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The Female Subject in the Border
Autobiographies of Cleofas Jaramillo and
Jovita González

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My interest in the present discussion involves a discursive analysis of the literary texts of Cleofas Jaramillo and Jovita González. On the basis of a study of two border autobiographies--Romance of a Little Village Girl and "Jovita González: Early Life and Education"--as well as some of the autobiographically informed elements of Dew on the Thorn, I will examine these works as hybrid narrative forms in which the text can be seen as a model of culture and as a meaning generator. So as to understand the process of communication and the production of new information that results from the written word I will look at the discursive strategy of description and the notion of ‘cultural pre-constructs’ (Grize 1990) and how they function within the narrative as a means of constructing border discourse which allows the reader to understand the knowledge, notions, desires and opinions of the subject in relation to the collective sense of identity.

The types of discursive strategies that stand out in these border autobiographies can be located within what Yuri Lotman (1984, 1990) has called the ‘semiosphere.’ I will pay particular attention to what can be termed as border discourse which involves the narrative strategy of description as the basis for understanding a discourse that focuses on self as well as collective restoration of identity.

Mi interés en este trabajo involucra el análisis del discurso en los textos literarios de Cleofas Jaramillo y Jovita González. Con base en el estudio de dos autobiografías de la frontera –Romance of a Little Village Girl y “Jovita González: Early Life and Education” así como en los elementos autobiográficos en Dew on the Thorn, estos trabajos se estudian como formas narrativas híbridas en las que el texto puede ser considerado un modelo de cultura y un generador de significado. Con el objeto de comprender el proceso de comunicación y la producción de información nueva proveniente de la palabra escrita, se analizará la estrategia discursiva de descripción y la noción de pre-constructos culturales (Grize 1990). Así mismo, se analizará cómo -dentro de la narrativa- funcionan como un medio para construir el discurso de la frontera, permitiendo al lector entender el conocimiento, las nociones, los deseos y las opiniones del sujeto en relación con su sentido colectivo de identidad.

Los tipos de estrategias discursivas que sobresalen en estas autobiografías de la frontera pueden ser situadas dentro de lo que Yuri Lotman (1984, 1990) llama “semiosfera”. Se dará atención especial a lo que puede ser denominado discurso de la frontera. Éste involucra la estrategia narrativa de descripción como la base para comprender el discurso que se enfoca tanto en uno mismo como en la restauración colectiva de la identidad.
The present discussion involves a detailed comparative analysis of texts created by two Mexican American women: Jovita González’s “Early Life and Education” and Cleofás Jaramillo’s *Romance of a Little Village Girl*. I am particularly interested in examining the use of narrative discourse evident within these texts which I define as border autobiographies or narratives which represent an alternative system of knowledge that does not conform to the generic laws of the dominant literary system of the United States. The border autobiography occupies a position outside of the dominant literary “repertoire” because it does not fit the traditional definition of autobiography; that is, the author, narrator and protagonist very often are not one and the same. These narratives also represent a type of memory that is situated in a semiotic system that involves not only the representation of the autobiographical “I,” but also of the collective “we;” that is, the subject matter of the life story refers to land and home, as well as family, the cultural “other,” education, and certain cultural practices that contribute to the formation of the *habitus* of a particular geographical space. The narratives of both González and Jaramillo, then, focus on an autobiographical “I” who situates herself as part of a larger group with a specific cultural memory.

The importance of the border autobiography has much to do with recollections that are valuable in terms of the recovery of personal histories which contribute to the broadening of a public history that historically has been responsible for silencing, or marginalizing personal recollection, especially that concerned with minority groups. The border autobiography, therefore, is a historical document with deep symbolic and cultural value. As such, it is concerned with the diachronic and synchronic implications of trans-cultural memory which involves self and collective representation, as well as the use of the discursive strategies of narration and description as the basis for presenting socio-cultural practices and those principles responsible for generating such practices. Just as the border autobiography provides a narrative based on the semiotic space of two cultures, it also involves a type of border discourse that neither fits the traditional limits of non-fiction nor does it conform to notions of historical writing.

