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Lost Archives, Lost Lands: Rereading New Mexico's Imagined Environments

Abstract This article describes how Nuevomexicanas/os have used texts, images, and other media to reclaim the lands they lost in the US-Mexico War. Along the way, it models a method for reading "imagined environments"—the frameworks through which human groups have represented, related to, and resided in their more-than-human worlds. This article focuses on two generations of writer-activists. In the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, Adelina Otero-Warren and Fabiola Cabeza de Baca situated themselves in the Precarious Desert, an imagined environment of constraints, contingencies, and struggles for survival. Then, in the 1960s and 1970s, the Alianza Federal de Mercedes revived the Pueblo Olvidado, an imagined environment saturated with laws, treaties, and cultural traditions. Despite many differences, both generations shared a desire to settle on and profit from Native lands. But though they never became environmentalists, they experimented with environmental writing and politics. By recovering these experiments, this article shows how media produce—rather than simply portray—lands and waters. Ultimately it tells the story of the borderlands as a series of struggles over what environments are, whom they can contain, and how they should be used.
Keywords US-Mexico borderlands, Latina/o and Chicana/o archives, ethnicity, ecocriticism, environmental humanities

On October 15, 1966, a caravan of cars set out from Albuquerque, New Mexico. As it made its way northwest, it passed the dry grasslands of Sandoval County, the piñon pine forests of Santa Fe County, and the multicolored mountains of Rio Arriba County. Around 10:00 a.m., it reached an enormous natural cave called the Echo Amphitheater. Under US law, the amphitheater was part of a campground in the Carson National Forest. But to La Alianza Federal de Mercedes (Federal Alliance of Land Grants), it was part of La República de San Joaquín del Río de Chama—a land grant issued by the Spanish Empire and held by a Nuevomexicana/o (New Mexican) community. Under the charismatic leadership of Reies López

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Figure 1 La República de San Joaquín del Río de Chama. Image number 000-654-0040, Reies López Tijerina Photograph Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico

Tijerina, the Aliancistas had spent months reclaiming their *república* (RLT: box 39, folders 1–9).[1] In letters to government officials, they had critiqued the United States for breaking its promise to respect thousands of land grants in California, New Mexico, and Texas (RLT: box 45, folder 15). In releases for the English- and Spanish-language press, they had asserted their right to govern the land grants with their own political institutions (RLT: box 1, folder 1). Finally, in "community letters" and "settler applications," they had explained how they would repurpose the land grants for small-scale farming, low-intensity grazing, and other sustainable practices (RLT: box 45, folder 14). In each of their media, the Aliancistas had used Nuevo México's unique cultural traditions. However, they had not made much of an impression on the US public sphere. Thus, to amplify their arguments, they had decided to take over the amphitheater (see fig. 1).

As they flashed their headlights across the red and yellow rocks, the Aliancistas looked back on a long struggle for land and water. In the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries, Nuevomexicanas/os earned land grants by fighting against indios bárbaros (a derogatory term for Apaches, Comanches, and other equestrian peoples). Although they waged war on behalf of the Spanish Empire, very few Nuevomexicanas/os were Españolas/es (pure or nearly pure

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Spaniards); instead, most were genízaras/os (detribalized Natives, many of whom were or had been slaves) or mestizas/os (mixed-race individuals) (Blackhawk 2008). In the bloody borderlands between competing human societies, Nuevomexicanas/os developed distinctive strategies for living in, on, and with nonhuman environments. Because they held many of their land grants in common, they prioritized collective survival over individual success, long-term sustainability over short-term profitability, and ecological attachment over economic alienation. On shared pastures called ejidos, they raised livestock without eroding the soil. Along hand-dug irrigation ditches called acequias, they grew crops without draining the aquifer. Finally, in pueblos, they cultivated the principles of *reparto* (distributing resources among community members) and *respeto* (conserving resources for future generations) (Rodríguez 2006). With the reciprocal relationships that are key to all "moral economies" (Scott 1976), Nuevomexicanas/os solved many environmental problems. However, they could not survive US settler colonialism. In the 1880s, 1890s, and 1900s, Anglos converted land grants into factory farms (on which Nuevomexicanas/os worked for low wages) and forest reserves (in which Nuevomexicanas/os were treated as trespassers). In the 1920s and 1930s, they redesigned rivers with invasive infrastructures. Finally, in the 1940s, they used New Mexico as the base for their nuclear weapons program. By converting communal properties into circulating commodities, Anglos pushed the environment to a breaking point: they ruined fertile agricultural areas, increased the incidence of forest fires, reduced flow of the Rio Grande, and generated tons of radioactive waste. Through these processes, they also made Nuevomexicanas/os some of the poorest people in the country (Dunbar-Ortiz 1980; Kosek 2006; Correia 2013).

