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BANDITRY AND POETRY:
VERSES BY TWO OUTLAWS OF OLD LAS VEGAS

DORIS L. MEYER

VICENTE SILVA, whose misdeeds have been chronicled in both Spanish and English,¹ was a native New Mexican who settled in Las Vegas in 1875. By all outward appearances, he was a peaceful family man and saloonkeeper. Unknown to the general public, Silva's saloon was also a meeting place and hideout for a gang of outlaws called La Sociedad de Bandidos de Nuevo México. The sociedad was actively captained by Silva from about 1888 to 1893; thereafter he dropped out of sight, and it was rumored and later verified that he had been murdered by his own men.²

During the spring of 1894, more than a dozen members of the Silva gang were tried and convicted in district court in San Miguel County for being party to assorted murders. They were sentenced to imprisonment in the state penitentiary and, in one case, to death by hanging. Extensive press coverage accompanied each stage of the outlaws' apprehension and trial, reflecting local sentiments that law and order was an issue of top priority after years of unchecked banditry.³

Lawlessness had increased in Las Vegas as the city grew and prospered following the arrival of the railroad in 1879. The city's newspapers regularly deplored what appeared to be an uncontrollable problem. An anonymous poem entitled "Duerme la justicia" (Justice Sleeps), published in *El Sol de Mayo* in 1891, testified to the chronic situation:

En este país desgraciado
 Las leyes no se ejecutan.
 Los criminales disfrutan
 De renombre ensangrentado;
 Su crimen queda olvidado
 Y el castigo merecido
 Rara vez es recibido
 Por el delito de muerte.
 Está la justicia innerte
 Y las leyes en olvido.⁴

In this unfortunate land
 Laws are not enforced.
 Criminals enjoy
 Bloody renown.
 Their crime is overlooked
 And the proper punishment
 Is rarely received
 For the crime of murder.
 Justice is inert
 And laws forgotten.

Some three years later, the *Las Vegas Daily Optic* wrote in the same vein with reference to the Silva gang and other outlaws who continued to plague the area:

That a carnival of crime has reigned in this county [San Miguel] for several years has not been unknown to every citizen of it. Commencing in fence-cutting, it progressed to barn-burning, and culminated in murder, while it also degenerated into larceny, both petty and grand. For the number of crimes committed the apprehensions and punishments have been deplorably and criminally small. In fact, they have been so few, and the number and enormity of undetected and unpunished crimes have been so great, that there has come to be entertained a general feeling that no one need hesitate to commit any crime for fear of punishment.⁵

Much of the banditry rampant in Las Vegas at that time was the result of local opposition to the land-grabbing tactics of wealthy ranchers and speculative land companies. The land being fenced as exclusively private property had originally been a communal holding known as the Las Vegas Grant, and its poor Mexican-American owners were being manipulated by rich investors who had the advantage of understanding the intricacies of Anglo law.⁶ Out of a frustration which had economic, political, and ethnic overtones, a vigilante group called Las Gorras Blancas (The White Caps) began conducting night rides around Las Vegas and surrounding counties in 1889.⁷ Its masked members cut fences, burned crops and buildings, and generally terrorized unsympathetic landowners. They had the tacit support of many

townspeople and the grudging acknowledgement by the local press that injustices had been committed.⁸ The local organization of the Caballeros de Labor (Knights of Labor) offered its backing, and subsequently the Gorras Blancas participated in acts of violence related to labor issues.⁹

In 1890 a new political party, called El Partido del Pueblo Unido (The United People's Party), included in its platform some key issues (land-grabbing and political bossism) which were of prime concern to the Gorras Blancas and the Caballeros de Labor.¹⁰ Because of its wide appeal, it registered significant victories in the territorial elections. Some of its members included leaders of the Caballeros de Labor (such as Juan José Herrera¹¹), former Democrats (for example, Nestor Montoya and Félix Martínez, both associated with *La Voz del Pueblo*, an influential Spanish-language newspaper), some Anglo businessmen, and renegade Republicans (such as Lorenzo López¹²). "Idealism, dissatisfaction, patronage and power spurred the alliance of old antagonists"¹³ in what was referred to in the Republican *Daily Optic* as a "mongrel association of dissimilar elements."¹⁴