The narratives created by González and Jaramillo are of interest because they present the reader with heterogeneous life stories. Each
text presents various layers of meaning, the first of which has to do with narrative discourse that is concerned with the autobiographical “I,” and the symbolic spaces she occupies during her life course. However, the border autobiography not only presents a life story through the voice of the autobiographical “I,” rather, at another level we find that the life story is concerned with the autobiographer in relation to a cultural collectivity. This level of meaning can be understood through an interpretation of narrative discourse that focuses on family genealogy, education, religious, and cultural practice.

Key to understanding the narrative text is an analysis of the types of discourse that conform it. As suggested by Sara Mills “the term ‘discourse’ has become common currency in a variety of disciplines” (1) where it is used in the analysis of the literary text. Mills presents a detailed study of the way in which this term has been used by various authors, among them Benveniste and Foucault. For Benveniste discourse should be understood as “every utterance [that] assumes a speaker and a hearer, and in the speaker, the intention of influencing the other in some way” (208). Each of the two authors considered here, either explicitly or implicitly, has a specific audience in mind as she writes. Her text may at once be directed to those who are closest to her or those who have little knowledge of Mexican American history and cultural practice; she also seems to be addressing those readers, who like herself, have experienced the constraints of traditional roles assigned to women.

In its simplest sense discourse is conversation, or information; however, as suggested by Foucault, discourse can be defined as “the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements” (Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge 80). It is through the regulating practices of discourse (through knowledge) that we become who we are, and it is through ‘discursive formations’ that certain already established identities or subjectivities are reinforced. Of interest then is the “general domain of statements” regarding the life story of the female subject that are made evident in the border autobiographies of Jovita González and Cleofas Jaramillo.

The autobiographer narrates her life story, first of all, through the narrative discourse that is produced by the act of telling within the
text, especially in terms of the symbolic spaces in which she develops and which give coherence to her life story. A pertinent question at this point is concerned with how we are to understand the concept of “autobiographical subject.” As Mills has noted, many Poststructuralists, have “move[d] away from the notion of the Cartesian subject, the subject whose existence depends on its ability to see itself as unique and as self-contained, distinct from others, because it can think and reason” (30). They focus instead on the “subject-in-process or the subject-in-crisis” rather than the unified subject.

Like Foucault who asserts that discourse produces the subject (“The Order of Discourse” 62-66), Barthes notes that the subject can be defined as an “effect of language.” He also argues that “all those outside power are obliged to steal language” (Roland Barthes 79, 167). The Mexican American women writers considered here, for example, represent the voice of the cultural “other” situated outside of power as a subject whose roles have been culturally assigned to her. Indeed, the observations of Geneviève Fraisse in “A Philosophical History of Sexual Differences,” focus on the traditional role of women [which] has been one of “marital dependency and subordination to the preservation of the species” (51). In general, then, the traditional role of women was confined to that of obedient daughter, and then as wife and mother. This assigning of roles corresponds to what Foucault has determined as discursive or “tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations” (The History of Sexuality Volume I 101-102). Of importance, then, is the way each autobiographer uses language as a means of responding to these assigned roles.

With these ideas as background, the focus of my analysis involves an examination of the narrative discourse evident in the texts of González and Jaramillo, particularly in terms of the way the autobiographical “I,” as a “subject-in-process,” presents her life course. I will be most interested in looking at the way the autobiographer expresses herself from an assumed or appropriated type of discourse that has to do with those “force relations” that have historically situated her in the traditional roles of daughter, wife, and mother as well as her subjected position within the space of the home where the male figure takes on a dominant position.

Although the recovered autobiography of Jovita González (1904-
1983), who writes from the geographical space of Texas, is only five pages in length, it is an important document in its own right, especially in terms of how it informs *Dew on the Thorn* and relates to the other texts included in this study. González divides her autobiography into two segments: “Early Life” and “Education.” The autobiographical narrator begins the chronology of her text by emphasizing her place of birth: “I was born in Roma, Texas.” However, although the narrative begins with the autobiographical “I,” and although this section is entitled “Early Life,” the reader immediately encounters a discrepancy or anachrony in the chronology of narrative events. That is, through retroversion the narrator subordinates her past history to that of an account of the life of her father, her grandparents, her mother and a cousin of her father. This is further evident as the narration continues with a reference to the autobiographer’s father “Jacobo González Rodríguez a native of Cadereyta, Nuevo León México, [who] came from a family of educators and artisans” (ix). Thus, from the very beginning of the narration the autobiographer takes on the function of informing the reader about data concerned with her family rather than simply focusing on self.

