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Cañero Serrano, J. 2017, "Tendiendo puentes, compartiendo conocimientos. The International Conference on Chicano Literature in Spain (1998-2016)" In Spanish perspectives on Chicano literature: literacy and cultural essays, eds. J. Rosales & V. Fonseca, The Ohio State University Press, Columbus, pp. 109-125.

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Universidad
(Article begins on next page)
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Tendiendo puentes, compartiendo conocimientos

The international Conference on Chicano Literature in Spain (1998-2016)

Julio Cañero

Until not long ago, for the vast majority of the Spanish population, Latin America began in Patagonia and ended at the border cities of Ciudad Juárez, Tijuana, or (Heroica) Nogales. Many were unaware that crossing the Rio Grande (the Rio Bravo in Mexico), in the “sister” cities across the border, El Paso, San Diego, or Nogales (Arizona), Latino culture stretched and lavished through what, to our misunderstanding, was a monolingual English speaking territory. Spaniards, perhaps from their anti-American animosity, had forgotten that this area, taken by the United States from Mexico or bought from Spain, had been part of our nation. Focusing on the study of the exploits of Viriato, El Gran Capitán, or Cortés, we were ignorant of other illustrious names like Vázquez de Coronado, De Soto, Cabeza de Vaca, or Junípero Serra: compatriots who once walked the land that eventually would turn into the United States, building, therefore, a shared history.

The situation has reverted in recent decades considerably. Our rulers, starting with King Felipe VI, have dedicated countless efforts to spread the knowledge of a Hispanic United States past on both sides of the Atlantic. But before our politicians realized that common history or paid attention to the Latino population in the United States, Spanish academics had begun to scrutinize them from different analytical angles, most of them focused on literature and culture. Numerous dissertations, research papers, publications, seminars, and conferences have been devoted to the study of the fastest growing group in the United States. Among the members of this heterogeneous community labeled as Latinos, Mexican Americans or Chicanos have deserved special attention by Spanish researchers. In this essay, I present the studies about Chicanos that have been carried out in Spain, both by Spaniards and by researchers from other nationalities who reside permanently in Spain, or those analyses developed by Spanish scholars outside our borders.

While spending the summer of 2014 conducting research at the University of California in Santa Barbara, I was contacted by Professor Jesús Rosales to participate in his new academic project. He was compiling articles by Spanish scholars working on both sides of the Atlantic and whose major research interest was Chicano literature. I must confess that Rosales’s first and logical thought, as I will explain

shortly, was of Dr. José Antonio Gurpegui, Professor of American Studies at the Universidad de Alcalá. However, since Gurpegui was about to begin a much deserved sabbatical, we both decided that I should occupy Gurpegui's place in the book. Nonetheless, had the topic suggested by Rosales been literary, I would have had to regretfully decline his interesting proposal, as over the years my research interests have derived from aspects related to U.S. culture, society, and politics, rather than literature.

In other words, I would have not been comfortable dealing with an exclusively literary topic. But the idea that he had in mind, and which I develop in the following pages, seduced me: to narrate the story behind the ten conferences on Chicano literature that have taken place in Spain biennially since 1998, and their contribution to the diffusion of Chicano works in my country. In short, I was asked to become a chronicler, like Villagrà or Cabeza de Vaca, of a journey that began in the beautiful city of Granada and whose latest stop was the *Villa y Corte* of Madrid. With the exception of 2004 and 2014, I have attended all. I can say, then, that I know quite well the ins and outs of these meetings. Scrutinizing and rereading their programs and publications has brought to my mind many anecdotes that, for obvious reasons, I do not share here. I instead focus on the academic contribution of Spanish scholars in Spain to the spread of Chicano studies as a result of these conferences.

The interest for Latinos in the United States did not begin in the Spanish academic world with the first conference in Granada. However, until the last decade of the last century, the majority of the Spanish population remained oblivious to the rich cultural reality of the Hispanic minority in the United States. As a worthy exception, the reputed scholar Manuel Alvar (1992) was interested in the maintenance of Cervantes's language among the Hispanic communities of the American Southwest. In any case, the interest of the Spanish university did not go beyond the use of Spanish by those groups in their battle against the hegemony of the English language. Everything related to Hispanic or Latino cultural expressions— literature or artistic creations—had no place in our university departments.

