ForeWord Reviews

Cantos de Adolescencia (Songs of Youth)
Americo Paredes
B. V. Olguin, translator
Omar Vasquez Barbosa, translator
Arte Publico Press
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Born of Mexican heritage in the border town of Brownsville, Texas, this self-proclaimed "Pocho" poet began his career by winning every literary contest available in his area. Since school only offered studies in English, his first poems were in that language, but before he was of legal age he had already developed a passionate pride in his Hispanic origin.

Translators Olguín and Barbosa have not only written an intensively-researched review of Paredes' life and *obra*, but have included clippings from *The Américo Paredes Papers*, archived in the University of Texas at Austin. The collection includes articles, letters, and critiques, plus juvenilia. These poems were written between 1932 and 1937.

To begin his introduction, Olguín quotes:

"¡Soy pocho! Dios me haga / orgullo de los pochos / así como los pochos son / mi orgullo. // Quisiera llegar a ser / el orgullo de los pochos. (I'm Pocho! May God make me / pride of the Pochos / just as Pochos are / my pride. // I would like to become / the pride of the Pochos.)" and continues:

> *When Américo Paredes wrote this short limerick in his mid-twenties, he could never have guessed that he not only would become the 'pride' of Mexican-Americans— the proverbial Pochos—but also a model for subsequent generations of Mexican—American and Chicana/o poets and artists.*

It's not necessary to read more than a few of Manzano's poems to realize that he was born with a perfect ear. In formal verse forms, his rhythms are impeccable and the rhymes never stretched or selected for sound value only, but fitting, as naturally as they would in a prose statement, into the theme. Whether in Spanish or English, in even his very early work, his unrhymed verse has its own structure—a cadence that faithfully reproduces the natural movements of spoken language.

The translators deserve praise for the notes following the poems, where every aspect of the translations that might be questioned is explained in terms of their wish to carry forward the central thrust of each poem, be it language, image, or meaning.

Sandy McKinney