Later in this narration of the life course which focuses on family history is interrupted as the narrating “I” switches to a segment which involves a reference concerned with “the girls” who occupy a symbolic space reserved for women:

What about the girls? They were taught at home. We were fortunate to have with us, at intervals, Mamá Tulitas, our paternal grandmother. She brought to us fantastic tales from medieval Spain. Before our eyes passed Christian damsels wooed by Moorish Knights. Crusaders fighting for the Holy Sepulchre, the Cid receiving his spurs from *la infanta* doña Urraca, the unfortunate Delgadina “*que paseaba de la sala a la cocina*”, as she was followed by her infamous suitor. Perhaps more important was the Mexican version of Cinderella which we loved (x).

Here the narrator creates the context of what is considered to be a female space which revolved around Spanish tales told by the paternal grandmother. These stories focus on a Catholic Spanish past which is transferred to the border space of Texas where the narrator’s family has historical roots.3 Careful attention to the semantics of this reference
points to a group, “the girls” who are signaled at first by the pronoun “they”. Initially, then, it seems that autobiographical González did not form part of that group until she uses words such as “we,” “us,” and “our” which ultimately signal her inclusion in this space.

The second narrative segment of this real-life chronotope is organized around life events involving a threshold in the autobiographical subject’s path toward education. She refers to her experiences first in San Antonio, Rio Grande City, the University of Texas at Austin, then the border areas of Webb, Zapata, and Starr counties where she conducted research; she then refers to her life as the wife of Edmund E. Mireles in Del Rio and Corpus Christi, Texas. What stands out in this section of the narrative is the repetitive use of the autobiographical “I” which takes on a more assertive tone. For example, it is important to note that within less than three pages of the narrative, there are numerous references to self, all of which have to do with a move away from the space of the father’s home, where girls were educated in appropriate female activities, to a new space which emphasizes autobiographer’s work as a teacher, writer and researcher.

Here the narrative “I” as focalizer presents her personal history of life successes, as a ‘subject-in-process’. Interestingly, the use of “I” occurs eight times in the first section of the autobiography, whereas in this second section, the use of “I” occurs thirty-six times as the narrator refers to herself and her achievements. The narrating “I” begins this section by telling how she first had to learn English to be able to attend school in San Antonio: “With the aid of a dictionary and my father’s constant help, I was able to be promoted at the end of the school year” and “by attending summer school I finished the equivalent of the high school course when I was eighteen” (xi-xii). This emphasis on the “I” and her more assertive role is further evident in references to her work and successes in research and higher education: “I went to Rio Grande City […] I was given a position at the city schools. Since I lived with my uncle and aunt, I saved all my money […] that went to my college fund” (xii).

The narrative chronology continues with further recounting of personal successes. For example the autobiographer notes that, “[T]he following fall I enrolled in the University of Texas” (xii). Following this information we find a series of references to her achievements that
involved teaching; however, the climax to this development is evident in her explanation of a later experience: “The summer of 1925 brought me a far reaching experience. I met J. Frank Dobie” (xii). Because Dobie was a folklorist, she suggests that he confirmed her own prior sense of the importance of the legends and stories of the Texas borderlands. She then notes, “he made me see their importance and encouraged me to write them, which I did, publishing some in the *Folk-Lore Publications* and *Southwest Review*” (xii). This history of personal success continues: “I was awarded the Lapham Scholarship to advance further research along the border and to study for my M.A. […] As a result of the thesis [I wrote], and again through the recommendation of J. Frank Dobie, I was awarded a Rockefeller grant in 1934” (xi-xiii).

