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Ernst Rudin

THE FIFTH HORSEMAN, A HEMALE REVISION OF THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION

Chicano – or Mexican American – literature is a relatively new genre, as is Chicano art in general. The Hispanic population of what is now the *Southwest* of the United States continued to read and write after the Anglo-American colonization of *Tejas* in the eighteen-thirties, the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo (1848), and the Gadsen Purchase (1854). Chicano literature as a major movement, however, started in the nineteen-sixties, in the political context of Civil rights movements and with the *teatro campesino* – short satirical plays written by Luis Valdés and others during the 1965 fruit picker strikes at Delano, California – as one of its first manifestations. The first Chicano novels to appear were: *Tattoo the Wicked Cross* (Floyd Salas, 1967), *The Plum Plum Pickers* (Raymond Barrio, 1969), *Chicano* (Richard Vásquez, 1970), *...y no se lo tragó la tierra* (Tomás Rivera, 1970), *Barrio Boy* (Ernesto Galarza, 1971), *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* (Oscar Zeta Acosta, 1972), *Bless me Ultima* (Rudolfo Anaya, 1972), and *Estampas del Valle* (Rolando Hinojosa, 1973). Since then, their number has been steadily growing. They draw on Latin American, U.S. American, and European literary models; most of them are written in English, some in Spanish and a handful are bilingual works.

José Antonio Villarreal (Los Angeles, born 1924), who was not directly involved with the Chicano movement, is considered by many literary critics a forerunner of Chicano novelists. His novel *Pocho*, published in 1959 by the mainstream press Doubleday, is, discourse and contentwise, a Chicano novel *avant la lettre*. *The Fifth Horseman*, his second novel, was published in 1974, when Mexican American literature was already well established. It can be regarded as the first Chicano novel of the Mexican Revolution, and "falls between the [Latin American] novel of the Mexican Revolution and the American history novel", as Luis Leal explains in "*The Fifth Horseman* and Its Literary Antecedents" (xi).

I would like to examine, in the following pages, José Antonio Villarreal's use of history in *Horseman*. The author himself tries to forestall such endeavors in his prefatory note:

> THIS IS A BOOK OF FICTION. It is not my intention to set down a scholarly history of the Mexican Revolution of 1910. I have deliberately presented events in a way they might best enhance the pattern of my tale, and am therefore at the mercy of the learned reader who will meticulously dissect my narrative for flaws in chronology, etc. And, yet, the essence of the novel is true.

I do not expect any novel to be a scholarly history, and will not concentrate upon the *Fifth Horseman's* "flaws in chronology, etc.", but upon the *use* it makes of history: the kinds of historical material it employs, the language in which the author presents this material, and the perspective from which he presents it.

The prefatory note to the novel is followed by an epigraph from the *Bhagavad-Gita* (cf. Cantú 428), by a first chapter entitled "The Prologue: Zacatecas, June 24, 1914", and by the three books "Hacienda de la Flor", "The Campaign", and "Los Desgraciados". Books one and two, which make up five sixths of the novel, show two different settings that draw on historical data from two different fields. As the titles indicate, "Hacienda de la Flor" makes use mainly of agrarian history, "The Campaign", mainly of military history.

"Hacienda de la Flor" deals with everyday life on a Mexican hacienda in Porfirian times, i.e. in the years before the Revolution of 1910-1920. The hierarchical structure, the organization, and the administration of the estate are described; different kinds of farm work, clothes and tools, funerary and festive rituals. The detached descriptive prose and the amount of detailed information in passages like the following have their literary predecessors – Matthew Bramble's letter of October 11th in Smollet's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771) may be mentioned as an example –, but would also fit perfectly into a textbook on Mexican agrarian history:

> Because it was almost entirely self-sufficient, it was necessary that the estate be so large. Although la Flor was not agricultural, it was imperative that there be a good-sized acreage of tillable soil. This was located south and west of the main buildings. Directly south, the Tecolote Mountains, the entire range completely within the hacienda proper yielded stone, lime, and other minerals for the small open hearth. From the north, beyond the grazing lands which immediately surrounded the main part of the hacienda, clay for adobe, wild herbs, and salt abounded! Eastward, in the foothills barely visible, were small forests which