As electoral politics became more responsive to popular concerns, the strength of the Gorras Blancas and Caballeros de Labor diminished; however, the Gorras Blancas were still blamed for much of the lawlessness that persisted in the area.¹⁵ In counter reaction to them, a Republican organization called La Sociedad de los Caballeros de Ley y Orden y Protección Mutua (The Society of Knights of Law, Order, and Mutual Protection) was formed in Las Vegas and led by Eugenio Romero.¹⁶ The intense political rivalry between Romero and the Pueblo Unido's Lorenzo López, in conjunction with the atmosphere of violence which prevailed, led to suspicions that there was considerable collusion between politicians and bandit gangs.¹⁷ A respected politician and longtime resident of Las Vegas, Miguel A. Otero, later wrote:

Politics were red hot in both San Miguel and Santa Fe counties, and frequent murders were being committed on all sides. In fact, the year 1892 will always be remembered, not so much on account of political

murders as for what should be termed "gang murders." The causes might well be termed *political*, for all these "button gangs" grew out of political organizations gotten up by certain leaders, who looked with favor on assassinations and killings of all kinds, whenever any objectionable politician appeared on the horizon to interfere with plans. In San Miguel County we had the Vicente Silva gang, while in Santa Fe County the Alliance League was the authorized Republican gang, and the Democrats had a "button gang" of rather secret nature, but openly opposed to the Alliance League.¹⁸

To what extent Vicente Silva and his Sociedad de Bandidos were actually involved in local politics is not known. Some members of his gang belonged to the Caballeros de Labor,¹⁹ and it is likely that they rode with the Gorras Blancas. According to Otero, Silva's gang was formed as an adjunct to the Partido del Pueblo Unido:

The true facts are well known to everyone in San Miguel County, that the Gorras Blanco [*sic*], La Sociedad de Bandidos de Nueva [*sic*] Méjico, and the Partido del Pueblo Unido were one and the same, and all under the leadership of Don Lorenzo Lopez, the sheriff of the county, at that time. His political ticket was known as Partido del Pueblo Unido (The United People's Party), but the other two organizations were the powers behind the throne.²⁰

Otero's theory in regard to Lorenzo López has not been universally accepted.²¹ Yet certain facts cannot be overlooked. Three of López' deputies in Old Town later confessed to being members of Silva's gang.²² It is also noteworthy that a member of Silva's organization was murdered by his own confederates when he broke the gang's vow of secrecy and publicly announced that he was switching his political allegiance from the Pueblo Unido to Romero's party, an act which branded him as a traitor.²³

Considering the doubts and disagreements concerning López' and Silva's involvement in Las Vegas politics, it is significant that one of Silva's own bandits, awaiting imprisonment in the penitentiary, left behind further incriminating testimony. On May 5, 1894, *La Voz del Pueblo* reported the sentencing of eight members

of the Silva gang and included a transcript of the court proceedings. As the judge condemned Procopio Rael to the longest prison term (ten years), he indicated that Rael was an active member of the Caballeros de Labor and possibly of the Gorras Blancas:

Ud. ha sido muy conspicuo en las filas de una organización, la cual ha prostituido su propósito original, pervirtiéndolo en el ultraje de inaugurar terror sobre una comunidad de la cual Ud. ha sido un miembro, y desenfrenadamente menospreciando la ley con la esperanza de que la secrecía que guardaban y el crecido número de socios que componían su organización le serviría de protección.

You have been very prominent in the ranks of an organization which has prostituted its original objective, perverting it in the outrage of initiating terror over a community of which you have been a member, and freely scorning the law with the hope that the secrecy that you kept and the growing number of members that your organization comprised would serve as protection for you.