It is difficult to believe the lack of curiosity that we had in Spain for the fastest growing community in the United States. Today the recovery of a common past, a shared heritage with the Hispanic population of the United States, is of the utmost importance for the Spanish government. ¹ Twenty years ago, however, this relevance was not contemplated within the academic world, to say nothing of the interest

¹ . For more information, see <http://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/e spana/ eh 14/ exterior/Paginas/ index.aspx>.

of Spanish society more generally. The departments of Spanish restricted themselves to what happened south of the Rio Bravo, wholly ignoring the artistic creations north of the river. In English departments, the picture was also bleak; in those departments, American literature was looked down upon compared with English literature (see Rodríguez Jiménez). If Whitman or Faulkner were considered secondary literary figures, little could be done to vindicate the study of Latino authors in general, and Chicano in particular.

Despite the insensibility in the Spanish departments and the disdain of the “Brits” in the English ones, there was someone who was not content to follow the dictates of the majority when regarding the study of Chicanos. That someone was José Antonio Gurpegui. I have said on other occasions that Gurpegui is, without a doubt, the “trailblazer” of Chicano studies in my country (Cañero “Dos décadas” 8–9). I would not dare to say that without Gurpegui Chicano studies would never have arrived to Spain; however, I am certain that without him this discipline would not occupy the important position it currently enjoys in Spanish universities. I will offer an example: since the organization of the “Quinto Congreso Internacional de Culturas hispanas de los Estados Unidos de América,” held at the Universidad de Alcalá in 1992, with the title “El Poder Hispano,” no other similar forum was organized. It is thanks to José Antonio Gurpegui’s tenacity in promoting these studies that ten international conferences have successfully been organized since 1998.

If José Antonio was the impetus on this side of the Atlantic, also incontestable is the interest from Chicano and Chicana authors and critics in promoting an academic rapprochement with the old Hispania. Although the term *Hispanic* has been rejected by many Chicanos, it is undeniable that we share a common history, a universal culture known as *Hispana*. It was only a matter of time before the re-encounter between Spaniards and Chicanos would develop into a series of conferences, as Chicano literary critics shared Gurpegui’s desire to organize these transatlantic meetings. I do not wish to offend anyone by unconsciously omitting their names, but, to name a few, professors such as Francisco Lomelí, María Herrera-Sobek, Antonio and Teresa Márquez, and Alejandro Morales also were responsible for increasing interest in Chicano culture throughout Spain. Their persistence, along with many Spanish researchers, was the real germ of the two decades of Chicano conferences in Spain that are presented in the following pages.

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHICANO LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Universidad de Granada (April 1–3, 1998)

Professor Manuel Villar Raso was the organizer of the first conference on Chicano literature. Villar Raso, a writer himself, had first heard of the legendary region of Aztlán while visiting the University of Arizona. This unexpected discovery brought him to procure the works of what could be considered the canonical Chicano writers: Miguel Méndez, Rolando Hinojosa, José Antonio Villarreal, Aristeo Brito, and Rudolfo Anaya. As he read and studied the artistic value of these books, he realized that had these authors been Latin Americans, their recognition and success in Spain would have been tremendous (qtd. in Arias). However, Chicano writers mostly were unknown to the Spanish public, and only a small group of scholars were interested in their work. Villar Raso decided to set up, along with the collaboration of Gurpegui, a conference on Chicano literature, for, he stated, Chicanos were creating a literature “que era urgente dar a conocer en España” (2).

More than twenty Chicano artists came to this first conference in Granada. We were lucky—and I include myself, for this was one of the first conferences in which I participated as a PhD candidate—to listen firsthand to Rudolfo Anaya, Miguel Méndez, Alicia Gaspar de Alba, Erlinda Gonzales Berry, Alejandro Morales, and many more. Also, the *flor y nata* (crème de la crème), as we say in Spanish, of Chicano literary critics attended this intense first meeting. The Spanish counterpoint was given by reputed professors such as José A. Gurpegui, Juan Antonio Perles Rochel, Federico Eguíluz, and José Miguel Santamaría, the first generation of the *de allá* Spanish scholars. Together with these well-established Spanish critics, the conference was attended by a group of (then) young academics who were, for different reasons and from different perspectives, interested in Chicano studies. I am referring to Rosa Morillas, Imelda Martínez-Junquera, María Henríquez, María Antonia Oliver, and the author of this brief *relación*, (chronicle) Julio Cañero; in other words, those who would make the second generation of Spanish researchers on Chicano studies.