This list of actions and achievements of the narrating “I” is significant because it clarifies this “far reaching experience” which suggests a female subject who has moved from the private home space reserved for female activity to the public space of research, writing, and publishing, activities normally reserved for men during this historical time period. This segment stands in contrast to the first part of the narrative as the narrating “I” uses the autobiographical mode as a means of celebrating her own emancipation from a space or ‘field of force relations’ which limited her intellectual potential.

The brief final segment of the autobiography refers to another change in life circumstances, that is, the narrator’s marriage to Edmundo E. Mireles. The chronology of this section points to a change in the use of “I” which becomes a “we” as the narrating “I” refers to her life in a space dominated by her husband. Here she recounts how she collaborated with her husband in organizing a Spanish Program for elementary school and the writing of two sets of textbooks that were used to teach Spanish at the elementary school level in Texas. The narrative comes to an abrupt end as the narrator states, “[u]ntil my retirement I taught Spanish and Texas History at W.B. High School in *Corpus Christi*. We have been happy” (xiii). Of particular significance here is the editorial comment by José Limón with regard to this final information. Limón notes:

> What she does not tell us in her autobiography is that in 1938-1939, while they were contemplating the move to *Corpus Christi*, she explored the possibilities of further graduate study toward a Ph.D. at Stanford,
California, California-Berkeley or the University of New Mexico, but following what were likely complicated marital negotiations, she decided to go with him to Corpus Christi (xxiv).

The implication of the final “We have been happy,” together with the comment by Limón, is that the narrating “I” expresses the reality of a female subject in relation to others. The “I” makes a choice which situates her as part of a relationship, the marital “we.” Indeed, as suggested by Chodorow, the masculine personality “comes to be defined more in terms of denial of relation and connection (and denial of femininity), whereas feminine personality comes to include a fundamental definition of self in relationship” (169). It is precisely the female “I” in relation to contingent others that marks each section of this autobiography. In the first section we see the autobiographical subject surrounded by ethnic history and immersed in traditional Mexican family life, a symbolic space dominated by the father as head of the household. The second segment presents the outstanding achievements of the “I”, yet the narrator consistently refers to the help she received from her father, her grandfather, her uncle, Frank Dobie and Archbishop Droessars and Bishop Capers, all of whom she notes contributed to aiding and opening doors for her studies and work. Although she expresses her achievements, she assumes a discourse related to the limitations placed on women, especially as they attempt to move beyond the space of the family. The third section makes no explicit reference to her husband helping her, but rather focuses on a collaborative effort in the area of education, as she refers to “[m]y husband and I.”

As Limón has suggested, there is really nothing that would make the reader doubt the word of the autobiographer, but it is the “cultural imperative” of marriage that makes us question the sincerity of the words, “We have been happy.” The answer perhaps can be found in the major narrative of *Dew on the Thorn* which presents the romantic love relation between Carlos and Rosita who like the autobiographer of “Early Life…” is immersed in the space of the father’s house where his word is law. Rosita and Carlos are in love, but because of a misunderstanding Carlos is disgraced and Rosita is forbidden to consider him as a possible husband. Rosita obeys her father’s orders, yet because this narrative is nostalgically romantic, the two lovers are finally reunited after Carlos’
reputation is cleared. Thus, the narrating “I,” like Rosita, follows the traditional path of womanhood, that of marriage with its promise of happiness.

Like Jovita González, Cleofas M. Jaramillo (1878-1956) re-creates a life course from childhood to adulthood in what can be considered as a personal history that is situated in New Mexico, yet both the chronos and the topos evoke an ancestral history as well. Because this text is much more extensive than the one created by González, in addition to the narrator’s life story, the narration also includes insertions of historical elements and digressions that involve descriptions of land and home. The autobiographical narrator begins her account by focusing on the historical past of her family. The chronology of first two chapters of the narrative move from the spaces of Old Spain to New Spain and there is an emphasis on the past of “the Spanish race” with mention of Columbus, “[i]ntrepid Cortez, Coronado and Oñate and brave De Vargas and many other explorers and colonizers [who] followed after” (1). Here the narrative emphasizes how these early colonizers and then the missionaries “helped carry the faith and culture of old Spain into these remote worlds” (2).

