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The University of New Mexico**



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New Mexico's Spanish Language Journalists: Camilo Padilla, Pioneer Publicist

by

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April 1994**

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PADILLA, Camilo. (b. 1865, Santa Fe, NM d. November 23, 1933, Santa Fe, NM)
printer, government employee, editor, publisher, short story writer

Education: Public Schools Santa Fe, NM ; St. Michael's College, Santa Fe, NM; Jesuit
College of Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NM

Camilo Padilla, Pioneer Publicist

Background

Spanish language newspaper publishing in New Mexico lasted well over half a century. From 1880 to 1935 more than 190 newspapers were published in some thirty communities across a geographical corridor extending from El Paso, Texas, to Trinidad, Colorado. The high number of publications, the tenacity of their publication over time, and the extensive area in which these publications appeared, attests to the widespread importance and impact of newspapers as a medium of information and cultural exchange throughout the period.

The appearance of these newspapers and the proliferation of the journalistic and literary activity that these efforts encompass was not the result of happenstance; not the fleeting fancy of a few individuals given to a mere love of letters; nor is it attributable to the vanity of an elite few wishing to see their names in print. Rather, such activity denotes a complexity in the intellectual, cultural, and literary life of nineteenth century New Mexico which heretofore has received little discussion in either cultural or literary histories. When viewed within the historical context that marks the development of a culture of print in New Mexico, new considerations arise regarding language use and the extent to which literacy and readership influenced the maintenance of cultural identity among New Mexico's Hispanic population. Thus, the study of this periodical and journalistic activity is not served by merely making record of the appearance and disappearance of individual journalistic enterprises in linear and chronological fashion. This work should also entail an understanding of human, intellec-

tual, and technical resources which necessarily underpin the effort of *Nuevomexicanos* to utilize newsprint as a medium for promoting a cultural agenda at a time of intense social, political, and economic transformation in New Mexico. Understood in this way, the advent of *Nuevomexicano* newspaper publication comes as a response to the threat of cultural and historical dispossession ushered in by an Anglo-American presence in the Southwest. Access to the technology of print by *Nuevomexicanos* in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries became nothing less than a means to sustain a generally agreed upon set of core cultural values and assertions cast in the interest of the *nativo* population of New Mexico in the wake of the social dislocation produced by the conquest of the Southwest by the United States in 1848.

Popular and literary journalism in New Mexico grew out of two momentous and seemingly antithetical developments in the nineteenth century. On the one hand, the territorial expansion of the United States into the Southwest, fueled by the nationalistic fervor expressed in the notion of Manifest Destiny, had the eventual effect of subordinating *Nuevomexicanos* and other Mexican origin groups in their homeland: the Southwest. As a result, *Nuevomexicanos* became the object of an intense Anglo-American cultural hegemony that threatened the cultural survival of New Mexican communities and which would eventually impede their right to self-determination. However, the U.S. military takeover of the Southwest also ushered in the economic conquest of the Southwest that followed in the wake of military

occupation. The resulting surge of economic activity opened new markets in the Southwest and increased trade and travel along the Santa Fe Trail. New Mexico entered the industrial age, not through scientific progress and evolution, but through subjugation and conquest. For the first time in their long history *Nuevomexicanos* had access to manufactured goods and to the scientific and technical advances that characterized the economic infrastructure of the United States. Among the items that could be acquired were typographical mechanical presses which heretofore had been extremely scarce in Mexico's northern provinces.

The story of Hispanic literary and popular journalism in the latter half of the nineteenth century, then, is rooted in the paradox

of improving material conditions amid the coerced transformation of *Nuevomexicano* society under the pressure of a politically and economically dominant Anglo-American social structure. During the last third of the nineteenth century an unprecedented number of *Nuevomexicanos* came into possession and ownership of printing presses being imported to the Southwest. As *Nuevomexicanos* gained greater use of this technology they employed it to give voice and expression to concerns rooted in the conflict and open racial hostility directed at them. The situation this engendered might be best described as one of "Yankee ingenuity" being employed by *Nuevomexicanos* to counter Anglo-American presumptions to the rights of the cultural conquest of the Southwest.

Camilo Padilla and the los Periodiqueros Movement

The scope of the work carried out by New Mexico's Spanish-language journalists, or *los periodiqueros* as I have come to call them, is the focus of a research study I began while on a Rockefeller Fellowship in the Humanities at the Southwest Hispanic Research Institute at the University of New Mexico. In my monograph, *El don de la palabra: Nuevomexicano Literary Journalism, 1880 to 1935*, I have documented the conditions that gave rise to the *periodiquero* movement in New Mexico and other areas of the Southwest. Much of what is detailed in that study provides the context for understanding the importance of the work of individual journalists such as Camilo Padilla.

For purposes of this essay, I shall limit my introduction to Camilo Padilla (1865-1933), by stressing that Padilla's work as a journalist provides a particularly noteworthy example of a widening scope of involvement for *Nuevomexicano* journalists in the public life of New Mexico. Camilo Padilla's contributions to the development of *Nuevomexicano* journalism and culture are important for two reasons in particular. First, Padilla's work spans his entire public life. This lifelong dedication to promoting the educational and cultural progress of his community is accompanied by increased professionalism and the improving quality of Padilla's work in journalism. It can be safely assumed Camilo Padilla was a leader among *Nuevomexicano* journalists in attempts to use the press for the benefit of *Nuevomexicano* communities. Second, Padilla's career points

the way to greater specialization and increased sophistication among New Mexico's *periodiqueros*. Camilo Padilla was in fact responsible for producing the first and only specialized publication to feature poetry, art, essays, and other forms of creative expression by *Nuevomexicanos*.