That first conference made Granada for three days the cultural capital of Aztlán. I will not comment on the academic significance of the papers presented by that second generation of critics *de allá*, which, for the most part, was significant. Nonetheless, we were young and had limited access to sources in addition to being far from the cores of Chicano literature. To the Chicano literary critics, our presentations were probably conventional and too canonical. I do not wish to upset any of my friends and colleagues of that second generation should they

read these lines, so allow me to take myself as an example of the generalizations that we used to make. My paper, entitled “La comunidad chicana y la colonia interna estadounidense: breves apuntes teóricos,” tried to prove that Chicanos were an internally colonized minority, basing my assertions on the works of Tomás Almaguer, Rodolfo Acuña, and Mario Barrera. Today I would not claim such a thing—at least from the nineties onward—but the analysis I presented, with all its simplifications, and along with those of my colleagues, demonstrated a newly acquired interest for Chicano studies in Spain. It was almost mandatory for us to call for another symposium.

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHICANO LITERATURE

Universidad del País Vasco (April 5–7, 2000)

In 2000 the conference moved to Vitoria, in the Basque Country, and was organized by professors Federico Eguíluz and Amaia Ibararán, both of the English Department of the Universidad del País Vasco. As I posed in the introduction, the interest in Chicano literature in Spain has always been located in English departments, not in the Spanish ones, and this designation has been a constant issue in the organization of these conferences. Federico and Amaia did a wonderful job, not only because of the value of the academic meeting *per se*, but also due to the political situation in the Basque Country at the time. A mere two months before the inauguration of the conference, Fernando Buesa, a socialist politician and a professor at the Universidad del País Vasco, was assassinated by ETA on campus, near the symposium venue. Moreover, during the conference, several panels were interrupted by extreme left-wing radicals who protested for education in the Basque language. José Antonio Gurpegi still recalls how he, Federico, and Amaia had to talk to the radical leaders to explain that Chicanos were a subjugated minority whose voice deserved and needed to be heard.

The academic value of the presentations by Spanish participants was *in crescendo*, and their papers “[daban] a conocer de forma científica el rico mundo de la cultura chicana” (Eguíluz 10). First-generation and second-generation Spanish scholars discussed less general issues and placed more interest on new Chicano authors and approaches. I would like to mention here three recurrent participants who, in spite of not being Spanish-born, had developed their academic life in Spain. The first is Nathalie Bléser, who has closely studied Rudolfo Anaya’s work. The second is Russell Dinapoli, whose

interests mostly deal with Chicano poetry. Last, but not least, is Klaus Zilles, probably the *Spaniard* who has best approached Rolando Hinojosa's literary corpus. These three are good examples of how Chicano literature was acquiring more significant academic attention in Spain.

THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHICANO LITERATURE: PERSPECTIVAS TRANSATLÁNTICAS EN LA LITERATURA CHICANA

Universidad de Málaga (May 24–29, 2002)

Juan Antonio Perles Rochel, whose PhD dissertation was the first on Chicano literature presented in Spain, surprised us all with the venue of the third conference. All sessions were held at Málaga's Diocesan Seminar, a place for retirement and study which proved fertile both for the quality of the panels and for the informal conversations it enabled. Professor Perles recalled that the topics presented by Spanish scholars showed "un altísimo interés en desentrañar y comprender la excepcionalidad chicana" (11). Additionally, in Málaga "quedó claro que la interacción entre España, Europa y Aztlán puede aportar un espacio de diálogo en el que se desarrollen estrategias comunes de subversión en un mundo globalizado" (12). Spanish scholars, burdened by a past of conquest, did not approach Chicano culture as an act of "constriction" or expiation of guilt (11). Rather, their presentations began to offer innovative analytic perspectives on Chicano creations, opening new spaces for academic dialogue between Spain and the United States.

