

Explorations in Sights and Sounds

(Ohiyesa) alone makes *Indian Heroes and Great Chieftains* compelling reading for anyone interested in the dramatic changes challenging

A Santee, Eastman was separated from his family in the aftermath of the 1862 Dakota/White conflict in Minnesota. Later, after education at Dartmouth College, he became the government physician at the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Many of the men included in this work were personal friends of Eastman and offered personal recollections of their lives.

Eastman's purpose in writing *Indian Heroes and Great Chieftains* was to correct popular misconceptions regarding American Indian people and their leaders that were widespread among the public. By so doing he believed "that the American people will do them tardy justice" (1). The result of his efforts is a curious mix of sympathetic portrayals on the humanity of these great Americans combined with, what would be considered by today's standards, whimsical ethnocentrism. For instance, Eastman concludes his chapter on the controversial Lakota Spotted Tail by stating: "Such was the end of the man (Spotted Tail) who may justly be called the Pontiac of the west. He possessed a remarkable mind and extraordinary foresight for an untutored savage; yet he is the only one of our great men to be remembered with more honour by the white man, perhaps, than by his own people" (40-41).

Indian Heroes and Great Chieftains is written in extremely readable prose and makes for entertaining reading. The accounts of the personal lives of these nineteenth-century American Indian leaders offer insights seldom available in later biographies. Anyone interested in a "period piece" of American Indian literature/biographies will find this book worthwhile reading.

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Juan Flores. *Divided Borders: Essays on Puerto Rican Identity.* (Houston, TX: Arte Público Press, 1993).

Juan Flores makes an important contribution to the literature on the Puerto Rican experience with his new book, *Divided Borders: Essays on Puerto Rican Identity*. The essays are exemplary of a serious exploration of the Puerto Rican identity as it has been defined and portrayed by a variety of writers, popular movements, and social movements.

The first essay offers a critical analysis of the historian Antonio S. Pedreira's *Insularismo: Ensayos de interpretacion*

puertorriqueña, a classic published in 1934. Flores places Pedreira's contributions to Puerto Rican identity in the context of the historical and literary period in which *Insularismo* was written. In addition, Flores provides the reader with insight into the ideological perspectives of the *historican* as well as providing an excellent eco-political framework to assist in critical analysis.

Flores credits Pedreira as the first established intellectual to study and document Puerto Rican identity and culture as an issue of national interest. Moreover, Flores offers a much needed challenge to Pedreira's writings by submitting a thorough and critical reassessment and dialectic analysis based on more recent paradigms and emerging evaluations of national identity, particularly under a changing cultural history because of the colonial influence of the United States on Puerto Rico and the massive migration of Puerto Ricans to the United States of America.

Flores uses an analysis based on historical materialism and offers a systematic study of the importance of economic production and selected historical events that formed the basis for the survival of the Puerto Rican national identity in spite of colonialism by Spain and later by the United States. The value of this essay lies on Flores' thorough exploration of Pedreira's contradictory paradigm where he attributes Puerto Rican national identity, that is, of the masses, to a socially generic victimization of the individual while attempting to offer an analysis on national forms of resistance to colonial oppression from both Spain and the United States. Flores discusses the conflicts inherent in Pedreira's victim blaming assertion of the Puerto Rican individual and the concept of inherent inferiority of the indigenous and African population.

The separation made between culture and national ideology from the question of political and economic status under United States colonialism is an important one. It serves to prove the serious dilemma of Puerto Rican identity that Flores traces through the subsequent chapters of his book.

In 1980, José Luis González published *El país de los cuatro pisos*. According to Flores, González' essay is in the 1980s what Pedreira's *Insularismo* was in the 1930s. The issue of national identity is once again highlighted; however, González' work is embedded in a broad historical perspective that delineates stages of Puerto Rican cultural and national formation resulting from United States political and economic global domination, colonialism in the island and the impact of racism, ethnocentrism and economic exploitation of the Puerto Rican worker in the United States, and the creation of a lumpenized class.

González traces Puerto Rico's history by using as symbol a

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four floor building. The first floor represents Spain's four centuries of colonial rule and slavery. The second offers trends and bearings of the immigration of Europeans and South Americans. A third floor symbolizes the United States invasion and domination of the Island after 1898, and the fourth represents the present era, which has its roots in the economic development plan of the 1940s and the "Free and Associated State." According to Flores, González' analysis of the significance of the popular masses, particularly those of African origin in the formation of Puerto Rico's national and cultural identity, is his major contribution. He also focuses on the racial, ethnic, class, and regional differences in the Island based on dominant and marginalized population groups.

Flores provides insight into González' theory of the tremendous impact of the African population on the Puerto Rican economy and, thus, the national culture. He explores this subject by studying the contributions of other authors, such as Luis Palés Matos, Tomás Blanco, Ramón Romeroa Rosa, as well as the prominence of "la plena" in popular music.

