AZTLÁN
Essays on the Chicano Homeland

Rudolfo A. Anaya
Francisco A. Lomelí

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Aztlán, Montezuma, and New Mexico: The Political Uses of American Indian Mythology

Ramón A. Gutiérrez

In 1885, William G. Ritch, then Secretary of the Territory of New Mexico and the recently elected president of the New Mexico Bureau of Immigration, issued a promotional book on the resources of New Mexico entitled *Aztlán: The History, Resources and Attractions of New Mexico,* which was meant to attract immigrants to the territory. *Aztlán* had a press run of 27,000 copies in 1885, but previous editions of the book, published under the title *Illustrated New Mexico*, brought the total close to 100,000 copies.[1]

Aztlán was a handsomely produced case-bound book. Its brown cloth cover was intricately embossed with a gold foil engraving of Montezuma, the Aztec emperor (Figure 1), holding a sceptor in one hand and a ceremonial staff in the other, seated on an eagle with outstretched wings. Below Montezuma was the North American continent with two cities prominently marked—Mexico and Santa Fe. Ritch began the very first line of text in his

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LEGEND OF MONTEZUMA.

Figure 1. Source: William G. Ritch, *Aztlán. The History, Resources and Attractions of New Mexico*, (Boston: D. Lothrop, 1885), p.4.

book by asking: "From whence came the tribes who founded and settled the City of Mexico?" "Aztlán," he answered. Ritch added that no one knew exactly where Aztlán actually was. Archaeologists had generally agreed that Aztlán was somewhere in Mexico's far north, "near the portion of New Mexico and Arizona bounded by the 35th and 37th parallel of latitude."[2] Ritch opined that this was probably the case. Otherwise, how could one explain the Pueblo Indian myths that told of Montezuma's life in New Mexico before he departed south to conquer the tribes of the Valley of Mexico?

The purpose of this essay is to explore why, in 1885, William G. Ritch wrote *Aztlán*. Why did he begin his promotional tract with the legend of Montezuma? What about this myth was particularly attractive to Anglo Americans contemplating a move to New Mexico? Why were parallels between the Aztec empire centered in Mexico City and the Pueblo Indians living near dusty Santa Fe being drawn in the promotional literature of the day? What fantasies of future development were being articulated in *Aztlán*? What does the publication of *Aztlán* tell us about the construction of myths and the political uses to which they are put?

These are the questions we will explore in this essay which is divided into three parts. In part one we will discuss the immediate history and politics of New Mexico that led to the creation of the territorial Bureau of Immigration in 1880, and particularly to the publication of *Aztlán* in 1885. In part two we will analyze the themes Ritch articulated in *Aztlán* to attract immigrants to New Mexico. Finally, in part three we will return to the "Legend of Montezuma" which was the centerpiece of Ritch's book, using it as a way of delving into the colonialist representations of New Mexico and its peoples that were being projected to the American reading public.

I. History

In 1850, only four years after territorial annexation by the United States, New Mexico had a population of roughly 60,000. Though the area was blessed with broad expanses of timber, arable land, sufficient water for irrigation, and abundant mineral deposits, these resources had remained largely unexploited. The only industries that had developed during Mexican rule were commercial livestock production destined for markets in

Chihuahua, Mexico, and St. Louis, Missouri, fledgling textile mills, and small-scale mining. Most of New Mexico's citizens supported themselves by working the land, raising enough for subsistence and trading whatever surplus they produced to merchants for luxury items.

The land on which Hispanos toiled was inequitably distributed. The *ricos*, as the "rich" or large landholders were called, enjoyed the life of a comfortable regional gentry, engaged in mercantile activity, and lived by exploiting their retainers, their poorer kin, and their share-croppers (*partidarios*). The majority of New Mexico's *pobres*, or land "poor" farmers, eked out a living by working their small private plots and by grazing their livestock on land held in common by their communities as *mercedes*, or land grants.[3] A burgeoning working class of men and women sold their labor to others as miners, field hands, laundresses, and muleteers. The Pueblo Indians lived on their ancestral lands, working much as most Hispanos did. And the few Anglo immigrants who had entered the area as settlers came as lawyers, land speculators, merchants, soldiers, or yeoman farmers.