The following cases are clear examples of the new spaces revealed by Spanish scholars. Departing from Luce Irigaray's philosophical principles on feminism, Esther Alvarez explored the figure of Doña Marina in some of Cherríe Moraga's works, evidencing how Moraga turned La Malinche into a "model of defiance, independence and survival" ("Daughters" 59). Also on Moraga, Carmen González explored the poetics of fragmentation in the Chicana author through the myth of Coyolxauhqui, which González identified with the dismembering of womanhood; a necessary step, González affirmed, towards "a reconstruction process leading to self fulfillment [sic]" (137). Finally, Alejandro Martín examined how rap music was a tool used by Chicanos to denounce their subordinated position in the United States (199). At this conference, even constructs from Chicano popular culture caught the attention of Spanish researchers. New academic bridges were being constructed.

THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHICANO LITERATURE

Universidad de Sevilla (May 12–14, 2004)

I have no personal memories of this conference for, as I mentioned earlier, I was unable to attend it. My *relación* (chronicle) of this conference must therefore be indirect and comes from the book edited by, among others, Juan Ignacio (Nacho) Guijarro. I assume that, as at former conferences, this publication is composed of a selection of the presented papers. According to the editor, the resulting compilation scrutinized Chicano artistic creation from a wide range of viewpoints:

There are articles that examine from feminist, comparative and close-reading approaches specific authors and literary texts, others discuss more general ideological and cultural issues like folklore, ethnicity, identity, sexuality or stereotypes, while some contributions focus on Chicano films and murals. (Lerate and Guijarro 11)

Allow me to comment on three works by Spanish authors in order to give the reader an idea of the originality of their analyses. Manuel Brito presented a paper in which he studied the experimental poet, playwright, and labor activist Rodrigo Toscano. For Brito, Toscano's poetry was "much closer to the experimental tendencies of contemporary American poetry in the late twentieth century than to the usual claims of Chicano cultural identity" (52), making Toscano's topics universal. In "Refining the Father Figure in Contemporary Chicana Literature," Antonia Domínguez suggested that "a new and challenging concept of fatherhood is being proposed by Chicano/a writers" (88), and she exemplified it by considering paternity in authors like Denise Chávez, Helena María Viramontes, and Arturo Islas. The last example is devoted to the exploration of the transformations made by Alicia Gaspar de Alba from the 1987 Spanish version to the 1993 English version of her story "They're Just Silly Rabbits." In the words of María A. Toda, these changes responded to "una serie de exigencias ideológicas procedentes de ciertas políticas de identidad" (253) (a series of ideological exigencies that came from certain identity policies, editors translation) which, she affirms, were detrimental to the complexity and humor of the earlier version of the story. I believe these three works provide an innovative critical approach to Chicano literary criticism.

THE FIFTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHICANO LITERATURE: INTERPRETING THE NEW MILENIO

Universidad de Alcalá (May 22–25, 2006)

Finally, the conference reached my home city, and its fifth edition was held at the Universidad de Alcalá. This meeting represented a turning point in the organization of the biennial forum. Since then, the Instituto Franklin de la Universidad de Alcalá has provided the local committees with its full resources to coordinate the seminar. In other words, the Instituto Franklin's team has worked *codo con codo* (side by side) to help other universities organize a successful event. It is only natural that the first direct involvement of the Instituto Franklin was held at the Universidad de Alcalá. This research center, of which I am currently director, is the only higher education organization devoted to the investigation and promotion of North American culture in Spain. Additionally, one of our priority lines of research is the Latino community in the United States—especially Chicanos. In Europe, and as a result of the research conducted at the Instituto Franklin, the Universidad de Alcalá is a recognized research center on Chicanos and Latinos.

