

VOCES - WRITINGS BY NUEVO MEXICANOS

INTRODUCTION

It is a pleasure to introduce this collection of prose and poetry by contemporary writers from the Nuevo Mexicano community. In this book the reader will recognize the voices of familiar writers who are vital links in the oral and written traditions of the Nuevo Mexicano's literary history; writers such as Fray Angelico Chavez and Sabine Ulibarri. But if an anthology is to reflect a wide spectrum of a community's literary expression, it must also introduce to the public new and younger writers. It is gratifying to see a new generation of writers developing, and to have this opportunity to introduce them to the public.

It was also important to include in this anthology the works of Mexican writers who now live in New Mexico. They are a link to our Mexican heritage. The exchange of works between Mexicano and Nuevo Mexicano writers is a natural communication which must be reestablished.

Our colonial ancestors brought their way of life, their religion and their language up the Rio Grande Valley to establish the beginnings of Nuevo Mexicano culture over four hundred years ago. At that time the sound of the Spanish language began to penetrate the valleys and the peaks of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, and it was the daily as well as the poetic use of that language that sustained the Nuevo

Mexicano pueblos throughout their history.

The Native American pueblos were already settled along the Rio Grande. Their languages, too, were an integral part of the space which the Spanish speakers came to occupy. In the fields, in the daily life of the pueblos, in the kivas, their ways and languages were crucial to the spiritual relationship they had created with the earth and the cosmos. These different ways of life would come to be neighbors, but they would also have to answer important, historic questions: Could the different language groups share the common space? Would one group seek to impose its will and language on the other? The answers are part of our history.

The same questions preoccupy us today. We are a multi-cultural and multi-lingual region. The Anglo American arrived in the mid-nineteenth century, introducing a new language to our land. We learned to utilize and share the languages of Nuevo Mexico, even as we continued to preserve our distinct ways of life. The Nuevo Mexicano writers in this anthology use both Spanish and English in their stories and poems.

These writers, through their stories and poems, represent the artistic expression of their community. The voices heard in this book introduce new and exciting writers and their individual vision of life and literature; collectively, the writers introduce a new literary space which is communal. Our space is the space of the Nuevo Mexicano; we are the contemporary links of

a history which has been passed down to us by the cuentistas and poetas of the villages. We strengthen our communal space and our identity through our literature, our voces.

During my years as a writer, I have discovered that the most important artistic ability for a writer to identify is his most personal, intimate voice. That authentic voice of the narrator or the persona within us is the voice of the person who yearns to tell the stories or to sing the songs. In a community which values creativity, that voice is encouraged and nurtured. The Nuevo Mexicanos always appreciated their storytellers and the singers. The voice of the storyteller delighted and entertained, it also helped pass on history, values, traditions, ceremonies, and jokes as well as prayers. The voice had not only its most common, <sup>daily</sup>~~obedient~~ tasks to perform, it also performed the more special, sacred functions.

Our community is evolving, changing, exploring its potential. Crucial to the development of our destiny and the definition of that destiny, are the voices of the writers and poets. Thus it has been in all the cultures of the world. So for all of us I thank each writer represented here, for each has dared to find and <sup>R</sup>nature his creative voice. This book assures us that the poetic voice of the Nuevo Mexicanos is strong, authentic, vital, real.

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