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I have done this work to please my
children, who often have urged me
to undertake it for their sakes."
--Rafael Chacón, forewords to
the "Memorias" (1912)

As the family story has it, during the composition of his "Memorias" the seventy-year-old Rafael Sotero Chacón sent handwritten chapter drafts to his nephew Felipe Chacón, a prominent journalist[1] in Las Vegas, New Mexico, who reviewed them, read them aloud to his children after supper (as one of these children, Vera, remembers), and then returned the manuscript with comments to the old patriarch who was living in a small house in Trinidad, Colorado, with Juanita, his wife and compañera of many years. When the "Memorias" were completed after six years of writing -- Chacón seals the date as "August 8th, 1912"-- his son Eusebio, a lawyer and the author of two novelas[2], had three copies made, one of which he kept, another of which he gave to a daughter, and the last of which Juanita gave to Felipe after Chacon's funeral in 1925. This genealogical elaboration is necessary

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[1] In addition to editing a number of Spanish language newspapers, Felipe Chacón published a volume of poetry and short prose in 1924 titled *Obras de Felipe Maximiliano Chacón, "El Cantador Neomexicano": Poesía y Prosa* (The Works of Felipe Maximiliano Chacón, "New Mexican Singer"" Poetry and Prose). See Erlinda Gonzales-Berry's discussion of Chacón's poetry, "Vincente Bernal and Felipe M. Chacón: Bridging Two Cultures," in Pasó por Aquí: Critical Essays on the New Mexico Literary Tradition, 1542-1988, Erlinda Gonzales-Berry, ed., (Albuquerque: New Mexico UP, 1989), 185-198.

[2] Eusebio Chacón published *El hijo de la tempestad* (Son of the Storm) and *Tras la tormenta la calma* (The Calm After the Storm) in 1892. For an excellent discussion on Eusebio Chacón's groundbreaking work as a novelist, essayist, and cultural spokesman see Francisco Lomelí's "Eusebio Chacón: An Early pioneer of the New Mexican Novel" in Pasó por Aquí: Critical Essays on the New Mexico Literary Tradition, 1542-1988, Erlinda Gonzales-Berry, ed., (Albuquerque: New Mexico UP, 1989), 149-166.

not simply for introducing an author and the history of his text, but necessary because the narrative's long journey toward public reading remains troubled by lost origins, tangled lines of descent, truncated versions, and a recent reconstruction in which Rafael Chacón's gift to his children is misplaced once again in a recently published version of the "Memorias."

Chacón's narrative bequest to his family would have a long and significant journey through family lines until its recent extra-familial and de-familiarized textual appearance in 1986. The original Spanish manuscript, as well as two of the typescripts, disappeared. Somehow the first two chapters, translated and typed as the "Memoirs," found their way into the Historical Collections Library at the University of Colorado, but "records do not cite a source for the document," nor is there a clear date of receipt.[3] Felipe's typescript, fortunately, was preserved by one of the daughters, Herminia Chacón de Gonzales, who had listened to versions of the "Memorias" as a child. Her copy remained preserved within the family until Vera Chacón de Padilla, another of Felipe's listener-daughters, undertook to see the manuscript into print as it appears Rafael wished. For all practical purposes, the "Memorias" that Rafael Chacón wrote to "please [his] children" remained with his children until 1986 when Jacqueline Dorgan Meketa, working from Vera Padilla's copy, "built" the bio-auto-graphical text titled Legacy of Honor: The Life of Rafael Chacón, A Nineteenth-Century New Mexican.[4]

Perhaps Chacón's "Memorias" still belongs to the family where it remains in the only Spanish typescript copy. For as Meketa freely acknowledges in the "Introduction" to her book, rather than "do the obligatory research, editing, and annotation, and then publish the memoirs pretty much as written by Chacón, allowing them to stand on their own" (5), she decided to "develop a book around the memoirs" (6). The term "around" signals an

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[3] I received this manuscript information in a letter (July 13, 1988) from David M. Hays, Librarian at the Western Historical Collections, University of Colorado Library, Boulder.
[4] Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986. All references to Meketa text, unless otherwise noted, will appear by page number.

immediate danger to Chacón's authorial status, not to mention a threat to the narrative proper, which, in Meketa's version, assumes a different form altogether. Meketa, for example, markedly re-organizes the narrative: Chacón's first chapter on "My Birth and Childhood" is re-organized --the detailed chapter headings cut and the narrative re-sequenced rather considerably-- into the first three chapters of Meketa's text. The entire Chacón narrative is framed by a substantial, and, I might add, an informative and intelligent "Introduction" and "Epilogue." Meketa also provides contextualizing chapter headnotes and inserts supplemental material --"oral interview transcipts, personal correspondence, military letters and reports, newspaper articles, military service and pension records, and eyewitness accounts"(5-6)-- directly into Chacón's text in order "to bridge an ambiguous gap between two events not clearly defined; the desire to flesh out several interesting but brief accounts with minutiae that would humanize events, such as Chacón's wedding, and allow the readers to imagine the festivities as though they were present; and last, but by no means least, to authenticate and support some of Chacón's statements. . . " (6). This long worded, multi-phrased sentence on her reconstructive method illustrates just how easily Chacón's text gets displaced by the editor's insertions.

To be just, Meketa's insertions do much to historicize Chacón's "Memorias." Her exhaustive background notes on the Civil War in New Mexico, for example, are invaluable for understanding the role *nuevomexicano* soldiers played in that crucial event as well the scapegoating and general ill-treatment they summarily received at the hands of Anglo officers. As Meketa points out, her guiding motive here was "to reach the many lay historians and nonspecialist members of the reading public interested in New Mexico's past rather than create a strictly academic work. . . familiar only to professionals" (6). Yet Meketa's text is much more academic in appearance than it might have been had she followed her "original plan" and published "the memoirs pretty much as written by Chacón." Legacy of Honor has all of the trappings of an "academic" book, complete with "Table of Contents," "Maps and Illustrations," two appendices, substantial

discussion notes, a bibliography and an index --and it is published by a university press. As it turns out, Chacón's "Memorias" is transformed from autobiographical to biographical narrative, and his life history subordinated to the historiographic project of reconstructing New Mexico's 19th century territorial period.

To cite only one of numerous examples of ethno-subject re-construction I refer to Arnold Krupat's introductory remarks on the textual evolution of Sam Blowsnake's personal narrative.[5] As Krupat has shown, the construction (and reconstruction) of Native American personal narrative has often resulted in the displacement, sometimes the multi-disciplinary fracture of the subject of the narrative.[6] Paul Radin, one of the pioneers of ethnography, took Sam Blowsnake's own written syllabary autobiography --edited by Radin and published as The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian in 1920 as a relatively short narrative-- and substantially reconstructed it for republication in 1926 as Crashing Thunder: The Autobiography of an American Indian. In the 1926 version Radin inserted numerous myth and origin stories, ceremonial speeches, and other personal narrative and speech fragments at strategic moments in Blowsnake's text in order to culturally contextualize the tribal events Blowsnake rather casually mentions. The interpolated product, as Radin points out in his Preface to the 1926 edition, results in a "considerably enlarged" narrative aimed at a "wider audience" [Krupat, xxiii].

Yet, the narrative logic of the original version is disrupted, the speaking voice muted by repeated anthropological insertions, the autobiographical subject subordinated to a "larger" project of constructing a "scientific" native American representative. The individual subject, Sam Blowsnake, who should remain in the narrative foreground, is so thoroughly reconstructed by the editor that he is actually displaced from his own story. That is, Sam Blowsnake, the subject name of the 1920 text (actually identified only as S.B.

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[5] Crashing Thunder: The Autobiography of an American Indian (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1983), ix-xviii

[6] see For Those Who Come After: A Study of Native American Autobiography (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

in the text) is erased, to be replaced with an even more Indian sounding name --Crashing Thunder. Personal narrative, however mediated, is transformed into biography, or anthropological cultural document, or historiographic narrative, or some such rhetorical colligation. What we have before us in such a reconstructed text is an example of the way an editor decides that the cultural Other needs contextualizing, needs to be situated in his or her own history, needs to be explained into reality for a "wider [read:white] audience." The result of such textual construction is empowering, on the one hand, because the ethnic subject is culturally contextualized for an otherwise ignorant and often ethnocentric audience; on the other, such contextualization, when it is externally manipulated, robs the I-speaking subject of voice, turning it to service as a cultural representation, the object of an audience's curiosity about a tribal group, as in the case of Blowsnake, or about Mexican Americans in the case of Chacon.

As for Meketa's reconstruction of the Chacón narrative, one must be fair enough to say that without her work the narrative may not have appeared for many years, or may have been altogether concealed within the Chacón family archive. Recovering and restoring a narrative that has been dormant for three quarters of a century is a remarkable undertaking. Making it widely public is also a way of restoring Rafael Chacón's status as an Hispano whose life-story figures importantly into 19th century territorial New Mexican military, intercultural, and politcal history. Without the historical information Meketa includes, Chacón's tight-lipped description of the discriminatory, even hostile treatment he and other *nuevomexicano* soldiers experienced in the Union army during and after the Civil War would remain unenforced. As Meketa says, Chacón "used considerable restraint" in his handling of the subject of "prejudice displayed against Hispanos in the military." She, therefore, incorporated several of his military letters and the "experiences and opinions of some of his contemporaries" in a move to concretize "the breadth and scope of the ugly and ubiquitous problem" (p. 7) he and his fellow Hispanos faced.

Meketa's historicizing comments, scathing as they are, reveal by contrast much about Chacón's own narrative confrontation with events occuring forty years earlier that had confounded, angered, and embittered him. Although he has bad memories about that period, he remains rhetorically reserved, describing events succinctly and presenting documents that speak for themselves rather than resorting to emotional display. Meketa writes Chacón's restrained enunciations back into the text. She says what he wouldn't, or chose not to. So, even though her advocacy is narratively disruptive, it proceeds from a politicized sensibility, from a position intended, for instance, to call historiography about the U.S. military affairs into question. By situating Chacón within a socially discursive matrix, she re-historicizes a period which had been troublesome and painful for Mexican Americans.

Meketa's interpollative narrative, however, creates a bind for Chacón: he is biographically expanded and made to function as a heroic character in Meketa's historical narrative. Like the Native American subject, he is given more, or different, presence in the bio-text than he made for himself in the "Memorias." The result is that we perhaps know more about him than he wished us to know. For example, in addition to the Chacón letters and military documents that Meketa inserts into the Civil War period, she collates diary entries Chacón wrote as a military scout "for his commanding officer" (227) in August and September of 1863. The entries not only supplement the "Memorias," as Meketa points out, they correct faulty memory since the events did not take place in June as Chacón reconstructs the experience some "forty-four years after the fact."

