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New Mexican Narratives and the Politics of Home

Elizabeth Jacobs

The Chicano critic Genaro Padilla states that within the tradition of writing from New Mexico the experiential and discursive network of the Spanish colonial imaginary continues to effect the orientation of conceptions of self and home towards time past (Padilla 31-32). Certainly New Mexico was one of the primary arenas in which the Hispanos first achieved an authoritative sense of self and home in America. Yet the argument that texts dating from Spanish colonisation function as 'genealogically re-empowering narrative[s]' is problematic in the light of recent trends within New Mexico's literary practice (29). Rather than seeking to recover a legitimating relation between themselves and a discourse of possession and domination from the past, it is my contention that contemporary Chicana writing in fact runs counter to this tradition.

New Mexico first acquired its identity as the home of Spanish American culture in the sixteenth century. It was then that imperial Spain conquered and claimed the territory and consolidated its power through an ideology structured around a rigorous system of racial, cultural and social classification (Gutiérrez 82). The diaries, (*diario*s) narratives, (*derrotero*s) and chronicles (*crónica*s) dating from this time substantiate this claim. Pedro de Castañeda's narrative, *Relación de la jornada de Cíbola conpuesta por Pedro de Castañeda de Nájera,* (1542) which details Francisco Vásquez de Coronado's massive exploration of New Mexico, records the establishment of a Spanish homeland through a discourse that "others" indigenous people. They are represented in ways that dehumanise and delegitimize their native social and cultural practices (Herrera-Sobek xxi). The description of the Pueblos given by one of Coronado's party reveals their disappointment at not finding cities of gold but Indian houses that are "stone and mud, rudely fashioned"(Hine and Faragher 5). Lacking European material systems of classification moreover there are also no 'principal houses by which any superiority over others could be shown' (6).

This kind of hierarchical categorization is also reflected in other colonial narratives produced at this time. Gaspar Pérez de Villagrá's *Historia de la Nueva México* (1610) similarly records the superiority of the *conquistadores* and their defeat of an alien "other." In the final cantos of the epic Villagrá details the conquest of the Acoma Pueblo situated on a high mesa, in terms that authorize the brutalities: '*Dime sobervia infame como ygualas. /Si como Luzbel quiere lebantarse, /Y el govierno de todo atribuirse.'* "Behold here this untutored barbarian born of ignoble savages /who like Lucifer Seeks /to reach such heights of power " (Lamadrid 165). Villagrá's representation of the Indians as demonised "other" hints at the later consolidation of Spanish imperialism, which occurred through the Franciscan missionaries and their efforts to convert the region to the Catholic faith (Hine and Faragher 34). Furthermore at that time and contrary to Spanish custom, the Pueblos also endorsed a matriarchy "with women exercising complete control over their households, sexuality and

choice of partner" (34). This was similarly incompatible with the ideology of Spanish Catholicism and the patriarchal family and over the course of time its dogma conversely affected the indigenous celebration of the mother's lineage and women's power within the home.

These kinds of colonial relationships were not restricted to Spanish colonisation alone of course but are also reflected in other colonial encounters that occurred at this time. The French incursions into Canada during the sixteenth century were marked by a similar treatment of native peoples, and many communities and settlements either disappeared or were radically altered by European settlement and Catholic conversion (Hine and Faragher 43-44). By the eighteenth century the territory that comprised New France in fact was comparable with was that of New Spain (48). In their northern colonies the English also carried out similar policies for claiming land with brutal precision and tragic consequences for the native inhabitants. Indeed it is fair to say, as Hine and Faragher argue, "the colonial period of North American history was marked by a series of bloody wars involving French, Spanish and English colonists, punctuated by periods of armed and uneasy peace" (80).

Yet Padilla argues that "the intra cultural collective memory" from this time continues to persist in exerting a formative role on contemporary Chicano literary expressions (31). As he goes on to state, its "experiential and discursive network":

> branches and imbricates, sustains itself but also exhausts certain practices at one historical juncture only to recover some approximate practice at other junctures, crosscuts, jumps between genres, or borrows forms and filters historically dissonant articulation through them, disappears, and then arches from one necessary discursive moment to another (31).