As in the case of Camilo Padilla, *Nuevomexicano* journalists at the turn of the century moved beyond the founding of newspapers in towns and villages across New Mexico where the printed word was virtually unknown prior to the introduction of the mechanical printing press. *Los periodiqueros* were responsible in fact for building cohesion among a core group of writers and editors whose endeavors gave rise to a literary and cultural movement among *Nuevomexicanos*. From the ranks of *los periodiqueros* came the first inklings of a native and indigenous intellectual tradition that coalesced the work of native poets, writers, historians, and publicists. Benjamín M. Read and Eusebio Chacón were two of the best known authors in the group that included poets, editors, and other literati. Read (1853-1927), a prominent Santa Fe attorney, authored *Guerra México-Americana* (1910) and other works. *Guerra México-Americana* was the first work of its kind which registered a *Nuevomexicano* perspective to events surrounding the U.S. war with Mexico. Eusebio Chacón (1870-1949) received a degree in law from Notre Dame University in 1888. While attending to a full and active practice as an attorney in Santa Fe, Las Vegas, and Trinidad, Colorado,

Chacón also managed to author novellas, poetry, and essays which found their way into print in Spanish-language newspapers in Santa Fe, Las Vegas, and Trinidad. Today Chacón is considered a precursor to contemporary Chicano authors.

There is now ample evidence to suggest that New Mexico's *periodiqueros* published other works of history in addition to publishing an astounding array of literary works. These efforts were designed to lay the foundation for a New Mexican school of history and a native literature in the Southwest. The obvious result of this activity is that the *periodiquero* movement becomes an important and significant precursor to contemporary literary production among Chicanos and Latinos in the country today.

Only with rare exception did these *Nuevomexicano* writers and editors have the luxury and means to dedicate themselves solely to literary pursuits or scholarship. New Mexico's Spanish-language journalists entered public life in a time of tremendous social, economic, and political flux. Seldom did their literary and humanistic pursuits maintain themselves separate and removed from the social, political, and economic realities that conditioned and, more often than not, limited the life choices and professional careers of these individuals. For this very reason, the life and work of Camilo Padilla is all the more significant since it provides an important example of an individual whose entire life was given in service to building and sustaining a *Nuevomexicano* cultural movement in literature and the arts.

Camilo Padilla, born in Santa Fe in 1865, was the only member of his generation to publish and promote *Nuevomexicano* literary works through the publication of a literary magazine. For this achievement alone Padilla is worthy of mention, for in doing so Padilla took the logical next step in the de-

velopment of an Hispano *Nuevomexicano* cultural movement by creating a publication that concerned itself exclusively with promoting an artistic, cultural, and literary venue directed at New Mexico's Spanish-speaking community.

Padilla, a graduate of St. Michael's College, paid tribute to his alma mater, at its 50th Jubilee on June 21, 1909. When asked to speak to the merits of the institution, Padilla noted, "Los personajes más culminantes en política, ciencias, artes, industria del Territorio pasaron los años de su niñez y juventud en los bancos de este establecimiento de instrucción, en donde bebieron en la fuente de la sabiduría de sus maestros; la gaya ciencia que los encumbró en los puestos más altos de Nuevo México." [The best prepared figures in politics, sciences, arts, and industries of the Territory spent the years of their childhood in this establishment of instruction where they drank from the well-spring of the wisdom of their teachers; the gallant science which raised them to the highest positions in New Mexico.]¹ Padilla's remarks allude to a sense of ascendancy and confidence that marked his generation's aspirations.

Padilla's love of letters and journalism came early in life. After graduating from St. Michael's, Padilla worked as a compositor on the *New Mexican*. Later in his life Padilla reported he had spent a total of ten years working in the offices of the *New Mexican*.

Camilo Padilla was among the best read and most seasoned travelers of his generation. His many trips to the east coast of the United States came to represent some of the

¹ "Jubileo de Oro del Colegio de San Miguel," *Revista Ilustrada*, April-May 1909, El Paso, Texas. Quotes taken from Padilla's writings maintain the idiosyncrasy of the author as concerns spelling and punctuation. The translations of these texts to English are my own.

earliest visits made by *Nuevomexicanos* to the eastern states and to the seat of government of the nation. Through these visits Padilla received a first-hand understanding of the workings of government, commerce, industry, and education in the eastern cities of the United States. Padilla first had occasion to visit New York, Virginia, and other parts of the eastern seaboard in June 1889 when he was just 19.² In 1890, Padilla again traveled to Washington, this time serving as the private secretary to Antonio Joseph, New Mexico's territorial delegate to the United States Congress. In the early years of the decade Camilo interspersed visits to Washington as Joseph's secretary with time spent working on newspapers in Mora County when Congress was not in session.

During the time spent back in New Mexico, Padilla began to lay the foundation for his own work in journalism. From July to September 1890 he edited *La Gaceta de Mora*. In December 1891 he began publication of his own paper to which he gave the feisty name, *El Mosquito*. In the ensuing decade Padilla would have several occasions to return to Washington. It was probably at the favor and through intercession of Antonio Joseph that Padilla obtained a position with the government printing office in Washington, D. C., and was later employed as a translator at the State Department. From 1898 to 1901 Padilla resided continually in the nation's capital.

Padilla returned to New Mexico in 1901 and soon relocated to Mora where he continued publication of *El Mosquito* for the next year and a half. Padilla retreated from journalism for a time after 1903 to teach school in Santa Fe County for the next four years. Padilla also served as president of the Board

of Education in that county. The historian, Ralph Emerson Twitchell, credits Padilla with overseeing the establishment of the first kindergarten in the Southwest during his term of office on the Santa Fe School Board.³

For reasons that are not yet clear, Camilo Padilla moved to El Paso, Texas, in 1907. There he began the publication of *Revista Ilustrada*. *Revista Ilustrada* became the most important and best developed publication issued by any *Nuevomexicano* editor and publisher up to that time. In the years that followed, Padilla alternately published his *Revista* in El Paso and Santa Fe. For the first four years after its founding in 1907, *Revista Ilustrada* remained in publication in El Paso. Padilla moved his publication to Santa Fe in 1912, a move which coincided with New Mexico's admission to statehood. For a time after, he published the magazine under the title *Sancho Panza*.

