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THE FORMATION OF A LATINO/A CANON

Raphael Dalleo and Elena Machado Sáez

Introduction

US Latino/a literature has a complicated relationship with canon formation. Through anthologies, university courses, and the institutions of literary publication and criticism, canons draw borders, determining who is allowed in and who will be excluded. Yet canons also stake out territory and help imagine communities. Latino/a studies, born as an intervention into an exclusionary American canon, is coming to terms with its own institutionalization and the kinds of selections and hierarchies that process entails. This push and pull, between challenge and consolidation, taking an anti-canon position or creating a counter-canon, marks the ambivalent relationship between Latino/a literary studies and canon formation.

Latinos/as in the American canon(s)

Latino/a literature developed as a counter-canon in response to its exclusion from pre-existing canons. Early writers who have been subsequently recuperated as foundational Latino/a figures – such as José Martí (Lomas 2008; Ramos 2001), who wrote his most important works while living in the United States – were until recently only considered part of a Latin American tradition; US-born or raised writers, meanwhile, were not considered part of Latin American traditions at all and left out of influential critical overviews such as Jean Franco's *Introduction to Spanish-American Literature* (1994). While Latin American writers are often included in Latino/a literature anthologies, the reverse is rarely true, as evidenced by collections like *Masterpieces of Spanish American Literature* (Flores and Anderson 1974) and *The Oxford Book of Latin American Short Stories* (González-Echevarría 1997).

As a body of work created in the United States, Latino/a literature should be part of the canon of American literature (though our preference is for the adjective “US,” the mechanisms of canon formation generally use the term “American;” for that reason, when we refer to the American canon, it should be understood as a formation tied to a racialized US identity invested in hemispheric aspirations and

manifest destiny). But throughout the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, Latinos/as in the US were defined as foreign regardless of their actual birthplaces or citizenships (Oboler 1995: 33). This exclusion translated to literature: Latino/a writers such as Arturo Alfonso Schomburg or William Carlos Williams could only be understood as American by being defined as black or white (Sánchez González 2001b). In this context, Latino/a writers had no place in the American canon. *Eight American Writers* – published by Norton, which has done as much as anyone in creating the American canon – identifies Edgar Allan Poe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Walt Whitman, Mark Twain and Henry James as “our American Classics” (Foerster and Falk 1963: xv). The first two editions of the *Norton Anthology of American Literature*, published in 1979 and 1985, included no writers of Latin American heritage except Williams. Furthermore, the only nod to his latinidad is mention of “his maternal grandmother, an Englishwoman deserted by her husband, [who] had come to America with her son, married again, and moved to Puerto Rico” (Baym et al 1985: 1081), a description emphasizing English origins. In these earliest configurations of the American canon, the few Latino/a writers admitted were allowed in on the condition of an erasure of their latinidad.

Latino/a writers therefore found little space in which to enter the American canon defined as such. Latino/a social movements of the 1960s were significantly invested in raising awareness among the broader public of the presence of Latino/a populations and their contributions to the US nation; in the realm of literature, this meant showing how mainstream understandings of US literary history failed to acknowledge Latino/a contributions. These social movements transformed the US academy and publishing industry, and the canon of American literature opened up somewhat since then. By 1989, after a decade of “Canon Wars,” the third edition of the *Norton Anthology of American Literature* included Denise Chávez, Alberto Ríos, and Lorna Dee Cervantes; the 1994 fourth edition was revised to begin with a section that featured Christopher Columbus, Bartolomé de las Casas, and Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca; and the 1998 fifth edition added Sandra Cisneros. But inclusion of Latino/a writers in the American canon has only been partial: *Masterpieces of American Literature* (Magill 1994) features more than 200 works but only two Latino/a authors. Even the 2007 edition of the *Norton Anthology of American Literature* devotes fewer than 150 of its almost 6,000 pages to Latino/a texts. Meanwhile, the flagship journal of American studies, *American Literature*, first published an article on Latino/a writing in 1979, and not again until 1990; searching the journal’s archives through JSTOR suggests that the word “Nuyorican” has appeared in the journal three times in its 83-year history.