Is it the case, therefore, that incorporating Chacón's words from the earlier period supplements and even supersedes an old man's failing memory? Perhaps, but such an editorial move violates a principal autobiographical choice: perhaps Chacón did not wish to disclose the details of past experience fully; perhaps he didn't think it necessary, or in his best social or cultural or historical interest, to provide a prolix description of his campaigns against the Navajo, his sicknesses and bouts of severe rheumatism, or the

continual struggle with Anglo-American soldiers who had no more regard for the *nuevomexicano* troopers than for the Indians these latter were ordered to battle. It does seem reasonable, therefore, to assume that Chacón was saying all he wanted to say --after all, he did work on his "Memorias" for some six years when he was still intellectually vigorous. Hence, Meketa's various remarks about Chacón's failure to say more about his career in the Army function as a motive for expanding the memoirs in the direction of bio-history. As she says, "the decision to insert the editor and the translator's own words included the necessity to bridge an ambiguous gap between events not clearly defined" (6). One can be sure, then, that given an editorial "desire to flesh out several interesting but brief accounts with minutiae that would humanize events"(6), Meketa will provide the necessary corrective details for the following gaps in the memoirs: "Chacón and his men were surely involved in more skirmishes and scouts than are recorded in the memoirs" (237); "This brief account of his days in Santa Fe leaves volumes unsaid" (243); "although Chacón does not emphasize it, the racial slurs, prejudicial attitudes, and lack of respect continued" (246); "Once again Chacón, perhaps mellowed by the passage of the years, fails to mention in the memoirs that upon his return from Arizona he was ill, discouraged, and probably angry" (258). In supplementing Chacón's memoirs, Meketa gives us a version of Rafael Chacón that, in the process of thickening the biographical-subject, eventually so disperses Chacón's own narrative that the autobiographical-subject is displaced.

The "Memorias" must be restored from its original condition. In the meantime Rafael Chacón has assumed enormous historical stature and representational responsibility in the text that has been developed around the old man's own carefully constructed memoirs. Since the Spanish longhand version of the "Memorias" remains in family keeping, we will, for the present, have to read him through Legacy of Honor: The Life of Rafael Chacón, A Nineteenth-Century New Mexican. Although I read Chacón contextually, my own discursive and historical contextualizing of Chacón's narrative is intended, not to

supplant or resettle, but to reinstate the subject, allowing Chacón to speak for himself and following what I take to be the more native logic of his "Memorias" as a genealogical narrative of culture and family rather than a historical account offering, as the bookjacket claims, "new insights into events in New Mexico history during the Mexican and early territorial periods, especially the Civil War." What we read of Chacón's life from his own words in the early chapters on his childhood before 1846 discloses his nostalgia for pre-American social and cultural practices that constituted the epistemological ground of subjectivity and memory. In the middle sections Chacón describes the culturally strategic accommodation to national transformation through service in the American army, which he and other *nuevomexicanos* joined after 1848 in order to secure their beloved homeland for their families and their posterity. These middle chapters, moreover, are less an old soldier's vain reminiscences of his glory days in the field than vivid and sometimes startling recollections of Chacón's desire to return to domestic life in the face of Anglo-American hostility in the military, severe rheumatism and privation during long scouts, and, more than anything, loneliness for his wife, Juanita, and their small children. And since he composed his autobiography for the children whose lives, he believed, were being modified by social transformation, the closing section of Chacón's "Memorias" articulates a genealogical desire to secure the family name against historical dispersal, with Rafael Chacón acting as family scribe for "a clean and honorable name."

II

Before the arrival of the Americans,
the customs of the populace of New
Mexico were very sane and sober.
--Rafael Chacón, "Memorias"

Although Raphael Chacón's "Memorias" opens typically enough with reference to his birth in Santa Fe in 1833, the narrative poses the central autobiographical concern some pages later when, in recalling a local political uprising in New Mexico when he was a child, he acknowledges the problematics of memory. "Our memory is frail," he writes, "more so when so many years have gone by, in the course of which we have experienced so many changes; for this reason it is not possible for me now to recall many of the things which I fain would remember" (44).

More than disclosing an understandable anxiety about the intellectual decline expected in old age, Chacón's remark poses the brooding epistemological uncertainty about recuperating vanished experience that so often troubles the autobiographer. If "our" memory is frail to begin with, and since we experience "so many changes," it becomes all but impossible to recall, much less understand, the meaning of past experience. But the inability to fully reconstruct the past to which all autobiographers are heir is for Chacón complicated by a process of cultural deracination that ruptures continuity with a linguistic and socio-cultural universe that both supplies and structures the forms of narrative that are to him familiar.

The autobiographical problem raised by Chacón, as it turns out, resounds throughout the narrative as the problem of occupying dissonant cultural worlds, one of which structured Chacón's locus of identity, the other of which disrupted the cultural environment necessary

to socio-psychological integrity. His anxiety about reconstructing the past may be associated with age and the loss of recuperative power, but there was something in that past which also troubled memory. The socio-cultural dislocation revealed throughout his narrative simultaneously provides autobiographical motive and threatens memory. As Chacón says, he was encouraged to compose his memoirs by family, friends, and certain prominent historians because of his distinguished military service and the general eventfulness of his life.[7] Chacón, therefore, begins to reconstruct a life they regard as valorous and historically significant; however, what he remembers about that life, especially his life under the new American regime, is hollowed out by images of cultural disfigurement, dissatisfaction in the U.S. Army, and nostalgia for an older cultural habitat. The story he recalls of a troubled intercultural state of affairs makes his military career appear ludicrously disjointed when compared with his recollections of the pre-American Hispano society into which he was born. Chacón's situation, nevertheless, is typical of the 19th Century Mexican (American) autobiographer for whom cultural discontinuity transforms personal narrative into a cultural document that narrativizes the profound historical break that unsettles collective discourse and in so doing destablizes the cultural subject. This is to suggest that memory --how we remember and what we choose to remember, since we can't or don't wish to remember everything-- is intimately tied to a culturally organized discursive habitat. On the one hand, Chacón writes from the standpoint of a retired, honorable American officer recalling his military exploits in the 1850s and 1860s; on the other, the social disequilibrium he experienced in the military gives voice to a discontented persona who, rather than celebrating his military career and

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[7]Noted territorial historians like Benjamin Read, Ralph Twitchell, Henry Sabin visited and corresponded with Chacón, because they knew he could be an invaluable sourcebook for their own projects. As Meketa writes: "After the turn of the century. . . Chacón suddenly found himself the center of much attention among historians and writers, and after he began work on his memoirs, he was often sought out by such people. Chacón was interviewed a number of times and spent many long hours poring over his old documents and letters and writing long descriptions and explanations to historians such as Sabin and Read. " (330)

American citizenship, strove instead to reconstitute a home and family apart from Anglo-American culture. Relocating himself within the ecology of a Hispano cultural habitat requires a profound autobiographical feat --he must restore a world the American army tried to destroy.

Let me continue with the epigraph, the logic of which I elided. After questioning the frail ground of memory, Chacón says, "But at the moment of penning these fragments of ancient songs, their swing and rhythm come back to my mind like a wail of the past, and I live once more under the paternal roof, and my thoughts again survey the scenes of my childhood" (44). This autobiographical "moment" startles Chacón with its haunting call upon memory. It may seem odd for songs from childhood to be remembered as "ancient songs," odd until we understand that these songs are indeed ancient because they are but echoes of traditional cultural practices preceding Chacón by generations, but practices which by 1900, Chacón fears, are eroded, or lost altogether. The songs he recalls in a "wail" of remembrance once functioned to situate experience within a collective habitat that preserved social events in formal verse structures. However, rather than the documentary content of the ballad, the language and nuance of the poetic form guide Chacón to a past which no longer exists, not only because he has grown old, because the cultural grid is broken. *Inditas* and *cuandos*,[8] popular songs and poetry "that saved . . . the tradition," (72) and, therefore, functioned as cultural mnemonic markers, have been lost as a result, he will argue, of the American invasion.

The "fragments" of topical ballads that Chacón pens into his "Memorias" simultaneously provide a historiographically important account of a political uprising that took place in 1837 (when he was only four), and retrieve the emotive field of childhood for

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[8] As Francisco Lomelí defines them, *inditas* are "songs or poems that use the capture of women by Indians as their central motif" and *cuandos* are poems or ballads "using 'when' as their point of departure." "A Literary Portrait of Hispanic New Mexico: Dialectics of Perception," in pasó por aquí: Critical Essays on the New Mexican Literary Tradition, 1542-1988, Erlinda Gonzales-Berry (Albuquerque: New Mexico UP, 1989), p. 138.

Chacón, thereby satisfying the autobiographical desire to restore his own presence in the past. The ballads establish a formal space for both discursive activities. Chacón's autobiographic "penning" of the popular romances of an "ancient" time mnemonically reestablishes the autobiographer's relationship to a cultural past retrievable only in fragments. As he says, "I was still very young in the year 1837 to be able to have a personal recollection of the Rebellion. . .", but the songs and tales the event generated, and which his father and family members related, provide the material of early experience he retrieves sixty years later. It is not ultimately the event's historical significance that matters to Chacón --although the event is important to the history of his formation as well as to the production of the text he is encouraged to compose--, but rather the memory of childhood, family, and home in a geo-cultural locale that by 1906 appears in ghostly outline under the re-configured map of the American West.

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Before he remembers the dispersive effects of the American conquest, or perhaps as a prelude to that signal event, Chacón describes his preparation as a cadet at the Mexican Military Academy in Chihuahua. In 1844, when he was only 11, he trudged off hundreds of miles by wagon to Chihuahua where he would become the youngest of a group of New Mexican boys sent at the order of Governor Manuel Armijo, who as the commanding general of New Mexico had successfully led his troops against a group of Texas filibusterers riding toward Santa Fe with intentions of annexing the territory in 1841.[9]

This section of Chacón's narrative on the military preparation for the American invasion may initially have been generated by his desire to provide historiographic

[9] By the early 1840s, New Mexicans were well aware that the United States had designs on Mexico's northern territory, and Armijo did attempt to prepare his compatriots for the impending invasion many expected.

information about the events leading up to the U.S.- Mexican war, but it becomes autobiographical discourse when the old man fixes his gaze on the child he was sixty years earlier. Chacón remembers himself with bemusement as a vulnerable and rather gullible boy of eleven who no sooner arrives in Chihuahua than he is cajoled into lending other cadets --"who already knew the ways of the world"-- from his money reserves. Sensing they have found a sucker, they proceed to strip him piecemeal of all his money and belongings. Chacón writes of the immature military cadet with comic self-irony:

> After these rascals had despoiled me of the best of my belongings and of the money, they sold me a horse, on which I had the pleasure of riding only once; they afterwards borrowed it from me under some plausible pretext and that was the last I ever saw of the animal. .
>
> When all the cash which I had loaned them had been spent, the gentlemen of schemes, my comrades, borrowed my trunk, my blankets, and my rug, and I let them have everything, remaining without bedding and without anything to eat, lacking even the resources to procure for myself the necessities of life. (50)

Like many another naive waif whose first departure from home proves disastrous, the young Rafael, bound by the principles of behaviour learned from the Catón, the "manual of politeness, morals, good manners, and etiquette" (16) introduced to children in primary school, is incapable of believing that others could act so dishonorably. But they do. None of his money, his belongings, not to mention his horse, is ever spoken of again by his fellow cadets. As in Benjamin Franklin's autobiographical anecdotes about the perils awaiting the young adventurer, Chacón narratively bequeaths his own story of the treacherous strangers he meets on the road of life. Unlike Franklin, the young Chacón finds strength not only in his own resources but in Catholic prayer. As the still reverent old man remembers: "I do not know how long I went hungry, but I do remember that one day I was

weeping bitterly when I received a letter from my father, and in it he enjoined me that whenever things did not go well with me I should recite the Salve Regina in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary and go to the church to hear Mass." (50)

Immediately after reading his father's advice, and while on the way to church praying "not one but many Salves," Rafael finds nine pieces of silver in the road. Not only does he happen upon the money, but, like manna fallen from heaven, he also discovers "some pieces of bread as hard as rock" (51) close to a stream. For Chacón this is an emblem of God's presence and the power of prayer: "Someone had lost his money in order that I, a helpless child, without experience and in a strange land, should receive a visible proof that God watches over the needy who, with confidence and faith, pray for the protection of His Providence" (51). This story of steadfast faith is a familiar example of the 19th Century Hispano's deeply embedded religio-cultural consciousness.