Since the end of the United States-Mexican War and the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848, the fate of the newly acquired American territory of New Mexico had been one of the hottest topics of national politics. From 1848 until 1912, when New Mexico finally became a state, various interest groups in the territory lobbied the American Congress to get their vision of the area's future encoded in law. Whatever faction one supported, sympathized with, or opposed, the issues at stake were clear. Who would control the development of New Mexico's lands, and therby dictate how its mineral wealth would be mined, how and where livestock would range, how its lands would be farmed, and when and where railroad lines would be laid? The resolution of all of these issues hinged on one: How and when would New Mexico became a state?[4]

For New Mexico's native Hispanos, the politics of statehood were clear. The sooner New Mexico became a state the better. So long as they were the numerically predominant population in the territory, they would control their own destinies. New Mexico would continue as an official bilingual state. The divinity of God would be taught in Roman Catholic schools. The communal land grants, which over the centuries the Spanish kings and the Mexican government had given them, would be held sacred. The profits from mining coal, iron, and other precious metals would be

theirs. In short, there would be native home rule.[5]

The movement to delay statehood came primarily from Anglo settlers. They feared the creation of a state ruled and dominated by Hispanos. The anti-statists were a group composed of all those military officials, local prefects, lawyers, land speculators, and some Hispano allies to whom the territory had been administratively entrusted in 1846 after the Army of the West forcibly occupied New Mexico. This "territorial machine," as the historian Howard R. Lamar has called the coalition, wanted New Mexico to wait for its statehood until Americans were the numerically dominant group.[6]

Under Spanish, Mexican, and the early years of American rule, New Mexico had always been a marginal and insignificant area in national politics. The situation changed early in 1879 when the Santa Fe Railroad laid tracks across the territory. Instantly New Mexico was integrated into a complex transportation system leading to all the major manufacturing centers in the United States. Shortly thereafter the area's resources were made available to a larger market. With so much at stake, understandably, the statehood issue came to the fore again.

The Anglo proponents of statehood knew that they needed American immigrant bodies. But how could they attract others of their kind, given the fact that early Anglo travel accounts had depicted New Mexico as a wasteland inhabited by superstitious racial inferiors who lacked a strong work ethic?[7] Equally vexing, wrote Governor L. Bradford Prince in 1892, was the idea "prevalent outside of our own vicinity, that New Mexico is a land of dry and barren wastes, where there is little agriculture and no horticulture, where attempts at mining have been attended by failure and where nature had done almost nothing to attract or support a population."[8]

To create a new image for New Mexico, one which the territorial legislature hoped would attract American businessmen and farmers to the area, on February 15, 1880, the legislature created the New Mexico Bureau of Immigration. The Bureau's mission was "to prepare and disseminate accurate information as to the soil, climate, minerals, resources, production and business of New Mexico, with special reference to its opportunities for development, and the inducements and advantages which it presents to desirable immigration and for the investment of capital."[9] What was never mentioned in the Bureau's enabling legislation was the pivotal political role

it ultimately would play in the statehood movement. If Anglos were to wrest control over New Mexico from the native Hispano elites, American immigrants were needed. Without them, writes Herbert H. Lang, what was deemed "an underdeveloped community of shepherds and subsistence farmers...[could not] evolve into a thriving, viable state in the American Union."[10]

From 1880 to 1912, when the activities of the Bureau essentially ceased—statehood for New Mexico having been accomplished—the Bureau published and distributed 124 known titles, totalling some 500,000 items.[11] The most popular of these promotional publications was William G. Ritch's book, *Aztlán: The History, Resources and Attractions of New Mexico*.