Two weeks later, on May 19, 1894, in another Las Vegas paper, *El Sol de Mayo*,²⁴ this poem was published:

Adios mi Padre y mi Madre,
Echenme su bendición
Que por andar de asesino
Me boy para la prición.

Goodbye my father and mother,
Give me your blessing,
For having been an assassin
I am going off to prison.

Adios mi querida esposa,
En quien yo nunca pensé.
Acuerdate de tu esposo
Que se ba pa Santa Fe.

Goodbye my beloved wife
About whom I never thought.
Remember your husband
Who is leaving for Santa Fe.

Adios "Pueblo" agradecido,
Que yo memorias les dejo
De las maldades que hicimos
Por consejo de Lorenzo.

Goodbye grateful "People's Party,"
I leave you memories
Of the evils we perpetrated
On the advice of Lorenzo.

Parece que no hay justicia
Entre Jueses y Jurados
Me mandan a la prición
Por haber asesinado.

There seems to be no justice
Among Judges and Juries.
They are sending me to prison
For being an assassin.

Yo me voy con la confianza
 Según lo dirá "la gente,"
 Que recordarán de mí
 Y el que ahorcamos en el puente.

I go with the confidence
 As people will say,
 That they'll remember me
 And the one we hanged on the
 bridge.

Yo no me siento ni solo
 Porque eso es lo que quería
 Dejé mis padres y esposa,
 Por cumplir con la Pandía

I don't even feel alone
 Because that's what I wanted.
 I left my parents and wife
 To go along with the gang.

Adios don Lorenzo Lopez,
 Siempre recuerde de mí.
 Para cumplir las promesas,
 Que yo a Ud. prometí.

Goodbye Mr. Lorenzo López,
 Always think of me.
 To fulfill the promises
 That I made to you.

El Moro²⁵ va por la vida
 Que era el mejor traisionero.
 Ya se perdió la esperanza
 De asesinar a Romero.

The Moor is going to live
 Since he was the biggest traitor.
 The hope is already lost
 Of assassinating Romero.

E Silva siempre recuerdo
 Por ser hombre muy valiente,
 Fue capitán de nosotros
 Y robó a toda la gente.

And I'll always remember Silva,
 Since he was a very brave man.
 He was our captain
 And he robbed everyone.

Procopio Rael es mi nombre.
 Mi historia queda vigente,
 Puede que en estos diez años
 Se olvidó todo a la gente.

Procopio Rael is my name.
 My story is now current.
 It could be that in ten years
 People will forget it all.

En fin madre de mi corazón
 Hoy me veo atribulado
 Por no tomar los consejos
 Que desde tiempo me has dado.

Finally, mother of my heart,
 Today I find myself sorrowful
 For not having taken the advice
 That you gave me long ago.

Essentially, the poem is a farewell admission of guilt upon the author's departure for the penitentiary in Santa Fe. But Rael takes pains to ascribe some of the responsibility for his errors to two superiors: López and Silva. In fact, he states that López, not Silva, was the top man, and he includes a specific reference to an assassination plot against Romero, which confirms Otero's description

of Las Vegas' political gangsterism. These allegations explain why *El Sol de Mayo*, a pro-Romero paper, published the poem, probably in hopes of discrediting López who was still sheriff. That it awakened no repercussions is further evidence of what Otero identified as a general public acceptance of political corruption. It is unlikely that the poem is a forgery considering its poor artistic quality, commensurate with Rael's limited education, and also taking into account the established custom of including original poems of this kind in local Spanish-language papers.

The publication of poems, both anonymous and signed, written by ordinary citizens was quite common in the 1880s and 1890s in New Mexico.²⁶ A popular verse tradition has flourished in Hispanic cultures since the time of the medieval *juglar*, and the composing and singing of *coplas*, *versos*, *décimas* and *corridos* was a natural pastime for Mexican-Americans of the territorial period.²⁷ Even the most amateur poet felt at liberty to share his verses with others. Apparently newspaper editors encouraged local contributions, as the papers published much poetry which, although mediocre in artistic terms, offers rare examples of personal and collective attitudes held by Mexican-Americans of the period.

