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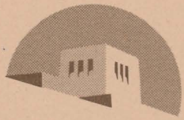

UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87131

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By
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A VIEW FROM WITHIN: AURELIO MACEDONIO ESPINOSA (1880-1958)

by Mónica J. Espinosa

Introduction

The name Aurelio M. Espinosa is familiar to most scholars and teachers of Peninsular Spanish literature, and also to many in the field of Spanish-American folklore. Nevertheless, outside of these areas, the life and work of this forerunner of modern Chicana/o[1] scholarship remain virtually unknown, even to Chicana/o academics. In view of the fact that the circumstances of his life and his work mirror to a remarkable degree the circumstances of Chicana/o scholars to succeed him, it is appropriate that an in-depth examination of the man and his many accomplishments should be undertaken.

We find ourselves now at the end of the twentieth century in a time of reflection on questions of multiculturalism and its significance for the study of culture in general, as well as questions about the relationships between race, ethnicity, class, and cultural production. While the battle to establish so-called ethnic studies programs at all academic levels is far from over, this genre of academic work is nonetheless here to stay, with or without institutional blessing. Those of us who choose to teach Chicana/o literature find ourselves encouraged and at times expected to be curriculum consultants as well. In my own experience this has taken the form of designing a program of courses in Chicana/o literature for the English department of the University of New Mexico, as well as proposing new courses in Chicana/o literature for the department of Comparative Literature at Stanford University. Inevitably, this sort of undertaking returns to classic questions of cultural identity: What is Chicana/o literature? What does it mean to be a Chicana/o? While some respond to these questions with frustration, protesting that these issues have already been discussed to death, and that it is now an established fact that Chicana/os are US citizens or residents of Mexican descent, usually of the working class, others point to the fluid and ever-changing nature of the circumstances of class, race, language, and historical context experienced by the aforenamed individuals. The concept of *mestizaje* is

also invoked, with the observation that as a borderland people we are the site of the coming together of many disparate elements. How we reconcile these elements and whether or not we privilege some rather than others, may have as much to do with our *chicanismo* as the mere fact of our Mexican descent. It is important, too, to recognize that the Chicana/o experience has and does vary considerably from one context to another. For this reason, I have chosen to focus for a time on one discrete aspect of that experience, and to construct a poetics for it. My focus is on the New Mexican literary tradition, and within that tradition, the influence and implications of the work of Aurelio Macedonio Espinosa for four twentieth century Chicana/o writers to follow him.

I had the tremendous privilege to be born into a family of scholars and raised in a house full of books. My aspirations to intellectual excellence were never questioned--on the contrary, they were taken for granted. For this and for the model of academic achievement which my parents provided to me and to my four brothers, I will always be grateful. I am particularly indebted to my father for passing on to me his love of and pride in the Spanish language and the traditional culture of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. I can point to my mother as my lifelong intellectual mentor, comrade, and model. I believe that my brothers and I all stand as testimony to the extraordinary work of these two people. However, the circumstances of my life also have led me to question my own cultural identity. While for over a quarter of a century I have committed myself to the struggle for the advancement of Chicana/o studies, I have at the same time often wondered how I as a *Nuevomexicana* fit into the paradigm of *chicanismo*. My schoolteacher parents didn't fit the working class model, nor did I, with my college education and all of its attendant privileges. Furthermore, our identification with Mexico and Mexican culture had been diluted by centuries of isolation and neglect. I have come to see the need for the definition of a New Mexican poetics which might situate the New Mexican Chicana/o cultural tradition within the larger context of Chicana/o culture.

It has been a careful reflection on the example of my own cousin, Aurelio M. Espinosa, that has enabled me to propose a paradigm for New Mexican

scholarship. My current research in the life and work of this man has surely been influenced by my life-long awareness of his stature both within the Espinosa extended family and the Hispanic community. Something of a family icon, he was always regarded with great pride and reverence by our elders. During my college years, I became aware of the fact that many of my teachers in the department of Modern Languages were familiar with Espinosa and his work. However, at that point in my development, I found it rather annoying to be asked about our relationship, as if it had anything to do with my own personal merits. Later on, it even seemed to me that perhaps my very acceptance to graduate school at the University of California at San Diego might have been influenced by my connection to Espinosa. I realized years later that while Joseph Sommers, then chair of the Department of literature, was certainly intrigued by the relationship, he was more interested in finding another generation of scholars to carry on the work of people like Espinosa.[2] But his attempts at that time to steer me in the direction of Espinosa's work were unsuccessful. It took several years before I was able to reach that point on my own.

