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CHICANO CINEMA AND THE HORIZON OF EXPECTATIONS: A Discursive Analysis of Recent Film Reviews in the Mainstream, Alternative and Hispanic Press

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Chicano Cinema and the Horizon of Expectations:

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"But even the smallest smoke signal can mark
the way on the road out of the cinema barrio
and toward Mama's dream of el Norte."
Richard Corliss, Time, July 11, 1988.

Introduction:

Between Summer 1987 and Spring 1988, Hollywood released four films that depicted the Chicano experience: La Bamba (1987), Born in East L.A. (1987), The Milagro Beanfield War (1988), and Stand and Deliver (1988). These films were seen as part of a new phenomenon, a hybrid called "Hispanic Hollywood." The Hispanic directors, producers and writers who made these films had escaped the "cinema barrio" of their alternative production companies and entered the mainstream, bringing positive, yet popular images with them.[2] Or so Time and other mainstream periodicals claimed.

What did these films represent: the Chicano experience or a Hollywood success story with -- incidentally -- Chicano characters? Until now, Chicano film criticism has turned to the formal properties of the text -- its narrative content and images -- to provide an answer. But when we consider to whom the film signifies, several answers or "readings" are revealed. In an attempt to move Chicano film criticism toward reception as integral to the production of meanings, I will examine the

aesthetic discourse of film reviews, interviews and feature articles in the mainstream, alternative and Hispanic press. It is here that film first reveals itself as a multiple text, since each publication offers a different interpretation, one that either reflects, anticipates or attempts to influence the expectations of its readership.

Such an approach, however, confronts two impediments: image-oriented, text-bound Chicano film criticism; and a broader discourse of film criticism and reviews that places Chicano and other ethnic films within the context of a "social problem" rather than of cultural identity or even film history. Therefore, before I undertake an analysis of the "horizon of expectations" (Jauss) for the four films, it will be necessary to consider the historical background as well as the prevailing approaches to Chicano film criticism in order to develop a new methodological model.[3]

Historical Background:

Chicano and/or Mexican stereotypes were established during film's silent period, and have continued to reappear throughout the history of American cinema: The Chicano has gone from bandido to gangster to gang member; while the Chicana remains either the passive object or the "dark lady."[4] These "images" have relied on ethnocentric assumptions that have made the Mexican American in popular fiction and film the most "localized" ethnic stereotype, identified with the Southwest despite more national demographics, and limited to the actions genres: western, conquest and urban violence films (Pettit XV).

The first films to depict the Chicano came from the "greaser"

genre, and included such films as Tony the Greaser (1911), The Greaser's Revenge (1914) and Guns and Greasers (1918), the last film to use "greaser" in its title (Keller 27). The "greaser" -- a product of Anglo-American thought since the early 1800s -- was a violent and murderous character who roamed the Southwest and whose inevitable defeat or redemption reaffirmed North American strength and virtue, while it also legitimated the dispossession of the Mexican and, later, Chicano in the Southwest territories. While the Mexican revolution has been cited as a factor in the "greaser" genre, the "greaser" is more a product of internal conflict for economic and political control of the southwest territories. It is important, therefore, to remember that Arizona and New Mexico (exceptional for its Chicano majority) become states in 1912. Thus the redeemed or "good greaser" can be seen as a prescription for Chicanos: Be prepared to protect North Americans from other "greasers" (Mexicans) but do not expect ever to be more than a double outcast or "noble greaser," neither Mexican nor American.

As with the "greaser" figure, most other "Latin images" did not represent distinct peoples: "Hollywood believed that Latin America was a uniform entity, unaffected by cultural, geographic, or social differences" (Woll 32). Complex cultural realities were reduced to a single nonspecific cinematic code that signified "otherness" or evil within the manicheaen Hollywood formula (Metz 229; Keller 25). With few exceptions, Chicanos were identified as "greasers," "wetbacks" or "Mexicans" until the 1960s, so that citizenship and the hybrid, syncretic nature of ethnic experience were denied.

Despite Hollywood's dominance since World War I, several forces have either modified or countered persistent Chicano

stereotypes: The World Wars, Latin American protests, and alternative film production. The World Wars presented Hollywood with new villains: Huns "and Japanese. In addition, the wars closed European markets, causing Hollywood to turn to Latin America in order to maintain its profit margins. The United States also wanted to secure Latin America as an ally during World War II. These changes caused Hollywood and the U.S. government to be more sensitive to Latin American portrayals, although films still often misrepresented their cultures and language variations (Woll, 14-16; 53-65).

More positive -- though still problematic -- Chicano images came about due to the emergence of the social problem film in the period between the Depression and the McCarthy era (Roffman and Purdy 252-256). Often Anglos would play the lead Chicano, or racial oppression would be solved by the "white Good Samaritan" (Keller 33). The most successful and laudable social problem films about Chicanos were the least accessible: Joseph Losey's The Lawless (1950) and Herbert Biberman's Salt of the Earth (1954), both low-budget independent features with blacklisted directors.[5]

Mexico and other Latin American countries have successfully protested Hollywood stereotypes since the "greaser" period (Delpar; Woll; Rios-Bustamante 9). The protests from Hispanics in the United States, however, went unheard until the civil rights movements. Nonetheless, Spanish-language newspapers in the United States reveal evidence of organized resistance in the form of editorials and boycotts since at least 1910 (Limón).

In the late-1960s and early 1970s, the Chicano Movement, in conjunction with other civil rights groups, pressured Hollywood

studios and commercial television to hire and train more minorities. These new positions -- though often "token gestures" involving low-budget documentaries and public affairs shows -- nonetheless provided the experience and resources for Chicano cinema to develop (Keller 47; Guernica 12). Chicano filmmakers Moctesuma Esparza, José Luis Ruiz and Jesús Salvador Treviño started out in television, but soon realized the need to set up independent Chicano production companies in order to deal with Chicano or Hispanic themes (Guernica; Treviño). In this same period. Chicanos such as Severo Pérez and Efrain Gutiérrez in San Antonio, Texas, initiated a brief, but successful rasquache cinema outside the film industry altogether.

Because of their marginal position within the industry, some Chicano filmmakers in the late-197Os formulated a counter-cinema based on two precepts: "the need to evolve a Chicano cinema aesthetic, and the need to create an alternative to the 'commercial' influences of Hollywood film..." (Treviño 176; Campus; Johansen; Cine-Aztlán) . Chicano reality, experience or history required a Chicano perspective at the level of aesthetics rather than mere representation at the level of images. The alternative would be "Chicano films rather than films, merely commercial, 'about' Chicanos" (Keller 48).

Between 1967 and 1980, some forty-five Chicano films were produced, mostly in English, although about one-fourth were bilingual. The two Spanish-language films and the two dual-language films represent less than one-tenth of Chicano production, an indication of the dual audience these films envisioned. In the twenty year period before La Bamba, eleven feature-length films were shot in either 16mm, super-16 or 35mm:

La Vida (1973), Alambrista! (1977), Please Don't Bury Me Alive! (1977) , Amor Chicano Es Para Siempre (1978),Only Once in a Lifetime (1978) , Raíces de Sangre (Mexico, 1978), Run. Tecato. Run (1979), Zoot Suit (1981), The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez (1982), Heartbreaker (1983) and El Norte (1983).[6] These films were not "picked up" by the major Hollywood distributors, with the exception of Zoot Suit. which received limited promotion as a "gang" film.[7] Instead, Chicano films have had to seek outlets though the barrio and art-house theater circuits, film festivals, college campuses and public television.