Another member of Silva's gang composed poetry with somewhat more literary talent than his cohort Rael. Germán Maestas was almost thirty years old in the spring of 1894 when he escaped from jail in Las Vegas, and then killed his wife's lover. Manuel C. de Baca, in a chapter devoted to Maestas' crime in his biography of Silva, relates how the enraged husband, in a sustained fit of jealousy, premeditatedly sought out his rival, mercilessly shot him, and left him to burn to death in a campfire.²⁸ Detailed testimony from the sole witness and later from Maestas himself indicates that the victim fired first, before Maestas and a companion answered fire killing him.²⁹ Nevertheless, for his crime Maestas was found guilty and was hanged on May 25, 1894.

Interviews with the prisoner were reported at length in Spanish- and English-language newspapers; Maestas talked freely about his act, claiming he shot in self-defense and that his crime was really the fault of his faithless wife:

Lo que tengo que decir, es una declaracion espontánea para que el público, o á lo menos la mayoría, sepa que noy soy un asesino tan depravado como se me ha pintado, o para que á lo menos, ya que no pueden salvarme la vida se dignen ofrecer una plegaria por el bien de mi alma. No niego, continuó, que yo maté a Pedro Romero, pero lo hice bajo circunstancias, las cuales si hubieran sido tomadas en consideracion por el jurado, nunca habria fallado en primer grado como lo hizo. Mi mujer, dijo el reo, ha sido la causa principal de todo esto. . . .³⁰

What I have to say is a spontaneous declaration so that the public, or at least the majority, may know that I am not as depraved an assassin as they have made me out to be, or so that at least, since they can no longer save my life, they might be so kind as to say a prayer for my soul. I don't deny, he continued, that I killed Pedro Romero, but I did it under circumstances which, if they had been taken into consideration by the jury, never would it have sentenced me to the first degree as it did. My wife, said the prisoner, has been the principal cause of all this. . . .

Perhaps because they sympathized with a classic example of conjugal love betrayed, which has traditionally been grounds for retribution in the Hispanic honor code,³¹ or perhaps because Maestas' case had been so widely publicized, the public thronged to see the hanging. As *La Voz del Pueblo* reported the next day:

El prisionero anduvo con paso firme y no levantó la vista ni siquiera para echar una ojeada á los que le rodeaban. Parecia estar profundamente impresionado, y en su semblante se notaba que el infeliz sufría indecible agonía en aquellos momentos tan aciagos de su vida.³²

The prisoner walked with a firm step and he didn't raise his eyes even to glance at those who surrounded him. He seemed to be profoundly moved, and in his face it was seen that the unhappy fellow was suffering untold anguish in those very sad moments of his life.

The same issue of *La Voz del Pueblo* which described Maestas' last moments also published a poem with the heading "A Rosita Durán, por Germán Maestas, su Marido" (To Rosita Durán, by Germán Maestas, her Husband):

Goza de tu libertad
 Que el quitártela es injusto,
 Que aunque yo viva á disgusto
 Mi mal remedio tendrá.
 De tu inconstante fortuna
 Mi vida te has de quejar.

Grande horror te ha de causar
 El ver clisada la luna;
 Pues no se ha visto ninguna
 Lo que hoy en ti se verá,
 Pues tu con grande crueldad
 Hoy me has echado al olvido,
 Conociendo tu muy bien
 Que yo he sido tu marido.
 Teniendo mi libertad
 Puede costarte la vida.

Mantente con el dichoso
 Inter yo salga de aquí;
 Que puede ser para tí
 El delito lastimoso.
 Si otro fuera el victorioso
 Y yo fuera el abatido,
 Fuera tu gusto cumplido
 Verme difunto a tus piés;
 Pueden ser penas despues
 Esos gustos que has tenido.