II. Aztlán

The bulk of *Aztlán: The History, Resources and Attractions of New Mexico* was devoted to a glorious description of all the resources and opportunities that awaited American immigrants. William G. Ritch listed the territory's mineral wealth, directions for reaching the various mining camps, and the exact railroad connections for the exportation of raw materials to manufacturing centers. "Rich mines are found in almost every direction...our mountains contain illimitable treasures, in the shape of lead, iron, copper, silver, mica and gold, and in the near future this beautiful country is destined to be known as the true El Dorado."[12]

Ritch promised capitalists and prospectors superb profits in New Mexico. He cited the case of the Sierra Grande Mining Company, which had begun with a small $10,000 investment and in less than two years had profited 5,000 percent, "or an annual return of thirty-fold" [sic].[13] "Incredible as it may appear," continued Ritch, other activities would yield comparable rates of profit. Anyone raising heifers could expect to make an annual average interest return of 62 percent, on stock cattle 43 percent, and on sheep 80 percent.[14] Those who believed in Ritch's solemn pronouncement, "Wealth seeks investment where there is profit, and is unerring in its judgment as no other representative of human intelligence can be," would truly realize their dreams in New Mexico.[15]

In addition to profits, New Mexico had two other inimitable resources:

its climate and its people. New Mexico's high altitudes, its dry atmosphere, its equable temperatures, and its generous sunshine made it a place where one's investment could be made to work "the year round."[16] Diseases that plagued workers in industrial centers were absent here. One found little heart disease, nervous trouble, rheumatism, asthma, or venereal disease. In fact, numerous men who once had suffered from consumption had regained their health quickly on breathing Santa Fe's air.[17]

New Mexico's salubrious climate had promoted the growth of a docile and industrious labor force. "The masses of the people are simple in their tastes and habits, peaceable and law abiding," wrote Ritch. The natives were a well-disposed, patriotic, and liberty-loving people who had always expressed warmth and friendship toward American immigrants. Those heinous crimes and domestic disorders for which New Mexico had become known in the 1880s were not the work of long-time local residents, Ritch maintained, but the activity of desperadoes from other areas who had "infested the Territory."[18]

Ritch, as president of the Historical Society of New Mexico, followed his inventory of New Mexico's resources with a truncated history of the area. This history was little more than an apologia for New Mexico's territorial annexation in 1848, and a particularly poignant exemplar of the Positivism that then had gripped Western intellectual life. Glorifying order and progress, Ritch reiterated the evolutionist theory of historical development that Henry L. Morgan had expounded in *Ancient Society* and that had been widely popularized in New Mexico by Morgan's assistant, Adolph F. Bandelier, as the Archaeological Institute of America's chief archaeologist at their Pueblo excavations.[19] According to them, New Mexico's history had progressed through four stages of evolution, culminating in "the magnetic wand of steam and iron," (i.e., the railroad) breaking down "the barriers of mountains, and join[ing] New Mexico with the world."[20] The first "epoch" of this history had been the settlement of the country by the Pueblo Indians' ancestral kin. "They constituted a people possessing...**many** of the characteristics, environments and habits of civilization."[21] For centuries the Puebloans had lived with "simple tastes, fixed habits, and habitations." They had toiled industriously and providently. They had been ruled by law and had developed an elaborate religious system, which, however "heterodox and idolatrous," had been sincerely believed by the people.[22]

The second epoch of New Mexico history had begun in the 1540s with the Spanish explorations of Francisco Vásquez de Coronado and with the area's colonization in 1598. These were years of "(ir)responsibility and dense isolation," wrote Ritch, "halcyon days of pooling for the few in peonage, peculiar contracts and bedeviled land grants, and upon the inseparable dry-rot arising from a thousand miles of isolation for centuries, and the attending monopoly of class interest."[23] This isolation had "stifled genius and killed enterprise." Paraphrasing comments made by Tranquilino Luna, the New Mexican U.S. Congressional delegate, regarding the deleterious effects of isolation, Ritch exclaimed, "the wonder is not, that they did not advance, but that they survived."[24]

Ritch's litany of social handicaps created and exacerbated by centuries of Spanish occupation was but a pretext for him to express his anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic sentiments. A particularly loathsome legacy of this period, he claimed, was the "land grant incubus" that had stifled the territory's free growth. Modernization awaited, but that did not come until the end of New Mexico's third epoch, its period of Mexican rule.[25]

The fourth, and according to Ritch, "the last" epoch of history, was ushered in by the "advent of the ever restless and irresistible American, to whom has been reserved the gigantic task of developing the illimitable resources of this most wonderful country, and by whom, eventually, the entire universe will be enriched in a most material manner."[26] Ritch explained that General Stephen Watts Kearney and the Army of the West had taken Santa Fe in 1846 peacefully, without force. Kearney came "with **the white-winged messenger of peace**, notwithstanding that he bore the insignia of war, and issued...his proclamation of good will and occupation in the name of the republic, offering the protection of a strong government, with stability and liberty to all the people."[27] Liberty had unfurled her banner in New Mexico, bringing with her the right to freedom of the press, of speech, and of person.