> supplied timber, and beyond that was rocky wasteland, mountain land where the hacienda's seventy-five thousand sheep grazed. (25)

The attempt at rendering an authentic image of rural Mexico before and during the revolution manifests itself not only on the thematic, but also on the linguistic level. In "The Prologue", a stanza of a Mexican *corrido* is quoted. No translation is given, but the theme and the context of the song are mentioned:

> Moya se fué por delante
> mirando por las laderas
> se llevó cincuenta gallos
> pero de los más panteras
>
> This was the ballad of the fearless old man, José Luis Moya, who with fifty men had taken the Bufa and the city back in 1910. (8)

This quatrain is by far the most extensive Spanish token in *Horseman*. All the other Spanish entries, with the exception of a small number of short formulas (*buenos días, buenas noches, qué tal, mucho gusto*), restrict themselves to single words which appear all through the novel but are most frequent in "Hacienda de la Flor". They do not render a *description* of the historical object, but *represent* it, are part of it. They do not *refer* to history: they *are* history. They can be integrated into a descriptive historical discourse, however, through explanation or translation:

> 'Cuaco!' that word for horse which also means move! (8)
>
> The encomienda was a protectorate, as the word implied, and a worthy Spaniard – usually one who had performed a service to the king, or a relative, or a bankrupt member of the court – was given an extensive area to protect. They owned the land and lived as lords, but the life and soul of every Indian within their domain was their responsibility. (80)

This explanatory way of dealing with foreign words, which can be found in fictional and factual texts from Bartolomé de las Casas to James Fenimore Cooper is the rare exception in *Horseman*. Villarreal prefers to bring in Mexicanisms without explaining or translating them, thus creating a less didactic and more aesthetic literary discourse that cannot be found in historiography, unless we compare the Mexicanisms in *Horseman* to the Latinisms that appear in scholarly historical texts. The important difference is that Latinisms represent the humanist tradition, stem from a cultural elite, and thus relate differently to the rest of the text than the jargon of cowboys.

Mexicanisms in Villarreal's novel serve similar functions as, say, the *gauchismos* in the epic poem *Martín Fierro* (Buenos Aires, 1872-1879) by José Hernández and the novel *Don Segundo Sombra* (Buenos Aires, 1926) by Ricardo Güiraldes. The dominant semantic fields in *Horseman* are food (*tamales, tacos, menudo, antojitos, birria, aguardiente, tequila*), clothing (*huarache, sarape*), housing (*adobe, choza, jacal, zaguán*), horsemanship (*reata, jinete, vaquero*) and administration (*alcaide, rurales*). Some of these terms are of Nahuatl origin; most of them are closely linked to Mexican rural culture, to the life of the vaquero. As words and as the material objects they stand for, they are historical tokens that belong to a certain region, to a certain society, to a certain time. The author's refusal to explain them creates a tension between their exotic form (as words) that attracts the reader and the reader's difficulty in understanding them. Their meaning has to be constructed with the help of the context or of a *diccionario de mejicanismos*. Whereas a scientific and explanatory discourse appeals mainly to the intellect, their primary appeal is a sensual one. The fact that they are integrated into the text without being italicized, may be interpreted as a further indication of their primarily aesthetic function. However, an intellectual effort is required in order to transform these exotic elements into meaningful elements. The author can reduce this effort by using a word repeatedly. *Jinete* ("rider") and *vaquero* ("cowboy"), for instance, are used frequently enough in *Horseman* to become familiar to the reader; *molcajete* (34, "mortar"), *jaripeo* (161, "rodeo"), and *birria* (144, "barbecue"), on the other hand, can gain their meaning from but one context.

From a standpoint outside the American Southwest, the use of Hispanicisms in "Hacienda de la Flor" – with the exception of the *corrido* stanza mentioned above – can be interpreted as a question of jargon and dialect, rather than as a question of Spanish versus English. For one thing, quite a few terms are of Aztec and not of peninsular origin; for another, and more importantly, words like *huarache*, *reata*, and *sarape* have become part of the English language of the American Southwest. They are familiar to the population on both sides of the Mexican American border, but unfamiliar to the New Englander as well as to the Paraguayan. They have much the same effect as the *gauchismos* in Hernández or Güiraldes may have on readers who are not familiar with the traditional vocabulary of the *pampa*.