Similar ideas of cultural origins and collective memory also lent a sense of pride and legitimacy to Chicano Movement writings, activism and issues of identity during the 1960s. It was during *el movimiento* that Reies López Tijerina founded and directed New Mexico's *Alianza de los Pueblos Libres* "The Alliance of Free City States" and the *Alianza Federal de Mercedes,* later renamed *La Confederación de Pueblos Libres,* in order to re-instate land grants and property entitlements dating from the colonial authority of the Spanish crown. Tracing a direct lineage back to these times, many New Mexican residents legitimated their claims to land through their Spanish forbears. According to tradition certain "ancestral holdings" had originally been awarded to communities or to single people so that "a man had his private home and a narrow rectangular plot which usually gave him access to river water" (Chávez 138). Calling for a stricter adherence to the civil and property rights promised by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) Tijerina aimed to continue these traditions.

Despite basing his claims on the failure of the Treaty to recognise these rights of land ownership, Tijerina's seven-year crusade to reclaim Hispanic land ultimately proved unfeasible and problematic. In literary terms the positing of a master narrative derived from the colonial model also poses difficulties. In reconnecting to the texts of Castañeda and Villagrá, Padilla's argument implicitly constructs "home" as an imperialising and blatantly masculine enterprise. It is my contention that recent Chicana narrative problematises this assertion and, as I go on to show, instead forms a politics of relocation that presents a shift in relation to the colonial project.

By the late seventeenth century a series of reconquests had re-established colonial control in New Spain's northern frontier (Gonzales 38). Indian communities had settlements in the areas between the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific Ocean but Spanish settlers took possession of these lands in grants made by the Spanish crown according to a perceived divine right. This established the area as the northern frontier of New Spain and then of Mexico after its war of independence in 1810, although it would not be until 1821 that Mexico finally gained independence from Spanish authority. The complex series of revolts, rebellions and racial clashes which followed culminated in the U.S.-Mexican war of 1848 when New Mexico along with other formally northern Mexican territories were ceded to the United States. A number of Chicano critics allude to the Mexican American war as being instrumental in the break with colonial literary models and the subsequent formation of an independent Mexican American sensibility in Chicana/o literature (Padilla *My History* 14). Padilla himself acknowledges that a Mexican American literary formation begins with "the American violence that ripped the Mexican map in *Tejas* in 1836 ... and then completely blanched the geography of northern Mexico in 1846-1848" (14). Yet despite this radical break with the imperial precursor, he continues to trace a substantial presence derived from the colonial model into twentieth century New Mexican literary discourse. The main thrust of his argument engages with the well-documented contention that when faced with a threat to their social standing and sense of self the Hispanos of New Mexico repeatedly return to their oldest identity as Spaniards or Spanish Americans as symbolic acts of resistance (Gutiérrez 90).

Certainly compared to other states such as Texas and California, New Mexico had experienced a much longer period as part of New Spain. From colonisation and the founding of Sante Fe in 1610 to New Mexican statehood in 1912 comprises some three hundred and twenty years. The relatively brief period when New Mexico was part of the Mexican nation, after independence from Spain in 1821 to conquest by the United States in 1846 was only twenty-five years. The logical outcome of these longer periods of time spent under Spanish rule encouraged*Hispanicisation* and the rejection of miscegenate identities. At the time of independence from Spain in 1821, the population of New Mexico was approximately half *mestizo* yet most denied their *Indio* heritage and considered themselves to be *Hispano* or Spanish American. This impulse was reinforced throughout the nineteenth century when "the ethnic confrontations created by the Texas Revolution, the US- Mexican war, the Gold Rush and large scale immigration' meant that the Hispanos of New Mexico began to emphasise their Hispanicity in an attempt to thwart anti-Mexican sentiment as well as Anglo assimilation" (Gutiérrez 97).

In literary terms, the accelerating shifts from Hispano to Anglo control throughout the twentieth century meant that a retrogressive but resistant discursive formation became particularly dominant, and many of the narratives of *nuevomexicana*/*os* continued to foreground the Spanish colonial past as a vital element in their construction of self and home. Thematically Cleofas Jaramillo's retrospective text *Romance of a Little Village Girl* (1955) begins this way:

> Intrepid *Cortez* (1520), *Coronado* (1540) and *Oñate* (1598) and brave *Vargas* (1692) ... they brought with them colonists and missionary priests. Toiling and suffering under untold hardships, they penetrated through mountain passes, across vast prairies, conquering savage Indian tribes and establishing settlements in the wilderness ... [they]

> ... helped carry the faith and culture of old Spain into these remote worlds (Jaramillo 2).