From 1846 to the early 1880s, hundreds of American immigrants had entered New Mexico who were "intelligent, patriotic, energetic, economical, honest and orderly."[28] Ritch maintained that "where hostile Indians roved a few years since, are now found prosperous mining and live stock camps, and flourishing cities and towns, and **an enlightened and enterprising population**."[29] In a short time these Americans had vastly improved the

situation of the natives, bringing new ideas and new methods. They had advanced commerce, developed the mines, planted improved crops, and established public schools, all hallmarks of liberal progress.[30]

As an immigrant promotional tract, *Aztlán* was explicitly aimed at attracting "honest, industrious, and thrifty" men who were not afraid of hard work. Any person who was intelligent and had a small amount of capital, promised Ritch, could "become independent if not wealthy. There are many industries for him to take hold of."[31] For professional men, such as lawyers and doctors, there were many opportunities for them "*on top of the ladder*." But if there were "not prepared to take their place *at the top*, it would have been better for them to have staid away."[32]

Men of means were important to New Mexico's economic development. But to prosper and to gain membership in the American union, the territory also had to attract yeoman farmers. As late as 1880, only nine percent of New Mexico's population had been born in the States. By this date too, only eighty-nine persons had requested public domain lands under the Homestead Act.[33] Thus much was made in *Aztlán* of the bountiful land to be had for a pittance in New Mexico.

Idyllic fertile valleys and grass-covered ranges awaited farmers willing to leave the Midwest, the South, and Northeast. Health, wealth, and happiness awaited them. Ritch told the yeomanry that their presence in New Mexico would be a civilizing agent. They would "plant free schools, conscience and toleration...[and] cultivate manly self-reliance and a healthy public sentiment."[34] For much of New Mexico's land was mired in Spanish and Mexican land grants, a system of communal landholding that "excluded the poor from the possession of landed property, and cursed so many countries."[35] If New Mexico was to prosper, individual will and initiative had to triumph. "Success or failure necessarily rests with the individual," wrote Ritch, and not with the moribund ideals of communalism.[36]

III. The Legend of Montezuma

Since so much of the message contained in the pages of *Aztlán* was a veneration of individualism, self-reliance, and the poor immigrant's dream of going from rags to riches, we return to the "Legend of Montezuma" we briefly mentioned earlier to see these same themes expressed, albeit in more

disguised mythic form. In the opening pages of *Aztlán*, Ritch warned his readers that what he was presenting as a coherent Montezuma legend had in fact been "gathered from various sources and connected."[37] Ritch said that the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and Arizona then believed that the great chief and emperor Montezuma had been born at the pueblo of Santa Fe[38] to a young virgin to whom the Great Spirit had given three pine nuts. The maiden ate one of the nuts and from it she conceived and bore a son named Montezuma. As a youth, Montezuma was not well regarded by his kindred. He was poor, led a vagabond's life, and was considered uncouth and rude.

But one day, the town's *cacique*, or chief priest, died. When the senior men, or *principales*, of the town failed to reach consensus on a successor, they surrendered the task to the village's young men. Quite by chance Montezuma was chosen for the post. Traditionally the *cacique* had been a man of great spiritual powers. Montezuma had none. And so it did not take long before the men started to ridicule him. Montezuma assured them that during the next hunt they would catch small game with their hands and that the large game would deliver themselves up. Near dawn on the day of the hunt, the Great Spirit encountered Montezuma, who was saddened because he knew that he lacked the magical powers to lead a successful hunt. "Do not despair, thou shalt be successful," said the Great Spirit. "Go to thy cabin and search for the blanket and moccasins thy mother left thee before she died." As Montezuma obeyed, the Great Spirit instantly washed and dressed him in proper ritual attire. He then gave the young man an animal-hoof rattle with which he would charm the animals to surrender. Montezuma used his rattle, and the town's men captured abundant game. As a result of these powers, not only was he revered as the town's *cacique*, but even people from adjacent provinces proclaimed him the greatest monarch.