Within the context of the Southwest, however, Villarreal's novel may be read differently. Mexicanisms cannot be dismissed there as pure jargon, as mere literary devices. Since they are familiar to the population, they

cannot function as exotic elements. They are not neutral terms either but can, depending on who uses them – or who reads them –, denote either identification with or contempt for the traditional Hispanic way of life in the region. They belong into the field of tension between English and Spanish, between the States and Mexico, between the North and the South. And in this context, "Hacienda de la Flor" rewrites mainstream history. It can be related to two fictional models, one Hispanic, the other Anglo American. On the one hand, it is rooted in the tradition of *costumbrismo* literature, on the other it depicts a lifestyle that has become famous as an essential part of the Anglo American heritage through Western novels and movies. On the one hand are *Martín Fierro* and *Don Segundo Sombra*, on the other Zane Grey and John Wayne. *Horseman* combines the two traditions; is a novel written in English and published in the United States which presents Hispanics as cowboys, thus rewriting the history of the Southwest and redefining terms like *rancho*, *corral*, or *rodeo*, which have become an integral part of the American English vocabulary, and are promoted as cultural elements of the Anglo American Southwest.

Horseman also includes a small number of general Hispanicisms which make for an easily and almost universally accessible folkloric element: either forms of address like *don, señor, muchacho, señorita*, or vulgarisms like *teta, puta, caray, caramba*: the vocabulary of the Mexican outlaw in American Westerns. Behind this kind of Hispanicism there is no material anthropological object. It does not stand for a rural historical token, but confirms cliché views of the Mexican mentality. Gary Keller says about terms of this kind: "they have become 'alien' to the Hispanic world to the degree that they are used by the Anglo to characterize (and caricaturize) the Hispano" (297).

Another linguistic characteristic of Villarreal's novel that has little to do with jargon and a lot with English versus Spanish operates on the syntactical level. Many Chicano novelists try by various means to make their readers aware that their characters "speak Spanish". The theme is too vast to elaborate on it in the context of this essay, suffice it to mention Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless me Ultima*, Raymond Barrio's *The Plum Plum Pickers*, and Arturo Islas's *The Rain God* as three novels that use different strategies in dealing with it (cf. Rudin, *Tender Accents*). Villarreal uses hispanicized syntax at times in direct speech, a technique already applied in his *Pocho*, though less extensively. The device most frequently employed in this respect is related to the common Spanish use of adjectives as nouns when applied to persons (e.g., *vete*, *loca*). In a couple of instances,

English is used in the same way: "away with you, crazy!" (16) or "he was an ancient" (169). There are, on the other hand, many cases where an adjective plus *one* attempt to render the Spanish usage. On pages 16 and 17 alone we find: "She was considered a strange one", "He will be a violent one", and "She is certainly a crazy one". Other non-idiomatic English phrases hint at an underlying Spanish sentence structure or at an underlying Spanish idiomatic expression: "How did the morning find you" (31), "I have not yet sixteen years" (36), "it matters not" (199), "for this was the hour of breaking fast" (385).

Hispanicized phrases make the reader of *Horseman* aware that the characters' language is not English, but appear much too erratically to be taken as a consistent attempt at reconstructing in English the Mexican Spanish of 1910. Besides, all through the novel we find words and passages in direct speech that are anything but historical. Teodoro Inés, head of the Inés clan, and pictured throughout the novel as dumb and "uncommunicative except, of course, when giving an order or a reprimand" (75), uses phrases like: "you committed matricide by the grotesqueness of your delivery!" (79); and shows an extraordinary command of synonyms:

> [...] it is not the fault of the gonads that they hang on the wrong man. There is a respect in me for balls. It is not the testes where the fault is but in the head and in the heart. (337)

Carmen, the hacendado's daughter and the peón Heraclio, her lover, sound in their conversations at times like two American College kids of the Seventies. A peón can use Hispanicisms, hispanicized syntax, and modern academese within one phrase: "The idea of a moral lapse for that of the rurales has left me" (200).