Indeed, as Meketa points out, Chacón's description of feasting on the river-softened bread reads like an "allegorical representation of the Catholic sacrament of Holy Communion" (360). The aged narrator enforces this orthodox interpretation of a remote event, it turns out, as an analogue to the conditions underlying his impoverishment at the moment he is writing his memoirs. His remembrance of youthful faith in God's succor sustains the aged narrator who views the vulnerable child through the filter of the narrative present in which he again finds himself the victim of selfless charity, much like Vallejo and other Californios. Although he had accumulated property and livestock in the 1880's and 1890's, he had lost everything --in no small part because, still following the dictates of the Catón, he had helped friends who could not repay his kindness. As he writes:

> With the destitute I was more liberal than good judgement would approve, since I signed [cosigned] large fiscal obligations and had to pay them. On writing these memoirs I have nothing, but, nevertheless, in what seems like a paradox, I lack nothing. The God, who has watched over me since I

was a child on foreign soil and who later allowed me to come out of combat unharmed, watches over me every instant of my life and provides me with what is necessary to sustain the body (326).

Chacón's Christian extrapolation makes him a figure in his own allegory of model behavior: his children will find a model of Christian charity, faith, and patience in the father's text. However, religious orthodoxy must be sustained in the presence of social ruptures that unsettle the community's religio-cultural matrix. In narratively circularizing the vital position of orthodox faith in his life, Chacón autobiographically grounds character and personality within a strong cultural configuration threatened at every turn by the "ostracism of this commercial age" (333). Chacón's desire for moral stability --both in life and in the narrative-- develops as a response to the unstable social world in which he finds himself. Hence, the numerous episodes that resonate with Christian interpretation are socially immanent allegories of personal faith and exemplifications of stability in the face of commercial alienation, or put another way, narratives of cultural faith and social purpose. Chacón's religio-cultural construction of a moral center, with its extensional codes of social behavior and familial relation, resides at the heart of narrative motive in the text. What he has to say about childhood never appears as the obligatory function of ego-centered memoir, but rather as the socially significant function of textual self-possession. The formation of a stable personality capable of coherent reponses to life's contingencies is requisite for anyone; for members of Chacón's generation, the traumatic social upheaval of the U.S. military invasion and the succeeding colonial domination intensified that normal human task. The "Memorias" records Chacón's salvaging of the personal life in the face of negative social relations which were destroying the cultural ecology that had shaped group and individual experience in Hispano New Mexico.

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After his initial trial of faith as a young cadet, Chacón did settle into the pattern of life at the academy. His training continued for somewhat over a year before "rumors of an American invasion began to be circulated" (57) and then suddenly, "in May of the year 1846, they ordered us to return to New Mexico as best we could." This abrupt termination of military training that was to have continued at the National Academy in Mexico City signaled the end of his formal schooling as well as the end of childhood.

After returning to New Mexico, Chacón was ordered by General Armijo to "go meet the American forces that were advancing to take New Mexico." His father, as might be expected, pleaded with Armijo to excuse his son, "because at that time I was scarely thirteen years old; I was a boy without experience" (64). The general refused, telling the elder Chacón, "No sir, your son is a cadet. . . and he is a military man and therefore, he also will have to go to the front" (64). The "military man" of thirteen did report to the defensive front south of Santa Fe, but the anticipated battle with the Americans never took place. Fifty years later, in a letter to the historian Benjamin Read, Chacón explains General Armijo's abrupt, but justifiable, decision not to engage the enemy:

> At that time I was incapable of estimating men's actions. I was a child: when I reached mature age I cast a glance back over that event and what first struck my imagination was that the conquering army came provided with everything that was necessary for the conquest. General Armijo and our poor people had no other resource than that of 'going to fight' . . . . What could Armijo do with an undisciplined army without any military training . . . He was a dwarf against a giant (63).

Only after he has been a member of the American "conquering army" does Chacón understand Armijo's position and his pragmatic decision not to see his people's blood spilled in a symbolic but futile effort against the *americanos*. It may have been the case

that the Mexican army did not put up a sustained fight, but narratives like Chacón's put to rest the fabrication that *nuevomexicanos* welcomed General Kearny's forces as the liberating army so often imagined in American historiography. He is adamant about the hostile if fear-repressed response to the American presence. Autobiographically casting a glance back over that event, Chacón remembers that his people saw the *americanos* as an invading "enemy," who in one town "burned the public markets, the granaries, and everything that people were not able to carry away" (67).

Chacón's remembrance of the injustices he and other Hispanos later experienced in this same U.S. military, moreover, influences his narrative recovery of the American invasion in unexpected ways: having lived upon the surface of two distinct plates of social experience --one cultural, the other national-- recalling such events produces a distention of consciousness in which his own contradictory loyalties grate against each other, creating immense pyschological pressure and occasions of narrative tremor. These juxtapositons work themselves into the autobiographical recollections in what are no less than a series of shocks of recognition. Having proven himself a loyal military officer in the 1860s, and in his late years having become a celebrated figure, he might very well have muted the immediate effects of the American takeover in 1846. He might have passed over the specifics altogether. But he didn't. Neither did he overdramatize, or melodramatize his people's responses. To my mind, the very succinctness of his description enforces the intense fear that *nuevo mexicanos* experienced as the American army made its way from town to town: "I remember that there was such terror instilled by the Americans that when a dog barked the people killed it, the burros were muzzled so they could not bray, and if the roosters crowed at daylight they killed them. Only at night were fires permitted in order that the enemy not discover the smoke from the huts" (67).

As was the case for Mexican people throughout the Southwest, the American invasion entirely disrupted the normal life of the Chacón family, not to mention a way of life in New Mexico that had been in formation for over two hundred years. Chacón records that his

own father, Albino Chacón, was sought for questioning by the military on suspicion of subversive activity, and that the elder Chacón later refused to cooperate in the formation of the territorial government. Although his father was a member of the educated, land-owning class and might have prospered in post-occupation society, he refused to reconcile himself to the conquest, thus ending up economically and politically ruined. Other New Mexicans not only refused to cooperate, they fought where and when possible.[10]

Chacón remembers the scattered guerrilla actions initiated against the Americans during the early months of the occupation as well as the general climate of anxiety that prevailed, but chooses not to elaborate on this period. Since he was a witness at such a momentous historical transformation, one might expect him to say more, but instead, as Meketa points out, he turns "his thoughts and writing to the native people, their customs, their traditions" before the invasion. I think that Chacón says less than he might simply because by 1906 when he was writing the memoirs he had been a U.S. citizen for over fifty years, having sealed that ambiguous bond with distinguished service in the U.S. military. To write more about the American hostilities than he does would have placed him in a split discursive situation. How could he reconstruct detailed descriptions of the invasion by an American "enemy" and still go on to record his own high-minded service in that enemy's army? Yet, although there is a good deal of repression, Chacón's narrative turn to pre-American cultural life is reminiscent of that discovered in much autobiographical narrative of the period in which the colonized subject describes life before 1848 as culturally and socially coherent and yet praises the social and material advances made after 1848.

Like the Californio narratives produced during the 1870s, the New Mexican autobiographer finds himself remembering a way of life before the invasion and ensuing disruption. The world these colonized autobiographers reconstruct both delights and pains

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[10] For useful accounts of resistence to the invading American forces see Rodolfo Acuña's Occupied America: A History of Chicanos (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), and Robert J. Rosenbaum's Mexicano Resistence in the Southwest: "The Sacred Rights of Self-Preservation." (Austin: Texas UP, 1981)

them. As I have suggested in my remarks on Mariano Vallejo, the narrative reconstruction of a valorizing pre-American period sets itself against Vallejo's sense of material and social displacement. Likewise, half a century after the transformation, Chacón's memory of disrupted childhood remains an unsettled description of the fragmenting of a cultural ontology that structures consciousness. Although he is a loyal citizen of the United States, he does not, or cannot, celebrate an American identity. Rather, as he remembers that his father harbored the family in a safe place "during the critical time of the invasion," the names of family and close friends all at once proliferate upon the page, along with memories of pre-American planting and harvesting customs, trading and bartering practices, and the many festive occasions that extended from this collective life --dances, singing, especially extemporaneous verse contests, feast days celebrated with various Pueblo Indians, and buffalo hunts.

It may be argued that this part of the narrative is motivated by a desire to provide a outline of village life and customs for Chacón's turn of the century contemporaries --after all he shared his broad historical experiences with members of the historical preservation societies then being organized in Southern Colorado at the end of the 19th century.[11] Nevertheless, what claims attention is the way the narrative fulfills this function in a recuperatively powerful social articulation. Once Chacón locates himself in the communal economy of the pre-American past, his narrative lights up, displaying a capacity for thick detail that appears generated by outright joy at remembering such collective events as harvesting and syrup production. I quote at length:

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[11] Meketa notes that about this time "an interest in the history of Trinidad [Chacón's home town] and the colorful characters who had participated in the settlement of the Southwest arose in the area. The Early Settler's Association was then formed, as the forerunner of the the present-day Trinidad Historical Society, and regional historians began questioning Chacón and other pioneers about their memories of earlier time, both in person and by letter." (308)

During the reaping of the crops. . . it was a joy to see neighbors helping one another in the gathering of the crops. Much syrup was made. They made presses from white pine logs on which several men would climb, pressing the cane as the men worked the log back and forth. The juice from the cane would then run into a receptacle built for this purpose. The cane was then pounded with sledgehammers of oak and heavy mallets and the cane was thrown in a canoe made of stout white pine. When the cane juice came out it was put in kettles and hung on syrup racks, and under the kettles they made sort of a furnace where they had a fire and put the kindling. The men and women worked together in order to carefully watch the timing of the syrup cooking. They sang songs and had dances with much modesty, and always good order prevailed. The young people of both sexes enjoyed themselves without failing to show respect and good manners, and all was enjoyment and happiness." (75)

I commence in the middle of the passage to emphasize Chacón's apparent delight, yet repressed anguish, at reconstructing certain cultural practices that by 1906 had either drastically declined, or vanished. Memory reproduces the sights and sounds of childhood, when a seasonal cycle of events was an enriching collective experience. What might otherwise be regarded as a nostalgic and idealized cultural reminiscence, however, appears politically motivated by Chacón's opening remarks in the paragraph: "Before the arrival of the Americans, the customs of the populace of New Mexico were very sane and sober. The people lived simply and very contentedly, with no ambitions that pushed them into vice. They did the sowing in the spring, and the corn was generally planted on the fifteenth of May, the feast of San Isidro Labrador" (74).

A description of seasonal consciousness and the cooperative structuring of labor which characterized Hispano rural life is told from the point of view of someone whose words

measure the disintegration of the collective economy that produced him. A reader familiar with the social history of New Mexico village life may be skeptical of Chacón's revisiting of a what appears as a conflict-free community. The land-owning classes, it might be argued, were as influential as the seasons in keeping village peons working on schedule. Given our knowledge of class division and its abuses, coupled with a post-structuralist distrust of narratives that construct harmonious communal origins, we can hardly be expected to believe that life was ever so joyous, cooperative, morally sane, peaceful -- anywhere. However, what bears analysis here is not Chacón's recuperation of what may read as a socially idyllic communal past so much as a strategic reconstruction of a pre-American community which fully integrated food production activity, religious festivities, village entertainments and artistic enactments of various kinds. Remember that the socio-cultural nostalgia here, functioning to startle and plot memory, is contained in Chacón's initial words --"Before the arrival of the Americans." Every succeeding word in this section, where native values of the pre-American rural community crowd the page, must be read against the devastating sense of a world ruined.