Concurrent with the emergence of the Chicano feature film was the re-emergence of older Hollywood stereotypes in the new context of the urban violence genre or gang exploitation film (Keller 44). These films included: Boulevard Nights (1979), Defiance (1980) and Walk Proud (1981). Chicano organizations such as M.E.Ch.A., Barrios Unidos, Nosotros and the Chicano Cinema Coalition protested these films as exploitive and racist, especially since in one film a non-Hispanic portrays the "good" Chicano. In Walk Proud, Robbie Benson donned brown contacts to play the lead role of a Chicano gang member who reforms. The filmmakers' controversial on location shoot in Venice, California, also increased tensions between gangs, and between the Chicano community and police and Anglos.[8]

Chicano Film Criticism:

Given the long history of negative stereotypes, it is no surprise that when Chicano film criticism began to emerge in the late-1970s, its focus -- like that of earlier ethnic-oriented and feminist film studies -- would be on the Chicano "image" in film.[9]

Consider the titles of the major works on Chicanos in cinema: The, Latin Image in American Film, Images of the Mexican American in Fiction and Film. Chicano- Images in Film, and Gary Keller's introductory essay in Chicano Cinema. "The Image of the Chicano in Mexican, United States, and Chicano Cinema: An Overview."[10]

In the mid-1980s, film critics began to question the adequacy of "image" analysis in film studies and as a tool for social change. In "Colonialism, Racism, and Representation: An Introduction," Robert Stam and Louise Spence critique the usual "image" analysis: "The privileging of social portrayal, plot and character ... has led to the slighting of the specifically cinematic dimensions of the films; the analyses might easily have been of novels or plays rather than films" (634). The new methodological model Stam and Spence propose does not dispense with content (or image) analysis, but instead makes it particular to the film medium: "Its emphasis should be on narrative structure, genre conventions, and cinematic style rather than on perfect correctness of representation or fidelity to an original 'real' model or prototype" (641). In other words, the image cannot be extracted from its articulation within a cinematic aesthetic system and mode of production.

To be fair, the limits of image analysis have long been recognized in Chicano film criticism. In a 1978 special issue of Agenda: A Journal of Hispanic Issues devoted to "media's distorted images," Francisco J. Lewels distinguishes between the blatant racism of stereotypes and the "subtle racism" that stems from mass media's institutional point of view, including budget and time constraints as well as historical ignorance (4-6). Tatcho Mindiola, Jr., and Linda Williams provide more sustained

alternatives to "image" analysis that corroborate the methodological model that Stam and Spence set forth (see also Spence and Stam). Their two essays are especially important, because of their wide distribution and influence at a time when scholars began to consider issues of Chicano representation in film. An extended examination, however, reveals that in both cases the focus was not on what Chicano films did, but on what they did not do. Thus, the films were not engaged in any significant manner, but instead became backdrops for other political concerns.

Mindiola, in his critique of The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez. demonstrates how the film's positive images are undermined by the consistent Anglo point of view that he attributes to the film's director, financial backer and other Anglo influences. Like Stam and Spence, he argues that what images or acts the film shows is less important than how it shows them (Stam and Spence 642). Despite available information and material, he concludes, the film "does not develop a perspective which puts the viewer within the Mexican community looking out" (14) .[11]

While Mindiola's criticisms are accurate -- except for brief expository scenes near the end, the film never examines the Chicano experience -- he nonetheless oversimplifies the narrative structure. The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez is not a simple western posse hunt in the realist mode, in which case -- as Stam and Spence note -- "[t]he possibility of identification ... is ... ruled out by point of view conventions" (641). Instead, the film is a self-conscious deconstruction of the Anglo point of view, centered on the mistranslation of a single Spanish word, yegua (mare). The English-speaking, non-Hispanic point of view becomes

problematic because it is shown to exist in a bicultural, bilingual context. In fact, since no subtitles are used, the privileged or ideal viewer is the bilingual one who can immediately understand the Anglo characters' linguistic errors and racist assumptions.[12] For the English-speaking viewer, the film systematically discredits the posse on a visual level, through the use of repetition, cross cutting and lighting. By the time that Gregorio Cortez is captured in a cabin, the scene is filmed from his point of view.

In a sense, The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez is also an extended deconstruction of the "greaser" films, which -- at about the same time that Cortez actually lived -- gave narrative form to the racism and the political and economic motivations that condemned him. The film, however, maintains linguistic and cultural distance: When Cortez tells his lawyer the story from his perspective, the Chicana translator's voice does not intrude upon his flashbacks. Thus the film offers no false transcendence for Anglo audiences; it is not about understanding the "Ballad of Gregorio Cortez" as a Chicano -- few stanzas of the ballad are translated -- but about the fact that such a ballad or point of view exists that contests the "greaser" image.

Neither Mindiola nor Williams consider how the films each examines were received within various interpretive communities: Hispanic, academic, mainstream, et al. Both assume universal reception; that is, a text tells one story to all audiences. Mindiola fails to acknowledge how The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez constructs three "language" audiences, each with a different access to the narrative. Williams offers more troubling implications in her criticism of Moctesuma Esparza and Alejandro

Grattan's Only Once in a Lifetime, a film about an older, suicidal Chicano artist. Williams faults the film for lacking the "integrity and honesty" about the Chicano experience of Herbert Hibernian's Salt of the Earth and Robert Young's Alambrista! . William's desire for "authentic ... cultural or class difference" between Anglos and Chicanos seems to confine the Chicano experience to these stories about poor rural laborers. The word "authentic" rings false, since Williams ignores the urban and middle class realities of the Chicano experience in order to construct a "type" who opposes an external or white "bourgeois culture." The fact that Williams fails to comment on her position as a middle-class Anglo critic who prefers Anglo-directed films about working class Chicanos, reveals a certain indifference to Chicano reception and production. Rather than consider -- let alone research -- the various roles Only Once in a Lifetime plays within the Chicano community and the development of a Chicano cinema, she assumes that her "anti-bourgeois" reading can "speak to and for Chicanos."

Methodology:

The methodological model followed in this paper moves beyond text-bound criticism -- with its assumption that a text tells one story -- to examine reception within the aesthetic discourse on film that can be found in the popular press. I plan to build upon the work of Carlos Cortés, who adds a much needed contextual element to Chicano film criticism. It should be noted, however, that Chicano cultural and historical studies have long turned to newspapers in order to reconstruct Chicano perceptions of events since the Mexican American War. In fact, in one of the first

essays on Chícanos and film, Jose Limón brings such a historical approach to his examination of the Chicano response to "greaser" films in the Southwest. A decade later, Cortés would be among the first in either Chicano or film studies to theorize the role or impact of the aesthetic discourse on film reception.

Cortés argues that the image the viewer sees on the screen depends on the pre-established context of the "societal curriculum" (family, peer groups, neighborhoods) and "total media curriculum" (newspapers, magazines, television) that "educate" the viewer.[13] The media curriculum that interprets and evaluates films plays a significant role in providing a context within which to receive the projected images and narrative. Cortés cites film reviews and columns as the "fragmentary evidence" available to the film historian attempting impact analysis, but fails to recognize or utilize these sources as an important discourse in their own right. Nonetheless, Cortés's concept of the "total media curriculum" allows for multiple readings and challenges the primacy of the text, since "film does not operate alone" (Cortés, "Chicanas" 96).