The use of Mexican vocabulary and hispanicized syntax is not restricted to "Hacienda de la Flor", though for obvious reasons more prominent in this book than in "The Campaign", where vaquero terminology is less required and where the urge for military action only allows for Spanish ranks like *coronel* and for battlecry Hispanicisms: "A chingar la muerte! – Let us go fuck death!" (210).

Military history has been part of the novel in English at least since Tristram's Uncle Toby, and the narrator of *Horseman* doesn't take battle matters less seriously than his fictional European predecessor. The insistence on factual data, on dates, numbers, and places in "The Campaign" as well as in "Hacienda de la Flor", seems to belie the author's initial

statement that *Horseman* is not meant to be a scholarly history. Villarreal comes at times very close to a historiographical discourse. He tackles the political situation:

> On April 22, Madero and the besieged General Navarro agreed on a truce of fourteen days while the negotiations took place, but Limantour's demands were too great, and at the end of the period of armistice, nothing had been resolved. The truce was extended, and Limantour, who offered nothing but the removal of Díaz, and in turn wanted the revolutionary forces to disband, found his position stronger with each day. It was plain to everyone but Madero and his civilian advisers that if the rebels did not attack the Revolution would end, having been nothing but a spark, a flare of resistance by the people. (227)

strategic details:

> The promontory was two hundred yards wide and a thousand yards long. It was grassy, rocky, and exposed. Below was the city, still in Federal hands, and above, at the base of the mountain, Federal troops were entrenched with machine guns at ready, capable of stopping any assault. Forward by a hundred yards were Federal fusiliers, dug in shallow trenches behind rocky barricades. (1)

as well as the development of the battles as such:

> Halfway down the mountain, where the first houses were found, they were stopped by sharpshooters and well-placed automatic weapons, but the unending mass of men behind them pushed them forward, and now for the first time since the attack began, their officers whipped them into order, their fighting became deliberate, heavy, and yet they were thrown back. Their backs were to the mountain and their men were still pouring down upon them, so that a sudden disorganized flight became an attack because they could not retreat. Suddenly from their left, the General appeared on his big red horse, and threw two thousand of his horse at the flank, so the men on foot went into the cobblestone streets, and Natera gave the order once again, and every one of those first defenders was killed. (10)

The authoritative and seemingly objective handling of the political and strategic backgrounds, the not so detached description of battle-scenes with the narrator in the role of a supreme choreographer, the abundance of factual details, and the mythification of a heroic leader are identical with the way in which "romantic" American historiographers of the last century, Francis Parkman, to name one, deal with their subject (cf. Levin), and can also be found in the documentary Mexican novel of the Revolution (cf. Leal), in historical fiction – for example in Pérez Galdós's novels or in Bierce's short story collection *Soldier-Folk* –, and in popular works of

military history up to today (e.g. Ketchum). All these texts resemble old chronicles, be they English or Hispanic, in that they present a history of military deeds and of their heroes and in that they mythify their subject.

Horseman does not show the Mexican Revolution from a neutral perspective. The narrator sides with Villa and mythifies him; Villa, brute, prodigy, and prophet, becomes Mexico:

> He thought of the primeval genius in the man – what supernatural gift had been bestowed and why on this man who was in fact an animal? And what would he have been with training and direction, for, semiliterate, he knew things about warfare that years of study did not teach many men. And suddenly he saw that which he had known but had not recognized. Why it was that he loved and respected and followed this man who should be inferior and distasteful. He was crude, uncultured, rough – with a deep-rooted potential within him ready to explode. Here was México, crude and uncultured, gifted with latent energy, and the uncontrolled energy of Villa was the México to come; his weaknesses, even his foibles, as well as the unleashing of his force through war – all this was México. And to the General Felipe Angeles, Villa, despite his inferiority and, to be truthful, his superiority, was a prototype – he was the image of the fatherland under a big hat, behind mustaches, and cruelty and sentimentality. And that was why the hidalgo, Angeles, followed him. (304)

The fascination of the intellectual with a crude and much less educated military leader and his subordination to him is a theme that comes up already in Mariano Azuela's *Los de abajo* (1915), the first Mexican Novel of the Revolution. Besides, both books deal with the mythical and legendary stature of Villa. Azuela does so with a certain irony; Villarreal propagates the myth without any reflection upon its nature. The narrator of *Horseman* insinuates that Villa was invincible as a war leader, that he did not lose the Revolution on the battlefield, but because his colleagues and superiors worked against him, because he was sent faulty ammunition and because of superhuman influence: "a sandstorm disrupted what death and privation could not" (305).