To disrupt the cycle of capitalist dispossession and ecological degradation, the Aliancistas turned a national forest back into a land grant. Over the weekend of October 15 and 16, 1966, they filled the concave cliff with tents, kitchens, a courthouse, and a school. During the week of October 17–21, they picketed government offices in Albuquerque and claimed public property in the disputed lands. Finally, on October 22, they tried and convicted two forest rangers for trespassing (RLT: box 39, folder 2). By conducting these citizen's arrests, the Aliancistas foreshadowed the courthouse raid of 1967, in which they would injure three officials, take two hostages, and trigger the largest manhunt in New Mexico's history. But while Anglos branded them as maniacal militants (Nabokov 1969; Gardner 1970; Blawis 1971) and

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while Chicanas/os bragged that they "did what Malcolm X . . . only talked about" (Gutiérrez 2000: xvi), the Aliancistas were far more thought-provoking than threatening. Over the course of the 1960s, the Aliancistas realized that Anglos had not just conquered Nuevo México—in addition, they had disregarded, distorted, or destroyed the media that made Nuevo México possible in the first place. As a result, the Aliancistas decided that they could not simply retake their lost lands; first, they would need to reconstitute their lost archives. Through years of painstaking research, they reassembled the land grant deeds, reinterpreted the Laws of the Indies, and reasserted the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Then they used these media to open "worlds of transformative politics and possibilities" (Muñoz 1999: 195). In hundreds of radio broadcasts, thousands of print publications, and countless other media, the Aliancistas developed new ways of understanding—and by extension, using—their old land grants. At the Echo Amphitheater, the Aliancistas performed these pieces of their past: as guards patrolled the perimeter, they issued visas to tourists; as villagers cooked on campfires, they sang traditional corridos; and as a judge and a jury convened in a courthouse, they invoked eighteenth-century environmental laws.

Since the Aliancistas left the amphitheater, their ideas have echoed around the borderlands. In the last fifteen years, Rudy V. Busto (2006) has recovered Tijerina's religious ideas, Lorena Oropeza (2008, 2014) has reconstructed the Alianza's history, and Simón Ventura Trujillo (2013, 2017) has reconsidered the movement's racial politics. Along with Jake Kosek (2006), Lee Bebout (2011), and David Correia (2013), these scholars have treated the Alianza as a "rich site of cultural production" (Trujillo 2013: 9). But while they have illuminated its theories of human identity, they have not studied its approach to nonhuman environments. And while they have reread Tijerina's sermons and memoirs, they have not delved as deeply into the rest of the Alianza's archives.[2] For decades, these archives were buried in a secret bunker; although they were safe from bureaucrats and businessmen, they were covered in debris, crawling with rats, and contaminated by hantavirus (Busto 2006: 10). In 1999, they arrived at the University of New Mexico, and in 2005, they were opened to the public. To make sense of these "fragmented . . . textual remains," we can turn to Latina/o literary criticism (Lazo 2016: 3). First, we can resituate "fetishized, aestheticized, [and] polished forms of literature" within "a broader tapestry of 'writing'" (Coronado 2013: 28, 20). Second, we can "redefine publishing, circulation, and reading as performance contexts, in which

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subjects possessing a broad range of literacies can participate" (Gruesz 2002: xii). By taking these steps, we can add the Alianza's archives to a growing genealogy of Latina/o literature. In the process, though, we will need to consider what it means to call communities *Latina/o*—and, for that matter, what it means to label texts as *literature*.

Although they reaffirm aspects of Spanish colonialism, the Alianza's archives challenge the prevailing ways of depicting and dwelling in the borderlands. As one might expect, they differ from Willa Cather's novels, Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings, and other Anglo media; rather than exploring personal freedoms and artistic possibilities, they wrestle with ecological constraints and historical contingencies. At the same time, they clash with Alurista's poems, Gloria Anzaldúa's essays, and other Chicana/o media; rather than forging spiritual bonds with the Aztec homeland of Aztlán, they assert legal rights to colonial land grants. To read the Alianza's archives, we cannot rely on Anglo or Chicana/o practices; instead, we need to use Nuevomexicana/o ones. As several scholars have suggested, *Nuevomexicana/o* may be the best term for "people whose roots reach deep into the brown earth of their homeland" (Gonzales-Berry and Maciel 2000: 7). Like *Latina/o*, the term highlights relational racialization—the processes through which mestizas/os, genízaras/os, and other groups became Nuevomexicanas/os. Unlike *Latina/o*, however, the term designates a specific site of "double colonization" (Gómez 2008: 10)—at first, Nuevomexicanas/os took land from Natives, but later they lost land to Anglos. Further, the term consolidates the media that Nuevomexicanas/os used to (re)define their regional identity—eighteenth-century bureaucratic discourses, nineteenth-century Spanish-language newspapers, twentieth-century novels, and everything in between. These media were conditions of possibility for the Alianza—and for other varieties of awareness and activism.

This article describes how Nuevomexicanas/os have reimagined—and thereby reclaimed—their lost lands. It focuses on two generations of writer-activists. In the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, Adelina Otero-Warren and Fabiola Cabeza de Baca situated themselves in what I call the Precarious Desert, an imagined environment of constraints, contingencies, and struggles for survival. Then, in the 1960s and 1970s, the Aliancistas revived what I refer to as the Pueblo Olvidado, an imagined environment saturated with laws, treaties, and cultural traditions. Each generation developed a distinct aesthetic strategy; while the former addressed English-language texts to the Anglo public, the latter disseminated multilingual media through a Nuevomexicana/o

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counterpublic. In turn, each generation forged a conflicting ethnoracial identity; while the first saw itself as light skinned, high class, and "Hispana/o," the second claimed to be mixed race, working class, and "Indo-Hispana/o." Despite their differences, both generations shared a desire to settle on and profit from Native lands. But though they never became environmentalists (at least not in the way we usually use the term), they still experimented with environmental writing—and environmental politics. With these socially specific ways of creating and circulating media, both generations tried to restore their resilient subsistence ecologies. By celebrating colonial land grants, they opened alternatives to capitalist environments.