The Great Spirit told Montezuma that one day a great eagle would lead him to his future capital and metropolis. When the prophesied day arrived Montezuma mounted the eagle, followed by numerous people. For many vernal blooms and numerous new moons they travelled, stopping here and there to form temporary towns, but never staying long. Finally, in A.D. 1325, they arrived at a lake. The guiding eagle immediately perched itself atop a prickly pear cactus plant and seized a serpent with its beak. This was the sign the Great Spirit had given Montezuma, by which he would know that he had reached Tenochtitlán, or Mexico. There Montezuma built a

town and houses for the tribes that would form the Aztec empire.

William G. Ritch concluded the "Legend of Montezuma" by noting that the Aztec eagle perched on a prickly pear cactus with a serpent in its beak had become the Mexican Republic's coat of arms. This same image appeared on the New Mexican territorial seal, the only difference being, wrote Ritch, "that the Mexican eagle is nestled confidently under the shadowing wing of the emblem of our own nationality"[39] (see Figure 2).

Historically minded students of the southwestern United States will understandably wonder whether this myth of Montezuma's birth in Santa Fe bears even the slightest glimmer of truth. As Ritch himself admitted in 1885, no one then knew the exact birthplace of the Mexica or Aztecs. What was true at the end of the nineteenth century still holds today. Since it is often the habit of victors to rewrite their history to fit the political exigencies of the day, it should come as no surprise that even the Mexica themselves found it difficult to unravel their own mythologies to locate their place of origin. What the Mexica did assert unequivocally was that their ancestors had come from Aztlán. Where was this place Aztlán? Did it ever really exist?

Nigel Davis, the most prolific contemporary writer on Aztec origins, believes that Aztlán was more a concept than a place, and that if we are to interpret the concept correctly, we must delve into the Mexica's cultural development. For if, as it appears, the Mexica "possessed a modicum of civilization when they reached their ultimate habitat [in the Valley of Mexico], they could hardly have been living in the remotest wilds. If, on the contrary, they were nomads on their arrival,...the place of origin should be sought further afield, beyond the pale of Middle American civilization."[40]

The Mexica told the sixteenth-century friars, on whom we must rely for this information, that Aztlán was a place surrounded by water and that the Mexica had lived there as fisherman. After the Mexica left Aztlán, one of the first places they visited was Seven Caves. Since the legend of emergence from Seven Caves was not unique to the Mexica, but rather was a common myth of origin for many of the tribes in the Valley of Mexico, one can only surmise that it was a place where many tribes assembled after the collapse of the Toltec Empire in the twelfth century. Given the territorial limits of the Toltec Empire, archaeologists suspect that Seven Caves was rather close to Mexico City and that Aztlán was further off.[41]

We know quite well that shortly before they arrived in Mexico City the

Figure 2. Source: William G. Ritch, *Aztlán. The History, Resources and Attractions of New Mexico*, (Boston: D. Lothrop, 1885), p.7.

Mexica were a heterogeneous tribe. Some spent their lives hunting and gathering, and others lived tilling the land—a combination that suggests the union of two very different groups. Wigberto Jiménez Moreno believes that the horticulturalists had probably originated as nomadic hunters in the Mexican state of Nayarit. They had entered the Toltec Empire sometime in the tenth century, and there had become semi-civilized. After the fall of Tula, around A.D. 1168, the Mexica returned to a nomadic life. Sometime between then and A.D. 1345, they temporarily settled at Seven Caves and there were joined by a group of nomadic hunters who were quite recent arrivals to the valley. Legend has it that the tribal god of these Aztecas, Huitzilopochtli, ordered them to change their name to Mexica, a change which suggests their absorption by the more civilized Mexica. Legend also has it that in conjunction with the name change the Aztecas obtained bows and arrows, a technological innovation for them.[42]

This brief survey of Mexica cultural development should lead us to conclude that the mythic Aztlán was probably not in New Mexico and that Montezuma was not born in Santa Fe. The existence of numerous trade links between the Valley of Mexico and the Rio Grande Valley during Toltec times, as well as the diffusion of Aztec ceremonialism and religious thought throughout vast portions of Mesoamerica, undoubtedly explains why so many northern Mexican Indian tribes told the Catholic missionaries and soldiers that Montezuma had originated in their villages; folk wisdom was simply being repeated over and over again.[43]