In the model that Cortés outlines, a film does not exist as a pristine text, but in mediation with media coverage and audience expectations. Stam and Spence provide a similar framework: "We must be aware ... of the cultural and ideological assumptions spectators bring to the cinema. We must me conscious, too, of the institutionalized expectations ... which lead us to consume films in a certain way" (646-647) . While Cortés does not theorize the receptions possible within such a framework, Stam and Spence suggest the three levels of reception that Stuart Hall delineates in "Culture, the media and 'the ideological effect'" (344-346).

Hall argues that the formal properties of a text construct a "preferred" reading. The audience, however, can produce an alternative reading that is either "negotiated' with or "oppositional" to the "preferred" one. The fact that Stam and Spence refer to these two readings as "aberrant" (646-647), however, reveals the extent to which film critics privilege a determinate or "fixed" text over its multiple inscriptions within multiple social contexts. Ethnic audiences, then, who somehow fail to grasp the "preferred" meaning are not seen as active participants who utilize the strategies of various "interpretive communities" (Fish 322; Burton 18-21), but as "aberrant" readers who miss the point. Such a theoretical position puts too much emphasis on the unmitigated power of Hollywood, and on the film critic who somehow escapes its "ideological effect."

At its core, the concept of the "preferred" reading raises the question as to who will determine what is preferred in the text. In the case of Chicano (and other ethnic) films, the "preferred" reading has often been defined by those aspects -- mostly formal -- that Anglo critics and reviewers understand. In short, reception becomes intention! And so, rather than conceptualize reception in terms of adherence to or aberrance from a fixed text, it proves more useful at this point in time to consider the ways in which reception determines the text or image.

The film reviews for La Bamba provide an striking instance of such *difference* in the reading of an ethnic-coded sign. In the issue over whether actor Lou Diamond Phillips, a Filipino-Hawaiian, resembled a Chicano, reviewers disagreed on whether the real Ritchie Valens himself looked Chicano. Several noted that Valens looked like a bull and had obvious "Indian heritage" that

made him "look so cool" (Village Voice: Time; Video). The fact that Valens looked Indian and Phillips did not was cited as something "you can see . . . in any photo" (Village Voice) . In most reviews, however, including those in the Hispanic press, neither Valens nor Phillips elicited comments about ethnic representation. But the reviewer in the Los Angeles Times saw another Valens altogether in claiming that "part of his appeal was how un-Latin he looked, with his freckles." Same photo, three different images: Indian, Chicano and Anglo.

My analysis draws upon reception theorist Hans Robert Jauss's concept of the "horizon of expectations," which he defines as "the sum total of reaction, prejudgments, verbal and other behavior that greet a work upon its appearance" (3-45). The "horizon of expectations" provides the context within which viewers receive a film and can be divided into two broad categories: expectations derived from the film itself (style, genre, director and stars); and the aesthetic discourse on film. Though the latter often mediates or defines the former, little research has been done on how the aesthetic discourse on film prefigures consumption.[14] While film critics do have an impact on readers and each other (English 74-88), most studies tend to reduce the nature of that impact to a comparison of popular tastes and critical opinion, which assumes that one can compare a quantity (audience attendance) with a quality (critical opinion). The fact that a person attended a film is taken as a vote in favor of the film. Other studies have audiences rate films and compare the results to critics' ratings (English 126; Austin, "Critics'"). The focus of these studies is an overall evaluation -- excellent, fair and poor -- that reduces the significance of the film to a question of

purchase value.[15] Still, the impact of the aesthetic discourse on film can be described in general terms: "it tends to establish the critical vocabulary and frames of reference used not only by reviewers, but by film audiences as well" (Alien and Gomery 90).

Sources were gathered from The Reader's Guide to Periodicals, The Alternative Press Index, The Chicano Periodical Index, The New York Times. The Los Angeles Times and Variety. The Chicano/Hispanic publications include the middle-of-the-road bilingual monthly magazine Americas 2001 and Spanish-language daily newspaper La Opinion (Los Angeles) as well as the progressive bilingual newspapers Unidad/Unity (Oakland) and El Tecolote (Mission District, San Francisco), which are published weekly and monthly, respectively. Overall, thirty publications representing at least nine distinct audiences were tracked (see Table 1). Some publications could legitimately belong to several classifications: for example, Cineaste is a film magazine (aesthetic) with a Marxist orientation (alternative); and although the editorial board claims otherwise, the journal could be considered academic, given its contributorship.

In examining the aesthetic discourse, I will not attempt to posit an actual impact, because too many variables would be involved: readers often subscribe to or read several publications, so the potential impact would depend upon an almost infinite number of combinations. Instead, the emphasis will be on what gets said where and for what (broadly defined) readerships. And on what does not get said, since -- as Roger Ebert, film critic for the Chicago Sun Times. points out -- "critics can have the greatest impact by ignoring work" (quoted in English 110).

Given the scope of the paper, I will limit the analysis to

the two prominent issues that arose in the press: the response to the four films as a new development or cycle within the American film industry; and the *use* of the "barrio" as the dominant metaphor or framework for understanding these films.

Analysis: The Phenomenon

In its review of La Bamba. Newsweek did not evaluate the film per se, but the incipient phenomenon the film's success seemed to promise: "Hispanic Hollywood." The phrase soon gained currency as a shorthand for the half dozen films in production and "more than twenty-five projects featuring Hispanic themes ... floating around Hollywood."[16] Few reviews, however, examined or defined "Hispanic Hollywood," except to cite the relative increase in Hispanic films, directors and stars.

The discussion of "Hispanic Hollywood" as an economic or social phenomenon took place within the context of the news/general interest, business or industry publications: Newsweek; Time,, in a special issue on Hispanic culture; Americas 2001. in a special issue of "Latinos in Hollywood"; Americas. an inter-American publication of the Organization of American States; Advertising Age and Variety, in its annual "Focus on Latin American and U.S. Hispanic Markets."[17] In addition, the Los Angeles Times and New York Times published six articles on La Bamba that explained the trend in terms of a "new" Hispanic market that Hollywood was "testing."[18] And Pat Aufderheide, senior editor of the Marxist newspaper in These Times. examined the forces at work in these films in her extended review of Stand and Deliver in Mother Jones.

The dominant explanation for the Hispanic films -- called

Hispanic although all four films were about Chicanos - - was demographics coupled with the realization that Hispanics constituted a viable and "distinct market that Hollywood could learn to target. According to market studies, the Hispanic population (estimated at 25 million) resembled the peak audiences of the 1930s and 1940s, who went to the movies on a regular basis -- rather than to see a specific film -- and as a family. Since the Hispanic population was concentrated in major urban areas, studios could reach the large Spanish-speaking audience with fewer dubbed or subtitled prints and a smaller, regional promotion campaign. Until 1986, studios limited subtitled releases to the big name action features of Chuck Norris, Sylvestre Stallone, et al. When Universal Studios released a dubbed version of Steven Spielberg's animated feature An American Tail (1986), the one theater that exhibited it earned the second highest gross for theaters nationwide.