Arguably what is most surprising in this passage is the open admiration shown for the colonizer at the expense of and in relation to the colonised. The Spanish civilisers are clearly defined against Indian savages and are associated with religion, faith and culture, while the Indians are all classed as savage, godless and unsocialised. The passage thus has points of contact with earlier colonial narrative in that it reinforces the conquest hierarchy of the coloniser as superior and the colonised as inferior. Its military aspect further consolidates this rhetoric. According to Jaramillo's account the *conquistadores* "penetrated through mountain passes, across vast prairies, conquering savage Indian tribes" (Jaramillo 2). Much of the association between the male *conquistadores* and feminised land then is sexualised and misogynistic, suggesting a violent relationship predicated on unequal power relations. In claiming a genealogy dating back to this time, Jaramillo constructs a version of home that replicates this tendency, and the colonial tradition of being pro-European and anti-Indian remains deeply ingrained.

This particular discursive formation can also be traced in the work of Cleofas Jaramillo's contemporary Fabiola Cabeza de Baca. The detailed mapping of the "staked plains" of north-eastern New Mexico, the *Llano Estacado,* which begins de Baca's novel *We Fed Them Cactus,*(1954) has a clear resonance with that of earlier colonial narrative:

> The llano is a great plateau. Its sixty thousand square miles tip almost imperceptibly from fifty-five hundred feet above sea level in Northwest New Mexico, to two thousand feet in Northwest Texas ... As one descends Cañon del Agua Hill from Las Vegas, a great stretch of country greets the sight... the *Montos*o wooded land ... Conchas Mesa, Corazón and Cuervo peaks, the Variadero Tableland, travelling on ... one reaches Cabra Spring, after passing Cabra Spring one comes in view of the Luciano and Palomas mesas, Cuervo Hill and in the distance Pintada Mesa (de Baca 1-3).

Clearly, as in Jaramillo's account, on the one hand the descriptions and naming of the Spanish language geography do implicitly disclose the sense of disempowerment in which the twentieth century Hispanos found themselves (Padilla 29). Yet on the other hand the *llano* is a space over which Cabeza de Baca has a particular kind of panoptic vision and in this sense the descriptions also clearly resonate with a nostalgic tone for a colonising culture. Renato Rosaldo famously discusses this tendency and argues that people often "mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed"(Rosaldo 71), and to a certain extent Cabeza de Baca creates a similarly nostalgic version of events.

The narrative of *We Fed Them Cactus* recalls the arrival of Hispanic pioneers to the *Llano Estacado* in the 1830s and their gradual establishment of ranches and communities. It then goes on to outline the ways in which this society was undermined first of all by the Mexican American war, then by the arrival of the railroads, Anglo settlers and homesteaders in the 1880s. Finally it records the complete loss of Hispano land to Anglo America by the 1940s. The series of events that bring about this situation are presented in ways that critique the dissolution of Hispanicity by Anglo forces. Yet Cabeza de Baca responds to this by emphasising the Spanish and de-emphasising the Mexican and *mestizo* heritage. The ethnic and inter-ethnic relations reconstructed in the text reflect this perspective. For instance it is obvious from Cabeza de Baca's account that the Hispanos of New Mexico did not live in isolation. At that time as Gonzales argues, there were complex economic, cultural and racial

relationships between Native Americans and Anglo Americans, both of which in turn exerted a considerable influence on their Hispanic neighbours (99). Gonzales goes on to point out that surrounding the Hispanic settlements in New Mexico were numerous Indian pueblos and tribes, including 'Utes and Navajo to the northwest, the Jicarilla Apache to the north, the Comanche to the east, the Mescalero Apache to the south, and the Chiricahua and Western Apache to the southwest' (100). Yet their presence is only ever mentioned by de Baca obliquely and then only in terms of the unequal relationships between the Indians and the *rancho* elite.