The narrator re-creates her own life story within the context of a larger narrative that points to Spain as the starting point of what would become a way of life of the Nuevo Mexicanos. A sense of connection to the identity of these early settlers is expressed by the narrator as she mentions “some of my ancestors, the Luceros, descendants of Pedro de Godoy, settled the little valley of Ojo Caliente, which had already been discovered by Sosa and by Cabeza de Baca” (3). It is through linguistic markers such as “my ancestors” that the autobiographical narrator immediately situates herself with those contingent others who left “the comforts of their European abodes to come into this wilderness” (4). In addition to the Luceros the narrator makes specific reference to other kinsmen such as her great-grandfather, Don Manuel Martinez and her grandfather, Vicente who would buy part of the lands of Arroyo Hondo where eventually the narrator’s “parents lived and raised their family of five boys and two girls” (4). It is here that the autobiographer clearly assumes a discourse that declares the rights of the Spaniards to settle this land which was already inhabited.

This historical retroversion, and the specific references to the
narrator’s “ancestors” that makes up the first section of the narrative is similar to references concerned with the collective history evident in the text created by González. Each of the autobiographical narrators has chosen to refer to family history as it relates to a particular topos, one that is closely linked to the sense of identity of the narrating “I” and her family ties to a particular geographical space in New Spain. In both instances the autobiographical “I” clearly asserts her authority as a writer as she tells the reader that she and her ancestors are “of” this land and therefore have a more thorough knowledge of the way of life that corresponds to this space which pertains to those of Hispanic descent, and not the Anglos such as J. Frank Dobie, Mary Austin and Mabel Dodge Luhan,7 who were merely extranjeros who wrote about the land, its peoples and customs.

The initial chronology of family history is interrupted as the narrator digresses into references to the independence of Mexico from Spain which resulted in “the last phase of Spanish rule” as this territory came under “the stars and stripes of the United States” (69). Temporally, the first segment of the narrative begins as “the country had adjusted itself to the new changes” (10) and the autobiographical “I” situates herself in an idyllic setting:

I can still see myself, like a wild bird set free of a cage, running from one berry bush to another, filling my little play bucket, my heart beating with delight at the sight of beautiful mariposa lilies, blue bells, yellow daisies, feathery ferns—plucking some to trim the pretty sunbonnets mother made for me (10).

This focus on a romantic, ideal space is echoed in the way the narrator defines herself in relation to her family. She is the child of a man who “ran his combined dry goods and grocery store without help. He directed the work on his farms […] he raised beef, sheep, pork and race horses […] He read his Bible and kept in it a record of the births and deaths of members of his family” (11). Her mother’s activities consisted in “raising her family of five boys and two girls” and she “made her babies’ layettes by hand” (11, 13).

In contrast to the initial portions of the text, it is in the final segment of the narrative that a crucial change in life circumstances of the
autobiographical “I” becomes evident, and it is within this segment, after the death of the narrator’s husband, that we discover the voice of a more outspoken woman. This autonomy is at first muted as the narrator notes that at her husband’s death “I felt something rush into my hand. Was this undescrivable thing something of my husband’s spirit that passed into me, through my hand? Was this what gave me the courage and strength needed?” (128). Like the narrator of “Early Life….” who attributes much of her success to others, especially male figures who helped open doors for her academic and writing activities, this autobiographical “I” also attributes her strength to her husband.

In this section of the narrative we also find an autobiographical “I” who takes on a different role within this new space, one that is outside the space of the father’s and the husband’s home. Her new life situation requires that she function as an autonomous person. This is no longer a narrative which focuses on the autobiographer’s role as wife, mother and homemaker. Rather this segment of the chronotope involves the life course of a woman who, although she at one time thought of herself as not being sufficiently intelligent, is forced to take on the task of sorting out the debts left by her husband. This woman, who had spent nine years in a secluded convent school and who had studied only one business course, demonstrates her capacity to settle her husband’s estate. Indeed, when she receives notice of “a carload of farm machinery” addressed to her husband Ven, she explains “[t]here was not time to lose.”

