reservation in South Dakota to attend White's Manual Labor School in Wabash, Indiana, the Santee Normal Training School at the Santee Agency in Nebraska and Earlham College. The juxtaposition of her essays with the Carlisle's publications demonstrates two facets of her resistance. First, this juxtaposition shows that through her essays Zitkala Sa explicitly questions Carlisle's educational plan, which sought to civilize Indian "savages," transform them into self-sufficient individuals, and teach them English. And second, this juxtaposition allows for a reading of Zitkala Sa's essays to what Scott Richard Lyons calls "rhetorical sovereignty" (450). Through her essays, Zitkala Sa attempts to resist Carlisle's educational plan and to argue for "the inherent right and ability of [Indian] peoples to determine their own communicative needs and desires [...], to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse," or, in Zitkala Sa's case, of education (Lyons 449-450).

Carlisle's educational plan rested on the fact that Indians were savages who must be civilized, and its educational mission was to remove Indian children from the reservation, rid them of any tribal characteristics, and then teach them what Carlisle saw as the good and civilized ways of white culture:

> [W]hen we agree with the oft repeated sentiment that the only good Indian is a dead one, we mean this characteristic of the Indian. Carlisle's mission is to kill THIS Indian, as we build up the better man. We give the rising Indian something nobler and higher to think about and do, and he comes out a young man with the ambitions and aspirations of his more favored white brother. (*Indian Helper* 18 march 1898).

Zitkala Sa was aware of Carlisle's educational narrative; she therefore reverses the dichotomy that Carlisle establishes by telling stories of Indian home life, marked by descriptions of art, etiquette and social codes. At home as a child, Zitkala Sa did not "run wild"; she stayed close beside her mother and took part in "practical observation lessons in the art of beadwork" by observing how her mother "spread upon a mat beside her bunches of colored beads, just as an artist arranges the paints upon his palette" (40). Furthermore, just as Carlisle displays the manners and proprieties of white culture, Zitkala Sa displays those of Indian tribal life. She writes of her Indian traditions, recalling her mother's "hospitality" when she would cordially "invite the neighboring old men and women to eat supper," after which came a moment when "time old legends were told" (38). She makes other reversals of the white /civilized, Indian / savage script, arguing that she not only came to school a civilized child, but also that it was during her boarding school experience that she suffered the "extreme indignities" of a savage and cruel white culture (187). She makes this point clear when she describes the different styles of dress of the "palefaces" and Indians: "As I walked noiselessly in my soft moccasins, I felt like sinking to the floor, for my blanket had been stripped from my shoulders. I looked hard at the Indian girls who seemed not to care that they were even more immodestly dressed than I, in their tightly fitting clothes" (186). In her essays, it is not the Indian who is barely clothed in the "full and hideous dance dress, or rather undress with more feathers and toggery than clothing"; instead, it is Indian students dressed in white apparel

who are "immodestly" dressed. Along these same lines, Zitkala Sa discusses how white, seemingly civilized actions actually transgressed cultural practices of great importance to Native people. She cites the time in her education when the "paleface" teachers cut their students' "long, heavy hair" (187).She informs her readers that this practice was not taken lightly by Indian communities, for Indian children had been taught by their mothers "that only warriors who were captured had their hair shingled by the enemy. Among Indians short hair was worn by mourners, and shingled hair by cowards!" (187).When Zitkala Sa describes her haircutting experience, it is not the Indian who is seen as the savage, but the white teachers who carry out crude and barbaric actions: "downstairs and tied fast in a chair. I cried aloud, shaking my head all the while until I felt the cold blades of the scissors against my neck, and heard them gnaw off one of my thick braids. Then I lost my spirit" (187). In fact, the white educators do not help Zitkala Sa develop her civilized nature; instead they are the savages who cut her braids and who force her to lose her Indian spirit.By disrupting this dominant dichotomy, she intervenes in Carlisle's system of what Vizenor calls "manifest manners, which are "the simulations of dominance; the notions and misnomers that are read as the authentic and sustained representations of Native American Indians" (5-6).Zitkala Sa's move to re-present Indian life and inscribe an Indian world governed by art,culture, and social etiquette is not only an act of "rhetorical sovereignty", it is also an act of Indian "survivance," an act that "undermine[s] and surmount[s], with imagination and the performance of new stories, the manifest manners of scriptural simulations and 'authentic' representations of the tribes in the literature of dominance"(17).

Carlisle argued that to be truly civilized the Indian must break from the tribe and become a self-sufficient individual: "We believe that it is criminal to encourage the Indians to cling together in communities on reservations. [.. .] GO OUT! GO FORWARD! BE AN INDIVIDUAL! is our doctrine;"God helps those who help themselves," our motto" (Indian Helper, 11 Oct 1895). Zitkala Sa argues against Carlisle's assertion that Indians have no individual identity by

claiming that her education was not what enabled her to develop her individuality; instead, the school compromised and constricted it.Indeed, her essays s attest to the fact that not only did she have her own individuality and Indian identity before she attended the off-reservation school, but also that the school is what constrained and suffocated her. In "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," she describes how her life with her mother cultivated the individual in her. When Zitkala Sa received her lessons in the "art of beadwork," her mother "required of [her] original designs"; her mother's quiet "oversight made [her] feel strongly responsible and dependent upon [her] own judgment" (40). It was at home on the reservation that Zitkala Sa was "treated [. . .] as a dignified little individual" (40). In contrast to the cultivation of Zitkala Sa's individuality in her Indian community, the off-reservation school only restrained and impeded her development.She would "actively [test] the chains which tightly bound [her] individuality like a mummy for burial" (190), her "spirit" eventually "tore itself in struggling for its lost freedom," and she realized "all was useless"(186). The off-reservation school forced her to surrender her Indian individuality and ways of life.

Through these essays, Zitkala Sa offers her experience as proof that Carlisle's educational plan does not automatically lead students down a path to individual success. Even though such publications as Harpers Bazaar recognized her as an exemplary Indian who was brought to school as a "veritable little savage" and then transformed into a writer with "rare command of English and much artistic feeling" ("Persons" 330), she complicates her own success story by revealing that her educational journey led her to "the heart of chaos".

According to Carlisle, learning the English language did not seem to be a difficult experience at all. In fact, English acquisition seemed to be something Indian students strived for. However, from Zitkala Sa's perspective, the English language was not welcome to her ears. Conversely, it brought "unjustifiable frights and punishments" into her life (188). Her essays show that the foreign, English-speaking voices of the teachers and other students only added to the

chaos she experienced as a young girl. But even though these English words created a "bedlam within which [she] was securely tied" (186), she did learn to speak English, not because she wanted to, but because she had to. Given the fact that she wrote these essays in English, Zitkala Sa obviously learned English and learned it so well she was able to use her command of the language to challenge Carlisle's educational system by publishing her essays in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Yet, she makes sure her readers know that her use of English is itself "problematic, an ambivalent tool-both the sign of oppression, and the means of escaping it" (Cutter37).

Despite the fact that she uses her writing to "escape oppression" by critiquing Indian education, her acquisition of English was not made without concessions. When she speaks of how the school and the teaching of the English language have changed her, she writes, "I no longer felt free to be myself, or to voice my own feelings"; English had taken part of her identity (47). She connects identity with language, arguing, loke Joy Harjo and many twenty-first-century writers including bell hooks and Gloria Anzaldua, that a part of a person's culture and identity is lost when she gives up her "mother's native tongue".Zitkala Sa's perspective on English acquisition resonates with Harjo's when Harjo writes:

> My frustration with the language, particularly the English language, stems from anger with the colonization process in which English language was a vicious tool. The colonizers knew what they were doing when they tried to destroy tribal languages and which, infuriatingly, they were successful at in many instances. Language is culture, a resonant life form itself that acts on the people and the people on it. The worldview, values, relationships of all kinds-everything, in fact, is addressed in and through a language. (99)

Harjo here only reinforces Zitkala Sa's assessment of the enforcement of English acquisition as a site of white cultural hegemony that works to erase Indian identity and culture.

2. *American Indian Stories* and the Sentimental Novel

Federal schools like Carlisle saw Indian women as crucial parts of their civilizing program. Their work rested on the idea that female students must master the arts of domesticity, embrace the ideals of true womanhood and to abnegate all connections to Indian life. As Estelle Reel instructs, "because our grandmothers did these things in a certain way is no reason why we should do the same" (qtd. in Lomawaima 231). Therefore, through her autobiographical essays, Zitkala-Ša tells her readers that the educational process she went through did not achieve its goals. In her writings, she questioned this process and worked against the cultural erasure happening at schools like Carlisle.

Many literary scholars have discussed and defined the conventions of domestic or sentimental fiction. Donna Campbell provides a useful summary of the genre, citing such features as a heroine's quest to master herself and desires, her struggle to handle social pressures and personal passions, and her ability to endure suffering "at the hands of abusers of power before establishing a network of surrogate kin" (119).

Sentimentality is marked by a particular setting and cast of characters: often the child, slave, or elder on a stage of what Philip A. Fisher calls an "inevitable and fated suffering" (93). This suffering, through which Fisher claims the characters' humanness is earned. Jane Tompkins asserts that the effectiveness of sentimental fiction rests in its capacity to form a connection between the reader and character: a process through which the "other" enters the self metaphorically to become it. The boundaries between the sufferer and the observer are at least temporarily obscured; the reader is not only taught to feel as another does but to (mis)take that feeling as her own (qt in Carpenter 3). Challenging Tompkins's fixation with white, middle-class women as the writers and readers of sentimental fiction, Laura Wexler argues that sentimentality was a significant instrument for the astute "civilizing" of young Native American women in the boarding schools of the late nineteenth century. Sentimentality, she claims, "was an externalized aggression that was sadistic, not masochistic, in flavor. The energies it developed were intended as a tool for the control of

others, not merely as aid in the conquest of the self "(15). For Wexler, sentimentality becomes a key instrument of nineteenth-century colonization.

Like the Native American women writers who preceded and followed her in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Zitkala Sa drew from sentimental and autobiographical genres and then deliberately adjusted those genres for a predominantly non-Indian readership. This strategy encouraged her to claim and reshape the narrative and moral authority associated with the two literary forms.Zitkala Sa's stories particularly use the language of domesticity to analyze sentimental ideology's central role in forced Indian education as well as its related participation in the national effort to Americanize the Indian. In parallel, her autobiographical fiction reveals how two apparently competing discourses involving Indians, humanitarian reform and literary Westerns, joined their efforts to include "the Vanishing Indian" in their national story of progress and expansion (Bernardin 214).

The autobiography's sentimental plotline formally and thematically depicts Zitkala-Ša's ambivalence toward boarding school education. By organizing her story around domestic concerns of home, family, and mother-daughter relations, Zitkala-Ša clearly casts her life story as a version of popular nineteenth-century sentimental fiction. At the same time, her autobiography subversively engages with the propagandism of sentimental ideology in boarding schools and on reservation.

In "Impressions of an Indian Childhood,"Zitkala Sa invokes sentimental tropes in order to implicate the American government in producing her predicament.This first chapter disloses the devastating results of that forced removal,as the mother tells of how the "paleface" deceived their people, stole their homeland, and drove them away "like a herd of buffalo"(10). The mother also mourns deaths of her brother, other daughter, and husband—all casualties of the American government. Throughout "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," Zitkala Sa draws implicit contrast with the United States's relentless destruction of her home and of her people. Moreover, by describing the strength and

resilience of the women in her community, particularly her mother, Zitkala-Ša introduces an alternative image of Native American women to an audience accustomed to stereotypes of the degraded "squaw".

With the concluding incident of the first installment, Zitkala Sa stresses her mother's narrative role as moral authority. Like Iktomi (the Trickster) stories that the narrator listens to each night, the mother's cautioning stories about the duplicity of whites are designed to encourage vigilance toward non-Native "tricksters". Tricked by missionaries, the narrator refuses to listen to her mother's stories, deciding instead to go to boarding school in Indiana. The narrator's immediate regret for her decision represents the major trauma animating sentimental plots: "the violation, actual or threatened, of the affectional bond" between mother and daughter (Dobson 267). At the same time, Zitkala-Ša uses this central sentimental moment to undermine Christian sentiment by identifying missionaries as the agents of her traumatic separation from her mother.The missionaries who attract the young narrator away from her mother with their deceptive promises of "big, red apples" (39) reverse standard Judeo-Christian referents to dramatize the dangers Christianity poses to tribal survival.

In "The School Days of an Indian Girl", Zitkala Sa discloses the reformist logic of taking Indian children from their homes in order to inculcate appropriate notions of home and family. By focusing on the ruptured mother-daughter bond, Zitkala Sa refutes reformers' arguments that "owing to the peculiar surroundings of the mass of Indian children, they are homeless and are ignorant of those simplest acts that make home possible" (Morgan 229). Moreover, her detailed narrative of geographic, linguistic, and cultural dislocation at a Quaker boarding school contests the reformers' allegations of boarding schools as "substitute homes". Her narrative thus reveals the paradoxes of an educational policy that desintegrated familial bond in the name of "strengthening and purifying [the Indian's] conception of the family" (Gates 55). By representing her struggles with a linguistically, culturally,and geographically alien society, Zitkala-Sa offers an unsettling portrait of Euro-American reform culture.As the narrator reveals, to

be domesticated under the rubric of institutionalized sentimentality entails losing one's home, enduring the cultural violations of cut hair and close-fitting clothes, and finally, trying to understand an alien and expeditiously punitive discourse.

In a strategic sentimental move, Zitkala Sa repeatedly invokes her mother –loss and longing: "In my anguish I moaned for my mother, but no one came to comfort me" (56). Years later, at college, the narrator regrets her deliberate separation from her mother:"often I wept in secret,wishing I had gone West,to be nourished by my mother's love, instead of remaining among a cold race whose hearts were frozen hard with prejudice" (76). By adapting the sentimental trope of mother-hunger to define her hardship at boarding school, Zitkala Sa identifies a defining paradox of Anglo women's reform culture: its extension of humanity to Indians dictated complete disregard for familial ties. In her narrative, she shows how the white women who served as agents for her sentimental training at boarding school displayed little compassion for their Indian charges. Under a "halo of authority" (65), these representatives of Anglo womanhood sustained a punitive administration that included inadequate healthcare resulting in the unnecessary death of one of Zitkala-Sa's friends.

Having established herself as a sentimental heroine in the first installment, Zitkala Sa systematically dismantles this role in the second installment through socially unacceptable revisions of the sentimental script. In a move intended to alienate her readers, Zitkala Sa identifies Christianity as a coercive tool of assimilation. Warned by a teacher "that little girls who disobey school regulations were to be tortured by him" (63), the narrator afterward dreams of the devil chasing her back to her mother's cabin. Her dream conceives the devil as a construct only of the Euro-American worldview: he "did not speak to my mother because he did not know the Indian language" (63).The narrator recalls that just as the devil reached for her, "my mother awoke from her quiet indifference, and lifted me on her lap.Whereupon the devil vanished, and I was awake" (63). Privileging maternal authority over that exerted by school, the narrator's dream dispels the power of the Christian story. The next morning, the

narrator takes her revenge on a picture of the devil: "I began by scratching out his wicked eyes. . . . there was a ragged hole in the page where the picture of the devil had once been"(64). By conflating maternal love and cultural resilience, Zitkala Sa uses sentimentality precisely to expose its role in the agressive assimilation of Indian students.

Additionally, in "Why I Am a Pagan," Zitkala-Sa turns away from the Christian rhetoric she had learned in school and instead communicates through the sacred discourse of her own people: "A wee child toddling in a wonder world, I prefer to their dogma my excursions into the natural gardens where the voice of the Great Spirit is heard in the twittering of birds, the rippling of mighty waters, and the sweet breath of flowers" (107). However, this essay's ideological perspective is not as straightforward as it may seem because there is biographical evidence that Zitkala Sa did not completely abandon Christianity. "Why I Am a Pagan" thus needs to be viewed not as a sign that Zitkala-Sa turns away from Christianity itself, as Margaret Austin Lukens has argued (187-88), but rather that she rejects a Christianity that denigrates American Indian life.

Hence, Zitkala Sa's refusal to endorse Christianity not only defies the dictates of sentimental ideology, but also denies the unquestioned authority of Euro-American worldviews. Moreover, the narrator turns to Sioux spiritual beliefs to protect herself against sentimental indoctrination in boarding school.

In the third and final installment, "An Indian Teacher among Indians", Zitkala Sa completes her literary self-construction, one that confronts the reader with contradictory impressions of the success of her sentimental education. Rather than gaining a sense of home and family as promised by the boarding schools, the narrator cannot find herself at home in either culture.Unable to fully return to her home and mother,and yet defiantly resistant to U.S. culture, Zitkala Sa articulates the liminal position inhabited by many recipients of the Indian education system in this era.

3. Re-visioning Sioux Women

As stated earlier, Zitkala Sa demonstrated that a language belonged to whomever used it and could fulfill "the political needs of any people who must speak it" (Cheyfitz 127). To show how this phenomenon plays out in Zitkala Sa's narrative, I will examine how she corrects images of Sioux women that had been distorted through the lenses of Euro-American observers.

In the nineteenth century, the American Indian woman was often constructed as "Squaw": a "dark," "savage," "fat," "lewd" woman whose vices were "drunkenness, stupidity, thievery" and who served as a "mere economic and sexual" convenience for men (Green 711). These images persisted into the twentieth century, making it impossible for the American Indian woman to be seen as real. Against this backdrop, Zitkala-Sa entered the literary scene.

In "Impressions of an Indian Childhood", Zitkala Sa turns almost immediately to women's work, the first area in need of her re-vision: "morning, noon, and evening, my mother came to draw water... for our household use" (7). This is exactly the type of labor that nineteenth-century Euro-American male accounts considered as degrading and that provided supposed evidence of American Indian women's low status. For example, E. D. Neill said of Dakota women (1872): "From early childhood they lead 'worse than a dog's life.' Like the Gibeonites of old, they are the hewers of wood and the drawers of water for the camp [They are] uncultivated and made to do the labor of beasts" (qtd. in Weist 31). In contrast, drawing water is shown to be an activity of high status according to Zitkala Sa:

> My grown-up cousin, Warca-Ziwin (Sunflower), who was then seventeen, always went to the river alone for water for her mother_I admired my cousin greatly So I said: "Mother, when I am tall as my cousin Warca-Ziwin, you shall not have to come for water. I will do it for you (8-9).

Likewise, the farm work for Euro-Americans was evidence of the women's enslaved position and reflective of the men's degraded state, as the following excerpt from a French trader's nineteenth-century journal reveals:

> Beasts of burden of these inhuman monsters [American Indian men], they (the women) are loaded with all the work. They endure alone all the labor of farming, a

> resource, however, with out which the men would probably not be able to live, because of their sloth and laziness, (qtd. in Weist 32)

On the contrary, women's farming means something far different to the narrator. They are linked to fond "early recollections of autumn" (37) and incarnate positive models that lead young girls to imitate the much esteemed female/mother role in the community: "I was left to watch the corn, that nothing should disturb it. I played around it with dolls made of ears of corn. I braided their soft fine silk for hair, and gave them blankets as various as the scraps I found in my mother's workbag" (36). With images such as these, Zitkala-Sa challenges the prevailing belief that American Indians without formal schooling are uneducated, for she demonstrates the traditional way in which a young Sioux female learns from female elders. Through a Siouan lens, then, Zitkala Sa celebrates "the strength and essential value of women in the traditional Lakota world" (Susag 10), revealing what scholars have only recently begun to recognize.

Patricia Albers reveals that Sioux women had rights that "guaranteed them control over their own production and the fruits of their labor" (218). However, predominant patriarchal attitudes at the turn of the century and beyond could not allow for the veneration of American Indian women (Allen b 32). Because their life style was different from white women's, it was considered barbaric. The first Superintendent of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Thomas McKenney, would write in a co-authored history book,

> The savage woman is debarred of the prerogatives, and deprived from exercising the virtues, of her sex, by her wandering life. The fireside, the family circle, all the comforts, luxuries, and enjoyments which are comprised in the word home, are created and regulated by female affection, influence,and industry--and all these are unknown to the savage, (qtd. in Weist 37)

Zitkala-Sa discredits this myth, depicting with affection the warm home life of the Sioux, highlighting female influence and industry: "Close beside my mother I sat on a rug, with a scrap of buckskin in one hand and an awl in the other.This was the beginning of my practical observation lessons in the art of beadwork"

(19). In fact, domestic tasks such as this were recognized as important artistic contributions by Plains Indians if not by Euro-Americans. Recent scholars acknowledge that "beadwork designs ... represented] a type of power that was uniquely female" (DeMallie 240) and "brought prestige and wealth to the woman and to her family" (Schneider 109). Acquisition of such skills was a sign of a girl's virtue and honor (Schneider 110), which would suggest that the Plains Indians had a "cult of true womanhood" of their own.

By the end of "Impressions," Zitkala Sa makes clear that the declining of female power is linked to the intrusion of the white man. For instance, she shows ways in which politeness rituals were transmitted and how the mother taught her daughter to avoid "intruding [herself] upon others" (8). Now, on the train, the girl is confronted with intrusive "bold white" faces of children whose own mothers allow this "rude" behavior (48). Implicit in this comparison is an honoring of Sioux women's ways.

In her portrayal of white women in "Schooldays," Zitkala Sa uses the same derogatory language commonly used by their community to characterise the American Indian woman. She describes the way white women physically punish children, a rare act in Lakota society: "the white woman is guilty of 'brute force' (59). In tying a child "fast in a chair," she exhibits uncivilized behavior.In another episode, she invokes a white woman who does not attend to a child's "dull headache or... painful cough" and that she uses one teaspoon from the same bottle to heal "variously ailing Indian children" (66- 67). This last failing is very important, for in Lakota culture medicinal knowledge was a source of power and respect for women. Lakota women who had visions might gain "the power to use herbs to cure bodily ailments... or to make charms... to protect growing children,"and these women formed the Women's Medicinal Cult, which gathered annually to prepare medicines for warriors (DeMallie 240, 241). According to Rayna Green, throughout the American Indian world women were responsible for treating minor sicknesses and served as medical consultants for their people. Because they knew about plants they could prepare herbal medicines and determine what foods were best for an ill person (28-29).

The white woman's behavior is unacceptable in Zitkala Sa's eyes (66-67), however in referring to this woman as "well meaning" (67), the narrator excuses her ignorance as the inevitable outcome of an underdeveloped society, thus suggesting the superiority of her own culture.

The autobiographical fiction that follows is said to mirror the mercurial history of the once-powerful Sioux in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, which included key moments such as the removal of the Sioux to reservations (1850s to I860), the Sioux revolt (1862), the defeat of Custer (1876), the United States government's assimilationist efforts (1880s), and the massacre of the Sioux at Wounded Knee (1890) (Spack, *Revisioning* 34-35).An examination of the role of female characters in each story reveals the consequences of the loss of Sioux women's dignity and power during this time period.

Among most Plains people, power and cultural knowledge were dispensed through females (Allen 205). It is therefore no coincidence that in "The Soft-Hearted Sioux" the narrator's first advice about his future role as husband and hunter comes from his grandmother. Significantly, the grandmother is smoking a pipe, and this links her with the Lakota creation story of White Buffalo Calf Woman who gave the people "the gift of the Pipe, and thus a gift of Truth" (Green 21). Thus in refusing to smoke [his] grand-mother's pipe (Zitkala Sa 111), the narrator symbolically rejects the "Truth" and instead turns to Christianity by way of a mission school.

According to DeMallie, the Lakota believed that their society was only as strong as its women (261). Rejection of female wisdom, then, could lead only to tragedy, as in this story, in which the narrator is helpless and unable to save his father from death.Thus Zitkala-Sa puts the blame not only on born Christians, but also on converts who adopt a Christianity that has no room for traditional Sioux cultural values.

Unlike "The Soft-Hearted Sioux," the next story, "The Trial Path," is notable for its absence of any reference to white Christian culture. Again, a grandmother takes central importance at the beginning of the story as she unfolds

a narrative containing the "sacred knowledge" that she wants to transmit to her granddaughter (Zitkala Sa 134). Unfortunately, although the granddaughter hears the tale, she sleeps before the explanation of its ritual significance. Zitkala-Sa thus symbolically indicates the difficulty of transmitting cultural knowledge from generation to generation, even if without the intervention of whites. As long as the grandmother lives to tell and retell the "sacred tale," the hope exists that the younger female generation will hear it, learn from it, and be able to pass it on. As Paula Gunn Allen points out, the oral tradition, especially in its ritual aspects, "rests on female power" (205).

Zitkala-Sa's re-vision of Sioux women's privileged status is most apparent in the story "A Warrior's Daughter," whose protagonist risks her life to save the man she loves. Here, the author subverts the well-known story of Pocahontas's rescue of John Smith. A white Christian male is always captured by the natives but then rescued by the King's dark beautiful daughter, who, like all good princesses, defies her own people to save the white man, acting "out of 'Christian sympathy'" (Green 704).The image of Pocahontas protecting John Smith became a national myth and set up a model for Indian-White relations, making the white man every Indian Princess's dream. Zitkala Sa undermines that myth. In her story, Tusee does have aristocratic roots but in Sioux terms. Yet when this Princess goes to rescue a man, he is Indian, not white. Zitkala Sa appropriates the characer of the white male hero image used to construct the white male hero in creating this American Indian male as a romantic figure whose heart "beat[s] hard and fast" when he asks Tusee's father for his only daughter's]" hand in marriage (142). Furthermore, in setting the story in an Indian context, Zitkala-Sa undermines religious rhetoric by rejecting the possibility that "Christian sympathy" can account for the rescue. Indianizing the Pocahontas tale even further, Zitkala Sa disguises her protagonist and dresses her in instead as an old woman with a bundle on her back. Jeanne Smith suggests that Tusee's disguise links her with the Lakota trickster, Iktomi, who carries grass in his blanket as though it is a heavy burden in order to trick and capture ducks. Masking her character in a "harmless" pose, Zitkala-Sa enables her to

enact revenge (Smith 53-54). Using another trickster strategy, Zitkala Sa empowers Tusee with apparently male characteristics: a "warrior's strong heart," which gives her the courage to fight the enemy, and "broad shoulders," which allow her to carry her lover safely away (Zitkala Sa 151, 153). As children, these women were favored, just as Tusee was her father's "great joy" (137), which led to an adulthood of high self-esteem and drive (Medicine 270). In Evelyn Blackwood's view, the fact that American Indian men were "not threatened by such behavior" suggests that this was a socially approved role for females and not a deviation (37).

Thus, in reestablishing Sioux women to a powerful role, "A Warrior's Daughter" challenges the assumptions of the dominant ideology.

4. Zitkala Sa's Construction of a Native American Identity

Throughout her text, Zitkala-Sa avoids defining herself traditionally according to either Yankton or Anglo culture. As Dexter Fisher notes: "[Zitkala Sa] is not a] is not reaffirming the role of the woman in tribal life ... Nor is her purpose to praise the educational opportunities afforded her through governmental policies" (206). I argue that Zitkala Sa's persona is bicultural, and by bicultural I mean that she signs in a context that is indivisibly Anglo and Yankton; a context in which she is irreducible to either culture and alienated from each. In fact, Zitkala Sa's narrator does not privilege any culture above the other, nor equate them in situating herself among and against her shared cultures. Instead, she merges both to create a new type of Indian, one that goes beyond the limiting roles offered to Native American women by both cultures. However, this biculturalism differs from the modern concept of a hybrid individual described by Gloria Anzaldua as "la consciencia de la mestiza", in which "la mestiza" accepts and integrates into all her cultures:

> *The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she*

> *sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else (Borderlands 101).*

In *American Indian Stories*, Zitkala Sa is unable to fit in either world and considers herself as alienated from both her native community and the white's man world. Thererfore, Zitkala Sa's textual hybridity is more closely oriented to those produced by her African American and American Indian contemporaries. Ross Posnock has discussed what he terms the W. E. B. Du Boisian "distinction," as a practice of "anarchy [that] manifests itself as strategic difficulty, which he used to escape from the bondage of racist classification, from stereotypes that reigned supremely as Nature" (507). Du Bois's "double consciousness"

> staged the clash [between races] rather than defusing or muffling it [...] because the reality that confronted them [his audience] was unsettled, he unsettles, keeping debate alive in his audience so that their perplexity might be clarified, if not dissolved. This dissonant perspective is not to be the end point but rather the tool of a more nuanced kind of political conduct, one supple enough to make distinctions and double moves rather than relying on a single "frontal attack." (507-08)

Similarly, Zitkala Sa conceives her autobiography by highlighting stereotypes, framing the Indian/white binary as faulty;in this manner, she keeps the dialogue between cultures present, rather than reconciling their cultural differences. This bicultural context dismisses not only stereotypical representations of Indians, but also the philosophical beliefs of a racial hierarchy, and Anglos' constant attempts to impose it upon NativeAmerican peoples. Dorothea Susag, for instance, has argued how Zitkala-Sa depends her Native heritage, particularly the Iktomi tales, to "reveal a powerful feminine and ethnic voice when read against her two cultural influences [... and] to overcome forces that would suppress the feminine Indian voice" (3). . Zitkala-Sa selects personal incidents that enable her to display an Indian stereotype and shows how Natives, such as herself, disrupt the Anglo cliché of racial typing. She begins by describing her childhood on the Yankton Reservation, while she is living with her mother:

> I was a wild little girl of seven. Loosely clad in a slip of brown buckskin, and light-footed with a pair of soft moccasins on my feet, I was as free as the wind that blew my hair, and no less spirited than a bounding deer. These were my mothers pride,? my wild freedom and overflowing spirits (8).

She describes herself with a simple construction of the Indian type: she is "wild," wearing buckskin and moccasins. According to Robert Berkhofer, this description echoes the nineteenth-century scientific typing of the Indian where "savages were presumed to be closest to the animal stage, they were also presumed to be creatures of instinct who reacted simply, almost automatically, to environmental stimuli" (60). The narrator describes the child's mind as limited in perception and spiritual: "I was not wholly conscious of myself, but was more keenly alive to the fire within. It was as if I were the activity, and my hands and feet were only experiments for my spirit to work upon" (8). With such a description, Zitkala-Sa initially reconfirms Indian stereotypes. These stereotypes and their inherent cultural assumptions however are disrupted by the narrator'description of her childhood. While her life in the reservation might appear to occur exclusively in a Yankton context, the narrator presents her early life within an Anglo context as well. Euro-Americans, for example, help with some of the economic goods that sustain Zitkala-Sa's family. She makes coffee in a coffeepot (27). Later her mother will move into a log cabin that she decorates with curtain windows and checkered tablecloths (40, 89).