The question still remains, Why were American immigrants bound for New Mexico in the 1880s so fascinated by Montezuma and the legends of Aztlán? Several interrelated answers suggest themselves. The first explanation simply relies on the diffusion of the most current science at the time. It was noted earlier that the evolutionary scheme of history that William G. Ritch employed in *Aztlán* came largely from Lewis H. Morgan's book *Ancient Society*, through Adolph F. Bandelier's residence and research in New Mexico starting in 1882. Morgan's legacy in American anthropology was to supplant romantic representations of the Indians as Noble Savages, and instead to place Indians at the bottom of an evolutionary scale that led up toward European cultural dominance and superiority.

We see this concept excellently displayed in the evolutionary theories of Aztec social development. Morgan's reconstruction of Aztec society in

Ancient Society (the principal author and historical researcher for this book chapter was Adolph F. Bandelier) concluded the Montezuma had not been a mighty emperor, that he had not lived in an elaborate palace, and that Tenochtitlán had not been a bustling metropolis. Montezuma, Morgan claimed, had been a simple tribal war chief, living in modest communal dwellings, and Tenochtitlán had been a small town constructed much like the pueblos of New Mexico. The earliest Spanish chroniclers of Aztec society had grossly exaggerated what they saw, he declared. Notwithstanding his own racism, ethnocentrism, and total ignorance of Spanish documentary sources, Morgan and his assistant Bandelier asserted that they were best prepared to interpret what the Spanish *conquistadores* truly had seen.[44]

William G. Ritch took up this leveling of Aztec social complexity through comparisons with New Mexican pueblos in the introduction to *Aztlán*, a comparison made visually explicit in Figure 1: Montezuma sits looking over Santa Fe and Mexico City. Locating Aztlán in New Mexico, Ritch noted that the land was still occupied "by people of the same race and characteristics, except so far as changed by intervening centuries." Referring to New Mexico as a "pre-Columbian country" that had recently awakened "from centuries of abeyance, and the bursting of its bonds of isolation," he asserted that one found there "the seat of the antipodes of civilization upon the continent."[45] Here, then, using Morgan's evolutionary scheme, Ritch had reduced the Aztecs and the Pueblo Indians to the level of savagery.

One also sees in Ritch's Montezuma-Aztlán discussion a second theme, the rising importance of individualism to American culture as refracted through representations of the Indians. It seems likely that as the president of the New Mexico Historical Society, William G. Ritch was in the audience when Adolph F. Bandelier addressed the society in an 1882 lecture on "Kin and Clan." There Bandelier expressed his hostility toward communism, asserting that Indian clan organization "was the strongest, most efficacious, and most durable system of communism the earth has yet seen, and as such, the most powerful tyranny."[46]

Ritch reiterated very similar prejudices in the Montezuma legend he had pieced together for his readers. There Montezuma was not depicted as the leader of a larger clan-based society, but an individualist led by the Great Spirit to fantastic feats. Similarly motivated sentiments were again

expressed, as we saw above, when Ritch discussed Spanish communal land grants. New Mexico's medieval conservatism would end, Ritch believed, only after the area was shorn, of its communal traditions, and became a state run by independent private landholders.

The whole discussion of the Montezuma legend and a New Mexican origin for the Aztecs, as articulated by Ritch in *Aztlán*, must also be placed in the larger cultural movement begun in the 1880s to construct out of the harsh realities of New Mexico a "Land of Enchantment" for investors, tourists, health seekers, alienated literati, and artists to exploit. Central to this movement, as T.C. McLuhan has splendidly illustrated in her book *Dream Tracks: The Railroad and the American Indian 1890-1930*,[47] was an alchemical marketing by the Santa Fe Railroad of a Southwestern Indian ceremonialism linked in unique spiritual harmony with the earth. Using illustrators, painters, and photographers, the Santa Fe Railroad's advertising department tried to recreate a lost world and a return to primitivism. In an America that in the 1880s was lamenting its spiritual impoverishment and searching for new inspiration in mythology and legends, the "Indian" of the Santa Fe Railroad was a prototype of a preindustrial society of simplicity, freedom, and nobility.[48]