One important way this kind of information is transmitted is through different narratives that occur throughout de Baca's text. During El Cuate's "the twin's", *recuerdos* or storytelling, he recounts his and other *ciboleros* "buffalo hunters" relations with the Comanches. These he states were always "friendly" and had been so "for more than a century" (de Baca 47). From his perspective it was the Anglos who the Comanches most resented and not the Hispanos, mainly because of the movement of Anglo-owned cattle onto Indian land. According to El Cuate's narrative, "stealing cattle was the means of revenge which the Indians used against the cattle owners," the stolen livestock in turn became the means by which the Comanches traded with the Hispanos and their *comancheros* "Indian traders" (48). Yet these economic relations were not as idyllic as El Cuate's narrative suggests. Internal divisions developed out of conflicting economic and political agendas. Gonzales argues that the elite New Mexican *patrones* looked upon both the *comancheros* "Indian traders" and the Comanches as common cattle thieves and relations between them were often strained and antagonistic (100). Likewise, although American cattle barons ultimately made most profit out of these systems of exchange, the Hispano population nonetheless benefited and the Indians did so the least:

> The *Americanos* around us were the real racketeers in the business. They did the buying from us, then they would drive the loot to Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, or to California where they sold it at great profit …The American government kept on the trail of the Comanches, but often the officers who were sent out to stop the illicit trade found it profitable to engage in it themselves … the Comanches were finally rounded up by the military government [and] were put on reservations (49).

In these ways the unequal ethnic and class relations of the Spanish *hacienda* society surface in the text. Earlier during the Mexican period the growing affluence of the region had created a significant stratification between those who accumulated wealth and those that could not. By the time of American occupation *Hispano* society tended to break down into two fairly rigid classes, the *ricos* "rich" and the *pobres* "poor" (Gonzales 99). At the top of the social hierarchy were the *ricos*, a small number of families who monopolised the pastoral and mercantile life of the province. Beneath the elite were the *pobres* who were predominantly *mestizos*, below them were the *genízaros* and Pueblos Indians who had the lowest social status of all. Cabeza de Baca states she was not of the poor *mestizo* or *genízaro* classes, but was part of "the landed gentry, in whose veins ran the noble blood of ancestors who left ... Spain, for the New World" (53). Raymund Paredes has analysed this literary tendency and has accused de Baca and her contemporaries of displaying a "hacienda mentality" (Rebolledo and Rivero 37). Certainly the spatial descriptions of de Baca's *rancho* home represent these class and race distinctions and echo on a micro-political level the mapping of the *llano* during the opening pages of the text:

> We had pine floors in the front room and dining room. The *despensa* occupied the space of 12 hundred square feet. This room served as a storeroom, summer kitchen and

> sleeping quarters for stray cowboys. All the rooms were spacious...we had Papa's big desk in the front room and dozens of chairs with wide arms. Over the mantel in the dining room hung a large antique mirror (9-10).

Yet within some family spaces restructuring also produced different roles for women and out of these roles new constructions of feminine identity arose. This is clearly reflected in the text and Cabeza de Baca does actively include women's "great part in the history of the land" (59). In this sense as Tey Diana Rebolledo argues, we should reframe our understanding of the "hacienda mentality" when considering the works of these writers (209). Not only did they face strong stereotyping tendencies from the Anglo American community, but were also constrained by Hispano society and codes of conduct, all of which militated against women's independence, educational opportunities and literary expression (Rebolledo and Rivero 37-38). In this sense it is hardly surprising that de Baca's representations of women by and large reproduce traditional stereotypes and divisions of labour.

This can be clearly seen as much of the text is spent in detailing the organisation of the *rancho* around her father's role as the *patrone* and head of household, supported by his male employees, the *mayordomo*, the *caporales* and the countless *vaqueros*. This kind of hierarchical authority not only explicitly promotes a sense of home that is organised along rigidly authoritarian and patriarchal lines, but its gendered ideology also circumscribes the female subjects of the text. A clear example of this can be seen in the author's own role in the hacienda society. As her mother died when she was young, Cabeza de Baca takes on the role of *patrona*, a role that has existed since the first incursions into New Mexico in the sixteenth century. Yet on closer reading this role also conforms to recent definitions of women's ambiguous positioning within colonial society (Stoler 344). Clearly enjoying the power afforded them through their social position on the one hand, women such as de Baca were also just as clearly part of the patriarchal ideology entrenched within *hacienda* society. As a consequence women's subordination to paternalistic family structures are naturalised and accepted in the narrative, often leaving the unequal relationships between genders unquestioned and intact. At an ideological level this works to sustain the division of labour reinforcing the sense of an unproblematic and apparently fixed ideal of women's roles and their duties within the domestic sphere.

