

THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET:  
TALES OF GROWING UP FEMALE AND HISPANIC

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## ABSTRACT

Sandra Cisneros' "The House on Mango Street" is a woman's Bildungsroman tempered by the realities of working class Hispanic life. The narrative of Esperanza is a feminist tract of sexual awakening, sisterhood and Chicana identity, and the dreams and aspirations of a young artist at odds with family and cultural traditions. Cisneros' text is a search for a Woolfian "room of one's own" -- an experience unique to women made more unique by its cultural implications.

The House on Mango Street:  
Tales of Growing Up Female and Hispanic

In world literature, the recollection and the retelling of growing up experiences are canonical. Originating essentially in the late 18th century European literary tradition, a narrative of development, formation, and achievement of adult life was delineated from a mature perspective that retold those childhood and adolescence experiences. This particular form of the narrative mode has been especially studied in the English literary scene from Dickens to Golding,<sup>1</sup> captured in the French "educational" novel in the Rousseau manner, and --above all--given its name from a German tradition that spans from Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre to Thomas Mann's Buddenbrooks, in their depiction of personality development within bourgeois society. Hence, the word Bildungsroman which is generally used for the genre's definition and prescription of such a narrative.

In the Hispanic literary canon, the novela de aprendizaje o formación is recognized on both sides of the Atlantic. Having its antecedents in the narrative mode created by the picaresque subgenre, and the peculiar character development of its antihero, a modern reader can recognize many forms of growing-up tales in both Peninsular Spanish and Latin American productions that seem to follow the normative patterns of the Bildungsroman<sup>2</sup>, from the Mexican Periquillo Sarniento to the Argentine Don Segundo Sombra. In them, according to Jerome Buckley in his Season of Youth, "a child of some sensibility grows up in the country or in a provincial town, where he finds constraints, social and intellectual, placed upon the free imagination. His family, especially his father, proves doggedly hostile to his creative instincts or flights of fancy, antagonistic to his ambitions, and quite impervious to the new ideas he has gained from unprescribed reading. His first schooling, even if not totally inadequate, may be frustrating insofar

as it may suggest options not available to him in his present setting" (pp. 17-18). This canonical model cannot be applied exactly to some of the classic novels mentioned above, but even less to more recent forms of literary expression, such as Chicano narrative or the so-called "women's novel."

Among the new productions, nevertheless, one finds certain characteristics that, by virtue of their repeated appearance, can begin to point to a common ground for recognition and critical study. In ethnic literary texts published in the United States, and especially those dealing with the Hispanic experience (for example, Rudolfo Anaya and Tomás Rivera among the Chicanos, and Piri Thomas among the Nuyorricans), the cultural environment that shapes adolescence--whether rural or urban--has engaged the male experience in narrative texts since the mid-sixties. As it develops, however, the U.S. Hispanic literature that deals with tales and experiences of growing up is not exclusively represented in the novel, but has taken diverse shapes, in the form of short stories and even poems. Recent illustrations are found in the writings of Helen Maria Viramontes and Gary Soto. This is why Bildungs "tale" is perhaps a better way to designate such works, since the term does not specifically preclude a narrative mode built around the form of a poetical text or a short narration.

The best known examples of "Bildungs" texts in Chicano literature are those that deal with "young boys growing into manhood or self knowledge,"<sup>3</sup> and retain some of the features of the canonical prescription: the hero a) learns through different experiences (peers, elders, school, books); b) encounters conflict, generated by the clash between his "new" world and traditional views; c) reaches a moment of epiphany, in which he discovers who he is, and d) at the end of the work achieves integration of his own self as consciousness and as a social being.<sup>4</sup>

The process is best achieved within the confines of a longer work,

such as . . . Y no se lo tragó la tierra, but it can be partially presented in shorter texts. Indeed, the Chicano Bildungstale seems to have developed a variation of its own, in which a long text is made up of vignettes unified by means of a central character, ususally --but not exclusively--a first person narrator. These vignettes can be read as individual stories on their own, or together as a single text: such is the case of not only Rivera's well known book, but of Sandra Cisneros' The House on Mango Street.