Initially, it was my interest in theory and the kinds of questions that theory raises--questions about authority, voice, audience, centrality and marginality, narrative structures, performance, point of view, among many others--as well as the interdisciplinary intersection of literary studies with history, anthropology, and other textual studies proposed by contemporary theoreticians,[3] that brought me full circle back to Aurelio Espinosa and his importance for cultural criticism, the study of American folklore, the American canon, and the study of Chicano literature. I pondered the task of evaluating this early Chicano scholar and determining his position within the field of Chicano studies. This task has taken me through a rereading of Espinosa's works, from his earliest studies on the Spanish language spoken in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado, published in 1909, to his collections of Spanish language ballads and folktales published in the later years of his career in the thirties and the forties.[4] It has also taken me through a reading of the work of several contemporary cultural critics who have assumed the task of reassessing the nature of cultural studies as well as the significance of the position

of the analyst.[5] My readings have finally led me to focus on the problem of the insider-outsider duality as it manifests itself in the work of Aurelio Espinosa and three other New Mexican writers.

But at the same time that I grappled with theoretical issues, I continued to have a very personal interest in Espinosa, augmented the more I learned about him. Who was Aurelio Espinosa? What kind of community produced this accomplished individual? What I found, rather than the story of a privileged member of some sort of New Mexican oligarchy determined to maintain an allegiance to the power structure, was a startling mirror image of those closest to me. Born in El Carnero, Colorado, in the year 1880, Espinosa was one of fourteen children in a family of meager resources. El Carnero is situated in the San Luis Valley, an expanse of arid, rocky land straddling the border of southern Colorado and northern New Mexico, and located at an altitude of 8,000 feet above sea level in the Rocky Mountains. It is one of the most picturesque sites in North America, offering breathtaking vistas of the Sangre de Cristo mountains on the east and the rugged San Juan mountains on the southwest. In some parts of the valley miles of blue-grey chamisa stretch as far as the eye can see, and just outside of Alamosa one can visit the largest sand dune national park in North America. Alamosa, one of the valley's principal towns, is also notable as often the coldest place in the continental United States during the winter months. Ironically, the valley's great natural beauty is the setting for one of the most impoverished areas of North America. Espinosa's home town was a tiny mountain village, where life is described by Espinosa's son José Manuel Espinosa, as "an isolated, rugged frontier existence."[6] Espinosa's parents, Celso and Rafaela Espinosa, were homesteaders who made their living through farming and sheep raising. Espinosa, like most boys of his community, spent his summers on the high mountain pastures herding sheep and living isolated for months at a time in the tents of the sheepherders' camp. But Celso Espinosa was also a school teacher, and Aurelio Espinosa's first school was that of his father, where the children were taught to read and write in both English and Spanish. So while Espinosa spent his boyhood herding sheep and subject to the hardships of that frontier existence, he was at the same time taught to value the world of the mind, and encouraged to look beyond his

immediate circumstances. But even as he looked to another way of life, he conserved the world of the Valley, engraving in his heart its oral traditions which gave voice to a people and its past.

He spent his formative years in a village in which the so-called ethnic minority was in fact the majority of the population. Settled in the seventeenth century, the San Luis Valley is one of the oldest Hispanic areas of the United States after the larger New Mexican area. The majority of the townspeople of El Carnero, and later, Del Norte, where Espinosa spent his youth, were the descendants of Spanish settlers who had travelled north from Mexico into New Mexico in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Spanish would have been the language of choice and of necessity for virtually everyone, regardless of ethnic background. In this setting, Hispanic people occupied all strata of the community, and Espinosa would have grown up taking Hispanic role models for granted. In spite of economic hardships, Espinosa was nevertheless encouraged and supported by his family in the pursuit of an education. In order that Espinosa and his older brother might attend the University of Colorado, their parents moved the family to Boulder, where Celso took a job as a janitor to support his family and to pay for his sons' tuition.

During Espinosa's years in Boulder, he attracted the attention of two of his professors as well as the president of the University of Colorado, who encouraged him to study and collect the oral tradition of his own community. In 1902, after receiving his Bachelor of Arts degree, he began his professional career as professor of modern langauges at the University of New Mexico. In 1904 he received his MA from the University of Colorado, and in 1907 he began a doctoral program at the University of Chicago, finishing the Ph.D. cum laude in 1909. His doctoral dissertation, "Studies in New Mexican Spanish", a study on Spanish-American dialectology was published in three parts between 1909 and 1914 in the *Revue de Dialectologie Romane*, and attracted the attention of several scholars in the United States and abroad, among them Professor Ford of Harvard University. Ford recommended him to Professor John Ernst Matske, then chair of the Romanic Languages department at Stanford University, who was looking for a bright young man to bring to this new

university barely 20 years old. Matske offered him a position and he joined Stanford in 1910, where he remained until he retired in 1946, making it his base of operations for his folklore field trips and research.