The complete record of Padilla's work as a publicist in Santa Fe has yet to emerge. Information regarding the issuance of his magazine is sketchy and incomplete and is obscured by the fact that no extant issues of *Sancho Panza* ever made their way to libraries or archival repositories. Added to this is the fact that the publishing history of *Revista Ilustrada* is marred by its issuance in different cities and by an incomplete record of all issues of the magazine. Padilla reverted to using the earlier name, *Revista Ilustrada*, and continued to publish under that title in Santa Fe through the decade of the 1910s. Sometime in the early 1920s, Padilla once again returned to El Paso and issued *Revista Ilustrada* again from that city. He remained in El Paso until the summer of 1925, shortly after that moving the magazine to Santa Fe for the last time. Back in Santa Fe, Padilla unabashedly shared with his readership the

² LR Territorial Archives of New Mexico, Roll 103, FR 998, June 6, 1889. In his letter to Governor L. Bradford Prince, Padilla speaks of his recent visit to New York City.

³ Twitchell, *The Leading Facts of New Mexican History*, p. 99.

motive for this move, “No sabemos por qué pero lo cierto es que cuando el hombre siente el aguijón del dolor, donde quiera que se encuentre, lo primero que hace es buscar sus verdaderos amigos; le hacen falta el calor y el consuelo de los suyos, y de seguro en busca de ellos se marcha. He ahí la razón porque nos encontramos aquí.” [We don’t know why it is but it is true that when a man feels the sting of pain, wherever he may find himself, the first thing he does is seek his true friends; he lacks the warmth and comfort of his own [people] and surely he will take up and leave in search of them. There then is the reason that we find ourselves here.]⁴ His return to Santa Fe, was to fulfill a need to work in the city of his birth and reside among friends and family. Padilla published *Revista Ilustrada* in Santa Fe until shortly before his death in 1933.

Camilo Padilla’s contributions to *Nuevomexicano* literary journalism are important on a number of levels, not the least of which is that for most of his adult life Padilla was among the most active and dedicated of the *Nuevomexicano* periodiqueros. His collaborations with *Nuevomexicano* periodicals began early in his life. Among his first submissions to Spanish-language newspapers is a letter to the editor of *La Voz del Pueblo* in Las Vegas in May 1889. Padilla’s submission appeared with the title “Crónica nacional.”

The communiqué was meant to provide *La Voz* and its readership with news and information from Washington, D.C., where Padilla was living while in the employ of Territorial Delegate Antonio Joseph. During the early part of the decade, Padilla contributed many such items to Santa Fe’s most important Spanish-language newspaper, *El Boletín Popular*. Padilla’s association with *El*

Boletín was no doubt encouraged by the fact that José Segura, the editor and proprietor of the paper, was Camilo’s first cousin. Through communiqués sent back to *El Boletín* Padilla came to be regarded as the paper’s official correspondent in Washington. Padilla’s items regularly appeared with the note, “De la capital nacional: Correspondencia particular de *El Boletín*” [From the nation’s capital: Special correspondence to *El Boletín*]. Camilo often signed his communiqués with the pseudonym “Gus.” Padilla submitted other items to the paper as well, including editorial opinions, travel narratives, and cultural observations.

In April 1894, for example, Padilla submitted a short essay he titled “Nuestra única salvación” [Our Only Hope] to *El Boletín*. Padilla spoke to the issue of disharmony and discord that had begun to manifest itself among *Nuevomexicanos*. Padilla observed that this disunity had become most pronounced in the territory from 1874 to 1894. This twenty-year period encompassed the arrival of the railroad in New Mexico and a subsequent and unprecedented immigration of Anglo-Americans to New Mexico. As racial and economic conflict intensified during the period, *Nuevomexicanos* were more directly impacted by pressures produced by Anglo-American society in its attempt to consolidate power over native interests in the region. In his essay, Padilla alludes to the political and cultural fissures that had come to disfigure the contours of self-reliance and cohesiveness that had characterized *Nuevomexicano* society of earlier times. Padilla noted that an atmosphere of discord and dissonance pervaded *Nuevomexicano* communities, a condition that in his mind was exacerbated by the menace of an alien culture and its attendant moves to dominate the region. Like others of his generation, Padilla could readily see that a kind of social and cultural distention was affecting *Nuevomexicano*

⁴ “El por que de nuestro cambio,” *Revista Ilustrada*, July-August 1925, Santa Fe, New Mexico

communities and threatened their social well-being. Padilla goes on to suggest that if the tendency to factionalism were allowed to continue, the *nativo* population would soon be entirely at the mercy of Anglo-American interests in the Territory. Padilla's exhortation to unity read:

El tiempo transcurrido entre estas dos fechas—1874 y 1894—significa mucho para nosotros. Ahí encontramos la llave de nuestra situación. Sólo veinte años median de una a otra fecha, mas ¡cuánto cambio y materias ofrece ese período al observador! Durante ese lapso se ha operado en nuestras conciencias una marcada tendencia al apartamiento, un movimiento de desunión que de día en día aumenta en progresión verdaderamente aterradora. En nada existe verdadera comunión de ideas; los grandes principios que daban unidad á nuestras acciones y que establecían entre los hombres de una misma raza una especie de confraternidad ó se han desmoronado ó amenazan ruina.

Consecuencia fatal de esta disgregación es la envidia, la ambición y la mala voluntad que nos tenemos, que han venido á suplantar y á empequeñecer no sólo los grandes principios de confraternidad que heredamos de nuestros padres sino hasta nuestra fé. La intriga y la mentira—esos monstruos que acompañan la política del día—han venido á suceder á la sinceridad y la verdad. El sentimiento particular ha tomado el lugar del sentimiento colectivo; el último hoy no existe, ó si existe, avergonzado de ver tanta perfidia, se oculta en el pecho de uno que otro de nosotros . . .