The 1960s politics of 1970s anthologies

Just as the Civil Rights struggles by the Chicano Movement or the Young Lords sought to force the United States to acknowledge the contributions of Latinos/as to the nation, challenges to the exclusionary canon of American literature coalesced in the formation of Chicano/a and Nuyorican anthologies. The earliest of these

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anthologies appear in the early 1970s; their timing, as well as their ethnic-specific rather than pan-Latino/a scope, reflected their connection to Civil Rights groups articulating their struggles along these lines (Cabán 2003; Oboler 1995). These connections to social movements meant that the 1970s anthologies were often geographically and ethnically focused, organizing their selections around Chicano or Nuyorican writing, and were often published by small local presses such as Quinto Sol, which published several editions of *El Espejo/The Mirror* (Romano-V and Rios 1969; 1972). These anthologies show little uniformity in terms of structure or even content; collections organize the readings either thematically or by genre, and few writers appear consistently from one anthology to another. Despite these divergent geographical contexts, however, the anthologies of the 1970s can be labeled as 1960s academic projects. The thematic structure of *From the Barrio* (Salinas and Faderman 1973) alludes to this inspirational context, dividing the volume into the sections "My Revolution" and "My House." The idea of creating or owning political and personal space demonstrates the goal of these anthologies: to address the absence of Latinos/as in the American literary canon. Two responses to this absence emerge: the counter-canon impulse towards establishing an alternative archive of Latino/a literary production, seen in *Aztlán* (Valdez and Steiner 1971) and *Mexican American Authors* (Paredes and Paredes 1972); or the anti-canonical desire to overturn the idea of the canon articulated in the introduction to *Nuyorican Poetry* (Algarín and Piñero 1974).

Adopting a vocabulary of Civil Rights activism, the counter-canon anthologies attempt to outline an ethnic-specific tradition to counterbalance an American literary canon. The editors of *Aztlán* organize the collection drawing connections between Aztec cultural texts and 1960s Chicano writing, dedicating the first half of the anthology to questions of ethnic origins – with chapter titles including "Where are the Roots of Men?" and "The Genesis of Chicanos" – and using the second half to address elements of the Civil Rights movement (La Tierra, La Mujer) under the title "La Causa." The introduction positions literary studies as a space to construct a revisionist history of Mexican-American identity, arguing that the goal of literature is to "present illuminating images of mankind" (Valdez and Steiner 1971: xiii). The anthology emphasizes the indigeneity of Mexican-Americans, that "We are the New World" rather than "one more in a long line of hyphenated-immigrants" (1971: xiv). The anthology performs this rhetorical positioning by not only placing the Aztec codices and contemporary Chicano texts side-by-side but also contextualizing them using historical documents such as the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's 1970 report. Similarly, the introduction to *Mexican American Authors* elaborates the collection's counter-canon goals. It begins with a sense of literary inheritance, that Mexican-Americans are "heirs to the European civilization of Spain and the Indian civilizations of Mexico" (Paredes and Paredes 1972: 1). Citing the racist depictions of Mexican-Americans in the works of John Steinbeck and Stephen Crane, the introduction asserts that the collection will "attempt to swing the scales" by positioning contemporary 1960s Chicano writing as a corrective to the American literary canon (1972: 4). These Mexican-American anthologies and their counter-canon agenda succeeded in obtaining institutional acceptance for "Chicano" as a literary category, as illustrated

by Houghton Mifflin following the Paredes and Paredes anthology with the publication of *Chicano Voices* (Cárdenas de Dwyer 1975) as part of their Multicultural Literature series.

The anti-canon trajectory contests the traditional conception of literature (as high culture) representing the historical achievements of a people. The introduction to *Nuyorican Poetry* reveals how 1960s anti-establishment politics are key to the anthologizing of contemporary literature during the 1970s. The editors frame the poet as one who must break with the past to address a gap in the vocabulary of the present: "There is no existing language to express the feelings and work to be done ... If the action is new so must the words that express it come through as new" (Algarín and Piñero 1974: 15). The activism of the 1960s demands a new way of describing human experience and, accordingly, the poet has an important function within society: "The newness needs words, words never heard before or used before. The poet has to invent a new language, a new tradition of communication" (1974: 9). The collection seeks to document this new language and reveal its sources in the barrio rather than in literary institutions, since "Nuyorican talk ... is street rooted" (1974: 16). The anthology's selections thus reflect the priority of "newness," focusing on contemporary Nuyorican poetry, and rejects institutionalized authority by focusing on orality and the ghetto as sources of inspiration.