Espinosa was associated with some of the major intellectual figures of his time and his discipline. He met Ramón Menéndez Pidal in 1909 and they became lifelong friends and colleagues. After a folklore field trip to Spain in 1921, he presented Menendez Pidal with 200 versions of forty previously uncollected ballads which he had collected in Spain. These were presented in his name and in the name of the American Folklore Society. Menéndez Pidal may well have been instrumental in Espinosa's admission to the august *Real academia española de la lengua* (Royal Academy of the Spanish Language). In the Americas he corresponded frequently with Rodolfo Lenz, Julio Vicuña Cifuentes, and Ramón Laval, the pioneer folklorists in Chile, and with José María Chacón y Calvo, Fernando Ortíz, and Carolina Poncet in Cuba. He also worked closely with Northamerican anthropologists Franz Boas and Elsie Clews Parsons, and historian Herbert E. Bolton. He and Boas collaborated on studies of the influence of Hispanic folklore among the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and northeastern Arizona.

Much more may be said about Espinosa's achievements and the recognition he received from his fellow academics, both in his lifetime and following his death. But at this point I would like to turn back to one of my initial questions. What is the position of Aurelio Espinosa within the field of Chicano Studies? Can he in fact be regarded as a major Chicano linguist, as Eduardo Hernández Chávez would contend, or is he merely a "hispanophile," as Americo Paredes has labelled him.[7] Paredes' assessment of Espinosa seems justified in the face of so many of Espinosa's pronouncements concerning the Spanish origins of New Mexican folklore. Typical of these is the following passage written in 1914, "After I began publishing my New Mexican Spanish folk-lore material, some four years ago, I made the somewhat sweeping assertion that in my opinion most of the material was traditional, that is, Spanish. Further study has strengthened this opinion more and more. The traditional material--whether it be ballads, nursery rhymes, proverbs, riddles, folk-tales, or

what not--may have sometimes undergone some modifications and amplification, but it has survived; and not only has it survived, but it has remained practically untouched by foreign influences."[8] Perhaps even more troubling are Espinosa's assertions that the American Indians had contributed little or nothing to the New Mexican folk tradition; rather, that their cultures found themselves integrally affected, perhaps even improved by contact with Spanish-speaking peoples.[9] What are we as Chicano scholars to make of such observations? How do we reconcile ourselves with Espinosa and attempt to include him in our ranks?

In an effort to answer these questions we might turn to anthropologist Renato Rosaldo, who addresses questions of social analysis and the positioned subject in his recent work *Culture and Truth.*[10] In this book he points out that "Cultures and their positioned subjects are laced with power, and power in turn is shaped by cultural forms. Like form and feeling, culture and power are inextricably intertwined. In discussing forms of social knowledge, both of analysts and of human actors, one must consider their social positions." (169). Rosaldo speaks of the field-worker's double persona reflected in the term "participant observer" and he points out that ". . .the process of knowing involves the whole self. . . .The explicit recognition of multiple sources of knowledge in social analysis enables the social analyst to become a social critic." (181). Espinosa the social critic? Can such a thing even be implied? How can this man who has been widely regarded as the defender of a cultural elite, as a holdover from colonialism, even be viewed as anything short of a lackey to our oppressors? Perhaps the truth lies somewhere in the middle. E.P. Thompson, in *The Making of the English Working Class,* writes, "The notion of class entails the notion of historical relationship. Like any other relationship, it is a fluency which evades analysis if we attempt to stop it dead at any given moment and anatomise its structure." (9).[11] Espinosa's class position and class identity were anything but static. As a member of the Academy he certainly enjoyed some privilege, but this did not make him automatically a capitalist entrepreneur. His position as one who lived on the margins of culture and class are reflected in the intellectual choices which he made. His lifelong defense of the teaching of Spanish and the maintenance of bilingualism were certainly not calculated to win him

popularity in the Anglo-American community. Nor was his documentation of such folk plays as Los Tejanos, which presented an alternative history of New Mexican participation in the Civil War, with the New Mexican defeat of Texan invaders.[12]

In my attempts to come to terms with the apparent contradictions perceived in Espinosa's life and work, I remind myself of the importance of history, influenced by Renato Rosaldo's observation that "Work in cultural studies sees human worlds as constructed through historical and political processes, and not as brute timeless facts of nature." (39). [13] In focusing on Espinosa's historical context I turn to the concept of the indigenous ethnographer and her or his importance for cultural criticism, as well as the study of Chicana/o literature.