A third generation of Spanish researchers presented its academic credentials at this conference. As most of those from the second generation were attaining tenure or about to be promoted, young researchers were unveiling their own critical voice. I am referring specifically to Aishih Wehbe-Herrera, María Jesús Castro Dopacio, and Eva Fernández de Pinedo. Wehbe-Herrera, departing from scarce referential sources, focused on some major concepts that affect the construction of Chicano masculinity(ies) such as *machismo* and hegemonic/subordinate masculinities (80). Castro Dopacio presented a very illustrative paper on the connections between Chicana and Puerto Riqueña literature, studying the more traditional representations of the Virgen of Guadalupe—as an example of motherhood and housewifery—and the revisiting of those representations to attribute new characteristics to the Virgen which are closer to modern-day Chicanas and Riqueñas (116). Eva Fernández approached the rewriting of mainstream fairy tales by Chicana writer Silvia González. In her paper, Fernández verified the two obstacles U.S.-born children of Mexican descent must face while approaching their roots: “the nostalgic and biased vision of the homeland passed on by their parents and the commodified imagines of their minority propagated by the mainstream” (198). Needless to say, and I hope you excuse this slight dose of *chovinismo* (chauvinism), Alcalá's conference was one of the best.

THE SIXTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHICANO LITERATURE: NEW CHALLENGES FOR THE NEW MILENIO

Universidad de Alicante (May 22–24, 2008)

After a decade of encounters, it was clear that the interest in Chicano artistic expression—the conferences began with literature, but the spectrum was soon expanded to include other arts—had grown considerably on both sides of the Atlantic. Along with the *trendsetters* of Chicano literary criticism, younger critics came to Spain to share their work with Spanish scholars. Here, Spanish researchers continued to contribute with their papers to provide different interpretations, at times informed by their personal experiences with Chicano literature. This was the case of plenary speaker Isabel Durán, whose presentation, “Teaching Chicana/o Literature Abroad: The Use of Autobiography for Comparative Purposes,” was centered on instructing this type of literature outside the United States. I must confess that Isabel’s speech at the Universidad de Alicante is one of the best I have attended on the topic of Chicano studies.

Through a succession of vicissitudes, I came to be the editor of the volume that compiled some of the papers presented at the sixth conference. The book, entitled *Nuevas reflexiones en torno a la literatura y cultura chicana*, was selected in 2010 by *El Portal del Hispanismo*, the Instituto Cervantes, and the Spanish Ministry of Education as “book of the week.”² One of the young Spanish contributors, Olvido Andújar, dealt with the representation of Latinos in American TV shows. She used the example of *Desperate Housewives* to study how Gabrielle Solis’s identity was built in a *mainstream* screening. Ana Díaz López scrutinized Ana Castillo’s *So Far from God*’s main character, Sofi, as if she were the protagonist of what Díaz López called the first “telenovela chicana” (49). Contrary to the archetypical construction of female identities in *telenovelas* (soap operas), this novel, Díaz López said, “subvierte el ideal femenino que encontramos en television”. Sofi deconstruye la teoría del cautiverio femenino que promulgan las telenovelas erigiéndose en una figura extraordinariamente feminista” (50). Both Andújar and Díaz López represented new directions taken by young Spanish researchers dedicated to Chicano studies.

². For more information, see <http://hispanismo.cervantes.es/libros.asp?DOCN=436>.

THE SEVENTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHICANO LITERATURE: WRITING THE LANDSCAPE/ LANDSCAPES OF WRITING

Universidad de León (May 27–29, 2010)

The topic of this conference was very much interconnected with the research interest of the organizer, Dr. Imelda Martín-Junquera. Martín Junquera, a renowned Spanish scholar of ecofeminist literary criticism, expressed that the selection of participants was an attempt “to portray the different types of physical, ideological, symbolical, and spiritual landscapes that have been present in Chicano Literature throughout its existence” (“Introduction” 1). All papers presented, either by American or by European scholars, shared a common denominator: “the recurrent focus on nature and culture as two intertwined subject matters and the relationships established between them” (Ibid.).

Among the different contributions made by Spanish scholars, three of the topics, in particular, caught my attention. Two discussed the use of Spanish in Chicano literature, and the other the translation into Spanish of works written in English by Chicano authors. The paper by José Antonio Gurpegui, “‘In Spanish, Mi Hermano, in Spanish’: Is Good to Speak in Español in USA,” focused on the relation between the use of Spanish and the socioeconomic position of the people who speak it in the United States today. Gurpegui’s contribution, although questioning the linguistic influence of Spanish in English, foresaw a strength in the use of this language in the United States due to the demographic growth of its speakers (191). In “Writing on the Border: English y español también,” Cecilia Montes-Alcalá scrutinized the use of Spanish and code-switching in Chicano bilingual literature. Following a sociopragmatic approach, Montes-Alcalá concluded that the use of code-switching was by no means arbitrary or marginal, but a valid aesthetic device (227).