As it analyzes Otero-Warren, Cabeza de Baca, and the Aliancistas, this article models a method for reading "imagined environments"—the frameworks through which humans explore spaces, engage with beings, and consume objects. Like "social imaginaries" (Castoriadis 1998), "imaginative geographies" (Said 1978: 49), and "imagined communities" (Anderson 1983), imagined environments are "enabling but not fully explicable symbolic [matrices] within which [people become] world-making collective[s]" (Gaonkar 2002: 1). In contrast to their counterparts, however, imagined environments orient these human "collectives" toward the more-than-human world. Sometimes, imagined environments influence aesthetic judgments; thus, most Anglos would agree that Santa Fe is beautiful, the Grand Canyon is sublime, and the Trinity Nuclear Test Site is ugly. Other times, imagined environments lead to ethical evaluations; while a Nuevomexicana/o might associate the Rio Grande with irrigated agriculture, a Taos Indian would treat Blue Lake as sacred. At all times, imagined environments establish and maintain norms; whether they designate concrete places ("San Joaquín") or abstract spaces ("the desert"), they impose inarticulable yet all-important expectations. In special cases, imagined environments can crystallize in slogans or symbols; thus, many Anglos refer to New Mexico as the "Land of Enchantment." But more often, imagined environments become so immersive that they start to seem invisible; although they circulate in media, they turn into ways of perceiving, thinking, and acting. Ultimately, they are "fluid middle grounds between embodied practices and explicit doctrines" (Gaonkar 2002: 11); without calling attention to themselves, they influence the ways in which humans represent, relate to, and reside in the more-than-human world.

Imagined environments emerge through dialectical conflicts. When they express one group's utopian fantasies, they reflect another's

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imaginative failures. When they seem natural or ideal, they remain contingent and contradictory. The territory that we call New Mexico is saturated with Pueblo, Diné (Navajo), Apache, Comanche, Ute, Spanish, Mexican, Anglo, and other cultures; it bears traces of states and subjects, experts and laypeople, upper classes and working classes. By recovering two of these imagined environments, this article charts a new course for ecocriticism. In the last decade, leading ecocritics have explained how literature reveals "slow violence" (Nixon 2011), responds to "ecosickness" (Houser 2014), and reflects a "sense of planet" (Heise 2008). Through their brilliant close readings, these ecocritics have illuminated the intertwined crises of capitalism, racism, and ecological change. But while they have developed new approaches to the environment, they have reproduced old assumptions about literature. With their emphasis on exposé, they have made it seem like literature represents—but never reshapes—the more-than-human world. And with their commitment to consciousness-raising, they have acted as if literature is always aligned with existing environmental movements. To be sure, literature often evangelizes about extrinsic issues. However, it also acts as an intrinsic condition of possibility. This article shows how texts, images, and other media *produce* lands and waters. As it builds on new scholarship at the edges of ecocriticism, ethnic studies, and postcolonial studies (Ybarra 2016; Posmentier 2017; Iheka 2018), it argues that human differences both divide and define nonhuman environments. Ultimately, it tells the story of the borderlands as a series of struggles over what environments are, whom they can contain, and how they should be used.

The Precarious Desert

In the early twentieth century, Nuevomexicanas/os used several strategies to reclaim their lost lands. While working-class groups cut fences and burned houses, elites used less direct but still effective forms of cultural politics. To counter Anglo influence, they founded the Sociedad Folklórica and participated in the Santa Fe Fiesta. To celebrate Nuevomexicana/o culture, they crafted *santos*, wrote *cuentos*, and performed bailes. Finally, to maintain a Hispanophone public sphere within an Anglophone empire, they printed newspapers and published books (Wilson 1997; Montgomery 2002; Nieto-Phillips 2004).

With these strategies, elites cultivated some sorely needed cultural pride. However, they also contributed to an emerging racial ideology. In this period, Latinas/os were being re-racialized; although legally

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considered white, they were practically treated as "off-white" (Gómez 2008: 2). Throughout the borderlands, they were caught in a double bind; while they had more legal rights than other racial minorities, they had fewer economic opportunities than the white majority. In New Mexico, elites escaped this bind by creating a "Spanish fantasy heritage" (Wilson 1997; Montgomery 2002). First, they distorted Native histories; by demeaning Apaches, Comanches, and other peoples, they made it seem as if colonialism had been benign or even benevolent. Second, they idealized Hispana/o identities; by emphasizing their ties to the conquistadores, they staked a claim to "noble bearing" (Otero-Warren [1936] 2006: 9) and "noble blood" (Cabeza de Baca [1954] 1994: 53). Third, they embellished US racism; by mapping Latina/o *limpieza de sangre* onto the Anglo one-drop rule, they made whiteness more important than ever before (Nieto-Phillips 2004).