In addition to forming part of an established Chicano literary modality, or stories of growing up, Cisneros' book is related to another paradigm: the woman's Bildungsroman or tale. In the wider Hispanic context, critics have pointed out the differences encountered in this sub-generic form: for example, Gabriela Mora studies what she calls the female Bildungsroman in the Spanish American tradition through the novels of Colombian Albalucía Angel,<sup>5</sup> and Grínor Rojo analyzes the contrasting forms found in stories by the Puerto Rican Rosario Ferré.<sup>6</sup> Apart from the obvious lack of a male protagonist, the woman's Bildungstale is usually one in which a young girl faces opposition, from family and cultural traditions, to her independence, whether it be in educational, sexual, or occupational terms. The mother figure is usually very strong, and the father can either be absent or of secondary importance; the authority and wisdom of grandmothers is evident on such narratives, and abuelitas are frequently--as in the poetry of Chicana writers--objects of reverence, admiration, and love, for they exemplify the good qualities of the culture.

One characteristic that the female Bildungstale has in common with the canonical form is the aspiration of the young girl to become an artist, whether it be a writer or a dancer or a musician. But her dreams are thwarted and her options remain the traditional ones: conform, be married, become a wife and mother. If in the European form the young protagonist

also rejected the models proposed by older generations, but finally--at the end of the novel--he is integrated into society, in the female version of the *Bildungstale* the young woman breaks with the norm: she either escapes, dies, or the narrative ends openly, without the reader receiving a clear picture of what her ultimate destiny will be. In some of the best examples, such as Rosario Ferré's La bella durmiente, the female hero is confronted with a disjunction between convention and freedom, ordinariness or creativity, the old versus the new, middle class values versus revolutionary mores.

In some of the most recent Chicana *Bildungstales*, such as Helen Maria Viramontes' The Moths and Other Stories and Sandra Cisneros' The House on Mango Street, a young adolescent girl confronts a reality different to that faced by her brothers. She grows up with a strong tendency to imitate older female authority figures, loving and warm, such as the grandmother; the mother figure is contradictory, at times positive and at other times inflexibly rigid in her insistence on material values. While the young protagonist yearns for a life of beauty and freedom, her brothers and sisters, and usually an absent father, are alien to her aspirations, or at best, they do not understand her. In The House on Mango Street, young Esperanza aspires to have a space of her own, a "real" house; but her family can only afford that ugly, small red one which even the nuns at her school find inadequate as lodging. Then again, other kids at the parochial school can afford to eat at the cafeteria; but Esperanza, the child-heroine, has to go home for lunch and, at best, sometimes stay behind and eat a cold rice sandwich.<sup>7</sup>

The cultural reality of the barrio is very different for an adolescent woman; while the male cultural models present a double imagery of tired working men or flashy, street-wise "dudes," young girls like Esperanza and her friends are still considered to be objects of conquest. And she

watches her Puerto Rican friend, Marin, portray a cool, savvy young woman:

. . . Marin lights a cigarette and it doesn't matter if it's cold out or if the radio doesn't work or if we've got nothing to say to each other. What matters, Marin says, is for the boys to see us and for us to see the boys. And since Marin's skirts are shorter and since her eyes are pretty, and since Marin is already older than us in many ways, the boys that do pass say stupid things like I am in love with those two green apples you call eyes, give them to me why don't you . . . . ("Marin," p. 28)

But there is also the other face of the coin. Familial and cultural values are everpresent in the young girl's life, where the extended family, and religious and social customs, play an important role. For Esperanza, the mother is a pivotal figure and the source of support and influence. Such a female role model offers a sharp contrast to the girls the protagonist faces every day on Mango Street:

It's me--Mama, Mama said. I open up and she's there with bags and big boxes, the new clothes, and yes, she's got the socks and a new slip with a little rose on it and a pink and white striped dress. What about the shoes? I forgot. Too late now. I'm tired. Whew! Six thirty already and my little cousin's baptism is over. All day waiting, the door locked, don't open for nobody, and I don't til Mama gets back and buys everything except the shoes. Now Uncle Nacho is coming in his car and we have to hurry to get to Precious Blood Church quick because that's where the baptism party is, in the basement rented for today for dancing and tamales and everyone's kids running all over the place. ("Chanclas," p. 45)

Other female figures are also positive and beneficial influences on the young protagonist, especially close friends but particularly sisters with whom Esperanza can feel totally at home: they might look very different, but they have a common background and they can communicate without words. These family ties and influences are cultural realities for the U.S. Hispanic, who places special importance on blood relatives, and values their closeness and like-thinking. For the Chicana writer, the depiction of these figures, who form an integral part of her family nucleus, are central to characterization in *Bildungstales*, whether it be in short stories or poems; good illustrations are the poems of Alma Villanueva, Margarita Cota Cárdenas, Inés Hernández Tovar, and Lorna Dee Cervantes, and the short

stories of Gina Valdés and Denise Chávez. In The House on Mango Street, sister Nenny--who is not even a best friend--is a very young person with close ties to Esperanza, if only because of blood and familiarity:

Nenny and I don't look like sisters . . . not right away. Not the way you can tell with Rachel and Lucy who have the same fat popsicle lips like everybody else in their family. But me and Nenny, we are more alike than you would know . . . . One day we were passing a house that looked, in my mind, like houses I had seen in Mexico. I don't know why . . . I'm not even sure why I thought it, but it seemed to feel right. Look at that house, I said, it looks like Mexico. Rachel and Lucy look at me like I'm crazy, but before they can let out a laugh, Nenny says: Yes, that's Mexico all right. That's what I was thinking exactly. ("Laughter," p. 19)

Realities of working class Hispanics are present on Mango Street, but also --and very importantly--there is a consciousness of the subculture, based on the dominant ideology's definitions of race and color. The familiarity of the known, and the stupidity of those who fear the unknown--a root cause of prejudice--are very clear in the inner monologues of Esperanza. A sensitive young girl, wise beyond her years, she observes the surfaces but understands the deep structures of the society that surrounds her. In this sense, obviously, the Chicana Bildungstale is far from conforming to the canonical substance and form: no middle class environment, no ruling class mores . . . rather, the stark truth about life in a Hispanic ghetto in the United States.

Those who don't know any better come into our neighborhood scared. They think we're dangerous. They think we will attack them with shiny knives. They are stupid people who are lost and got here by mistake. But we aren't afraid . . . . All brown all around, we are safe. But watch us drive into a neighborhood of another color and our knees go shakity-shake and our car windows get rolled up tight and our eyes look straight. Yeah. That is how it goes and goes. ("Those Who Don't," p. 29)

Roots that go back to poor, first generation immigrants, and the bicultural realities of bilingual people are well captured in The House on Mango Street. Humor plays an important part in the portrayal of characters, but it is a humor laced with a bittersweet sense of frustrated

lives, of those who must wait for nothing and who do not want to keep memories of an uprooted past. In the vignette "No Speak English," the everyday struggle of recent immigrants is portrayed, as well as their alienation in the midst of a foreign society. Jokes and bilingual plays on words are intermingled with the sadness of a life of routine work, and even deprivation.

Mamacita is the big mama of the man across the street, third-floor front. Rachel says her name ought to be Mamasota, but I think that's mean . . . .

Somebody says because she's too fat, somebody because of the three flights of stairs, but I believe she doesn't come out because she's afraid to speak English, and maybe this is so since she only knows eight words. She knows to say: "He not here" for when the landlord comes, "No speak English" if anybody else comes, and "holy smokes" . . . .