Simply put, Zitkala-Sa's life story is constructed as a blend of cultural practices. In her narrative, Native peoples live in a canvas wigwam or a log cabin, sharing the land with Anglos. As Robert Berkhofer Jr. suggests, "change toward what Whites were made him [the Indian] ipso facto less Indian" (29). Nevertheless, that perception is clearly inappropriate in Zitkala-Sa's case since from her earliest recollection, she experiences life within a bicultural context. While her ancestors might have depended on buffalo for its economic and material sustenance, Zitkala-Sa never does. Her reservation life is therefore clearly different from that practiced by her Yankton ancestors. She might wear a buckskin dress with moccasins, but she also plays with Anglo-made marbles. Her narrator identifies with an Indian stereotype, but also rejects its restrictive definitions. By not straightforwardly deploring such changes to Yankton culture, Zitkala Sa avoids directly criticizing Euro-Americans for their extermination

policy and instead, she uses her mother's voice to denounce the white intrusion. Mary Paniccia Carden indicates that the mother believed that "white education is among the factors eroding the ground of 'real Dakota' identity" (130). It is the mother that inculcate the fear of the white man in both

her children and the reader. Her mother warns her, "Don't believe a word they say! Their words are sweet, my child, their deeds are bitter" (Zitkala-Ša 23). It is the relation between the mother and daughter that reflects the double consciousness Zitkala-Ša experiences. As Carden argues,

> Her distance from her mother is the measure of her distance from her young Sioux self; her immersion in American culture estranges her from the Sioux culture embodied by her mother and evacuates mother-daughter communication (Carden 131).

Zitkala Sa's understanding of the two worlds she is split between intensifies through her relation with her Native mother as well as with the white environment at the boarding school. When travelling to the boarding school in the East, Zitkala-Ša instantly experiences an ambivalent identity: "I was in the hands of strangers whom my mother did not fully trust. I no longer felt free to be myself, or to voice my own feelings" (25). She already recognizes a change in herself. Once she is at the school, the social atmosphere is emotionally stressful for the young girl. She is shocked by the behavior of white woman tosses her in the air, commenting that her mother would never treat her like a "plaything" (30). Sandra Kumamoto Stanley analyzes the effect the different cultures have on the young girl's character: "Imposing one set of values and erasing another, the missionaries impose a whole system of signification which the child Zitkala-Ša cannot decode and, as such, one in which she cannot situate the self" (67).

Zitkala Sa's time spent at school leaves her vacillating between obedience and rebellion. The young Zitkala-Ša is conscious of the effect education has on her:

> It was next to impossible to leave the iron routine after the civilizing machine had once begun its day's buzzing; and as it was inbred in me to suffer in silence rather than to appeal to the ears of one whose open eyes could not see my pain, I have many times trudged in the day's harness heavy-footed, like a dumb sick brute" (41).

Her vacillation between her native self and the "white" self being imposed upon her leaves her torn between two identities. Carden argues:

> Taken in hand as an object, she experiences the dissolution of the boundaries marking her sense of individuality.She loses control of the signifiers of identity inscribed on her body as she is surveyed, marked, and forced to comply with white cultural norms" (130).

As Du Bois' defintion of double consciousness suggests, by adhering to the expectations of white society, she is split into two different selves. She opposes assimilation, exclaiming, "I will not submit! I will struggle first" (33). Her incapacity to fit in either world leaves her feeling alienated. Stanley suggests,

> She must face the fact that she is a representative of both—the ethnographic self and the radical other…Zitkala-Ša's work escapes the easy binary opposition in which the self is pitted against the other, the minority voice against the dominant culture. For finally, the self is a site of continual displacement, in which multiple voices must interrogate cultural presuppositions. (67)

This would suggest that Zitkala Sa's identity is more fragmented than the binary theory contends.

Zitkala Sa's shifting identity is intensified during her adulthood when she becomes a teacher at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. As she continues her integration into the white world.She admits, "I made no friends among the race of people I loathed. Like a slender tree, I had been uprooted from my mother, nature, and God… Now a cold bare pole I seemed to be, planted in a strange earth" (62). She reminds her readers of the pains in erasing the Indian identity and asserts that her native roots are still intact. Stanley analyzes the "double veil" that Zitkala-Ša wears as a Native American and an "assimilated" American:

> Her sense of private dislocation is now transferred onto the communal sphere; for her Native American community also exists in the "in-between" space of a hybrid culture, caught in the "double veil" of being Yankton Sioux and enculturated Americans. But in this cultural site of contestation and negotiation, Zitkala-Ša, in mastering, rather than rejecting the "white man's" discourse, acts as an agent for political and social change. Thus, her sense of her cultural dislocation gives her the opportunity for relocating and reconceiving cultural identity. (Stanley 68)

Thus, through her fragmented identity Zitkala Sa accepts her cultural hybridity and serves as a mediator between the white and Native cultures. She is bound to

both cultures, but remains loyal to her native identity. She refuses to be assimilated and instead she uses her bicultural situation to challenge the boundaries of cultural identity.

In her first three autobiographical essays, Zitkala-Sa depicts herself as at odds with her world when she moves from her reservation to boarding school. Her decision to leave her mother, her community, and the land she grew up on is described as a fall from grace. The fact that she has lost the "right relation . . . between human self and human others" is clear in the conflicts she has with her mother and her constant enmity towards most of the white people around her.

Dexter Fisher considers Zitkala-Sa's writing as:

> a model of ambivalences, of oscillations between two diametrically opposed worlds, but it is also a model of retrieved possibilities, a creative, human endeavor that stands at the beginning of many such endeavors eventually to culminate in the finely crafted work of contemporary American Indian writers" (206).

Even though she represents the ambivalence of the Native-American individual at the crossroads of culture, her narrative is informed with the elements of resistance and preservation of cultural values that will help future generations construct a new American-Indian identity.

The fact remains, however, that in the writings of Zitkala-Sa, individuals who vacillate between the American world of the educational system and the Indian world of the reservation are both alienated by a sense of disconnection from their traditional culture and proud of their resistance to assimilation. The individuals in these narratives are not hindered by ambiguity, but they are disconnected because of it.

In sum, Zitkala Sa is bound to both white and Sioux cultures, but remains loyal to her native identity. Her experiences with the white world produce feelings of pride and appreciation toward her Native American background. She refuses to fade away in white society, as assimilation demands of her. Instead, she uses her occupancy between two cultures to challenge the boundaries of

cultural identity. Thus, rather than giving in to society's ideal of possessing only one identity, she embraces her multiple selves and rejects white society's attempt to mold her into its own vision of civilization.

II- Contemporary Native American Autobiography: Leslie Silko's *Storyteller*

As seen in the first part of this chapter, early Native American writers like Zitkala Sa wrote mainly to assert their identity and their people's culture. They wrote for a white audience, and much of the form and content was oriented toward this audience. However, from the 1930s the move from orality to literacy in some ways came to a stop during this period. As Brumble suggests, "During the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s they [anthropologists and ethnographers] published narratives [orally] collected from Apaches, Navajos, Sioux, Kwakiutls, Hopis, Papagos, and Kiowas among others" (98). During this time some Natives wrote their own stories, but there was no large audience for these works. As David Brumble put it: "This was not a time in which the social order encouraged a cultural opening to Native American [literary] influences" (118).

Native literature gained widespread attention in 1969 when N. Scott Momaday won the Pulitzer prize for his novel *House Made of Dawn* and *The Names: A Memoir* (1976), which serve as good examples of Indian transformations of the genre. According to Brumble "No Indian autobiography before Momaday….tried to imagine the literate equivalent of preliterate autobiography" (178). This does not lead to believe that Momaday was the first Native autobiographer to introduce in his works elements of Native oral traditions, but his works come as close to the ways of oral storytellers as had ever been seen.Thus, we may consider Momaday's autobiographies as the beginning to change the way in which a Native American can tell his/her story.

Hertha Dawn Wong explains that contemporary Native American autobiographers "often consciously combine their Native American traditions with their Euro-American educations" (10). Native Americans' Euro-American

educations, including Euro-American literary traditions, will always play a role in Native American writings, but Native Americans can celebrate these Euro-American traditions now that they do not insist on total domination. The heritages of Native Americans now join in to allow Native American writers to create distinctive Native literary creations.

Leslie Marmon Silko dedicated herself to reviving Native American culture and literature, and her reputation stands as one of the most important contemporary Native American writers. She has incorporated a pronounced Native American color to her works by effectively mixing different genres into varied literary pieces, by connecting the writing closely to nature, and by implementing oral traditions, and storytelling. Her writings reflect the complex nature of Native American identity formation and define peaceful coexistence and syncretism as the best way towards the survival of Native American identity and the preservation of cultural continuity.

Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller* (1981) is far from being a traditional autobiography in a Euro-American sense. Indeed, Silko experiments with multiple genres: photographs, poetry, traditional Pueblo Indian stories and personal experience, creating a text that celebrates and defines her multiple identities as a woman, an Indian Laguna Pueblo, an American and a person of mixed race heritage. Like Zitkala Sa's *American Indian Stories*, Silko's *Storyteller* is an example of autobiography written by a Native American woman who has used the "palefaces" tool -writing- and made it her own by infusing in it elements of her Native culture: the oral tradition. In this part, I will explore how Leslie Marmon Silko attempts to re-appropriate Native American identity and history. As she blends traditional and Western literary genres, Silko examines themes of memory, identity and power; she conveys Native American beliefs regarding time, nature, and spirituality; and examines how stories and storytelling shape people and communities.

The two qualities that *Storyteller* possesses that will be the guiding characteristics of this part are genre hybridity and a non-exclusive first person voice.

1. Storyteller: an Unconventional Autobiographical Mode

Storyteller encompasses eight short stories each of which had been published previously with some of them having appeared in more than one collection. However, in *Storyteller* these short stories are arranged alongside different other texts and photographs that enhance the reading of each individual story and put them in an important context. This context besides being communal is autobiographical in nature and reconnects these stories with Native sources. Concerning the structure of *Storyteller* Silko notes, "*Storyteller's* layout is real deliberate. I did that. We went round and round. I did the entire layout on that because a lot of *Storyteller* was published in other places. The key to *Storyteller* is the way it's all put together" (29). Any approach to *Storyteller* has to be founded on an awareness of the basic unity of the work as a whole. Silko has on several occasions, dealt with the question of reaching a meaning after a study of her texts. The image of a spider web underlies the structure of *Storyteller* as well.

According to critic Robert M. Nelson critical reviews have described it as a "collage", a "montage" or even an "assemblage" (251). Linda Krumholz affirms that "Storyteller" is a distinctively 'readerly' text: the many stories, poems, and photographs are gathered into an apparently random 'scrapbook' form (64), and Elizabeth McHenry describes the book as "a combination of three narrative genres:"autobiography, fiction and ethnography" (115). Lucero calls *Storyteller* "a strangely volatile combination of simple autobiography and seemingly simple stories" in which Silko "adds her portion to the conglomerate wisdom of a people working together for an identity" (Wong 187).

In *American Indian Women: Telling Their Lives,* Gretchen M. Bataille and Kathleen Mullen Sands, Silko is quoted as saying: "The book [Storyteller]

shows how directly and indirectly, relying on my past and family, how much my 'autobiography' has become fiction and poetry. The stories in my family and my life are part of what's made in the book" (139). She also notes that *Storyteller* is a result of seeing her life as a series of stories and that the purpose of using fragments of her life, poetry, traditional stories, short fiction with the photography is "to give the reader an idea of the relations I see and feel" and to show "how autobiography gets distilled and comes back in fiction and poetry" (140).

For anybody expecting a linear story of a life, *Storyteller* may be confusing as a narrative of individuation for its lack of a central unified voice. The book comprises twenty six pictures and sixty seven stories. Some of these are family stories, while others are traditional Laguna stories, Western short stories and poems. Because it is dedicated to the many generations of storytellers that kept the stories going, *Storyteller* in a way denies individual authorship as Silko gives voice to other family members, who taught the young Silko about the importance of stories for their survival. As McHenry points out, the result is "distinctly non- traditional" (qtd in Barnett and Thorson 102), since it presents a mixture of genres, no numbered divisions between its component parts, except a symbol to suggest a sparation between the stories and an unusually positioned table of contents at the end. However, these features should not be mistaken for "experimental literature", notes McHenry; rather, "it is more accurate to consider that Silko's nonlinear form of narrative appears as it does because she sees it as the only appropriate vehicle of expression that will contain the transcription of her fragmented and collective experience" (qtd in Barnett and Thorson 102). Silko affirms that oral tradition is a communal phenomenon that cannot exist without the people who told these stories:

> the oral tradition depends upon each person
> listening and remembering a portion
> and it is together –
> all of us remembering what we have heard together –
> that creates the whole story / the long story of the people.
> I remember only a small part.

But this is what I remember" (Silko 6-7)

The story/poem "Skeleton Fixer"clearly embodies Silko's idea of communal authorship to play in the written word.Indeed, she took up the version that she heard Simon Ortiz tell, as she explains at the end of the poem,"A Piece of a Bigger Story They Tell Around Laguna and Acoma Too,From A Version Told by Simon J. Ortiz" (245). Silko heard Ortiz's version orally, and she continued the telling in a written version.

Many of the stories of *Storyteller* work this way; they are Silko's written version of oral stories. In the story/poem "Skeleton Fixer", Old Man Badger is gathering bones and reconstructing a body; He gathers the bones and puts them together: "Words like bones/Scattered all over the place (Silko 234). He knows without thinking how the bones should go, and although he does not recognize them, "he loved them anyway". For Dharma Thornton Hernandez, the"Skeleton Fixer" is an analogy for the process Silko uses to construct *Storyteller;*She explains : " [Silko] is finding the lost words and stories of her past and revising the narrative schematic representations in order to reconstruct her identity and the identity culture of the Laguna Pueblo Indians" (55).

Many of the stories told in *Storyteller* are Silko's written version of oral stories, but she does not feel it is always necessary to give an oral storyteller credit, because stories do not belong to the storyteller, they are the property of the community.Obviously, Silko refutes the persistent Euro-American misconception about the existence of "one true Indian version" of a story.

In *Storyteller*, Silko shows sensitivity to the problems associated with Native American autobiography. Telling one's life story is made necessary only by the contact situation and yet is problematic because to tell one's story, one must find ways of accommodating to the language and power structures of the other. Krupat points to the problem of accommodation in Native American autobiography, noting that many Indians chose to enter into collaborative narrations as their only means of revealing to the world the horrors that have been committed against their people.

Since defeat and the acceptance of it are the prerequisites to these autobiographies, many are set as tragedy. According to Krupat, early Indian autobiographies observe the models established by Western autobiographies that celebrate Indian fighters and "conquerors" of the "frontier." These autobiographies present an ideology of approval for displacing "savage" Native peoples in the name of civilization, and place the Indian in the role of the tragic hero accepting defeat in the struggle for civilization (Krupat 33-53). Therefore, the Indian voice of resistance behind the autobiographical model is obscured and hardly perceived by whites who have adopted a colonial ideology. Following models of tragedy or ethnographies of vanishing cultures counteracts the truth that Native American autobiographies arose in reaction to the clash of cultures. Silko's *Storyteller* shows that American Indian narrators have a strong desire to reveal the injustices forced upon them and to resist the suppression of their cultural and historical interpretations.

Contrary to conventional autobiographies which follow patterns that meet the literary expectations of Euro-American readers, Silko makes her readers become involved in a dynamic process much like that of the oral tradition. Bernard A. Hirsch explains the way in which the structure of *Storyteller* acts as a teaching process borrowed from the oral tradition. Hirsch argues that Silko's singular use of genre and voice draws the reader in a gradual process of establishing coherent connections among the episodic elements of the text. He writes: "Successive narrative episodes cast long shadows both forward and back, lending different or complementary shades of meaning to those preceding them and offering perspectives from which to consider those that follow"(1). This type of learning process is part of the dynamic oral tradition. Silko uses it in *Storyteller* to stimulate the form of intimacy with the reader that the oral storyteller does with the listener. Hirsch asserts that Silko's narrative strategy demands that the reader become involved with the text, exploring interrelationships among texts, both written and photographic (1). By becoming involved in this process, the reader must adopt a dynamic means of interpretation similar to the mode of learning that takes place in the context of oral tradition.

Simultaneously, this strategy is clearly one of resistance to the structures of emplotment evident in conventional autobiographies.

In addition, Silko offers a text that furthers the redefinition of the concepts of author, text and reader in relation to the autobiography. For instance, as an author, Silko does not explain herself in a unified way. According to Brumble, "Like Momaday she expects us to see her as the sum total of the experiences that have become her stories" (179). Thus, in *Storyteller*, we do hear the autobiographical voice of Silko, but we mostly get to experience Silko's life.

Silko says of the text that the "people, stories, poems and pictures are a way of knowing that request the reader to "find the relationships and the meanings yourself" because the interaction of the spoken prose with the short stories, the poems and the photographs "demonstrates the way remembrance works" (Bataille and Sands 139). Autobiography thus becomes a way of remembering one's heritage, traditions and family. The emphasis on memory and non-linearity owes, in part, debt to N. Scott Momaday's 1969 *The Way to Rainy Mountain,* an oral attempt at textual autobiography. However, as Arnold Krupat explains, Silko is radically revising Momaday in that his style is monologue, based in part on his Western influences, while hers is dialogue and polyphony (181-182).

According to J. Browdy de Hernandez in her "Writing (for)Survival," when reading *The Ways of My Grandmothers*:

> [It] becomes hard to remember who is speaking, as the different voices wind their stories in and around Hungry Wolf's voice. By inscribing the series of first-person narrators, Hungry Wolf attempts to circumvent the limiting linearity of written narrative, bending it into something that more closely resembles the multivocal oral tradition from which her texts draw. (44)

All the voices in *The Ways of My Grandmothers* contribute to reveal the life of Hungry Wolf and contribute to the survival of the writer's culture in a way one voice could not. Similarly, in *Storyteller,* Silko is not the central figure in these texts as equal weight is given to other subjects and other stories. Thus, we find

Silko slipping from a traditional Laguna story to a poem and then to herself or a member of her family.

Paula Gunn Allen explains the tendency of traditional tribal narrative "to distribute value evenly among various elements". She notes:

> In this structural framework, no single element is foregrounded, leaving the others to supply "background." Thus ... there are no heroes, no villains, no setting, in the sense of inert ground against which dramas are played out. There are no minor characters, and the foreground slips along from one focal point to another until all the pertinent elements in the ritual conversation have had their say (qtd in Browdy 241).

Similarly, *Storyteller* is characterized by an unusual textual structure, encompassing family reminiscences, a collection of short stories, poems and photographs. The short stories and poems do not possess an obvious autobiographical quality. Usually, it is because the characters or settings in these texts are recognizably fictional or non-Laguna. However, a closer look at these stories reveals thematic concerns that are close to Silko and echoes what she has said about herself, family, and tribe throughout her artistic career. These are the themes of transgression and mixture, and the importance of stories to frame and incorporate into a whole. I will take a closer look at key autobiographical and literary pieces and show how they combine to give the reader the sense of an individual who is rooted, through stories, in a family and a community.

The Marmons have lived "below the village, close to the river; they are at the same time insiders and outsiders of culture and nature. It is possibly this awareness of her family's position that brings Silko to write so frequently about and to identify with the first transgressive insiders: Yellow Woman and Coyote.

Even though the book is not divided into chapters. Linda Krumholz argues that it can be divided into six thematic sections: "Survival," "Yellow Woman", "Drought," "Rain," "Spirits," and "Coyote."

The "Survival" section presents stories as an essential element for the survival of the culture in a changing world. After completing the manuscript of *Storyteller*, Silko said:

> I see *Storyteller* as a statement about storytelling and the relationship of the people, my family and my background to the storytelling-a personal statement

> done in the style of the storytelling tradition, i.e.using stories themselves to explain the dimensions of the process (qtd. in Per Seyersted 35).

Throughout the book, survival is a reccuring theme; however, Silko relates the survival of the native culture with a process of reconnecting with the indigenous culture by means of dynamic, evolving stories through meanings derived from living and interpreting Laguna community. Paula Gunn Allen asserts that "the central issue that confronts American Indian women today throughout the hemisphere is survival, literal survival, both on a cultural and a biological level" (qtd in Browdy189). She also argues that in their emphasis on survival and continuity Native American women's autobiographies conform to Native women's traditions in general. She notes:

> The women's traditions are largely about continuity, and men's traditions are largely about transitoriness or change. The women's rituals and lore center on birth, death, food, house-holding, and medicine...that is, all that goes into the maintenance of life over the long term. Men's rituals are concerned with risk, death, and transformation-that is, all that helps regulate and control change (qtd in Browdy 82).

Generally, conventional autobiographies present genealogical histories of cultural continuity; in *Storyteller*, however, Silko discloses the confusion in communal identity precipitated by European contact. She speaks of her great-grandmother, Marie Anaya, a native of Paguate village, and her great-grandfather, Robert G. Marmon, who was of European origin. Her great-grandfather learned to speak Laguna, and Silko informs us that he had no interest in returning to European culture; at times white people referred to him as "Squaw Man." Silko relates a story about one of her great-grandfather's trips to Albuquerque that reveals how significant the experience of cultural conflict is to her family history. Her great-grandfather had his two sons with him on this trip, and when they became hungry, he decided to take them through the hotel lobby into a café. The manager stopped them, telling her great- grandfather Marmon that he was always welcome, but when he had Indians with him he should use the back entrance to reach the café. Silko writes:

> My great-grandfather said,
> "These are my sons."

> He walked out of the hotel
> and never would set foot in that hotel again
> not even years later
> when they began to allow Indians inside (15-16).

This family account is followed by the piece "Storyteller" highlighting ways tribal life has been disrupted by culture contact. Grandma Marie Anaya Marmon, whom Silko calls Grandma A'mooh, "which is the Laguna expression of endearment," dies while being taken away to Albuquerque to live with her daughter. Her daughter went to work every day, leaving Grandma A'mooh with no one to communicate with. Silko says of her grandmother:

> She didn't have anyone to talk to all day
> Because Bessie worked.
> She might have lived without watering morning glories
> and without kids running through her kitchen
> but she did not last long
> without someone
> to talk too (33)

Silko's Grand father Hank wanted to be an automobile designer, but in 1912 Indian schools were strictly vocational schools and the teachers told her grandfather that Indians didn't become automobile designers. Therefore, Grandpa Hank became a store clerk:

> He subscribed to Motor Trend and Popular Mechanics and followed the new car designs and results of road tests each year. In 1957 when Ford brought out the Thunderbird in a hardtop convertible, Grandpa Hank bought one and that was his car until he died (184).

Cultural oppression is also reinforced by short fictional stories like "Lullaby". The theme of the lullaby clearly presents a contrast to the dramatic devastation of the lives of the family in the story. For Cynthia Carsten " the story acts as a microcosm of the structure of *Storyteller*, [and] throughout the book, Silko provides dialogic contrasts between the harmony of the Native American worldview and the disruption of that way of life" (117).

The stories "Storyteller" and "Lullaby" both describe the loss and suffering of the Native people, due to the intrusion of the white race. The first section of the book depicts the issues inherent in conveying to an audience

accustomed to a Eurocentric reading approach, the concept of survival that lies at the heart of Laguna stories and storytelling. There is also a depiction of many women in this section who function as strong, resilient characters in the face of adversity, and propagate the cultural legacies to the forthcoming generations. Moreover, land assumes the role of a living character in "Storyteller". Thereby, storytellers and the land are interwined in this section.

"Storyteller" is a story set in arctic Inuit country in Alaska, and despite its difference from the setting of Laguna, this story has an essential role in the book. Like Yellow Woman, the protagonist, an anonymous young Yupik woman flatly depicted like all mythical figures, is a transgressor, and a master of boundaries and stories. In addition, like the Marmons, she lives on the outskirts—her "house was not near the village houses. It stood alone on the bank upriver from the village" (Silko 18). Also, like to the Laguna heroine, the young Yupik woman is "restless and strong". We may argue then that the Yellow Woman character is a perfect vehicle for Silko. Indeed, this character embodies the marginal person who is nevertheless central in importance to her culture because of her courage and knowledge of the world beyond the village and the stories she presents. To a certain degree, this mythical figure parallels Silko's own life as a storyteller on the margins: at the river's edge of Laguna, Alaska, and finally on the outskirts of Tucson.

The girl's parents are poisoned with bad alcohol sold by the white shopkeeper; she seeks revenge for her parents' deaths, enticing the shopkeeper over the frozen river onto the ice that she knows is too thin to support his weight. He falls through the ice and drowns and she is apprehended following his disappearance. The method employed by the young girl to drown the shopkeeper and the ensuing insistence of the girl upon her statement confessing murder, are problematic to the white reader regarding issues of crime and sin. Besides, it necessitates a shift in the readers understanding regarding the relationship the Native Americans have with the land. Indeed, the girl achieves her revenge not by trying to control the ice, but by fully acknowledging it. She spends days on

the river ice examining "shadows of boundaries, outlines of paths which were slender branches of solidity reaching out from the earth" (28).

Towards the end, the storyteller derides the white materialistic vision towards land and their lifeless relationship with the landscape. She criticizes their lack of understanding for, "They thought they could keep out the cold with string yellow wading" (Silko 18). The Gussucks had to rely upon weak, temporary means to survive in the harsh arctic conditions to fulfill their greedy ambitions and desires that are based upon disharmony with the land and culture.

The protagonist has her story and that ensures the survival of the Native culture and identity and serves as a means for the native population to negotiate the oppressive ideologies of white racism. The girl could have stayed out of trouble by declaring it was an accident, but on the contrary, she argued with the trooper and the attorney to let them know that she murdered him; she repeated,"This is the way the story must be told" (367). It is said many times throughout the story by the grandfather that it must be told "this way"; the story must have these exact words.

It is undeniable that Silko's insight is based upon an organic relationship with the landscape. She asserts, ". . . there's a sense of familiarity almost like certain places being a parent or relative, in other words, being related to the land in a familiar way and there is a kind of security there which I always feel". (qtd in Barnett and Thorson 105). Contrary to people who might die, land continues to be a constant presence infusing life and identity into a community. Silko presents the continuum of stories that are transmitted as a legacy from generation to generation, still, the land forms a central character in those stories and continues to exist. In this context, stories about land and the telling of those stories, which continues to accommodate changing generations, are the principal means of identity formation and resistance.

It is also important to note that, throughout the book, Silko's strong sense of the place is very reccurent. However, by telling a story about a setting other

than Laguna,"Storyteller" takes this sense beyond the confinements of Laguna to make a general statement regarding all the Native Americans.

In "Lullaby", we find a similar thematic concern regarding the survival strategies of the Native population. Here too an old woman, Ayah, is portrayed as a source of acquired wisdom that she uses to undermine the oppressor's discourse. Ayah who has been a victim of colonialism, had to suffer the loss of all her three children. Seyersted argues that: "Even though the story is seen through Ayah's eyes and painfully illustrates her loss, it does not condemn the whites, but presents a balanced picture". He further observes that, although the disparity in the treatment meted out to the Navajos is obvious, the most painful event of the story, that is the taking away of Ayah's children, is shown as a result of the concern of the white doctors for the children since they took them , to save them from tuberculosis (Seyersted 22). However, the story implicitly reveals colonial oppressive discourses and strategies as the focus is shifted from the concern of the white doctors' for Ayah's children towards the means employed by them to take them away. Ayah was made to sign a paper without understanding the implications of the act. She signed the paper because, "She only wanted them to go, and to take their eyes away from her children" (Silko 45).

Silko considers education as one of the most important colonial institutions by means of which the colonizer exerts authority and oppresses the subjects. It has served as a primary weapon to eliminate any resistance and maintain existing power structures. Silko challenges and questions the Eurocentric assumptions that serve as substructures to white education. Ayah, an old Navajo woman, having lost her first child to US nationalism is deprived of her motherhood by having her other two children taken away. Educated in white schools and bred away from Ayah, the loss of these two children is more severe than her first child's loss. It is apparent in these sentences:

> it was worse than if they had died to lose the children and to know that somewhere, in a place called Colorado, in a place full of sick and dying strangers, her children were without her. She had seen children die and ―she had carried them herself, up the boulders and great pieces of cliff, she had laid them in ―crevices of sandstone and buried them in fine brown sand. (Silko 47)

Ayah is upset about the loss of connection with her children that would have ensured the continuance and preservation of their stories. Nothing can be lost as long as the Native Americans remember and relate to their communal identity by means of shared connections of memory manifested in the form of stories and spoken words. However, the two children are taken away from their culture and their community; consequently, they do not remember even their mother besides forgetting their language and having no means of relating to the land and culture.

Silko does not criticize directly the white education, but does believe that separating children from their land and culture was undertaken in the past to annihilate Native American identity. In *Storyteller,* we learn about Aunt Susie who did not lose her connections with Laguna land and culture despite being educated in white schools. She serves as an instance exemplifying Silko's point of view that Ayah's two children suffered because they were taken away from the maternal care and not just because of being educated in white schools.This practice of cultural genocide was a recurrent phenomenon in mainstream policies against the Natives. As Krumholz comments, "Silko does not simply present the tragedy of loss; she creates in her readers the need, the desire and the ability to hear and understand those stories from a Native American interpretive perspective" (98). In this context, we can interpret "Lullaby" as an attempt to recover the broken connections with the land and culture.

"The Yellow Woman" improvises on the traditional story of Kochininako, a mythological female character in Laguna Pueblo stories, and redefines the women's roles. In some versions of this story, a woman member of the tribe is taken away by an attractive stranger, usually a spirit from the north and returns to the community with a story, something of value. Through a feminist perspective, we may be tempted to think that the story supports the free sexuality of Native women, but when asked in an interview if she would support such a reading, Silko strongly objects. Barnes asks her: "Do you see the myths concerning her [Yellow Woman] as having arisen from need for escape on the part of the women from a kind of social and sexual domination?" Silko replies:

> No, not at all. The need for that kind of escape is the need of a woman in middle-America, a white Anglo, the WASP woman.... The kinds of things that cause white upper-middle-class women to flee the home for awhile to escape...domination and powerlessness and inferior status, vis-a-vis the husband, and the male, those kinds of forces are not operating....What's operating in those stories of Kochininako is this attraction, this passion, this connection between the human world and the animal and spirit worlds (Conversations 77).

Ambrose Lucero elaborates on this further when he states that "the ambiguity Silko produces so painstakingly in 'Yellow Woman' is the inevitable result of the mystic purity of her intentions" (10). The importance of the story lies in the internal struggle of an individual woman and her relationship to the tribe.

Silko is also concerned with the traditional social role of Indian women. For example she tells the story of a young huntress and underlines the fact that Native American women were as skillful at hunting as men.

The "Drought" and "Rain" sections reproduce rituals of the Pueblo tradition. The stories start with drought and its destructive forces. For instance, in "Tony's Story", Silko undermines the assumption of the whites, who see Native Americans as savage and complex, by presenting the white oppressor as a representative of destroyers symbolized by witches in the story. Told from a first person narrative, the story recounts a true story about a Native American who killed a white state patrol officer. Krumholz makes a connection between the depiction of witches and the consequent drought. In Laguna belief, the two elements are interrelated, for drought is believed to be a consequence of disharmony brought about by witchcraft. The white police officer, characterized by an irrational antagonism for the Native Americans, is a central figure in the story. In one instance, he hits a Native American named Leon and almost kills him. In the subsequent narrative, he has two more encounters with Leon and his friend Tony. From the police officer's odd behavior, Tony draws a connection between the white police officer and a dream involving witches. Without hesitation, he kills the patrol officer who threatened to assault Leon again. Compared to him, Leon, an ex-soldier familiar with the institutions of the Western culture, fails to react.