So far we have not dealt with the most important character of the novel, the man who as a mythical hero stands above even Pancho Villa: Heraclio Inés, the 'Fifth Horseman'. He is the protagonist in both the agrarian and the military setting. Like Jack Crabb in Thomas Berger's *Little Big Man* (1964), he is the invented historical hero who has been close to historical personalities, who has even influenced their decisions, but who has been "forgotten" by historians and who is now "resurrected" by the novelist. Like Jack Crabb, Heraclio outrides, outwits and out-womanizes his superiors, be they historical or not. But unlike Jack Crabb, he is not redeemed by

irony. Berger's first person narrator is the perfect anti-hero; is so much of a showoff that the reader never knows whether to take him seriously or not and that established perspectives are constantly questioned.

Heraclio is given the stature of a true mythical hero in more than one sense. The fact that many of the people around him die a violent death which he does not want but to which he is always the indirect cause makes him a tragic hero. His name links him to the archetypical classic hero, the title of the novel to Christian mythology; and he can also slip into the role of the Indian noble: "After his first lapse when he had marveled at the size of Domingo, Heraclio had allowed his features to become inscrutable, and the man did not know that he had a thousand years of experience in this art" (101). As an Inés and not a mere peón, he is in a privileged position: a mere peón could not allow himself to loaf when he feels like loafing without getting punished; would not have philosophical conversations with a Spanish nobleman, would not have his master as his godfather and his master's daughter as his lover. And a peón would most certainly not be given the possibility of marrying the hacendado's daughter and himself becoming the landlord. Heraclio is, apart from the owner and his family, the most privileged individual on the *Hacienda de la Flor*. And when he changes from the agrarian to the military setting, he is no foot-soldier either, but, from very soon on, a member of the elite troupe *Los Dorados*. Besides, he is Villa's favorite and he knows it: "I came to war with my general to help in a much bigger fight, and I cannot be troubled by the petty feelings of a mediocre and a half-sane colonel" (272). The final section of the novel, "Los Desgraciados", shows him in yet another star role: as a solitary avenger against all odds he sends himself on a secret mission, kills Celestino Gámez, who has betrayed the *villista* cause, and rides off into a Californian sunrise.

> The novel creates a mythological, heroic ancestor of the modern Chicano. It is highly significant that, at the end of the novel, its protagonist, an authentic hero of the Revolution, must choose between betraying the revolutionary ideals or becoming an outlaw in the eyes of the victors. He must choose, that is, to remain in the army and reap the benefits plundered from the people, or to remain on the side of the Mexican people and break with the military. He is true to the ideals of the people's revolution, and so must flee Mexico, becoming one of the thousands of refugees who sought temporary asylum in the United States, and who eventually stayed on to become the grandparents of the Chicanos of today. This positive portrayal of the refugee directly responds to the negative image common in Mexico, and thus constitutes a Chicano redefinition of a Mexican stereotype, not just an Anglo-American one. (Bruce-Novoa 37ff)