Flores gives tribute to the influence of class and race as significant factors in the analysis of social hierarchy and economic stratification of Puerto Rico's society. He also offers a critical account of history by surpassing narrowly prescribed Marxist paradigms. For example, Flores argues that the case of Puerto Rico merits particular attention because of the complex interwoven ethnic, racial, and class realities of this national identity. He suggests an analysis that addresses the dynamic socio-economic interactions that explain diverse images and realities based on "ethnic layering" and "topology" of the Puerto Rican. He also moves on to suggest that the cultural process and formation of the Puerto Rican identity does not stop with the migration of thousands of Puerto Ricans to the United States. A valuable contribution to his work, one which he expands on in subsequent chapters, is what he defines as the "dynamic osmosis" that takes a new meaning and definition as the Puerto Rican cultural and national identity continues as a visible influence in American urban centers.

La Charca, Zeno Gandia's novel, was written in the early 1890s after the period of the "terrible year" (1887) which was characterized by economic depression and political regression. The the social conditions of the time, such as rural isolation and class exploitation by the colonial coffee-land owner elite. Flores challenges the ideological undertone, similar to that found in Pedreira's writings in which the underclass is portrayed through the filter of a paternalistic ideology of ethnic determinism. This problem, Flores contends, is not only a reflection of the historical period in which the novel was written, with political repression serving as a mechanism

novel represents an aspect of the Puerto Rican economy, particularly the coffee-growing regions where the peasantry bore the burdens of literary control, but it is also indicative of the literary mode of the time. Authors like Zeno Gandia and Alejandro Tapia y Rivera exemplified a distinctive Puerto Rican, nineteenth century literary form that ranged from romanticism to realism and naturalism.

The popular music of "la plena" forms the basis for Flores' essay "Bumbun and the beginning of Plena music." The beginning of la plena as popular music signals a twenty-five year era in Puerto Rico's sugar cane regions and its peasantry. Born in La Joya del Castillo in the city of Ponce, this form of music is founded in the Afro-Caribbean influence. Most of the credit for this musical expression goes to the legendary Joselino "Bumbun" Oppenheimer, a Black Puerto Rican plantation worker. Between 1925 and 1950 la plena ascended to national visibility and became an important vehicle for oral history and cultural transition among the working rural and urban poor. Flores merges concepts of music expressions and traditions of the period with literature and history in an extraordinary composition of the realities of working-class life and Afro-Caribbean influence on the cultural life of the nation. This influence was transported by thousands of Puerto Rican migrant workers to the urban centers of the United States during the late 1920s and 1930s.

Flores' essay on the contribution of Rafael Cortijo to musical expressions sets the tone for an exploration of the linkages that exist between cultural expressions of the marginalized classes, particularly the African of Puerto Rico, and the formation of a national identity, both in the island and in the United States. This essay exposes manifestations of racism and classism in Puerto Rico by lifting a veil showing Euro-hispanic-centered arrogance of those in power, around what seems to constitute folklore, cultivated expressions and national artistic forms. Flores offers an excellent critical analysis by tapping into a series of historical events in recent years around the creation of a national space for the legacy of Rafael Cortijo. The resistance to open this space highlights a larger problem of national significance. It speaks to the ideological and political boundaries that have divided the question of national culture between the popular African-based traditions of the culture and the Euro-hispanic-centric privileged elite. Flores proposes a discussion where both elements, the popular, African component and the elite and folkloric components befriend each other and find a common bridge in the exploration of national culture and identity.

The value of Flores' work in this essay lies in his evaluation of the concept of cultural borders. Basing his work on recent Chicano authors like Guillermo Gomez-Pena and Gloria Anzaldúa, Flores examines the concept of infusion, interfacing, and celebration of

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multi-culturalism around the paradigm of social group membership and diversity in the Puerto Rican society, and their influence on each other.

The separation between the ruling elite and the popular masses takes center stage as thousands of Puerto Rican workers migrate to the United States. An excellent analysis on the colonial resistance movement and social movements of the 1950s of the island are presented. Flores highlights the United States' influence on the island's economic development policies, elections for the governor, and the initiatives that were developed to promote working class migration to the United States.

These very important events changed the social-economic and political facade of Puerto Rico. Flores describes the resistance and nationalist movements that spawned workers organizations and political parties. Pressure to emigrate was, however, often the only alternative to escape hunger and poverty. *Las Memorias de Bernardo Vega*, edited by Cesar Andreu Igleias, offers an excellent example of forced migration. Bernardo Vega was a socialist leader of the 1900s who, along with thousands of Puerto Ricans, migrated to the United States. In New York he lived his cultural heritage in an environment ravaged by poverty, racism and ethnocentrism, and where he was victimized by capitalist exploitation and national repression.

A major contribution of Flores' work is the illumination of the ideological contradictions and struggles of working class men, like Bernardo Vega, and the intellectual and political elite. The contributions of Jose De Diego, an intellectual and politician who was considered by many to be a renowned national leader, are presented as evidence of these contradictions.