Para morir nací.
 Yo nunca he de ser eterno,
 Que aunque yo vaya al infierno
 Vengaré mi agravio, sí,
 Haciendo un ejemplo en tí,
 Como el vulgo lo verá;
 El mundo se asombrará,
 Y el que leera esta historia

Enjoy your freedom,
 Since to take it away from you is
 unjust,
 For although I may live in dis-
 comfort
 My woe will have a remedy.
 Of your inconstant fortune,
 My dear, you will surely complain.

Horrible it will be for you
 To see the moon eclipsed;
 Since in not one of them has been
 seen
 What will be seen in you today.
 Since in your great cruelty
 Today you have already forgotten
 me
 Knowing full well
 That I have been your husband.
 If I had my freedom,
 It could cost you your life.

Stay with the fortunate one
 Until I get out of here;
 The crime could be for you
 A painful one.
 If another were the victor
 And if I were the defeated,
 Your pleasure would be complete
 Seeing me dead at your feet;
 The pleasures you have had
 Could later bring anguish.

I was born to die.
 I'll never be eternal
 But although I may go to hell,
 I'll surely avenge the insult
 Making an example of you
 As the people will see;
 The world will be amazed
 And for him who reads this story

Todito esa vanagloria,
Pesar se le volverá.

En fin, ingrata mujer,
Me has hecho perder la vida
Por quererte defender
Hoy me hallo en una prision
Esperando el fatal dia
De mi triste ejecucion.
Se llegará el veinticinco,
Sin justicia y sin razon;
Pues tu has tenido la culpa,
De Dios espera el perdon.³³

Every bit of this vanity
Will become woe.

And so, ungrateful woman,
You have made me lose my life.
By wanting to defend you
I find myself today in prison
Awaiting the fatal day
Of my sad execution.
It will come on the twenty-fifth
Without justice, without cause.
Since you have been to blame
You must await pardon from God.

Maestas cannot forgive Rosita for her betrayal and he vows vengeance while protesting the injustice of his fate, sentiments which he also expressed to reporters who interviewed him in his cell.³⁴ In contrast to the tone of resignation in Rael's verses, Maestas' mood is defiant and highly emotional; consequently the lyrical impact of his poem is stronger.

The authenticity of Rael's and Maestas' poems is reinforced by their style as well as their content. Both authors use the traditional Spanish octosyllabic meter, common vocabulary, and a rather awkward, unpolished style. The theme of the two poems is similar in that both are farewells in which the authors seek self-justification by assigning some or most of the blame for their acts to others. Seen through their poems, both Rael and Maestas acquire "human" dimensions and seem far less cold-blooded than they do in Baca's history of the Silva gang.

Both young Mexican-American men were essentially common outlaws with an "uncommon" poetic urge. In other words, they responded to a cultural heritage which Billy the Kid, Dave Rudabaugh, Black Jack Ketchum, and other Anglo desperadoes in New Mexico did not share. Composing verse was a natural form of self-expression for them, not a result of formal training. Their poems, and those of other Mexican-Americans composed individually or collectively, offer valuable insight into the history of the Southwest.³⁵ They may even, as in the above cases, suggest that history be rewritten.

NOTES

1. The original biography was by Manuel C. de Baca, *Historia de Vicente Silva y sus cuarenta bandidos* (Las Vegas, N.M., 1896). An English translation was published in 1947: Manuel C. de Baca, *Vicente Silva and his Forty Bandits*, trans. Lane Kauffmann (Washington, D.C., 1947). Another English version appeared some years earlier: Carlos C. de Baca, *Vicente Silva: New Mexico's Vice King of the Nineties* (n.p., 1938); it was reissued under another title, *Vicente Silva: The Terror of Las Vegas* (Española, N. M., 1968), by the same author. For further accounts of Silva and his gang, see Peter Hertzog, *A Directory of New Mexico Desperados* (Santa Fe., n.d.); Miguel A. Otero, *My Life on the Frontier, 1882-1897* (Albuquerque, 1939), I; and F. Stanley, *Desperadoes of New Mexico* (Denver, 1953).