To theorize the Spanish fantasy heritage, several generations of scholars have turned to Otero-Warren's *Old Spain in Our Southwest* ([1936] 2006) and Cabeza de Baca's *We Fed Them Cactus* ([1954] 1994). In the 1970s and 1980s, Chicanas/os condemned their racist politics (Paredes 1978). In the 1990s and 2000s, feminists celebrated their cultural resistance (Padilla 1993; Rebolledo 1994; Reed 2005). Both generations produced outstanding scholarship. But in their haste to reach provocative political positions, they oversimplified the worlds in which the women lived and worked. The last decade has opened more nuanced interpretations. Priscilla Solis Ybarra (2016: 4) has shown how Otero-Warren and Cabeza de Baca's "goodlife writing . . . embraces the values of simplicity, sustenance, dignity, and respect." Meanwhile, Karen R. Roybal (2017: 102) has argued that their "archives of dispossession" "demonstrate . . . [a] deep abiding love for [their] homeland." Ybarra and Roybal have started untangling the intertwined histories of race and nature. But if we want to fulfill the promise of their projects, we must deal with some difficult questions: Why did Otero-Warren combine "respect" for Nuevomexicanas/os with racism against Natives? And why did Cabeza de Baca "love" a "homeland" that she often found inhospitable?

If we acknowledge these ambiguities, we can return to the Precarious Desert. Otero-Warren and Cabeza de Baca invoked this imagined environment in the opening paragraphs of their books: while the former described the Southwest as "a region of struggles" (Otero-Warren [1936] 2006: 3), the latter told "the story of the struggle of New Mexican Hispanos for existence on the Llano, the Staked Plains" (Cabeza de Baca [1954] 1994: ix). At some points, the women saw

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"struggle" through the lens of the Spanish fantasy heritage; thus, they explained how they occupied indigenous territories and sustained colonial traditions. At other points, they thought of "struggle" in environmental terms; therefore, they devoted much of their attention to droughts, dust bowls, and other natural disasters. By taking up these two types of struggle, Otero-Warren and Cabeza de Baca drew on and contributed to a distinctive definition of the desert. Instead of linking it to vacation, recuperation, and other kinds of leisure, they represented it as a site for farming, ranching, and other forms of labor. And instead of dividing it into grids of private lands and public water infrastructures, they treated it as an unpredictable environment. As they defined the Precarious Desert, Otero-Warren and Cabeza de Baca were not especially ecocentric: although the first "loved nature" (3) and although the second "enjoy[ed] Nature in her full grandeur" (3), both believed that nonhuman environments should serve human needs. That said, the women spurned official environmental movements in part because they "stayed" with the environmental "trouble." According to Donna J. Haraway (2016: 1), "Staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or Edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings." To Anglos, "staying with the trouble" often seemed optional. But for Nuevomexicanas/os, "staying with the trouble" was always necessary; amid social and ecological struggles, it allowed them to "live and die well."

In the Precarious Desert, we can find new forms of "decoloniality," which Ybarra (2016: 15) defines as "indigenous practices" that "survived colonization," "reject[ed] Western epistemology," and "united humans and nature." At the same time, we can see the ongoing effects of Spanish colonialism. To read Otero-Warren and Cabeza de Baca, therefore, we must determine how their experiences as both colonizers (of Natives) and victims of colonization (by Anglos) influenced the texts they wrote, the literary networks they formed, and the imagined environment they circulated. In his history of the borderlands, Raúl Coronado (2013: 394) recovers the "world[s] [that were] not to come," the "models of being and belonging" that permeated Latina/o communities but petered out under Anglo modernity. By analyzing ideas that "existed only liminally" (395) or that "failed to cohere" (394), Coronado turns away from grand teleology and "unbroken genealogy." In their place, he discovers "a string of alternate realities as disappointing as they are beautiful" (394). Following Coronado, we

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must recognize that Otero-Warren and Cabeza de Baca were powerful precisely because they were problematic: although they made some "beautiful" books, they also had some "disappointing" ties to colonialism.

Otero-Warren came from two of New Mexico's oldest families, but she spent her life navigating new cultural conditions (Montgomery 2002; Salas 2005; Ybarra 2016). In some ways, she assimilated into the elite; she grew up with a British stepfather, went to school in St. Louis, and worked in New York City. In other ways, she suffered along with the working class; most notably, she lost her father in a shootout with land thieves. To reconcile these pressures, Otero-Warren used Anglo institutions to fight for Nuevomexicana/o rights. From 1917 to 1920, she participated in the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage. Between 1918 and 1929, she led the New Mexico Board of Health, the New Mexico Board of Public Welfare, and the Santa Fe County Schools. Finally, in 1922, she became the first Latina to run for the US House of Representatives. Although Otero-Warren lost the election, she became close friends with a campaign volunteer named Mamie Meadors. Between 1932 and 1935, the two friends withdrew to a rural ranch, and Otero-Warren wrote *Old Spain in Our Southwest*. In some chapters, she drew on dominant forms of environmental writing, but in others she experimented with autobiography, historiography, folklore, ethnography, tall tale, and song. By blending these genres, she cultivated an "aesthetics of proximity" (Iheka 2018: 23)—a literary practice that "distribute[d] agency" among people, plants, animals, and other actors. Even as she credited the more-than-human world with "a beauty too great for human beings" (Otero-Warren [1936] 2006: 3), she connected land grant ecologies with socially specific survival strategies.