The contrast between the 1970s anthologies in terms of organization demonstrates the structural models that will dominate the formation of a US Latino/a canon in the decades to come. *Mexican American Authors* opens with a corrido, alluding to literature's indebtedness to oral history and, like *Nuyorican Poetry*, is predominantly comprised of contemporary writing from the 1960s and 1970s. By contrast, *Aztlán* is structured to draw a connection between the contemporary 1960s generation and the Pre-Columbian past, mainly via Aztec culture. Privileging either a contemporary generation of writers or drawing links between that present and a particular past remain the dominant modes of anthologizing Latino/a writing until the late 1990s, when a more conservative and traditional historical arrangement emerges.

These 1970s collections also set the stage for the counter-canon of Chicana feminist and queer writing anthologized in the 1980s. The paucity of women writers in the early anthologies is striking: *Aztlán* and *El Espejo* include only two contributions by women, *Chicano Voices* only three women out of 37 entries, and *Voices of Aztlán* (Harth and Baldwin 1974) only one of 36. The rationale often offered for this absence is that there were "still too few" women writers (Cárdenas de Dwyer 1975: viii), but a more likely explanation can be found in the masculinism of 1960s politics that often guided the editorial selection of writers. In Valdez's introduction to *Aztlán*, he imagines only male poets who can "speak for Man" (Valdez and Steiner 1971: xiii) and certainly, *Nuyorican Poetry* also imagines the poet as masculine: "The poet sees his function as troubadour. He tells the tale of the streets to the streets" (Algarín and Piñero 1974: 11). The 1980s would bring an enormous wellspring of women's writing, partly in response to machismo, and partly due to new institutional resources that provided more space for women's voices to enter the canon. These anthologies of women's writing would also be one of the first places for a nascent challenge to the nationalist canon and the articulation of a pan-Latino/a alternative.

Hispanic and women of color anthologies in the 1980s

While Latino/a literature began to be anthologized in ethnic-specific collections during the 1970s, some of the earliest pan-Latino/a projects also arise in this period with the support of academic publishing. The *Revista Chicano-Riqueña* began publishing in 1972 under the editorship of Nicolás Kanellos, who also established Arte Público Press in 1979. Kanellos thus helped create a foothold for pan-Latino/a literature in academic publishing during the 1970s and 1980s, and his own trajectory – born and raised in New York City, founder of *Revista Chicano-Riqueña* in Indiana and then editor of Arte Público Press in Texas – allowed him to go beyond the geographical segmentation that separated the earliest anthologies. The inter-ethnic collaborations made possible by academic publishing ventures laid the foundation for the publication of three pan-Latino/a anthologies from 1980 to 1982. A *Decade of Hispanic Literature* (Kanellos 1982) is the product of the *Revista Chicano-Riqueña*, commemorating the journal's tenth anniversary. Also from this period is *Hispanics in the United States* (Keller and Jiménez 1980; 1982), published by Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe. Collecting writing under the category “Hispanic” – first used by the US Census in 1970 – these anthologies stand as a testament to the importance of academic publishers in generating inter-ethnic dialogue.

Women's studies is another site of early contributions to a pan-Latino/a canon. The seminal text, *This Bridge Called My Back*, was published in 1981 by Persephone Books and, due to the success of the first edition, republished in 1983 by Women of Color Press. While *Bridge* was not the first collection of multiethnic women's writing – *The Third Woman* (Fisher 1980) includes Chicana writing alongside that of Native American, African-American and Asian-American authors – *Bridge* was the first to compare writing by Chicanas, Puerto Ricans, and Cuban-Americans. The concluding sections of *Bridge* even offer an alternative to the opening table of contents, including the heading “Latina Writers.” Of the collections published in the early 1980s, *Bridge* most explicitly connects itself to the 1960s discourse of the 1970s anthologies. The original foreword provocatively declares its goal to “make revolution irresistible” (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983: vii). The thematic table of contents contains further parallels, with the section “The Roots of Our Radicalism” evoking the origins emphasis of *Aztlán* and the “Speaking in Tongues” section calling to mind *Nuyorican Poetry's* objective of creating new languages.