Sylvia Rodríguez has brilliantly analyzed the contribution of the Santa Fe-Taos art colony to these developments. Anglo artists appropriated indigenous symbols and mystically projected them in art and literature, "with the individual ego cast large against the mythic, solitary landscape," disguising in their Indianist preservation politics their desire to keep New Mexico underdeveloped, but firmly under American rule.[49]

One has only to reexamine the triptych on page seven of *Aztlán*, which comes right at the end of the Legend of Montezuma (see Figure 2), to see the beginnings of the Indian primitivism and bohemian individualism that would blossom in New Mexico at the turn of the century, which McLuhan, Rodríguez, and others have documented and analyzed so meticulously. In the center portion of the Ritch triptych, a lone Indian, set before the sunrise, beholds the symbol of the United States, the American eagle, enveloping in an overwhelming, almost paternalistic fashion, Mexico's national symbol, the eagle perched on a cactus devouring a serpent. To the left of this scene is one depicting miners digging into the earth, and to the right a pastoral image of sheep and and cattle being tamed by a mounted cowboy brandishing a whip.

Aztlán, then, stands as a particularly poignant example of how a mythic complex was selectively appropriated, reinterpreted, and selectively transformed, in order to achieve concrete political gain. In 1885 William G. Ritch, as the territorial secretary, wanted to attract immigrants to New Mexico so that Anglos would outnumber Hispanos, his goal being an Anglo-dominated state. Ritch used all the energy and money he had, to project representations of an El Dorado that would appeal to capitalists and landless farmers, and to enlist the memories, hallucinations, and dreams of those spiritual refugees from industrial America who wanted to return to nature. Ritch and later witting and unwitting allies created their "Land of Enchantment," their caricatures of "Indians," and their quaint Hispano peasants, which the tourists still flock to New Mexico to see. And indeed, the myths became so powerful that now even the natives utter them as truth.

NOTES

1. The *National Union Catalogue Pre-1956 Imprints* lists only the third, fourth, and fifth editions of *Illustrated New Mexico*, noting that 11,000, 16,000, and 26,000 copies, respectively, of these editions had been published. If the first and second editions of *Illustrated New Mexico* each had a run of 10,000 copies, this would bring us to my 100,000 estimate. Ritch himself would report to the Bureau of Immigration's members in 1884 that during his first two years as president of the Bureau more than two million pages of promotional literature on New Mexico had been distributed. On this latter point see *Report of William G. Ritch to the Annual Meeting of the Bureau of Immigration* (Santa Fe, 1884), p. 6.
2. William G. Ritch, *Aztlán: The History, Resources and Attractions of New Mexico* (Boston: D. Lothrop & Co., 1885), p. 5.
3. Charles L. Briggs and John R. Van Ness, eds., *Land, Water, and Culture: New Perspectives on Hispanic Land Grants* (Albuquerque, 1987).
4. Howard R. Lamar, *The Far Southwest 1846-1912: A Territorial History* (New Haven, Conn., 1966), pp. 138-9.
5. Lamar, pp. 73-81.
6. Lamar, p. 73.
7. Raymund Paredes, "The Mexican Image in American Travel Literature 1831-1869," *New Mexico Historical Review 51*(1977), pp. 5-29, and "The Origin of Anti-Mexican Sentiment in the United States," *New Scholar 6*(1977), pp. 139-65; David J. Weber, "Scarce More than Apes: Historical Review of Anglo-American Stereotypes of Mexicans," in D. Weber, ed., *New Spain's Far Northern Frontier* (Albuquerque, 1979), pp. 293-307.
8. *Message of Governor L. Bradford Prince to the Thirtieth Legislative Assembly of New Mexico, December 28, 1892* (Santa Fe, 1892), p. xxxii.
9. Ireneo L. Chávez, *Compiled Laws of New Mexico, 1884* (Santa Fe, 1885), p. 628, as quoted in Herbert H. Lang, "The New Mexico Bureau of Immigration, 1880-1912," *New Mexico Historical Review 51*(1976), pp. 195-6.