My father says when he came to this country he ate ham and eggs for three months. Breakfast, lunch and dinner. Ham and eggs. That was the only words he knew. He doesn't eat ham and eggs anymore. (pp. 73-74)

In the character formation of Esperanza, these bilingual and bicultural experiences shape a considerable part of what she is, what she will be one day. The always tired father (seldom called "Papa," except when in the binomial "Mama and Papa") who, usually taciturn, has revealed the funny-serious incidents of first arrival in the strange country; the fat lady, daily sitting by the Spanish-broadcasting radio while crying for her lost home in the country she left behind; her sister and neighbors, watchful witnesses of adaptation or isolation in the working class Hispanic barrio of a big city; the struggle to survive, to eat, to pay the rent, to communicate in the midst of silence and misunderstanding: all of these experiences are not, indeed, traits that can be said to form part of the canonical form of the Bildungstale. In the U.S. Hispanic context, however, scenes of such daily life are commonplace.

The tragedy of language loss in children, by now a common occurrence in

Chicano narrative and poetry (as well as in Nuyorrican literature)<sup>8</sup>, is also contemplated in The House on Mango Street. In the same vignette cited above, there are several humorous yet ironic allusions to this problem. The fat lady in pink--shades of a Fellini movie--sings out her homesickness, her anguish, her estrangement from people who speak in foreign sounds, flat metallic sounds. And increasingly, her own child is breaking away from the "mother" tongue (here in a very literal sense), following the allure of consumerism and of the commercial world of publicity, which in the form of business advertising penetrates the walls of the third floor apartment on Mango Street:

Cuándo, cuándo, cuándo? she asks.  
Ay, caray! We are home. This is home. Here I am and here I stay. Speak English. Speak English. Christ!  
Ay! Mamacita, who does not belong, every once in a while lets out a cry, hysterical, high, as if he had torn the only skinny thread that kept her alive, the only road out to that country.  
And then to break her heart forever, the baby boy who has begun to talk, starts to sing the Pepsi commercial he heard on T.V.  
No speak English, she says to the child who is singing in the language that sounds like tin. No speak English, no speak English, and bubbles into tears. (p. 75)

These are the urban experiences that are lived by children in an immigrant, ethnic neighborhood, the experiences that shape their development into adults and that configure a pattern of learning outside the confines of schools. Esperanza, from her own window, has a vantage point from which she observes the street below and the houses across. Her experiences are not constrained to her own circle of acquaintances, to the inner responses that she produces in answer to family happenings, to friends that play with her, to teachers, to strange boys and men that walk past her on Mango Street. As a first generation born Mexican American girl, presumably living in a Chicago barrio (these are the indications given in the text), her contact with the world also includes a growing awareness of her differences: she is not like others she meets at school, she is not the same color as her teachers, and yet she can feel at home on

the street where people are like her, where she understands the two languages they speak, the plight of their struggle.

Esperanza also goes through the feelings of sexual curiosity and awakening that are common to the *Bildungsroman*s. Sometimes these experiences take the form of innocent children's conversations and games, where girls talk about the "givens" of life as they have observed it to be. Our protagonist is older than others, and thus knows more about "scientific" truth: the role of women in life, can it be only to develop a body that will have children? As they jump rope on the street, friends and sister give their observations on what "hips" are meant to be in a woman:

They're good for holding a baby when you're cooking, Rachel says turning the jump rope a little quicker. She has no imagination. You need them to dance, says Lucy.

If you don't get them you may turn into a man. Nenny says this and she believes it. She is this way because of her age . . . . But most important, hips are scientific, I say repeating what Alicia already told me. It's the bones that let you know which skeleton was a man's when it was a man and which a woman's. They bloom like roses, I continue because it's obvious I'm the only one that can speak with any authority; I have science on my side. The bones just one day open. Just like that. One day you might decide to have kids, and then where are you going to put them? ("Hips," pp. 47-48)

Esperanza is the thinking-one, the truth-holder, the gatherer of facts. She listens to older girls and then passes on her knowledge to her younger friends and sister. In reflecting about her own words, she keeps on observing females; their bodies, the way they act, the cultural adornments that their families give them. And in doing so, she meditates on growing up, on becoming more than bones, more than skin, more than earrings, more than games. The rhythm of the jump ropes serves as a meditation device, the swishing sound of cord against cement, of children's voices singing about hips and women and boys and lips puts her in her usual reflective mood. She is the gatherer of experience that she will later want to put into written words, on a page:

When the two arcs open wide like jaws Nenny jumps in across from me, the rope tick-ticking, the little gold earrings our mama gave her for her First Holy Communion bouncing. She is the color of a bar of naphtha laundry soap, she is like the little brown piece left at the end of the wash, the hard little bone, my sister. (p. 49)

An integral part of the canonical Bildungsroman was the episode of sexual initiation. In the female version of the genre, this is no less important. As it was for the male hero, such an episode is usually surrounded by stealth, aggressiveness, social pressure, and intense curiosity combined with anxiety. The woman's viewpoint, as expressed in the Spanish American Bildungsroman, is--as to be expected--quite different from that of the male. In the contemporary mode, both perspectives have continued to make the first sexual encounter a forbidden one; but in the case of the young girl or adolescent, there is also usually a violation of will, a painful and yet wanted experience; the feeling of having been deceived, yet sometimes accompanied by pleasure; a feeling of emptiness that accompanies the-moment-after, and the worrisome sensation of sinful guilt; at times, the nausea of physical pain combined with fear.<sup>9</sup> The House on Mango Street offers an even more disturbing variation on the female version of first sex: the often hushed-up episode of sexual molestation of a young girl.

Although conned into feeling that she "wanted it," Esperanza also feels betrayed and violated. Her friends and the cultural myths of love and passion have deceived her. "All the books and magazines" have told her lies, as well as Sally from Mango Street. It was only dirty sensations and sour smell, in a sad episode which takes place at the amusement park. An unknown man, presumably Anglo, does away with her romantic notions of "what it would be like." All that is left for Esperanza and her first encounter with sexual passion is a feeling of disgust and deceit.

Sally, you lied. It wasn't what you said at all. What he did. Where he touched me. I didn't want it, Sally. The way they did it, the way it's supposed to be, all the storybooks and movies, why did you lie to me? . . . .

Sally, make him stop. I couldn't make them go away. I couldn't do anything but cry. I don't remember. It was dark. I don't remember. I don't remember. Please don't make me tell it all. Why did you leave me alone? I waited my whole life. You are a liar. They all lied. All the books and magazines, everything that told it wrong. Only his dirty fingernails against my skin, only his sour smell again. The moon that watched. The tilt-a-whirl. The red clowns laughing their thick-tongue laugh . . . . Their high black gym shoes ran. Sally, you lied, you lied. He wouldn't let me go. He said I love you, I love you, Spanish girl. (pp. 93-94)

This a unique moment in the *Bildungstale*, only possible within the parameters of a female worldview. For the young protagonist, this sexual episode also has added racial connotations: white boys that go out at night to "make out" with Hispanic girls from the barrios, to deceive them into "love," to exploit their dreams, to rape them out of fantasies in an act of sexual and cultural pillage.

In this manner, The House on Mango Street shows itself as a feminist tract. The female protagonist conforms to what society has shown her to be expected, what the dominant mass culture has dictated; but she rebels, she repudiates the norm, she --in her young mind-- filters out the false from the authentic, the artificial and "commercial" from the truly human. In the vignette entitled "Beautiful and Cruel," Esperanza wages a battle against conventions on female behavior. She is not the beautiful princess, as in fairy tales, and she does not believe either in the trap of "escaping" by teenage pregnancy. She knows better than to follow such a supposedly easy way; she will fight, and she will be strong. Esperanza will not behave like a regular woman:

I am an ugly daughter. I am the one nobody comes for. Nenny says she won't wait her whole life for a husband to come and get her, that Minerva's sister left her mother's house by having a baby, but she doesn't want to go that way either. She wants things all her own, to pick and choose. Nenny has pretty eyes and it's easy to talk that way if you are pretty . . . . I have begun my own quiet war. Simple. Sure. I am the one who leaves the table like a man, without putting back the chair or picking up the plate. (p. 82)

The mother figure is an interesting one in this tale of growing up.