[The time that has transpired be-

tween these two dates—1874 and 1894—means much for us. Here we find the key to our situation. Only twenty years separate one date from the other, however, how much change and evidence is offered to the observer by this period of time. During this interval of time a marked tendency to separatism has moved our conscience, a movement towards disunity that increases day to day with terrifying progression. Nowhere can be seen a communion of ideas; the great principles that brought unity to our actions and that established among men of the same race a kind of brotherhood have crumbled away or are threatened by ruin.

The fateful result of this dissolution is envy, ambition, and the ill will we have for each other; [these things] have come to supplant and shrink the great principle of brotherhood that we inherited from our forefathers, even in matters of our very faith. Intrigue and falsehood—those monsters that keep company with the politics of the day—have come to overtake sincerity and truth. Individual concern has replaced the collective sentiment; the latter does not exist today, or if it exists it is shamed by such treachery as lies hidden in the heart of one or another of us ...]⁵

Padilla made other important submissions to *El Boletín* that register a deep concern over socio-historical events that were playing themselves out in New Mexico. In May 1894, he wrote a second item on the question of divisions among *Nuevomexicanos* which carried the title "La necesidad de concordia" [The Need for Unity]. Soon after,

⁵ "Nuestra única salvación," *El Boletín Popular*, April, 12, 1894.

Padilla wrote an editorial essay marking the anniversary of the death of Francisco Chávez, an extremely well-loved and respected *Nuevomexicano* political figure who had been murdered by henchmen in Santa Fe two years before.⁶ Padilla again used this occasion to exhort *Nuevomexicanos* to unity by appealing to close identification and charisma that Chávez had among the Spanish-speaking populace of New Mexico.

Padilla's submissions to *El Boletín Popular* in the 1890s are characterized by clear, concise, and polished language. In them one finds the work of a keen observer and chronicler of people, places, and events. Padilla shared in detail the experience of his travels with his readership back in New Mexico. Padilla was aware of the importance of providing such accounts to other *Nuevomexicanos* who had not had the opportunity to travel. Life for the great majority of Padilla's fellow *Nuevomexicanos* centered on subsistence farming and ranching. Few citizens of the Territory had either the occasion or opportunity to consider the roots of the cultural, economic, political, and religious disparity that existed between their community and Anglo-American emigrés to New Mexico. Added to this, encounters with Anglo-American immigrants in New Mexico were strained by cultural differences and surrounded by mutual distrust. *Nuevomexicanos* were left to imagine and speculate on the background

and way of life of these newcomers.

Nuevomexicanos had little information to indicate the enormity of the socio-economic disparity that existed between New Mexico and the rest of the United States. This lack of understanding was exacerbated by the air of haughtiness and superiority that conditioned Anglo-American interactions with the native populations of the Territory. Padilla obviously sensed the importance of issuing his communiqués from Washington in which he attempted to register a sense of awe and excitement with his own discovery of eastern American cities. In this way Camilo Padilla gained insight into the workings of the country that only a few decades prior had so profoundly affected and forever changed the fate of his homeland and the way of life of his fellow *Nuevomexicanos*. Padilla's views of Washington, D.C., and other cities he visited in New England represented incursions into a social world that was foreign and alien to most *Nuevomexicanos* in the nineteenth century. In pieces such as "Camilo en Virginia" and "Historia Original Neo-Mexicana: Pobre Emilio," a short story Padilla published in *La Gaceta de Mora* under the pseudonym "Zulu," Padilla began to delineate the social and cultural boundaries that conditioned interactions between *Nuevomexicanos* and the dominant Anglo-American social and political reality that enveloped them.

⁶ Rosenbaum summarizes the circumstances of the Chávez murder as follows, "On the night of May 29, 1892, Francisco Chaves (sic), sheriff of Santa Fe County and grand master workman of the Knights of Labor for the territory was killed from ambush. A rising Democratic politician who had built a strong opposition to the Santa Fe Ring, he had been killed by the Borrego brothers, known associates of Catron. *La Voz* lost no time in charging Catron with the murder and connecting the Law and Order Society to the assassins. Since Catron was the Republican candidate for delegate-in-Congress in the fall, the county girded for a bitter campaign." Rosenbaum, *Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest*, p. 132-133.

Padilla's "Historia Original Neo-Mexicana"

Padilla's "Historia Original Neo-Mexicana: Pobre Emilio" [Original New-Mexican Story: Wretched Emilio!] was published in the summer of 1890. The story in the context of *Nuevomexicano* literary journalism is a remarkable accomplishment. It is among the first pieces of prose fiction written by a native New Mexican to show a decided intent to capture the personal experience of *Nuevomexicanos* as they attempt to make sense of the ethnic and cultural differences that set them apart from the Anglo-American society. "Historia Original Neo-Mexicana" is the story of Emilio, a young man who, we are told, is a close friend of the narrator. Emilio, we discover, is about to embark on a journey that will take him *al oriente*, to the East, to work in the nation's capital. Camilo Padilla's own travel and work in Washington obviously inform the details of Emilio's story.

Upon taking his leave of Emilio at the train station in Santa Fe, the author reflects on the possibility that this separation will forever change their lives. The narrator's intuition will prove to be prophetic. Two years later, the narrator makes a trip to Washington where he has the opportunity to visit his friend once again. The two rekindle their friendship and indulge in long conversations about, as might be expected, New Mexico:

Obtuve un cuarto cerca de Emilio y todas las noches nos juntábamos ya para platicar, ya para tomar un paseo.

¡Qué ratos tan memorables aquellos!

Ya platicamos sobre Nuevo México y la raza neo-mexicana, ya sobre aquella hermosa ciudad y sus

atractivos.