The narration continues with an emphasis on the narrating “I” and her capacity for intelligent action:

I immediately addressed the cards to farmers who lived in the near villages, giving them a list of the farm machines and setting the price five dollars cheaper […] I not only sold the new ones, but also sold all the old discarded ones under the shed […] I cleared for the estate three thousand dollars, adding the cash from the crops Sofio harvested that fall (132).

This passage stands because we no longer detect the romantic voice evident in the first segment of the narrative. Indeed, as she situates herself in the autonomous space of this final section of the autobiographical
chronotope, we find a voice of self assertion. Within the space of four pages she highlights activities in which she had to clear pending bills left by her husband, undertake the sale of an apartment house, rent out a room in her Santa Fe house, as well as take care of a country house and attend to the problem of renting farms. She then notes that during the depression following World War I, the mortgage on these properties was foreclosed and “[m]y last thread of hope in saving a home for my daughter broke, after nine years of hard work trying to save something” (137). An important question at this point is: Who is the autobiographical subject that stands out at the end of the text? I suggest that the voice of the autobiographical “I” is no longer a timid one; she no longer inhabits the confines of a domesticating space. Instead we perceive the voice of a woman who comes into her own sense of capability, her own sense of selfhood as she survives the death of her husband and later the death of her daughter Angelina.

The final segment of the narrative focuses on a space where the autobiographical “I” is alone after the death of her daughter Angelina who was brutally murdered. A chapter entitled “A Night of Horror” that recounts this “ghastly” event and the trial that followed is inserted in the text. Ultimately the narrator continues her life story as she focuses on how she began anew after these extreme life crises. It is also within this portion of the text that we find the celebration of a newly defined autobiographical subject who continues work on a manuscript she had started years earlier. This was a manuscript encouraged initially by her daughter, a manuscript for “this new generation [that] knew nothing of our interesting old customs” (167). She mentions the texts that result from her effort: Spanish Fairy Tales which consisted of “twenty-six stories translated into English and published in book form” (167), as well as a cook book entitled The Genuine New Mexico Tasty Recipes. The narrator notes that after writing these books “I now felt so encouraged that I completed the writing of my book on folklore, Shadows of the Past” (168).

By choosing to write these texts, the autobiographical “I” ultimately occupies a space that had initially been reserved for Anglos. Her attitude toward this project is tentative at first as she notes “I had the material, but like a builder without experience, did not know how to put it together” (168). She comments further on the Western universities.
who were not willing to publish her text. Her response to this is strong and clear: “I decided to have it published by a small private press here in my city” (168). Here we find a subject who assumes an authoritative stance, a subject who has progressed from a situation of timidity and silence to one in which she makes her voice heard within her city. She finally becomes keenly aware of her achievements as she notes, “I feel that I have accomplished at least one thing—preserved in writing our rapidly vanishing New Mexico Spanish folk customs” (168).

The final symbolic space of the chronotope involves an autobiographical “I” who takes further action as she organizes “our Santa Fe Fiesta” and then founds the Sociedad Folklórica which she tells the reader “brought me a feeling of considerable satisfaction because it has awakened much interest among our Spanish population in learning and appreciating our old traditions” (183). Although the action is taken by the individual “I,” the contingent others or members of the Hispanic community are also evident in references such as “our population” and “our traditions.” Yes, the narrator has to an extent put aside her muted voice, and taken on the voice of an autonomous, authoritative “I.” Yet this autonomous “I” is still situated in relation to other members of the community and she continues to operate within a specific cultural space as she focuses on the life and customs of the Nuevo Mexicanos, thus writing herself and her people into history.

In conclusion, it is important to note that both texts examined here provide us with interesting chronotopes that point to the development of the autobiographical subject during different temporalities and spaces. There are several questions that arise at this point. In what way does the subject speak in each of these texts and how does she manipulate the “I” in different spaces? What identities does she embrace and which are refused? In both “Early Life and Education” and Romance of a Little Village Girl, we find that it is the woman’s body that determines her initial assignment to a domesticating space. González presents the reader with an “I” who as a child seemingly enjoyed listening to stories such as La Influencia de la Mujer which narrated the lives of strong women. In her later life, away from the home, the narrator presents herself as a woman who acts rather than simply listening; that is, she achieves a position as an accomplished researcher and writer and she also becomes a woman who earns a master’s degree during a period
when few women entered the area of higher education. The narrator of *Romance* concentrates most of her narrative on her development in the traditional spaces of the father’s and then the husband’s home. However, it is during the space of widowhood that she narrates the development of an “I” that moves out of the social roles defined for her as she comes into her own as a writer and founder of the *Sociedad Folklórica*.