We may draw a comparison between Leon and Chato of "Lullaby" and between Ayah and Tony. These two types of Native American characterizations reflect the fallacious and deceptive belief that the colonizer instills in the mind of the colonized subjects, who then assimilate the colonial discourse and believe that the colonizers' institutions can confront any situation. For instance, in "Lullaby" when the doctors come back to take the children, they address Chato and tell him that, "They had her signature and that was all they needed" (46). Instead of offering any resistance, Chato persuades Ayah to hand over the children to the doctors, telling her: "It's too late now. The police officer is with them. You signed the paper" (Silko 46). Likewise, when the white police officer pursues Leon and Tony during their second encounter, Leon observes:

> He can't do this…. We have a right to be on this highway. Tony responds I could not understand why Leon kept talking about rights, because it was not rights that he was after, but Leon did not seem to understand; he could not remember the stories that old Teofilo told (Silko 127).

Tony's response suggests he has a better comprehension of the problem as he approaches it without looking at the situation from the perspective of the white legal system. Still, both Chato and Leon provide examples of the colonized Native Americans, who have internalized the colonizer's discourse and are unable to offer any resistance. Then, Chato and Leon's failure to act, presents a contrast to the resistance offered by Ayah and Tony, who rely upon Native American stories and beliefs to resist the colonizer's discursive strategies and ideologies meant to mantain the power structures.

In a similar note, *Storyteller* seems to defy all Eurocentric assumptions about art and literature, besides refuting the white ethics, aesthetics and discourse. In these stories, Silko examines the dubious subtleties of the white legal structures and points at the colonial practice of using the legal structures to contain and restrict the colonized into illusory possibilities of justice.

The "Spirits" section presents the cycles of death and life and the meaning of transformation. Transformation is very important for Native Americans who firmly believe in the presence of the spirits of the dead, their rebirth and reincarnation. It is important to note that the concept of death in Indian religion

is considered as continuity and not as the end of existence. In this part, Silko not only does reflect upon those who are dead and commemorate her dead family members, but she also mainly ponders on the cycles of death and life, which the Natives perceive as part of the continuous cycles of nature. For instance, in the poem ("Mountain Lion Lay Down with Deer"), Silko alludes to biblical descriptions of Paradise, where the lion lay down with the lamb, thus imitating an ascent to Heaven. The narrator representing the spirit of Native American people is reborn and returns after "a thousand years" up on the hill "where the mountain lion lay down with deer" (199). The protagonist-spirit remembers its rebirth, and by retelling the story the people renew the memory of the spirit, which becomes water "the memory spilling out into the world" (200).

The "Coyote" section introduces another significant figure of Indian oral tradition. Both Yellow Woman and Coyote have a strong presence in *Storyteller*.Through the means of trickster stories, Silko presents the individual self as part of the extended family, tribe, and the world. These tricksters seem to represent similar life forces, but portray different circumstances because of their gender. Male Coyotes are usually wanderers, always going along to no place in particular. Yellow Woman (and female Coyotes) are usually settled down and raising a family even when adventure calls them to stray away. By bringing food, stories, witchery, cultural heroes, or "simply [bringing] in new blood into the Pueblo, Yellow Woman becomes a symbol of renewal through liaison with outside sources" (Ruoff 73). Yellow Woman's affairs traditionally begin "on the river bank," "on the fringe of things," the very borderlands that the Marmons call home, Silko has also associated the Marmons with Coyote, the bringer of change: the principal destroyer and creator of culture. For instance, she has identified her family in this passage from her poem "Toe'osh: A Laguna Coyote Story:"

> Some white men came to Acoma and Laguna a hundred years ago
> and they fought over Acoma land and Laguna women, and even now
> some of their descendants are howling
> In the hills southeast of Laguna (237).

For many scholars, Coyote, or Trickster, is the most considerable protagonist in North American Native mythology. Generally, Coyote possesses a number of

specific features : strong individuality, humor, irony, ambiguity, transformation, and many others. The Trickster is not a single character, but he represents a complex blend of personalities.He functions as a mediator, creator, destroyer,advisor, cheater, or clown, but his favorite activity is playing tricks with people and animals, although he often becomes the victim of tricks too. In some tales Trickster appears in various animal disguises: Coyote, Raven, Hare,Spider or Rabbit, in other stories he is called Nanabush, Napi, or Iktomi (

Silko herself seems to act as a trickster. Indeed, Silko's great grandfather, Robert G. Marmon, was a white man who married a woman from the village of Paguate in Old Laguna. After this woman's death, Marmon married her sister, Marie Anaya, whom Silko identifies as her great-grandmother.As a trickster, Lynn Domina explains, readers should be more cautious about assuming that the autobiographical act is being manipulated.

"Coyote Holds a Full House in his Hand" is another short story that would seem to be an unusual inclusion into an autobiography. But looking closely at this story, we see that it is appropriately located at the end the book. Indeed, it is perfectly in accord with the last seven narratives of the book where Coyote, like a true trickster, takes different forms such as: a rooster, a girl from Encinal, some Laguna and Navajo men, gossip, a furry coyote, the Marmon family, a politician. They all have to do with Coyote's knack for survival, and even after several failures and humiliations Coyote always comes back.

Also significant is how "Coyote Holds" as the last narrative relates to the first narrative to give *Storyteller* a circular structure, somewhat like a spider's web, the image of the universe created by Grandmother Spider. Ideed, the last narrative "Coyote Holds," hints at what may be happening in this first introductory narrative where "A tall Hopi basket… contains "hundreds of photographs taken since the 1890's around Laguna" (1). Like the first narrative, it is about the plural (the Laguna photos and stories) in the singular (the Hopi basket): the multifaceted Coyote within a Hopi setting. So maybe the Hopi basket

has more to do with helping to create this textual link between the narratives and a circular structure than it has to do with Hopis.

2. The Indian With the Camera: Silko's Use of Photography

When Silko writes in the opening pages of *Storyteller* that "a photograph is serious business" and that the photographs she includes "have a special relationship to the stories (1), she is stressing the importance of the person who holds the camera. With such a statement, Silko is implicitly arguing for visual sovereignty; in other words taking control of the camera and the images one produces as a result of having that control. To investigate how Silko disrupts White settler colonial narratives through her incorporation of photographs, I draw on the theoretical approaches of indigenous scholars such as Victor Masayesva, Gerald Vizenor and filmmaker Barry Barclay among many others.

Mainstream photography of Native Americans by non-Natives has had a long and agitated history and continues to be as such because of the ongoing production of images that stereotype and misrepresent local populations. Victor Masayesva maintains that Native Americans are still stereotyped on postcards and other mainstream media. He writes of an ongoing struggle to maintain a sense of self separate from the one conceived by non-Native photographers. He notes:

> We Hopis often find ourselves the subjects of tourist cameras. The reason is simple. As Southwest Indians we are on display, always: on napkins, on sugar and salt packets…sometimes in rare library collections, but most often on postcards…although we are inundated by collectors of Indian images, we somehow keep our essential selves away from the camera (Masayevsa 10).

In such contexts, insists Masayevsa, there is an urgent need for self-representation. In the same vein, Maori filmmaker Barry Barclay uses the metaphor of the camera ashore to discuss the importance of an indigenous point view and the resultant visual sovereignty. He argues that the white man will always keep a perspective from the ship's deck: "the camera is owned and controlled by the people who own the ship" (Barclay 10). He claims that the white man "will always film from within the national orthodoxy from whence he came" (qtd in Rainwater 10). In contrast, Indigenous cultures are outside the

national viewpoint, "for indigenous cultures are ancient remnant cultures persisting within the modern nation state" (qtd in Rainwater 9). In light of this cenral difference, Barclay coins the expression *fourth cinema,* the cinema of those ashore when they hold the camera. Kristy Bennett elaborates on Barclay's definition, writing that what Barclay calls 'Fourth Cinema' "still exhibits the indigenous world insofar as it creates something the West can look at, namely the film itself; however, it seeks to create a representation of indigeneity that is free from the debilitating gaze of the outsider (qtd in Rainwater 19). Though Barclay and Bennett are speaking of cinema, the concepts articulated are evenly appropriate in the context of photography.

An example of one who contributed significantly to the distressing history of American Indian photography is Edward Curtis. According to Vizenor, Curtis "posed as an ethnographer out to capture the last images of a vanishing race" (qt in Rainwater 60). Curtis modified and manipulated the subjects of his photographs to create the past he imagined, and according to Vizenor he thereby created "an ethnographic simulation" (qt in Rainwater 60). As a result of his performance, viewers of the photographs look at images of warriors who are not warriors, Lagunas who are not Lagunas…etc. Thus, Curtis creates an ethnography of Native Americans who did not exist at the time he took his photographs, and in that sense never existed at all.

In his essay "Ontic Images", Gerald Vizenor argues that "Natives must create their own stories; otherwise, the sources of their identities are not their own". In so doing, they "create stories of survivance, a sense of presence and distinctive identities in the very midst of…many contradictions and contingencies" (qtd in Rainwater162, 164). Vizenor thus explains the importance of storytelling and of taking control of the camera. Indeed, holding the camera themselves enables Native American photographers not only to challenge political and historical contradictions, but at the same time to establish and maintain a presence that privileges self-representation.

In *Navajo and Photography,* John C. Faris argues that photographs, particularly photographs of Indigenous peoples need to be carefully and critically

deconstructed; that often what is more important is outside the frame and under the editing (Faris 139). He encourages the viewer to get rid of clichés that continue to spread the white man's colonial accounts of Indigenous peoples, and to create greater space for self-representation through Indigenous photography (Faris 15-19). Faris uses the categories of *surveillance, humanist, commercial,* and *alternative* photography to the photographs of Indigenous peoples (Faris 42). According to Faris, *Surveillance* photographs include documentary (official, unofficial, advocacy), anthropological (archive, museum), and casual (early tourist, traveler, worker in area); *humanist* photographs portray Indigenous peoples either sentimentally (vanishing race, lost culture, family of man) or as victims (dead, dying, nonfunctional or misfunctional in White perspective); *commercial* photographs often depict either Indigenous aesthetics (color/silver/weaving/turquoise, fashion—body parts), or landscapes (people as extension of trees, rocks, scenery) and studio (personal, postcard) images (Faris 42).

When applied to photographs of Indigenous people, *Surveillance, humanist,* and *commercial* photographs are often photographs taken by White or non-Native photographers. A single photograph may fall into more than one category. Faris defines *alternative* photographs as either photographs in which a different voice is privileged or photographs taken by Indigenous photographers (often include political, resistance, silences, effacement, defacements) (Faris 42). The use of the word *alternative* to describe Indigenous photography may be problematic, for it implies a lower status and minimizes the vision, experience, and authority of Indigenous photographers.

Faris might describe Silko's photographs in *Storyteller* as *alternative;* however, I argue that Silko's photographs are partly responding to a history of invasive *surveillance, humanist,* and *commercial* photography. In fact, the photographs undercut the clichés and assumptions that could occur from a non-Native reader and viewer to more aptly convey the Laguna Pueblo narrative and worldview. Indeed, Silko's concern is to show what is outside the tourist's frame.

Marmon's interest in photography originated in the boarding schools.Silko explains, since "My grandpa Hank first had a camera when he returned from [the Sherman] Indian School" (1). However, at boarding schools, Native Americans were the subjects of photographs, but never the photographers. Within the schools, photographs had a different significance from those featured in Silko's text.Carolyn J. Marr notes, "While the technology [of photography] itself is neutral, the manner in which it is used is imbued with issues of power" (Marr 52).Richard Pratt, for instance, used photographs as propaganda to illustrate the supposed absolute transformation of Indian students from "savages" to "civilized Americans" in a series of "before" and "after" images, making photography an important sign of the boarding-school experience, and more specifically of the power that the schools exercised over representations of their Indian students. In Silko's text, however, Indians are behind the cameras as well as in front of them. Photography becomes a way for Silko to trace the threads of the stories she is telling, rather than an indicator of the loss of Indian culture.Moreover, photography served to demonstrate the ability of Indian people to use the Western form of expression as part of their repertoires of representation. She explains the inclusive nature of the Pueblo culture in the following statement:

> Pueblo cultures seek to include rather than exclude. The Pueblo impulse is to accept and incorporate what works. . . . The Indian with a camera is frightening for a number of reasons. Euro-Americans desperately need to believe that the indigenous people and cultures that were destroyed were somehow less than human; Indian photographers are proof to the contrary. The Indian with a camera is an omen of a time in the future that all Euro-Americans unconsciously dread: the time when the indigenous people of the Americas will retake their land. Euro-Americans distract themselves with whether a real, or traditional, or authentic Indian would, should, or could work with a camera. . . . Hopi, Aztec, Maya, Inca—these are the people who would not die, the people who do not change, because they are always changing. The Indian with a camera announces the twilight of Eurocentric America (*Yellow Woman* 177-178).

Clearly, Silko distinguishes between photography as a medium of representation and the photographer whose choice endows the image with a particular meaning used for promoting an ideological agenda.In other words, not only does Silko assert that Native Americans do not reject photography as a way of self-

expression, but she also shows that they adopt and appropriate them in their own distinct way.

Silko does not begin her life narrative with the traditional "I was born" as in Western autobiographies, but rather she tells the reader about the Hopi basket that contains photographs:

> there is a tall Hopi basket with a single figure
> woven into it which might be a Grasshopper or
> a Hummingbird Man. Inside the basket are hundreds
> of photographs taken since the 1890's around Laguna (Silko 1).

The history and identity of Laguna and its people are evoked here through the hundreds of images and stories they are a part of but curiously not included in a Laguna space, but rather a Hopi space: the "tall Hopi basket". Even though one might be tempted to associate the basket of photos and stories with a Laguna storyteller or Silko herself, the specific Hopi-ness of the basket undermines such an interpretation.

The twenty-six black and white photographs were taken by Lee H. Marmon, Silko's father. The decision to use her father and grandfather's photographs instead of creating her own new photographs shows the importance of family tradition.

Silko introduces herself by relating that there are hundreds of photographs in the basket, taken from the 1890s around Laguna, and explains the implication of these photos to her memories of family, community, and Native stories. She explains their relation to the stories she assigns to her selfhood:

> It wasn't until I began this book that I realized that the photographs in the Hopi basket have a special relationship to the stories as I remember them.The photographs are here because they are part of many of the stories and because many of the stories can be traced in the photographs. (1)

By justifying her choice to include photographs, Silko sets the tone of the work in that she is not going to adhere to usual Euro-American customs.She reveals that the photographs do not serve only like a visual representation of the memories of the autobiographer as in the Euro-American autobiography. According to Cynthia Carsten,

> Silko intentionally rejects the literary conventions of Euro-American genres because they are inherently unsuited to the inscription of Pueblo worldview and lived experience. In addition, these conventions have historically served to maintain and propagate ideologies of domination over American Indian cultures (Carsten 107).

Indeed, a traditional white autobiographical form would emphasize the individual and neglect the community. Silko, therefore, both centers and decenters herself in her own narrative to teach the reader how to apprehend Laguna Pueblo communal dynamics.

Photography 4 depicts Aunt Susie placing a hand on a fence in the forefront to the vast New Mexico setting with a small half-naked Silko in the bottom left of the frame. The picture of Aunt Susie highlights the importance of Silko's community of storytellers, especially women storytellers, and honors them.

In whites' photography of Indigenous peoples, people are photographed from an above angle and are rarely photographed directly except for a few studio portraits. Whether the model is standing or sitting, the downward angle of the camera lens reduces the size of the subject. Individuals seem small compared to their setting and to the photographer. This choice of angle is a strong evidence of the imbalance of power between photographer and subject (Faris Figure 13). However, Aunt Susie is photographed by her nephew, Lee Marmon, using an upward angle, therefore she looks large in front of the landscape. Aunt Susie is not framed in the aesthetics of *humanist* or *commercial* depictions of Indigenous people. Indeed, in this photograph, she is tall and fills the photograph. She is not belittled by a downward camera angle and her size within the frame suggests that she is the main subject of the photography.

Silko employs the same options to the group portrait in photograph 22, which appears after "A Geronimo Story". The story focuses on scouts that are supposed to be tracking Geronimo, but these scouts prefer deer hunting and talking about Geronimo's escapes. The story instead becomes a story about the rituals of storytelling while on a deer hunt and the use of storytelling to fasten a

communal bond. The photograph, however, portrays a group of twelve unnamed men directly facing the camera. The camera angle is slightly pointing upwards. Like Aunt Susie's portrait, this group portrait shows the different power and relationship of Indigenous photographer/ Indigenous model on one hand, and non-Indigenous photographer/ Indigenous model on the other hand. The caption informs the reader that these twelve men, forty-three years earlier, were riders in the Apache Wars. The lack of clarification about its position after "the Geronimo story", pushes the readers to continually readjust how they perceive the relationship between the photographs and the text. According to Jordana Finnegan, the juxtaposition of story and photograph "affirms the survival of the Laguna men (qt in Schweninger 66). Thus, the photograph of the Laguna Regulars proves that the Indians did not vanish.

Photographs also serve to tell stories about places by showing differences between the captured image and the present state of the land, making visible what has disappeared. For instance, in the section "Yellow Woman" of her book, Silko includes a photograph to denounce the devastation of Laguna land at the site of the Anaconda Company's open pit uranium mine (Silko 80). In the photograph, cumulus clouds hover over hills, and what seem to be shelters or dwellings appear in the forefront, along with dirt roads. The scene is devoid of people, but it is obvious that people are living or working on the land. From Silko's caption, the reader is informed that the picture represents a site of an open pit uranium mine that has inflicted massive damage to the land:

> Looking east from Paguate Village at the open pit uranium mine which the Anaconda Company opened on Laguna land in the early 1950's. This photograph was made in the early 1960's. The mesas and hills that appear in the background and the foreground are gone now, swallowed by the mine. In the beginning, the Laguna people did not want the mining done on their land, but then as now, military needs and energy development far outweighed the people. (Silko back cover).

The photograph immediately following the image of the mine is of Laguna village, displaying Laguna people on the land.Silko insists that the Laguna people disapproved the mining but could not prevent or put an end to it. The

photograph dated "early 1960s" and reprinted in the 1980s insists that there are still people, Laguna people to denounce the woeful results of that destruction.

The caption to the photograph on the facing page reads "Looking from the east edge of Laguna village toward the west" (Silko 270).Silko identifies the photograph as "looking west". One should ask how important it is to look west and that the perspective tends to highlight a church. According to Schweninger, "implicit in the caption is the concept of Manifest Destiny and the cultural and the environmental destruction that accompanied its insistence on westward movement" (70). Clearly, the colonizer's notion that God approved their invasion motivated waves of colonization. Moreover, the juxtaposition of these two photographs suggests that Manifest Destiny and uranium mining are related to the colonizer's culture and are both destructive.

Another example of full-page photos juxtaposed is a portrait of an old woman and a wide angle shot of a landscape (photo 12 and 13, 138-39). In the case of these two photographs, neither the woman nor the landscape is named. The old woman wears a beaded necklace and a shawl over her shoulders.She looks down and away from the camera. At first glance, one might tend to notice the similarities between it and a Curtis photograph. However, the caption "A photograph my Dad took" rejects such similarities. Thanks to the caption, the photographer of this unindenfied woman becomes central rather than the subject herself and this reverses Curtis's photograph where the subject is central.For the landscape, Silko offers the following caption: "the Navajos say the black peaks in this valley are drops of blood that fell from a dying monster which the Twin Brothers fought and fatally wounded" (271). Through the reference to the Navajo belief that blood became mountains, she surely evokes the idea that the land and the people's blood are one. Moreover, by juxtaposing the two photographs, Silko implies that the old woman and the land share a common blood. Such photographs suggest survival and visual sovereignty.

The photograph of Mr.Kasero standing proudly in front of his corn plants offers another instance of how the photographs Silko includes talk back to

mainstream ethnographic photography. The photograph includes story and exemplifies visual sovereignty:

> Mr. Kasero and his wife used to drive their wagon and horses up from Mesita village to Laguna to buy groceries and pick up their mail. One time they gave me a ride in their wagon, and I remember how wonderfully the rocks and bumps in the road could be felt through the wagon box. Mr. Kasero was especially proud of his corn plants one year and asked my father to photograph them. My father asked him if he would be in the picture too, and Mr. Kasero said okay, as long as the corn plants could be seen. (270-71)

Mr. Kasero's stiff posture suggests his camera shyness. In telling the story behind the photograph, Silko implies the communal effort involved in preserving such links to the past that, through story and photograph, live into the present.

The photograph on the facing page displays a baby on a cradle (photo 9, 108). The baby is unindentified in the picture and seems to have been abandoned in the cradle as there are no other people to be seen.The caption, however, offers both a story and relief:

> The people believe the cradle board protects a child and when they place the baby on the cradle board, they speak silently to the cradle board, reminding it to take care of the child. My mother kept me on the cradle board until I was twelve months old (270).

Here again, Silko offers only an ambiguous identification of the subject of the photograph. She does not explicitly identify herself as the baby in the photograph. Also interesting is the repetition of the word 'cradle board'. Such repetition emphasizes the significance of the cradle and its protective nature rather than the baby that is the focus of the photograph.

The two photographs are related, in a sense, in that they both insist on the continuance of Laguna life and culture. Mr. Kasero standing proud beside his prosperous corn field; the baby on a cradle looking forward to a promising future, especially if we asume that the baby is Silko.

Through all these photographs, Silko implicitly argues for the importance and necessity of taking control of the power of visual representation and thereby attaining a form of visual sovereignty. She insists that the visual is very complex and indicates that one must undertake different approaches to get a trustworthy visual articulation of history.

3. Affirming the Hybrid

For the most part, Silko's position in the field of literary studies rests on her status as a Native American writer, albeit one who examines hybrid identities; in comparison, her position as a New Mexico writer has seldom been explored. In *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, Jace Weaver, Craig Womack and Robert Warrior suggest that the field of Native American literature, to some extent, remains underdeveloped with many readers still entranced by texts that are perceived as providing a gateway to understanding Native culture and which appear to offer "initiation into a hidden world of tribal wisdom" (2).

Although her work engages with many issues that transcend Native concerns, Silko's writing has often been viewed in this context. Conversely, she has been accused by fellow Native authors of 'anglicising' her work in order to make it more accessible to a non-Native audience. Silko has constantly contended with editors who reject the 'unconventional' elements of her work in favour of what they regard as authentically Indian.

In *Red Land, Red Power: Grounding Knowledge in the American Indian Novel* Teuton asserts that a new theoretical framework is needed for Native American literature. According to Teuton, "most scholars, despite an admirable, expanding interest in studying American Indian literature and culture, still approach Native literary texts primarily as a project to form an interpretative relationship to the literature of an extremely different culture" ("A Question of Relationship", 152). As Teuton argues, this ulimately places Native Americans in the minority category, a subservient culture to be studied by a dominant power. Declaring that "Natives are not helpless victims of colonial devastation, but instead the shrewd protectors of indigenous thought", Teuton rejects the stereotypically subservient role assigned to Indian culture (11).

In *The Romance of Authenticity*, Karem examines how an Anglo perspective has affected widespread interpretation of Silko, observing that she is "rarely treated as an artist and more often treated as an informant, providing

information about Laguna life" (160). This representation of Silko has led to a restricted definition and analysis of her work, for, as Karem claims, "Critics have become so entranced by what Silko writes about Native American life that they have often ignored how she writes or have treated any non- Native American issues as extraneous to the text" (160). As this assertion shows, Silko's work has largely been interpreted within an ethnographical context, with critics focusing on how her work relates to, and impacts on, Native American Studies.

Recent research in the area of Border Studies encourages a redefinition and expansive interpretation of Silko's work. In fact, as a contemporary Indian writer from New Mexico, Silko also displays this aspect of Southwestern culture in her writing. Silko's geographic and cultural position in New Mexico has exposed her work to a variety of ethnic influences and as such, it may be interpreted and analysed within the context of borderlands literature. As a Native American woman living in the Southwest, Silko occupies the third space proposed by postcolonial theorists, especially Homi Bhabha and more specifically the third country discussed by Gloria Anzaldúa in *Borderlands/La Frontera*. Silko's mixed blood status identifies her as a member of the hybrid race that occupies the transcultural frontier of the Southwest borderlands.

In order to dwell in these borderlands, Anzaldúa asserts that it is imperative to develop a fluidity of identity: "To survive the Borderlands/you must live *Sin Fronteras* / be a crossroads" (194). Silko's own family, who claims an Indian, Hispanic and Anglo ancestry, represents this convergence of ethnicities and as such did not belong to any one culture but, according to Silko, "lived somewhere on the fringe of all three. Indeed, the people of Laguna Pueblo have never sought to isolate themselves or demand ethnic purity. Later, the Laguna tribe was one of the first Pueblos to intermarry with Euro-Americans and "Americanize" themselves beginning in the 1860s. In fact, one of these first marriages occurred between Silko's great grandparents Robert G. Marmon and Marie Anaya Marmon.

In *Storyteller,* Silko recounts how her family experienced this cultural hybridity as a fact of everyday life. Silko's great grandfather and his brother were

Anglos who had settled in Laguna Pueblo and married Native women. Both men were integrated into the community and each in their turn served as mayor of the Pueblo. Many of Silko's relatives, including her great grandmother and aunt Susie, had been sent away to be educated at boarding schools, yet managed to preserve aspects of their Native heritage. Both women were famous storytellers within the Pueblo, yet Silko recalls how her Grandmother A'mooh would also read to her from the Bible. The Marmon house itself was located near a major highway, which brought the family into contact, not only with Indians from other Pueblos, but also a constant succession of truckers and tourists. Born and raised at this cultural intersection, Silko was exposed to a diversity of ethnic influences from a very young age. Thus, Silko's cultural background and upbringing contributed to her liminal position as a hybrid occupant of the Southwest borderlands.

As Kathleen Sands and Gretchen Bataille point out, Native American women turn what has been called their "marginality" to their advantage:

> They have seen themselves, not as women on the margins of two cultures, but as women who take pride in their ability to draw effectively on traditional resources as they assert them-selves in the plural society of contemporary North America" (131).

Sands and Bataille comment that the narratives of Native women might be best described as "stories of adaptability" (130).

Silko, indeed adapts writing to her own purposes, bringing the Laguna Pueblo oral tradition and the Euro-American autobiographical tradition together in what Hertha D. Wong calls "an act of self-reconstruction in which a Native American conceives of himself or herself anew (often reassembling a fragmented tribal identity) as a result of this boundary-culture encounter" (116). According to Lynn Domina, Silko writes in a trickster way that enables her to move freely along the borders and sides of her personality and, thus, to write across the "Laguna white hyphen": "Such a hyphen asserts that a person is neither absolutely Laguna nor absolutely white, yet it also functions as a fulcrum,

permitting a shift from one to the other, especially when identity is perceived through cultural performance rather than physical appearance" (46).

In "The Man to Send Raincloud*",* for instance, Silko deals with hybrid subjects who must negotiate a complex bicultural world. In the story, the Navajo last rites, which are performed in the hope that the departed spirit will send rainclouds back to his people, are contrasted with the Catholic last rites, which also have to do with "holy water." When old Teofilo dies, the people want both ceremonies performed, to ensure that the rainclouds will indeed come, and Leon is sent to convince the reluctant priest to come to the burial:

> "Why didn't you tell me he was dead? I could have brought the Last Rites anyway."
> Leon smiled. "It wasn't necessary, Father."
> The priest stared down at his scuffed brown loafers and the worn hem of his cassock. "For a Christian burial it was necessary."...
> "It's O.K. Father, we just want him to have plenty of water.
> "You know I can't do that, Leon. There should have been the Last Rites and a funeral Mass at the very least" (176).

The priest eventually changes his mind and accepts to perfom the Last Rites. Sprinkling holy water is interpreted completely in a different way by the Navajos and the Catholics. The Navajos aren't really interested in the Catholic Last Rites or funeral Mass, but if sprinkling Catholic holy water may help to bring rainclouds, the Navajos are willing to do it. As Ruoff claims in her reading of the story, " these Pueblo Indians have not abandoned their old ways for Catholicism; instead, they have taken one part of Catholic ritual compatible with their beliefs and made it an essential part of their own ceremony"(5).

Silko seems to suggest that the priest is on the verge of understanding the impossibility of Christianizing these people, " he looked at the red blanket, not sure that Teofilo was small, wondering if it wasn't some perverse Indian trick—something they did in March to ensure a good harvest" (177).

The coming of the rain is thus ensured by accommodating a Catholic priest and his holy water to an Indian burial ceremony. It may seem ironical to assimilate such ancient Native traditions to Catholic practices, however as Slayer notes:

> Such ironies were the very means by which Native Americans were able to continue their traditional ceremonies under the scmtiny of white missionaries. By moving their spring ceremonies to Easter or their winter solstice ceremonies to Christmas and by adapting the rituals enough to pass as both, they were able to continue the traditions in some form. No doubt Betonie would approve. (82)

In this story therefore, Silko portrays the fusion of Native American and white Catholic cultures and beliefs, while at the same time preserving traditional values. Obviously, Silko does not take sides and gives a balanced description of the characters.

Silko's repertoire, as demonstrated through her stories, not only includes "Laguna, Mexican, and white" identities but also the story of a Yupik woman living in a small Alaskan settlement. The presence of this story, with a protagonist who is clearly not Silko, and who participates in a tribal culture and tradition far removed from Laguna Pueblo signifies the presence of a Pan-Indian identity in Silko's repertoire. This identity is built upon shared experiences and values that reach across tribal boundaries, coming together in part because of abuses and injustices faced by Native Americans across the continent.

4. Storytelling and Survival

In Native American cultures, stories foster the survival of the people and their culture. As Danielson explains,

> The verbal arts sustain cosmic relationships, testify to sources of creative energy, teach young people, heal the sick, bring lovers together, or reprirnand the socially irresponsible. Leslie Silko's *Storyteller* is an heir of such tradition and a testimony to verbal art as survival strategy (325).

According to Keresan mythological traditions, 'Thought Woman' or 'Grandmother Spider' are the female creative figures who sustain this storytelling tradition by thinking or telling the world into existence. As mentioned before, Paula Gunn Allen considers 'Spider Woman' or 'Thought Woman' as a creator of life and preserver of the culture:

> In the beginning was thought, and her name was Woman. The Mother, the Grandmother,...is celebrated in social structures ...and the oral tradition. To her we owe our lives, and from her cornes our ability to endure ... She is the old woman who tends the fires of life. She is the old woman-spider who weaves us

> together in a fabric of interconnection. She is the eldest God, the one who remernbers and re-members. ...Native Americans seek-through song, ceremony, legend, myths, and tales-to articulate and share reality, to bring private self into harmony and balance with their Native Amencan reality, to verbalize the sense of the rnajesty and reverent mystery of al1 things, and to actualize, in langage, those tniths that give hurnanity its greatest significance and dignity. (qtd. in Evans 181)

The Spider Woman's words establish the fundamental notions of ceremony, song, and memory as necessary to survival. The struggle for survival is to be understood here as a struggle against oblivion.

Cultural survival through the traditional creative storytelling act as initiated by Spider Woman indeed informs Silko's *Storyteller*. Moreover, the storytelling follows a circular pattern, a ritual process of survival, involving notions of continuity.Among Native Americans, however, the oral tradition is more than just a cultural criterion. Native scholar Paula Gunn Allen states that "the oral tradition is more than a record of a people's culture. It is the creative source of their collective and individual selves" (*Sacred* 224). The oral tradition provides the important knowledge needed by the young to ensure the future survival of the tribe and the continuance of its customs, and this is what Silko strives to achieve in her stories: inform the upcoming generations.