Heraclio never is "on the side of the Mexican people", and it is in my opinion problematic to postulate him, as Bruce-Novoa does, as a Chicano hero and redefiner of stereotypes. Rather than challenging U.S. stereotypes, he confirms them. For one reason, he becomes a Superman, a perfect North American pro-hero, through his characteristics and the way in which he is presented; for another, the narrator propagates through him a blatant stereotype of the Latin lover, a myth that, according to one Chicano critic, is "perpetrated on Chicanos by the Anglo colonizer who first emasculates the colonized man and then takes pleasure in watching him try to prove his masculinity. Our own experiences, however, contradict such stereotypical views" (Mirandé 172; cf. also Márquez). Machismo is a complex phenomenon and it would be too simple to explain it solely as an Anglo projection on Latins, especially in a novel that does not deal with Chicanos but with Mexicans. What seems clear nevertheless, is that for one thing Heraclio's sexual feats do not reflect the everyday reality of the peón – or of the Chicano today, as far as that goes – and that for another, the heavy reliance on macho values, and even more the total lack of critical or ironic distance in presenting them, make the novel a questionable paradigm against established stereotypes – not because it deals with machismo (I do not think there is a Chicano novel that does not deal with machismo) but because of the *way* in which it deals with it. Floyd Salas's *Tattoo the Wicked Cross*, for example, also exhibits manliness and male values. But whereas these values are but an important *theme* in the case of *Tattoo*, their celebration appears to be the ultimate *aim* in the case of *Horseman*.

Manliness is a major issue in *Horseman*. Friendships and loyalty between men are celebrated, and the phrase "to be a man" seems to represent the highest qualification attainable for any male:

> Villa was a man, despite this, and because he was a man and because he loved him, Heraclio accepted him. For Heraclio, too, was a man and a man must take his friends with and for their weaknesses as well as their goodness and manliness. (287)

Heraclio's balls, not Villa, are his supreme myth and his major source of motivation: "my pride is between my legs, and my loyalty is to my pride" (78). He has all the qualities of a superstud. All the women that appear in the novel, except the ugly and grumpy ones, fall for him. He breaks virgins in much the same way as he breaks horses, he takes them and leaves them according to his whims and without assuming any responsibility for the relationship: the hacendado's daughter, the mother of his once best friend,

the *soldadera*, and the naïve country girl who becomes his wife. When he finds himself bound by the last two towards the end of the novel, both wife and established lover die tragically and conveniently to provide him with a solitary movie finale.

Heraclio is much more concerned with proving his superiority over men, horses, and women, than with solidarity: "... that day he made a vow that he would never cry again and another that he would become the best horseman in la Flor, which meant that he would be superior to his brothers" (49). "You will learn that I cannot be ordered" (70). His greatest act of solidarity consists significantly in saving two enemy officers from execution.

> [...] And, yet, the essence of the novel is true.
> There was no Heraclio Inés, as there were tens of thousands of Heraclio Ineses who died for a right they believed was theirs.
> There was a Madero; there was a Porfirio Díaz and a Victoriano Huerta, and there was a Villa. Men such as these are real; other characters are imaginary.
> And the peon is real. This is of men. This is of the peon, who exists yet today. This is of the slave anywhere, any time. (prefatory note, no page number)

This is of men alright. But it is not of the slave. *Horseman* suffers from a gap between Heraclio's character and the endeavor to present him as a social revolutionary. The prefatory note, the social injustices described in "Hacienda de la Flor", and explicit statements by the protagonist like:

> When one is in bondage it matters not whether he empties pisspots or works with animals. [...] We are peones. It makes no difference how we serve don Aurelio. (58)

suggest that the cause of his becoming a *villista* soldier lies in these social injustices, in his solidarity with the peones. Heraclio, however, is not only too much of a hero, to serve as a model for the underprivileged; he is also an egocentric elitist and an adventurer rather than a social revolutionary, which makes it difficult for any reader to identify with him. I agree with Roberto Cantú's statement that: "Villarreal's characters are out of the ordinary, hence the detachment of the readers: being of lesser clay, we cannot identify with the hero" (426). By the same token, I hope my essay has made it sufficiently clear why I cannot agree with Cantú, when he says:

> The protagonist's name, having no answer, carries a hope: there will always be men to fight against malign forces, and therein lies the hope of kinsmen, that is mankind. The novel conveys a positive message, concluding with Heraclio's departure to California. (429)