In the Precarious Desert, people take shape by working in, on, and with their environments. Otero-Warren starts exploring this process in her first chapter.[3] As a storm sweeps over Santa Fe, she feels "gray," "gloom[y]," and "out of tune" (3–4). Eventually, she recognizes other ways of weathering the storm: while she "shudder[s] at the wind," a mestizo shepherd sleeps beside his flock, and while she "cover[s] [her] eyes from the bright rays," a Native "neighbor . . . offer[s] his prayer to the rising sun" (5). With these contrasts, Otero-Warren invokes several ideologies; like a tourism promoter, she embeds nonwhite people in their environments, and like a Romantic poet, she makes laborers seem "closer to nature" (5). But even as she plays with these perspectives, she opens them to critique. Whereas

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promoters promise unmediated experiences of other cultures, she feels a "sense of loss" from her mixed-race kin (5). And whereas Romantic poets see beauty through the eyes of rustic pastoralists, she sits by a "melancholy candle . . . flickering as if gasping for breath" (4). As a symbol for her possessions and privileges, this "candle" separates Otero-Warren from the world. But though the Promethean flame feels like an impossible burden, it also acts as a condition of possibility. As she turns her back on the "solemn" sky, she begins to write (3).

In her remaining chapters, Otero-Warren explores the relationships among land, labor, and identity. To cope with her "melancholy," she depicts the communal land grants that antedated individual properties, the hand-dug acequias that came before high-tech water infrastructures, and the "feudal" Spain that preceded the capitalist United States. More importantly, she recovers the aesthetics and affects that thrived in these "lost" lands:

> These people, in their villages, were surrounded by the beauties of nature which became a part of them; they added unconsciously to the brilliant coloring by placing the red chili, in strings, and the pumpkins and blue corn on the adobe houses. They did not constantly exclaim over the beauty of the sunset, or the golden leaves of the cottonwood trees, or the blueness of the bluebirds. That, to them, was not unusual and while apparently they were indifferent to it, it was actually a part of them. (51)

With creatively clumsy syntax, Otero-Warren explains how the "beauties of nature" simultaneously "surrounded" and "became a part of" the villages. As she praises these old attitudes toward environmental stewardship, she experiments with new forms of eco-media. In the canonical works of New Mexico modernism, writers and artists break bonds between representations and referents: while Cather "exclaim[s]" "constantly" about the flat surfaces of the sunny skies, O'Keeffe makes colorful sensoria out of mere "cottonwood trees." In this branch of Nuevomexicana/o eco-media, however, writers reconnect cultural traditions to their natural preconditions: instead of redesigning the desert intentionally, Otero-Warren explains how subsistence farmers "add" to their surroundings "unconsciously." With her condescending tone, Otero-Warren claims economic, social, and cultural capital. But while she deepens divisions within human society, she models unalienated approaches to the more-than-human world. Because her "people" are "indifferent" to the apparent distinctions between labor

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and leisure, they can imbue their working days with small yet significant pleasures. And because they are "unconscious" of the supposed lines between human practices and nonhuman spaces, they can combine "red chili," "blue corn," and earthen "adobe" in multisensory assemblages. Ultimately, these cliché characters link land grants to an imagined environment. Rather than protesting land loss, they preserve the sensibilities that made land important in the first place.

With her "aesthetics of proximity," Otero-Warren embeds Nuevomexicana/o culture in New Mexico's nature. Sometimes, she links environments to languages: "There is hardly a mountain, river or village in the Southwest that, by its name, does not tell of some incident attending the colonization of New Spain" (Otero-Warren [1936] 2006: 92). Other times, she sees environments as nonlinguistic signs: "Water actually means the livelihood of the people, not only food . . . but all [for which] their surplus may be exchanged" (61). At every stage, she treats both environments and signs as "media," a term John Durham Peters (2016: 2) uses to designate the "vessels," "infrastructures," and "containers of possibility" that facilitate our lives. As she reveals the relationships among these media, Otero-Warren recovers an imagined environment; thus, she explains how Nuevomexicanas/os bring wooden *santos* "into the fields" because they believe that "water is sacred" (Otero-Warren [1936] 2006: 61). Further, Otero-Warren shows how this imagined environment shapes its material counterpart; she notes that Nuevomexicanas/os plant "cottonwood trees . . . along the irrigation ditches to shade the water and keep the sun from lifting it into the sky" (61). By exploring the threshold between the imaginary and the material, Otero-Warren suggests that a Nuevomexicana/o's "natural engineering ability" (61) is just as valuable as an Anglo's love of (capital *N*) Nature: even in "times of great drought" (62), this ability can simultaneously sustain a human culture and a more-than-human world.