2. M. C. de Baca and M. A. Otero were among those present in 1895 when Silva's body was exhumed from a grave identified by one of Silva's bandits. Otero, *Life on the Frontier*, p. 179. Silva's men had killed him for the money he hoarded and because they were disgusted with Silva's brutal killing of both his wife and brother-in-law. C. C. de Baca, *Vicente Silva* (1968), p. 30. Until these facts were known, local papers carried reports of various rumors concerning Silva's fate. See *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, April-May, 1894, for example.

3. For a general discussion of this issue, see Porter A. Stratton, *The Territorial Press of New Mexico, 1834-1912* (Albuquerque, 1969), pp. 175-95.

4. *El Sol de Mayo* (Las Vegas), Dec. 10, 1891. All newspaper quotations are transcribed without orthographic or punctuational corrections. I am responsible for the accompanying translations into English.

5. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, April 12, 1894.

6. For a complete analysis of this situation, see Robert J. Rosenbaum, "Mexicano versus Americano: A Study of Hispanic-American Resistance to Anglo-American Control in New Mexico, 1870-1900" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Texas, 1972). For this reference and other helpful advice, I am grateful to Dr. Myra Ellen Jenkins of the State Records Center and Archives in Santa Fe.

7. The Gorras Blancas have been portrayed as common marauders (see Otero, *Life on the Frontier*, pp. 166-67) as well as oppressed "social bandits" in line with the Hobsbawn theory (see Andrew B. Schlesinger, Jr., "Las Gorras Blancas, 1889-1891," *Journal of Mexican-American History*, 1 [Spring 1971], 87-143). The most objective and thorough analysis is found in Rosenbaum's, "Mexicano versus Americano."

8. Local juries generally would not convict fence-cutters. Rosenbaum, "Mexicano versus Americano," p. 218. The press was divided in its reaction to the Gorras Blancas: "most territorial editors, whether Anglo or Hispano, disapproved of violent methods, but some recognized the justice of the ends of the White Caps and sought to persuade them to use methods that would lead to reconciliation rather than conflict between ethnic groups." Stratton, *Territorial Press*, p. 131.

9. Robert W. Larson, "Populism in New Mexico," *New Mexico Past and Present*, ed. R. N. Ellis (Albuquerque, 1971), p. 189.

10. Rosenbaum, "Mexicano versus Americano," p. 223.

11. Herrera most probably organized the Gorras Blancas in 1888; he had spent some time in other parts of the Southwest where he became involved with labor organizations. He then returned to New Mexico and became a leader of the local Caballeros de Labor in Las Vegas, championing the cause of the poor wage earner. Both he and his two brothers, Pablo and Nicanor, were known to be political agitators and were believed capable of violence. Herrera acquired ownership of *El Defensor del Pueblo* in Albuquerque in 1891 in a move to expand his organization in New Mexico. See Rosenbaum, "Mexicano versus Americano," passim.

12. Lorenzo López was a wealthy "jefe político." Originally a Republican like his brother-in-law, Eugenio Romero, López later became Romero's bitter enemy and was elected county sheriff in spite of Romero's strong objections. Otero, *Life on the Frontier*, pp. 224-26.

13. Rosenbaum, "Mexicano versus Americano," p. 224.

14. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, Sept. 8, 1890.

15. Rosenbaum, "Mexicano versus Americano," p. 267.

16. Eugenio, another "jefe," appealed to wealthier Republicans who had been harassed by the Gorras Blancas. He owned the Spanish-language paper, *El Sol de Mayo*, first published in May 1891. Rosenbaum, "Mexicano versus Americano," pp. 270-73.

17. Rosenbaum, "Mexicano versus Americano," p. 267.

18. Otero, *Life on the Frontier*, p. 263. For confirmation of Otero's assessment of New Mexican politics in 1892, see Howard R. Lamar, *The Far Southwest, 1846-1912: A Territorial History* (New Haven, 1966), pp. 193-94.