Like Demetrio Macías, the protagonist of *Los de abajo*, Heraclio only joins the Revolution after he has killed someone. Moreover, his commitment is much more a personal one to Villa than a commitment to the social causes of the fight: "I wait for my General Villa. When he calls, I shall go. Not until then" (257). In this, his attitude towards the Revolution seems to reflect the attitude of many historical *villistas*. According to Hans Werner Tobler, most soldiers joined the Villa army because of the General's charisma; many out of a spirit of adventure or in order to escape personal problems, quarrels, or regional feuds. Moreover, Villa's army did, in contrast to Zapata's, not develop into a movement with clear objectives for agrarian reforms, and the areas controlled by Villa did not undergo radical social changes (215-225). Since it tries to justify a revolutionary's joining the military campaign with social causes where the authentic cause is a spirit of adventure, *Horseman* can be read as an *a posteriori* effort to come to terms with the *villista* past. In this sense, it becomes an authentic *villista* document. Luis Leal even extends the *villista* perspective of the narrator to the author: "As in most novels of the Revolution, the action is seen from the perspective of the *villistas*, since the authors [...] were *devoted followers of Villa, as is Villarreal*" (xx, my underlining).

Heraclio feels committed to the idea of the Revolution and to Pancho Villa, but is unable to express this commitment in times of peace. Towards the end of the novel, when his wife, his lover, and his son are all dead, Heraclio is asked first by Carmen and then by Otilia to marry them. He refuses Carmen, the new hacendada and his first love; not because he does not love her, and not, as one might expect, because he is a revolutionary and she a hacendada, but because: "I think only that to marry you would be an injustice to you. I really do not think that I shall ever take a wife again. [...] But if I marry, I shall marry you" (366). Shortly before Heraclio meets Otilia, the widow of his favorite brother Concepción, the narrator has established procreation as a principle stronger than war, in a passage marked by a bizarre contrast between an anti-war stance of sorts on the one hand, and cynicism and misogyny on the other:

> A million perished and yet one lived, and here was the victory greater than Zacatecas, greater than Torreón. This was the answer from the animal, man. And regardless the number of treaties, conspiracies, and bargains, and the intellectual plans for the future by committees, from a moment of primitive copulation would come the man again and again. And the despot and the cacique could never deny the unalterable fact that even from the most horrendous rape springs life. And no amount of war, no amount of slaughter could stop this. (368)

Despite this pronouncement for life over war; despite the fact that Heraclio is indirectly responsible for his brother's death, and despite the strong mutual attraction between him and Otilia, Heraclio also refuses this second offer to settle down. When she asks him to stay with her, he entrenches himself in traditional values: "You are my brother's wife [...] what you suggest is abominable" (375), goes on: "[...] it really does not matter that much for me – to live. I now live for my General and my country but not for myself. I have no right to seek happiness at this late date [...]" (376), and leaves for Torreón to kill General Gámez, risking his life once more for the *villista* cause. I have brought in this part of the novel so extensively, because it shows that Heraclio's commitment to his country is not a commitment to the people, but a commitment to an abstract idea and to an heroic leader. He would die gladly for Villa, but shuns responsibility towards the women he says he loves. He leaves for California not because his life is in danger, but because he is a war hero unable to content himself with a lesser role, unable to cope with everyday life, unable to live as a common human being. Therefore, the ending of the novel can only be read as the unmotivated and empty gesture of a cynic:

> He breathed deeply, shutting out the past. He was tired of the past, tired of killing his brothers. He knew suddenly that when he returned it was to help rebuild his beloved homeland, that he would never again take a part in its destruction. (398)

The Mexican Revolution has been mythified as few other historical events of the twentieth century and Villa stands, together with Zapata, as a mythical figure way above any other of its leaders. Quite a few romanticizing documentary novels on the Revolution were written in Mexico and also in the United States, until Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* (1955) and Carlos Fuentes's *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (1962) presented the theme from a more critical stance by putting it in the context of postrevolutionary Mexico and of the human condition in general (cf. also Leal). José Antonio Villarreal does not take these or other Mexican novels of the second half of the twentieth century as his starting point; *Horseman* can be read as *Los de abajo* turned into an epic, as a direct descendant of the early Mexican documentary novel of the Revolution. As if *Pedro Páramo* and *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* had never been written, it uses historical material on the Mexican Revolution in order to glorify the *villista* cause and in order to celebrate machismo. The author presents the reader with a rigid male power system: the mythical fictional hero Heraclio Inés is superimposed

on the mythical historical hero Francisco Villa and presented by an omniscient narrator devoid of any critical or ironic distance.