Chacón regards the disruption of socially significant linguistic practices as oral poetics after the Americanization with more than vague sadness at the lapse of festive folk traditions. The fragmentation of Hispano oral tradition is figured as a rupture in the cultural epistemology of the *nuevo mexicano*. Upon recalling the extemporaneous verbal dueling that routinely took place between competing *poetas* at dances, religious feastdays, and various group gatherings, Chacón laments the loss of the oral speech community that simultaneously sustained an aesthetic tradition and an orally transmitted epistemology embedded in the community's historical, political, moral, and mythic narratives. In recalling the singing of *Inditas* and *cuandos*, the autobiographer is transported to an earlier cultural locale in which the play of language was a cultural activity of both great pleasure and a linguistic event of significant social dimension. *Trovos*, duels matching repartee and the verbal improvisation of formally complex *cuandos* commemorating

important historical events, buffalo hunts, commendatory verse acknowledgements of loved ones, or verse *memorias* of deceased relatives were performed by well-known *poetas*. But villagers were by no means passive auditors witnessing the performances of famed *poetas*. On the contrary, they passed immediate judgement on the ability with which these *trovadores* [troubadors] performed a series of rhetorical feats. Verbal extemporizing was part theater, part intellectual competition between *poetas* and villagers, and part rhetoric school for children who were absorbing the socio-linguistic conventions of their community.

Chacón, for instance, remembers one occasion when Juan Bautisa Vigil y Alarid, the town doctor, was challenged to "instantly compose, and without stopping, recite a verse that ended with the words, 'I say that there is no hell' and that at the same time he would say nothing blasphemous nor offensive to the dogmas of the Catholic religion"(73). Alarid was tested for his ability to extemporize in a sustained manner, following formal conventions of meter and end-ryhme. Yet, success was not alone rhetorically performative, since the *poeta* must reverse the heretical signification of the phrase in a manner consonant with the community's religious tenets. Hence, while rhetorical skill could not be dislodged from the community's ethics, such elasticity did function to invigorate the culture through a renewing play of language.

Such collective rhetorical practices constituted the means by which Hispanos had sustained their historical and cultural narratives, their religious beliefs, their medicinal practices, not to mention their sense of humor. The narratives in this storehouse of collective historical knowledge and cultural values were transmitted to succeeding generations, not through an array of static values, but rather through an oral poetics of complex verbal codes which constituted group subjectivity. As Chacón's contemporary the noted folklorist Aurelio M. Espinosa wrote in 1913, such practices "constitute a kind of life philosophy, which, with the authority of tradition and experience, is ever present in the

minds of the people."[12] And as a more recent folk historian, Rowena Rivera, writes: ". . . what gave resiliency and flexibility to Spanish/Mexican colonial oral poetry was precisely its bond to the reality of the common folk. As such it was therefore always suitable to be used in any way that it was needed, so long as it adhered to the community's religious ideology, its code of ethics, its sense of aesthetics, and it own iterary canons."[13] Yet, as Chacón points out, this collective discourse was radically altered by the American installation of a hegemonic social, cultural, and linguistic economy.

Because Chacón worries that the Hispano community has already lost touch with a crucial part of its identity at the turn of the century, the examples of fragmented verse compositions included in his memoirs do not represent an effort to preserve part of this oral tradition. Rather than restore the past, he must admit the breach between himself in 1906 and an earlier cultural discourse. Like other Hispanos, he can "only remember a very few verses of their compositions" (72). The popular *romances* that "saved the tradition . . . have been forgotten or have been corrupted until they now [circa 1900] remain completely distorted" (72). To re-produce such fragments can only be a pathetic, disincorporated textual gesture. Espinosa, working at the same time, did reproduce these cultural artifacts for folkloric study, but when one looks at the list of over 400 hundred one-line "New Mexican Spanish proverbs" Chacón's anxiety about the disfiguration of cultural practices and oral discourse is made manifest. Espinosa himself expresses his own anxiety about the erosion of proverb practice: "A proverb is considered the final word on any subject, on any occasion, and in any emergency. That a few, however, are beginning to scoff at them, is evident."[14]

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[12] see "New Mexican Spanish Folk-Lore," JAF, 26(April-June, 1913)100: p. 97.

[13] "New Mexico Colonial Poetry: Tradition and Innovation," pasó por aquí: Critical Essays on the New Mexican Literary Tradition, 1542-1988, Erlinda Gonzales-Berry (Albuquerque: New Mexico UP, 1989), p. 83-84:

[14] op cit, p. 97. And Rivera, while noting that certain forms have "miraculously survived. . . up to the 1960s," notes the erosion of traditional practice: "In northern New Mexico and southern Colorado, one can still find a few surviving fragmented texts representing the fullest traditional form of the secular *décima* or the religious *décima-a-lo-divino*. And

The brooding question about memory's frailty that underlies Chacón's reconstitution of his cultural childhood is central to the autobiographical enterprise: how can Chacón adequately describe personal experience when the cultural ecology has been stripped of the discursive equipment necessary for representing subjectivity seated in cultural practice? As it turns out, rather than reconstructing a coherent order of experience, autobiographical narrative is forced to describe fragmentation, dispersal, the subject's inability to articulate himself. Chacón suppresses his anxiety at such a juncture by moving on to other episodes of life, yet his narrative of childhood writes itself as an anguished memory of familial, cultural, and linguistic discontinuity that scars much of the text.

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occasionally, one also finds, especially in southern Colorado, an older poet who can chant the *planta* [introductory quatrain for the *décima*] and a few stanza."
ibid, p. 90.

III

"Do not trust the Mexican troops."
--General E.R.S. Canby, Commander
of the Union forces in New Mexico,
March, 1862

Obliged by circumstances always to defend themselves
with weapons, in the country and in the village,
like the Roman populace in Roman times, they
soon raised among their sons a populace of
soldiers by nature intelligent, intrepid, valiant,
and lovers of their country and of their liberty.
The New Mexicans, raised in the use of arms
from their childhood, did not know what fear was
and God grant that those in whose hands our
destiny has fallen will begin someday to
appreciate their beautiful qualities and
their temperaments.
--Rafael Chacón, "Memorias"

Some forty-years after Chacón had served with distinction in the American military, his words register an unreconciled concern about the perilous position he and fellow *nuevomexicanos* held in American society. Writing his memoirs after 1906 when he was in his late seventies, he recognizes that "those in whose hands our destiny has fallen" --*los americanos*-- refused to appreciate the *nuevo mexicanos'* courage and loyalty , even after they had proven their "martial character" during Civil War battles fought in New Mexico, the military campaigns leveled against the Navajo and Apache, not to mention their participation in the Spanish-American War of 1898. Significant here is Chacón's

recognition as an old man that a half century after Nuevo Mexico and Colorado had become American territory, native Hispanos remained outside the trust of the U.S.

Chacón's "Memorias" presents one more version of the manner in which 19th century Hispanos had adapted to the American transformation, but not without experiencing what for members of Chacón's generation were confounding divisions between loyalty to the U.S. and their disenchantment with its common mistreatment of them in the military. Like Juan Seguin and Santiago Tafolla in Texas, Chacón adapted to life under the U.S., even excelled as a military officer in the wars against the Navajos, Utes and Apaches, as well as in the brief New Mexican Civil War battles, but as his narrative twists about on him, Chacón's memories of military duty are less about service to his adopted country than about the persistent conflict with Anglo soldiers who derogated Mexican American troopers on a daily basis. The long middle section of the narrative --the section which reconstructs his military years from 1861 to 1864-- appears as a rejoinder to haunting Anglo-American voices from the past that were constant reminders of ethnocentric snobbery and outright exclusion.

Recall that in his preface Chacón writes that he expects "no greater reward" for his labor than that his readers be supplied with "some short hours of amusement." Yet, aside from some few anecdotes drawn from childhood and curious incidents from his military career, there is little that a reader can expect in the way of amusement from the book. Not that Chacón is grim, nor would he think his life tragic, but memory retrieves a life history troubled by inter-cultural tensions that constantly cloud his narrative. In the same short preface, he remarks that he has "gone over all the events of greater importance, from a biographical standpoint" and that having responsibly completed that documentary outline he will satisfy himself to "leave details and amplifications of historical narrative to other works of greater pretensions." He may leave amplification to others, but if ironized, as I believe it to be, this statement allows him to understate his revisionary and oppositional intentions. Like Seguin and Vallejo, writing from the standpoint of a man whose major

phase of adult life requires a version of telling that discloses the disappointments which life under the American regime had imparted, Chacón documents his experience as an American soldier who is often treated like the enemy. Yet, his version of the troubling military career remains strategically tight-lipped, undetailed, as I've suggested, because to elaborate means to place himself within a narrative vortex that might split him apart altogether. Chacón's is the common predicament of the colonial subject whose loyalties are split by conquest.

One must begin here by questioning the apparent contradiction: why did Chacón and other Mexicans join the U.S. military so soon after they had been the victims of American conquest? Early in the narrative he says that the family suffered materially and emotionally at the hands of the Americans; so, on the face of things joining the conquering military appears socially and ideologically ludicrous. After all, he describes the family situation as extremely destablized:

> The severity of the American occupation swept away the few properties of my father. . . . My poor sisters and my mother, little accustomed to those trials, suffered the hardships of the poor like true heroines. . . . During the days of discouragement, of which there were many, my father entrusted us to the hands of God, and I have still saved a very beautiful poetic composition which gave him comfort in the sad hour.(86)

Given this disclosure of post-occupation material hardship and spiritual discouragement it is difficult to believe that Chacón --in a sudden turn of mind-- became an American patriot in 1855. But it turns out that this choice is rather understandable and common in a colonized territory. Economic conditions pressured Chacón and scores of other Mexicans into joining the American army, especially since they were promised handsome cash bonuses and the prospect of steady pay. The economics of their choice doesn't account for their loyalty, but, as we shall see, their loyalty was to an idea of the homeland that, they believed, could be protected through the U.S. military.

As Darlis A. Miller reveals in "Hispanos and the Civil War in New Mexico: A Reconsideration," when the Civil War threatened to extend into the territory, Union officials "initiated plans to raise two regiments of volunteers among the territory's citizenry."[15] Only after Hispanos were given bonuses for joining, promised that their families would be cared for, and guaranteed stable pay were they willing to muster in. As Miller writes, "despite hesitancy, approximately 2,800 residents--most of them Hispanos--had enlisted in the New Mexico volunteers by February 1862. Undoubtedly these men joined the army for mixed reasons, but for many the chief attraction was the prospect of soldier's pay and bounties"(107). The monetary inducement must have been enormously attractive to a people whose economy had been squashed less than fifteen years earlier. Yet, a more culturally autochthonous reason for mustering in was their desire to secure the homeland. Joining the American army provided the *nuevomexicanos* with the military means to defend the homeland against their "ancient enemy" the Navajo,[16] and the more recent but more deeply hated enemy, "los tejanos." The *nuevomexicano* memory of the Texas conspiracy to invade New Mexico in the early 1840s was fresh, and antagonism for the hated *tejanos* had not relaxed in the twenty intervening years. As Chacón writes, the Texas military "invasion of 1841" aimed at extending the Texas border to Santa Fe was beaten back by New Mexican forces, but the "legacy of bitterness and hatred" that developed as a result of that incursion was fresh in the minds of New Mexicans well after 1848. Such antagonism proved exploitable in recruiting efforts in 1861 when troops were

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15 New Mexico Historical Review, 54:2, 1979, p. 107.