When studying Native American oral performance, one has to keep in mind the differences between Western and indigenous literature. As Allen notes: "traditional American Indian literature is not similar to western literature because the basic assumption about the universe and, therefore, the basic reality experienced by tribal peoples and by Western peoples are not the same, even at the level of folklore" (*Sacred* 55).Moreover, Native Americans do not have canonical literary conventions and are more concerned with the content and context of the story than defining it by a literary genre.

From a Pueblo Indian perspective, stories are the lifelines that connect together all things, stories take all possible forms (myth, song, gossip, anecdote, etc.), and inhabit all areas of life. Silko notes:

> The original [Laguna] view o f creation...sees that it is all part o f a whole; we do not differentiate or fragment stories and experiences. In the beginning,

> Ts'its'tsi'nako, Thought Woman, thought o f all these things, and all o f these things are held together as one holds many things together in a single thought(Silko 56).

Each individual in this worldview has the duty to listen and contribute to the oral tradition: "the whole story/ the long story of the people" (7).That is to say, the main contribution a person makes is linking a line of speech to the web/story of the Laguna community and eventually, to history and the world.

It is no surprise why stories and their inherent powers are so important to Silko when one considers Laguna Pueblo and its history. In the harshness of the arid New Mexico desert where Laguna Pueblo is situated, even just one person's selfishness can threaten all living beings. Thus, "Survival depended upon harmony and collaboration not only among human beings, but among all things—the animate and the less animate, since rocks and mountains were known to move, to travel occasionally" (Silko 86). And in this way, storytelling best displays this inclusive worldview because it is really a communual effort that requires not only successive generations of Lagunas, but all creation as well.

For Silko, and for many other Indian authors, storytelling is strongly tied to identity since, as she recounts, "From the time we are very young, we hear these stories, so that when we go out into the world, when one asks who we are or where we are from, we immediately know. . . . We are the people of these stories."(*Yellow Woman* 51). She explains that her own "dreadful" Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schooling actually had the result of encouraging her to maintain life-giving tribal narratives:"Whatever literature we were exposed to at school (which was damn little),at home the storytelling, the special regard for telling and bringing together through the telling, was going on constantly. And as the old people say, "If you can remember the stories, you will be alright, 'just remember the stories'" (57-58).

In the opening pages of *Storyteller,* Silko positions herself within the tradition she supports, by placing herself in the preservation of the lineage of Laguna storytellers (along with Great-aunt Susie Marmon, Great-grandmother Maria Anaya Marmon, Grandma Lillie and Grandpa Hank Marmon and Lee

Marmon who are also counted arnong the living embodiments of Spider Woman) and assuming the responsibility for passing on her Aunt Susie's stories:

> What she is leaving with us
> the stories and rernembered accounts
> is primarily what she was able to tell
> and what we are able to remember.
> As with any generation
> the oral tradition depends upon each person
> listening and remembering a portion
> and it is together
> al1 of us remembering what we have heard together
> that creates the whole story
> the long story of the people.
> 1remember only a small part.
> But this is what I remember. (6-7)

The stories are thus transmitted from generation to generation.

From the very beginning Silko recognizes the impact of the off-reservation boarding schools on her family, on the stories, and on herself. She displays on the first page a photograph of her great-grandmother, Maria Anaya Marmon, and her great-grandfather, Robert G. Marmon, holding her child Grandpa Hank. Maria Anaya Marmon,Silko's Grandma A'mooh, wears the Victorian clothing that served as the marker of the boarding-school-educated Indian. In fact, Silko tells us that both Grandma A'mooh and her daughter-in-law, Silko's great-aunt Susie, attended the Carlisle Indian School.We can immediately see the effect of the boarding schools on Silko's storytelling, since she learned her trade primarily from Grandma A'mooh and Aunt Susie.

Silko reports that Aunt Susie was sent away to Carlisle and then continued her education at Dickinson College. Aunt Susie returned to the reservation to teach, a professional choice that might give the appearance she supported the anti-Indian sentiments of the boarding school by herself propagating its Eurocentric education (Silko 3). In fact, Aunt Susie was to become known for creating her own curriculum, which included both European American and Laguna knowledge and skills.

Combining her belief in writing and in books with her commitment to passing down the oral tradition, Aunt Susie meticulously wrote the stories in

English, attempting to use her boarding-school education to maintain the legacy of the Laguna people for future generations. Silko does not, in fact, see Aunt Susie as a "white-educated scholar" but as a "scholar/ of her own making/ who has cherished the Laguna stories/ all her life" (7). In her scholarly practice, Aunt Susie blends languages and literary forms, as in the story of the little girl who wanted her mother to make her *yashtoah*,or "the hardened crust on cornmeal mush" (8). Silko explains that this is a "very old story," and in Aunt Susie's telling of it "you will also hear the influence of the Indian school at Carlisle."Aunt Susie defines terms like *yashtoah* and *byn'yah'nah'* ("the west lake"), and alongside these markers of tribal identity, Aunt Susie uses "some English she picked up at Carlisle—words like *precipitous*." As Silko says, in this story "things are not separated out and categorized; all things are brought together."(57)

Most of Aunt Susie's stories were passed on orally, since her poor eyesight made her writing progress very slowly, but Silko clearly sees herself taking up Aunt Susie's role as the one who will record the oral on paper, using the skills gained at the boarding schools. Thus, Aunt Susie teaches Silko not Carlisle's assimilative curriculum but ways to preserve the old stories, and each time Silko uses the word "precipitous" in *Storyteller*, she invokes and continues the Laguna storytelling lineage.

Moreover, as Aunt Susie uses her literacy in English as a tool for tribal cultural survival rather than as a marker of her achievement of civilization, she discredits the educators' theory of identity according to which her knowledge of and appreciation for her tribal language would be eliminated by learning English.

Grandma A'mooh was the other storyteller who deeply affected Silko, representing Laguna tradition to her great-granddaughter despite her time at Carlisle.Silko remembers watching Grandma A'mooh care for herself and her family in traditional ways; for instance, she washes her hair with yucca root and informs the young Silko that this will keep white hair from yellowing; she makes red chili "on the grinding stone/ the old way, even though it had gotten difficult for her"; most important, she tells stories about her youth and about tribal

customs and history (34). This is not to suggest that she remained untouched by her years at Carlisle. One telling sign of the lasting impact of her boarding-school education was her continuing literacy in English. Silko relates that in addition to telling Laguna stories, Grandma A'mooh read a book about Brownie the Bear to Silko and her sisters, and to Silko's father and uncles in their youth. Grandma A'mooh's manner of reading the book shows how she was able to adapt her Carlisle education to her Laguna culture. Silko recalls, "she always read the story with such animation and expression/changing her tone of voice and inflection/ each time one of the bears spoke—/ the way a storyteller would have told it" (*Storyteller*, 93). Clearly, Grandma A'mooh traditionalizes the contemporary and turns a Victorian storybook into a Laguna custom, an act that works against the boarding-school educators'assumptions about the unidirectionality of the assimilative process.

Grandma A'mooh and Aunt Susie both teach Silko the crucial importance of storytelling to the community, the family, and the individual. Their time at Carlisle does not keep them from telling the stories that ensure the survival of Laguna culture. While the separation of children from their families made it more difficult for traditional education to take place, storytellers like Silko's mentors did not lose the stories, as the educators hoped. They did, however, use the representational tools acquired at Carlisle, such as English literacy, to adapt new methods of telling and recording the ancient stories, developing repertoires of representation.

To conclude, in *Storyteller*, Silko sets up a strategic dialogue combining myth, fiction, community and family reminiscences, resisting the power of the dominant culture to circumscribe the meanings of self- and cultural identity, and their expressions in the genre of autobiography.*Storyteller* is also an autobiography where the "I" is only possible through recognizing a self as also "Others." It is the story told of how one person is also a tribe, and one tribe is also the world.

In addition, both Zitkala Sa and Leslie Marmon Silko come from hybridized, mixed-breed cultural backgrounds, and constructed sophisticated

autobiographical texts that draw both from the mainstream Euro-American culture and the Native American traditional cultures, tactically employing the strengths of both to further their own (often unstated) political goal: the survival of their tribal cultures alongside the mainstream culture.

Chapter IV

Chicanas' Autobiographical Writings

Introduction

The Mexican-American War of 1846-1848 is the most widely accepted historical point of departure for the development of Chicano literature. Any literature written prior to this date by the Spanish-speaking inhabitants of the Southwest is considered to belong to the Mexican period, and to Mexican literature. At the core of the Chicano literary imagination is a deep sense of heritage. Inhabiting the landscape between two cultures, they are Mexican Americans, yet unable to identify totally with either Mexico or the United States. Thus, through their literature, they seek to articulate the paradox of their past, to understand what Lorna Dee Cervantes has expressed as "a name/that fights me" (qtd in Fisher 307).

The writers to be discussed in this chapter fall into two generations: Hispanics of New Mexico writing in the first half of the twentieth century (Cleofas Jaramillo's *Romance of a little Village Girl*) and writers publishing after the Chicano Renaissance in 1960s (Norma E. Cantu's *Canicula: Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera*). Between the two generations, value systems changed: working and middle class women began to write where before mostly educated upper-class women were writing; the first generation writers emphasized only Spanish culture, while the second one showed pride in the combined Mexican and Spanish heritage. The first generation of women writers generally perceived themselves as Spanish; the second generation saw themselves as Chicanas. There might be a huge ideological and political gulf between the two generations; however, the new generation continues to connect to the past, to its values and traditions.

As a precursor to Chicana literary authors, Jaramillo was important in establishing a feminine literary corpus in New Mexico that served as an example of the use of diverse narrative strategies and mixing different literary genres-- including poetry, folklore and photographs-- to convey a sense of identity for herself and for her fellow New Mexicans in the face of Americanization. In the case of Cantu, we see similar strategies throughout her work that also serve as identity markers within the borderlands of Texas during the post-World War II era. Theoretically, this chapter uses

the foundational studies of Chicana feminism. In *Infinite Divisions: An Anthology of Chicana Literature*, Rebolledo and Rivero divide the Hispana/Mexicana writers into various categories and assert a historical presence of women writers as precursors to Chicana literature. Moreover, they claim a space for female writing that predates the Chicano movement politics of the 1960s and 1970s, when Chicana feminism emerged as a theoretical tool and thus reignited Chicana literary and cultural production. Rebolledo and Rivero place the majority of the literary foremothers to which Cantu dedicates her literary formation in the category of "the 1920s-1950s: Flowering of a Literature of Resistance". During this period, many writers confronted different identity issues as colonized people; as mothers; wives; and children; as guardians of family values and culture; and as storytellers. Then, with the use of different narrative strategies and by mixing literary, historical and cultural genres, these foremothers were able to express just what it meant to be Hispana/Mexicana with multiple identity markers. Concerning *Nuevomexicana* writing, Diana Tey Rebolledo and Rivero state one of the defining strategies as

> the blending or blurring of various forms: the oral and the written, history with creative autobiography, recipes and narrative, family history and romance. The mixing of genre (recipes with fiction, autobiography with poetry) was seen by these writers as acceptable because it was a *recuerdo*, a remembering, and because all the narration was underscored by the *cuento* storytelling tradition. In Hispanic storytelling the mixture of genres with strong attention to personal detail was acceptable, even expected. [Thus]the personal subjectivity incorporates all the discourses of history, sociology, psychology, and geography, but it is the personal storyteller that binds it together (18).

The use of several narrative strategies and literary genres is later employed by contemporary Chicana writers in their attempts to construct the self through writing.

According to Rebolledo and Rivero, Jaramillo's autobiography, *Romance of a Little Village Girl*, aims at understanding the cultural and historical borders that were imposed by the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) and Americanization efforts that left the Hispanic population culturally and linguistically displaced in a space they once considered their own (31). The idea of borders extends itself literally to Cantu's *Canicula* as she continues to struggle with not only cultural and historical borders, but also the geographical borders of Laredo, Texas, and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas. As

Emma Pérez argues, a Chicana past is often constructed by means of crossing geographic terrains and political borders (xiv). By crossing these borders, both Jaramillo and Cantu reflect the multidimensional experience of living within a culture that consistently looks to negotiate cultural identities.

Throughout this study, we shall see how both Jaramillo and Cantu use their personal knowledge of folklore, history and cultural politics, as well as a variety of genres, to reflect an identity unique to their respective geographic spaces and time periods. To do so, it will be necessary to discuss the history of the formation of Mexican American Autobiography.

1. *The Formation of Mexican American Autobiography*

Although the study of the autobiographical genre is flourishing, little has been written about the formation of autobiography in Chicano culture. This may suggest that Mexican Americans had never written their life stories and had just disappeared from history without leaving a trace. As such, deciding when and why autobiography does emerge as a distinct cultural activity is a rather problematic issue. Moreover, claiming autobiographical authority for certain texts raises the proprietary issue of genre. One prevalent question that Arnold Krupat asks about Native American autobiography is: "to what extent is it responsible to treat works presented as contributions to history and ethnography as works of literature?" (*For Those* 31-32). Such issues are indeed of immediate concern when explaining the socio-cultural, ideological conditions that underlie the formation of autobiographical consciousness in Mexican American society.

Reconstructing the history of autobiography necessitates constructing a tradition. We can fairly trace the autobiographic tradition to the Spanish exploration narratives. Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca's *Relaciones* (1536), one may say, represents the first autobiographical account of life in the New World, which together with Francisco Coronado's *Relacion* (1543), Juan de Onate's *Proclamacion*, Eusebio Kino's *Memorias Historicas* (1683- 1711), and many other military and missionary "relaciones" and "diarios" constitute an enormous amount of narratives that may be considered autobiographical. After all, American literary historians have identified British travel

narratives, journals and diaries as the first literary productions of the nation; likewise, autobiography scholars have identified William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*, John Winthrop's *Journal*, Samuel Sewell's *Diary* and numerous other histories and personal narratives as part of the nation's autobiographic tradition. Both the Spanish and the British narratives constitute the beginnings of American literature since they express responses to the New World and are actually shaped by the experience of the Americas. American scholars when establishing the literary canon for the nation, however, have disregarded the Spanish colonial narratives.

Chicano autobiography as a specific cultural utterance begins with that historical moment when the United States forcefully appropriated northern Mexico in the mid-nineteenth century. The war itself and the rapid Americanization of the West set off a social, political, economic, linguistic, and cultural shockwave which pushed Mexicans to inscribe themselves upon history as victims of oblivion. The violent transformation of a well-established society as much as forced many individuals into an autobiographic mode. As Raymund Paredes points out in his essay on "*The Evolution of Chicano Literature*":

> The great divide in Chicano history is the year 1848 when the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended twenty-one months of warfare between Mexico and the United States. ... Although a distinctive Mexican American literary sensibility was not to emerge for several generations, the signing of the [Treaty], more than any other event, required southwestern Mexicans to reassess their relationships to the old country and the United States (74).

In fact, many of the nineteenth and early twentieth-century narratives that comprise the beginnings of Chicano autobiography construct a subject in which the "I" is often subsumed to imply the reconstruction of a cultural history. Thus, the history of one's people becomes the history of the "I". *Yet, it is only in 1984 that contemporary autobiography began to receive serious attention as a distinct genre (Padilla, Marquez, Saldivar). In 1988, the Americas Review published a special issue on U.S Hispanic Autobiography in which they discussed the writings of authors like Oscar Zeta Acosta, Ernesto Galarza, Richard Rodriguez, Gary Soto, Anthony Quinn and personal narratives of nineteenth century Mexican American women, with essays discussing*

theoretical questions about autobiographical ideology and cultural subjectivity in autobiographical narratives. In his Chicano Narrative: the Dialectics of Difference, Ramon Saldivar discussed "the rhetoric of autobiographical discourse… [and] the ideologies that surround" Richard Rodriguez's Hunger of Memory: the Education of Richard Rodriguez (1982) and Ernesto Galarza's Barrio Boy: the Story of a Boy's Acculturation (1971). It is important to note that the problematic of autobiographical self representation in contemporary writing appears in nearly all of the current thinking on Chicano autobiography as a genre in which individual experience and collective historical identity are closely bound together. However, almost all of the scholarship has focused on issues operating in contemporary Chicano autobiography, as though autobiographical consciousness and narrative production, with all the problems related to the construction of identity, ideological contradiction, and rhetorical strategies, had developed only in the last three or four decades. This fixation on the contemporary period had the effect of reaffirming the thought that Chicano literature is a recent phenomenon, thus largely ignoring prior personal narratives in which "ideological complications (historical repression as well as contestatory articulation) comprise the originary worry of autobiographical expression in Mexican- American culture" (Padilla 6).

Closely examining unpublished testimonies as well as published narratives, Padilla argues that these personal reminiscences parallel Native American and African-American autobiographies-particularly slave narratives- in "registering collective opposition to racialist and ethnocentric assumptions"(8). Collective representation, however, created issues for Mexican American autobiography as it had for slave narratives. As William Andrews points out, in the nineteenth century, white people produced and read slave narratives "more to get a first -hand look at the institution of slavery than to become acquainted with an individual slave" (5). Indeed, as Thomas Couser, Robert Stepto and Houston Baker have all shown, the struggle with narrative autonomy by African Americans was carried against a group of white abolitionist editors and publishers who not only sponsored slave narratives, but also through authenticating them they "addressed white readers over the invisible bodies of black narrators" (qtd in

Guttiérez and Padilla 120). I would similarly argue that after 1848, Anglo Americans in general were not interested in the production or in reading the personal narratives of Mexicans who had just been granted American citizenship. Moreover, as slave narratives were published and broadly distributed to promote the abolitionist cause, Mexican American personal narratives functioned only as additional material for American historians and were therefore not published.

As discussed in the previous chapters, Harriet Jacobs, Zitkala Sa and Leslie Marmon Silko recognized the collective function of the autobiographical genre and, rather than focusing only upon themselves, articulated identity within the context of a culture that was being systematically destroyed and silenced. Likewise, after 1848, Mexican Americans were conscious of the historical consequences of such writings. As Mariano Vallejo wrote to his son, his Recuerdos históricos y personales tocante á la Alta California (1875) would fight negative representations of Mexican Californians prevalent in both pre- and post- 1848: "I shall not stop moistening my pen in the blood of our unfounded detractors…you know I am not vindictive but I am and was born Hispano. To contradict those who slander is not vengeance; it is to regain a loss (qtd in Guttiérez and Padilla 36). Obviously, Vallejo's narrative tends toward a strategy of historiographic refutation against his "detractors" rather than focusing on his own personal achievements.

From the 1920s through about 1950, a group of women in New Mexico wrote books that may be described as a hybrid of personal narrative, folklore, recipe books, cultural traditions, community and general socio-cultural history. Nina Otero Warren's Old Spain in Our Southwest (1936), Cleofas Jaramillo's The Genuine New Mexico Tasty Recipes: Old and Quaint Formulas for the Preparation of Seventy- five Delicious Spanish Dishes (1939), Sombras del Pasado /Shadows of the Past (1941), and Romance of a Little Village Girl (1955), Fabiola Cabeza de Baca's The Good Life: New Mexico Traditions and Food (1949) and We Fed Them Cactus (1954) are all books that display the above characteristics. These narratives tend to describe the past nostalgically while ignoring the social fragmentation of the present. In fact, contemporary Chicano critics interested in more political and social commentary condemn these early accounts.

Raymond Paredes, for example, claims that these writers had a "hacienda" mentality, ignored social concerns, and lacked interest because they were too sentimental and sophisticated:

> The Mexican American literature in English that emerged from New Mexico during the 1930s evokes a past that, while largely imaginary, is presented with rigid conviction… The writers described a culture seemingly locked in time and barricaded against outside forces .Here the New Mexico Hispanos pass their lives in dignity and civility, confronting the harsh environment with a religiosity and resolve reminiscent of the conquistadores themselves…There is something profoundly disturbing about this body of work. It seems a literature created out of fear and intimidation, a defensive response to racial prejudice, particularly the anglo distaste for miscegenation and ethnocentrism (qtd in Rebolledo *Desert* 99)

Yet, Diana Tey Rebolledo reminds us that during this period (1930s- 1959s) most "women had no education and even those who did had little leisure to write. Nor were they encouraged to write; they were confined to fairly rigid gender roles, carefully watched and cared for. It is a wonder they wrote at all" (99).

I- Cleofas Jaramillo's *Romance of a Little Village Girl*

No group of New Mexicans found its sense of cultural identity more challenged by the Anglo conquest than the elite, or *rico* , descendants of the Hispanos who dominated New Mexican affairs at the time of war between the United States and Mexico (1846- 1848). The influence of this class continued even after the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo placed New Mexico under U.S. control. While the New Mexican Hispanic elite of the early and mid-twentieth century refused to submit to the Anglos, they found they needed to define themselves in new, Americanized ways. Indeed, "Hispanos" became "Spanish Americans" and they even rallied to declare their support for U.S. troops during the 1898 Spanish American War. Moreover, they socialized with the new Anglo elite of politicians and they sent their sons to elite American universities and their daughters to the same convent schools their mothers and grandmothers had gone to, but increasingly educated them in English rather than Spanish (Reed 70). Cleofas Jaramillo was one such daughter.

The New Mexico Federal Writers Project of 1930s encouraged a sense of value of Hispanic culture and history in Jaramillo and many writers like Aurora Lucero White, Nina Otero Warren, and Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, among others. At that time, Taos, Las Vegas and Santa Fe were undergoing a cultural renaissance because of the influx of Anglo and European writers and artists to the area. Of Santa Fe, Jaramillo writes: "Writing and art are contagious in this old town…[we] have caught the fever. ..Some of us have the courage to try" (Jaramillo 167). Her decision to become a writer was then influenced, in part, by the overwhelming desire to preserve her personal Spanish identity because she sensed that other writers during her time-period attempted to take this identity away from the native population. In the introduction to *Romance*, Rebolledo states:

> Jaramillo had the feeling that she and the Hispanics were being co-opted and that people outside the culture were trying to steal her writing just as they were trying to appropriate the culture. Although such fears might seem paranoiac, they were not groundless. In a sense Mary Austin, Mabel Dodge Luhan, and others who helped create the mystique of New Mexican culture during the period, were, in effect, appropriating the culture they found so fascinating (xxiv-xxv).

Familiar with the writings of Cather, Austin, Laughlin, among others, Jaramillo often borrows their language and their romantic perspective. However, as she does so, she records the pressure of Americanization on her own culture and her social position, and she responds strategically in her representations of New Mexican villages. She describes her homeland, the valley of Arroyo Hondo, as "a fertile, green refuge" and "an isolated nook" that preserved old customs. Yet, she admits that she did not think about recording them in writing until Anglo writers showed her their value and, implicitly, her own value as their chronicler.

When considering publishing her book *Romance,* Jaramillo decided that the best option would be to self-publish as many people were interested only in stealing her ideas. She writes:

> I tried sending my manuscript to some of our Western Universities. After holding on to it for several months, they would return it, saying they did not have the funds to publish it. One professor said he was writing a book. Would I permit him to use two or three of my stories in his book? I then understood. All they wanted was to read my manuscript and get ideas from it, so I decided to have it published by a small press here in my city (168).

The historical circumstances, in which Euro-Americans took over the land once owned by native Nuevomexicanos, caused Jaramillo to believe that the culture she had known as a child and for much of her adult life had ended. Thus Jaramillo clung to a Spanish heritage both as a weapon in the struggle to retain a sense of the community and culture that she perceived as lost, and as a method for her to hold an exalted status over Euro-Americans, when in financial reality Jaramillo had none. For Jaramillo, an accurate depiction of Nuevomexicanos and their culture became essential. For example, Jaramillo decided to write her cookbook, *The Genuine New Mexico Tasty Recipes/Potajes Sabrosos*, because of the "deficiencies" she saw in Spanish cookbooks written by Euro- Americans. In fact, her book was inspired by an erroneous article (1935) in *Holland Magazine* that listed incorrect ingredients for the making of flour tortillas. Jaramillo decided to write a cookbook to document Mexican culture from her native perspective. In this same spirit Jaramillo wrote her other books, *Cuentos del Hogar* (1939), a translation of twenty five tales, drawn from folklore, her mother had related when she was a child, because they "would soon be lost if someone did not put them down in writing" (167); *Shadows of the Past / Sombras del Pasado* (1941), a book in which she labored to "preserve some of the folklore of New Mexico and *Romance of a Little Village Girl* (1955).

In "Tradition and Mythology: Signatures of Landscape in Chicana Literature," Rebolledo describes how Jaramillo records her early journeys through northern New Mexico in such a way that "Landscape… contains metaphors of change, a tragic sense of loss of place, loss of culture, and loss of language" (qtd in Norwood and Monk105). In "Las Escritoras: Romances and Realities," Rebolledo notes that the Hispana authors of early twentieth century New Mexico, including Jaramillo, wrote

> …against the overwhelming dominance of Anglo culture and language, against patriarchal norms. Their narratives are valuable not only because they preserve accounts of folk life but because in particular they document the customs a woman thought important to record: those accounts of private lives and duties of women not usually included in male narratives. Thus we are able to glimpse something of the experience of the female half usually left out of history (208).

Rebolledo argues in *Women Singing in the Snow* that in practicing this sort of writing, women authors like Jaramillo not only assumed responsibility for the terms on which their loss of land and culture would be described, but they were also "actively resisting culturally defined roles for themselves and for all Hispana women" (33). These women were writing, in part, because they wanted to communicate their sense that this culture and identity was somehow disappearing, that it was being assimilated through history and cultural domination.

Genaro Padilla points out that the dominating culture, in order to subvert the conquered group's ideological consciousness as much as possible, must make "the subject culture forgets the details of its domination" (44). Padilla also argues that many Hispano writers were influenced by Anglo-American intellectuals who came to New Mexico at the beginning of the 20th century. These writers invented for New Mexico an aesthetic discourse of myth and romance, a discourse which "provided one of the few forms through which Hispanos could compose their lives for public view (46). This same discourse, praised by Anglos in such books as *The Land of Poco Tiempo*, by Charles F. Lummis, and *Death Comes to the Archbishop*, by Willa Cather, when written by *Hispanas* has been severely criticized by recent Chicano critics.

The study of the writings of early women needs serious attention particularly when one considers that these women were confined to fairly rigid gender roles. For Padilla, the writings of these women contain "sparks" of dissent. He states,

> What we must look for are momentary struggles in the narrative, revealed perhaps only in whispers of resistance, quelled immediately but signaling like
> a flash through the dense texture of language and reified memory. In such whispers we discover those gaps in the narrative where the native cultural "I" voices itself against the imperial "Other" to speak through the bars of the ideological prison in which it is confined (44).

Since cultural hegemony is rarely complete, that is to say, since every subject, or "prisoner" wishes to be free, we must search for those instants where resistance reveals itself in even the most compliant discourse.

In her article "Narrative Strategies of resistance in Hispana Writing", Rebolledo argues that this group of women was neither "naïve" nor "innocent" in their writing, that

in fact they established a set of narrative strategies of resistance that are "constantly subverting the official text" of Anglo-American writing about Nuevomexicanos. She contends that the narratives written by these women are priceless in their preservation of the customs women thought important to record. Among these strategies, first, a sense of colonized identity and the defining of that identity by detailing the cultural signs imbedding that identity, such as Hispano topography, accounting of family names, friends' family names and long accounts of cultural resistance. Second, a sentimental recall of the past, generally expressed in nostalgic edenic terms. It is nevertheless a past which questions present authority. Third, the blending various forms: the oral with the written, history with creative autobiography, recipes and narrative, family history and romance; the mixing of genre (recipes with fiction, autobiography with poetry). Finally, a translation from Spanish to English, in which exists a critique of Anglo culture, of Anglos' understanding of Hispanic culture, and the imposition of the spirituality of Hispanic culture (Rebolledo 136).

Relying on these theoretical works, I will analyze how Jaramillo attempted to preserve her Spanish heritage while subverting constantly the "official" text, the one the dominant culture is to receive.

1- Cultural Autobiography as Resistance in Cleofas Jaramillo's Romance

Romance of a Little Village Girl is a more strictly autobiographical form than the other texts discussed in this thesis. The narrative documents Jaramillo's personal history and the social struggles of her family and community. Each chapter is framed in a ballad form, blurring the lines between poetry and prose, which may suggest that Jaramillo was hinting at traditional Spanish epic poetry. This combination of poetry and narrative, romance and family history, cultural history and creative autobiography was common in Hispanic storytelling. Jaramillo's use of various genres within her autobiography parallels the collective ways of her community.

Like her contemporaries, she describes the descent from an edenic girlhood in northern New Mexico to a more ambivalent present where she feels the loss of traditions, the loss of New Mexican Hispanic culture. She traces the history of the "New Spanish

Province" from the time of the early settlers and the role her family (the Martins-later Martinez-and the Luceros) played in its settlement, to the present day. For example, Jaramillo details the Hispanic perspective as the area became an American territory in 1848. She notes:

> After existing surrounded by the struggle of life and death…for almost three centuries under Spanish rule, with one stroke the new colony was brought under the rule of a foreign government under a new, unknown constitution, which helplessly the Spanish population must accept (6-7).

Only slowly, according to Jaramillo did the Hispanic *ricos* become aware that they needed to control the rapidly deteriorating situation.

Throughout *Romance*, Jaramillo details many of the events of her life, including her personal memories of growing up in the northern New Mexican village of Arroyo Hondo and details regarding the deaths of her husband Venceslao Jaramillo, a prominent Nuevomexicano politician, and their daughter Angelina. Located north of Taos, New Mexico, Jaramillo describes Arroyo Hondo as a place that "imparted to its inhabitants satisfaction and contentment" (14). She states that the New Mexico of her childhood had "adjusted itself" to the increase in Anglo American migration to the region during the late nineteenth century, even as the newcomers had begun to extract property and wealth from the Nuevomexicana/o upperclass (9-10). It is when Jaramillo turns to events from her adulthood that she seems to deplore the "ills and troubles," which, in one way or another, she attributes to modernization (199). While she, at times, presents her childhood village as a somewhat isolated, pastoral place, where tourists would travel "past remote villages" and "wide plains," practically reconstructing the narrative vision of New Mexico with which Anglo American audiences were familiar, she also provides readers with descriptions of cultural events that would bring together people from various backgrounds, showing how local culture was never quite as static Lummis and others believed (10). For instance, during the feast day of San Geronimo, for instance, Jaramillo recalls how people would travel from near and far to celebrate the occasion in Taos.

Jaramillo explains how she wanted to share an otherwise unknown "quiet romance". "Under the apparent deadness of our New Mexico villages" she explains,

"there runs a romantic current invisible to the stranger and understood only by their inhabitants". She promises an account of "girlhood years that were enriched with comfort and love, innocent of any wickedness, sheltered from all care and grief" (ix). At the beginning of the narration her home was a paradise with crystal clear springs and bounty meadows. Early in the book there is a passage describing her return home from boarding school.

> I climbed up on the seat by my father and rode along inhaling the fresh fragrance of the newly-awakened sage and wild flowers. The desert plain seemed turned into a fairy-land. Icy winter had given place to warm summer, melting snow and filling rivers and causing ditches to overflow. Here and there we dropped into a verdant little valley, the sparkling river fringed with new green plants and drooping willows. From the edge of the highest ridge we looked down into the Arroyo Hondo . . . which in its rich verdure seemed to lie asleep, the deep silence enveloping the valley broken only by the rattling of our carriage wheels or the distant barking of the dog. Happy in letting my tongue loose in my fond Spanish, I had chatted all the way. (41-42)

At the end of the narrative this has completely changed. Her husband dies of cancer in his thirties, and she struggles to save her farm and properties.