Like Otero-Warren, Cabeza de Baca lived on the threshold between tradition and modernity (Reed 2005; Roybal 2017). On the one hand, she descended from the explorer Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and grew up on a ranch near La Liendre, New Mexico. On the other hand, she studied at New Mexico State University and taught in the US school system. Throughout her life, Cabeza de Baca tried to reconcile her Nuevomexicana/o heritage and her Anglo education. Despite losing her leg in a car accident, she spent years traveling through the hinterlands to teach home economics. As she approached middle age, she started hosting radio shows, crafting newspaper columns, and writing books. Initially, she relied on professional expertise; in

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Historic Cookery (1939), she republished some of her agricultural extension service pamphlets, and in *The Good Life* (1949), she mixed fiction with food writing (including the first-ever recipe for a fried U-shaped taco shell). Eventually, she began drawing on personal experience; in *We Fed Them Cactus* (1954), she explained how her family "made a living from this land—[at first] from cattle and sheep, [but later] by selling curios, soda pop, gasoline, and food" ([1954] 1994: ix). With this jarring juxtaposition, Cabeza de Baca set out on a study of settler colonialism. In some passages, she focused on environmental (mis)management; while she scorned "poor fools" who "ruin[ed] pasture[s]," she saved her sharpest words for "idiots in Washington" who planned farms "in a country that [did] not have enough rain" (146). Even more often, she engaged with ways of "living from the land"—with human-nonhuman relations that developed in Nuevo México before declining under the United States.

Throughout *We Fed Them Cactus*, Cabeza de Baca shows how aridity shaped her lands—and her subjectivity. Sometimes, she explains how the presence or absence of water influenced her thoughts; for instance, she recalls, "[her] friends in the city would be upset when rain spoiled a day's outing, but [she] always was glad to see it come" ([1954] 1994: 11). Other times, she describes how the experience of rain saturated her feelings; for example, she insists, "only those ever watching and waiting for rain can feel the rapture it brings" (15). Above all, she asserts that aridity altered the course of her life; indeed, she takes her title from a summer in which "only the cactus survived," and in which her father spent each morning "cutting [the cactus] and burning off the prickles before feeding it to the cattle" (171). By "staying" with these "troubles," Cabeza de Baca challenges conventional nature writing. Whereas John Muir emphasizes his independence from his environments, she represents her reliance on natural resources. And whereas Aldo Leopold cultivates his "land ethic" in relative abundance, she comes to her thoughts and emotions by accepting scarcity. She encapsulates her philosophy in her claim that her father "never saw the lightning [because] he was too busy watching for the raindrops" (15): through her struggle to survive on the Llano, she learns to "see" in specific ways.

The Precarious Desert has a strange sense of time. Whereas Cather and O'Keeffe associate aridity with timelessness, Cabeza de Baca links it to three distinct temporalities. First, aridity delineates the past by linking significant events to droughts: when she "[speaks] of the Armistice of World War I, [she] always [says] 'the drought of 1918 when the Armistice was signed'" (12). Aridity also defines the

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present: she "count[s] the weeks and months between rains" and can "always tell anyone exactly to the day and hour since the last rain" (11, 12). Finally, aridity unsettles the future: she "pray[s] for rain and when it comes [she] get[s] full value for [her] prayers; then [she] wish[es] it would be portioned over a period of months instead of one night" (39). By tracing aridity through time, Cabeza de Baca remembers what it was like to live without government-run water infrastructures. Although she admits that it was harder to grow crops and raise livestock, she suggests that it was easier to live within—rather than try to transcend—limits. Ultimately, she uses writing to reckon with risks; faced with "social and environmental catastrophe," she uses the type of practice that Sonya Posmentier (2017: 3) calls a "poetics of survival."

From the desert's sharply distinguished temporalities, Cabeza de Baca fashions literary forms. In "The Night It Rained," she introduces El Cuate, a "western character" who is so "real" that he "seem[s] to have sprung from the earth" ([1954] 1994: 15). For almost a fifth of the book, El Cuate talks about hunting buffalo, herding cattle, trading with Natives, and fighting off Anglos. Since he is a servant on Cabeza de Baca's ranch, and indeed since he is a character in *We Fed Them Cactus*, his stories reinforce a range of racial and class hierarchies.[4] But since he talks to "pass away the time"—and for that matter, since the entire "storytelling mood" relies on the rain—his stories resituate race, class, and other human differences within nonhuman environments. As they blend his voice with the storm's sounds, they subordinate idealized traditions—El Cuate's speech, Cabeza de Baca's writing—to their material preconditions. And as they compress a "lifetime" of experiences into a single rainy night, they suggest that Nuevomexicana/o culture is suited to a particular ecological niche (16). In the end, the stories epitomize the Precarious Desert—an imagined environment that sustained resilience amid uncertainty.

Like Otero-Warren, Cabeza de Baca had a conflicted career. While she helped Hispanas/os take a perilous path toward white privilege, she taught readers how to survive in the Precarious Desert. Even as they disappear into the past, both women still raise questions about our future: How can we endure heat and aridity? How can we accept droughts and dust bowls? How can we learn from subsistence agriculture and communal land tenure? Tijerina approached these old problems in new ways: although he engaged even less explicitly with ecology and although he departed even more dramatically from environmentalism, he still invented strategies for adapting to, collaborating with, and surviving in the more-than-human world.