16 As Chacón writes toward the end of the narrative, generations of Chacóns had fought against the Navajo, with substantial losses: "the terrible Navajos. . . had deprived me of those whoe were dear to me, my grandfather Don Francisco Lopez, my god father, Captain Blas de Hinojos, and so many other officers from my family who perished in the wars against that tribe" (303). Although he offers no apologies for waging war against the Navajo, Chacon opposed the inhumane conditions to which they were subjected in forced removals by the U.S. during the 1860s. In a letter to the Santa Fe Gazette (April 1863) Chacón balked at the plan to remove the Navajo to a location he thought impossibly severe: "The place is unfit, it will not even grow grass . . . The winters are very cold and the summers are unpleasant. No people have ever lived in this area; it is a desert" (Meketa, 248).

being organized for the Civil War; Miller again: "The legislative assembly of New Mexico issued a manifesto which stated bluntly that the enemy was Texas and the Texans and that 'every Mexican in the Territory' must rally to the cause"(120n). And Governor Connally issued a proclamation warning "the people that the territory had again been invaded by Texans and that their 'manhood' called upon them to defend their homes, their families, and the soil of their birth" (Miller,108-09).

Defending the homeland --especially in American uniform-- must have been a test of will for Hispanos who found themselves socially disfranchised after centuries of permanent residence. In the Hispano collective mind, what became the Territory of New Mexico under the American regime was actually *la Nueva Mexico*, a land settled in 1598 by Juan de Oñate and a group of six-hundred colonists, a land in which the oldest capital in North America --Santa Fe-- was established in 1610, a land that during the succeeding two centuries and a half had become a homeland to thousands of *nuevomexicanos.*[17]

After the North American invasion, the Chacón family, along with their compatriots, was forced to make major economic and social readjustments, or surrender themselves to despair. After the family moved to El Chamizal in 1850, Rafael developed his skills as a laborer, woodcutter, trader and pack freighter, as well as a buffalo hunter. What this episodic section of the narrative shows is that Chacón, like other Hispanos, was racing to survive after the destablizing effects of the American takeover. During the period from roughly 1850 to 1861, when he was enlisted as an officer in the Union army against the impending Confederate march into New Mexico, Chacón spent long periods freighting cargo between Santa Fe and various towns, went out every autumn to hunt buffalo for winter meat, joined the American army for a period of about six months in 1855 to pursue a group of Apaches and Utes, and then, immediately after fighting against those tribes,

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[17] My thinking here on the deeply ingrained desire to protect the homeland has been much influenced by Tobias Duran, a New Mexico historian.

Chacón was an "Indian trader for four or five years, meeting the Cheyennes, Comanches, and Arapahoes. . ." (106).

Chacón's narrative is replete with details about his enduring relationship with the land that comprised the map of his peoples' cultural geography. His description of buffalo hunting, for example, figures prominently into the "Memorias" as a metaphor for the formation of an intimate cultural discourse. Hispanos had hunted buffalo for generations and would continue to do so until the herds were killed off entirely at the end of the century. In addition to providing a stable meat source, the excursion for buffalo every October was an occasion of immense social and discursive significance. Chacón describes the buffalo hunting practices of the *nuevomexicanos* less as an ethnographic tale of the Western frontier experience than as a narrative of social bonding: "On the plains, where the silence was crushing, the hunters assembled from many parties and made camp together in order to become a society. There we met kinsmen and friends, and friendships were made that lasted for life" (93). Chacón represents the hunt as an activity that produced not only food, but collective events of the sort that evolved into --usually comic but occasionally tragic-- narratives which were related again and again in increasingly elaborate form.

The anecdotal hunt scenes that appear in Chacón as embryonic narratives reappear in more extensive, and different narrative form in Miguel Antonio Otero's autobiography My Life on the Frontier (1935) and especially in Fabiola Cabeza de Baca's autobiographical We Fed Them Cactus (1954) where one of the ranch hands --El Cuate-- relates story after story of the buffalo hunt to an enthralled audience of children and adults. Even in the fiction of Fray Angelico Chavez[18] and Rudolfo Anaya[19] the social significance that derives from stories about life on the *llano estacado* (the central plains of New Mexico) emerges from a condition of material absence that produces an imaginative desire to

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[18] see The Short Stories of Fray Angelico Chavez, Genaro M. Padilla, ed., (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).

[19] seeAnaya's Bless Me, Ultima (Berkeley: Quinto Sol, 1972), Heart of Aztlan (Berkeley: Editorial Justa, 1976), and The Silence of the Llano (Berkeley: Tonatiuh-Quinto Sol, 1982).

reconstitute those narrative events that were lost when the buffalo were destroyed. The fact that the buffalo were killed off and the *llano* fenced-in has produced a narrative enterprise in *nuevo mexicano* autobiography and fiction that simultaneously operates to criticize the American hegemony while developing a socio-ideologically charged figuration of cultural presence on a landscape that will not be surrendered. Cabeza de Baca's We Fed Them Cactus, in fact, is "the story of the struggle of New Mexican Hispanos for existence on the Llano, the Staked Plains" (Preface).[20] Cabeza de Baca remembers her father's intimate attachment to the llano: ". . . he had taken deep roots on the Ceja [cap rock country in the llano], roots deeper than the piñon and the juniper on his land. . . . He had his children, but they could never be as close to him as the hills, the grass, the yucca and mesquite and the peace enjoyed from the land"(175). Another father, Gabriel Marez, in Anaya's Bless Me, Ultima, a man whose consciousness is seated in the llano, will not be reconciled to life in town; although he is fenced off the range, he buys a small plot of land edging the llano as a symbol of his refusal to surrender his claim to a traditional way of life. For Chacón just after 1900 as for Cabeza de Baca in 1954 and Anaya in 1972, the *llano* represents the homeland, a zone of cultural freedom replete with stories that sustain personal and cultural identity over time. In fact, the original nuevomexicano story about the llano and the buffalo is Juan de Oñate's "Relación del descrubimiento de las Vacas de cibola" a first-hand account of his first viewing of the buffalo in 1599.[21]

The autobiographically positive figuration of the homeland, therefore, allows Chacón to narratively re-enforce an identity that has been constructed over a period of 300 years. Although *Nuevo Mexico* became American territory in 1848, Hispanos did not surrender their deeply rooted conviction that they were inextricable from the land. The homeland had always to be defended from its enemies and, therefore, Chacón, "raised in the use of

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20 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1954).

21 see Spanish Exploration in the Southwest, 1542-1706, Herbert Eugene Bolton (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), pp. 223-232.

arms from. . . childhood" took what recourse he must and joined the American army. Yet, that army, as Chacón came to realize, had little regard for New Mexico as homeland, or the *nuevomexicano* as soldier.

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Chacón's most vivid memories of the Civil War period are less about valorous battle against the Confederates that about recurrent scenes in which Union soldiers and officers were openly racist to him and his compatriots. What we encounter in the "Memorias" is a description of determined soldiering on the part of the *nuevomexicano* soldiers and, without having to read through any subtext, Chacón's pointed disclosure of the denigrating treatment to which he and his men were daily subjected. At this juncture in the narrative, Chacón's autobiographical voice assumes an accent of pointed, yet not acrimonious, insistence. Rather, he remains composed, saying what he must say, but remaining calm, as though to show that even in old age he capably confronts the spectres of the ethnocentric Anglo soldiers as he had when he was a young officer. The entire section is marked by pride for the integrity he and his fellow New Mexicans maintained during their service to the Union. His memories of the "Mexican" soldiers whom, he writes, "came with me in all the battles in which I fought and in everything showed valor" (127) are not vague, but textually specific. Working from official documents, he lists all the men of his company who fought bravely by name and rank as "a remembrance and a recollection for their posterity", likewise "omitting those who deserted, who were few" (127) Some eighty-six native *nuevomexicanos* with such names as Mateo Arguello, Ramón Chávez, Isidro Durán, Encarnación Lucero, Enríquez López, José León Mora, Juan Romero, José Guadalupe Sandoval, Francisco Vásquez are inscribed into Chacón's text. Not very American sounding names for a U.S. Army company, not names to be trusted. And Chacón knew his compañeros were neither trusted during their service, nor respected by

American military historiographers who often chose to scapegoat them. In fact, they were roundly blamed for losing the initial Civil War battle in New Mexico at Valverde in February, 1862.

Writing on "The Confederate Invasion of New Mexico" in 1916, the prominent historian Ralph Emerson Twitchell pointed out that General George Canby, the commanding officer, sent "many telegrams and orders. . . to notify commanders of posts and others to place no reliance in them whatever except for certain purposes."[22] The letter (to Major Donaldson, March 7, 1862) that warned "Do not trust the Mexicans troops" was then amplified by Donaldson in a note to a General Thomas which read: "no reliance can be placed on the New Mexico Volunteers. . . They have a traditionary fear of the Texans and will not meet them in the field." (Twitchell,34) Additionally, the inspector-general in Santa Fe wrote, "No dependence whatever can be placed on the natives; they are worse than useless; they are really aides to the enemy. . ." (Meketa, p. 180). As Twitchell notes, although the "opinion of all the officers of the regular army is unanimous," such "judgement of their qualifications as fighting men as a class, in the face of an enemy of the prowess of the Texans, is unfair." The result of this general "blackwash" was that the volunteers "were employed in garrisoning posts, or in expeditions against the hostile Apaches and Navajos. . ." (Twitchell, 36). This pervasive hostility displayed toward the *nuevomexicanos* and the exploitation of their services remained fixed in Chacón's mind while he wrote his memoirs: the result was a narrative recovery of the Civil War period which functions to exonerate his compañeros and himself, even though there was nothing for which they needed to be exonerated.

In one of his earliest references to training for their encounter with the Confederates, Chacón makes no mention of any "traditionary fear of the Texans," but he does have much to say about tensions with the Union regulars. One story concerns a Lieutenant A.P.

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22 The Leading Facts of New Mexican History, Vol. 2., (Cedar Rapids: Torch Press, 1912), p. 33n).

Damours. Assigned to Chacón's company because he was bilingual, instead of proving helpful, Damours was a sadistic racist who, the aged autobiographer remembers, "always mistreated and insulted the Mexicans," "pricked their thighs with his sword," or rammed a "stick to their neck in order to make them straighten up" (131). As company captain, Chacón was charged with maintaining unity and calm among his men, which meant maintaining his own poise: "I, who was very impetuous in my youth, repressed my anger all that I could, in order to see if he would correct his ways." But when Damours made derogatory slurs at mess, he no longer held back:

> The next time when he began with his jokes once again at the table, I said, 'Until now I have suffered and allowed you to talk of my race, but from now and henceforth I will not allow you to return to denigrating them in my presence.' He replied that I did not have the right to keep him from speaking. . . I repeated that in my presence he was not to do it anymore, and that if he would . . . he should know that I would stand behind my word. He was frightened and used arrogant language. Then I seized some loose boards . . . and broke them into two or three pieces. He attempted to draw out his sword but I did not give him time to use it, but I began to hit him with the boards. . . . Then, seeing me infuriated, he fled outside, dragging his sword, and ran over into the middle of a group of officers, and I went after him. . . . I explained everything and they began to laugh. . ." (131)

Episodes of this kind --and there are a good many in this part of the narrative-- adopt an accent of comic detachment from experiences that might just as easily have been remembered in bitterness, or brooding self-righteousness. Chacón maintains a rhetorical mask that transforms repressed anger into comic dismissal of an old adversary.