Because of my interest in analyzing the role of the ethnographer as both collector and creator of texts, and the ethnographer's relationship to those observed, I have come to see Aurelio Espinosa as an "indigenous ethnographer," a term taken up by James Clifford in his books *The Predicament of Culture* and *Writing Culture* in which he questions Western visions and practices. He points out: "A new figure is entering the scene, the 'indigenous ethnographer' (Fahim, ed. 1982; Ohnuki-Tierney 1984). Insiders studying their own cultures offer new angles of vision and depths of understanding. Their accounts are empowered and restricted in unique ways."[14] Clifford also points out that to a growing number of scholars, "the 'literariness' of anthropology --and especially of ethnography-- appears as much more than a matter of good writing or distinctive style. Literary processes--metaphor, figuration, narrative--affect the ways cultural phenomena are registered, from the first jotted 'observations,' to the completed book, to the ways these configurations 'make sense' in determined acts of reading."[15]

The work of ethnographers has traditionally observed certain conventions in the relationship between the observer and the observed. This relationship has usually been set in the framework of established oppositions. In the past the observer typically emerged from a powerful society; the observed from a weaker, often dependent society. The culture

of the observer was characterized as literate and complex, while that of the observed was often preliterate and to appearances simple. Often the ethnographer was white, of Western European descent, speaking an Indo-European language and setting out to observe members of a Third World, black or brown or red or yellow society, speakers of Hausa or Tamil or Quechua or Cree.[16] However, in more recent times, concurrent with what some have called the crisis of anthropology, this framework has changed. Those who were once limited to the role of the observed have increasingly joined the ranks of the observers, turning now to read with the insider's eye the text of their own society, and also to record and interpret that text for others. The once assumed notion of the other in the relationship between ethnographer and informant has been significantly altered.

In reflecting on Clifford's observations concerning the literariness of anthropology, one might also come to see literature and its creators as participants in an anthropological undertaking. This becomes even more plausible in the case of so-called minority or ethnic literatures, in which we find writers whose role comes to be that of ethnographer, one who not only creates a work of art, but also feels the need to serve as an intermediary between cultures, explaining each to the other.

Aurelio M. Espinosa presents an example of that marginalized figure, the indigenous ethnographer, the scholar who is at once both insider and outsider, yet never really fully one nor the other. The initial theoretical questions which occured to me in my reading of the work of Aurelio M. Espinosa, have evolved into the foundation for a long-term study on his life and work. In the course of considering the intersection of anthropology and literature at the heart of Espinosa's work, I began also to see the importance of reading his life and work as a text. As one of the earliest, if not the first North American-born Chicano Ph.D., he provides a case study of the evolution of Chicana/o scholarship. Seeing Espinosa as one utterance in Chicana/o discourse may permit the establishment of a paradigm of Chicana/o scholars. In the preface to his critical account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism, *The Prison House of Language*, Fredric Jameson writes

"The history of thought is the history of its models. . . which, first used to organize our understanding of the natural world, have then been called upon to illuminate human reality.

The lifetime of any given model knows a fairly predictable rhythm. Initially, the new concept . . . permits hosts of new perceptions and discoveries, which result in turn in a volume of new work and research. In the declining years of the model's history, a proportionately greater amount of time has to be spent in readjusting the model itself, in bringing it back in line with its object of study. Now research tends . . . to turn back upon . . . (the structure of the model itself)(p. v.).[17]

Like so many Chicanoa/os to follow this initiator of a scholarly tradition which would become an important component of Chicana/o studies, Espinosa had left his marginalized community to receive academic training at institutions of the dominant culture. His subsequent return to observe and collect the folklore of this same community, anticipated the kinds of theoretical problems which would come to be associated with critical changes in the structure of ethnographic research, as well as the kinds of problems which would be raised in the fields of critical theory and literary studies.

During his tenure at Stanford University, Espinosa's main fields of scholarly work were folklore and philology. While the direction of his life had taken him far from the San Luis Valley of his childhood, he would return many times to the Valley to collect the oral traditions of his people. This ethnographic work resulted in the completion of two volumes on the Spanish language spoken in New Mexico, *Estudios sobre el español de Nuevo Méjico*, published in Argentina, and a collection of New Mexican ballads, *Romancero de Nuevo Méjico*, published in Spain. He conducted field work in Spain, collecting folktales which he published in Spain under the title *Cuentos Españoles*, a compilation which even today remains a seminal work in Hispanic studies. He was also the author of more than twenty Spanish textbooks for high schools and colleges and more than 175 articles on philology, folklore, and literature.[18] In light of today's reemerging interest in the collection of previously undiscovered Chicano literary texts, the work of Espinosa is of significant importance. As Ernestina Eger points out in her *Bibliography of Criticism of Contemporary*

Chicano Literature (1982), "Critics now place increased emphasis on oral tradition...; Chicano literary historians continually discover and analyze previously unknown works and writers, revealing ever greater continuity between early and later literature." (p. xv).[19] Today such scholars as Luis Leal, Rosaura Sánchez, Francisco Lomelí, Ernestina Eger, Clara Lomás, Tey Diana Rebolledo, Genaro Padilla and Luis Torres are delving into archives, studing Spanish language newpapers, and attempting to record a disappearing oral tradition. Espinosa was a forerunner of this kind of scholarship, working at a time when there was very little, if any precedent for his endeavors.