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El Pueblo Olvidado

Tijerina spent his life moving around the United States. As a child in the 1920s and 1930s, he picked cotton in Texas, planted beets in Colorado, and worked at a factory in Michigan. During these hard years, he rarely attended school, but between 1944 and 1946, he studied at an Assemblies of God institute. For the next decade, he preached an increasingly idiosyncratic brand of Pentecostalism; at one point, he tried to walk from Illinois to Texas, and at other points, he renounced all of his possessions (Gardner 1970: 40). In 1955, he broke with the church, moved to Arizona, and founded a religious community called the Valle del Paz (Valley of Peace). For a few months, Tijerina and his followers felt like they were starting a new society. But over the next two years, their utopia became a dystopia: floods ruined their fields, vigilantes destroyed their houses, and officials shut down their school. Tijerina almost gave up hope, but just when things could not get any worse, he experienced "una revelación, una visión, o un super-sueño" (a revelation, a vision, or a superdream) (Tijerina 1978: 32). Then he decided to go to New Mexico (Blawis 1971; Tijerina 1978; Busto 2006; Trujillo 2013).

In New Mexico, Tijerina led a double life. Privately, he abused his family.[5] Publicly, he laid the groundwork for the Alianza. If we wanted to write Tijerina's biography, we would need to "redress" the "silences" that "saturate" his archives (Trouillot 1995: 27). But if we are interested in understanding his imagined environment, we will have to reread the archives themselves. Rather than close reading a couple of texts, we can reckon with a "multiplicity" of media (Lazo 2016: 17), and rather than focusing on individual figures, we can reconstruct a Nuevomexicana/o "network" (Gruesz 2002: 7).

Like the inhabitants of the Precarious Desert, Tijerina believed that nature and culture were interdependent: by his account, "La tierra y la idioma van juntas. . . . para salvar nuestras Mercedes, tenemos que salvar primero nuestra cultura" (Land and language go together. . . . To save our land grants, we must first save our culture) (RLT: box 1, folder 36). As he explains in *Mi lucha por la tierra* (1978: 33), he developed this belief during his first visit to a land grant. Upon arriving, he learned the "larga, triste y violenta historia de los que vinieron . . . a robarles su propriedad" (long, sad, and violent history of those who came . . . to steal their property). While listening, he felt "una estocada" (a stab) "en [su] corazón" (in his heart), and through this sympathetic identification, he resolved that "estos humildes

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ancianos tenían una causa santa, justa y sagrada" (these humble elders had a just and sacred cause). At this pivotal moment, Tijerina took an unexpected turn: rather than grabbing a gun or building a barricade, he started assembling an archive. First, he asked the "hombres más ancianos" (oldest men) to explain their experiences. In turn, he questioned local leaders about the "títulos de las tierras" (titles to the lands), the "abogados que [les] representaron" (lawyers who represented them), and the "tratado" (treaty) that protected their rights. Finally, he decided to "buscar todo lo que [iban] a necesitar en [su] lucha" (find everything that they would need in their fight).

To build his imagined environment, Tijerina conducted archival research in Spain, Mexico, and the United States. While he learned how settlers destabilized land grant ecologies, he also figured out how they manipulated land grant media. In publications like "The Great Land Robbery" (1970) (RLT: box 2, folder 3), Tijerina divided dispossession into three stages. First, bureaucrats destroyed documents; whether they "sold the archives . . . for scrap-paper" or "threw them out into the street," they made it seem as if land grants had never existed (RLT: box 1, folder 1). Second, judges misinterpreted legal traditions; under Spanish and Mexican law, *parciantes* (water sharers) controlled sustainable acequias, but after a series of US Supreme Court cases, engineers could create invasive infrastructures (Rodríguez 2006). Third, politicians broke treaties; although they had agreed to let Nuevomexicanas/os conserve their common lands, they helped Anglos invest in private property. By recognizing that dispossession was at once material and imaginary, Tijerina developed a new historical theory and deployed a new social movement strategy: to retake lost lands, he began reconstituting lost archives.

As he pored over documents, Tijerina recovered a range of environmental practices. Like Otero-Warren and Cabeza de Baca, he learned how Nuevomexicanas/os worked in, on, and with the land. Unlike his predecessors, he rejected private property in favor of the "pueblo," a word that can designate a place ("el pueblo de Santa Fe"), a people ("el pueblo Nuevomexicano"), or *the* people in general ("el pueblo unido jamás será vencido"). In open letters like "Land Grant Officials State Their Claim" (1966) (RLT: box 2, folder 1), the Aliancistas insisted that the "true owner" of each land grant was not an "individual" but the "pueblo." Then, in pamphlets like "The Alianza: What, Where, and Why" (1968) (RLT: box 1, folder 1), they envisioned a society in which resources could never be "alienated" and in which "absentee ownership [would] not [be] permitted." To some extent,

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the Aliancistas saw this society as an extension of the Spanish Empire—as a settler state with its own "flag[s]," "seal[s]," and "other independent attributes." For the most part, however, they defined it as a "moral economy of the peasant"—as a mode of production based on communal land tenure, collective labor, generalized reciprocity, and ecological responsibility (Scott 1976). Like members of other moral economies, the Aliancistas blurred the boundaries between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism: although they thought that "nature . . . [was there] to be used," they also believed it "belong[ed] to everyone" and deserved "respect" (Vasquez 1970). Without identifying as environmentalists, the Aliancistas developed their own environmental ethics: whereas "timber and mineral companies" wanted to make as much money as possible, land grant communities hoped to "live comfortably by working hard" (RLT: box 1, folder 1). Ultimately, the Aliancistas attempted to restore "passionate attachments" between people and place (Kosek 2006): even as they argued that the land grants belonged to them, they acknowledged that they belonged in the land grants.