La Bamba -- with a record seventy-seven Spanish-language prints and a "Hispanic theme" -- was widely reported as the "first real test of the Hispanic market for American films" (Harmetz, "Hollywood"). Hollywood's recurrent "discovery" of the Hispanic market is, of course, a source of amusement and frustration among Chícanos. To its credit, Advertising Age recalls the "discovery" and "test" of the Hispanic market that accompanied Zoot Suit (1981), also directed by Luis Valdez (Walley). La Bamba would earn nearly $60 million in the United States, with the Hispanic market providing a two-to-one return on advertising costs over mainstream audiences. Columbia Pictures allocated five percent of its 1,250 prints and $6 million advertising budget to the Hispanic market, which accounted for ten percent of the population and of

the overall gross (Fabrikant; Valle, "Ritchie"; Newsweek).

La Bamba and the more modest, but nonetheless profitable films Born in East L.A. and Stand and Deliver generated excitement in the press because Hispanic demographics and the Hollywood profit motive seemed to resolve racial conflict overnight without accommodation on either side.[19] Studio heads reiterated that their desire to make as profit had no racial bias. La Bamba was presented as a "noble experiment" that would either prove that the Hispanic market and Hispanic films were profitable or fail and be forgotten (Harmetz, "Hollywood"). While Hollywood often nurtures a star (e.g., Bill Murray) or theme (e.g., baseball movies) through several failures in the hopes that a niche or market can be developed, industry executives did not afford Hispanic efforts the same opportunity. Variety alone -- due to its function as a trade journal concerned with economic developments -- noted that contradiction in an article titled "Hispanic Mart Promises B.O. But Studio Pursestrings Tight" (Dawes).

Cuban American Ramón Menendez, writer and director of Stand and Deliver, implicitly challenged the myth of demographics promulgated in the press, wherein the discovery and cultivation of a growing, untapped "market" would lead to social change: "The [Hispanic] actors, directors and producers are in place. The real problem is the lack of powerful Hispanic executives" (Corliss 67). Still, Menendez and the Chicano filmmakers subscribed to the Hollywood profit motive as *a* mechanism that could be used for cultural negotiation. Luis Valdez expressed the purpose behind the accommodation to the "universal themes" that pervade Hollywood cinema:

> I want to be part of the mainstream -- as

> myself. What that requires is communicating artistically images and feelings society-at-large can understand. ... We can stay in our barrios and pour our venom into our little community newspapers or teatros but we are not going to create substantial change until we get into the mainstream.

And Richard "Cheech" Marin saw Born in East L.A. as a mainstream film that used comedy to raise social issues and make a profit, likening himself to Charlie Chaplin.[20] Despite this apparent change from an alternative to mainstream film practice, the same appeal to or strategic use of "universal themes" characterizes the manifestoes of radical, alternative Chicano filmmakers during the heyday of the Chicano Movement's cultural nationalism (see Campus) . Publications that promoted liberal causes or social change, however, criticized the directors' efforts to fit into the mainstream, although Aufderheide implied that the films nonetheless represented negotiation between Hispanic filmmakers and non-Hispanic Hollywood.[21]

Overall, the mass media placed the new "Hispanic Hollywood". within a historical context briefly described as a period of "limited roles" and "negative stereotypes." The vague sense of past racism isolated the new films from historical processes -- including resistance -- and film production, which added weight to the explanation that these films were demographics-driven. Newsweek alone provided a broader context for the appearance of these films, when it mentioned the possible conflict with the Mexican film industry that supplies Spanish-language theaters in the United States.

Time, Americas and Americas 2001 were the only publications to offer brief historical overviews of the Chicano or Hispanic in Hollywood cinema. Americas presents an upbeat review of Hispanic actors in Hollywood since the 1920s "Latin Lovers." Even the stereotypes the article alludes to are innocuous: "mariachis" and "beautiful señoritas" (Amador 2). Since Americas represents the U.S.-backed Organization of American States, it is logical that the article would repress material that might recall or evoke anti-United States sentiment.

Richard Corliss in Time presents a three-paragraph historical overview that contrasts the current difficult situation in which Hispanic filmmakers work with a benign past: "In the old days things were almost better," because -- unlike other minorities -- Hispanics were portrayed as such positive figures as the "Latin lover" and "camp goddess." As with Americas, *T*ime begins its history after the "greaser" films, and ignores the bandido and buffoon stereotypes that coincide with the Latin lover (Keller 27). Corliss states that Hispanics were not represented on the screen between the 1950s and 1970s, and then implicates liberal Hollywood and Blacks, who became the subject of social problem films and, later, blaxploitation films. He fails to mention that social problem films about Blacks were pivotal in the demise of the Black independent production companies of the previous three decades (Bogle 34). In any case, numerous social problem, historic message and especially western films have depicted Chicanos and Mexicans since the 1930s (Keller 37).

Corliss's selective history reinforces the notion that minorities contend with each other in a zero-sum game, wherein one racial or ethnic group's gain is another's loss. Corliss also

uses the dubious statement about a "liberal" Hollywood in order to bolster his conservative message that Hispanics must assimilate with the mainstream. Ironically, the period Corliss refers to as liberal is notable for its Production Code censorship, and the House Committee on Un-American Activities investigations that made it dangerous to be a liberal in Hollywood.

In Time, the Chicano feature films of the late-197Os and early 1980s are not identified as such, but instead as "art-house fodder ... [that] ... staggered under the weight of their liberal messages." The Chicano directors and producers who made these films -- which are by no means "art-house fodder," but include social melodramas, rasquache seriocomedies and co-productions with Mexico -- are hidden behind a liberal-elite facade, summed up in the phrase "guilty connoisseurs." Corliss in effect substitutes a stereotyped liberal white audience for the actual agents who arose out of the Chicano Movement of the 1960s. Likewise, he negates the Chicano audiences who saw these films. Corliss retextualizes Chicano film history as a liberal-conservative drama in which Hispanic filmmakers face an "imposing" conflict between fine art and popular culture. In other words, the "cinema barrio" has to do with fine art and good (liberal) intentions -- not the Chicano experience -- while "el Norte" has to do with a "commercially appealing story line" -- not the Chicano experience.

In Americas 2001, Antonio Rios-Bustamante challenges the selective history presented in Time and Americas. He examines the "Latin/Latina lover" as both a positive and negative image. While Corliss applauds the female "Mexican spitfires" as able to explode their roles with "wit and pizzazz," Rios-Bustamante links Lupe Velez's typecast career as the "Mexican spitfire" to her own

suicide. He also cites the recurrent "greaser" stereotype that began with silent films, and details the protests and negotiations that took place in the studios - - with Mexican actors such as Dolores Del Rio and Ramón Novarro - - and in the Spanish-language newspapers, especially La Opinion.

Despite a rich history of Chicano representation and resistance, the mainstream or Anglo publications presented a selective history or context for the new wave of Chicano-produced films. Often it was a context that minimized Chicano agency, in order to play out an Anglo political drama well-suited to the issues or concerns of the Presidential campaign then dominating the news. When Chícanos were the focus, the emphasis was on a passive "market" that could be "exploited," rather than on the Chicano filmmakers and professional organizations and their two-decade-long struggle to bring their stories before the American public.

Analysis: The Barrio

Given the lack of historical awareness in the mainstream press, Chicanos continue to be written about as the most "localized" ethnic group. Such an act is more ideological than demographic, since it "localizes" the discourse on Chicanos to barrio issues, excluding Chicanos from the reportage and debates on "mainstream" and "national" issues.