While he certainly possessed an insider's knowledge of the way meaning is encoded in the villages of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado, Espinosa was nevertheless integrally affected by his training and formation within an institution of the dominant culture, as well as by the training he received in Spain, and he surely internalized the ways of seeing and encoding inherent in his reception of the European tradition. How this may have affected his vision and understanding of his own culture upon his return to the community in the guise of ethnographer, and how a changed vision may have affected and/or shaped the texts which he both compiled and re-encoded are questions which may remain ultimately unanswerable, but are nevertheless relevant in the construction of a paradigm for Chicana/o scholarship.

How did Espinosa view himself in relation to his community and informants? An observer now as well as observed, and certainly affected by the influence of the dominant culture in his formation and training as a "scientific scholar," he returned to his native community to collect folklore and to make evaluative observations of the members and customs of these communities. At the same time, he appears to have adopted a position of relative exteriority vis-à-vis his community. Espinosa in his essay "La ciencia del folklore," published in Havana, Cuba in 1929, defines folklore as "la expresión directa y verdadera de la psicología del hombre primitivo," "the direct and true expression of the psychology of primitive man," and seems to define his mission of ethnographer as the provision of tools leading to an understanding of the primitive mind.[20] Espinosa

recognized his marginal position between cultures, acting as interpreter, decoding and reencoding the oral traditions of his own community. By virtue of his training and acculturation he served as an intermediary between communities, explaining each to the other. Yet also by virtue of his training in institutions of the dominant culture he remained what Genaro Padilla calls "prisoners of discourse".[21] His ideological position was informed by the discursive tradition of his discipline and came to play an important role in his work. The need to trace southwestern Spanish language folk culture directly back to Spain gave direction to much of his work. Ultimately, I come back to the contradictions impicit in his work. How do I read Espinosa? I may read him as a reader and transcriber of texts, whose example can help illuminate our readings of contemporary texts, and just as important, our understanding of our own textbuilders, bearing in mind the importance of ethnicity and class. And always, I face the task of responding to the contradictions which have plagued my reading of Espinosa and so often made me uncomfortable with him.

I have not been alone in my discomfort. In recent years several critics have commented disapprovingly on Espinosa and his work, seeing him as overly conservative and reactionary. They point to his insistence on the Spanish origins of Hispanic American culture as a betrayal of the mestizo, a desire to associate himself only with the Anglo-American conquerors, based on a common European heritage. In the introduction to the 1977 *Hispanic Folktales from New Mexico* edited by Stanley Robe, he comments on the "steadfastly Spanish outlook" of Espinosa's work, and goes on to say that "There is a constant identification of New Mexico with Spain in the comparison and analysis of the tales and even in the wording of the titles of their published collections. . . . and one could almost gain the impression that the New Mexican colonists proceeded directly from Spain to their new home in America without stopping in Mexico."[22] In his article "The Folk Base of Chicano Literature," published in a 1979 collection of critical essays entitled *Modern Chicano Writers,* Américo Paredes, a folklorist from UT Austin, classifies Espinosa as a "Hispanophile," and attributes to him the view that "while folklore of Spanish origin in the United States has its sources in colonial Mexico, this folklore reached the Southwestern United States long ago, when Mexico

was New Spain, centuries before modern Mexico was formed. The Spanish folklore of the United States is thus superior to that of Mexico, not only because it is criollo (Spanish-American) with impeccable colonial credentials, but also because it represents survivals of ancient and valuable European forms. " (p. 5)[23] In a paper given at a conference of the National Association of Chicano Studies, José Limón, an anthropologist and disciple of Paredes, invests considerable energy into using Hayden White's work on the theory of tropes and historical discourse, articulated in a collection of essays, *The Tropics of Discourse*, to contend "that Espinosa's work is meta-informed by a metaphorical-tropical apprehension of the folkloric field and a latent interpretation that is formist in its mode of argumentation, romantic in its emplotment, and conservative in its ideological implication."[24] Yet another scholar, anthropologist Charles Briggs, in a 1988 study, "The Creativity of Tradition in Mexicano Verbal Art" in his book *Competence in Performance*, asserts that Espinosa's conclusion regarding the identification of the New Mexican Spanish folklore material with the Spanish tradition "constitutes a blatant denial that New Mexican folklore bears any significant relationship to history, thus negating the possibility of studying the way that folklore can enable dominated groups to articulate their own history, let alone to change it." (p. 371)[25]

In reflecting on the ideological problems raised by Espinosa's work, we must first of all bear in mind the fact that he began his career at the turn of the century, working virtually alone in a field that was regarded as having little or no value by the dominant culture. Far from denying the relationship of folklore to history, Espinosa proclaims in an essay published in Havana in 1929 entitled "La ciencia del folklore,"

Y en el campo de la historia, ¿qué importancia tiene el folklore? La historia, los materiales que los historiadores y cronistas nos han documentado a través de las edades, viene a ser en general solamente la historia de algunas naciones o pueblos que han logrado dominar a los demás, la historia política de ciertos monarchas y de su familia. Muy poco nos han dicho los historiadores de la vida del campo, de la vida individual, colectiva y religiosa de los pueblos. El estudio de la vida de las gentes, de su modo de pensar, de su arte, de sus creencias y prácticas, es una cosa nueva en el campo histórico. Y el resultado es que la historia, para ser

historia verdadera, tiene que valerse de otras ciencias auxiliares y entre ellas de la ciencia del folklore.