However, the institutional home of women's studies was by no means a comfortable one for Latina feminist projects. The anthology's shift in publisher embodies the tensions that Latina feminists and other women of color felt in their relationships to white feminist institutions (Rebolledo 2005: 17–22). These challenges to feminist solidarity appear concurrently with a post-1960s moment in which 1960s political and aesthetic definitions of literary work become troubled. Moraga's gloomy foreword to the second edition of *Bridge* expresses disillusionment in the power of political writing:

The political writer, then, is the ultimate optimist, believing people are capable of change and using words as one way to try and penetrate the privatism of our lives ... At the time of this writing, however, I am feeling more

discouraged than optimistic. The dream of a unified Third World feminist movement in this country as we conceived of it when we first embarked on this book, seemed more possible somehow, because as of yet, less tried.

(Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983: iii)

The newness and political power of *Bridge's* first edition seems tempered by what Moraga has witnessed by 1983, whether "the [US] training of troops in Honduras to overthrow Nicaragua's people's government," South African apartheid, or the US invasion of Grenada (1983: ii). Moraga's solution to the conceptual and material inability of 1960s politics to address the "world on fire," is to call for a more international approach, placing women of color in the United States within a larger context (1983: ii). This foreword explains Moraga's decision to anthologize US Latina authors alongside Latin American women writers in *Cuentos* (Gómez et al 1983), which anticipates the editorial work of Magill, Augenbraum, and Stavans.

Anzaldúa's companion foreword to *Bridge's* second edition reads as a motivational speech meant to provide an alternative to Moraga's pessimism. But the introduction to *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras* (1990) finds Anzaldúa expressing similar concerns regarding the viability of a multiethnic feminist coalition as well as the dangers in becoming part of the feminist literary canon. In *Making Face*, Anzaldúa explains that she hesitated to embark on another anthology project because she was "waiting for someone to compile a book that would continue where *This Bridge Called My Back* left off" (Anzaldúa 1990: xvi). What motivated her to finally do the work herself was not an idealistic desire to continue with literary activism, but a frustration and dissatisfaction with the effects of *Bridge*, whose canonization had led to complacency:

I got tired of hearing students say that *Bridge* was required in two or three of their women's studies courses; tired of being a resource for teachers and students who asked me what texts by women of color they should read or teach and where they could get those writings. I had grown frustrated that the same few women-of-color were asked to read or lecture in universities and classrooms, or to submit work to anthologies.

(Anzaldúa 1990: xvi)

Anzaldúa predicts what is to come in Latino/a canon formation, or perhaps was the case all along: despite the counter- or anti-canon aims of their editors, literary collections were silencing alternate Latino/a literary canons (Rebolledo 2005: 38). This tokenism, Anzaldúa explains, "was stymieing our literary/political movement" by overworking "the same half dozen *mujeres*" (1990: xvi-xvii). If *Making Face* stands as a corrective to *Bridge*, the major shift between the two anthologies is from a selection of contemporary writers to a more broadly historical collection in terms of content, including 1970s writers such as Bernice Zamora or even earlier figures such as Julia de Burgos. Anzaldúa's work on her second collection therefore represents the move towards contextualization in the anthologies of the early 1990s.