10. Lang, p. 195.
11. Wilma Loy Shelton, *Checklist of New Mexico Publications, 1850-1953* (Albuquerque, 1954), pp. 22-9.
12. Ritch, p. 137. See also pp. 37, 40, 82.
13. Ritch, p. 47.
14. Ritch, pp. 58-61.
15. Ritch, p. 84.
16. Ritch, p. 41.
17. Ritch, pp. 41, 66-9.
18. Ritch, pp. 29-30.
19. Benjamin Keen, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1971), pp. 380-410. Leslie A. White, ed., *Pioneers in American Anthropology: The Bandelier-Morgan Letters, 1873-1883*, 2 vols. (Albuquerque, 1940).
20. Ritch, p. 250. The four epochs of history are outlined on pages 135-36.
21. Ritch, p. 189. My emphasis.
22. Ritch, pp. 191-2.
23. Ritch, p. 8.
24. Ritch, p. 250.
25. Ritch, p. 81.
26. Ritch, pp. 135-36.
27. Ritch, p. 198, emphasis in the original.
28. Ritch, p. 30.
29. Ritch, pp. 198-99, emphasis in the original.
30. Ritch, p. 145.
31. Ritch, p. 116.
32. Ritch, p. 117, emphasis in the original.
33. Herbert H. Lang, "The New Mexico Bureau of Immigration, 1880-1912," *New Mexico Historical Review 51*(1976), p. 193.
34. Ritch, p. 8.
35. Ritch, p. 65.
36. Ritch, p. 8.
37. Ritch, p. 5.
38. Frank G. Applegate, in his book *Indian Stories from the Pueblos* (Philadelphia, 1929), pp. 171-78, essentially reprints the Montezuma legend William G. Ritch first published in *Aztlán*. The only difference

in the two stories is that the Tewa Indians of the San Juan area told Applegate that Montezuma had been born not in Santa Fe, but in Pose Uingge, a large prehistoric site about twenty miles north of San Juan Pueblo.

39. Ritch, p. 7.
40. Nigel Davis, *The Aztecs: A History* (London, 1973), p. 5.
41. Davis, p. 5.
42. Davis, pp. 2-25. Wigberto Jiménez Moreno et al., *Historia de México* (Mexico, 1967), pp. 115 et seq., as discussed in Friedrich Katz, *The Ancient American Civilizations* (New York, 1972), p. 134. See also Paul Kirchhoff, "Civilizing the Chichimecs," in *The Cultural History of Ancient Mexico* (Austin, 1948), pp. 134-35.
43. Nigel Davis, *The Toltec Heritage: From the Fall of Tula to the Rise of Tenochtitlán* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1980); Elsie Clews Parsons, "Some Aztec and Pueblo Parallels," *American Anthropologist 35*(1933), pp. 611-31; F. Mathien and R. McGuire, *Ripples in the Chichimec Sea: New Considerations of Southwestern-Mesoamerican Interactions* (Carbondale, Ill., 1986); Frank Waters, *Book of the Hopi* (New York, 1963), esp. pp. 103-08.
44. Keen, pp. 380-91.
45. Ritch, pp. 21-22.
46. Bandelier quoted in Keen, p. 398.
47. T.C. McLuhan, *Dream Tracks: The Railroad and the American Indian 1890-1930* (New York, 1985).
48. McLuhan, pp. 1-19.
49. Sylvia Rodriguez, "Land, Water, and Ethnic Identity in Taos," in Charles L. Briggs and John R. Van Ness, eds., *Land, Water and Culture: New Perspectives on Hispanic Land Grants* (Albuquerque, 1987), pp. 313-403.

The Homeland, Aztlán/El Otro México

Gloria Anzaldúa

El otro México que acá hemos construido
el espacio es lo que ha sido
territorio nacional.
Es del esfuerzo de todos nuestros hermanos
y latinoamericanos que han sabido
progresar.
—Los Tigres del Norte[1]

"The *Aztecas del norte*...compose the largest single tribe or nation of Anishinabeg (Indians) found in the United States today....Some call themselves Chicanos and see themselves as people whose true homeland is Aztlán [the U.S. Southwest]."[2]

Wind tugging at my sleeve
feet sinking into the sand
I stand at the edge where earth touches ocean
where the two overlap
a gentle coming together
at other times and places a violent clash.