¡Oh pláticas benditas, que habeis, cual ingratos pájaros, emprendido el vuelo para no volver jamás! Mientras duraban aquellas pláticas, los hermosos ojos negros de mi amigo se hallaban bañados en lágrimas. Me recuerdo de un capítulo de su residencia en ese lugar, y del cual los voy a á dar alguna idea al narrar lo siguiente:

[I obtained a room close to Emilio's and each night we would get together to talk or to take a walk.

Oh what memorable times were those!

Now, we would talk about New Mexico and the New Mexican race, now about the beautiful city and its attractions.

Blessed talks, which like uncaring birds have taken flight and will never return again! While those conversations lasted, my friend's beautiful dark eyes were bathed in tears. I remember a chapter regarding his stay in that place, of which I shall give some idea in the following narration:]⁷

But indeed, things had changed. Emilio relates how he has fallen madly in love with a young woman in the capital. He is willing to give up everything in order to have her love. "Sacrificaré religión, familia, honor, futuro —todo por ti . . ." [I will sacrifice everything, religion, family, honor, the future, all for you . . .] he declares upon asking her one

⁷ "Historia Original Neo-Mexicana: ¡Pobre Emilio!" *La Gaceta de Mora*, August 14, 1890.

evening to marry him. But she has already told him, “. . . tu eres católico; yo presbiteriana. Es imposible para mi cambiar de credo religioso, así como también lo es para ti.” [. . . you are Catholic, I am Presbyterian. It is impossible for me to change my religious beliefs, just as it is impossible for you to do so.]⁸

Emilio, dejected and torn, is given to bouts of depression. He confesses to his friend his folly at believing he could cross the cultural divide into the Anglo world by seeking the hand of this Anglo maiden. Despondency invades his spirit and his conversations are filled with nostalgia for New Mexico and, in particular, for the New Mexican woman. The narrator relates those moments of intimate disclosure when Emilio confesses all to him:

A menudo me decía: “Oh no hay en este mundo mujeres tan tiernas apasionadas, sinceras, como las nuestras—las mexicanas. Lo que nuestras primitas son todo lo contrario—frías, metalizadas, especuladoras. ¡Mexicanas, mujeres nobles, Dios las bendiga mil veces!” Y cuando llegaba á esto afirmaba que realmente sentíalo que decía, consagrándolas una lágrima.

[Many times he would say to me: “Oh, in this world there aren’t women as tender, passionate, sincere as our women—the Mexican women. Indeed our cousins here are quite the opposite—cold, hard, speculative. Mexican women, noble women. God bless you all a thousand times!” And when he would come to this, he would affirm that he truly felt what he had said by shedding a tear for them.]⁹

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*

Emilio, though no longer infatuated with the young woman, cannot rid himself of the humiliation at being spurned by the woman he loves. One day, having made the decision to kill himself, Emilio takes up a revolver and at the very moment when he is about to end his life, a vision suddenly appears before him. The vision is of two shadows or shapes which represent his most cherished ideals. In one he sees a vision of the homeland, of New Mexico, in the other he sees the image of his own mother. Emilio’s dream occasions a profound transformation and change in the young man at the very moment that he has thought to take his own life. Emilio confesses to his friend the following:

Al momento puso el revolver sobre la mesa é hincado y llorando dijo: “Si no fuese por Vdes. ¡Oh mi pátria y querida madre! yo me volaría la tapa de los sesos. Pero como ciendo [sic] que tal vez necesiteis mis humildes servicios, debo de ocultar debajo de una falsa sonrisa mis penas, y defendros con mi voz, pluma y espada. Es contigo, ¡patria querida! con la que me esposo, y no es sino por ti quien vivo.

[At that moment he placed the revolver on the table and kneeling and crying he said, “If it were not for the both of you, my homeland and my beloved mother, I would blow off the top of my head! But it being the case that you may have need of my humble services, I am obliged to hide my pain beneath a false smile and defend you with my voice, my pen, and my sword. I am with you beloved homeland, to you I am betrothed and it is only because of you that I live.]¹⁰

Although Emilio’s story is cast in the mold

¹⁰ *ibid.*

of a nineteenth-century romantic narrative, filled with melancholic undertones and overstated pathos, it nonetheless accords emotional valence to the profound identification of *Nuevomexicanos* with a homeland and a cultural inheritance distinct and at times at variance with Anglo-American sensibilities. Although the protagonists appear as emotional caricatures suspended in the situational contrivance provided by the story of an unrequited love, the subtext of "Historia Original" has everything to do with the clash of cultural values between *Nuevomexicanos* and the Anglo-American social order. The story's overt symbolism centers on themes revered in Mexican culture. It is no coincidence that questions of religion, honor, motherhood, homeland, the idealization of the feminine, and a culturally prescribed abhorrence to suicide should figure so prominently in the psychological dilemma young Emilio confronts. From the vantage point of cross-cultural dissonance, the story then is less about personal sentimentality; rather, it is given over to the exploration of contrasting world views and ideologies.

"Historia Original" interjects Padilla's autobiographical experience and explores contrasting sensibilities framed by social and cultural differences. It marks a definitive evolution in the writings contributed to Spanish-language periodicals by native writers in New Mexico. The simple and straight forward story of Emilio may in fact be the earliest narrative exploration which attempts to mediate the truth of the world as viewed by *Nuevomexicanos* through figurative ideations of literary discourse. It is important to note that Padilla's "Historia Original" predates other work in prose by other *Nuevomexicano* writers in their attempt to lay a groundwork for the creation of a literature by the *nativo* population of the Southwest. "Historia Original" appears two years in advance of Eusebio Chacón's twin novellas, *El hijo de la*

tempestad and *Tras la tormenta la calma*, which were published on the presses of *El Boletín Popular*. More significant than this chronology of publication is the possibility in Padilla's text of fictional disclosure which encodes the reality of nineteenth century Mexican American experience as circumscribed by social, political, and economic contact with Anglo-America.

