

### ***Explorations in Sights and Sounds***

two chapters are strong indictments for the study of Mexican American autobiography and a grounding of that study, the remaining four chapters attempt to group this vast amount of material into some sort of thematic structure. The amount of material, however, is just too overwhelming.

In spite of this, Padilla has given us an introduction to the world of Mexican American autobiography which begs to be studied. With each peek at the lives of these men and women who experienced the obliteration of their culture, the reader wants to learn more. With this book, Padilla encourages more students of Mexican American autobiography with the realization that there are many “truths” which have yet to be learned from these narratives.

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**Américo Paredes. *The Hammon and the Beans and Other Stories*. (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1994) 230 pp., \$9.95.**

Américo Paredes is a seminal figure in Mexican-American studies. Professor Emeritus of English and Anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin, he is best known for his work in folklore, principally *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero*. But after a distinguished career as teacher and scholar, he has turned in recent years to literature (mostly written years ago), with the publication of a novel (*George Washington Gómez*) in 1990 and a collection of poetry (*Between Two Worlds*) in 1991. The present accumulation of seventeen stories, combined with Paredes' novel and poetry, provide a clear and comprehensive literary view of Mexican-American life in Texas and elsewhere during the first half of the twentieth century. An excellent introduction by Ramón Saldívar presents a much-needed history of south Texas and the recurrent “border troubles” so that the reader can better comprehend the socio-cultural milieu which gave birth to the stories. In Saldívar's words, Paredes' collection represents brilliantly “the difficult dialectic between a Mexican past and an American future for the Texas Mexicans living on the border at the margin of modernity and modernization” (xvi). Saldívar also includes information about the author and the histories of many of the selections—where they were written, dates of composition, circumstances, etc. Most appear in print for the first time in a colorful and attractive volume with cover design by Mark Piñón.

The title story and several others focus on the racial tensions in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The young first-person narrator of

"The Hammon and the Beans" observes the activities of the occupying United States army and recounts the oral histories of the region, blending them with other historical events such as the activities of Francis Marion during the American Revolution. The tale ends on a note of sadness concerning the social situation of the region.

"Macaria's Daughter" treats machismo and death, while "Gringo," set during the U.S. Mexican War of 1845, again looks back on regional history. Death, religion, and faith play roles in "A Cold Night", a story written in the early 1940s as part of a collection entitled *Border Country*. A Cold Night was the winner of a 1952 contest sponsored by the *Dallas Times Herald*, and declared the best story submitted. The subject and tone are reminiscent of those found in ...y no se lo tragó la tierra [*And the Earth Did Not Part*], the landmark novel published by Tomás Rivera in 1971.

Seven of the selections were written when the author was in Japan and are set in Asia during World War II or the Korean Conflict of the early fifties, but they also deal with themes of race and conflict. As Saldívar points out, "what is at issue now is the global nature of the idioms of racism and their role in the construction of an American national subject, suggesting how expressive forms of race hate encountered on the border became imbricated with effects of colonialism and imperialism in Asia during World War II" (xxxiii).

As contemporary Chicano literature works at mining a rich but relatively obscure past, precious gems are bound to be encountered from time to time. *The Hammon and the Beans*, long dormant, is a fortuitous discovery for the student of Ethnic American Literature.

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**Jan Nederveen Pieterse. *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) 259 pp., \$35.00.**

*White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture*, by Jan Nederveen Pieterse, a Dutch social scientist, provides us with insightful thoughts about the ethnic conflict between the dominant Whites and the dominated Blacks.

The book has three parts, consisting of fifteen chapters. Part One deals with how Europeans and Americans see Africa and Blacks historically, such as Eurocentrism, savagery, slavery, colonialism, African apartheid, safari, and cannibalism. Part Two focuses on how Blacks were portrayed as servants, entertainers, and other stereotypical figures in Western popular cultures (including childrens books