Consolidating and questioning the canon: Anthologies of the 1990s and 2000s

During the early 1990s, new efforts to historically contextualize Latino/a writing emerge, evoking the generational and comparative historical structure of the 1970s *Aztlan*. A noteworthy example is *Decade II* (Olivares and Vigil-Piñón 1993), which compiles work published in *Revista Chicano-Riqueña* and *Americas Review* from 1983 to 1992. Another contextual move placing different generations of writers alongside each other can be found in Rebolledo and Rivero's *Infinite Divisions* (1993). The original plan of these editors was to develop a history of Chicana literature beginning with the 1960s, undertaking an archival-driven venture. Researching the New Mexico Federal Writer's Project as well as publications by Arte Público, *Bilingual Review*, and Third Woman Press, the editors "unearthed more and more early writers" and "the frontiers of its early history began to expand backward in time until we were in the early 1880s" (Rebolledo and Rivero 1993: xx). In addition to including some of these earlier "foremothers," the introduction also demarcates the "Chicano Renaissance (in the early sixties and seventies)" as its own cohesive tradition (1993: xxi). The editors point out a genre shift, noting that the Renaissance was dominated by poetry and that contemporary writing tends towards narrative. This shift can be corroborated by looking at how Arte Público's *Decade II* reverses the order of the genre sections in their previous *A Decade of Hispanic Literature*, foregrounding prose ahead of poetry. The other major new contextualization to surface in this period is the inclusion of other ethnic groups, such as Dominican-Americans, who become included in pan-ethnic anthologies such as *Latinos in English* (Augenbraum 1992), *Masterpieces of Latino Literature* (Magill 1994) and *Latina* (Castillo-Speed 1995), or Central American Latinos/as, included in *Currents from the Dancing River* (González 1994) and *New World* (Stavans 1997).

The support these anthologies acknowledge shows the gradual acceptance of Latino/a literature by mainstream institutions. *Best New Chicano Literature* (Palley 1986) credits literary contests held at UC Irvine; anthologies such as *Chicana Creativity and Criticism* (Herrera-Sobek and Viramontes 1988) resulted from academic conferences; federal agencies such as the NEH and private corporations such as Apple provided grants for *Infinite Divisions* and *Hispanic, Female, and Young* (Tashlik 1993). By 1995, it becomes possible for the introduction to *Latina* to say "Latina literature is not new" but "widely anthologized" (Castillo-Speed 1995: 17). The integration of Latino/a writing into the mainstream canon, albeit in a limited form, as well as what had by the mid-1990s become a proliferation of Chicano/a, Hispanic, and Latino/a anthologies, prompts a new counter-canon impulse, one that critiques the Latino/a literary canon produced by the 1980s and early 1990s.

Two of the most active anthologizers of the late 1990s and 2000s are Harold Augenbraum and Ilan Stavans. Augenbraum and Olmos's *The Latino Reader* (1997) represents the culmination of previous efforts to provide a broader historical trajectory for Latino/a literature in order to challenge the American literary canon. The organization of the collection is historical, opening with colonial "Encounters," while also including José Martí and María Amparo Ruiz de Burton as "Prelude"

to the "Latino United States" which spans from the 1920s until 1993. Stavans's *Norton Anthology of Latino Literature* (2010) expands upon this structure by pairing a historical trajectory with thematic headings: "Colonization" (1537–1810), "Annexation" (1811–98), "Acculturation" (1899–1945), "Upheaval" (1946–79), "Into the Mainstream" (1980–present), and finally "Popular Dimensions" (which includes popular culture and music). The teleology behind this thematic structure defines the 1960s as a state of "upheaval" that only momentarily disrupts the assimilation of Latino/a writing into the mainstream. The *Norton's* historical trajectory seems consistent with the politically conservative interpretation of Latino/a canon formation elaborated in Stavans's works of criticism (Machado Sáez 2009).

Even as Augenbraum and Stavans spearhead some of the most historically minded anthologies of this period, they also articulate the anti-canon anxiety that permeates even traditionally minded canon building. In *New World* (1997), Stavans asserts that the canonization of Latino/a writers has led them to become "too cozy, too comfortable" (1997: 5). The rationale for this anthology is to challenge the Latino/a literary establishment by introducing new perspectives of more contemporary writers. Almost a decade later, Augenbraum and Stavans repeat these claims in their introduction to the jointly edited *Lengua Fresca* (2006), making a distinction between "the old guard" and the "next wave" with a "post-Latino consciousness" (Augenbraum and Stavans 2006: xiii). The counter-canon goal of introducing another set of newer voices with "fresh language" (2006: xxi) not only evokes the logic behind *New World* and even *Nuyorican Poetry*, but also becomes aligned with an anti-canon challenge to literariness. Emphasizing orality and popular culture, Augenbraum and Stavans decide to not focus "exclusively on traditional forms of literature" (2006: xvi) because it was "the earlier generation [who] seemed to be interested in creating high culture," whereas "now we seem to have entered the domination of popular culture throughout the United States" (2006: xviii). But as our historical review of the 1970s Chicano and Nuyorican anthologies shows, the impulse towards the popular is not new. Nevertheless, the editorial work of Augenbraum and Stavans reveals that valorizing "newness" relies on an ahistorical rendering of "older" forms of Latino/a writing. Both *New World* and *Lengua Fresca* therefore follow a thematic organization rather than a historical one.