La Bamba, Born in East L.A. and Stand and Deliver are set in East Los Angeles; while The Milagro Beanfield War is set elsewhere in the Southwest. But in contrast to the conventional depictions, these films attempt to redefine or reconceptualize the stereotyped "ethnic" spaces, especially through the use of genre. In place of

the usual western, conquest or gang film, these new films use the American "success" genre, comedy, or -- in the case of The Milagro Beanfield War -- reverse t;he terms of the conquest film. Film reviewers, however, did not cite or question past and present instances of "localized" Chicano images. That these films were about the barrio was a given, although how each reviewer translated or understood barrio ("neighborhood" or "slum") varied, and with it the reviewer's assumptions about the Chicano experience as film narrative. While I had expected to discover significant differences across ideological as well as ethnic lines in the press, such was not case. With few exceptions, Anglo reviewers or publications confined Chícanos to a barrio *slum,* while Hispanic reviewers or publications identified the barrio *community* as the starting point for Chícanos' placement within the national culture.

Because each film evokes different issues in the press about the barrio, I will approach the aesthetic discourse one-film-at-a-time in order of release before drawing some general conclusions. Space limitations, however, do not allow me to deal at length with the films themselves. In any case, an analysis of the cultural codes, cinematic structures and ideologies that inform these texts is the subject of another project. For now, I will preface each section with a brief plot summary.

La Bamba.

Luis Valdez's La Bamba is the biography of 1950s rock-n-roll star Ritchie Valens (nee Ricardo Valenzuela), who died at the age of seventeen in the same plane crash that killed Buddy Holly in 1959.

The Chicano/Hispanic newspapers La Opinion and Unidad hailed La Bamba as a realistic portrayal of the barrio. La Opinion declared that the film "es nadamás una historia sobre las gentes del barrio." Unidad added that the film evokes "una justa medida de realismo de lo que es vivir como latino, con todo su color, emoción y hasta toque de lo sobrenatural." These reviews emphasize Valens's ethnic environment and the structural movement from north to south rather than the expected one al norte. Valens moves closer to his ethnic roots -- Mexico and "La Bamba" -- at the same time that he enters the mainstream: "El filme trata con las búsqueda de identidad, y también del éxito" (Unidad).

The Hispanic press saw La Bamba as a pivotal Chicano film in which the Chicano themes "adquieren, por primera vez, características verdaderamente universales" (La Opinión). As Americas 2001 explained, La Bamba depicted the "daily struggles ... [that] ... exist in every family." As a result, La Bamba was most often compared to East of Eden (1955), because both films depict the struggle between a "good" and a "bad" brother. The universal themes were not believed to compromise the Chicano experience -- with its unique culture that includes a little bit of the supernatural -- but instead to provide an entry point for non-Hispanic audiences.[22]

El Tecolote, on the other hand, faults La Bamba as an American success film that superimposes an individualist and assimilationist ideology upon the Chicano community and its culture. The untold story of the barrio or "[o]ur house ... in shambles" includes poor education, job discrimination, the new immigration law and English-Only initiatives. Rather than emphasize Chicano "organizing and struggle," Columbia Pictures and

Luis Valdez exploited a market with a film that offered a "momentary surge of cultural pride."

The mainstream newspapers found La Bamba realistic in its depiction of barrio details, but not life. The Los Angeles Times cited the "authentic details of migrant worker camps and cracker-box San Fernando Valley homes," but added that "[t]here must have been a crunch somewhere as one culture accommodated another, and a lot of that is gone." Most reviewers criticized Valdez for shaping "facts into fable" (Time) . La Bamba represented "mythmaking," historical "hocus-pocus" (New Yorker). "mystical inflation" (Rolling Stone), and even a "soapy ethnic melodrama verging on camp" that begs the question, "Is any of this true?" (Video). The Village Voice noted that "Southern California's Mexican culture - - with its own early rock and roll - - hardly exists on film."

Reviewers objected to "Ritchie's denial of his roots and total buy-in to the American dream" (Variety) , and believed that the film should have emphasized his subjective experience as a Chicano (also Glamour). These reviews were similar to the one in El Tecolote in their criticism of "mainstream dreamers" in the barrio. As New Yorker critic Pauline Kael explained: "He can be the pride of the Latino community (and still be innocuous enough to be like by the larger public.) The picture is a hangover from the fifties: he's a credit to his ethnic group."

While these criticisms appear to be the same, their contexts are not. El Tecolote serves a barrio audience, while the other publications write for an audience that is for the most part uninformed and unaffected. Also, in the issue after the review, El Tecolote provided a forum for Valdez to respond to these

criticisms in a lengthy interview (Valdez, "An Artist"). In this respect, Pat Aufderheide's review in In These Times stands out from the non-Hispanic press, as do her subsequent reviews. Even though often critical, she is careful to locate La Bamba within Valdez's career since the agit-prop "actos" of El Teatro Campesino in the mid-1960s, and can see the often problematic relationship between Chicano culture and an ostensibly "universal" postwar youth culture. In short, Aufderheide brings to her reviews an awareness of the Chicano experience, both aesthetic and social, perhaps due to her background in Latin American cinema.

The other Anglo reviewers criticize the film as "myth," without a corresponding recognition of the "truth" from which Valdez is said to have turned, a "truth" I have previously identified as a "localized" discourse and selective history. This process in the mainstream and alternative press will become even more apparent in the section on Stand and Deliver.

Born in East L.A.

Richard "Cheech" Marin's directorial debut and first film without Tommy Chong is based on his popular music video of the same title. A lesser known fact about the video and film is that both are based on a newspaper account about a Chicano born in East L.A. who was deported to Mexico.

Born in East L.A. lampoons the Simpson-Rodino Immigration Act and California's English-Only Initiative, while it alludes to FDR's "repatriation" program and Elsenhower's "Operation Wetback," which together deported over three million "Mexicans," most of whom were either born in the U.S. or legal immigrants. With few exceptions, however, the film did not receive coverage outside the

Hispanic press, except in Latin America, where the film even won top honors at the New Latin American Cinema Festival in Havana, Cuba.

Most non-Hispanic periodicals explained that Born in East, L.A. attempts to create sympathy for "wetbacks."[23] These reviews did not consider how the film redefines cinematic conventions about the barrio as it proclaims Chicanismo. For example, the establishing shot for the film is of a typical barrio home rather than streets filled with gang members and drug pushers. Also, barrio murals are photographed instead of the less prominent graffiti. And while the film parodies the Bruce Springsteen rock-anthem "Born in the U.S.A.," it qualifies rather than rejects the song's patriotism.

La Opinion, however, captures these subtleties in its headline, "De las calles del barrio a la frontera mexicana." While the non-Hispanic reviews defined the narrative movement as from Tijuana to the U.S. border, La Opinion envisioned the movement from the point of view of "un tipico muchacho del Este de Los Angeles" as he is wrongly deported. In an earlier review, La Opinion described the film's premier in East L.A. to emphasize the congruence between film and barrio: "[H]acia mucho tiempo que el publico de origen hispano de la ciudad de Los Angeles no veia una película con la que se sintiera indentificado."

Unidad identifies the crucial distinction the film makes between East Los Angeles (Chicanos) and Tijuana (illegals). Rudy Robles (Marin), a third-generation Chicano who does not speak Spanish, neither sympathizes with illegal aliens (including his cousin) nor understands the extent to which American society views him as more Mexican than American. It is only when Robles is

deported that he begins to change his point of view. Thus the film targets East Los Angeles as well as mainstream society. La Opinion emphasizes a similar dual-audience message, although it does not mention Rudy's initial equivocation: He is a victim, "la singular representación de una tragedia colectiva."