19. Rosenbaum, "Mexicano versus Americano," pp. 329-35. Rosenbaum says that Silva was with the Romero faction, a statement for which there is no proof. It is more likely that he was with López and the Pueblo Unido, as explained in the pages which follow.

20. Otero, *Life on the Frontier*, p. 167.

21. I have not found Otero's specific allegations concerning López in any other studies on the subject. Indeed, Schlesinger calls Otero's theory a "distortion"; he maintains that López was a shrewd politician who was fed up with Republican criticism of his inability to establish law and order as sheriff and therefore switched to the Pueblo Unido. Schlesinger, *Las Gorras Blancas*, pp. 120 and 216.

22. Carlos C. de Baca, *Vicente Silva* (1968), p. 10.

23. For details of the mock trial and subsequent hanging of Patricio Maes, see *ibid.*, pp. 14-17. Also see *La Voz del Pueblo* (Las Vegas), May 5, 1894.

24. It was in this paper in October 1892 that Patricio Maes, the Silva bandit hanged by his own gang for treason, announced in a letter to the editor that he was leaving the Pueblo Unido and joining the Republican Sociedad de Mutua Protección.

25. "El Moro" was the alias of Martín González y Blea, a Silva outlaw. He turned state's evidence after his arrest and avoided the death penalty.

26. On this subject see my article, "Anonymous Poetry in Spanish-language New Mexico Newspapers 1880-1900," *The Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingüe*, 2 (Sept.-Dec. 1975), 259-75. Spanish-language papers were on the whole more literarily oriented than Anglo or bilingual papers in New Mexico.

27. See R. Menéndez Pidal, *Los romances de América y otros estudios* (Buenos Aires, 1939). On the continuation of the Hispanic verse tradition in New Mexico, see the following important studies: Arthur L. Campa, *Spanish Folk-Poetry in New Mexico* (Albuquerque, 1946); Aurelio M. Espinosa, *Romancero de Nuevo Méjico* (Madrid, 1953); and A. Lucero-White Lea, *Literary Folklore of the Hispanic Southwest* (San Antonio, 1953).

28. For details of this crime, see M. C. de Baca, *Silva and his Forty Bandits*, pp. 100-3, or C. C. de Baca, *Vicente Silva* (1968), pp. 34-36. It is interesting to note in *La Voz del Pueblo*, May 26, 1894, that in a final declaration, Maestas explained that he had resisted arrest until Sheriff Lorenzo López arrived because he felt he could trust López to protect him from lynchers.

29. The witness' testimony was published in *La Voz del Pueblo*, April 7, 1894; *El Independiente* (Las Vegas), May 26, 1894; and the *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, April 16, 1894.

30. *La Voz del Pueblo*, May 19, 1894.

31. The Spanish Golden Age drama reflected this honor code in many plots. As Raymond R. MacCurdy writes: "Three of Calderón's plays . . .

are based on the Spanish code of honor which provided, as a matter of law, that a husband had the right to kill an adulterous wife and her lover." *Spanish Drama of the Golden Age* (New York, 1971), p. 434.

32. *La Voz del Pueblo*, May 26, 1894. The *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, May 23, 1894, reported that tickets of admission for the hanging were applied for from as far away as Colorado Springs.

33. *La Voz del Pueblo*, May 26, 1894.

34. In his final interviews with reporters, Maestas claimed to have forgiven his wife and he requested, but was denied, permission to see her one last time. It is therefore likely that his poem was written several weeks before his death, shortly after his sentencing. Maestas had once before turned to writing to express himself—when he broke out of prison, he left an insulting letter for the sheriff (presumably López), the contents of which were not made public. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, April 16, 1894.

35. In a study entitled "Folklore and History," Américo Paredes discusses the importance of consulting popular ballads as a source of history. See *Singers and Storytellers*, ed. M. C. Boatright (Dallas, 1961).