

Exiles, Migrants, Settlers, and Natives: Literary Representations of Chicano/as and Mexicans in the Midwest

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ABSTRACT

Since the Chicano/a cultural renaissance of the 1960's and 1970's, the Midwestern United States has emerged as a geographical reality in Chicano/a literature, sometimes merely as a common destination for Chicano/as seeking work, but more and more often as a site of vibrant Chicano/a communities. This paper examines the divergent perspectives and attitudes in this literature toward the Midwest, and toward Chicano/as and Mexicans who have made their homes there. The first section examines texts by Pat Mora, Alicia Gaspar de Alba, and Wendell Mayo, focusing on the ways in which these texts offer the Southwest as the true Chicano/a homeland and suggest that the experience of Chicano/as in the Midwest is one of exile and isolation. The second part of this paper discusses texts by Tomás Rivera, Ana Castillo, Sandra Cisneros, and Hugo Martínez-Serros, and explores representations of transnational and heterogeneous communities of Chicano/as and Mexicans in the Midwest. This analysis reveals the limitations of a conception of Aztlán narrowly associated with the Southwest, and suggests that the complexities of Chicano/a identity demand greater attention to the diversity of regions in which Chicano/as live and work.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Theresa Delgadillo is a doctoral candidate in the Department of English at the University of California, Los Angeles. Familiar with both regions she discusses in this paper, Delgadillo grew up in Wisconsin and has lived in the Southwest for 10 years. She has published essays in *Studies in American Indian Literatures* and *Modern Fiction Studies*. She earned a M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Arizona State University. Her short stories appear in the collection *Southwestern Women: New Voices* and *VOCES: A Journal of Chicana/Latina Studies*. Currently she is working on her dissertation, titled "Hybrid Spiritualities: Resistance and Religious Faith in Contemporary Chicano/a Cultural Production."