Born in East L.A. ends with Robles and several hundred Mexicans overwhelming the U.S. border to the sound of Neil Diamond's "America." The Los Angeles Times, which found the film better than La Bamba, felt that there was "nothing or satirical" about the scene: "You don't have to be a WASP to love your country, warts and all" (also Variety). Cineaste, however, thought that the ending was "politically naive in that it perpetuates the myth of boundless opportunities for illegal aliens in the U.S.," and gave no credence to Marin's response in its interview: "America is the land of opportunity, however it may temper that opportunity with persecution and discrimination" (Marin, "Cheech Cleans" 34). What no reviewer mentioned, was the fact that Robles and the illegal aliens crossed the border not into the United States per se, but into East L.A. -- the barrio — via the sewer system. Though cited as the film's funniest scene, the ending recalls the dangerous border crossing in El Norte (1983). Robles even brings a Salvadoran novia with him, so that their implied marriage symbolizes the impact of recent Salvadoran refugees on barrio life and culture.

The Milagro Beanfield War

Based on the John Nichol's 1974 novel, The Milagro Beanfield War is about an unemployed Chicano who resists developers' efforts to turn his town into a resort when he diverts state-controlled

water to cultivate a beanfield on his dead father's land. The film was directed by Robert Redford, and co-produced by Moctesuma Esparza, who owned the rights to the novel.

Because of Redford's prominence, location in The Milagro Beanfield War took on significance not as a real place, but as a symbolic one: "merry black-and-white moral landscape" (American); and "Redfordland ... a dream of liberal community" (Time). Most reviewers identified the film as a "progressive fairytale" (Guardian) that ranged from "white liberal guilt" (American Spectator) to "wishful thinking" (Newsweek; Commonweal).

The conservative American Spectator criticized the Chicano characters as unrealistic liberal stereotypes: "[T]hey're one-dimensional icons of noble poverty, courtesy of the cliche-infested, liberal-guilt-ridden imagination of a rich white movie star." Surprisingly, liberal and middle-of-the-road periodicals also objected to the film's reversal of the terms of the conquest narrative, so that the "noble peasant" now triumphed over "gringo indignities" (Village Voice: New Republic; New York). The liberal Catholic periodicals America and Commonweal even aimed some self-criticism at their earlier "1960s liberalism," with its "naive optimism" in the efficacy of "good intentions," which the film revived.

The more mainstream (and conservative) periodicals -- Newsweek. People and Time -- also cited Robert Redford's liberal intentions, but nonetheless promoted the film as a "feel good fable" with either positive or subtle stereotypes. Time -- which on the one hand locates the film in "Redfordland" -- even begins its review with a paean to Redford's style, but in the process reduces the Chicano characters to little more than landscape:

> The kiss of two fine brown faces is silhouetted by an orange sunset. Night falls, and there's a rope of rainbow in the sky; a frosted moon smiles behind a scrim of mist. Nature has rarely gone to the movies in starker, more glamorous clothes.

These unnamed characters are reduced to color. The passive voice further denies their role as participants, so that they become instead an aesthetic experience: "Nature." The passage links the "brown faces" to the "frosted moon" through facial actions (kiss, smile) and color (brown, frosted or white).

Because The Milagro Beanfield War was identified with Redford and his particular brand of Hollywood liberalism, reviewers often cited the influence of film genres alone. Pat Aufderheide made this pattern explicit when she concluded that the film "refers more to other movie conventions than it does to the texture of the experience and culture of its subjects" (In These Times). Given the mish mash of styles, genres and, for Aufderheide, Latin American accents, the introduction of "magic realism" was seen as inappropriate: "When Gabriel Garcia Márquez deals in magic realism, every whimsical idea is tied to a hard one" (Los Angeles Times: also Village Voice). The violence comes too late and proves harmless, although America pointed out that other reviewers underemphasize the "threatened and actual violence" in the film.[24]

The Hispanic press, however, identified The Milagro Beanfield War with Chicano history, rather than with Redford's "passionate humanism" (Time) or Hollywood genres. Unidad put the film into a political perspective: [T]he first major movie to take up the issue of the theft and struggle for Chicano lands in the

Southwest." La Opinion called The Milagro Beanfield War "un 'milagroso' filme que nos recuerde el orgullo de nuestro origen," and -- in an earlier review -- identified that pride with "la luch contra la adversidad y el materialismo."[25]

Seen within the context of Chicano culture, "magic realism" did not detract from the film, but instead helped it become a poetic "monumento a la identidad hispana en Norteamérica" (Rodríguez). Thus the film was seen as pivotal in the history of "magic realism" and its dissemination to North America. Like Unidad. La Opinion thought that the film would educate non-Hispanics, though it placed even greater emphasis on the film's impact on Hispanic pride, telling its readers to see the Spanish version: "Disfrútela y recuerde que nuestra herencia hispana es lo mas valioso que tenemos."

Clearly, then, the faults identified within the mainstream or Anglo press, must be seen *not* as absolute shortcomings inherent in the text, but as perceived ones particular to the (re)viewer and his or her cultural-political-class nexus.

Stand and Deliver

Stand and Deliver is "based on the true story" of Jaime Escalante, a math teacher at Garfield High School in East Los Angeles who gained national attention in 1982 when eighteen students passed the Advanced Placement exam in calculus. The Educational Testing Service accused the students of cheating, forcing them to take the exam again.

Like Born in East L.A., the film was inspired by newspaper accounts and takes place in the present-day East Los Angeles barrio. The non-Hispanic press and El Tecolote described the

barrio as a problem space; while the Hispanic press described the barrio as "nuestra comunidad," a place with pride and achievement despite outside racism and neglect. Religious, Marxist, liberal and conservative publications alike referred to the barrio as an impoverished "environment": "gang-plagued, predominantly Hispanic" (The Christian Century; Newsweek); "poor people and slums" (Nation; People: Cineaste: Guardian: New York); "drugs, joblessness, and early pregnancy" (Christianity Today) ; and a "war zone" (Los Angeles Times) . Often Garfield High was treated as the representative "inner-city school," described as a "mess" (Village Voice) that perpetuated "an underclass programmed to fail (Time), or "cycles of poverty and degradation" (Commonweal) .

While these descriptions suggest a social criticism, most often it was the barrio community itself that was seen as holding back the students. In explaining the problems students faced, reviewers cited "the absence of competent parents and teachers" (Village Voice); gangs, "thoughtless and irresponsible parents," and demoralized teachers (Glamour); and "peer and home pressures" (El Tecolote) that explain "why barrio kids have a hard time doing their homework" (New York Times) . The solution was likewise found within the barrio in either a "barrio hero" (Time: Newsweek .- Christianity Today) or in the realization that "seeming limitations of environment and resources are only artificial barriers that can be overcome with hard work and the right attitude" (Variety).