And in the field of history, what importance does folklore have? History, the materials documented for us by historians and chroniclers over the ages, generally adds up solely to the history of a few nations or peoples who have managed to dominate others, the history of certain monarchs and their families. Historians have told us very little about the life of the countryside, of the individual, collective and religious life of the people. The study of people's lives, of their way of thinking, of their art, of their beliefs and practices, is a novelty in the field of history. And the result is that history, in order to be true history, must avail itself of other auxiliary sciences and among them the science of folklore.[26]

But in spite of his consciousness of the problem of history, he was at the same time bound by the constraints of hegemonic discourse. His attention to the Spanish origins of New Mexican Spanish folklore was entirely congruent with a world three-quarters of which was still under colonial rule. To expect a different perspective would be unreasonable and ahistorical. Espinosa's colleagues and mentors--Franz Boas, Charles Lummis, Elsie Clews Parsons, C. Marius Barbeau, among others, were equally convinced of the need to conserve the heritage of European culture in American folklore. Barbeau, in an article entitled "The Field of European Folk-Lore in America" published in the *Journal of American Folklore* in 1920, writes: "The need felt by many ethnologists of disentangling their interwoven European and Indian data, in order to arrive at safer historic deductions, has recently developed in them a genuine interest in the study of the European primary sources. The gathering of Spanish, French, and African traditions by members of our Society since 1913 are largely due to the sound policy of Dr. Boas, our editor. ...If we should fail to secure for posterity the ancient documents left to our care, a permanent and heavy loss for European history will inevitably result. " (JAFL, vol. 32, pp. 192-193).[27] In order to succeed in an academy that knew no Ford Fellowships for minority students, or Rockefeller post-docs, in which the importance of cultural diversity probably would have meant the value of a summer in Rome, Espinosa was constrained by the priorities of the institution, much in many of the same ways that we today find ourselves constrained.

But if he recognized the need to succeed in the academy on the academy's terms, his class formation in the San Luis Valley was never erased. While his gaze toward Spain might be interpreted by some as a loyalty to European colonizers whose culture he found superior, I suggest that one might read it as a manifestation of his opposition, not to Mexican culture per se, but to Mexico as yet another colonial power. His emphasis on Spain reveals an equal, if not greater opposition to gringo invaders whose presence in New Mexico had also come to represent a new colonialism for New Mexicans. Therefore, his resistance within the confines of the academy took several forms. One form was his persistance in collecting the tradition of a people many might have viewed as a people without a legitimate culture. In reflecting on the charges of class and ethnic bias which have been leveled at Espinosa, claiming that he denied his Mexican identity, one must turn to the history of New Mexico (of which Southern Colorado is a cultural part, settled as it was by New Mexicans), and understand that New Mexican settlers realized no great benefits from the Mexican government during its domain over *las provincias internas*, as the northern territories were known. New Mexicans lived in prototypical colonial relations with Mexico, and many were eager to break away from Mexico to form an independant republic. They saw themselves as separate from Mexico, with their own traditions, developed over years of isolation and neglect.[28]

At the same time, New Mexicans were under assault from an influx of Anglo American settlers and traders, who despite certain threats they posed, nevertheless offered what appeared to be more equitable economic dealings. In spite of this ostensible material benefit, the primacy of the Spanish language was certainly emperiled from 1848 on, representing a threat to traditional New Mexican culture. Espinosa recognized the identification of language with culture. Consequently his insistence on the importance of the Spanish roots of New Mexican culture may be read as a resistance to racism and cultural imperialism. His cultural resistance also took the form of years of dedication to the advancement of the teaching of the Spanish language in public schools, colleges and universities. This at a time when the Black Legend still enjoyed credence and Spanish was considered by many to be a language unworthy of the

company of Latin, Greek, or French.[29]

In reflecting on the historical framework of Espinosa's life and work, it is important to understand the academic environment which awaited him when he came to Stanford in 1910. He discovered an academic hierarchy dominated by Europeans, primarily Germans and French. The chairman of virtually every department was of German ethnicity.[30] In a system which valued German and French studies much more highly than Hispanic studies, not to mention Latin American studies, a concept inconceivable at the time, he was slated to wage a long battle. For years he fought to promote the study of the Spanish language and Hispanic culture, in opposition to the existing norms at Stanford. He found himself in conflict with other faculty members, often engaging in verbal battles and even at times throwing oppenents out of his office. He has been described by his son, Aurelio M. Espinosa, Jr., as a real fighter, and a campus activist comparable to those of the modern Chicano movement. Nor was this sense of having to claim his rightful place limited to the campus. Aurelio Jr. relates an incident involving a well-intentioned neighbor woman who came over to the house shortly after Espinosa arrived at Stanford. She offered to help "Americanize" his wife Margarita. One can easily imagine Margarita's reaction, considering that her family had been in the southwest for hundreds of years. Margarita's response was to firmly request that the neighbor leave her house and not return.[31]