However, as he continues to detail Army exploitation and ill-treatment of Mexican volunteers, his rhetorical poise cracks now and again. As in his encounter with Damours,

there was simply too much to repress. At this point, the narrative assumes a dense documentary, self-impersonalizing posture that endangers autobiographical coherence. Chacón includes more and more correspondence --some of his own letters, many official military and judicial letters-- which, it appears, he has saved for just such an occasion: Chacón's documents certify the Army's failure to pay the men, its failure to reimburse him and other New Mexicans for the horses, feed, equipment they agreed to front temporarily, and, most painfully, its general disregard for and hostile treatment of the *nuevomexicano* troops. At a crucial moment in the formation of Chicano autobiography, "self" concentration is disrupted once again by memories of social discomfort. In 1906-1912 Chacón was a celebrated military figure, a hero. But rather than exploit his public status in the "Memorias", the old issue of the nuevo mexicanos' service during the Civil War nags at Chacón, pressing him into the service of documenting his fellow soldiers military record. At stake is the honor of the *nuevomexicanos* involved in the single major Civil War battle fought at Valverde in southern New Mexico.

In brief, after daylong bloody and often confusing skirmishes on February 21, 1862, the Confederate forces prevailed. In his official report, Colonel Canby, the Union commander, wrote that "the battle was fought . . . with no assistance from the militia and but little from the volunteers, who would not obey orders or obeyed them too late to be of any service" (Meketa, 164). As Meketa points out, Canby's charges laid the foundation for all the subsequent historiography of the encounter, and "fostered a rash of rumors, accusations, and exaggerations which, ever since, have clouded the true picture of that day's events and unjustly dishonored many of the native soldiers" (165). Twenty-five years later the story, related by one Anglo veteran of the battle, had become agressively comic:

> Before the insidious advances of the 'tortilla' they were invincible; the red hot *chile colorado* had no terrors for them, and against whole batteries of cannistered beans, Caesar was nowhere. But for anything indigestible, as grape, unfermented, they retired with respectful celerity, which the

demoralization of a single six-pound shot precipitated a stampede equaled only by a break of terrified buffalo. (181)

By the turn of the century such old-fart stories were being told at meetings of Civil War veterans throughout the territory, some of which were attended by Chacón who surely wasn't laughing at the ethnic jest. In a letter to historian Edwin Sabin in 1911, Chacón once again tries to correct things: "Personally I have always disliked to speak of matters that might be construed into self-praise. . . . But there are times, and this is one of them, when we must speak on behalf of the truth to correct all erroneous impressions given out about the Battle of Valverde. That was a bloody battle, not yet sufficiently understood. . ." In his "Memorias," Chacón describes the day in detail, narrating the movements of both armies with great precision, from sunrise --"which many of us would not see set" (167)-- through a daylong chronology of "flanking attacks," cannon fire, cavalry attacks, the spectacle of "blood, horses, torn and dismembered limbs, and heads separated from their bodies" to "the hour the sun went down [and] the order was given to retreat"(171). Memory is so alive to a significant day some fifty years past that, along with remembering names and ranks of a host of officers, he sketches "from memory two maps" that are copied into the "Memorias" as a cartographic warrant against historical inaccuracy. The Civil War episode concludes with Chacón pointing out that he "had had the honor to exchange the first shots with the enemy Confederates at the beginning of the campaign . . . and the honor to discharge the last shots on the enemy, already fugitives, at the end of the Texas invasion" (185).

Although he valorizes his own efforts, the memoir does not distinguish Chacón from his fellow Hispanos. To his way of thinking, he was but one of many men defending their country against foreigners as they had done for centuries. Chacón's response to the ethnocentric barrage leveled at the *nuevomexicano* volunteers remains strategically soldierly to the end when he reminds his readers that defense of the homeland was a culturally ingrained reflex:

> Since the Spanish colonization this nation of New Mexico endured an unequal struggle against the savage nations [naciones bárberas] that surrounded it, without any rudiments, without resources, without assistance of any kind from capitals of ruling countries. They have fought and died, always with the faith that is was necessary for them to defend their hearths. Obliged by circumstances always to defend themselves with weapons. . . (185-86).

More effective than an emotional outburst, his historicizing language countermands the slandering images of "tortillas", "red hot chili" and "cannistered beans," as well as the accusations of cowardice perpetuated by many historians. Chacón's dignified rhetorical position neither denigrates the Anglos along whose side he fought, nor lapses into sentimental cultural extremism. His final words on the Civil War period, however, are unsettling, divided by deep regard for his people's topographic identity and his recognition of their unfortunate subordination in a country that exploited the *nuevomexicano* during its wars without seeing "their beautiful qualities." Writing during the few years before New Mexico was to become a state (1912), Chacón, like Seguin, Lorenzana, and Vallejo before him, projects an uncertain future for his posterity, a destabilized condition in a country into "whose hands our destiny has fallen.

Rafael Chacón,
probably in the summer of 1862
while stationed in Santa Fe.
(*Historia ilustrada de Nuevo México*)

IV

I gave him my hand, looked directly into his eyes,
and he, embarrassed and ashamed, lowered his head. . .
--Rafael Chacón, "Memorias"

There is a daguerreotype of Rafael Chacón, seated, sword in hand, dressed in full military regalia, facing out from the front cover of Jacqueline Meketa's Legacy of Honor. Chacón appears robust, of well-groomed black hair and trimmed mustaches, with dark, intense eyes peering into the camera and beyond. Meketa suggests that the photo was probably taken in the summer of 1862 while Chacón --about 29 years old-- was stationed in Santa Fe. This would have been some four or five months after the invading Confederates were routed out of New Mexico. Chacón had reason for appearing confident, since, as he writes in the "Memorias," he had performed the symbolically crucial act of firing the first and last shots at the "enemy Confederates." He would continue to perform such feats against other enemies.

After the retreat of the Texas Confederates, the New Mexico volunteers were reorganized into a cavalry unit, and Rafael Chacón, awarded a command, continued to serve in the U.S. military campaigns against the Navajo and Apache. He quickly rose in rank from Captain to Major, and from cavalry officer to Commander of Fort Stanton in 1864. Chacón's service record, from all accounts, was exemplary, so exemplary that when he began to apply for resignation in early 1863 his requests were either ignored or refused by his commanding officers. As Meketa explains, "it seemed as though his requests just disappeared into some sort of void at the military headquarters and that the only communications he received were further orders for more dangerous and difficult duty" (267). As the photo seems to reveal, Chacón was not a man afraid of duty or danger, and it is

Rafael Chacon.

just such a visage that historians at the turn of the century would emboss in their comments on him.

Benjamín M. Read's Illustrated History of New Mexico[23] (1912) includes a three-page biographical profile of Rafael Chacón drawn primarily from the official military records. The *bio* commends him for his "gallant record for efficiency as an officer and meritorious service," but doesn't add much to our knowledge of him. Yet, Read's Illustrated History does provide us with another photo of Chacón, this time as an old man, the Chacón who was writing his "Memorias." The photograph, one imagines, was one of those taken of septuagenarian veterans at a Golden Anniversary celebration of the Civil War battles in New Mexico. The image is startling because Chacón, once again in full military uniform and cavalry cap, is standing at attention, with full chest and head erect, gazing intently into the lens. Only his white mustaches, the white hair showing below his cap, and the obvious passage of many decades gives him away. Otherwise, his bearing is that of the 1862 daguerreotype.

Read had recently called upon "Captain Chacón," who was living in Trinidad at the time, to supply him with information on the American invasion of 1846 and other significant events of the territorial period. Read's Illustrated History, for example, includes a long letter, dated May 4, 1910, in which Chacón recounted events from 1846; in the letter, Chacón says: "I wrote in 1906 part of my memoirs and thence I copy what follows. . ." (Read, 432). Since by this time he knew that his life was composed of events significant enough to be told by others, he decided he would compose his own narrative. As Meketa says, "about the time that Rafael Chacón began writing his memoirs an interest in the history of Trinidad and the colorful characters who had participated in the settlement of the Southwest arose in the area. . . . and regional historians began questioning Chacón and

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[23] Santa Fe: Santa Fe New Mexican Printing Co., 1912. The original history was the Spanish História Ilustrada de Nuevo Mexico, (Santa Fe: Compañia Impresora de Nuevo Mexico, 1911).

other pioneers about their memories of earlier times, both in person and by letter" (Meketa, 308). Chacón, however, seems to have had little interest in being a colorful character whose memories would supplement the legend of the West. For Chacón, writing the past of the self was both a way of helping historians reconstruct the past and making them responsible for reporting the truth of that past. Once again, we discover a personal narrative endangered by the objectification of a life spanning the Mexican period, the American invasion and subsequent territorial period, and the admission of Colorado into the Union in 1876 and New Mexico in 1912. The danger is that Chacón's memories, and his "Memorias," may be so appropriated by regional history that another, distinctly motivated voice is overlooked.

Although he was a local celebrity by the turn of the century and might well have participated in the romanticizing of the U.S. Cavalry, the truth of his experience in the military was not a specimen of the extravagant tales of the winning of the West, but, on the contrary was a story of bone-hard work, constant exposure to danger, material privation, and sickness. The "Memorias" do not glamourize the U.S. Cavalry the way popular pulp "True Life Stories of the West" so often did. If anything, Chacón's text unsettles the popular image of the mounted cavalry trooper as a tall, blue-eyed soldier who, as it turns out, was not only a "Mexican" but a "Mexican" who usually marched rather than rode. Moreover, rather than focus on life in the field, the cavalry section of the "Memorias" is primarily the story of his unceasing efforts to establish solid ground for his wife and children while military assignments were driving him farther and farther from them. The section of the narrative in which Chacón retraces the period between 1862 and 1864 outlines numerous skirmishes with Indian groups, maps his military movements throughout New Mexico and Arizona, comments on the unrelenting poor treatment of the native soldiers, records his own bouts with debilitating rheumatism along the trail -- constantly repeating his desire to finish his service and go home.

Chacon's narrative strategy here accommodates itself to the style of historiographic discourse of the period. His account of the period --as chronologically, toponymnically

and topographically precise as his seventy plus years will admit-- provided just the kind of information that, enforced by a rich inventory of official letters, would suit Read, Edwin Sabin, and the members of historical societies while also suiting his own needs. Read's Illustrated History, for example, is saturated with documentary correspondence, diary and journal accounts, legislative papers, official military records and the like. Personal narratives of this period, at least those by public men, also appropriated this form of documentary discourse --after all the history of the self requires documentation, especially when the self anticipates becoming the subject of someone else's history. And, not unexpectedly, given the Civil War experience, the correspondence which Chacón incorporates into the section exposes exploitation, cultural discrimination, and the severe material and physical privation to which the men were daily subjected. It is little wonder, therefore, that many of Chacón's letters and the commentary surrounding them speak to his longing for family and home, and his often desperate pleas to be allowed to resign.