A very important part of Puerto Rico's history is presented as Flores traces the historical roots of the Free and Associated State period where during Operation Bootstrap, along with the era of Munoz, came a new paradigm to understand national identity. Clearly, the continual shift of political and economic events towards colonizing the island and integrating it into the global economy of capitalism through the repatriating of profit by the United States leaves an imprint on the lives of the marginalized population. The national dilemma around issues of acculturation, assimilation, and resistance to cultural genocide of the Puerto Rican takes center stage in Flores' analysis. This colonial dilemma around the preservation of the national culture versus the genocidal culture continues to be examined by Flores in the last part of his book with an examination of Puerto Rican literature produced in the United States.

During the 1960s Nuyorican literary expression begun to emerge as part of a new ethnic expression with authors like Pedro Pietri and Piri Thomas in the 1960s, and Tato Laviera in the 1970s.

This literary movement gives voice to a population unique in its cultural identity and in its class and socio-linguistic reality. The conditions of urban Puerto Rican working class and lumpenized populations are given form through their own voices. These new forms of literary expression describe the oppression of Nuyoricans in the United States and also in the island. The harsh realities of living in the borders as marginalized social groups and the complex bilingual contradictions faced by this population group reveal the birth of this distinct literary form. Flores offers an excellent segment on the various personalities and stages that follow different periods in the development of this unique literary expression. While it is primarily based on the New York experience, the author contends that it reflects the realities of Puerto Ricans in other urban American centers.

One of Flores' most valuable contributions is his analysis of the historical, economic, political, and geographical borders which form the basis for the complex cultural identity of the Puerto Rican of the United States. Living in two cultures and using two languages, English and Spanish, has offered a transformation of the unique characteristics of Puerto Rican identity. To Flores the act of pluralism and uniqueness of the Puerto Rican cultural identity is an act of self-determination, self-affirmation, and a strategic manifestation of resistance to both Euro-hispanic elitism and United States colonial assimilation.

Flores' final essay, "Living Borders/Buscando America: Language of Latino Self-Formation," pulls together a series of considerations on the concept of multi-culturalism or what goes under the name of "new social movements." Flores contends that the new social movement of today offers a more promising space to Latino identity than other ethnicity theories such as the "melting pot of the early twentieth century" and the "new ethnicity" of the 1950s and 1960s. However, Flores seems to contradict himself when addressing the notion of how the new social movement, which includes social group memberships of gender, race, religion, and sexual orientation, do not fully encompass class struggle. Also unclear is his examination of the concepts of "private" sphere and "public" sphere. The apparent confusion in this last essay seems to be located in the distinctions that this author makes between the idea of "Latino identity" and that of other social group membership (i.e. women, gays, etc.). The lack of clarity over these two ideas may serve to foster interpretations based on hierarchies of oppression. One weak area in Flores' work is a lack of in-depth exploration of these other social group memberships as they relate to issues of Puerto Rican cultural identity. For example, in the few occasions in which Flores presents any discussion on the relevance of gender in literature (i.e., *La Charca*), the discussion is very broad, with little significance given to problems that the

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patriarchal cultural orientation, machismo, as well as Marianismo, pose to the question of national identity. At times a few names of women authors are included without an expansive analysis on a much needed “women identified” contribution to Puerto Rican literature, music, and other forms of cultural expression. The same could be said about the issues of gay and lesbian identity. While it is commendable that this author has moved beyond typical heterosexist notions of identity and has made an attempt to be inclusive to other oppressed population groups, such as gays and lesbians, his work is primarily based on the contributions of heterosexual, male authors, historians, and musicians, or around literature and musical lyrics that are male centered. The importance of women’s contributions to the national culture, identity, and history remains, once again, on the periphery.

In summary, Juan Flores makes a major contribution to the concept of Puerto Rican identity. His analysis of national cultures is well grounded in a strong knowledge base of the history of Puerto Rico told not from the victor’s perspective but rather from the marginalized classes. The Puerto Ricans of today, both in the island and in the United States, are without a doubt a population group which reflects the multiple realities of racial, ethnic, political, economic, and sexual realities. It is a population that has learned to survive, resist, and struggle for self-determination and self-affirmation. In the United States, Puerto Ricans have also participated in the transformations of the United States society. While the colonial relationship of Puerto Rico continues to persist, Puerto Ricans continue to protect their national identity by resisting assimilation, and developing new forms of expression and a social movement that requires that the United States open itself to the unique contributions and struggles of this national group.

Juan Flores’ book makes an important contribution to documenting our history as a nation that must be challenged to celebrate our indigenous and African heritage. Flores offers an in-depth presentation on the history of Puerto Rico by also presenting an outstanding documentation of the literary, musical, and linguistic expressions of the marginalized classes of both Puerto Rico and the United States. This book is an important asset for individuals interested in studying literature and the history of the Puerto Rican. It also makes a major contribution to interdisciplinary programs in Puerto Rican studies.

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