Finally, in her paper “(Too) Changing Landscapes: The Translation of US Hispanic Literature into Spanish,” María López Pons showed the relation between the translation of Chicano authors’ works into Spanish and the lack of success of those translated works in the Iberian market. The reason, she said, was the translator’s need to understand deeply the literary landscapes in which Chicano writers place their work. Without that knowledge, López Pons pointed out, a translated Chicano work ended up being “an extremely neutralizing translation or a bizarre amalgam of translating techniques that leaves readers puzzled” (209). The best example of a novel translated into Spanish was, according to her, *Caramelo*, by Sandra Cisneros. The novel, López Pons affirmed, proved that cooperation between the

translator, in this case Liliana Valenzuela, and the author was a guarantor of success.

THE EIGHTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHICANO LITERATURE: CROSSING THE BORDERS OF IMAGINATION

Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha (May 24–26, 2012)

Toledo, the Imperial City, was the site of the eighth conference, and Mar Ramón Torrijos was our host. Perhaps as a result of its proximity to Madrid, Toledo's conference was attended by many scholars from both sides of the Atlantic (Ramón Torrijos 12). One of the attendees, Armando Miguélez, a Spanish critic from *de acá*, who eventually returned to Spain, was one of the first Spaniards to work on Chicano literature in the United States. His PhD dissertation, supervised by Justo S. Alarcón and presented in 1981, dealt with "cuentos literarios chicanos" from 1877 to 1950. I met Armando in 1998 at a conference in Cáceres and found his presentation groundbreaking. On a personal note, it was wonderful to see him again in Toledo and to hear his talk about one of the first Chicano writers, Adolfo Carrillo.

Along with Miguélez, I would like to devote some lines to someone I consider one of the finest Spanish literary critics on Chicano literature and culture: Maria Antonia Oliver. She has presented at most of the conferences, and the quality of her papers and publications confirms my assertion. In Toledo, Maria Antonia discussed the search for ethnic difference in Stephanie Elizondo Griest's *Mexican Enough*. I highly recommend the reading of her prolific critical works, for they are a good example of Spanish scholars' quality, an analytic excellence that is also evident in Esther Álvarez, to whom I referred before. In Toledo, Esther Álvarez was acclaimed during the conference for offering the Universidad de Oviedo as the next venue for the symposium. The conference would move, once again, from South to North.

THE NINTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHICANO LITERATURE AND LATINO STUDIES: CITYSCAPES: URBAN AND HUMAN CARTOGRAPHIES

Universidad de Oviedo (May 28–30, 2014)

As in 2004, I was unable to attend this conference. However, as said before, I was personally involved in its organization. For instance, and as an *appetizer*, I arranged a roundtable at the Casa de América in Madrid in which notable Chicano and Chicana literary critics and writers gave their opinion on the current status of Chicano literature.

Additionally, the team at the Instituto Franklin worked closely with that of the Universidad de Oviedo to organize the conference. Nonetheless, and as will be the case with future conferences, the leading role was assumed by the HispaUSA Association,³ created to stimulate and encourage the conjunct study of Latinos in the United States by American and Spanish researchers. Thanks no doubt in part to these collaborations, the conference was a resounding success. Acclaimed Chicano literary critics and writers from the States came yet again to share with their Spanish colleagues their analysis. Promising young researchers such as Noelia de Gregorio and Laura Vázquez, both *de allá* researchers, gave an outstanding response to the challenges proposed by the American critics. The results of this conference already have been disseminated in a recently published book edited by Professor Esther Alvarez (*Geographies*).