As early as October 1, 1863, he addressed a letter to his commanding officer, General Carleton, in which he tendered his resignation, citing a complete lack of recognition for his services. He reminds the General of his loyalty in the fight against the "Rebellion of the South" as well as that against the Indians, but complains that his "sacrifices have not been well considered or perhaps even forgotten" (242). Then in a brilliant rhetorical manuever, he writes: "Observing the coolness, the indifference, the reserve of the Department in view of the undeniable acts achieved by me . . . I have believed it appropriate to tender my resignation in order that I may return to domestic life, so that my vacancy be filled by some other one of more enthusiastic patriotism and valor" (242). There can be no mistaking his anger here. The triple repetition saturates the sentence with the officer's legitimate anger over the blatant failure of the military command to recognize not just another honorable service record but an unimpeachable record of documented bravery. He has sacrificed his wife and children for the good of his adopted country, but his country hasn't paid the slightest notice of either service or sacrifice. Chacón's final rhetorical

move in the passage, that of suggesting that he will retire in order to leave a vacancy for someone of more "enthusiastic patriotism and valor," establishes both its own ironic question and answer. The vacancy he leaves cannot be filled.

Nine months later he addressed another letter of resignation to General Carleton, this time focusing more precisely on his responsibility to his family: "full of privation in an age when the man struggles to sustain it, my family is entirely abandoned, relying on chance, my wife is sick almost all of the time without anyone to help her and my young children are left to fate without my presence to guide them" (June 25, 1864). Yet, even in this letter before he cites family responsibilities, Chacón indicates that he has been subjected to "the most severe and active part" of numerous military campaigns and, although an officer, has had to "drive back a strong and greedy enemy" with a "only a handful of men" (264). Once again, the letter speaks his distinct concerns in a manner that shows Chacón's understanding of how multiple rhetorical moves can be effected in the rather dangerous space of official correspondence. That is to say, his critique of the Army's exloitation of him and his men is stated, obliquely but clearly, and then re-directed to familial concern that domesticates the language of his resignation. As in the letter to Carleton of 1863, lest there be any question of his patriotism, he closes by strategically offering "to sacrifice [his] life in honor of the nation . . . when the circumstance should arise."

Only a month later, on July 21, 1864, Chacón's language is increasingly direct and his reasons for wishing to resign patently clear. As he writes in the "Memorias," he was finally forced to articulate a number of concerns about the persistent problem of anti-Mexican sentiment to which he and other native soldiers continually endured: ". . .my patience already almost exhausted, with a determination to take severe steps. . . I had written to the Department in the following words." Chacón would no longer repress his anger and alienation at the horrible state of inter-cultural relations. What he had hinted at in other correspondence and reports here issues forth in unrestrained utterance:

> I have been left alienated by the same attitudes which always, since I have been in the service, have been in effect among the officers and soldiers of the regular army toward the volunteer officers and soldiers. And this is truly one of the principal reasons why I have put in my resignation many times, and the grief that I felt when it was not accepted stings me every time that I see the demeanor with which they conduct themselves, and I am well satisfied that this goes on toward all of the volunteers in this Department, and for my part I no longer want to leave such offenses in silence. (281)

He goes on to recount a personal affront as newly-appointed commanding officer at Fort Stanton by Anglo soldiers who were charged with building furniture and outfitting his quarters: "The carpenters. . . made two or so regular pieces of furniture but, upon the arrival of Lieutenant Cook, the chief commissary, they turned their attention to him. . . . In only one day they outfitted the quarters of that officer with all the necessities for comfort and decency due to his official rank, and I, who have been here for twenty days, am still living without many of the necessities that correspond to my rank" (281).

The inclusion of numerous such letters in the text of the celebrated old soldier's "Memorias" must be read in light of Chacón's understated but powerfully documented undermining of that soldierly past. Imagine what the members of the Early Settler's Association of Southern Colorado --a group established by Anglos-- must have thought upon reading Chacón's scathing letters and commentary. Here was a (Mexican) American who insisted that in all military action he was guided by a sense of duty, honor and patriotism, and yet who, as a Mexican (American), was disrespected not only by the highest but the lowest ranking Anglo "regular" soldiers. Like Sequin before him, he had been duped: he may have achieved a rank of Captain and then Major, even been appointed commandant of an outpost fort, but he was still just a "Mexican" who couldn't get a couple of low ranking carpenters to furnish his commandant's quarters. The old autobiographer sifted through forty-year-old documents that might juggle and clarify memory and what

he found must have provoked the same impatience and anger he felt as a young officer of thirty who decided he would not "leave such offenses in silence." The letters must have been faded, the paper brittle, the calligraphy perhaps smudged by time, but the sentiments were still fresh in his memory and thus usable in the text of his "Memorias." Usable as proof that the *nuevomexicano* story in the military was not the material of Western romance but more like a bad memory.

Chacón, as self-contained as he tends to be, effectively contradicted a carefully contrived image of the winning of the West, exposed the ethnocentricisms of the very groups that encouraged his remembering, and sealed his experience not with a vain old soldier's romanticized memory of the forty-year past, but with a documentable presence in that past--the official correspondence that spoke beyond the present writing of his memoirs and beyond the written memoirs into the present of this and all subsequent readings. Again, an understated but powerful individual and cultural performance of autobiographical resistance was being enacted by a retired American soldier who was encouraged to remember his exploits and who, in remembering, recalled not so much the exploits as the exploitations. Committing himself to paper between 1906 and 1912, Chacón confronted a past that didn't square with the story under construction by the Historical Society. While writing, he must have found himself in the startling and embarrassing, certainly the embittering position of rediscovering the truth of a past that makes the photograph of him as the proud old soldier appear circumspect, given the alienation and grief he actually experienced when he wore the uniform. The necessarily combative stance he assumes in the reconstructed moment is one that implicitly questions the efficacy of his service in the U.S. Military. Memory leads not to a romanticized reconstruction of events nor to a nostalgic valorization of the *nuevomexicano's* role in the American army, but rather to a series of politicized rememberings of the socio-cultural stresses a forty-year gap could not occlude.

The photo of the old soldier circa 1912 shows a man strong of body for seventy-nine, broad shouldered, direct of gaze, an officer demanding the dignity and respect "that correspond to my rank." The "Memorias" composed by the old man pictured in the photo insists upon the same recognition and respect. Of the day his resignation finally went through -- September 2, 1864-- he writes: "I took off the officer's epaulets, ungirded my sword, with which I had given humble but willing service to my country, and exchanged the blue uniform for the clothing of a civilian. From August 1861 until September 1864, I had passed my time in active campaigns, always earning the confidence of my superiors, and leaving with honor in everything."(303) Yet this moment of self-respecting reflection is undone when, in the next paragraph, Chacón remembers that the same Lt. Cook who handed him his discharge was under arrest for "imprudent acts and haughtiness" (303) while he was commandant at Fort Stanton. Less that two months earlier, Cook was one of many insubordinates who had tried to sabotage Major Chacón's authority, ignoring orders because they were issued in Spanish, "causing discord between the regulars [Anglos] and volunteers [nuevomexicanos]" and preventing him, as Chacón wrote in the letter of July 21, "from exercising the power that the law and justice extend to me." (282) Moreover, as Chacon implies, he sensed imminent danger: "Until the moment at which I gave up my sword," Chacón remembers, "I made it understood that I was of superior rank and would maintain my authority at all cost" (303).

Even though Chacón narrates a gestured reconciliation with Lt. Cook, the micro-narrative functions parabolically to suggest how Anglocentric arrogance is disempowered by an unbroken gaze. On the face of it, the scene appears to be a sentimentalized account of inter-cultural rapprochement between the two men: yet, Chacón is cleary the dominant character in the scene, reminding his readers that the anti-mexicano military abuses he suffered never disempowered him, never stripped him of his dignity, never threatened his Christian calm, but, on the contrary, brought shame upon the perpetrator: "Upon receiving my discharge I gave him my hand, looked directly into his eyes and he, embarrassed and

ashamed, lowered his head and squeezed the hand I had extended, and we parted from one another without rancor and without resentment"(303). Chacón's final official encounter with the U.S. Army in the figure of Lt. Cook provides him fifty years later with the material for a scene in which the New Mexican officer's questioning and challenging gaze functions as a mirror of conscience in which the Anglo lieutenent is forced to see his own ethnocentrically corrupt visage --and what he sees shames him.

The scene may or may not have been enacted just so in 1864; that is, perhaps Chacón's reading of Cook's averted face may be misremembered: perhaps the "lowered head" and "embarrassed and ashamed" gesturing was actually a manuever of false sentiment at the prospect of assuming Chacón's command. We can't know the event's alternate narrative possibilities since we have neither a confirming nor a contestory statement by Cook. Hence, Chacón's version of the event assumes authority by virtue of his politicized composition of an event present only in the old man's memory. Chacón's text of memory becomes a vanquishing ethnic text at the moment two competing cultural characters are written into an autobiographic scene in which the *nuevomexicano* author knowingly shames Lieutenant Cook, the Anglo other, whose own textual space is empty and, since empty, powerless.

V

> Since this trip . . . was in all ways
> typical of an emigration much like that
> which might have been made in colonial
> times by our ancestors, for curiosity's
> sake I wanted to keep a concise diary
> of the journey, and from the rough
> drafts that I made then I take the
> notes for this part of my memoirs.
> --Rafael Chacón, "Memorias"

Whereas the middle section of the "Memorias" is a record of Chacón's military service encouraged by regional historians but undergirded by an autochthonous narrative of return to home and family, the final section of the narrative is about Chacón's discovery that his home was not a circle of familial and material security to which he could summarily return. Rather, when he did return to Peñasco he found that the "battles to make an honorable living" had exacted a series of economic reversals that made his removal to a new locale and his reconstruction of home necessary. Hence the brief closing pages of the "Memorias" describe Chacón's efforts to locate the family in a permanent home and then end with Chacón, the aged patriarch, bequeathing a permanent textual location for the family name, a space in which he could gather the names of family, relatives, and friends in a closing utterance of genealogical identity and historico-cultural tracing.

Although Rafael Chacón lived another thirteen years after completing the "Memorias," the concluding passages of the narrative read like an old man's deathbed words. Chacón pictures himself alone in a room with his wife and compañera, Juanita, hearing the absent voices of those friends who "during the epoch of my prosperity. . . would," he writes, "follow me anywhere, hanging upon my slightest whim or my voice." Alone and no

longer prosperous, about all that he has is an honorable name and the language with which to purchase permanence within an intimately matrixed familial and cultural text. Keenly conscious of the autobiographical responsibility he assumes in "shaping these last lines" (333), Chacón knows that his narrative constitutes the intersection between his children ("the extension of my hopes and my ambitions") and the "intrepid spirit of their grandparents." Stressing the cultural presence of the colonial "abuelos," or "ancestors," Chacón announces the genealogical tradition he extends to his posterity: "Through their veins runs the blood of gentlemen, of those gentlemen who, with a sword on their belt and with combat spurs, traveled to posts all over the American world" (333). Once again calling attention to the Spanish term for "gentlemen" --"hidalgos"-- Chacón reconstructs a line of descent between his children and the Spanish colonial settlers. However much some of us may chafe at such an imperial gesture, for Chacón the articulation of genealogical connection with the colonial ancestors acts as a socially empowering reassertion of culural continuity in the face of an American hegemony that, as Chacón has repeatedly shown, operated to de-culture mexicanos.