Three publications -- one evangelist, one Hispanic and the other alternative -- cite broader explanations for the crisis in inner-city schools like Garfield. Christianity Today explains that "socioeconomic class [and not race] is the biggest predictor

of academic success." The review thus reveal "hard work and the right attitude" or ganas to be social constructs rather than individual attributes. The somewhat Marxist analysis, however, becomes subsumed under the evangelist paradigm, wherein the "visionary" teacher initiates students to the "Quest." El Tecolote -- which cites "peer and home pressures" -- and Guardian reject the "barrio hero" or "individual-warrior-for-his-people" and "hard work" as solutions, especially given racism and "economic inequalities." But despite the film's perceived conservative message and emphasis on Escalante rather than the students, both reviews recommend the film, "because it shows Latinos as people, not stereotypes."

Although most reviews discuss the film's narrative weaknesses and the social impact that is said to compensate for them, few consider whether Stand and Deliver challenges usual film conventions about the barrio. In fact, the discourse in the mainstream and alternative press often segregates questions of ethnic content from questions of filmic form, as though the two had nothing to do with each other. In a rare exception, Pat Aufderheide argues that Stand and Deliver shattered the division between message and entertainment, which "only works if there isn't human experience on either side of the dichotomy" (In These Times). She concludes that the film makes it "impossible to forget that you're watching people divided by class, ethnicity, language and gender." While El Tecolote and Guardian make similar claims about the characters as socially defined, other reviewers identify the characters as individuals who transcend both an impoverished barrio and film narrative.

The review in Nation reveals the conceptual blind spot common

to most non-Hispanic reviewers who address the issue of Hollywood form and ethnic content. The review cites as a challenge to the conservative Hollywood formula "the mere notion of using poor people and slums as something other than a battleground between cops and drug peddlers...." The unironic use of "poor people and slums" to describe an ethnic community, however, belies the reviewer's subsequent criticism that the film "leaps over ... any fresh knowledge or insight."

Newsweek cites Writer-Director Ramón Menendez's efforts to dispense with "expected cliches" and depict instead "the Latino experience." The review, however, undermines the point about stereotypes through its own gratuitous use of "expected cliches." Garfield, though described as a "mecca for barrio kids," cannot escape a remark about "the inevitable gang jackets." The statement makes manifest the assumption that gangs are "inevitable" in (and particular to) the barrio. The review continues to develop the gang subtext in the last paragraph, which contains Menendez's statement about the absence of cliches such as "bloody gang fights." A contrapuntal heading in boldface promises: "Gang fights." The heading could have read "No gang fights," reinforcing the point of the paragraph. Instead, the headline writer uses "expected cliches" to draw attention to the last paragraph. The only other phrase in boldface is the title in the first paragraph, so that at first glance the reader sees **Stand and Deliver** and **Gang fights:,** with the body of the review positioned in between.

Time - - which described the Chicanos in The Milagro Beanfield War as landscape -- further objectifies Chicanos in its review of Stand and Deliver. The review begin in dramatic fashion with

three words: "Drugs, rape, murder." Because these social problems are unsuited to nature metaphors, the review turns to a cinematic one: "inner-city school life can be a recurrent horror movie." The review then describes "a barrio hero" who solves these problems on the screen and in real life. While Stand and Deliver is based on a true story, neither drugs, rape nor murder ever figure in the actual or depicted events. Rather than place the film within an appropriate genre, Time instead treats the barrio experience as an all-too-predictable and violent film genre.

Since the Hispanic press did not see the barrio as a problem space (but as a cultural space with achievements, problems, and so on), reviews emphasized the film's role as the most realistic and positive communal portrait to date. La Opinion praises Stand and Deliver as an authentic representation of "el tipo de vida que se desarrolla en medio de las abigarrados y coloridas calles del Este de Los Angeles" (also Unidad). Americas 2001 locates Garfield High "comfortably behind Whittier Blvd. ... in the heart of East Los Angeles." The review then describes how Garfield is perceived within the community: first for its "classic rivalry" with another high school; then later for its college-bound graduates. In a historical note, the review adds that "[t]en years ago, Garfield was known for its absenteeism and its youth gangs...."

The few non-Hispanic publications that historicize the school's real problems, place them in 1982, the year in which the film takes place (Mother Jones; Los Angeles Times: New York). In real life, Escalante began teaching at Garfield High in 1974; and five students first took the AP exam in 1979 (Hubbard; Harmetz, "Math"). In addition, former students and Escalante himself

explain that -- unlike the film -- there were no gang members or cholos in the class; in fact, most students were already college-bound (Valle, "Real-Life"; Harmetz, "Math"). It becomes more than ironic, then, that several reviewers complain that the gang problem is not emphasized enough in the film and that Escalante's success seems "too easy" (Glamour: Variety: Village Voice: New York).

In New York, David Denby complains, "Victory comes too easily, without enough resistance and backsliding. And what kids! They have to be among the tamest, sweetest ghetto teens in history." Denby, like Richard Corliss in Time, conjures up a history he needn't document, since -- like any prejudice -- it is already well-known. When Denby compares Stand and Deliver to Dennis Hopper's gang film Colors, he concludes that "the violent, despairing Colors is the one that has the ring of *truth"*(italics mine). This is, after all, the "truth" about Chicanos in Los Angeles that reaches him in New York through the news media.

Such are the expectations on the horizon of the film's mainstream release.

Conclusion:

The most obvious and significant breakdown that occurs within the publications, and one that obviates all other differences, is the one between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic press. Liberal non-Hispanic publications often relied on the same outsider's assumptions about the barrio that characterize the conservative publications. The barrio was a problem space, denied a history, culture and separate point of view. Thus the films were often place in the context of a "social problem," rather than in the

context of cultural identity or even film history.

The issue of "universal" themes best reveals the manner in which critics and reviewers do not consider the Chicano perspective(s). The non-Hispanic publications denounce the imposition of universal values upon Chicano culture. In addition to the implicit patronization -- "don't become middle class and flattened out (like us)" -- these writers fail to see that the universal values acquire a different function in La Opinion and other Chicano publications. Here the Chicano experience is understood to be something different and unique, something resilient and evolving that Hispanics alone have access to in these films, something they bring to these films: in short, a culture. Thus the universal themes were not seen as an imposition on Chicano culture, but as a transmitter of those aspects of Chicano culture that non-Hispanics could understand. Chicano directors and reviewers saw Chicano cinema as an effort to expand the non-Hispanic "horizon of expectations," thus changing the very nature of those "universal" values.

The non-Hispanic press, however, often responded to these films with silence. The Reader's Guide to Periodicals lists just one review for Born in East L.A.. And while it also lists fifteen reviews for The Milagro Beanfield War, the fact that most deal with Robert Redford cum celebrity is itself a form of silence. Time reveals a third kind of silence in its objectification of the Chicano as either nature (landscape) or culture (horror films).

It is too early to tell whether "Hispanic Hollywood" as such will continue and whether these films have changes the "horizon of expectations." But as film scholars, we must be careful not to displace that horizon with our own theoretical expectations.

Instead, we must discern the interpretive communities that are active in constructing meaning, that reveal the text to be a process and not a product.. And when we look to the "horizon of expectations" beyond the "cinema barrio," we must be sure to ask, whose expectations? Whose barrio?

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[2] Throughout the essay, I use the term Hispanic to refer to U.S. citizens of Latin American descent. I do so in order to reflect the actual usage in the press. While some might object to Hispanic on ideological grounds, I find the alternative, Latino, fraught with the same problems: Both terms originate with the European colonial or neocolonial powers and neither acknowledges our African and Indian heritage.