Camilo Padilla's work in literary journalism is typified by great preparation, care, and a true love for the art of writing and letters. Praise for Padilla's work was frequent and began early. Severino Trujillo, a contemporary of Padilla and himself a journalist and educator from Mora County, was enthusiastic in his reading of Padilla's "Nuestra Unica Salvación." Trujillo exuberantly praised Padilla's work, stating that the heart of every *Nuevomexicano* should swell with pride in recognition and acknowledgment of the merit of Padilla's observations. Trujillo wrote:

Honor á quien honor es debido.
El joven escritor ya bien conocido en este territorio, así por sus raros dotes literarias como por su carácter íntegro y simpático, hoy entreteje un nuevo laurel á su inmortal corona, y conquista un título más al aprecio y admiracion de sus compatriotas.

[Honor to he who is deserving of honor. The young writer widely known in this Territory for his exceptional literary gifts and for his unblemished and good-natured character, weaves today a new laurel in his immortal crown and wins one more title much to the admiration and liking of his countrymen.]¹¹

Twenty years later, the esteem voiced by Trujillo continued to be echoed by

¹¹ "Honor á quien honor es debido," *El Boletín Popular*, April 26, 1894.

Padilla's contemporaries, many of whom had worked with equal fervor in the cause of a *Nuevomexicano* cultural movement. That praise should come from Eusebio Chacón is especially telling. In October 1914 Chacón responded to Padilla's request for the submission of an article on the history of New Mexico to be included in *Revista Ilustrada*, taking the occasion to note that he was much honored by the solicitation. Chacón ended his note with praise for Padilla's long career in journalism and for the noble, albeit, difficult task Padilla had set for himself in attempting to bring literature and art to the masses of *Nuevomexicanos*. Chacón writes that he found the idea of having a submission published in *Revista* as fanciful a notion as Padilla's own dream to bring high quality literary journalism to the state:

He leído esta carta varias veces; me hé dado pellizcos por desengañarme de no estar soñando. . . . Ah, sí, soñando uno de esos sueños color de rosa de mi amigo Padilla, que con tanto heroísmo se dedica al periodismo elegante y culto en Nuevo México, como quien dice, sacrificando su vida en "arrojar margaritas" . . . a un pueblo que no aprecia como debería tales sacrificios.

[I have read this letter several times; I have pinched myself to make sure that I am not dreaming. . . . Oh yes, dreaming one of my friend Padilla's rose-colored dreams, my friend who so heroically dedicates himself to elegant and refined journalism in New Mexico, as one would say, sacrificing his life by "tossing marigolds". . . to a citizenry which does not appreciate as it should such sacrifice.]¹²

At Padilla's passing in 1933, praise for his work as editor, educator, civic, and political figure continued to be voiced in many quarters of New Mexico. At Padilla's death the English-language *Santa Fe New Mexican* reported:

In his passing, New Mexico loses a pioneer educator, a trenchant publicist, pioneer printer, editor and publisher; a distinguished orator in two languages; famous interpreter, political leader of outstanding ability, keen student of public affairs, a life-long worker of the Spanish-speaking people of the southwest, and an enthusiast in the cause of preserving the Spanish traditions, customs, art, music, language and culture.¹³

¹² "Cosas raras de la historia de Nuevo México," *Revista Ilustrada*, Santa Fe, New Mexico, October 15, 1914.

¹³ "Camilo Padilla Dies After Hard Fight," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, November 23, 1933.

Padilla's Revista Ilustrada

Camilo Padilla published his "magazine" *Revista Ilustrada* for twenty-seven years. *Revista Ilustrada*, a contemporary of *El Palacio*, the New Mexico Historical Society's publication, was no doubt born out of the need *Nuevomexicanos* felt to have their language, art, and literature featured in an analogous publication. As was the case with the histories of the day, *Nuevomexicanos* increasingly were becoming aware of the manner in which Anglo-American publications were restrictive and elided the local culture. In the best of cases, the ethno-centrism of these publications was reflected in the consistent omission of *Nuevomexicano* authored pieces. In the worst of cases, articles on *Nuevo-mexicano* life and society were filled with countless distortions spewed forth by a multitude of uninitiated observers of *Nuevomexicano* cultural practices.

Camilo Padilla was himself a member of the Anthropological Society and maintained an association with such leading figures in the cultural life of New Mexico as L. Bradford Prince, ex-governor and founding member of the New Mexico Historical Society. Padilla had made the acquaintance of the historian Colonel Ralph Twitchell, and in later years those of Gov. Bronson Cutting and publicist Willard Johnson, the editor of *Laughing Horse Magazine*. *Revista Ilustrada* was launched at the exact time that Anglo-American specialized publications on art, history, archeology, and literature made their first appearance in New Mexico.¹⁴ Camilo

Padilla's resolve as a publicist was sharpened by this kind of development. It moved him to conceive of *Revista Ilustrada* as a specialized venue specifically tailored to *Nuevomexicano* needs. Padilla described his magazine in its early titles as "*Publicación mensual de industria, comercio, literatura y arte*" [Monthly publication of industry, trade, literature, and art]. Later, with the magazine's permanent relocation to Santa Fe, Padilla subtitled it "*Magazine de hogar*" [Magazine for the home], and described its purpose to be, "*Crear interés por el idioma de nuestros padres.*" [To create interest in the language of our forebears.]