Her role as a nurturer becomes routine, and she gladly accepts it, as Hispanic women in her generation have done year after year. But she also had dreams of creativity; of singing, of becoming her own person, of having access to a good education, a better chance to grow and do. Mama still reminisces about her adolescence and her dreams; and in doing that, she becomes her own daughter's teacher about female life, about the dreary and dependent existence of women in the barrio subculture. Poverty keeps them down; lack of knowledge keeps them in the ghetto:

She borrows opera records from the public library and sings with velvety lungs powerful as morning glories . . . . Today while cooking oatmeal she is Madame Butterfly until she sighs and points the wooden spoon at me. I could've been somebody, you know? Esperanza, you go to school. Study hard. That Madame Butterfly was a fool. She stirs the oatmeal. Look at my comadres. She means Izaura whose husband left and Yolanda whose husband is dead. Got to take care all your own, she says shaking her head . . . . Then out of nowhere: Shame is a bad thing, you know. It keeps you down. You want to know why I quit school? Because I didn't have nice clothes. No clothes, but I had brains . . . Yup, she says disgusted, stirring again. I was a smart cookie then.  
("A Smart Cookie," pp. 83-84)

At the end, Esperanza will be different because of her dreams of becoming a writer. Her fantasies of having a house to herself echo the Woolfian "room of one's own" condition for women's creativity to bloom. Social and economic independence are needed, but also a solitary space where nobody, not even a man --especially not a man--will interfere with creation. No chores to be done for anybody else; just her own inner life and the texts to be birthed:

Not a man's house. Not a daddy's. A house all my own. With my porch and my pillow, my pretty purple petunias. My books and my stories. My two shoes waiting beside the bed. Nobody to shake a stick at. Nobody's garbage to pick up after. Only a house quiet as snow, a space for myself to go, clean as paper before the poem.  
("A House of My Own," p. 100)

This is the true self of the young girl emerging, longing for a life that will be devoted to creation. In her fantasies, the house on Mango Street has become a house of her own to grow in, to bloom in, in unison

with her petunias.<sup>10</sup>

And then there is the soul sister, the kindred spirit: another girl on Mango Street who wants to write, but who is trapped in an unhappy and shaky marriage. Wife beating and abuse are the sad topics for the vignette "Minerva Writes Poems;" Esperanza is her confidante, a child counselor to another adolescent who is not much older than she, and yet has two children. Minerva is "unlucky," with the lack of fortune of a teenage mother who has an unfaithful, cruel, abusing, often absent husband; and such is the lot of her family ("Her mother raised her kids alone and it looks like her daughters will go that way too.") The sorry state of welfare mothers, and their unending cycle of hopeless liaisons, is hinted at, although not made explicit. And to think that Minerva is fired with creativity and inspiration! The narrator on Mango Street feels powerless to help:

Minerva cries because her luck is unlucky. Every night and every day. And prays. But when the kids are asleep after she's fed them their pancake dinner, she writes poems on little pieces of paper that she folds over and over and holds in her hands a long time, little pieces of paper that smell like a dime. She lets me read her poems. I let her read mine. She is always like a house on fire--always something wrong. She has many troubles but the big one is her husband who left and keeps leaving . . . . One night she is through and lets him know enough is enough. Out the door he goes . . . . Next week she comes over black and blue and asks what can she do? Minerva. I don't know which way she'll go. There is nothing I can do. (p. 80)

As in other female Bildungstales, though, the young protagonist of The House On Mango Street sees a way out; her destiny will not be like Mama's, or Marin's, or Minerva's. She breaks away from the established pattern, chooses rupture rather than continuity. At the end of the narrative Esperanza wants to leave the neighborhood, and wonders what the neighbors will say when she leaves "with all those books and paper;" but secretly knows in her own heart that she will come back "for the ones she left behind." This is one trait in which the Hispanic female Bildungstale, as it develops in the United States ethnic literature, differs from her Spanish

American counterpart: there is a coming home to the barrio, back to the roots. The young female hero harbors compassion and love for the ones whose escape is not possible.