As Nancy Miller has noted, women authors often place themselves within a “female plot” which is defined as “that organization of narrative event which delimits a heroine’s psychological, moral, and social development within a sexual fate.” Miller sees this fate as the woman’s “obligatory insertion within the institutions which in society and in fiction name her—marriage, for example” (125). Both “Education and Early Life” and *Romance* demonstrate this ‘obligatory insertion’ into the confines of marriage. However, as I have argued, each of these narrators goes beyond those limits by giving voice to her own sense of autonomy as she reassembles her life experiences into a story which speaks of her development into selfhood, one that includes activities or actions that allow her to assume positions that are often outside of what is expected of a woman in the traditional Mexican American household at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century.

**Notes**

1. Here I am referring to Pierre Bourdieu’s *The Logic of Practice* in which he presents the notion of *habitus* which acts as “a system of cognitive and motivating structures”. *Habitus* from this perspective refers to those “schemes of perception and appreciation through which [motivating structures] are apprehended” (52-65). An analysis and application of *habitus* as evidenced in the four texts of the corpus of this investigation forms part of the content of Chapter 4.

2. My use of the notion of assumed or appropriated discourse is based on Foucault’s “The Order of Discourse” in which he discusses “societies of discourse” which “function to preserve or produce discourses” and which demonstrate “forms of appropriation” of certain doctrines, truths, or rules that underlie validated discourses.

3. It is important to note that the “fantastic tales” about *la infanta* doña Urraca, and Delgadina referred to by the autobiographer point to stories concerned
with women as objects of a phallocentric system. Urraca is a key player in the fighting that took place between Alfonso and Sancho over the lands they had inherited from their father, Alfonso I. Although Fernando I divided his kingdom between Sancho, Alfonso and the Infante García, Sancho as the eldest son, deemed himself the legitimate heir to León, Castilla and Galicia. Fighting over these lands between Sancho and Alfonso took place, and Alfonso, in an attempt to limit Castillian expansion, gave his sister Urraca the area of Zamora. As the story goes, Urraca received these lands as payment for certain sexual favors bestowed upon her brother. Ultimately, however, after the death of Sancho, Doña Urraca cedes control of Zamora to her brother Alfonso who unified the kingdom parcellled out by Fernando I. Of importance here is Urraca’s use of her body to gain favor and the reward of land at a time when women were prohibited from governing. Ultimately, however, even her body will fail her as she is forced to cede control of Zamora to her brother. “Delgadina,” one of the most widely known romances in the Spanish language, involves a crude theme regarding the obsessive sexual harassment of an abusive paternal hierarch intent on raping his daughter. Both of these themes, loss of land and excessive paternal strength are critiqued in *Dew on the Thorn*.

4Limón’s comment is based on correspondence in the E.E. Mireles and Jovita González de Mireles Papers, Special Collections & Archives, Texas A & M University-Corpus Christi Bell Library.

5Again, my emphasis here is on narrative rather than descriptive discourse of aspects such as land and home.

6In her introduction to *Romance* Tey Diana Rebolledo uses the term Nuevo Mexicanos to refer to the people of New Mexico and she uses the term “Hispano” to refer to Jaramillo’s perspective concerning this particular area of the Southwest.


8It is important to note that *Shadows of the Past/Sombras del Pasado* was originally published by Ancient City Press in 1941 and reprinted in 1971. *The Genuine New Mexico Tasty Recipes* text was originally published by Seton
Village Press in 1942 and then reprinted in 1982 by Ancient City Press. *Cuentos del Hogar (Spanish Fairy Tales)* was published in El Campo, Texas by Citizen Press in 1939.

**Bibliography**


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