Augenbraum and Stavans are not the only editors whose collections reinforce the ever-evolving newness of Latino/a writing. *Latino Boom* (Christie and González 2005) features writing since 1985 by Rudolfo Anaya, Ana Castillo, Achy Obejas, and others, but draws no relationship to earlier US Latino/a writing: the post-1960s Boom is credited not to the Civil Rights or feminist movements but to the "explosion of South American literary works in the 1970s and 1980s" (Christie and González 2005: xiii-xiv). This alternative genealogy leads to an erasure of US-based predecessors, pointing back to Gabriel García Márquez as setting the stage for Sandra Cisneros and Oscar Hijuelos. The impetus toward a hemispheric canon that fuses Latin American and US Latino/a writers thus leads to disavowal of the 1960s as a context and the progressive politics that inspired such an intellectual project. Nevertheless, this hemispheric view also displays the counter-canonical impulse of the 1960s anthologies: if there is a constant within the Latino/a canon, it is the principle of destabilization. Even *Latino Boom* closes by positing a counter-canon to

its own thematic organization, closing with a section entitled, "Beyond Worlds: Beyond the Boom."

Contemporary criticism and the challenge to the Latino/a canon

Latino/a literary criticism has been caught up in these same debates about canonization. Bruce-Novoa remarks that "there was an ironic sense of worth associated with being outside the canon, almost a feeling of purity" provided by viewing Latino/a literature as a challenge to "the exclusionary ethnocentrism implied by *The Canon*" (Bruce-Novoa 1986: 119). A history of omission from American, Latin American and women's studies canons, combined with the increasing visibility of Latino/a literature during the 1980s and 1990s, brought with it an anxiety about the politics informing the Latino/a canon. Lima suggests that the 1980s Culture Wars, during which ethnic studies programs were asked (and continue to be asked) to justify their academic existence, might also have prompted this turn inwards (Lima 2007: 95). The concern that the Latino/a counter-canon itself reflects the inequities of canon-making has energized challenges that have shaped Latino/a studies since the 1990s. Critics viewing the counter-canon as too focused on contemporary literature engage in archival research; critics seeing the counter-canon as masculinist or heteronormative inspire advances in gender and sexuality studies; critics considering literature itself an elitist practice move into cultural studies.

The counter-canon that developed beginning in the 1970s often saw Latino/a writing as a new entity, bursting into existence with the social movements of that era. But as Kanellos explains, this view can lead to a troubling presentness: "most scholars have limited the study and teaching of Chicano, Puerto Rican, and Cuban literatures in the United States to works published in the last forty years, furthering the impression that U.S. Hispanic literature is new, young, and exclusively related to the immigrant experience" (Kanellos 2002a: 1). The Recovering the Hispanic Literary Heritage of the United States project, established in 1992, has been the most concerted and influential institution in this archival effort. The series has republished dozens of early works, ranging from fiction by nineteenth-century Mexican-American writer María Amparo Ruiz de Burton to the 1858 *El laúd del desterrado*, which collects poetry by Cuban exiles in New York and New Orleans. A number of critics have supplemented these republications with their own archival work on early Latino/a writing. Lazo (2005) focuses on the *filibustero* Cubans collected in *El laúd* along with the periodicals that these writers founded and contributed to during the 1850s. Gruesz (2001) writes about some of the same Cuban writers, as well as a number of early Mexican and Mexican-American participants in nineteenth-century US print culture. Sánchez González's *Boricua Literature* (2001), meanwhile, expands the counter-canon of US-based Puerto Rican writers, adding Luisa Capetillo and Pura Belpré to a list of better-known writers including Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, Piri Thomas, and Judith Ortiz Cofer.