With its inaugural issue published in El Paso, *Revista Ilustrada* opened up a heretofore unknown space for representing the creative work of the *Nuevomexicano* community in art and literature. Revista's format was, for most of its years, that of a literary magazine. The poems, short stories, and historical articles featured in each issue were enhanced with illustrative photographs, wood block prints, and other graphics. The magazine's columns and features promoted leading figures from all walks of life in the Spanish-speaking community of the Southwest. Padilla's collaborations with editors in El Paso and in Mexico lent the magazine a dynamic and progressive outlook. Its inclusiveness reduced the tendency to view *Nuevomexicano* issues and concerns as unrelated or disconnected to realities in other areas of the Southwest, and made patent a cultural affinity to the El Paso border area, to Mexico, and to other parts of the Hispanic world.

Revista Ilustrada became the first publication issued by a *Nuevomexicano* to recognize the importance of *Nuevomexicanos* working in the arts and literature. Spanish-language newspapers of

¹⁴ Padilla's title may have been inspired by the work of publicist N. Pérez Bolet who had begun the publication of *La Revista Ilustrada de Nueva York* in 1895. See Veron A. Chamberlin, & Ivan A. Schulman. *La Revista Ilustrada de Nueva York: History, Anthology and Index of Literary Selections*. Colombia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1976.

earlier days, arbitrarily divided as they were between news, announcements, editorial commentary, poems, and other writings, were subject to the immediate concerns of daily life. The poems, essays, or other writings supplied by local editors and writers were filled with an urgency that took precedence over more formal refinements of the texts. *Revista Ilustrada*, however, was able to present texts that were removed from the immediate context of social, political, and cultural happenings. Thus, it benefited and encouraged a process of distillation in the thought and writing of *Nuevomexicanos* that were achieving greater sophistication in literature by the early years of the twentieth century.

The magazine's mission was aided by the fact that by this time there were several established voices in the *Nuevomexicano* community who spoke in unison on the matter of advocating the ascendancy of their culture and arts. *Revista Ilustrada* published the works of Benjamín M. Read, Eusebio Chacón, Aurelio M. Espinosa, Luz Elena Ortiz, and Isidoro Armijo along with the commentaries of Camilo Padilla who often offered his work in a column titled, "*A través de mis cristales*" or under the pseudonyms "Dimas" or "Ignatus." In its format and presentation, *Revista Ilustrada* rivaled the work of its contemporaries in the local English-language press. Far from being parochial and provincial—a charge often directed at New Mexico's Spanish-language press—it displayed the works of Mexican and Latin American authors, opened its venue to include New Mexican women writers. It featured the arts in the form of wood block prints, graphics, and photographs. Camilo Padilla also provided his readership with a list of books available for purchase from "La librería de la Revista." The list included a number of works of world literature (Hugo, Dumas, Verne, Cervantes, etc.), works from

the national literatures of Latin America (*María* by Jorge Isaacs, *El perriquito sarniento*, by Fernández de Lizardí, etc.), and a number of works of a regional and local nature such as "La llorona," "Cuento: Pedro de Urdimalas," and "Chucho el roto." Presumably, Padilla authored some of the latter works which he sold for fifteen to thirty cents a copy. The content and style of these books is not known since copies of these have yet to be recovered.

All in all, its typical sixteen-page issues were carefully edited and executed. At the time of Padilla's death the *Santa Fe New Mexican* noted of *Revista Ilustrada*, "It was well edited, attractively illustrated and was full of literary gems. It did much to stimulate interest in the Spanish language throughout the Southwest."¹⁵

After 1925 when *Revista Ilustrada* was permanently moved to Santa Fe, Padilla began to use the magazine as a vehicle to discuss two important causes to which he was particularly committed. The first was the founding and establishment of *El Centro de Cultura* in Santa Fe. The second was his sponsorship of *El Club Político Independiente*.

Padilla envisioned the creation of a cultural center as a place to unite the more loosely organized *Nuevomexicano* literary and debate societies that already existed in Santa Fe and other New Mexican towns. The cultural center, in Padilla's mind, would serve as a focus and center for cultural, literary, and social events sponsored by its membership. Padilla first announced the opening of *El Centro de Cultura* in January 1926. In giving notice of its inaugural activities in *Revista Ilustrada*, Camilo Padilla also expressed his pleasure at realizing his dream of according

¹⁵ "Camilo Padilla Dies After Hard Fight," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, November 23, 1933.

a public presence and focus for the expression of *Nuevomexicano* art and literature. Padilla's descriptions of *El Centro de Cultura's* first evening program are enthusiastic, "Estamos de plácemes. Nuestro hermoso sueño ha sido realizado. Por fin hemos establecido un Centro de Cultura en esta hermosa capital." [We are overjoyed. Our beautiful dream has been fulfilled. Finally we have established a Cultural Center in this lovely capital city.]¹⁶ In the same issue Padilla outlined the goals of the "Centro." Padilla envisioned the cultural work of the center as an extension of the work carried on by *Revista Ilustrada*:

El objeto principal del dicho Centro será apoyar y crear interés por el idioma de nuestros mayores y la literatura española; dar conferencias sobre asuntos de interés general, historia, etc., y tener veladas literario-musicales cada mes y establecer salones de lectura donde nuestro pueblo encuentre periodicos, magazines y libros en español y, si posible, tener una biblioteca de obras en español para uso de los socios.

[The major goal of the *Centro* will be to support and create interest in the language of our elders and in Spanish literature; to hold conferences on subjects of general interest, history, etc., and to host musical and literary evenings each month; to create reading rooms where our people will locate periodicals, magazines, and books in the Spanish language; and, if possible, a place to keep a library of works in Spanish for the use of its members.]¹⁷

The work of *El Centro de Cultura* began

¹⁶ "Centro de Cultura," *Revista Ilustrada*, Santa Fe, New Mexico, January 1926, p. 6.

in earnest within the first month after it opened. The February-March issue of *Revista Ilustrada* for 1926 carried notice of the success of the *Centro's* first "velada literario-musical." The evening's program of musical and literary offerings was held in the auditorium of Lorreto Academy. Many distinguished Santa Feans were in attendance. The program for the evening included musical performances by the *Centro's* "orquesta," readings, recitations, and speeches by noted members of the *Centro*. The highlight of the evening was a choral recital of well-loved songs from Mexican and New Mexican folk traditions. *A la ciudad de Santa Fe*, a song-poem written by El Paso native Zeferino M. Mares, which had been published some years before in *Revista Ilustrada*, was sung by a choir of young women who performed the song as a tribute to Mares. Padilla ended his description of the evening by expressing his gratitude for the support the event had generated among Santa Feans. As he summed it up, "por haber puesto en práctica su idea de establecer este Centro" [for having put into action the idea to establish a *Centro*].¹⁸ Padilla also took the opportunity to announce that Benjamín Read had accepted an invitation to deliver a lecture at an upcoming meeting of the *Centro*.