They will not know I have gone away to come back. For the ones I left behind. For the ones who cannot get out. ("Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes," p. 102)

Sandra Cisneros' text, or collection of texts, speaks to the differences of growing up as a member of Hispanic minorities in the North American social milieu. But the text also speaks to the marked differences existing between its female perspective and that of the Chicano male narrative. Cisneros draws upon the subtext of similarity for Hispanic childhood and adolescence in the urban barrios of the U.S.: Chicago, Los Angeles, New York. A rich panoply of voices and images are present in these vignette-like stories (or minichapters) about the growing up experiences of Esperanza, a symbolic name--"hope"--both for herself and for her ethnic culture. Following on the tradition of urban accounts of male adolescents, the street and family education received by the Chicana female is one embroidered with the cultural uniqueness of Hispanics; but at the same time, as pointed out in the preceding pages, it reflects a "feminine" world vision, full of the singularities of that specific woman subculture.

The House on Mango Street is, then, an innovative Chicano and feminist text, in which images and voices reveal a female consciousness of great sensitivity and a writer of decidedly superior talent. In the continuing development of the U.S. Hispanic Bildungstale, and in the context of women's literature, this well-crafted and meaningful piece of Chicana writing is bound to become a classic in years to come.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See Jerome Hamilton Buckley, Season of Youth, The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1974). Subsequent references are made with respect to the same edition.

<sup>2</sup>The controversy goes on about the best term to define the genre. The Entwicklungsroman (highlighting development) is the one preferred by some feminist critics, such as Annis Pratt (see her Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction, Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1981).

<sup>3</sup>Erlinda González-Berry and Tey Diana Rebolledo, "Growing Up Chicano: Tomás Rivera and Sandra Cisneros," International Studies in Honor of Tomás Rivera, Revista Chicano-Riqueña, 13:3-4 (1985), 109. I thank Diana Rebolledo, my collaborator on the project on "Chicana Discourse on Identity," for a copy of her manuscript. We are both grateful to the National Endowment for the Humanities for its funding of our research on the subject, and to the Southwest Institute for Research on Women for its continuing support.

<sup>4</sup>These reflect my own modifications and/or additions to what Diana Rebolledo lists as characteristics in her article with González-Berry.

<sup>5</sup>In "El bildungsroman[sic] y la experiencia latinoamericana: La pájara pinta de Albalucía Angel," La sartén por el mango (encuentro de escritoras latinoamericanas), Patricia Elena González and Eliana Ortega, eds. (San Juan: Ediciones Huracan, 1984), 71-81.

<sup>6</sup>In "Los cachorros, de Mario Vargas Llosa, y La bella durmiente, de Rosario Ferre: nota sobre la inversión de una estructura," paper read at the 12th annual meeting of the Latin American Studies Association, Albuquerque, New Mexico, April 1985. I am indebted to the author for having provided me with a copy of his paper, and for the insightful theoretical observations he makes in it about the Bildungsroman and its new modalities

vis-à-vis the canonical models.

<sup>7</sup>Sandra Cisneros, The House on Mango Street (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1983). All references to the book are taken from the same edition, and pagination is indicated in the body of this paper as appropriate.

<sup>8</sup>Good illustrations of this appear in the works of Lorna Dee Cervantes and Miguel Algarín (see my article "Hispanic Literature in the United States: Self-Image and Conflict," in International Studies in Honor of Tomás Rivera [special issue of Revista Chicano-Riqueña, 13:3-4 (1985) pp. 173-192]).

<sup>9</sup>See Gabriela Mora's article quoted above, p. 77.

<sup>10</sup>Diana Rebolledo sees the house on Mango Street as a symbol of consciousness, as "collective memory, as archetypal labyrinth, as a nourishing structure within which . . . the child comes into a sense of her own being" (op. cit., p. 114).