New work on gender and sexuality shows a similar interest in revisiting earlier moments that the emerging counter-canon threatens to forget. Anzaldúa and Keating's anthology, *this bridge we call home* (2002), is geared towards understanding the

legacy of *This Bridge Called My Back* while incorporating new voices, such as those of white feminist critics, women and men. Additionally, Emma Pérez (1999) and Rebolledo (2005) offer feminist revisionist histories of 1960s movements and academic projects in the new millennium. Critics such as Lara-Bonilla (2010) point to feminist texts from the 1980s as a lost generation between the 1960s and the 1990s. La Fountain-Stokes (2009a), meanwhile, traces the evolution of queer diasporic identity from the 1960s to the present, while acknowledging his debt to Chicana Third World feminism and critics such as Negrón-Muntaner. Queer studies critics such as Muñoz (1999) and Cruz-Malavé (2007) are also turning to cultural studies as a way of including voices otherwise omitted from a solely literary canon.

While archival research and gender studies seek to expand the existing canon, cultural studies has arisen as a challenge to the literary canon itself. Paredes (1958) pioneered this approach, of taking *dichos* and *corridos* as seriously as high cultural forms such as novels and published poetry. He explains that “while in Mexico the Mexican may well seek lo mexicano in art, literature, philosophy, or history – as well as in folklore – the Mexican American would do well to seek his identity in folklore” (Paredes 1982: 1). Studying these sorts of popular forms became no longer the sole domain of anthropologists or ethnomusicologists, with literary scholars, such as Leal (1995), McKenna (1997), Saldívar (2006), and others, continuing Paredes’s work on the *corrido* as a literary form. The inclusion of the *corrido* in the most recent editions of the *Norton Anthology of American Literature* shows how influential this challenge to an exclusively literary canon has been. Critics known for influencing the canon of US-based Puerto Rican literature such as Flores and Sánchez González have similarly moved away from examination of literary texts and towards music (Dalleo and Machado Sáez 2007: 29–32). While Flores’s first essay collection (1993) contains extensive discussions of literature, his second (2000) focuses primarily on popular culture. When literature is discussed, it is “lower-case literature” that is opposed to “canon-forming literature” (2000: 184) and its “assimilationist proclivities” (2000: 183). Sánchez González’s *Boricua Literature* (2001) follows five chapters on literary texts with a lament that contemporary literature has become “inescapably affianced to brutal institutional partners” (2001a: 188), leading her to ask “what is left to read?” (2001a: 160). Her answer is *salsa*, to which she devotes her final chapter. Cultural studies, like archival research and gender studies, thus continues to extend the critique of canon formation that we have seen initiated in some of the earliest anthologies of Latino/a writing.

Future directions in canon formation

Two key forces have consistently acted on the development of the Latino/a literary canon from the 1970s until the present. First is a prioritizing of “newness” in selecting what material to publish. Second is a counter-canon impulse, motivating editors to choose writers not represented in prior anthologies. These forces result in new voices tending to become the only voices in the canonization of Latino/a literatures. In other words, the frequently stated goal of *supplementing* prior canons ultimately translates into *supplanting* them. More emphasis on the archive and on

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the Latino/a literary ug of "newness" in impulse, motivating hese forces result in on of Latino/a litera- g prior canons ulti- he archive and on

popular culture may lead to a more open canon, but could as easily lead to a substitution of these texts in the place of others. The contradictory impulses of contextualization (recuperating writers who have been ignored by previous canons) and contemporaneity (discovering emerging new writers) lie behind the constant flux of the Latino/a canon.

Research on canon formation yields interesting insights into the development of the field and allows for a more historical perspective on the configuration of the Latino/a canon. Many new avenues for research in this process remain. Caminero-Santangelo's *On Latinidad* (2007) asks us to think about how ethnic traditions within the pan-Latino/a canon are in dialogue with one another: so how have *critics* from Chicano, Nuyorican, Cuban-American, or Dominican-American studies engaged each other's canons? How can syllabi and course catalogs serve as spaces where a more historical progression of canon formation can be traced? How or why do the 1980s function as a transitional moment within the development of a Latino/a literary canon? What do we make of critical shifts in terms of which genres are prioritized in the teaching or anthologizing of Latino/a literature? Can new instruments of analysis, such as Moretti's (2007) "distant reading," help us analyze the popularity of certain authors within different temporal canons? Does the *Norton Anthology of Latino Literature* signal the end of the constant replacement of one canon with another? Or will the supplanting of prior generations of canons continue?

Suggested further reading

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