[3] The parenthetical style is used in this essay. In the text and bibliography, I cite the reviews for each film by publication rather than by author. I do so in the bibliography in order to segregate reviews according to film and to condense the citations for the seventy-plus film reviews. In the text, I cite the publication in order to emphasize its role as a forum in which certain types of reviews appear. All other sources are cited by author.

[4]Keller 27; Rios-Bustamante 7-8; Cortes; Candelaria; Morales.

[5]Miscegenation is a recurrent theme in both the "greaser" and social problem films that has yet to be explored. In Licking the Greaser's (1910) and Broncho Billy's Mexican Wife (1915), the narrative is resolved when the Anglo hero rescues and marries the "Mexican" woman. In the 1950s, Ricardo Montalban marries a blond Anglo in Right Cross (1950) and My Man and I (1952), while the mestizo child in Giant (1956) is presented as the answer to racism. And in The Lawless and Trial (1950), the Anglo hero develops a father-son relationship with the endangered Chicano boy.

[6]Based on Treviño's filmography in Cardenas 18-20; Keller 47-48; and my own research. I include Robert Young's Alambrista! because it has been screened at Chicano film festivals and written about as a Chicano film. Nonetheless, a split exists as to whether the determining feature of "Chicano cinema" is Chicano production (Cardenas 18-20) or a Chicano aesthetic or sensibility (Keller 48). Also, some might argue that Alambrista! is better defined as about the Mexican immigrant experience, although immigration and Chicano themes are often grouped together on political and cultural grounds.

[7] Interview by author and Lillian Jiménez with Severo Pérez, February 3, 1990.

[8] East Los Angeles College M.E.Ch.A. Jeffries presents an Anglo apologetic for these films.

[9] Other works on racial images include: Cripps; Leab; Bogle; Friar and Friar; Bataille and Silet.

[10]Woll; Pettit; Cardenas and Schneider; Keller.

[11] Mindiola refers, of course, to Americo Paredes's now classic text With a Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and its Hero, the source for the film. Interestingly enough, neither the film nor Mindiola's essay mention Gregorio Cortez's statewide infidelities, which were discovered after his arrest when numerous women appeared at the courthouse claiming to be his fiancee. His wife later divorced him (95-96). Paredes, however, is quite clear on the internal dynamics within the Mexican community.

[12] The errant Anglo translator who claims to "speak Mexican" makes constant use of the present tense, first person conjugation of Spanish verbs. When he accuses a Chicano of knowing where Gregorio is hiding, he snarls, "I know (conozco) Gregorio Cortez." These errors are never fully explained to the English-speaking viewer.

"Cortés, "Chicanas" 96-97; see also Cortés, "Societal"; Cortés, "Greaser's." Hall (340-341) and Jauss (41) make the same point about the education role of the media and the external factors that affect a text's reception.

[14] Alien and Gomery cite just one study on the role of nonfilmic events in the production of meaning (257) . I have not been able to locate any articles in the Film Literature Index for the four years since their book's publication.

[15] The above remarks are based on an examination of the following annotated bibliographies: Austin, "Film Audience"; Austin, "Update"; Austin, "Research."

[16] Review of Stand and Deliver in Mother Jones.

[17] See the review of La Bamba in Newsweek: Corliss; Rios-Bustamante; Amador; Walley; Besas; and Dawes.

[18]Fabrikant; Goldstein; Harmetz, "Hollywood"; Snowden; Valle, "Ritchie"; and Valle, "La Bamba.

[19] The resolution, however, was limited to a mutual economic exploitation that left racial attitudes unchallenged. Variety provides the clearest, if not crudest, example of this line of thinking in an article titled, "Crossovers Vie for Megabuck Tortilla: Latinos & Anglos Seek to Break Ethnic Barriers" (Besas).

[20]Valdez, "An Artist"; Valdez, "Luis"; Marin; Marin, "Cheech Cleans"; and Marin, "Cheech Marin."

[21] Reviews of The Milagro Beanfield War and Stand and Deliver in Nation. See also reviews of La Bamba in New Yorker and El Tecolote. The development of Chicano studies itself reflects the divisions between mainstream Chicano directors and their progressive critics. In the 1930s and 1940s, individual Chicano scholars and civil rights groups such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) advocated assimilation. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Chicano Movement (and the emergent Chicano studies programs) rejected assimilation and stressed a separate Chicano identity. Since the 1980s, the work of the early Chicano scholars has been seen as progressive within its own historical context, which has lead some Chicano scholars to seek a new paradigm that addresses the two impulses: assimilation and cultural identity (Muñoz). As yet, however, no consensus exists on how to interpret "basic capitalism" or the profit motive as a force within the Chicano community. Carlos Cortés outlines a "Chicano Media Action Program" that puts the onus upon Chicano consumers to use the commercial media to their own advantage (Cortés, "Greaser's" 36-39). Chicanos need to "vote with their feet" for Chicano filmmakers, because "[s]upport brings money, and money can mean better Chicano films in the future" (137). Cortés applies the same formula to other Chicano media , wherein an increased audience would increase advertising revenue and "provide the financial base for greater social activism" (136).

The relationship between the Chicano audiences and media, however, is not a direct one, since the media must cater to advertisers (who want a suitable forum for their ads) and studios (which want to reach the general audience) in order to obtain the needed funds and -- in the case of movies -- distribution. See, for example, Plascencia's examination of the impact of advertisers on Low Rider magazine.

[22] U.S. News and World Report also identifies the film as both Chicano and universal.

[23] People; Variety; The New York Times. The Los Angeles Times was the only mainstream periodical to identify the dual theme: "the second-class nature of American citizenship for ethnic minorities and the desperate situation in which illegal aliens find themselves."

[24] Reviewers did not consider the implications behind the protagonist's shooting of his old neighbor, Amarante Cordova. the final scene, however, can be read as Cordova's death: he is seen walking down the road toward home, when the Coyote Angel suggests a shortcut across a field, and the two jump over a fence and disappear. In the previous scene, Cordova had just regained consciousness in the hospital, but was in no condition to be released, let alone walk.

[25] This statement undermines the generalizations in the mainstream press that equate ethnic middle-class status or aspirations with material gain and the loss of cultural identity.

Table 1: Film Reviews

Source:	Bamba	/ Born	/ Milagro	/ Stand
MAINSTREAM NEWS/OPINION				
Newsweek	X		X	X
Time	X		X	X
U.S. News & World Report	X			
Los Angeles Times	X	X	X	2
New York Times	2	X	X	2
ALTERNATIVE NEWS/OPINION				
Guardian			X	X
In These Times	X		X	X
Mother Jones				X
The Nation			X	X
Village Voice	X		X	X
HISPANIC NEWS/OPINION				
Americas 2001	X			X
La Opinion	2	3	3	2
El Tecolote	X			X
Unidad	X	X	X	X
TRADE JOURNAL				
Variety	X	X	X	X
AESTHETIC/ENTERTAINMENT				
American Film			X	
Cineaste				X
Horizon			X	
Rolling Stone	X			
WOMEN				
Glamour	X		X	X
Vogue			X	
RELIGIOUS				
America			X	
The Christian Century			X	X
Christianity Today				X
Commonweal			X	X
EDUCATED - ELITE*				
New York			X	X
New Yorker	X			
The New Republic			X	
The American Spectator			X	
GOSSIP				
People Weekly		X	X	X

From the top: liberal (2), middle-of-the-road, conservative.

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