Jaramillo has also experienced the parent's deepest loss with the death of two infants. In a veiled critique, she describes the disjuncture between cultures exemplified in the death of her first baby. She went to a hospital in Denver in order to have good medical care. She writes:

> On the second day, when the nurse brought in the baby from his bath, I felt his little hands and they were ice cold. "The baby is so cold," I said to her. "Just on the outside," she answered, putting the baby back in his basket up on the table by the window. I almost cried. I wanted to keep him by me to keep him warm. By next day his kidneys had stopped functioning. The baby specialist called in circumcised the baby as a cure. He cut a blood vessel and the baby bled to death. (108).

This scene is contrasted in the next chapter with a discussion of what the *medica*, or *curandera*, tells her. "Hearing what had happened to our baby, the medica said: 'That trouble comes from catching cold. We roast an onion, split it open, and while it is still warm, place it over the baby's bladder. Muy pronto (very soon) the functioning is released" (109).The narrative perspective is clear; if Jaramillo had given birth to her baby within her cultural context, the baby would have survived.

When Jaramillo began to reconstruct her past, she wrote with a subtle awareness of personal, cultural and material loss. Thus, she follows the "retrospective narrative habit". As Genaro Padilla argues "an individual life is measured within a communitarian configuration and against the disruption of identity as identity is situated within an imagined cultural community of the past" (232).Along with the stark contrast between an imagined past and an impoverished present, Jaramillo's writing expresses the division between native Nuevomexicano traditions and their Anglo American appropriation.

Jaramillo's moving account of Angelina's murder, and how she attempted to fill the gap of loneliness by participating in the cultural preservation activities in Santa Fe during the 1930s, is an autobiographical instance that is undermined by cultural practices. *Romance*, therefore, is a narrative divided between Jaramillo's desire for writing her life and her self-assumed responsibility for writing her culture. That is to say, Jaramillo's narrative is split between duty to a vanishing culture where she plays the role of a pure descendant of the Spanish conquistadores and a personal narrative of a woman whose life has been injured by tragedy and social displacement in which she expresses her grief, social anger and reaffirmation of life and purpose in social activity after Angelina's death.

3. *Domesticity in Romance of a Little Village Girl*

Chicana feminist scholars such as Gloria Anzaldua, Cherrie L. Morraga, and Sonia Saldivar Hull have argued since the early 1980s that American feminism was blind to issues of race, class, and sexual orientation and that in most cases, American feminism only addresses the needs and concerns of white, middle-class heterosexual women. Accordingly, they theorize a field of "Chicana feminisms" that would more adequately address the needs and concerns of women of color, and particularly Chicana women, than does mainstream American feminism. Saldivar Hull, while recognizing the important contributions of Euro-American feminism, urges a critical "color consciousness" among literary scholars rather than the well-intentioned but ultimately restrictive "color blindness" practiced by earlier varieties of liberal scholars (36). While I will depend on the works of these scholars, I also believe that practicing only a

Chicana feminist reading of Jaramillo's text remains insufficient. In her claim of whiteness, Jaramillo is less concerned with race or ethnicity than with class and social privilege. I will then rely on white feminism as well. Further, I will focus on how religion works in this text as an extension of domesticity and as public platforms for female authority.

In Romance, Jaramillo uses the rhetoric of domesticity to resist Anglo definitions of femininity and strays from strictly traditional roles for Hispanic women. Domestic rhetoric functions in no less than three main ways: first, it corrects ideas among Anglo women that Hispanic women do not have their own traditions of domesticity and that Anglo women can be trustworthy reporters of Spanish American domesticity; second, it asserts a domestic ideology that is both centuries- old and that they see as superior to Anglo versions of domesticity; and finally, it instigates a more collaborative domesticity that integrates Spanish-Mexican traditions with Euro-American modernity to conceive a Spanish-American modernity.

Jaramillo's text can be considered as a response to the misreading American woman in her upper class New Mexican context. In Romance, she mentions her relationship with famous Anglo writers of the Southwest such as Willa Cather (28) and Ruth Laughlin Barker (118). Still, she also writes that her foundation la Sociedad Folklorica (1936) and her book the Genuine New Mexico Tasty Recipes (1939) shared the goal of correcting popular misrepresentations of Hispanic culture by Anglo women:

> *While calling upon and taking one of my Spanish recipe cookbooks to one of my neighbors, our conversation for the moment centered around Spanish recipes. "Have you seen the article in Holland's Magazine written by Mrs. D? she inquired. I had not seen it, so she gave me the magazine to take home to read it. It was a three-page article, nicely written and illustrated, but very deficient as knowledge of our Spanish cooking. In giving the recipe for making tortillas it read, "Mix bread flour with water, add salt." How nice and light these must be without yeast or shortening! And still these smart Americans make money with their writing, and we who know the correct way sit back and do nothing. (173)*

The article Jaramillo scornfully refers to here appeared under the exotic title "Intriguing Mexican Dishes", and the opening lines infuse Mexican cooking with mysticism: "to read a menu of Mexican dishes is like chanting a hymn of praise. The musical syllables, with their decided accents, scan themselves joyously to one's ear.

There are empanadas,enchiladas,ensalada, sopapillas and so on (qtd in Zink 119).It appears that Jaramillo was offended by the Anglo woman playing with Spanish words and her method of making tortillas. She was probably more offended by the writer's use of dialect to characterize a Mexican American housewife as she shops the market for chili peppers. Jaramillo's response to this Anglo woman's misrepresentation of her Spanish culture characterizes her entire body of work.

Jaramillo uses domesticity to glorify an irreversible past, resist Anglo appropriation of Mexican American lands and assert a Spanish American culture. This passage from *Romance*, where she reflects on the simplicity of her childhood, epitomizes Jaramillo's perspective on the sharp difference between Spanish tradition and Anglo modernity:

> Children fed with simple foods raised on their lands, and housed in neat little whitewashed houses with large sunny yards, were healthy and happy, too…not spoiled by too much liberty and by the bold example they learn now from television and movies. Juvenile delinquency? No one knew what it meant. Mothers stayed home taking care of their children, satisfied to live on their husband's earnings. They were not buying new clothes all the time nor visiting beauty shops. No one was ever late for church…How nice it would be if people now would live thus! (14)

In this passage, Jaramillo blames technology, feminism, secularism and consumerism for the loss of the old Spanish customs she refers to in her autobiography. However, in other instances, one might read consumerism in descriptions of her travels to Chicago, New York and Washington as well as to Mexico. One can also read consumerism and modernity in the fact that her winter home in Santa Fe "had all the conveniences that save time and work" (123). Gayatri Spivak discusses "worlding", explaining that the colonized participate in the contemporary international world as much as the colonizers, even though the colonizers try to define the contemporary as if it consisted only of their contemporary (qtd in Zink 121). Jaramillo writes that her people are still untouched by modern progress, showing that, on one hand, she confirms the colonialist, nostalgic romanticization of the colonized past even as, on the other hand, she distances herself from her indigenous past. Thus, Jaramillo rewrites modernity in ways that claim space for a feminine, Spanish American modernity.

Before turning to religion and education, I refer to a passage from McLean and William's *Old Spain in New America* to show an example of common Anglo modes of religious and educational colonialism against which Jaramillo fought. In addition to their assumptions about Mexican American homes, McLean and Williams argue that the "marked difference between Saxon and Latin America cannot be due wholly to climate or to race" but rather to a "fundamental lack in their [religious] system…it seems legitimate to ask whether the form of Christianity introduced long ago has not proved itself inadequate to create a civilization that would develop the best qualities of those who accepted it" (xiii). Further, they assert that the mission of the Protestant Church is "not to destroy the Roman Catholic Church, but to bring it into cooperation with all Christian forces on the one foundation Christ Jesus" (xiv). Then, to achieve that goal, Protestant missionaries trained workers in four major branches: evangelistic, educational, medical and social. White women were certainly involved with the educational and social work among the Mexicans of the Southwest. Peggy Pascoe historicizes the ways that white Protestant women used to assimilate 'Other' women. These "home mission women…interpreted the 'home' as the ideal Christian home of Victorian rhetoric", so that by the end of the nineteenth century, "Protestant evangelical women engaged in 'woman's work for woman' all over the country" (qtd in Zink 6). By running home missions, these women enforced the ideals of Victorian domesticity on the women whom they 'othered'. Sarah Deutsch; writing specifically about Mexican American/ Anglo American encounters, notes:

> By 1900, churches in the United States had come to think of mission fields as frontiers of Christian civilization and missionaries as a vanguard. Anglo Protestants spoke in one breath of Americanizing and 'Christianizing' New Mexico, of conquering this frontier (qtd in Zink 63).

These women were firmly rooted in America's Victorian ideology of domesticity, and in their work in New Mexican communities they were "determined to take over the direction of the entire village and to reshape it, in brand of miniature empire building" (73).In addition, Deutsch notes another outcome of reform work: "the Presbyterian education produced an elite corps of Hispanics who succeeded in the Anglo context, but at a price…the new religion could distance its adherents from old neighbors as well as old customs" (28).

Jaramillo's *Shadows of the Past* is partly structured according to the calendar year of the Catholic Church, with chapters like "Feast Day" or "Holy Week at Arroyo Hondo". In the chapter "the Penitente Brotherhood", Jaramillo defends the controversial religious sect against Anglo writers who distort their practices:

> Due credit is given to the English writers who come to New Mexico and write such interesting books from second-hand information, but I wish here to contradict some of their statements. One author starts his article on the *penitents*: 'Are they lunatics or murderers?' They are neither. The members that live according to the brotherhood's rules are the best, most sincere religious people (64).

Here, Jaramillo sarcastically destroys the credibility of Anglo writers who claim authority on a custom they have not practiced and by using sources who are not reliable. Further, she notes that the Catholic Church has "condemned this order for years", excommunicated the most radical members (65), which proves that her motive for discussing the order is really not to defend their practices, but rather to take the opportunity to show how Anglos are wrong about Mexican Americans religious and cultural practices, and to claim the authority to speak of such things herself. In *Romance,* Jaramillo asserts that religion is very important in her family, she notes: "like all the Spanish ladies in her time, my aunt was very faithful in attending the church services every day, sometimes getting there so early, the church was not open" (51); and "religious tradition ruled" in Grandma Melita's home (95). Elizabeth Jacobs argues that the female characters in Jaramillo's autobiography represented and projected "the most effective form of colonialism…That their daily habits, including household and social etiquette as well as religion, can be translated in this context as the conscious and planned reproduction of fundamental colonial values" (5). As products of Spanish colonialism, women like Jaramillo perpetuated Spanish colonial religious and domestic customs. For Jaramillo, then, domesticity rhetoric challenges, preserves and transmits cultural performances of national and cultural identity.

4. Jaramillo's Folk Community

Late-nineteenth-century folklore studies, like the discipline of anthropology from which it descended, supposedly allowed professional and novice folklorists to locate "authentic" culture among diverse groups of people.

In *Native Speakers: Ella Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, Jovita Gonzalez, and the Poetics of Culture* (2008), Maria Eugenia Cotera uses a comparative approach to examine how three women of color, writers and scholars, Ella Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, and Jovita Gonzalez, became involved in projects to change public attitudes in the United States about their respective communities. Significantly, each of these women, as Maria E. Cotera writes, "broke from the discursive boundaries of their chosen disciplines to explore the political and poetic possibilities of fiction (5-6). Cotera proposes a comparative feminist approach that is attentive to distinct historical experiences, revealing some of the antecedents to contemporary women of color writings and activism. Attentive to each writer's ethnographic meaning-making interventions as well as their "resistant rhetorical strategies," Cotera maintains that the rise of folklore studies during the early twentieth century allowed the subjects of her study to enter a "newly created institutional contact zone" that overwhelmingly understood ethnography as an "encounter with radical cultural difference" (37). More recently, she has written about Chicana archives as a "composite text," "a yet unwritten history of intellectual labor that offers scholars a glimpse into the conditions of articulation that brought us to the place we are now" (b 300), a place in which we can write and speak about Chicana feminism in classrooms, conferences, and books. Cotera contends that Mexican American acts of collecting were very much collective acts, in some ways akin to the later meaning-making practices of Chicanas, that have not only fostered the "creation of permanent collections but also potential collectivities"(304).

Relying on these theoretical works, I will analyze how Mexican American women challenged structures of coloniality that devalued their histories by drawing attention to their gendered bodies, exposing their exclusion from institutional forms of meaning making by Anglo-Americans as well as Mexican American men.

As discussed earlier, Jaramillo's framing of her autobiography illustrates her preoccupation with establishing herself as an elite "Spanish" American woman, a preoccupation that largely stems from the outcome of the US-Mexico War (1846-1848). With the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, Mexicans who remained within the newly constructed borders acquired citizenship, making them the first generation of Mexican Americans. According to Alberto Varon, it is roughly from this period forward that Mexican Americans "found themselves in the paradoxical position of U.S. citizen and perceived foreigner" (2). These conditions positioned Mexican Americans as racially and morally inferior and therefore unworthy of the privileges of national belonging.

The literary and print culture produced by Mexican American women in the US West and Southwest from this moment onward, much of it sharing similarities with *Romance of a Little Village Girl*, often comments on the effects this geopolitical shift had on their lives. However, since much of this literary and print culture was produced by the Mexican American upper class, these writings tend to highlight issues of property ownership and hardships having to do with the upper-class' inability to maintain their elite status. María Amparo Ruiz de Burton's novel *The Squatter and the Don* (1885), for instance, draws attention to the dispossession that upper-class Mexican-Californians experienced almost immediately after 1848.

Ethnographic discourses were part of the disciplinary study of folklore in the United States between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The institutionalization of American folklore studies itself coincided with government-supported efforts to examine supposedly primitive cultures that seemed at odds with the nation's project of Manifest Destiny. Late-nineteenth-century folklore studies, supposedly allowed professional and novice folklorists to locate "authentic" culture among diverse groups of people. Shirley Moody-Turner reminds us that, since its emergence, American folklore studies was shaped by the assumption that the white middle-class—its values, perspectives, and ex periences—was the definition of "civilized" culture (qtd in Cotera 27). For this reason, folklore studies often reinforced discourses of white superiority, and, by extension, ideas that seemed to confirm the

inferiority of people of color (18).Moreover, Dominant ethnographic discourses and concepts of folklore had always attempted to denigrate Mexican American local ways of being and knowing following the American-Mexican War.

In *Romance*, Jaramillo discusses the events leading up to the formation of *La Sociedad Folklórica* in the 1930s. Inspired by an article she had read about a Natchez pilgrimage wherein "antebellum mansions" and "rich heirlooms" of the South were displayed for the public to commemorate phases of the region's history, the text states that Jaramillo devised her own plan to curate her Nuevomexicana/o community's Spanish colonial heritage and transform a popular festival dominated by Anglo Americans into what she thought it "ought to be" (174) . But she also attributes her inspiration for creating a folklore society to the lack of one in New Mexico. Recalling that the famous Texas folklorist J. Frank Dobie had invited her to become part of the Texas Folklore Society, it occurred to her that as there was no equivalent in New Mexico, "it would be an excellent plan to start one" (176).Vizcaíno-Alemán characterizes this moment in the text as one in which Jaramillo "appropriates the Old South in the New South to revive old Spain in New Mexico" (12). In this sense, the origins of her *Sociedad Folklórica* are to some extent entangled with the regional history and politics of the South.

Critics have interpreted Jaramillo's intervention in the Fiesta as resistant but controversial attempts to recover Nuevomexicano history. Genaro M. Padilla argues that such "disruptions" were "strategically intended to counter" Anglo American control of the Fiesta, and he considers her actions a socio-psychological compensation for her actual social and economic status through the 1930s and 1940s as a financially troubled widow living in a small apartment off the main plaza in Santa Fe" (220). However, from the vantage point of folklore, we can read their shared efforts to transform the Fiesta not only as an attempt to reclaim control of a narrative about New Mexican belonging from Anglo Americans, but also as an exercise that reveals the politics that contributed to their exclusion from institutional spaces during the early twentieth century. However, the plan Jaramillo creates to reorganize the Fiesta contradicts her own perception of tradition and the ideal Nuevomexicana ways of belonging, which she describes earlier in *Romance of a Little Village Girl*. In "Government Changes Take Place," Jaramillo

speculates that Nuevomexicanas/os continued to practice their cultural traditions after New Mexico became a US territory precisely because of the social and political transformations that took place. "Crushed at first with these hard changes, but with their spirits still strong, with inherent courage and religious resolve" Jaramillo states, "they [Nuevomexicanas/os] bore their trials. In an effort to keep satisfied and cheerful, feast days, weddings, and other celebrations were kept up, with feasting, music, and dancing". (9) In other words, Jaramillo contends that previous generations made more concerted efforts to practice their traditions because these customs allowed them to cope with their displacement.

5. Of Spanish Descent

One of the reasons that minorities in general and Chicanos in particular tell their stories is to write themselves into the discourse of nationhood, and to revise the official stories of the nation. Priscilla Wald argues that such writers have an "uneasy awareness of a larger story controlling their stories. But these works also convey their authors' understanding that those larger stories constituted them as authors; they could not tell their stories without the conventions those larger stories provide" (3). Their works manifest their writers' distressing sense of not enjoying full freedom in their texts.

According to Wald, minor writers have different reasons to tell such stories. First, these writers seek "to tell, represent and analyze untold stories: what had been suppressed and repressed by official stories of "We" the people (qtd in Arranda 4). Second, they have realized that, due to historical or socio-cultural contingencies, "home is not what or where [they] think it is and that [they] by extension, are not who or what [they] think [they] are" (qtd in Arranda 7). For this reason, they feel that they have to protect who or what they think they are. Third, and most importantly, by creating a valid cultural past, they repress the chaotic nature of history. These writers exhibit "the fears of a dominant group that wants to protect its property, its own terms of inheritance, and generally, its power" (qtd in Arranda 7). In a similar way, Cleofas Jaramillo sought to preserve her "vanishing culture" by integrating cultural traditions into her autobiography. Because of the hybrid nature of *Romance,* this narrative could be labeled

autoethnography. Bentley contends that writing and ethnography were comparable enterprises: each functioned "as a way of mastering manners on the page" (2) and, in either case, the goal was to reclaim culture (and cultural mastery) from the entropy, alienation, and relativism promised by its modern predicament. Bentley recasts the novel of manners as an ideological apparatus; "the foundering elite restaged its own authority by (re)viewing it through an anthropologic lens" (70).

It is particular that Jaramillo's first chapter of *Romance* entitled "the New Spanish Province" opens with an epigraph to a Spanish presence in the New World from which she claims her cultural identity:

> The first white speck on the
> Western sea was made by a Spanish
> Sail
> And the first lonely grave on the
> Plains,
> Was dug by a Spanish trail
> They left their loved abodes
> To tempt new seas, and stretched
> Their sails
> …to lands unsettled to habitate (1).

Thus, from the beginning, we are aware that Jaramillo's narrative offers not only her autobiography but also an ethnography of her Spanish heritage. Throughout her narrative, she blends cultural traditions and festivities with her life story. Chapters are entitled: "Penitente Ceremonies of Holy Week", "the Parish Feast Days", "Wedding at Taos" and a Native American festivity called "the Indian Feast of San Geronimo". Much of the narrative describes also the traditional food preparation. Jaramillo obviously led a privileged life. In her narrative, she documents the rituals of high society, offering details about her travels and parties she attended as the wife of a politician.

"Writing about manner", Bentley argues, "becomes a genesis of a modern liberal authority" (2). In a similar way, Jaramillo strives to write about her Old Spain, to chronicle her traditions, and more precisely her Spanish aristocratic manners. It is that textualization that fosters in her an authority over her "sphere of culture", thereby granting her "cultural possession". This cultural possession, however, can become problematic for two reasons. First, Jaramillo complicates her collective discourse by

claiming cultural resistance against an Anglo American hegemony, while legitimating this discourse by repressing the Other in the margins, namely "lazy Aztecs", "savage Indians" and "simple peasants". In short, she documents the offensive manners of the Spanish elites. In her text, Jaramillo juxtaposes the lives of the aristocracy against the lives of the peasants. Although there were great divisions between those who owned the land and those who worked the land, Jaramillo never acknowledges her elite privilege. Instead, she constantly repeats that there were no class distinctions in New Mexico, but rather that everyone lived and worked in harmony. For example, she notes, "My parents were not the haughty kind of Dons; they never made their servants feel that they were inferior. There was no need, for our servants knew their places and kept it" (15). These contradictions are also clear when Jaramillo writes condescendingly about the *peones* (Peasants), who are responsible for harvesting the lands. She writes:

> After the gayeties of the fiestas, the *peones* took a two or three-day siesta, to make up for sleep lost during the celebrations. It mattered not that the *patron* (master) waited a week, with part of his harvest still out in the fields. "Why hurry" they said. "*Mientras vida dure tiempo sobra,* (While life lasts there is time left)". I always compared this axiom with my mother's common admonition: "*tiempo perdido los santos lloran.* (Over lost time saints cry)". (23)

And while she describes laborers as lazy and incompetent, she sees herself and her family as efficient and hard-working. Similarly, she represses Native Americans in order to legitimate her position in Anglo –American society. According to her, "they are savage Indians" who need to be civilized. For example, she credits her Spanish forefathers for the discovery of the New Land; she writes: "toiling and suffering untold hardships, they penetrated through mountain passes, across vast prairies, conquering savage Indian tribes and establishing settlements in wilderness" (2). She then asks her readers, "What was that brave spirit of adventure that lured our ancestors to leave the comforts of their European abodes to come into this wilderness among savages?" (4).Throughout the narrative, Jaramillo addresses this question by embellishing the glorious journey of the conquistadores.

To address these elitist notions of Spanish culture, I turn to Carey McWilliams's *North From Mexico: The Spanish -Speaking People of the United States, in which we find an exploration of the practice of Spanish-speaking New Mexicans and Californians*

who privilege their European heritage while repressing their indigenous roots. He states: "borderland cities have fed themselves on a false mythology for so long that it has become a well-fattened paradox" (qtd in Arranda44). For McWilliams the paradox is that the distinction between what is "Spanish" and what is "Mexican" is a functional arrangement that allows both Anglo- Americans and elite Mexicans (who do not consider themselves Mexicans) to deprive the lower-class Mexicans of their heritage in an effort to keep them in their place. This Spanish heritage allows states like California to glorify its "Spanishness" by holding La Fiesta, in which Spanish customs are celebrated. Similarly, Jovita Gonzàlez and Arthur L. Campa argue that, although elite Mexicans did suppress their Mexicanness, the Anglo-American hegemony supported the suppression by vilifying anything that appeared Mexican. According to Gonzàlez:

> *When one sees the great sums spent to reconstruct the Spanish missions and other buildings of the Latin-America occupation one cannot help but wonder at the inconsistency of things in general. If Anglo-Americans accept their art and culture, why have they not accepted the people? (qt in Arranda 49).*

Gonzalèz questions Anglo-American intentions of mythologizing Spanish culture. Moreover, Campa argues that because of Anglo-Americans attitudes toward race, New Mexicans "disassociate [themselves] from anything that carries a Mexican implication". Hence, New Mexicans "must insist on [their] difference in origin", claiming that they are of "pure Spanish blood, a direct descendent of the Spanish conquerors" (49). Eventually, New Mexicans do not see themselves as "Mexicans" with Indian blood. Instead, according to Campa, they invent themselves as "White Spanish-Americans", who practice Spanish customs, which are in reality Mexican.

Historian F. Arturo Rosales argues for the reassessment of the "Spanish Fantasy Heritage" as defined by McWilliams. In his article "Fantasy Heritage Reexamined: Race and Class in the Writings of the Bandini Family Authors and Other Californios, 1828-1965", Rosales believes that if Californios "adhered to 'Spanishness' they did so following their own agenda—one that predated the Anglo takeover" (qtd in Arranda 82). So rather than putting the blame on Anglo-American hegemony, Rosales contends that Hispanics in the Southwest have always been aware of their indigenous roots but willingly embraced their European heritage regardless of Anglo-American domination.

In fact, according to Rosales "regional chauvinism based on claims of having more Spanish blood…is also a time-honored habit in many parts of Mexico" (82). Drawing from both McWilliams and Rosales, we may argue that the "Spanish Fantasy Heritage", while predating the Anglo-American takeover, instantly became a ready-made paradigm for both the Anglo-American settlers and the Spanish American elite.

Jaramillo's text reveals how she enacted "whiteness demonstrations" a term coined by Maria Carla Sànchez to refer to "a range of individual traits that perpetuate social and sometimes economic dominance", and which also served as a "symbolic shorthand for genealogical connection to imperial Spain and its colonizing projects" (65). She further argues that even though whiteness demonstrations may signify a variety of traits that seeks to claim privilege, along with social and economic dominance, they do not necessarily translate into social and economic power (65-66). With such "whiteness demonstrations", Jaramillo seems to deny her mestizo Mexican cultural heritage, thereby creating racial distinctions among people of Mexican descent. For example, she mentions that she is aware of Mexican customs but perhaps has forgotten them over time (105). In fact there are few instances in the text where Mexicaness is even mentioned. After the death of her second baby, she mentions that their nurse, Vita, was good at preparing Mexican dishes (111). That is the first time in her narrative that food is referred to as Mexican, rather than Spanish. In another episode, Cleofas explains to Venceslao that they do not have many sheep and asks him for the reason why he is selling them, he replies: "Because we Mexican can only make money with sheep, and land is getting scarce" (125). Venceslao's affirmation of a Mexican identity provides a sharp contrast to Cleofas's portrayal of him as an upper-class Spanish politico.

Clearly, Jaramillo does not perceive herself as ethnically related to Mexico. If we look at the description she provides of her hometown, settled by brave and courageous Spanish conquistadors, we see a stark contrast:

> *Through the center of the basin splashes the noisy, rocky river. Its crystalline waters create green-carpeted meadows and fields. On the west river surges through the stupendous gate of the Rio Grande and mingles its crystal waters with the musky green ones of the Rio Grande. Three picturesque villages add charm to this small section of the beautiful Taos Valley (7).*

The descriptions above clearly indicate Jaramillo's preference of an environment framed by a Spanish presence.

Jaramillo's appropriation of Spanish identity is also apparent in her use of photography throughout her narrative.

In On Photography, Susan Sontag examines the various uses for photography, which include, among others, memorializing the achievements of individuals considered as members of families (as well as of other groups); constructing a portrait chronicle of self; giving people imaginary possession of a past that is unreal; and helping them to take possession of a space in which they are insecure by offering irrefutable evidence while at the same time enabling them to refuse experiences (8-9). Barthes looks at photography in much the same way by analyzing the level of truth implied by photography, how it reflects identity formation, and the privileging of certain photographs over others, as well as our innate attraction to visual imagery to represent certain ideologies.

Of the eight photos that appear at the beginning of the autobiography, Jaramillo includes herself in five. One photograph in particular shows her dressed in a Spanish gown and a mantilla. The lace mantillas were imported from China and Spain and were accessorized with precious jewels inherited from previous generations. Another photo shows the members of La Sociedad Folklorica during their ten–year celebration. Obviously, Jaramillo uses photography as a means of cultural preservation. As she affirms: "To encourage greater interest in the preservation of the old Spanish customs and the study of our traditions, I donated to the society my fifty-page album with my folklore collection" (183). This photo collection, thus, serves as a historical archive aimed at asserting a Spanish identity seen through the eyes of Jaramillo and those who supported a similar ideology.

Jaramillo's use of family photos may also suggest a need and a desire to maintain a status quo: to immortalize Spanish customs as a way to connect to a past identity that she wishes to preserve in this new Anglo American society. However, her status as a

widow who lost her wealth and prestige does not serve as the backdrop for her photos. Rather, the pictures serve, as Sontag argues:

> *as a thin slice of space as well as time. In a world ruled by photographic images, all borders ("framing") seem arbitrary. Anything else can be separated, can be made discontinuous from everything else: all that is necessary is to frame the subject differently (22).*

Thus, Jaramillo's framing allows her to create an identity of her own terms. Since she is the primary subject, she has the liberty to omit any details, even important ones that do not correspond to her personal ideology.

Jaramillo's assertion of her identity as Spanish, in a changing political, linguistic and cultural landscape can be interpreted as a defense mechanism in a New Mexico borderlands defined by colonial relationships. Jaramillo's reality is constructed through narrative and photography as a means not only to admit nostalgia for a disappearing past, but to reassert a Spanish presence in Anglo American society. Moreover, Jaramillo's use of various narrative strategies and genres to frame her identity provides a path for future Chicana writers to use similar techniques in the development of a self based in different time periods and distinct geographical spaces. As such, her work is an important contribution to American literature.

II- Crossing Borders and Mixing Genres in Norma E. Cantú's *Canícula: Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera*

Concerning the focus of literary foremother narratives, Rebolledo and Rivero assert: "many of the themes and topics covered by these women are frequently seen today in contemporary writing, even though the approach may be different" (qtd in Guttiérez Y Muhs 104). While Jaramillo writes about northern New Mexico's transition from Spanish/Mexican control to Anglo American following the Mexican-American War, Cantu's autobioethnography deals with a different geographic space in the period following World War II and takes place in the linguistic, political and cultural borderlands of Laredo and Nuevo Laredo. Cantu's narrative emphasizes the land in between the Mexican and American border, which complicates notions of identity based on race and geographic space.

In *Decolonial Imaginery: Writing Chicanas into History*, Emma Pérez uses a postmodern approach to recover Chicanas histories. She states:

> I take a postmodern approach for a number of reasons. Postmodernism is often infuriating for the same reasons that postmodern claims are useful. Nothing is taken for granted. Nothing is accepted at face value. Nothing is real. All is imagined and therefore disputable (xiv).

In an effort to define the "decolonial imaginary", the multidimentional space between colonial and postcolonial history that allows one to analyze split identities and disjointed realities, Pérez applies Chela Sandoval's concept of "Differential Consciousness", which states that identities can change according to sociopolitical and historical factors, and considers Sandoval's concept to lie within the "decolonial imaginary". While Jaramillo was not aware of these concepts as a theoretical tool for writing, she however uses strategies within her text to affirm an identity that is altered by different circumstances, while at the same time refusing to adhere to a specific narrative technique. Cantu was undoubtedly conscious of a postmodern space where everything is questionable and where realities may not be what they seem.

The use of different strategies for narratives that do not follow a chronological order supports Pérez's strategy of approaching Chicana subjectivity through multiple nonlinear dimensions. Cantu mentions this point in her introduction to *Canicula:*

> It is not a narrative strung out in keeping with Freytag's pyramid: it does not adhere to conventions of plot development. Instead it is a collage of stories gleaned from photographs randomly picked, not from a photo album chronologically arranged, but haphazardly pulled from a box of photos where time is blurred (xii).

While Jaramillo adheres to a chronological order when relating her autobiography, she uses different narrative strategies to write her story, including autobiography, ballad forms, photography and folklore. Cantu's text adopts various narrative genres as well as a nonlinear development, more closely related to Pérez's "decolonial imaginary".

1. Mixing Genres

Norma Elia Cantu is a Mexican American writer who was born in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico, but was raised on the other side of the Rio Grande, in Laredo, Texas, as the oldest of eleven children.