The February-March issue of *Revista Ilustrada* also carried full page portraits of the *Centro's* officers. Governor Bronson Cutting, a strong supporter of Padilla's efforts, was given appropriate recognition with his photo heading those of the others in the group. Cutting's photo was followed by those of the *Centro's* officers: Camilo Padilla, president; R.L. Baca, vice-president; David Chávez Jr., second vice-president; and Isidoro Armijo, treasurer.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ "Por el Centro de Cultura," *Revista Ilustrada*, Santa Fe, New Mexico, February-March 1926.

Padilla's other interest at the time was his involvement with *El Club Político Independiente*. Padilla in fact was directly responsible for the creation of the political movement associated with the organization. *El Club* began as a third-party movement to organize the *Nuevomexicano* political power in the state by creating a voting block among *Nuevomexicanos* that could influence the outcome of elections. The club's purpose was straightforward. Padilla maintained that it allowed *Nuevomexicanos* to exercise political clout by insuring that the *Nuevomexicano* vote would not be taken for granted by the major political parties. *La Bandera Americana* reported that *El Club* was capable of

mustering some 30,000 votes that it could deliver to those candidates who could be counted on to support a *Nuevomexicano* political agenda. While Padilla was directly involved in the organization, he lent only occasional space in *Revista Ilustrada* to *Club Político* matters, and he was careful not to allow politics to change the literary and cultural focus of the magazine. Padilla did report in *Revista* on the Convention held by *Club Político* in Albuquerque in 1927. In a short item Padilla noted the work of the convention had been to lay down a constitution and agenda for the party. Padilla emerged from that convention as the club's vice-president.

Padilla's Final Years

The value of Camilo Padilla's work as a writer, journalist, and publicist is immeasurable, though regrettably even copies of his successful *Revista Ilustrada* are for the most part unknown in New Mexico's libraries and archival repositories. Like the work of other members of his generation, Padilla's efforts passed into obscurity and neglect within a very few years after his death in 1933. Tragically, Eusebio Chacón's words, "sacrificando su vida en arrojar margaritas . . . a un pueblo que no aprecia como debería tales sacrificios" [. . . sacrificing his life by "tossing marigolds" . . . to a citizenry which does not appreciate as it should such sacrifice], while meant as a tribute to Camilo Padilla's selfless endeavor in literary journalism, ring prophetic from a contemporary vantage point. Padilla spent a lifetime attempting to ameliorate the neglect in education and the arts that typified life for most *Nuevomexicanos*. But in a few short years after his death, Padilla's name and the record of his achievements dropped from public memory. With Camilo's death the most dynamic period in the *periodiquero* movement drew to a close.

The final years of Padilla's life were difficult ones filled with personal loss and persistent illness. In the face of such hardship, Padilla continued to show great courage and depth of character. In January 1926 Padilla shared with the readership of *Revista Ilustrada* the painful and intimate experience of having lost his only son the year before. Padilla wrote:

Aquí, en un cementerio cercano a donde escribo estas líneas, se yergue una cruz que marca el lugar de eterno reposo de mi único hijo, que se llevó el año 1925. Pero también me trajo

resignación, lo que le agradezco. Y además, le agradezco la gran mejoría en mi salud, que ha hecho florecer esperanzas sobre las ruinas de mi corazón.

[Here, in a cemetery near to where I now write these lines, stands a cross that marks the eternal resting place of my only son. [My son] that was taken by the year 1925. But [the year] has also brought me resignation, for which I am grateful. And also, I am grateful that the year has brought great improvement in my health, this has caused hope to flower again over the ruins of my heart.]¹⁹

The loss of his son and his deteriorating health began to dissipate Padilla's energies and he was able to give less and less of his time to his literary and cultural activities. The hope Padilla expressed at the start of 1926 that his health would improve soon faded. The last ten years of Padilla's life saw a progressive deterioration of his health. His bouts with chronic rheumatism became ever more pronounced and took their eventual toll. Padilla was 67 years old at the time of his death. Despite ill health Padilla had managed to produce, even into his waning years, some of the best work in journalism by any *Nuevomexicano* of his day. Padilla's lifelong friend and fellow *periodiquero*, Benigno Muñiz, the editor of *El Nuevo Mexicano*, paid final tribute to Padilla's work and life with the publication of his photo to which he added a terse and unadorned line which read, "Las penas y mortificaciones de este mundo han terminado para nuestro buen

¹⁹ "A través de mis cristales," *Revista Ilustrada*, Santa Fe, New Mexico, January 1926, p.4.

amigo y compañero, Camilo Padilla . . . Descanse en paz." [The sufferings and mortifications of this world have ended for our good friend and companion, Camilo Padilla. . . May he rest in peace."]²⁰

In Camilo Padilla one finds the rare ex-

ample of an individual for whom the needs of his community in varied aspects of civic and public life, served not to deter him, but rather reconfirmed in him the belief in the centrality of print and literary expression to the development of that community.

²⁰ "Requiecat in Pace," *El Nuevo Mexicano*, Santa Fe, New Mexico, November 23, 1933.

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