Espinosa's campus activism continued until 1928. However, in that year he received a crushing blow from which he was never to recover. He and Margarita lost one of their daughters to tuberculosis. At the age of sixteen, she spent a year in the sanatorium before dying. Espinosa visited her daily, keeping a vigil at her bedside, praying for her recovery which was not to be. He is described by his son Aurelio has having been broken by her death, never fully recovering from this loss, and he appears to have lost the spirit to continue his battles in the professional arena. At this point he became increasingly conservative and turned to the Church as a source of consolation and inspiration, not a surprising move in view of his upbringing and the importance of Catholocism to his community. He became increasingly involved in religious activities, lending his support in

particular to the establishment of institutions for the education of women. His allegiance to the Church created in him a strong aversion to the Communist regimes which he viewed as oppressive to the freedom of religious belief, and he was horrified by the measures taken by these governments in their efforts to obliterate the "opiate of the masses." His oppositon to Communism soon translated into an opposition to the Spanish republicans, because of their socialist and communist agenda. However, he was not, contrary to what many believed, a supporter of Franco; rather, he was committed to his opposition to any repression of freedom of religious practices. This opposition extended to Hitler and Mussolini as well. While he felt real love for Franco, he saw himself compromised by the Spanish republicans' ties with communist and socialist agendas and believed he had no choice but to stand against them. He was motivated by a need to stand in defense of the Church, which, as a Spanish political institution, had allied itself with Franco. Consequently his was always an uneasy position. He lost many friends as a result of the stance he took, but was remained firm in what he saw to be a defense of freedom of religion.

Part of our work as the generations to succeed Espinosa consists of examining the model which he presented and represented, contradictions and all. To dismiss Espinosa out of hand would be a sorry intellectual loss for our community. While many have briefly recognized Espinosa's important achievements and contributions to American culture,[32] no one to my knowledge has adopted a critical stance and attempted an extensive study of the man as a forerunner of contemporary Chicano scholarship. I view such a project as the possibility to make a significant contribution to both the fields of ethnic studies and of critical theory. It will lead to another understanding of a principal figure in Hispanic scholarship, a renewed appreciation of the Chicano oral tradition and its incorporation into the printed literary tradition, and it represents an addition to the growing body of theoretical work in cultural studies.

This book attempts to incorporate biographical and critical considerations of the life and work of Aurelio Espinosa as a marginalized figure, with a discussion of the significance of the New Mexican tradition for later New

Mexican writers. Chapter one presents an overview of studies on the intersection of literature and anthropology, focussing on the reading of ethnic literature as ethnographic texts. Chapter two continues and expands my discussion of Aurelio Espinosa, examining his work as a folklorist and philologist, and his influence on the study of the Spanish-language oral tradition of the American southwest, positing Espinosa as the initiator of a paradigm for Chicana/o studies. In chapter three, I reflect on the particularities of New Mexican history, the nature of the Indo-Hispano community which has evolved there since 1592, and in particular its experience as a *provincia interna* and its relationship with Mexico. Chapter four introduces a discussion of religion, specifically sycretic catholicism, and the New Mexican tradition; this chapter also embarks on a study of religious meaning in daily life, involving *lo real maravilloso*, as opposed to some outsiders' depiction of a New Mexican magical reality. It continues with an overview of the *penitente* tradition, and the significance of New Mexican religious beliefs for the maintenance and evolution of the New Mexican *teatro.* Chapter five analyses the implications of Espinosa's work on the New Mexican folk tradition for later 20th century New Mexican marginalized figures, writers who are at once both insiders and outsiders. Examples of such figures can be found throughout the history of Chicana/o literature in general and New Mexican literature in particular. For the purposes of this discussion I have selected the works of Rudolfo A. Anaya, Ana Castillo, Denise Chávez and Fray Angélico Chávez. Each of these writers attempts, in different ways, to explain the traditions and the conditions of nuevomexicano life. Each establishes herself or himself as playing a role in cultural resistance as well as cultural preservation. Chapter five culminates with the definition of a New Mexican poetics, based on the study of representative New Mexican writers.