In *The Writing of Canícula*, Cantú offers a brief insight into her persona and remembers how her grandmother had taught her to read and how she loved books. She recalls two books that proved to be conscious influences when writing *Canícula*:

> I read *Six of One* by Rita Mae Brown (1983) while I was in Spain in 1985, and I had read Maxine Hong Kingston's (1989 (1976)) *Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Amongst Ghosts* when it first came out. I can honestly say that these two creative nonfiction words, the former a novel that the author calls creative autobiography and the latter a novel the author was encouraged to categorize as autobiography, started me thinking about a narrative set on the border that used an autobiographical strategy. (Cantú, *Writing of Canícula*, 100)

The story is set in Laredo, Texas, in the 1940s, 50s, and early 60s. It deals with issues on the border, the land Gloria Anzaldua calls "my home, this thin edge of barbed wire" (25).

The book is made up of eighty-six short narratives that are usually inspired by an actual photograph but defy any sense of chronology or order. Some of the photographs accompany the narratives, but many are only described in the text. In fact, she had thought of photos as the starting point of the stories because the photos worked well as

"springboards for memory" (Cantú, *The Writing of Canícula*, 100) and because they provided a good frame for the narrative.

Cantu challenges her audience to reconsider their assumptions about authenticity and truth-telling. She states:

> Many of the events are completely fictional, although they may be true in a historical context. For some of these events, there are photographs; for others, the image is a collage; and in all cases, the result is entirely of my doing. So although it may appear that these stories are my family's, they are not precisely, and yet they are. (xi)

Her introduction quite contests the notion of autobiography as being characterized by the idea of an "autobiographical pact" as suggested by Philip Lejeune, therefore negating that authenticity and subsequently authority are inherent within "naming." Instead, she states, "I was calling the work fictional autobiography, until a friend suggested that they [family stories] really are ethnographic and so if it must fit a genre, I guess it is fictional autobioethnography" (xi). This renaming can be considered an act of resistance itself as Cantú refuses to accept a simplified categorization of her text and chooses to name her own genre in opposition to a set of confining rules. As an author and a woman of color, Cantu rejects the expectation that historically oppressed communities have a responsibility to produce literatures of open revolt.

1.1 Genre: Autobioethnography

Cantú's autobioethnography novel tells a story through photographs and accompanying vignettes. Cantu labels the book "autobioethnography" because it offers not only the fictionalized account of the life of her family, but also the distinct way of life in the Texas/Mexican borderlands in general. In an interview with Gutiérrez y Muhs she summarizes the novel by saying: "It's an ethnography of a community as seen from a little girl, from some participant observer, if you will, of the community, cultural lines."(Gutiérrez y Muhs 20).

According to Cantu's introduction, her father and other South Texas residents use the term *canicula* for the "mini-season that falls between summer and fall" when most of the cotton is harvested, and it is so hot "not even dogs venture out" (xii). Cantu explains the meaning of her title to initiate readers to the book's liminal relationships to

time and space. The *canicula* is not a season but a time in between seasons. The term is also geographically and linguistically specific to a region between nations, where the narrator and her family have crossed and re-crossed the Mexico-Texas border with difficulty and under a variety of different circumstances for generations. For scholars of Mexican American and Latina/o literature, this provides a clear connection between the stories Cantu recuperates from these in-between times, spaces, and bodies in South Texas and a Chicana feminist tradition grounded in the work of Gloria Anzaldua. In fact, Anzaldua exerts a deep influence on *Canicula*, which is obvious not only in the quote Cantu uses for one of the book's epigraphs ("The U.S.-Mexico border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds") but also in the cues she takes from Anzaldua's term *autohistoria*. Describing the intersecting genres in her own work, Anzaldua writes: "*Autohistoria* is a term I use to describe the genre of writing about one's personal and collective history using fictive elements, a sort of fictionalized autobiography or memoir" (578).

By blurring the space between fact and fiction, both writers provide alternatives to traditional narratives of the borderlands by showing the personal, intimate details of everyday life through the eyes and experiences of women in South Texas. As Anzaldua explains, these details lie at the heart of both individual and collective stories, and Cantu signals her interest in exploring the wider social and cultural implications of these stories by incorporating the term *ethnography* in the genre she invents for *Canicula*. From a methodological viewpoint, fictional autobioethnography allows Cantu to design and tell stories about growing up in South Texas that more accurately reflect her experiences and memories. Citing poet Pat Mora, Cantu explains: "[L]ife en *la frontera* is raw truth, and stories of such life, fictitious as they may be, are even truer than true" (xi). With the phrase "truer than true," Cantu presents her response to ethnographic, historical, and literary misrepresentations of women of color and their lives along the Mexico-Texas border.

Cantú's autobioethnography has allowed academics from a different range of disciplines to use her work as a way to better understand the complexities of border narratives, testimonios, life stories, ethnographies, borderlands history, folklore,

autobiography, and photography. In her review of Cantú's professional and creative writing, Ellen McCracken argues that she "transcends the divisions between genres and academic fields" and "[her] varied writing evidences a creativity that erodes standard categorical borders marking genre divisions" (264). In addition, Jeraldine Kraver acknowledges that *Canícula* belongs to an "increasingly genre-bending arena of life writing," but argues that her work is much more aligned with the interdisciplinary discourse of ethnography (77). In his article "'Heightened by Life' vs. 'Paralyzed by Fact': Photography and Autobiography in Norma Cantú's *Canícula*", Timothy Dow Adams focuses chiefly on an attempt to strictly define *Canícula* by using generic and confining theories of autobiography that rest on the binary notions of truth and fiction. In fact, he includes quotes from personal correspondences with the author, her answers to questions about *Canícula* at an American Women Writers of Color conference, and an online class discussion where Cantú responds to students' questions; all of that is meant to display Cantu's contradictory statements about the text. His reason was to prove his argument that "like all autobiographers, [Cantú] wants to have it both ways…" (66). For example, Cantú tells Adams that she describes the relationship between the photos and her narratives as "freezing memories" (66).

She continues, "We remember differently from what the photo 'freezes' and our words often don't quite express what we think/feel. I work with the ideas of memory and writing—but all in a cultural context of the border which itself is fleeting and fluid" (66). He notes that although she has described her work as a blurring between fact and fiction, she has also described it bluntly as a novel that is fictitious (68). And therefore, he concludes that *Canícula*, a "fictional" narrative alongside "factual" photographs is "simply autobiography, a book that like all autobiographies exists on *la frontera*, the borderland between fiction and nonfiction" (66). I argue that Cantu's text is by no means similar to other autobiographies, and the conflation of her work with other conventional life stories conceals the author's subjectivity and the real material histories that she defines as "raw truth."

In *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History*, Emma Pérez challenges readers to explore the "interstitial gaps" and silences of traditional

historiography for emancipatory moments and feminist voices (5). Like the historians and other scholars who continue to seek out these stories in oral histories and forgotten archives, Cantu also grounds her work in a radical reimagining of both content and methodology, by writing about women who are more likely to demonstrate their self-determination in personal interactions with relatives, classmates, and close friends. She explains:

> The feminist in me consciously included the strong women—the mothers,grandmothers, aunts, comadres. But it was not a difficult task, for they were in my life and in my childhood. I wanted to tell the stories of women who survived, who struggled, who worked as schoolteachers, who sold Avon and Stanley products door to door, as well as the mothers who went to work in the fields alongside the men. ("Writing" 105)

Thus, the genre of fictional autobioethnography allows *Canicula* to reach beyond the author's personal collection of family memories in order to imagine and articulate new voices that emerge from combining fact and fantasy, autobiography and fiction, and text and image.

1.2 Canicula as Testimonio (Testimonial Text)

Many critics of the genre have examined the difference between the *testimonio's* collective representation of the historically oppressed, the majority of whom are women, and the canonical Western text, with its focus on a singular individual, who is usually male, white, and educated. According to John Beverley:

> *Testimonio* is a fundamentally democratic and egalitarian form of narrative in the sense that it implies that any life so narrated can have a kind of representational value. Each individual *testimonio* evokes an absent polyphony of other voices, other possible lives, experiences. Thus, one common formal variation on the classic first person singular *testimonio* is the polyphonic *testimonio*, made up of accounts by different participants in the same event. (Beverley 34).

In the last decades of the 20th century *testimonio* emerged as a powerful mode of indigenous women's writing. Traditionally silenced by canonical versions of history, oppressed women have begun presenting their versions of "truth," rewriting history and challenging authoritarian power. *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (1983), translated into English as *I, Rigoberta Menchú, An Indian Woman in*

Guatemala (1984) has become a classic text within this genre. Moreover, it sparked a heated debate about the truth-value of the autobiographical narrative.

Beverly argues that in *testimonio* there is an "erasure of authorial presence. [This] makes possible a different kind of complicity… between narrator and reader" (97). Cantú accomplished this by erasing herself (Norma) and replacing that self with an everywoman character named Azucena. However, Cantu has not removed herself totally from her autobioethnographical account. Arguably, the photographs in *Canícula* stand as Cantú's evidence of the experiences of the Mexican American border community.

The vignette "Mexican Citizen" well exemplifies this. There are two photographs of Azucena Cantu: in the U.S. document she is a one-year-old baby; in the Mexican document she is sixteen. These photos clearly represent the same baby/woman we have seen represented throughout the narrative. However, if one looks closely at the images, particularly the one where she is sixteen, it is possible to see that the original signature has been taped over. The new signature boldly reads Azucena Cantú, but underneath that signature is a faint capitalized " N" (21-23).Obviously, Cantu wants the reader to know she is Azucena. It is important for her that the reader understands that *Canícula* is a communal narrative that allows her to bear witness and tell the story of her community.

In an interview with Elisabeth Mermann-Jozwiak, Cantú discusses her sense of urgency to remember and tell the stories in order to keep the culture alive. She states: "it also makes you think about why people think it [culture] is disappearing, why things have changed the way they have, why we must remember, and why we must keep it alive. Culture is a very fluid thing; it changes all the time. There is not one culture" (119). In the text, the narrator Azucena serves as a critical witness of the life in the borderlands. The young Azucena does not only remember happy celebrations like marriages, communions and quinceañeras but also traumatic events like the extradition of her family (5, 110), the death of her brother Tino (14-15, 49, 117), the flood (9-10), the fires (97-100), the powerful mayors and judges who "abuse, rape, embarrass, harass, taunt, demean women" (31).

In the episode "Las Piscas", for example, Cantu describes Nena at the age of nine working in the cotton fields with her parents. She describes the place where the workers are sick because of pesticides, bitten by insects, and burned by the sun:

> On a hot, hot, hot August day, the chicharras' drone forces me to the present; they madly hum incessantly, insistently. A long row of cotton to be picked, capullos de algodón, nothing moves, the dust has settled on the green leaves and on my skin…Sun so bright it hurts my eyes, barely look at it and I see bright red spots. Sweat runs in rivulets along my back. The acrid smell of the pesticides nauseates, sticks to the cushy, dusty white fruit, glassy fibers in my fingers as I pull as carefully as when I pick a burr off my socks (3).

Although there is no photograph to document the event, Cantu reveals what an outsider could never tell. Through Nena, she gives a voice to a community so often silenced. According to Tiffany Ana López, these types of narratives provide "window[s] into the world of Latina/o children and the various and complex ways they are forced to grapple with situations and histories of violence" (206–207).

1.3 *Canicula* and Folklore

In an interview undertaken by Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs, Cantu states: "I jokingly call myself an undocumented folklorist, as I do not have a degree in folklore, nor have I ever taken courses or trained in the discipline" (qtd in Herrera Sobek x). In fact, she was learning folklore even as a child picking medicinal plants with her grandmother, but she was not aware then of the treasure she inherited from her relatives and her community until she became a student at the university. It was only then that she learned that the traditions she cherished from childhood were part of folkloric and anthropological studies.

According to Maria Herrera Sobek, Cantu's incorporation of folklore in her work is linked to what she denominates as *aesthetic activism.* She defines *aesthetic activism* as "the use of the beautiful in the pursuit of social justice" (ix). That is to say, recorded in what seems to be inoffensive vignettes of family life and experiences in the border is a series of concealed criticism of a Texas/U.S society that persecutes its citizens via discrimination, segregation, economic exploitation, and social, educational and political subjugation. Through various folklore genres, Cantu expresses a subtle form of social protest.

Cantu incorporates folklore traditions to structure what Herrera Sobek calls a vast "cultural landscape" (x). Her "cultural landscape" will be deployed to inscribe a cultural context in which her narratives are set to articulate her *aesthetic activism*, that is her social protest. The title of the book itself *Canicula* is derived from a folk term used to describe the hot days of August and can be translated into English as "the dog days of summer".

Folklore is present in each of Cantu's narratives, including in folk speech. Many of the vignettes are titled after the nicknames of the protagonists; for instance, in "Tia Chita", Cantu critiques negative patriarchal folk constructions of unmarried women by the Mexican society. The pejorative term *solteronas* (unmarried women) is used to describe their single-women status. These women are also negatively described with the phrase *Se quedaron para vestir santos* (they have been left to dress the saints); in other words, they are not married and therefore dedicate themselves to serve the church, to dress and undress the statues on the altars. This is indeed a cruel description of women who choose not to be married for whatever reason. In the vignette "Henrieta" (88-90), Cantu offers a critique of class structures and the difference between rich and poor as exemplified even in a name. Henrietta, a Mexican American from the north, is called Henrietta--that is, she bears an English name (denoting upper class), as opposed to the more common Enriqueta (the Spanish translation), or as the narrator notes "even worse, Queta". Spanish in this case is depreciated, and class differences are exposed.

The most outstanding demonstration of a folk speech term as denunciation of an oppressive political system is in the vignette titled "Politicos". We might translate this word simply as "politicians", but Cantu writes the title of this vignette in Spanish and does not translate it as she does in others. In Spanish, the term *politico* means also someone who is arrogant, a crook and a person who pretends to be what he or she is not. The narrator denounces the corrupt Democratic and Republican political parties, whose leaders take the Mexican American voters for granted. The politicians take money from an economically deprived community and spend it on more affluent areas, leaving the common people impoverished.

Cantu depicts the strategies of survival used by Chicano communities, such as folk religious celebrations, which bring the community together, and help the people in collectively resisting destructive outside forces, and give them opportunities to help one another. For instance, Christmas celebrations are described as happy moments with family and friends. Nevertheless, because of economic issues, people can only afford homemade presents or fruits from the garden. Easter like Christmas is celebrated with family and friends. The traditions related to how Chicanos celebrate Easter are described in many vignettes, and the same issues of economic privation are highlighted. For example, *cascarones* (eggshells) are made with eggshells that have been saved throughout the year.

Religious folk celebrations are discussed throughout Cantu's narrative. The first Holy Communion takes place when the child is around seven years old. In *Canicula,* scheduling errors causes the protagonist to celebrate her first Holy Communion twice. This leads her to question the authenticity of these rituals, which seem to be manipulated at will.

Parade serves Cantu as an excellent platform from which to articulate her sense of outrage at politicians' marginalization and disrespect for the Chicano community. For instance, the narrator criticizes how political personalities, such as the president of the United States, are completely unconcerned about the Chicano community. In fact, when president Dwight D. Eisenhower visits Laredo in the 1950s, he completely ignores people who are lined up in the street to welcome him.

Cultural oppression is apparent in the vignette "Declamacion" (62), in relation to the folk practice of *ademanes,* or gestures. At school, the protagonist is to read a poem in English. She begins to perform the poem in the way she had been taught to declaim Spanish poetry, using hand and arm gestures. The teacher immediately stops her and tells her that she is reciting the poem incorrectly. The culture clash between English poetry reciting and Spanish is obvious. Nevertheless, the protagonist is mortified for being publically devalued.

Cultural affirmation is displayed in "Escuelita" (little school), since this is where the Spanish language is taught to children. In addition, Mexican culture is included in the songs and games of the children. These are important methodological strategies in the learning process. Whereas in the Anglo American schools Spanish is forbidden, and the children are punished for speaking it.

Clearly, each folklore element serves in a great number of instances as a platform from which the narrator can articulate her social protest or critique regarding issues of ethnic oppression or gender oppression in Anglo-American and Mexican society. Moreover, the folk items are so aptly integrated into the narratives that we hardly are aware of the way in which these cultural artifacts are disposed.

1.4 Photography and Memories

According to Pérez, there is little space for women of color and indigenous peoples in narratives of US history that favor linear trajectories of east-west migration, militaristic models of male heroism, and Anglo-American models of progress and development. Moreover, disrupting these narratives requires radical reconceptualizations of time and space in the United States that proceed from the knowledge and experiences of the marginalized. While the book is hardly a revolutionary manifesto, content and form often come together in *Canicula* to formulate precisely the type of "rupturing space" in which to consider these perspectives (Pérez 6). In the language of Chicana feminism, this is the "rupturing space" Pérez refers to as the "decolonial imaginary" (6).

In the prologue, Cantu introduces readers to a Chicana feminist consciousness that drives the text's visual component.

> In 1985, back in that safe space, between two countries, the woman Nena and her mother bring out the boxes, untie the white-turned-yellow shoelaces, and begin going through the memories. . . . They continue, the mother filling in gaps for the daughter, of before, of the times before and during that she has forgotten, or changed in her mind. (Cantu 2)

Using old photographs, which the protagonist reproduces and reformulates in her own voice as the content of *Canicula*, this scenario generates a Chicana feminist consciousness that proceeds from sharing, conversation and cooperation. It also

connects the novel's Chicana feminist methodology to its discontinuous, episodic form, which weaves together short vignettes from different times in the narrator's (and her family's) life.

Cantu describes *Canicula* as "a collage of stories gleaned from photographs randomly picked, not from a photo album chronologically arranged, but haphazardly pulled from a box of photos where time is blurred" (xii). This "decolonial imaginary" is symbolized by shoeboxes of old pictures and the women who work together to turn these "haphazard" images into alternative histories of the borderlands, disclosing forgotten moments of Chicana subjectivity, by refusing to privilege chronological and teleological approaches to history.

Alex Hughes and Andrea Noble affirm that while contemporary photography studies often emphasize twenty first century concerns about race, place, gender, and identity, they remain firmly grounded in the keystone texts of the field written by figures including Roland Barthes, Walter Benjamin, Susan Sontag, and John Berger. In their introduction to *Phototextualities: Intersections of Photograph and Narrative* (2003), Hughes and Noble emphasize the debt that today's critics owe to the past:

> They acknowledge that what distinguishes the photo-image from any other form of representation is its inextricable, material link to reality[;] . . . its status as "a trace of the real"; and an evidential manifestation of "what has been." In so doing, they return time and again to elements of the seminal meditation on the photograph elaborated in 1980 by Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida*, a work that has now become one of the canonical foundations of photography studies. (4)

This quotation is useful for theorizing the seemingly ambiguous opening paragraph of Cantu's prologue, where she mentions that Barthes is struck dead by a car in Paris. At first glance, there seems to be no connection between the death of Barthes and the narrator's desire to return to the photographs. However, if Barthes is credited with defining photography as radically different from other art forms because of "its inextricable, material link to reality", then his death figuratively frees Cantu and the protagonist from the constraints of this premise. In other words, Cantu is free to display her stories of the Texas-Mexico borderlands with family photographs that seem related less to reality than to characters who linger between fact and fiction.

In accordance with the book's Chicana feminist perspective on the founding mythologies of white supremacy and male privilege in South Texas, one of the most powerful themes in *Canicula* is analyzing how Nena and her family react to popular images of cowboys and other gunslingers. Using photographs of women from her own family throughout the text, Cantu responds to these legacies by exploiting the ambiguities of fictional autobioethnography to create both alternative histories and alternative representations of the borderlands that emerge from what Pérez might call the book's decolonial, Chicana feminist imaginary.

The image that opens the chapter titled "Cowgirl" appears little more than a cute photograph of smiling children dressed for a square dance. The opening sentences reads:

> In the photograph, Peewee, Angelita, Sanjuana, and I wear long red-checked dresses; I smile a toothless second-grader chimuela—grin. And holding Quico's hand, I pose in front of the blackboard with the alphabet running across the top, with the U.S. flag we pledged allegiance to every morning. Right hand over the heart—I was always getting it wrong; although I wasn't zurda—it still felt "right" to pledge with the left hand not the right. (33)

In reality, there are no blackboards, alphabets, or flags visible in the photograph, but only four girls and four boys as described by Nena. Narrating as an adult, the protagonist uses both English and Spanish, presenting enough context to keep non-Spanish speakers from getting lost (for example, *chimuela* means toothless and *zurda* means left-handed) yet still contesting the monolingualism of English-only classrooms symbolized by the alphabet running along the top of the blackboard in her memory. Above all, imagining a classroom setting that does not appear in the snapshot allows Nena to remember herself as a child who questions the logic of American patriotism. She asserts that it felt "right" as a second-grader to contest rituals such as the pledge of allegiance.

Image and text also work combine to describe the processes and institutions through which children in the United States are taught to idolize the image of the white male hero. Thinking about the photograph in "Cowgirl," Nena remembers watching serial Westerns on television with her brother, Tino, recalling that many of the children playing "cowboys and Indians" in Laredo took their ideas from shows such as *Zorro*,

Hopalong Cassidy, *The Cisco Kid*, and *The Lone Ranger*. She also affirms that television had a profound and lasting influence on her childhood. In fact, when she was younger, she composed her first short story for a contest sponsored by the local affiliate's afternoon show. As an adult, she understands the nature of identity notably in cultural representations of the borderlands where Anglo actors dress like cowboys and cowgirls on television. Yet, when she writes her first literary piece for a Cowboy show, Nena naively reproduces the race and gender bias of these performances, recalling that her story

> had no female characters and the cowboy, the hero, saved the day for his friend and killed the bad guys in a shoot-out—not very creative and quite predictable given the models in the form of movies and shows I was watching. And all the while, my uncles in Anahuac herding cattle and being real cowboys, my aunts living out stories no fifties scriptwriter for Mexican movies or U.S. TV ever divined. (34)

When Nena realizes that her favorite Western shows understate the experiences of women of color by romanticizing Anglo gunslingers, she offers through *Canicula* important insights into how American popular culture supresses borderlands history for Mexican American children in Texas. She also acknowledges that Mexican movies reflect their own problematic gender relations when they cast men as active heroes and women as passive objects of sexual desire. In the passage above, Nena finds that neither of these cultural traditions correctly represents the complexities of her life or the lives of the women in her family. Thus, "Cowgirl" offers options to androcentric representations of heroism in South Texas, and corrects what the adult Nena perceives as the shortcomings of her first short story—written when she was younger—to the influence of hegemonic representations of the borderlands.

In a photo she imagines, Cantu undermines the popular iconography of the Western cowboy and its tendency to privilege rugged individualism. Instead, she invites the reader to see the women in her life within a different scope, one of support and solidarity. Nena examines how these relationships help the women in the photograph to face the challenges of their daily lives on a number of different levels:"*Vecinas*. *Comadres*. Most importantly, women sharing life, tending to each other. Supporting each other. Teaching each other to mother, to survive, to understand, to live" (36). She

also recognizes that *comadrazgo* (structures of mutual aid and support amongst *comadres*) can represent an alternative kinship system to the gender roles many women in *Canicula* are expected to perform as mothers, grandmothers, daughters, or wives. She writes:"[S]ometimes pain forming bonds stronger than blood makes them more sisters to each other than to their own sisters, Thelma, Nicha, Tita" (36). Instead of simply accepting the social and gendered subject positions available to them through the structures of family (which are rooted, historically, in patriarchal systems of authority and control), the women in the photograph establish a sisterhood on their own terms out of their shared experiences.

The images of these women's bond seem to be a response to subsequent episodes in the book, where the gunslinger legacy manifests itself in the form of physical violence against women. For instance, in a chapter titled "Cowboy Boots," Nena tells the story of her childhood friend Sanjuana, who is raped by an Anglo shopkeeper named Tom. There are no photographs associated with this chapter. Like so many of the characters in *Canicula*, if Sanjuana is based on a person from Cantu's life, publishing a photograph of her could further expose her to the predation of the male gaze. As readers, we may interpret this choice as an example of how the Chicana feminist consciousness of *Canicula* literally protects women's bodies and their identities from further harm. In the same vein, the absence of Tom's photograph may signify the large number of men guilty of odious crimes against women who walk free and have yet to be identified and brought to justice. If text and images combine throughout *Canicula* to question the ideologies of rugged individualism, male agency, and violence associated with the cowboy myth, we might also interpret Tom's visual absence here as an effort to weaken his destructive power.

In an imagined photo, she describes "smiles belie tired, aching feet and backs; smiles on serious faces, stiff bodies posed for life" (3). Nena's narrative of working with her parents also proves that one does not have to be either a migrant or a man in order to be a field-worker. Thus, *Canicula* undermines conventional depictions of Mexican American field-workers in the United States—not only in the historically racist, anti-

immigrant discourse of politicians but also in the male-dominated tradition of early Chicano historiography—creating a space in which to recognize the laboring bodies of women of color beyond the domestic sphere.

2. - Crossing Borders

> *We are border people, half in love with Mexico and half suspicious, half in love with the United States and half wondering if we belong. (Rudolfo Anaya, Bordering Fires, Foreword, viii)*

The concept of the *border* has become increasingly significant in recent postcolonial and ethnic literatures. Borders theoretically imply the separation of cultures, languages and people.

José David Saldívar and other critics argue that for too long the story of American literature told by the canon has focused on the Protestant, Puritanical, and Northeastern culture to the exclusion of the Catholic, indigenous, and Southwestern modes of existence. In *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies,* Saldívar asks, "What changes, for example, when culture is understood in terms of material hybridity, not purity? How is the imagined community of the nation – to use Benedict Anderson's terms – disrupted and customized by materially hybrid US-Mexico borderland subjectivities?" (19).According to Oscar J. Martínez,

> A border is a line that separates one nation from another or, in the case of internal entities, one province or locality from another. The essential functions of a border are to keep people in their own space and to prevent, control, or regulate interactions among them. A borderland is a region that lies adjacent to a border. The territorial limit of a borderland depends on the geographic reach of the interaction with the "other side". (Martínez, 5)

Martinez explains that the border zones are by nature areas of conflict and are perceived equally by U.S Americans and Mexicans as a problematic area. In fact, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 have aggravated the situation of the borderlands, as American media have framed traditional controversial issues such as migration and

drugs in context of potential infiltration of terrorists into the United States through a border that is perceived to be "out of control". (Martínez 3)

A number of recent critics explored the border as location and theme in Chicano literature, seeking the relationship between Aztlán – the purported home of the Nahua people and the term taken up by Chicano activists and poets in the 1960s and 1970s in an effort to reclaim their homeland – and the borderlands. In *Rewriting North American Borders in Chicano and Chicana Narrative,* Monika Kaup contends that Chicanx writers rejects the view of the Mexican American borderlands as a divisive line between wildness and civilization or as the physical proof of the US Manifest Destiny, representing instead a physical and metaphorical space characterized by a bicultural experience:

> Chicano authors insisted that the space of their culture, the *mexicano* borderlands of the Southwest, was not the peripheral fringe of the American historical process, but a place in its own right, home, Aztlán, the native homeland of different peoples than Anglo Americans" (1).

Therefore, it can be argued that Chicanx authors depict the borderlands as a space of integration for Mexican Americans, displaying a counter-portrayal that deconstructs one of the myths constructing the American national identity, namely the Frontier Myth. This fundamental image represents the territory lying beyond the confines of the US nation as a rich and unappropriated land for the United States to occupy. These colonial prerogatives, Kaup argues, are undermined in Chicanx border literature by means of two different narrative structures: the nationalist plot and the immigrant plot (10–11). The former portrays the border in ways that are evocative of the mythical place of Aztlán, the homeland of Chicanxs. The latter, on the other hand, offers a context in which openness and mobility are necessary conditions for an eventual integration into the US society. Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me Ultima* (1972) and Richard Rodríguez's *Hunger of Memory* (1982) are cited by Kaup as examples of the first and second models, respectively. Hence, whereas the former describes a story marked by rootedness and survival in the occupied borderlands, the latter is more concerned with transnational relations and cultural changes.

These two plots also direct the action of many Chicana border narratives. Still, unlike their male counterparts, Mexican American female writers display a more dialogic relationship between both plots, creating narratives that combine images of territorial occupancy with images of movement and flexibility (Kaup 14). This involves, therefore, an evaluation of the power relations that considers Mexican Americans as strangers in their own land and of the structures that view the Chicanx homeland as fixed and rooted in the past. Gender restriction is an important expression of this rigidity that lies at the foundation of Chicano nationalism. Border narratives such as Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me Ultima* (1972) and *Heart of Aztlán* (1976) illustrate phallocentrism, as they describe a Chicano space where most of their female characters play minor and conventional roles. The Chicana boom then emerged out of the necessity to fill in the gaps left by phallocentric Latino culture and hegemonic feminism, bringing along a redirection of focus to heterogeneous, fluid, and more inclusive views of identity. This explains the multidimensional views of spaces that Chicana authors offer. In this respect, Latinx studies scholar Mary Pat Brady argues that Mexican American female writers are very attentive to the way spaces are shaped and reshaped by gender, race, sexual, and economic relations:

> Chicana authors of poetry, prose, and drama have critiqued the production of space … Chicana literature offers an important theoretics of space, one that … implicates the production of space in the everyday, in the social, but that unlike many space theories suggests the relevance of aesthetics, of "the literary mode of knowing" for understanding the intermeshing of the spatial and the social…Chicana literature has consistently offered alternative methods of conceptualizing space not only by noting how social change must be spatialized but also by seeing and feeling space as performative and participatory, that is, by refusing a too-rigid binary between the material and the discursive. (6)

In this quotation, Brady examines Chicana authors' long-time use of space. She argues that Mexican American women writers not only offer alternative representations of spaces, but also create an epistemology, a "literary mode of knowing," as she defines it, that permits an analysis of the power relations that produce and reproduce spaces in particular ways. Hence, Chicana writers view spaces like the border, as being constantly fashioned anew, conveying a decolonizing orientation that directs the representation of spaces and identities.

One Chicana work that describes the border in the aforementioned fashion is Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands/ La Frontera: New Mestiza*. Gloria Anzaldúa reflects on the *borderlands* concept and refers to the border as *"una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds" (3). This reproduces the power relations that have affected this concrete geopolitical site since it was formally established in 1848. These antagonistic relationships, she writes, create a difficult territory to live in, a place characterized by different beliefs and multiple cultures—white, indigenous, Mexican, female, that complicate her process of coming to terms with herself:

> I am a border woman. I grew up between cultures, the Mexican (with a heavy Indian influence) and the Anglo (as a member of a colonized people in our own territory). I have been straddling that tejas-Mexican border, and others, all my life. It's not a comfortable territory to live in, this place of contradictions. Hatred, anger and exploitation are the prominent features of this landscape. (Preface to the first edition)

In that way, Anzaldúa highlights, on the one hand, the relevance of gender, race, sexuality, and other social relations in the making of the borderlands and, on the other hand, the continual negotiation of identities which consequently turn this site into a flexible, shifting, and heterogeneous one.