Additionally, historically within Hispano society women's place was confined to the home, this was not only required by the church but was also intended to ensure the purity of Spanish blood. Confronted by the legacy of such profoundly rigid restrictions on their domestic, economic and political options, de Baca's female characters obviously display a specific set of socially and culturally constructed "feminine" values:

> Without the guidance and comfort of the wives and mothers, life on the *llano* would have been unbearable ... many of them have gone to their eternal rest and God must have saved a very special place for them to recompense them for their contribution to colonisation and religion in an almost savage country (61).

Here women's political agency is domesticated through the language of familial service and subordination and subsequently their identity is figured as supportive and auxiliary. Yet within the gendered and racialised settlement of the West, these women also represented and projected the most effective form of colonialism as the quotation clearly demonstrates. 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 (Stoler 344). De Baca makes the point, as the quotation illustrates, that despite the general absence of priests and churches on the *llano*, women helped to sustain religious orthodoxy. Yet in supporting the church and orthodoxy in these ways, Cabeza de Baca and other women of the *hacienda* elite played an active role in colonisation, particularly during social ruptures that unsettled the community's economic, religious and cultural context. Given these ideological factors her reinscription of "home" as a consequence emerges somewhat problematically in a vexed intersection between a feminine discourse and a powerful set of retrogressive master narratives.

More recent Chicana writing from New Mexico significantly reworks the patriarchal imaginary informing Cabeza de Baca's text. A native of Las Cruces, New Mexico, Denise Chávez has had numerous works published, including the collection of short stories, *The Last of the Menu Girls* (1986), and the novels, *Face of an Angel* (1994) and *Loving Pedro Infante* (2001). Some of the factors that account for the differences between the work of Chávez and her literary forbears are undeniably the result of narratives being written at different times by different individuals. The thirty years that separate their texts production have seen radical changes in global and local economies and patterns of family cohesion. While many of the daily cultural practices of language, social customs and communal relations have been retained; at the same time these massive changes have all had a profound impact upon individual conceptions of self and home.

In *The Last of the Menu Girls* home is not constructed around a gendered hierarchy but is centred on a mother and her two daughters, who become the resistant and oppositional figures on the terrain that Chávez describes. The disrupted patrimonies that the text affects also make the mapping of this terrain profoundly different from that of earlier New Mexican writers. Whereas Cabeza de Baca's text gives a sense of the infinite horizons and possession of the *llano*, Chávez's narrative is concerned with smaller spatial units. Rooms, houses, streets and vacant lots are the dominant spaces in *The Last of the Menu Girls*. The narrative is thus much more in keeping with other contemporary Chicana narrative, in that the primary connotation of home is of the "private space" in a working class district in the borderlands area of the state.

The larger location for the novel is a rapidly expanding town whose specific racial formations and economies, high incidence of female cancer and outbreaks of encephalitis, all suggest that "home" is no longer the nostalgic myth which Cabeza de Baca describes. Descriptions of the town indicate its "borderland" location as a place where national and international, rural and urban economies coexist in complex and contradictory ways:

> East and west were the boundaries of the town, the farms of Chile and cotton ... east and west were intimations of space and proof of relatives who still clung to the land: ... the northern road led to mountains and snow...to government and politics ... but now commercial development had forced the unspoken boundaries back (153).

These diverse familiar locations are all perceived as transitional spaces, the 'multiple shifting landscapes' associated with advanced capitalism, which is particularly acute in certain towns and cities on the United States-Mexico border. In this sense the area that Chávez describes is not an isolated Mexican American enclave but displays a connection with rather than an

occlusion of pressing international economic and political issues. As we have seen in the case of de Baca's work focusing on domestic space often corresponds to a retraction from current events, Chávez on the other hand highlights how her characters' lives intersect with more global affairs. These include references to nuclear contamination, US military intervention in Vietnam, the struggle for land rights and the growth of multinational capitalism. Readers are also made aware of waves of migration and an 'epidemic' of Mexican immigrants seeking economic opportunities by crossing over the border. Descriptions of complex patterns of settlement within the *barrio* reflect the subsequent racial and economic differentiation among the communities living there:

> North and east lay Chiva Town … [which] … consisted of several dirt streets crisscrossed by countless smaller ones. Within the unregistered boundaries of this neighbourhood lived a portion of the town's poorest families. Farther north and near the city park lay another world, that of the Fullerton's and the Brown's, black families … So, on driving north one passed through parallel but disunited worlds, worlds surrounded by invisible yet real membranes that pulled and yielded and fell back once more into themselves ... separate, distinct, part of the greater whole, yet consciously marked off: Chiva Town and Brown City (153).