I feel confident that I occupy a unique position for this project, given both my academic preparation and my status as an Espinosa family member and a *nuevomexicana*. In a sense I become the indigenous ethnographer here, a factor which certainly enters into my deliberations. Because of my commitment to the teaching of Chicano literature, one of the purposes of this work is its potential influence in revising notions of the American

literary canon, reflected in curricular development and design. The Hispanic American poetic tradition studied and collected by Espinosa is highly appropriate course material for undergraduate ethnic literature courses, and my theoretical research on the relationships between language and culture, between the observer and the observed, and between anthropology and literature could be incorporated into the studies of critical theory, at both the graduate and the undergraduate levels. This project might also lead to the development of graduate seminars on folklore, focussing on the Hispanic American oral tradition, and on comparative studies of both the African American and the Hispanic American oral traditions. These are certainly areas of great relevance in our efforts to develop a curriculum reflecting the cultural diversity of the United States. Students taking these courses will be introduced to material at best marginally presented in other English courses, and will come to understand the significance of these traditions as important components of American culture.

ENDNOTES

[1] For the most comprehensive study of Espinosa's life and work to date, see *The Folklore of Spain in the American Southwest: Traditional Spanish Folk Literature in Northern New Mexico and Southern Colorado*, by Aurelio M. Espinosa, edited by J. Manuel Espinosa. University of Oklahoma Press, 1985.

[2] Joseph Sommers, with Antonia Castañeda Shular and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, edited one of the earliest anthologies of Chicana/o literature, *Literatura Chicana: texto y contexto*, Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1972.

[3] For example, Edward Said, James Clifford, Stuart Hall, Renato Rosaldo, Mary Louise Pratt, Talal Asad, Michel de Certeau, Clifford Geertz, among others.

[4] For a complete bibliography of Espinosa's publications, see*The Folklore of Spain in the American Southwest*, op. cit.

[5] See Renato Rosaldo's *Culture and Truth: the Remaking of Social Analysis*, Beacon Press, 1989.

[6] Espinosa, op. cit., p. 12.

[7] Americo Paredes, "The Folk Base of Chicano Literature," in *Modern Chicano Writers*, edited by Joseph Sommers and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1979, p. 5.

[8] Aurelio M. Espinosa, "Comparative Notes on New-Mexican and Mexican Spanish Folk-Tales," in *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. XXVII, p. 211.

[9] ibid.

[10] op. cit.

[11] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 9.

[12] "Los Tejaños: A New Mexican Spanish Popular Dramatic Composition of the Middle of the Nineteenth Century" by Aurelio M. Espinosa and José

Manuel Espinosa, in *Hispania*, October, 1944, pp. 291-314.

[13] op. cit.

[14] James Clifford, *Writing Culture*, University of California Press, 1986, p. 9.

[15] ibid. p. 4.

[16] See Miles Richardson, "anthropologist--the myth teller" in *American Ethnologist*, No. 2., pp. 517-533, 1975.

[17] Frederic Jameson, *The Prison House of Language*, Princeton University Press, 1972, p. v.

[18] For complete bibiliographic listings see *The Folklore of Spain in the American Southwest*, op. cit.

[19] Ernestina Eger, *Bibliography of Criticism of Contemporary Chicano Literature*, 1982, p. xv.

[20] Aurelio M. Espinosa, "La ciencia del folklore," in *Archivos del Folklore*, Vol. III, no. 4, Editorial Cultural, S.A., La Habana, Cuba, 1929, p. 16.

[21] Genaro M. Padilla, "Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Cultural Autobiography as Resistance in Cleofas Jaramillo's *Romance of a Little Village Girl*" in *My History, Not Yours: The Formation of Mexican American Autobiography*, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993, pp.196-227.

[22] Stanley L. Robe, *Hispanic Folktales from New Mexico,* in *Folklore Studies: 30*, University of California Press, 1977, p. 8.

[23] Americo Paredes, op. cit. p. 5.

[24] José E. Limón, "Mexicans in the Southwest: The Tropics of Folkloristic Discourse," an unpublished address presented at the 1989 National Association of Chicano Studies Conference, p. 8.

[25] Charles L. Briggs, *Competence in Performance: The Creativity of Tradition in Mexicano Verbal Art*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988,

p. 371.

[26] Espinosa, op. cit. pp. 9-10.

[27] C.M. Barbeau, "The Field of European Folk-lore in America," in *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 32, 1920, pp.192-193.

[28] see Carlos G. Vélez-Ibáñez, *Border Visions of One World: An Anthropology of U.S. Mexicans of the Southwest*, forthcoming from the University of Arizona Press, esp. pp. 41-48 of chapter two, "The Second Settlers: The Creation of Hispano/Mexicano Communities, the American *Entrada* and its Aftermath."

[29] See Raymund A. Paredes, "The Origins of Anti-Mexican Sentiment in the United States," in *New Scholar*, Vol. 6, 1977, University of California at San Diego, pp. 138-165.

[30] From a personal interview with Aurelio M. Espinosa, Jr., May, 1994, in Stanford, California.

[31] ibid.

[32] see above references, esp. Robe, Briggs, and Padilla.