Canicula is another paradigmatic example of the more dialectical direction that Chicana border narratives adopt in their representations of this specific geopolitical setting. Its importance lies mostly in its capacity to raise timeless border issues from the perspective of a Mexican American girl, namely immigration, racism, economic stagnation, and the negotiation of multiple identities. These border issues are unfolded as we follow Nena's experiences of growing up along the Mexico-US border.

Cantu's narrative begins with a map. The map depicts the U.S.-Mexico border in south Texas and highlights sister cities on both sides of the border. It also includes both names for the river that divides these spaces, the Rio Grande on the U.S. side and the Río Bravo on the Mexico side. Other important locations include Matamoros, Anáhuac, Piedras Negras, and Dolores, which help to highlight the fact that Nena's girlhood is a transborder one. This implies that the level of interactions that constitute her life is determined by what much cultural studies scholarship defines as "transborderism". This

phenomenon refers to the ongoing interactions that occur among individuals and institutions of two distinct nation-states in the area where their borders meet (Ruiz 1992; Iglesias-Prieto 2011). It is more often used to display the considerable interaction, integration, and economic interdependence that characterize these areas. The implication of these constant crossings and the intersection of social, economic, and political forces are that they "transcend the boundaries of particular cultures and localities within nation-states, destabilizing previous geographic and power arrangements" (Irazábal 2).

Considering this, it can be argued that Nena and her family's continuous crossings back and forth contest the border's significance to the juridical production of identity. In this part, then, we shall pay attention to this political contestation, which relies not only on geographical mobility, but also on showing the various cultural influences that Nena and other characters come to epitomize. Nevertheless, while "transborderism" is a crucial feature of *Canícula*, this narrative also depicts episodes where the geopolitical adequacy of the border is rendered very visible. Best examples in this respect are those that focus on racism, deportations, or in the legal procedures that the protagonist has to go through to travel to the neighboring country. These episodes will therefore be considered to demonstrate how Cantú offsets her portrayal of a transborder life that, by definition, transcends the material effects of borders.

The vignette "Crossings" revolve around the family crossing the border between Mexico and the United States. In this particular case, the geopolitical efficacy of the border they are crossing is at the same time reinscribed and transgressed:

> Bueli and Mami and Papi crossed the bridge on foot from one Laredo to the other; they took turns carrying me … It was 1948. For Bueli the move brought back memories, mental photographs gone now, except for the stories she told: how in 1935 she and Maurilio, my Texas-born grandfather, and their two young daughters packed all their belongings and drove their pickup truck down from San Antonio. They felt lucky; most deportees left with nothing but the clothes on their backs –sent in packed trains to the border on the way to Mexico, even those who were US citizens. She told of crossing from one Laredo to the other and losing everything … to the corrupt customs officials at the border. Tía Licha still talks of how weeks later she saw a little girl wearing her dress … But there was nothing to be done, except cry and go on. And in 1948 crossing meant coming home, but not quite. (5)

Nena's maternal grandmother and her "Texas-born grandfather" are deported to Mexico in 1935. This crossing is reversed thirteen years later, when the protagonist's parents cross the border again to establish their residence in the United States. The significance of the border to highlight exclusion and inclusion is made very clear in her grandparent's displacement to Mexico, which is the result of the Repatriation. In fact, America was suffering from high levels of unemployment, so the Hoover administration proposed that Mexicans were persuaded to leave so that they could free up jobs for "real Americans" (Guerin-Gonzales 1996). Most importantly in this sense, repatriation was formulated to include US born Mexicans, and not just "birds of passage" (i.e., temporary workers and illegal aliens), as authorities initially claimed (Guerin-Gonzales 77-78). Underlying these measures was the "widely held belief that Mexican Americans had not legitimate claim to the United States as their home country" (78). Therefore, people like Nena's grandfather, a Chicano born in Texas, were deported out of the country, which irrevocably evokes the loss of civil rights that followed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

The destitution of citizenship status authorized by the Mexican Repatriation reflects the theft of Tía Licha's dress by the border patrol agents. For Nena's aunt, seeing another girl wearing her dress reminds her of her own displacement, a traumatic experience that is eventually indicative of the power of the border authorities to reject those considered as outsiders.

In constantly describing this back-and-forth movement as crossing "from one Laredo to the other," the narrator highlights the perplexity and the ambiguity of border crossings. This perplexity serves Cantu well to question the power relations that constitute the United States and Mexico as two distinct socioeconomic structures, putting the latter in a lower position than the former.

In addition to questioning these colonial power geometries, this emphasis on crossing and liminality "points towards the destabilization of the concept of Nation itself" (Castillo and Tabuenca Córdoba 100). As Debra Castillo and Socorro Tabuenca Córdoba argue in their analysis of *Canícula,* the act of bridging—which they identify as

a crucial aspect of both the content and form of Cantú's text—makes it impossible to adhere to traditional notions of nation and citizenship (98-100). Thus, the confusion over which Laredo the characters are crossing can also be seen as a critique of the categories of nation and citizenship imposed by the inadequacy of the Mexico-US border. Yet, at the end of the vignette, Cantu reminds the reader that geopolitical divisions have great impact on people's lives: "in 1948 crossing meant coming home, but not quite". This shows how home is turned into exile by the sociopolitical structures behind the process of bordering. For Nena, then, crossing to the United States after her family's deportation to Mexico recalls the power structures that caused their displacement. This clarifies her final questioning about the concept of home, which she considers as strongly connected to the sense of dislocation and isolation that characterises exile. In this context, it can be argued that the ending of "Crossings" highlights again the ambiguity of this land in-between by identifying this geographical area with both relocation and dislocation.

Border crossings are also presented in the three other pieces. "Living in Mexico" recounts Mami and Papi's time spent in Anáhuac before crossing again to Texas, whereas "Tina One" and "Elisa" show Nena moving from Laredo to Anáhuac and Matamoros for family visits and celebrations. These transborder travels undermine political and cultural divisions, highlighting a geographical and identity continuation between Mexico and the United States. Still, there are examples in *Canícula* in which these transborder crossings are interrupted by immigration authorities. In the vignette "On the Bridge", for instance, boundaries are reestablished every time Nena and Tino have to go through the agriculture inspection checkpoint to re-enter the United States. At this particular moment, both characters and readers are conscious of the existence of two distinct socioeconomic structures:

> We make the rounds at the Mercado … we go to Rangel's for cookies –galletas marías and morenas– and sugar, piloncillo, and dark aguacates that he [Tino] carefully cuts in half, satisfying US Department of Agriculture requirements, extracting the pit so that we can legally cross them to the United States, and closing them again, like fine carved-wood boxes (7-8).

The United States establishes regulations regarding the goods that enter the country in order to protect the economic interests of US farmers. These norms represent the power structures that effect a separation between both countries in social, cultural, economic, and political terms. Nena and her brother are aware of these limitations, but this does not prevent them from making their trips to Nuevo Laredo an integral part of their everyday lives.

Boundaries are again reestablished when Nena has to fill out her immigration papers to legally cross from one side of the border to the other. Having been born in Mexico after her family's deportation, she has to endure immigration bureaucracy to take up residence in the United States. This procedure, which is carried out when the protagonist is just a baby, is repeated at the age of twelve to travel back to Mexico. This time her documents are issued at the consulate of Mexico in Laredo, where Nena is declared a Mexican national. Photographs of the corresponding documents are included along with the story. It is interesting to note that whereas the papers issued in Mexico indicate that Nena's skin color is "blanco," the ones she got in the US state that it is "moreno" (30-31). Because of the racialization of Mexicans in the United States, considerations of whiteness differ between both countries, which makes race "an unstable and decentered complex of social meanings" that change across time and space (Omi and Winant 55). This, in turn, reveals the cultural and racial marks that borders arbitrarily impose on people.

The re-inscription of ethnocultural boundaries is also at issue in some vignettes. During a trip to Monterrey, Nena faces a sense of cultural disconnection best captured by the term that other kids use to refer to her. They call her "*pocha*" (31), a pejorative term for people of Mexican descent born in the United States who are, therefore, Anglicized and more like Anglos than Mexicans. Thus, Nena resents being called "pocha," stressing her feelings of homesickness for her life in Laredo.

The blurring of cultural lines is displayed in many vignettes. "The Parade", which centers on George Washington's birthday celebration in Laredo, shows people waving the US flag and honoring the first president of that nation, while at the same time

shouting "¡Viva México!" (49) and carrying the Mexican flag. The inclusion of Mexican and US elements in one social space are also at the center of "Treeky-Treat." When comparing this story to the piece "Halloween", we see that while the latter stresses the perdurability of the Day of the Dead against the influence of Halloween in Monterrey, the former, depicts a really different setting:

> Everywhere I turned I saw changes, but the most dramatic change was a very tall Frankenstein figure in full costume, makeup and all, who stood at the gate and handed out flyers announcing a Halloween sale at La Argentina, a nearby store. Street children wore masks, painted faces, ragged clothes over their usual rags, and otherwise disguised themselves, and with outstretched hands asked us for "treeky-treet." Día de los muertos had taken on a new meaning. (104-105)

The cultural blending that occurs in "Parade" and "Treeky-Treat" can be explained by relying on Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the "contact zones" (1992). This term refers to "social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power," giving way to new cultural settings that destabilize binaries (Pratt 7). Thus, the cultural contacts at issue in each of these stories create new sites that confound the divisions of two systems that are considered as opposites. In this respect, this status of contact zone can be extended to Nena's space, that is, the Mexico-US border, as it is the result of a dialogue in which the Mexican and the American converge.

Of relevance here also is the border language used in *Canícula*. While the text is written mostly in English, it contains a fair percentage of Spanish words that help in foregrounding the bicultural sensibility that characterizes this work. It is important to note also that Cantú does not italicize Spanish words, thus refusing to mark as foreign a language that is part of the real-life in the Texas-Mexico borderlands. Therefore, it can be argued that the narrative moves between two native languages, thus presenting language mixing as the living idiom of this border community.

According to Mignolo, border identities should be expressed in border tongues – the tongues that emerged in response to colonization from both sides. As Castillo and Tabuenca Córdoba observe, in *Canicula*, the Spanish language and Mexican culture continuously disrupt the English-language, US-based narrative in Nena's difficult

negotiation between two monolinguistic territories (117). Spanglish in her border community transcends the boundaries of language understood as a sign system and is conceived as a process, and a whole way of being termed "languaging". In *Local Histories / Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, Mignolo defines "languaging" as thinking and writing between languages and a process of social transformation. Having transcended the official languages of colonial empires, "languaging" invents new strategies for manipulating social domains of interaction (226-27). It is clear that language has always been an instrument of empire building. The imposition of rules of grammar that are to be universally accepted reflects, on the metaphorical level, the total political and economic control used by the empire over colonized subjects. *Languaging*, argues Mignolo, fractures colonial languages. Revealing the ideology of speaking and writing in one language, it becomes a fundamental condition of border thinking (253).

For Cantu, the words and the language she uses are important in her text. And obviously, Nena's identity and that of her family and community are intricately related to the language they are speaking and the language with which Cantú is writing. It is, as Anzaldúa argues, that for many people living in the borderlands, that a new language is created. "A language which they can connect their identity to one capable of communicating the realties and values true to themselves—a language with terms that are neither español ni ingles, but both (55). In this sense, "languaging" discloses a space of interaction that goes beyond the linguistic boundaries imposed by colonialism, thus displacing monolingual models of identity formation.

Accordingly, it can be argued that Cantú's text contests the common notion that borders dichotomize. While she does not disregard the divisive power of these geographical and metaphorical lines, her stress on the fluidity of spatial and cultural crossings contributes to removing and decolonizing incisive understandings of the human spaces that emerge between two different nations. Thus, Nena's homeland is not simply either Mexican or American, but rather an ambivalent territory where she negotiates multiple structures of power.

3. Community Cultural Wealth

In the prologue of *Canicula,* Cantu acknowledges that the text is a collection of stories gleaned from conversations with many members of her family (2). However, while the photos that Cantú includes in the narrative are of her as a child and adolescent, the autobiographical subject is not Norma Cantú. She gives another name Azucena Cantú, also called Nena. As Smith and Watson explain:

> [A]n authorial 'I' is assumed from the signature on the title page – the person producing the autobiographical 'I' --whose life is far more diverse and dispersed than the story that is being told of it. This is the 'I' as historical person, a person located in a particular time and place (59).

We do know that Norma Cantú exists as a historical person who actually lived in the South Texas borderlands during the 1950s and 1960s, however, she is not the narrated autobiographical 'I' Azucena Cantú. Cantú asserts:

> I wanted to tell my story of growing up on the *Tejas*-Mexico geographical border, but I wanted to do this in a way that, with my literary critic's eye, I could layer the narrative so that the text would speak to many – my family, my friends,Chicanas/os, readers at large – about many things: relationships . . . I also wanted to write about the way childhood and coming-of-age constitutes sites where ties develop (2003, 103).

While no individual, historical 'I' exists in *Canícula*, Cantú's assertion suggests that these narratives represent Norma Cantú's individual stories as well as the communal stories of the Mexican American border community. In this sense, Cantú's narrative becomes the vehicle through which the Mexican American border community can identify and express itself, and Azucena Cantú becomes a representative for all women and men living in the borderlands.

Throughout the text, Cantu tells stories through the voices of others and emphasizes the telling of others' stories along with her own. As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson observe: "…the writing and theorizing of women's lives has often occurred in texts that place an emphasis on collective processes while questioning the sovereignty and universality of the solitary self (Women 5).

Drawing from Chicana feminist epistemology, I will demonstrate how the protagonist Nena exploits her community cultural wealth to develop *familial* and *resistant capital.*

Throughout *Canicula,* Azucena begins to develop and foster community wealth, "an array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (Yosso 77). Tara J.Yosso explains that communities of color develop this cultural wealth through at least six different types of capital: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant. She notes that

> aspirations are developed within social and familial contexts, often through linguistic storytelling and advice (consejos) that offer specific navigational goals to challenge (resist) oppressive conditions. Therefore, aspirational capital overlaps with each of the other forms of capital, social, familial, navigational, linguistic and resistant. (77)

I will focus on two forms of this community cultural wealth, familial capital and resistant capital.

Cantu questions conventional forms of storytelling in her refusal to follow any linear progression. She notes: "chronological order had to go; after all, we don't think in clean, clear chronological order; life doesn't happen in neat little packages" (102). In keeping with the counter-story of Nena, Cantu chooses her own path.

Counter-storytelling is "a tool to 'counter' deficit storytelling [and] offers space to conduct and present research grounded in the experiences and knowledge of people of color" (Solorzano and Yosso 28). It is used to counter "monovocal" stories that become "master narratives" or "majoritarian stories". According to Solorzano and Yosso, these stories can be used to challenge racism, sexism and classism and work toward social justice. These counterstories offer a challenge to a legacy of racial privilege where dominant stories are presented in such a way that "racial privilege seems 'natural'" (28).

Nena possesses the community knowledge of sisterhood and reliance. The term *familial capital* refers to those cultural knowledge developed among family that convey a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition. This form of cultural wealth engages a commitment to community well-being and expands the concept of family to include a more broad understanding of kinship. As Nena observes: "they share it all, offer sympathy and prayers" (37). As a young girl developing towards

womanhood she looks for people to turn to, role models, in her family and surroundings. She reflects on her mother's experiences, "when you give life to eleven children and suffer two miscarriages you don't take worrying or life lightly. Every day brings its weight of worries and of joys, laughter and tears like sunshine and rain" (44). Like Mamagrande whose "pain and joys are buried in her heart" (17), Nena learns that women carry burdens that are sources of both pain and strength. "The keeping up of appearances, of dignity is what keeps Mamagrande exhausted", she notes (17). Nena sees Mamagrande, surrounded by children, as possessing an understanding of her internal power. She notes that for her grandmother, "the work never stops, her handkerchief a la mano in her apron pocket ever ready for the tears of joy and pain" (17). Nena must wonder how her grandmother can bear such intensity. Yosso offers an explanation for the source of her resilience:

> From these kinship ties, we learn the importance of maintaining a healthy connection to our community and its resources. Our kin also model lessons of caring, coping and providing (educacion), which informs our emotional, moral, educational and occupational consciousness (79).

Nena is thus unconsciously receiving her education, inherent in the art of her grandmother's everyday life.

Resistant capital "refers to those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality" (Yosso 80). Most of the time, these oppositional behaviors are not explicitly defiant. Rather, resistant capital can be verbal and non-verbal activity that feeds the female spirit. The women in Nena's life "consciously instruct their children to engage in behaviors and maintain attitudes that challenge the status quo. These young women are learning to be oppositional with their bodies, minds and spirit in the face of race, gender and class inequality (Yosso 81). In her attempt to respond to the experiences she finds wrong, Nena unfolds different types of oppositional behavior. Yosso summarizes Daniel Solorzano and Dolores Delgado Bernal's notion that

> resistance may include different types of oppositional behavior, such as self-defeating or conformist strategies that feed back into the system of subordination. However, when informed by a Freirean consciousness …or recognition of the structural nature of oppression and the motivation to work toward social and racial justice, resistance takes on a transformative form. Therefore, transformative resistant capital includes cultural

> knowledge of the structures of racism and motivation to transform such oppressive structure (Yosso 81).

For Nena, resistant capital takes different forms. For instance, in "Cowboy Boots", Azucena explains how she develops an almost sixth sense regarding her knowledge and comprehension that her friend Sanjuana had been raped by Tom, the man with the cowboy boots. For those who dwell in the borderland, this faculty is a well of empowerment.Although "Sajuana never said anything", Nena knew (118). Recalling this memory she notes, "I don't like cowboy boots. I don't wear cowboy boots, and in fact when I see a man, especially an Anglo, wearing cowboy boots, I cringe, react like I do when someone scratches the chalkboard with their nails" (118).

Nena is shocked that she could grasp on anything like this, since "I didn't even know about such things. Mami never talked to me about sex" (119). Yet, as she is sent to take up groceries for her mother, she still has the resistant capital to go to the store owned by Tom. While she does not verbally or physically show her anger and disdain toward Tom, she shows her strength through her own passive aggression: "I was so upset I couldn't look at him. Instead, I just looked down as I signed Mama's name for the pound of baloney and the loaf of bread; all I saw were his cowboy boots" (120). Clearly, for Cantu Tom's cowboy boots become a symbol of the racial and sexual power exercised by Anglo men in South Texas.

"The Flood" recounts the rising of Zacate Creek and the massive evacuation. The women in her life are continually presented as ready to challenge difficult circumstances. Nena begins to identify that strength in herself; She says: "Most kids cry but I am courageous…after the flood, Mami and Bueli begin again" (10). Her mother and grandmother know there will be other floods, and when they come, they will draw from their resistant capital to figure out what to do.

Nena develops her resistant capital to survive as a woman in different ways. However, it is evident that she is aware of one weapon already in her possession. In the vignette "Nacho", she describes how she gets revenge on Nacho, her schoolmate, after he tells on her for throwing a stone. She exclaims:

> How could I tell Mami of the anger, the humiliation, the mixed-up feelings that were held in that stone and in me? She'd never understand. I took my punishment, but already I was plotting revenge. I was going to write him a poem, call him a chimuelo chismoso; that'd serve him right. I savored the joy of having everyone laugh at him, as I read the poem at recess (32).

The best revenge against Nacho is to show him with words. She even enjoys the thought of using her words.

Through her community's cultural wealth, Nena learns about becoming a woman. And through her own cultural intuition, she lives Chicana feminist epistemology by telling her counter-story.

4. In Search of Chicana Identity

Una lucha de fronteras / A Struggle of Borders
Because I, a *mestiza*,
continually walk out of one culture
and into another,
because I am in all cultures at the same time,
alma entre dos mundos, res, cuatro,
me zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio.
Estoy norteada por todas las voces que me hablan
simultáneamente. (Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 99)

In this poem, Gloria Anzaldua perfectly reflects the confusion experienced by girls reaching womanhood in the borderlands. Growing up in the borderlands makes it difficult to construct an identity because more than one culture and language come together and clash.

As Mexican Americans, they feel a sense of belonging with both cultures, however, when a first-generation Mexican American will feel a much more intense connection to Mexico, a third or fourth generation Chicana will feel much more connected to the dominant culture.

While Jaramillo assert a Spanish identity in her narrative, Cantu begins with a Spanish background and focuses on a present borderlands space defined by Mexico and the United States.

In *Literary (re)Mappings: Autobiographical (Dis)Placements by Chicana Writers*, Norma Klahn argues that Cantu's text points to a space where contemporary writers such as Norma E. Cantu, Sandra Cisneros and Mary Helen Ponce contest hegemonic notions of domination and marginalization of minority cultures (123). Her photos, unlike the ones in Jaramillo's autobiography, are meant to show everyday people. In other words, while Jaramillo seems to link her photos to an upper class Spanish lineage, Cantu merely wants to show that the people on the borderlands exist. There are indeed a few instances in which we can compare photos from each text and analyze their significance to the development of identity. Both Jaramillo and Cantu include wedding photographs in their narratives. When Nena mentions the Spanish lace mantilla (veil or shawl) that her mother wears in the photos, it is clear that her intention is not to link the item with Spanish identity, as Jaramillo has done, but rather to link it to Mexico. Moreover, in Cantu's narrative we see a photo of Mami in a china poblana outfit (traditional Mexican dress) with the words *viva Mexico* written across the charo hat she is wearing (40). In *Romance,* Jaramillo sews a china poblana outfit for her daughter, but rather than commenting upon the significance of the Mexican dress, she merely states that she made it.

Nena is a first-generation Mexican American who strongly identifies with her parents' Mexican culture and traditions, however, she adapts to life in the borderlands and asserts an American self too.

The prologue begins by introducing adult Nena in Madrid right after her boyfriend has told her his life story through photographic images: "The woman Nena begins to shape her story …The stories of her girlhood in that land in between, *la frontera*, her story and the stories of the people who lived that life with her, one"(xiv). Nena indicates to the place where the photographs of her life are kept, that is, the borderlands between Mexico and Texas, the land where she was born and raised. It is important to draw attention to some aspects in her description of this geopolitical setting. Firstly, it is defined as a liminal space. This state, with its consequent emphasis on crossings, interactions, and exchanges between multiple cultures, make this site a transborder area that contests traditional boundary, as I will elaborate later on.

Another aspect to be highlighted concerns the feminine quality of this territory. Instead of using the neutral term "childhood" to refer to the story, the narrator chooses to use the word "girlhood," thus emphasizing the fact that *Canícula* is about a girl's life in the Mexico-Texas borderlands. Still, this does not mean that this narrative revolves around the protagonist only. Indeed, by presenting Nena's story as one of others in the land in-between, this narrative places the girl within a larger group, especially women. Cantu explains:

> I wanted to tell the stories of women who survived, who struggled, who worked as schoolteachers, who sold Avon and Stanley products door to door, as well as the mothers who went to work in the fields alongside the men. The women who peopled my childhood belonged to various social classes and survived in the world through different means, but all of them influenced me.

The author's determination to support and value the role of women in their quotidian life on the borderlands is, therefore, an expression of her feminist consciousness.

As previously mentioned, the feminine expression of this geographical space is presented by adult Nena, who takes a childhood point of view to tell the story. When analyzing the multiple gendered performances used in the text, we see that *Canicula* presents not only characters showing different Chicana femininities, but also individual female identities marked by apparently conflicting gender beliefs.

The protagonist becomes an adult in a context where "marianismo" and "machismo" engage with different gender beliefs, making border identities clearly visible. Many of the women who occupy the space of her girlhood represent, to a large extent, the previously mentioned patriarchal values, which Nena reproduces and questions during these early years. These ideals are well clarified by the paradigm that Chicana feminists name the "Tres Marías Syndrome" (qtd in Garcia). Related to the three Mary's in the life of Jesus—the Virgin Mary/Guadalupe, who is paradoxically virgin and mother, and Mary Magdalene, the reformed whore from whom *La Malinche* descended—this patriarchal discourse categorizes Chicanas according to three stereotypes: the virgin, the mother, and the whore. These three roles represent a patriarchal code of ethics and behavior that affect the lives of many women in *Canícula*.

Mothering is a practice and experience that shapes the lives of many of the female characters portrayed in the text, including Nena herself. In this sense, *Canícula* demonstrates that the act of caring and nurturing children is performed not only by birth mothers, but also by sisters, grandmothers, aunts, or friends. This exclusive familial arrangement of surrogate mothering is a common aspect among Chicanos, African American, and Native American communities, a reality which, as scholar in maternal studies Larissa M. Mercado-López points out, "poses challenges to canonical, psychoanalytic analyses of Western motherhood that assume exclusive mothering practices" (qtd in Garcia 179). In the narrative, Nena's mother takes care of Frances, her goddaughter; Tía Licha is like a mother to the protagonist, and the friends Tina and Pifania look after each other's children. Nena, as well, is expected and encouraged to act as a surrogate mother for her younger siblings. The vignettes "Esperanza,""Bueli," and "Azalia," describe how the protagonist is assigned to mothering responsibilities. The first recounts the moment when Esperanza, one of her sisters, is born, an event that generates mixed feelings in the protagonist. At the beginning, she is excited about having a new sister, only to find out later that the baby-nurturing responsibilities she is given are tiresome:

> It's not fun at all to rinse her diapers, burying the mustard-yellow mass that stinks worse than rotten eggs and makes my stomach want to come up. I run the tap water straight onto the soiled area, and then pile the diapers into a pail with bleach. Mami or Bueli will boil them in a washtub, set on bricks over a fire, and stir them with an old broomstick (13).

Nena's mother and maternal grandmother are the women who contribute the most to initiating the protagonist into the mothering role. The two other vignettes, "Bueli" and "Azalia," are very illustrative of this influence. The former recalls how Nena's grandmother reminds the protagonist of her role as a surrogate mother to Azalia, her three-month-old sister. "Cuida la niña," Bueli tells Nena on the eve of her death, devoting herself to the teaching of mothering untilnher last days (34). The vignette "Azalia" shows the power Bueli's last lesson has had on Nena, who feels relieved and proud that she successfully protected Azalia, as she was asked to do: "See, Bueli, I did take care of her" (36). The protagonist utters these words the day of Azalia's wedding, a special day in which she thinks about her sister's past health issues.

Moreover, Cantú's text portrays instances in which the dominant view of Chicana mothering is challenged. The transgression at issue here concerns mother's work outside the home. As many Chicana feminist scholars maintain, there is a large number of Mexican American women who have managed to change the negative meaning of maternal employment by reconceptualising paid work as part of mothering (see Pesquera; Segura). According to them, these women develop an ideology that employment is part of mothering rather than an opposition to it, and they conceive of their employment as a way to "provide for their family's economic subsistence or betterment" (qtd in Garcia 322). This is well illustrated in *Canícula*. Because the money Nena's father makes is not enough to support his wife and children, her mother has to perform sewing work outside of the house in order to supplement the family's income. Significantly, the mother views wage labor as part of their role as nurturers; thus it challenges the patriarchal discourses that claim that a mother's role should be limited to the domestic sphere.

Nena also negotiates female subjectivities that fall within the patriarchal category of *solterona*. This derogatory term captures the stigma that Chicano/Latino culture inflicts on those women who do not marry and have children. *Solteronas* are particularly associated with the figure of an old aunt who spends a lot of time in church. Chita and Toña, Nena's grandaunts are largely perceived in this misogynistic light, but reality contradicts the sad fate that patriarchy presupposes for women who do not form a family: "She [Chita] and Tía Toña were left to dress saints as the saying goes, but they didn't really –I don't recall either of them being churchgoers … Never married, *solteronas*" (122). In saying that their grandaunts rarely set foot in church, Nena is somehow questioning the expectations that Chicano culture prescribes for unmarried women. This does not mean that she does not feel the demands of marriage and procreation. In fact, these gendered expectations become more prominent as she undergoes sexual maturity. The vignette "Ojo de Agua" is a good example of this growing awareness:

> I don't know this, but this is the next to last summer I'll go there. It is different, I feel grown up; I've started hanging out at the Alameda not like a child in the playground, but on Sunday evenings, platicando with boyfriends that change each week, but not really boyfriends. I'm sad to leave that world, but excitedly anticipate going to Lamar Junior High and resuming friendships with Nancy … and Chelito no, – Chelito won't

> be there; in my absence she's gotten married or so the cryptic note from Estér claims. She's only fourteen. I'm scared, at the same time I'm curious: What's it like to be married? To leave? (38)

This passage conveys Nena's apprehension as she enters into the adult world. Her friend's early marriage makes her imagine herself as a married woman, with both fear and curiosity. Thus, she sees the first glimpses of a new world in which marriage is most likely to happen.

Nena's negotiation of the patriarchal script is closely related to apparent changes in her anatomy. The cultural script of virgin/whore dichotomy is operating here. On the one hand, girls are encouraged to act "decent," that is, they are expected not to have sexual relationships until they get married. Their virginity is in fact considered as the repository of the family's honor (Zavella 248). Hence, its loss often leads to the rejection of the girls by their own relatives. Therefore, those who do not keep their sexual purity are regarded as whores. These feelings are shaped by the discourse of malinchismo, that is, by the belief in *La Malinche*'s betrayal of her people by passively giving in to Hernán Cortés's sexual advances; this conveys the original shame that resulted in the Spanish conquest of Mexico (Paz 1992/1950) and the stigmatization of female sexuality (Moraga 1983).Chicana writers and feminists have since reexamined and reevaluated *La Malinche*'s cultural role and historic significance. In her article "Myths and Archetypes", Tey Diana Rebolledo explains that *la Malinche,* who was a victim of her family and historical circumstances, was taken by the conquerors and therefore cannot be blamed for anything. Moreover she represents the Indian race defeated by white Europeans, which eventually resulted in *mestizaje* (mixed blood). (Rebolledo193).

The hatred and blame Mexican Americans seemed to put on *la Malinche* for a long time, affected women's lives. Indeed, there is almost no difference between a girl who intentionally deviated from the path and a girl who was a victim. For instance what happened to one of Nena's friends, Sanjuana, evoked in the vignette called "Cowboy Boots", and who was raped by a janitor at her high school and had to leave the community (Cantu 118-120).In fact, bringing the case to court would have meant a more

public humiliation for the girl and her family, which is why the family refrained from officially pressing charges.

Prohibition and caution regarding a girl's sexual and gendered behavior before marriage get to Nena through different mediums, one of them being the "bad" examples set by some of her relatives and friends. The vignettes "Elisa" centers on the cost that the loss of virginity before marriage has for female teenagers in their context. However, even if the disgrace that befalls these girls can be said to serve as cautionary tales for the protagonist, there is no condemnation or rejection of these "sinful" acts, but a sense of injustice that Nena conveys in her rendering of the events. Elisa, Nena's cousin, is banished from her grandfather's house after having a baby at the age of sixteen. Deeply influenced by the discourse of malinchismo, Elisa's father cannot defend her, feeling compelled to move to Saltillo with his wife and his "sinful" daughter. These events earn Elisa the name of black sheep of the family. Far from rejecting her cousin, like the rest of the family, Nena shows sympathy and admiration toward Elisa, a woman who, despite having been ostracized by her own people, has managed to build a life of her own by working hard every single day.