In the passage I cited as this chapter's epigraph, Chacón's reference to the diary he kept while re-locating his family in 1870 resounds with an historically conscious desire to map his family's movement over the same terrain that the Spanish-Mexican colonists --his own "abuelos"-- had once traveled, upon which they had settled, and where they had constructed their villages. That Chacón kept a record of the journey, moreover, is remarkable as evidence of his conscientious documenting of what he considered a major geographical relocation as tradition, rather than the end of tradition. The Chacón family had long been settled in the tight circle of villages surrounding Santa Fe, the city of his birth and early childhood, and now the Chacón relocation to Trinidad affirmed a similiar resolve to expand the circle of the homeland. Keeping a diary and then incorporating it into his "Memorias" some thirty-five years later constitutes evidence of a Hispano alive to his place in history, alive to his position within a family and cultural structure of

relations, and crucially alive to the power of language as a signatory warrant of culturally matrixed subjectivity.

Chacón's discursive reaffiliation with an older Spanish-Mexican practice, moreover, reveals an unreconciled affiliation with the American territorial regime. The cultural-geneological impulse contains an implicit critique of an American hegemony that was in the process of erasing such filiations. Keeping a journey diary, or travel-log, a practice that was common during the Spanish colonial period, appears to have declined sharply in the 19th century, largely one may argue, as a result of social displacement. So, Chacón's diary of his own journey to resettle his family represents his desire to situate himself within a discursive tradition of settlement narratives that date to 1598 when Juan de Oñate first led a group of four-hundred colonists to settle "la nueva mexico." Reconstructing a set of relations between his own historical moment (post-1900) and one which preceded him by some three hundred years reestablishes a discourse of cultural continuity that elided the American homesteading period and in so doing imaginatively restored the connection between the emerging 20th century Hispano community and its pre-American sources. For Chacón, reaffirming the cultural and familial descent line was requisite to closing the "Memorias."

Just as the military sections of the narrative are motivated by Chacón's topocentric desire, so Chacón's narrative of resettlement is permeated with desire to sustain familial and cultural filiations: nearly everyone he greets along the trail is either a blood relative, an in-law, or a *compadre*, a sacramental family friend. Along with his wife and children, two of his brothers-in-law help him make the journey to the "new country" which, although not yet a made home, is already familial. The diaried section begins: "On November 9, [1870], a Wednesday, I left Peñasco, Taos County, to settle in Las Animas County, Colorado." A few days later --on November 13-- he writes that just when he was "in very reduced circumstances" he happened to meet a "Señor Ortiz. . . who had come to deliver a herd of heifers at El Moreno" and it "turned out that he was a relative of mine,

and he supplied me with meat, flour, and other provisions" (318). On November 19, the first houses they come to "were those of our relatives Isidro Medina and Salvador Córdova [who] received us with much friendliness and happiness." And the next day, when they arrive in the "new country," they are welcomed by *familia*: ". . . we were received with tears of joy. Heading the welcome by everyone was my venerable father-in-law, Don Rafael Paez, one of the most noble and generous men that I have ever known"(319).

A particularly poignant voicing of his admiration for his wife and their shared affection and concern for their small children may be seen in another entry. On the morning of November 11, Chacón leaves his family train camped at the mouth of a canyon while he rides into the town of Fernandez for supplies. Away the entire day and late into the night, he returns to camp to find his wife, Juanita, waiting alone by the light of the fire. The scene gives him pause to consider their bond from a distance:

> When I arrived a moving spectacle presented itself to my eyes, and for a moment I was unable to hold back the tears. Everyone was asleep, except Juanita, my noble spouse. She, who drank with me from the chalice of misfortune, was sad and silent by the fire, awaiting my return, keeping vigil and praying for the tender pieces of our heart that were going with us to test what destiny would hold in a strange country and among strange people." (317)

The "tender pieces of our heart" to whom he lyrically refers are of course his "little children, Gumecinda, Antonio, and the baby Eusebio, who was not yet a year old" (316). Juanita had had the misfortune of losing other children at birth, as well as experiencing the severe economic instability that forced the Chacóns to leave northern New Mexico for an uncertain future in southern Colorado. One wonders whether the diary entry for November 11, 1870 actually conveyed such sentiments, or whether the old autobiographer transformed the entry into the lyrical meditation on his family we discover in the

"Memorias." However interpellated the diary-memoria may be, the passage resonates with Chacón's esteem for Juanita who has kept vigil during this and other of his absences.

Although he says that he kept "a concise diary of the journey" it appears that he continued making diary notations intermittently during the next two years. In this part of the "Memorias" he recalls the precise date of crucial events: "On March 27 [1871] I planted some of the land at Ojo Verde, and by May 7 I had already planted five *fanegas* and three *almudes* of wheat. . ."[24] (320) and one year later he remembers that "On April 20, 1872, Don Felix Cruz and his wife, Doña Feliciana, came to visit us and he helped with the planting until April 26." The diary entries may have been brief, their transformation into the "Memorias" succinct, but the notations ring with a meaningfully affectionate gathering of names.

For April, 1872, he remembers planting the fields with only the help of his small children: "Gumecinda, then eleven years old, and Antonio, nine, drove the oxen for me, one on one side and the other on the other side. . . In that solitude, walking behind the furrow, the work of my children gave a prediction of prosperity on that land, blessed by their angelic presence, their youthful happiness united with the songs of the birds; and those songs and that joy, consecrated like incense with the fragrence of the countryside, had to have been what later brought to my hands a torrent of prosperity" (321). These and each of his eleven children are named at the end of the "Memorias" where he comments on their fate. Gumecinda "married Carpio Córdoba, son of Don Juan Córdoba and Doña Quirina Sánchez de Córdoba, residents of Hoehne, Colorado" and Antonio, the other angelic presence of the passage, was "treacherously killed by a cowardly assassin in Tijeras, Colorado, on October 18, 1898" at the age of thirty eight. Even those who died at or shortly after birth are not only recalled by name, but by place of birth: "The eldest, Juliana Basilia, was born in Santa Fe on January 9, 1859 and died the eighteenth of the same

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[24] A fanega is about 1.6 acres; an almud about half an acre.

month," "My fifth child was Máximo, who was born in Peñasco on May 11, 1866, and died three hours after he was born" (332). And his compañera, Juanita, is remembered most prominently in the last paragraph of the "Memorias":

> Upon shaping these last lines, my elderly wife, my noble companion [again, rather than the rhetorical endearment sounded in the English, in Spanish the term "compañera" has particular cultural signicance -- a couple who refer to each other as "compañeros" mean that they trust and rely on each other, that they enjoy each others' company, etc.], is seated by my side, waiting, in silence, for me to speak to her. Her head and mine are covered with white hair; our home is lonely. . . . Seeing the face of my beloved Juanita, to me she has never become old; to me she is always the youthful slender enchantress of Rio Lucia. She and I have been close together now almost to the end of our mortal life, and with a tranquil conscience we await the eternal departure (333)

Before departing, however, Chacón, cognizant of the social finality of anonymity, entitles his narrative with the names of relatives and friends, and even those names of adversaries, which provide the matrix for his own name. Names are marked into the pages of a memoir that functions as a narrative marking of presence for people with whom he conducted the business of his life: of those "que fueron amados" (who were beloved) were, for example, "Don Jesús María García, a man of very noble sentiments," "Don Juan Gutierrez, a faithful and good friend of mine" and a host of other men and women whose names are inscribed in an act of filial respect. Their names are inscribed in a narrative history alive to the necessity of protecting the name against the flood of time and political disaster, and the distortions of adversaries.

Although he is never vituperative, those who discredited the Chacón name are disremembered in an act of narrative retribution. He recalls an incident from 1873 in which a district judge --strategically unnamed but identified as "addicted to liquor and,

consequently, with an elastic conscience"-- publicly libeled him. Chacón remembers confronting the judge in his hotel room with these words: "I am poor and my only inheritance is my honor. . . I want to make it known that with this dagger I avenge myself of a tyrannical judge, if necessity obliges me to do so. The thing is public and well known and my pride will also be well known" (324). The "inheritance" Chacón refers to, of course, is his honorable name, a name he has proven many times he is willing to uphold with his life. The judge, who like other "cowards," issues insult only when "wholly supported by a phalanx of power that protects their miserable bodies" (324), recants and pleads that "no mention be made of that episode to a living soul" (324). Chacón keeps the episode secret for over thirty years and, then, as he writes, mentions it "now only to leave that very disagreeable moment recorded" (324). Recorded. The power of text to protect the name against the false accusation of those who would damage it. In recording an event long past, but not forgotten, an old man writing himself against death insures that his "inheritance" will be preserved against negative texting of the Chacón name.

There is something here akin to the Chinese discursive tradition of preserving the descent line, honoring the family name by keeping it "clean and honorable" and then passing the name forward as a container of clean habitation for the next generation. As Stephen Durrant suggests in an essay on Chinese autobiographical writing, the Chinese autobiographer acts as family scribe, or historian, whose narrative presence is important only insofar as it "centers upon the Confucian virtue of filial piety; his future opens up to the expectation that he will 'glorify his name in later generations.'"[25] Such a filial autobiographer discovers meaning not in detaching himself from tradition or culture in order to assert his uniqueness, as does the Rousseauvian autobiographer, but, on the contrary, "could not locate himself, could not even interpret his most intense experience, outside a network of historical relationships and precedents." The genealogical

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25 citation specifics to follow

imperative --the "bios"-- subsumes the individuating claim that "autos" demands in Western self-identitarian narrative. Inscribing the geneology of the family is tantamount to inscribing the self, since "the self is a point at which various strands from the past intersect"; hence the tradition-centered autobiographer, if one can refer to an autobiographer at all within such a densely matrixed context, "defines his existence not in substance, some inner core of private and personal meaning, but in a series of relationships. . . " (39). Chacón's fixing of his own "existence . . . in a series of relationships" operates in the "Memorias" as a genealogical circle of relations, not only temporally sequential but always spatially mapped, the genealogical chronology of the family's presence rooted in the space and geography of a social terrain undergoing enormous transformation. The series of relationships mapped by the old man fixes the Chacón name in history at the precise moment that New Mexico passed from territorial status to statehood in 1912, a date that for nuevo mexicanos legislatively closed off the territorial frontier more starkly than Turner did in 1890. By narratively mapping the family's name, Chacón superscribes his own location on that map of the cultural homeland, a homeland which, although undergoing a final geo-political modification, or hardening of boundaries, fixes ontological certainty in the signatory warrant of the name(s) situated in geographical and cultural space.

The "Memorias" closes with an indefeasible valorization of the Chacón name, not José Rafael Sotero Chacón his baptismal name in egocentered marking, but a familio-centric name, the culturally matrixed name he and Juanita leave to their posterity. Less an autobiographical than a geneological enunciation, Chacón's last texted words quite literally constitute a last will and testament. The old man writes: "upon passing from this scene we do not leave property or great wealth but we do leave for our children a clean and honorable name." (333) Chacón's entire text, one realizes all at once, has been a narrative about the name, a remarkably filial narrative in which the autobiographer functions as family scribe, here an old man prevailing over memory's lapse in order to gather a circle

of words around the name, "a clean and honorable name." **Chacón**: not an egocentric and excluding demaraction but the name as a container of multiple historical experiences, the intersection of many lives, a common tonal ground upon which the family centers itself, an inscription upon textual stone that recedes into the Spanish-Mexican colonial past and succeeds beyond the American presence into the future of the Chacón posterity.