Horseman is the only Chicano Novel of the Mexican Revolution, but not the only Chicano Novel to deal with the Mexican Revolution. Villarreal's own earlier novel *Pocho* is also a celebration of male values. But since the protagonist's father is, as an expatriate veteran of the Mexican Revolution, both a mythified hero and a representative of a value system that is challenged by his son, it is a much less monolithic work:

> *Pocho* succeeds as a novel, and more significantly as the paradigmatic Chicano novel, precisely because in bringing to the fore the question of value it both violates and subverts our received ideas of value, and forces us to define in real historical terms what has not been defined in the text. (Saldívar, 19)

Estampas del Valle, one of Rolando Hinojosa's novels in Spanish, contains a fictional historical diary related to the Mexican Revolution: in 1920, at the end of the Revolution, a Mexican officer and horse dealer writes in a fragmentary manner about Carranza's assassination, about daily events, and about his plans for the future. Villa and Zapata are mentioned by the way. The notes fall into the hands of young Jehú Malacara, and a Mexican Revolution that is much less mythical and heroic than Villarreal's becomes part of the Chicano heritage. Miguel Méndez, on the other hand, proves with a hilarious and absurd chapter in his novel *El sueño de Santa María de las Piedras* that it is still possible to present the outworn theme of the Mexican Revolution in a new and unexpected light.

The Mexican Revolution is not the only historical theme treated by Chicano writers. Raymond Barrio, Tomás Rivera, and Margarita Cota-Cárdenas, for instance – and more recently Ana Castillo and Alma Luz Villanueva –, have written novels that try to come to terms with a more immediate Chicano past; novels that deal with history, although they do not deal in a grand way with grand historical events, although their protagonists are no mythical heroes. And personally I prefer open, vulnerable, or satirical discourses to monolithic macho monuments.

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Zusammenfassung

Die Chicano Literatur – US-amerikanische Literatur mexikanischstämmiger Autorinnen und Autoren – hat sich ab den späten Sechzigerjahren als Gattung ausgebildet. Sie ist zum grössten Teil englischsprachig, steht aber auch mit spanischsprachigen Literaturen im Dialog. So baut der Roman *The Fifth Horseman* (1974) von José Antonio Villarreal sowohl auf dem anglo-amerikanischen historischen Roman, als auch auf dem frühen mexikanischen Revolutionsroman auf – nicht aber auf moderneren und differenzierteren spanischsprachigen Romanen zum Thema wie zum Beispiel Juan Rulfos *Pedro Páramo* (1955) oder *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (1962) von Carlos Fuentes. Titelfigur ist der Peon Heraclio Inés. Der erste Teil des Romans beschreibt seine Jugend auf einer mexikanischen Hacienda zu Beginn unseres Jahrhunderts. Er ist reichlich mit spanischem Vokabular durchsetzt und stellt US-amerikanisches Selbstverständnis dadurch in Frage, dass er die Kultur der Cowboys, einen der zentralen Mythen der Vereinigten Staaten, als eine mexikanisch-spanische Tradition präsentiert. Im zweiten Teil schliesst sich Heraclio der Revolution an und steigt in kürzester Zeit zum Mitglied der Elitetruppe Pancho Villas auf.

Villarreal will sein Buch als Plädoyer und Paradigma für die Unterdrückten dieser Welt verstanden haben, und der Kritiker Juan Bruce-Novoa sieht im Protagonisten eine Figur mit Vorbildfunktion für moderne Chicanos, die sowohl anglo-amerikanische als auch mexikanische Klischeevorstellungen untergräbt. Der Text selbst läuft diesen Postulaten zuwider, denn einerseits passt Heraclio perfekt in die Rolle eines einsamen Hollywood-Helden und andererseits ist er zwar ein Landarbeiter, aber kein unterdrückter, sondern ein äusserst privilegierter, der sich zudem durchgehend unsolidarisch, rücksichtslos und machtbesessen zeigt. Und auch deshalb, weil seine (und des Erzählers) hervorstechendste Eigenschaft der Männlichkeitswahn ist, eignet er sich kaum als Identifikationsfigur für heutige Chicanos – und für Chicanas schon gar nicht.