Nena is not always so direct in her condemnation of the patriarchal discourses of femininity that rely on the virgin/whore dichotomy. Sometimes, she has doubts herself about practices that, although considered popular and acceptable in certain contexts, could consider her as a whore and a traitor in the eyes of Chicano patriarchy. This happens after she buys the same pair of shoes that her wealthy and more "Americanized" friend Lydia:

> I beg and beg Mami for a pair of black leather flats with red, green, yellow, shiny rhinestones just like Lydia's. When I finally get them, Papi wants us to take them back –they're shoes for a puta, not a decent girl. But Mami's on my side, after all we spent her hard-earned money on the shoes, so I keep the shoes but wear them rarely. To church and school I wear my old scuffed oxblood-red loafers and bobby sox. I'm wearing the rhinestone flats defiantly in my quinceañera photo as I sit in our front yard with friends and family all around. (82)

Nena's father associates the new shoes with sexual promiscuity, this why he forbids her daughter to wear them. However, Nena does not want to dispose of the shoes. Two seemingly conflicting gender beliefs that the protagonist has to negotiate here are at

stake here. On the one hand, there is the idea that girls can follow mainstream fashion trends, whereas, on the other hand, the Chicano patriarchal discourse that associates Americanization with shallow materialism and promiscuity. In choosing to keep the shoes but wear them occasionally, Nena shows her capacity to handle conflicting elements in a way that neither of them is discarded or subsumed by a larger whole. This ability—which results from living in cultural, gender, racial, and language borderlands—is what Chicana feminists call a "mestiza consciousness" (Anzaldúa 1987). The quotation below provides a very accurate description of the negotiation exercise carried out by Nena:

> The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity … She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode –nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else … This assembly is not one where severed or separate merely come together. Nor is it a balancing of opposing powers. In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its parts. That third element is a mestiza consciousness –and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm. (101–102)

As a mestiza, Nena challenges Western dichotomous thinking by combining opposing gender systems, embracing a new third element that decolonizes and displaces these varying worldviews: the mestiza consciousness.

Conflicting presentations of the self are also part of *quinceañeras*. These celebrations, which generally coincide with the girl's fifteenth birthday, are generally perceived as affirming the Latinx community's values and culture. Simultaneously, they serve as indicators for appropriate behavior for women, since they aim to initiate girls into the well-defined roles of mother and spouse. Still, Latina feminist scholars such as Mary Karen Davalos (1996), Cantú herself (2002), and Julia Alvarez (2007) have increasingly directed their attention to the more complex meanings that these coming-of-age rituals are adopting. Thus, while the role of these celebrations in the formation of a woman's identity as female and Latina remains unquestionable, *quinceañeras* are now more commonly seen as rituals that allow for contestation of the expectations that this symbolic act implies (Davalos 1996; Cantú 2002; Alvarez 2007). In this sense, it is

argued that they have become sites where girls can review, articulate, and even reframe some of the contradictions that they have inherited from their dual cultures (Davalos 1996; Cantú 2002; Alvarez 2007). Nena's celebration of her fifteenth birthday can be examined in this light. On the one hand, her *quinceañera* provides an occasion for the celebration of community and belonging: "[S]he felt loved, protected, blessed … she's surrounded by her friends and family … Nena feels close to tears, her heart full of love, full of their voices. The tiny kitchen is packed; the song fills her heart" (12–13). This ritual then gives way to an empowering feeling of being part of a community. On the other hand, Nena's *quinceañera* includes many of the gendered specific elements that mark her transition into the female role that she is supposed to assume, some of which create a feeling of distress in her. These elements are the dress, the *esclava*, and the dance performance. As Cantú explains in her book *Chicana Traditions: Continuity and Change*, the *quinceañera* dress "signals that the young woman is moving from girlhood to her new status as señorita and is available for marriage" (Cantu b 19). White, pink, and other light colors are usually selected for the dress, although, as Cantú argues, many girls are increasingly choosing to defy expectations and wear dark colors, including black or even prints (20). Nena, for her part, wears traditional white garments, evoking the purity and virginity that brides are expected to take to the altar. The formal dance with an escort—which follows the religious ceremony—is intended to acknowledge the sexual awakening of the honoree and her readiness to engage in courtship (22–23). The protagonist, however, does not feel comfortable with the underlying explanation of the dance:

> Mami insists that she dance with Comadre Ramos's son. A slow song by the Platters comes through the tiny speaker on the portable record player in the tiny living room. Nena wants to die. At school she never even talks to the tall, lanky young man, Saturnino, who is a year older, and here they are dancing, his hand on her back. They don't talk, just move back and forth pretending to dance. The comadres, las tías, the neighbors, the kids –they're all watching. (13)

The protagonist considers this gendered element of the ritual absurd and embarrassing. She feels she has been compelled to dance with a boy she barely knows for the sake of tradition. In expressing these feelings of embarrassment, Nena is questioning the patriarchal foundations at the core of the dance. Therefore, the protagonist's *quinceañera* can be considered as a site that allows for the expression of her

contradictory self. On the one hand, she is happy and proud to belong to the community that has come together to celebrate her fifteenth birthday, but, on the other hand, she draws a line between her and one of the indicators of conventional gendered behavior that characterize this ritual.

In the vignette "Políticos", the injustices that Mexican Americans endure from dominant society play a fundamental role. Here, Nena desribes her growing awareness of the racism and sexism that affect her community, criticizing the forces that reproduce an unequal society:

> I don't understand. Remain angry at the machine, the bosses who control, who deprive. The políticos. Our money lines their pockets, paves private roads on their ranches while our streets remain unpaved, run like rivers after every rain; while our public library remains as small as someone's private library; while the dropout rate remains between 50 and 80 percent; while judges, mayors, sheriffs, and others in power abuse, rape, embarrass, harass, taunt, demean women. I see the pain, the hopelessness, the survival strategies of the poor. At eighteen, I can't forgive. At eight, I ponder what makes men so important… And I march to Austin protesting with the farmworkers; march in rallies protesting Vietnam; march for the ERA; wonder what else I can do, a lowly office clerk; wear a César Chávez button, read Marx? (42–43)

The narrator criticizes the disregard and abuses that are inflicted upon Chicanxs by Anglo men in positions of power, contesting the privilege and the legitimate authority of the latter. Moreover, she shows how this discriminationg situation coalesced with her own politicized story of resistance during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, when she opposed the Vietnam War and defended the rights of migrant farmworkers and women. Her final questionings, however, reveal a sense of inadequacy regarding her political actions, pointing toward the difficulty of changing the pervasive system of white male power.

As has been showed throughout this section, femininity is an important feature in Cantú's depiction of the human expression of the Mexico-US border. Mexican American patriarchal discourses have a crucial role in shaping Nena's girlhood, as well as the lives of many other female characters. Still, we have also seen that these restraining scripts are not always clearly accepted, but rather transgressed and

manipulated, thus, foregrounding the complex and contradictory nature of female subjectivities in this particular context.

To conclude, *Canicula* challenges classification and undermines the traditional definition of autobiography. She strategically includes photographs that trigger her memories as a way to tell her multi-layered stories about growing up on the borderlands. By mixing genres and blurring the space between fact and fiction, Cantu presents alternatives to traditional narratives of the borderlands by representing the personal, intimate details of everyday life through the eyes and experiences of women in South Texas.

The importance of *Canicula* lies largely in its ability to raise timeless border issues from the perspective of a Mexican American girl, namely immigration, racism, economic stagnation, and the negotiation of multiple identities. Through her text, Cantu challenges the common notion that borders dichotomize. While she does not ignore the divisive power of these geographical and metaphorical lines, her emphasis on the fluidity of spatial and cultural crossings contributes to decolonizing incisive understandings of the human spaces that emerge between two different nations.

Conclusion

Conclusion

The present thesis has sought to examine the autobiographical writings of women from diverse American ethnic groups, and to show how these women use their voice to uncover and resist mechanisms of oppression and map out paths toward political and social change.

We first addressed some major issues in the ethnic debate. Indeed, the terms "ethnic" and "race" have been more or less synonymous in America until recent times. Perhaps "ethnic" now sounds less discriminatory since it implies cultural diversity, than "race" which is usually related to the color of one's skin.

Concerning what exactly constitutes ethnic literature, in most contexts the term refers to stories, and poems that relate to groups that have been traditionally marginalized or disenfranchised in American society-- African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and Asian Pacific Americans. People in such literature are represented to be desperately seeking meaning as minorities, and struggling to maintain a balance between an ethnic heritage of the past and their identities while adapting to the mainstream culture.

In their narratives, marginalized women writers addressed such issues as self-representation, identity formation and history rewriting. However, it is important to point out that their autobiographies stray significantly from traditional norms and instead offer a blend of distinct modes of expression. It is true that all the autobiographers discussed in this thesis, depart from the laws of the genre by transforming it and introducing culture- specific elements which enrich and develop it. The transformation is based on the inclusion of other genres as much as showing that the boundaries dividing literature into categories may be crossed and reestablished.

A comparative analysis of the autobiographical texts of Harriet Jacobs, Zora Neale Hurston, Zitkala Sa, Leslie Marmon Silko, Cleofas Jaramillo and Norma E. Cantu display the similarities found between the strategies employed by the writers who come from different cultural backgrounds. These strategies include the use of different narrative modes in their autobiographies, like the sentimental novel, folktale, myth,

photography, ballad forms and folklore. Such similarities point at some universal and general features of ethnic improvisations on autobiography.

Harriet Jacobs's narrative is not so much a life account as a disclosure of specific "incidents" in her life. Jacobs does not want to make her private life public because she cannot write her life without including her sexual experience. This accounts for her use of the rhetoric of the sentimental novel. In fact, Jacobs uses the sentimental novel to express her sexual vulnerability because the slave narrative could not adequately represent this situation. In the sentimental novel, the heroine aspired to chastity and hoped for marriage and family, whereas Jacobs was in a situation in which neither chastity nor family or marriage could be achieved because she was a slave. However, because she was aware of the limits of the sentimental genre to express her peculiar experience as a female slave, Jacobs reshapes and challenges these conventions in her representation of both black and white womanhood.

Jacobs writes her story not as a way of attracting attention to her own life, but as a political statement, a means to enlist the sympathies and support of the Northern white women. As a female slave narrator, Jacobs follows the conventions of the abolitionist discourse and uses documents to support the veracity of her narrative. As Jacobs relates her story of sexual oppression, the dissociation of black family units, and her fight for and flight to freedom, she attempts to build a bond of sisterhood between herself and these women readers—a bond that she hoped would inspire Northern white women to take action against the "patriarchal" institution of slavery.

Hurston's *Dust Tracks* better fits into the tradition of autobiography as it relates Hurston's life from childhood to adulthood. However, the text resists two important conventions of autobiographical representation: traditional autobiographical structure and formal organization, and a focused projection of the autobiographical persona. Only in the first part of the text does Hurston produce a traditional autobiography. The rest of the narrative focuses on retelling community stories and on Hurston's ambiguous attitudes towards race.

Conclusion

As trained anthropologist, Hurston draws upon insights and observations gained from her anthropological research in crafting her autoethnography which combines autobiography, the story of one's own life, with ethnography, and the study of a particular social group.

Another genre used by Hurston in *Dust Tracks* is the folk sermon. Many of the characteristics of that tradition, particularly of the folk preacher and the folk sermon, are to be found in her autobiography. The persona in *Dust Tracks* is analogous to the folk preacher, and the narrative is comparable to the folk sermon. Like the folk preacher, Hurston tells stories, folktales, and jokes and also gives interpretations of prayers and sermons. More importantly, she exhorts the values of individualism and achievement as essential to the struggle for freedom and equality.

Early Native women's autobiographies were all written by women in order to help improve the conditions of Native Americans in general and their particular tribes. They are texts of resistance because even though Native American women used the autobiographical genre, a Euro-American genre in itself, they were subverting the genre by incorporating Native American stories, songs, rituals, and beliefs that were part of their oral traditions.

Zitkala Sa's *American Indian Stories* clearly does not conform to the traditional notions of autobiography. She subverts the genre by combining elements of personal narrative, Western autobiography, essayistic explorations and oral storytelling. Moreover, she challenges the basic assumptions of Franklinian autobiographies and disrupts traditional notions of autobiography on two levels: it does not offer a model of triumph and integration, nor does it emphasize the importance of language in the process of self-authentication.

Zitkala Sa also draws from the sentimental novel and strategically revises it. Her stories selectively use the language of domesticity to analyze sentimental ideology's central role in forced Indian education as well as its related participation in national effort to Americanize the Indian.

Silko's *Storyteller* serves as a good example of a narrative that rejects a linear development and experiments with multiple genres-- mainly poetry, traditional Pueblo

Indian stories and personal experiences—in an attempt to present the principles of the Laguna life. Moreover, in the process of explaining her culture, Silko employs photographs. To understand the stories which are full of descriptions of places, Silko includes visual images to help minimize the distance between the readers and the landscape which for many might seem unfamiliar. Photographs also help Silko to speak for her community and to disrupt White settler colonial narratives. Silko explains the importance of storytelling and of taking control of the camera. Indeed, holding the camera themselves enables Native American photographers not only to challenge political and historical contradictions, but at the same time to establish and maintain a presence that privileges self-representation.

Jaramillo's *Romance of a Little Village Girl* is in a more strictly autobiographical form than the other texts discussed in this thesis. The narrative documents Jaramillo's personal history and the social struggles of her family and community. Each chapter is framed in ballad form, blurring the lines between poetry and prose. This combination of poetry and narrative, romance and family history, cultural history and creative autobiography was common in Hispanic storytelling. Jaramillo also uses the rhetoric of domesticity to resist Anglo definitions of femininity and moves away from strictly traditional roles assigned for Hispanic women.

Canicula: Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera is Cantu's autobioethnography that tells a story through photographs and accompanying vignettes. Cantu's text is fragmentary and non chronological. In fact, Cantu does not try to tell a story with a plot. She puts together random memories of special events such as birthdays, weddings with common everyday life activities like cooking, sewing and playing with friends. In addition, Cantu uses different genres such as testimonio and folklore to articulate her critique regarding issues of ethnic oppression or gender oppression in Anglo-American and Mexican society.

Like Jaramillo, Cantu seeks to record through her text and photographs the traditions and cultural practices of a region undergoing a profound change under the process of Americanization. Using photographs of her family throughout the text, Cantu exploits

the ambiguities of fictional autobioethnography to create both alternative histories and alternative representations of the borderlands that emerge from what Pérez might call the book's decolonial, Chicana feminist imaginary.

Following Deleuze and Guattari's model of minority literature, we clearly established how the writers discussed earlier fulfilled three characteristics: deterritorialization, political theme and collective value. It is true that the question generally posed by ethnic writers is that of language itself: whether to write in his/her mother tongue, in the "adopted" language or even in both.

Harriet Jacobs and Zora Neale Hurston Yet that same group lives and operates within the larger society. Their stories can only be told from this particular group, and yet they are also stories that can only be told in the language of the oppressive society. Thus, they both subvert language by using African American English.

African American English was prevalent in many publications during Jacobs' time, but it was mainly confined to novels about slavery by white authors and was equated with illiteracy. Hence, Harriet Jacobs used African American English to undermine the stereotype of the ignorant, humorous, or satisfied slave and was also "signifying" on the usage of African American English in the sentimental novels during her time. She thus used "the language of the oppressor" and subverted it to construct her remarkable work of resistance, which is precisely "deterritorialization".

Zitkala-Sa believed that the white man's language was a means to power, but through a series of incidents involving English she discovered its problematic and untrustworthy nature. Given the fact that she wrote these essays in English, Zitkala Sa obviously learned English and learned it so well she was able to use her command of the language to challenge Carlisle's educational system by publishing her essays in the Atlantic Monthly. But she makes sure her readers know that her use of English is itself problematic, an ambivalent tool that is both the sign of oppression, and the means of freeing herself from that oppression.

Jaramillo began *Romance* with apologies for her supposedly limited command of English. What Jaramillo may have believed necessary, however, was writing in English

in order to reach the new generation and the otherwise mis-informed English speaking audience. Thus, English became a non-traditional tool with which she could advocate Hispanic tradition.

For Cantu, the words and the language she uses are important in her narrative. And obviously, Nena's identity and that of her family and community are intricately linked to the language they are speaking and the language with which Cantú is writing. A language with terms that are neither Spanish nor English, but both. In *Canicula,* the Spanish language and Mexican culture continuously disrupt the English-language. Spanglish in Cantu's border community transcends the boundaries of language understood as a sign system and is conceived as a process, and a whole way of being. It is *languaging* and like "deterritorialization", it fractures colonial languages.

In all cases, by incorporating dialect or Spanish, these writers meant to establish a specific connection with their communities on the one hand and to highlight the paradox by which these authors belong to two distinctive cultures, yet they also belong to neither.

The second attribute of a minor literature was its production of political themes. Whereas all of Harriet Jacobs, Zitkala Sa, Cleofas Jaramillo and Norma Elia Cantu addressed political matters in a straight forward way, Zora Neale Hurston did not. It is true that Hurston's views on "race" seem to be aspiring toward some kind of "raceless ideal", but in fact, like Fanon years later, Hurston's aim was to dismantle the white stereotype of black "inculture" not by privileging "blackness" as an oppositional category to "whiteness" in culture but by showing the vitality and diversity of non-white cultures. Indeed, the latter rarely portrayed blacks as victims of the oppression and racist attitudes held by white society; instead, she represented blacks as autonomous beings, proud of their folk culture. However, political literature is not just that which addresses immediate political concerns. Instead, it concentrates on the needs and representation of the whole minority group.

The last attribute of minority literature was its collective value. Specifically in minor/ethnic autobiography, the speaking subject 'I' is perceived generally to represent

the ethnic community. Among the autobiographies explored here, Hurstons's autobiography is perhaps the only one that emphasizes (in such a degree) the uniqueness, rather than the representativeness, of the autobiographer's life in America. All the other autobiographers discussed in this work do not display a strong emphasis on individuality common to traditional Western autobiography; instead they reflect the concerns of the whole community. We have seen that in *Incidents*, Harriet Jacobs tells the story of a young girl, then a mother, seeking to escape from sexual exploitation, thanks to the help of her community. In fact, throughout her narrative, Jacobs emphasizes her natural drive to be a free person. However, she cannot achieve that freedom by herself. Because many lives seem to be bound to her: her children, her grandmother and her friends. Moreover, because Jacobs cannot choose between family and freedom, her quest becomes to obtain both. She could have escaped by herself, but she knew that her decisions may affect others so she chose to stay.

Similarly, for Native Americans autobiographers, the story is never just about them. The "Spider woman" serves as a metaphor for Native American writers who seek to connect their people and their culture through their writing. For this reason, the writings of Native Americans do not display a strong emphasis on individuality common to traditional Western autobiography; instead they reflect the concerns of the whole community. The community is involved as the women tell their tribal histories, legends, stories, and traditions. Native American authors, drawing from a long tradition of oral storytelling in Indian communities, achieve in their works the collective expression of minor literature as well as communal solidarity.

In *American Indian Stories*, Zitkala Sa adopts a socio-anthropological approach to describe her childhood in the reservation and highlights the importance of the teachings of her mother as well as those of the tribe. She also emphasizes the importance of traditions for the survival of the community. Indeed, in many episodes, she describes the mishaps of many Native people who found themselves culturally and socially isolated after getting "civilized" in the white world. Likewise, Silko situates her individuality in a community context, relying on Laguna Pueblo oral tradition and history. Silko is greatly de-emphasized, in the traditional autobiographical sense, as she includes voices of different generations as well as fictive voices. However, Silko does

not de-emphasize herself for patriarchal reasons like early Euro-American women, but rather because her culture has taught her that her story cannot be told in isolation. As an autobiographical author she redefines what it means to be an autobiographical author by using her culture to tell her story.

Throughout *Romance,* Jaramillo focuses on an autobiographical "I" who situates herself as part of a larger group with a specific cultural memory. In this way, she describes the cultural practices, religious traditions, and local beliefs that shaped her childhood. Her account emphasizes life in a pastoral community that remained largely isolated from Anglo American influence for many decades. For Jaramillo, an accurate depiction of New Mexicans and their culture became essential. She started to collect Hispanic *cuentos,* songs, and folktales. Early on she collected and transcribed folktales, legends and recipes, aware that in time most Hispanic customs and traditions would be lost to Modernity. She was also the founder of the Santa Fe Folklore Society to promote the preservation of the Hispanic folklore.

In *Canicula*, Cantu suggests that the narrative represents her individual stories as well as the communal stories of the Mexican American border community. In this sense, Cantú's narrative becomes the medium through which the Mexican American border community can identify and express itself, and Azucena Cantú becomes a representative of all women and men living in the borderlands. Moreover, like Silko, Cantu tells stories through the voices of others and emphasizes the telling of others' stories along with her own. Yet, this does not mean that ethnic autobiographers cannot write autobiographies focusing on the individual's private life rather than the public concerns of the community.

In ethnic literatures, autobiography has become the means to assert one's identity and history. As discussed earlier, Western discourse has misrepresented ethnic groups. Thus, what was at stake in ethnic autobiography was the possibility of ethnic groups telling their own stories, presenting their own histories, and identities.

In *Incidents,* Harriet Jacobs' use of the pseudonym "Linda Brent" illustrates her multiple marginalization in and by society in that she herself was not empowered to criticize either the construction of womanhood or the institution of slavery. Thus, she was forced to construct the persona of Linda Brent in order to fashion her own

subjectivity, free from the constraints imposed by society. Faced with the question of how to construct a self from the position of the marginalized, Jacobs transcends the barriers confining women of the nineteenth century who chose to write of their experiences and challenges the boundaries of patriarchal ideologies by refusing to adhere to the cult of domesticity. Moreover, Jacobs, like many slave narrators, understood the need to provide evidence of her experience as a slave. In this way, she can undermine the continuation of the institution and to establish herself as a speaking subject, voicing her own experiences instead of being the object of someone else's discourse.

Hurston's *Dust Tracks* is different from Jacobs's narrative and presents a slight departure from Stephen Butterfield's conception of Black autobiography as being primarily not about an individual with a private career, but about a member of an oppressed social group with ties and allegiances to the other members.

Hurston has created different personae to present different individuals. At times she was accused by her community of playing the "happy darky role to entertain whites" and had been called an abandoner of the race; at other times and by other groups she was presented as a serious anthropologist. By showing little respect for the integrity of facts, Hurston constructed her fictional self quite coherently. Indeed, by setting her birth in the peacefully depicted all-Negro Eatonville, Hurston realistically developed a strong black woman's character who was not preoccupied by racial discrimination and her work consequently shows a conservative stance on race issues. Hurston's ambivalent identity embracing the simple Eatonville girl, the highly educated anthropologist and the creative writer results in a plurality of voices and in the impossibility to define her.

In *American Indian Stories,* Zitkala Sa reveals her complex relationship with the American identity. In fact, she does not define herself according to either Yankton or Anglo culture. Zitkala Sa's persona is bicultural because she does not privilege any of the cultures; she is happy among people of her tribe, yet she is treated like an outsider because of her education under the official curriculum. In the same way, when she is among the whites, she faces prejudices because of her race, even if they approve of her education. Her inability to fit in either world leaves her feeling alienated. However, her cultural dislocation prompts her to relocate and redefine her cultural identity. Indeed,

through her fragmented identity Zitkala Sa embraces her cultural hybridity and serves as an intermediary between the white and Native cultures. She is bound to both cultures, but remains loyal to her native identity. She refuses to be assimilated and instead she uses her bicultural status to challenge the boundaries of cultural identity. At times of her life, Zitkala Sa advised her people to adopt mainstream culture as the only means of survival in a white-dominated society. At other times, she argued that Indians should honor and maintain their own lifestyles and religion with only minor concessions to the white world. Zitkala Sa's seemingly contradictory viewpoints can only be understood in the context of the problems that Indian intellectuals of which she was an outstanding example faced during her lifetime.

Under similar circumstances, Silko's mixed blood status identifies her as a member of the hybrid race which occupies the transcultural frontier of the Southwest borderlands. Silko's own family, which claims an Indian, Hispanic and Anglo ancestry, represents this convergence of ethnicities and as such did not belong to any one culture but lived somewhere on the fringe of all three. In *Storyteller*, Silko relates how her family experienced this cultural hybridity as a fact of everyday life. She, thus adapts her writing to her own purposes, bringing the Laguna Pueblo oral tradition and the Euro-American autobiographical tradition together, which allows her to move freely along the borders and sides of her personality and, thus, to write across the Laguna -white hyphen. Such a hyphen asserts that a person is neither absolutely Laguna nor absolutely white; it also permits a shift from one to the other, especially when identity is perceived through cultural performance rather than physical appearance.

In the case of Jaramillo, we were drawn to her exaggerated emphasis on a Spanish ancestry and identity in her descriptions. Her text reveals how she enacted "whiteness demonstrations". With such "whiteness demonstrations", Jaramillo seems to deny her mestizo Mexican cultural heritage, thereby creating racial distinctions among people of Mexican descent.

Although many critics have called Jaramillo's clinging to tradition a lie (Reed 73), because it negates the historical presence of both *mestizo* and indigenous identities, her

identity is nonetheless real to her. Throughout her narrative, she negotiates cultural identity as she straddles the border between old and new colonial powers.

Jaramillo also uses photography as a means of cultural preservation. The photographs suggest a desire to maintain a status quo: to immortalize Spanish customs as a way to connect to a past identity that she wishes to preserve in this new Anglo American society.

Cantu, on the other hand, looks to her foremothers as precursors to a tradition of autobiographical narrative. She extends this narrative to include fiction in her attempt to portray a border identity in South Texas. This identity is constantly struggling to be accepted and defined in both sides of the border. Moreover, both Jaramillo and Cantu use geographic space as an indicator of historical, social, and political factors that contribute to the formation of their individual identities. While Jaramillo's autobiography is situated in northern New Mexico, Cantu's autobioethnography deals with the borderlands of Texas.

When analyzing the various gendered performances deployed in the text, we see that *Canicula* presents not only characters showing different Chicana femininities, but also individual female identities characterized by apparently conflicting gender beliefs. As said, Cantu's protagonist is a first-generation Mexican American who strongly identifies with her parents' Mexican culture and traditions, however, she adapts to life in the borderlands and asserts an American self too. The protagonist comes of age in a context where "marianismo" and "machismo" engage with different gender beliefs, making border identities clearly visible. Many of the women who occupy the space of her girlhood represent, to a great extent, the aforementioned patriarchal values, which Nena reproduces and contests during these early years. These ideals are well clarified by the paradigm that Chicana feminists label the "Tres Marías Syndrome": the Virgin Mary/Guadalupe, who is paradoxically virgin and mother, and Mary Magdalene, the reformed whore from whom La Malinche descended—this patriarchal discourse categorizes Chicanas according to three stereotypes: the virgin, the mother, and the whore. These three roles constitute a patriarchal code of ethics and behavior that shape the lives of many women in *Canícula*.

Conclusion

The writers discussed in this thesis are represented as desperately seeking meaning as minorities, struggling with their circumstances of cultural displacement, or learning to maintain a balance between an ethnic heritage of the past and their identities adapting to the mainstream culture around them. They have chosen the autobiographical genre in order to claim discursive spaces in which they might write an "I" and often a "we", that can work to uncover mechanisms of oppression and map out paths toward political and social change.

This thesis was meant as a contribution to the broadening and deepening of our understanding of women's autobiographies of disparate American cultures, considered in the spirit of Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s reminder in *Figures in Black* that "what we have for too long called 'the tradition' is merely one tradition of several and that we have much to learn from the systematic exploration of new canons" (58). Through such examinations, we not only see the genre of autobiography expand, but we continue to study the process of cultural evolution in the United States and acquire a new understanding of the question that lies at the core of American literature as to what it takes to be an American.

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ملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة مجموعة من السير الشخصية التي أفرزتها بعض الأقليات العرقية الأمريكية، و التي أسهمت بشكل كبير في رسم ملامح الأدب الأمريكي خاصة في العشرية الأخيرة. و على الرغم من أن هذه الأعمال نبعت في مجملها من ثقافات مؤلفيها الخاصة فقد تأثرت بالعوامل الاجتماعية و السياسية التي أحاطت بمجتمعاتهم. حيث ترفض هذه السير الشخصية ،التي وقعتها أنامل نساء هذه الأقليات مثلا، خطاب القوة و القمع الذي تفرضه ثقافة البيض المسيطرة، كما لم تترد صاحبتهن في سرد تجاربهن بغية كسر النمطية و العراقيل التي تفرضها الثقافة السائدة. تهدف هذه الرسالة إلى سبر أغوار مجموعة من السير الذاتية بغية اكتشاف الموروث الثقافي للأقليات التي تنتمي إليها هذه المؤلفات و التعرف على الطرق التي انتهجنها الكاتبات للتعبير عن هويتهن. حيث تنتمي مجموعة السير المختارة إلى مجموعات عرقية مختلفة، و قد تم اختيار النصوص كالتالي:إنيسدتس إن ذي لايف أوف أي سلايف غيرل *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl(1861)* لهاريت جاكوبس Harriet Jacobs و داست تراكس أون أي رود *Dust Tracks on a Road (1942)* *لزورا نيل هيرتسون* Zora Neale Hurston للأمريكيين الأفارقة و أميريكن إنديين ستوريز *1921 American Indian Stories* لزيتكالا سا Zitkala Sa (1921) و ستوري تيلير *Storyteller (1981)* *ليسلي مارمون سيلكو* Leslie Marmon Silko للأمريكيين الأصليين و أخيرا رومانس أو أي ليتل فيلاج غيرل *Romance of a Little Village Girl (1955)* لكليوفاس جارااميو Cleofas Jaramillo و كانيكولا: سنابشاتس أو أي غيرلهود إن لا فرونتيرا *Canicula: Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera* لنورما إليا كانتو Norma Elia Cantu للأمريكيات من أصول مكسيكية "شيكانا". و لما كان لكل أقلية من الأقليات التي تطرقنا إليها، تجربتها التاريخية و هويتها الثقافية الخاصة كان لابد من دراسة كل واحدة بطريقة مختلفة لذلك تم استخدام مجموعة من المقاربات بما يتلائم و طبيعة كل كاتبة و كل أقلية عرقية. و قد وقع الاختيار على نظرية النقد الأمريكي- الأفريقي و النسوية السوداء و نظرية سير الأمريكيين الأصليين و نظرية النسوية في التشيكانا. كما تمت الاستعانة بنظرية جيل ديلوز Gilles Deleuze و فيليكس غاتاري Felix Guattari الخاصة الأقليات الأدبية، ذلك أنها تمنح إطارا نقديا مناسبا عندما يتعلق الأمر بسير الأقليات الذاتية. تناقش هذه الرسالة كذلك كيف تمكنت المؤلفات من تغيير نمط السير الشخصية و كيف استخدمنه كإستراتيجية خطابية لإعادة رسم معالم هوياتهن. حيث لا تبحث مؤلفات السير الذاتية الخاصة بالأقليات عن خلق ذات موحدة بل تقدم تركيبة هذه الذات باعتبارها جزء من جماعات مضطهدة لا يمكن لهويتها السياسية أن تنفصل عن شروطها.

فالموضوع هنا فردي و جماعي في الوقت ذاته، لذلك اختارت هذه المؤلفات السير الذاتية سبيلا إلى اكتشاف مكانيزمات القمع و تبني أساليب تسمح بالتغيير السياسي و الاجتماعي.

السيرة الشخصية، العرقية، الأقليات الأدبية،الهوية، الجندرة (الجنسانية)، الأمركيون الأفارقة، الأمريكيون الأصليون، الشيكانا.