THE 10TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHICANO LITERATURE AND LATINO STUDIES: CULTURA Y HERENCIA HISPANA: CONSTRUYENDO UNA IDENTIDAD

Universidad Complutense de Madrid (May 30–June 1, 2016)

The latest, as of this writing, meeting on Chicano literature and Latino studies in Spain was held at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. The Conference was organized by Asociación HispaUSA, and by Complutense professors Isabel Durán, Carmen M. Méndez, and Eusebio de Lorenzo. Scholars from many different geographical areas, which implies that these Spanish seminars have become a reference in the study of Chicanas/os Latinas/os outside the United States, pondered how literature has served to preserve culture and heritage within the Chicano and Latino community, something that, by extension, has helped to build a distinctive, but multifaceted identity.⁴ As in the previous gatherings, the academic level was outstanding. Plenary lectures, panels, roundtables, and book presentations showed the good health that this academic area has enjoyed all over the world.

I would like to focus on the three plenary speakers of this conference. Given the political situation of the United States, creative writing professor and author Reyna Grande dissertated on a currently high controversial topic: immigration and its influence in the construction of Chicana/o literary identity in the United States. Our admired Gary Francisco Keller, professor and founder of Bilingual

³ . See the HipaUSA website: [http:// www .hispausa .com/](http://www.hispausa.com/) .

⁴ . The full program of this tenth conference can be viewed at [http:// hispaua .com/ Congresos/](http://hispausa.com/Congresos/)

Review Press, discussed the existence of a transcendent Chicana/o biculturalism through art, the use of language and everyday life. Finally, the acclaimed Spanish author María Dueñas described her experience as a visiting scholar at the University of California, Santa Barbara—hosted by my dearest friend, Professor Francisco Lomelí. María Dueñas explained how this enriching stay helped her prepare her successful novel *Misión Olvido* (2012). In this novel, Dueñas sketches the historical links between Spain and the United States and the importance of the *herencia hispana* (Hispanic heritage) through the main character's search of a forgotten Franciscan site within the California Missions Trail.

CONCLUSION

In the former pages I have attempted to summarize almost two decades of Chicano studies in Spain. As we have seen, this discipline had a difficult beginning in Spain, as it was virtually nonexistent in Spanish departments and irrelevant for the English ones. Even so, Spanish professors such as José Antonio Gurpegui, Manuel Villar, and Juan Antonio Perles believed that the situation could, and should, be reversed. Thanks to them and many Chicano authors and critics, Spain now convenes the most important seminar on the topic outside the United States. With preparations underway for its eleventh meeting, we can conclude that the conferences have been a success. However, that success is not measured merely by the biennial celebration of an international academic conference, though the meetings have served to *tender puentes* (build bridges) and *compartir conocimientos* (share knowledge) through which Spaniards have learned a great deal from the critics of Aztlán. I truly believe that the input of Spanish critics has been instrumental in developing Chicano studies in the United States as well; their particular analytic contributions have had a critical impact on both sides of the Atlantic.

In Spain, the inspiration of those Spanish critics is notable. Because of their work, there are now university courses solely devoted to the study of Chicano literature, and I am referring not only to North American Literature syllabi, in which Chicano writers and critics are already included, but to MA and PhD courses as well. Thanks to them, young scholars have had qualified directors for their doctoral dissertations on Chicano literature. New scholars have been incorporated in the pool of Spanish critics whose research interests are focused on Chicano studies (it would be interesting for an article, in the near future, to track the publications and contributions made by newer

generations), and numerous publicly funded research projects have been developed to explore Chicano literature's singularity.

Their effort has permitted the Instituto Franklin, the institution I have the honor to head, to take an active role in promoting Chicano studies. We publish an indexed research journal, *Camino Real*, whose articles exclusively deal with Latinos in the United States; promote Chicano writers by publishing the translation of some of their works into Spanish with the goal of making them accessible to the Spanish public; offer the opportunity to Chicano scholars to spend a month at our university to work on both fictional or critical texts; and, finally, continuously support the celebration of the Chicano literature conference in Spain.

I conclude with the hope that this small contribution helps to continue building bridges and sharing knowledge between scholars from both sides of the Atlantic. By the time this book is published, the 11th Conference on Chicano Literature and Latino Studies (2018), to be held at the historical Universidad de Salamanca and hosted by Professor Román Álvarez, will have its Call for Papers almost ready. I hope you are as ready as we are to begin this next stage of Chicano studies in Spain.

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