The references to racial differences illustrate rather than obscure the interethnic tension and the conflicting loyalties of the community that Chávez describes. Brown City is home to African American families like the Fullertons and the Browns, and is differentiated sharply from Chiva Town which is an undeveloped area lying outside of the city limits and home to the most recently arrived Mexican immigrants. Racial conflict between these groups is endemic as is that between whites and ethnics. The racialised discourse of a white woman, her xenophobia and denial of citizenship rights to others together with the refusal by the head nurse in the local hospital to bridge racial and cultural differences, illustrate the internalised racism of the population (Chávez 101). The nurse complains about the arrival of "the Anglo sons of bitches" and the "epidemic" of "lousy wetbacks" who cross over from the other side of the border (31-33). Within the community "they", the Anglos and the recently arrived Mexican immigrants, are differentiated from 'us' the resident New Mexicans. But given the proximity of the US-Mexico border racial distinctions are not that clear cut and consequently a distinct sense of being "in between" often dominates the narrative. Rather than replicating the territorial possessiveness of Cabeza de Baca's text, the extended discussions of boundaries, restrictions and space reflect this "border state":

> I was a child before there was a South. That was before the magic of the east, the beckoning north, or the west's betrayal ... For me there was simply up the street ... or there was down past the marking off tree in the vacant lot that was the shortcut between worlds (41).

Chávez's complex sets of maps are unlike those of earlier New Mexican writers. The topographical categories here centre on liminal spaces, margins, and thresholds and "in between" spaces rather than the listing of semantic configurations of space. Whereas the earlier mappings recorded conquests and claims to space through a panoramic gaze, those of Chávez emphasise the mediate nature of home and its multiple and shifting meaning. *The Last of the Menu Girls* as such rather than reoccupying what Padilla considers "the colonial narrative habitus", in fact disrupts and distorts its master narrative in multiple ways (Padilla 31).

This can be clearly seen in the descriptions of the character's homes. Unlike the class distinctions of her literary forbears *rancho*, the house of the protagonist's uncle, Regino Suárez, is described as "*rasquache"*; its haphazard construction repudiates the growing "whiteness" and commodification of the neighbourhood as it "stood out in its unconcern for the flat, vast-creeping tide of dried materialistic life..."(154). In comparison, the houses of Anglo families are implicitly racialised and are referred to as "mansions" (42) or "white temple[s]"(60). On the whole these houses are only ever observed from the outside and form a contrast with the depictions of the material interiority of *compadre* Suárez's home. For *compadre* Suárez constructing home is controlled by labour and economic factors; building materials are found, and in contrast to white middle class consumer capitalism, emphasis is placed on mending, refixing and reusing. This means that in the Suárez household things are not thrown away but are saved and recycled, like "a tiled table, redesigned from a former cable spool" (153), "the grey foam coach given to comadre Braulia by Toña Canales' sister-in-law, la Minnie" (159), "everything in the house was used, old, second-hand, mended, fixed up, someone else's"(160). Situated on the margins of Chiva Town its location indicates its difference and segregation from the other sectors of the society in which Suárez lives:

> Regino's house faced out to Algodones Street, that farther south led into that part of town called Little Oklahoma by certain vociferous residents who deemed the viaduct area little more than a strip of run-down, second-hand stores, flea markets and small motels of dubious reputation (151).

The mapping of this "new tarnished south" emphasises the socio-political realities of Mexican American working class life. As such it provides a counter discourse that is clearly outside of the master narratives that dominated earlier New Mexican writing. In this sense Chávez's text marks a compromised return to a sustaining tradition as the more complicated modes of home making and identification hint at a politicisation that undermines the ideologies running throughout Cabeza de Baca's text. In the latter, "home" is derived from an unbroken line back to a colonising and patriarchal past. In contrast Chávez has developed an alternative space within which the spatial distances and the environments women map affect a politics of relocation that is framed in resistance to the colonialist project. In *The Last of the Menu Girls*, it is not so much the conscious and territorial projection of the past, so much as a "border state" that signifies and has become home.

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