In the archives, Tijerina also found an alternative approach to racialization. Like earlier Nuevomexicanas/os, he recognized that ethno-racial identities took shape through environmental struggles. But while Otero-Warren and Cabeza de Baca saw themselves as light-skinned "Hispanas," Tijerina identified as a mixed-race "Indo-Hispano." To shore up this subject position, he used the Laws of the Indies. In the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, the laws tried to govern every aspect of life in the Americas; in Tijerina's terms (1978: 34), they gave "forma y carácter a los Mexicanos" (form and character to the Mexicans). In general, the laws segregated ethno-racial groups, but on a few occasions, they promoted interracial relationships. Through enthusiastic readings of these passages, the Aliancistas argued that they had become "overwhelming[ly] 'Indian'" and, therefore, that they should be called "Indo-Hispanas/os" (RLT: box 1, folder 1). By taking up this hyphenated term, the Aliancistas forged a distinct racial identity: whereas many Chicanas/os made up myths about Aztec heroes and Spanish villains, these Indo-Hispanas/os told sobering stories about mestiza/o settlers, genízara/o slaves, and indio bárbaro warriors (Blackhawk 2008; Trujillo 2013; Saldaña-Portillo 2016). Crucially, the Aliancistas embedded these human identities in nonhuman environments: much as black environmental writers engaged with plots, plantations, and provision grounds (Posmentier 2017), Indo-Hispanas/os linked themselves to land grants. In the

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end, the Aliancistas developed a powerful—and problematic—environmental philosophy: as Indias/os, they reclaimed tribal territories, and as Hispanas/os, they reasserted colonial laws.

Through his research, Tijerina also created a compelling case for land reclamation. Like many Chicanas/os, he critiqued factory farming, strip mining, and other "possessive" logics (Ybarra 2016). In contrast to his contemporaries, he never tried to "transcend possession" (Ybarra 2016: 96); instead, he tried to transfer land from Anglos to Nuevomexicanas/os, from individuals to communities, and from a capitalist economy to a subsistence ecology. To justify these transfers, he turned to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In this treaty, the United States explained how it would treat the indigenous and mixed-race peoples it incorporated after the War of 1846–48. Among other things, the United States promised to "protect" these peoples' "civil rights," "respect" their "religious corporations," and "valid[ate]" their "grants of land."[6] Over the course of the next century, the United States broke most of its promises. On February 2, 1963—the 115th anniversary of the treaty's ratification—land grant heirs founded the Alianza. In the first chapter of their constitution, they designated the treaty as "el Documento Principal invocado . . . para la defensa de las Mercedes" (the principal document invoked . . . for the defense of the land grants) (RLT: box 1, folder 2). In the remaining chapters, they reinterpreted the treaty. On the one hand, they read it as "Ley Internacional" (international law) that could support litigation with the United Nations, the United States, Mexico, and Spain. On the other hand, they saw it as an "Espiritu de Justicia" (spirit of justice) that would help them reclaim "todas las tierras" (all the lands) and "el fruto y beneficio que los violadores extranjeros sacaron" (the fruits and profits that the foreign rapists extracted). By appealing simultaneously to concrete laws and abstract justice, the Aliancistas cultivated a hybrid "countercartography" (Brady 2002: 6): whereas Anglos (ab)used liberal legal frameworks and whereas Chicanas/os "transcended possession," they viewed land as both secular and spiritual. Through this lens, the Aliancistas envisioned a world in which adaptive acequias replaced destructive dams and low-intensity pastures supplanted high-density feedlots. Although they prioritized their (all-too-human) land rights above the (more-than-human) rights of the land itself, they still fought for resilient environmental futures.

From their lost archives, the Aliancistas forged the imagined environment I call the Pueblo Olvidado. Although they used this term in many of their media, they defined it most memorably in "Información

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general para los herederos de todas las mercedes" ("General Information for the Heirs of All the Land Grants") (1964) (RLT: box 1, folder 1).[7] In its opening paragraph, this pamphlet divides New Mexico into two imagined environments, the Anglo "Tierra del Encanto" (Land of Enchantment) and the Nuevomexicana/o "Pueblo Olvidado" (Forgotten Community). The pamphlet then describes how these imagined environments developed with and against their material counterparts. As part of Spain and Mexico, the pueblo was "saludable fisicamente" (physically healthy) and "fuerte moralmente" (morally strong); it had "agua y pasto en abundancia" (water and pasture lands in abundance), and it "celebraba [sus fiestas] con pompa y alegría" (celebrated its holidays with splendor and happiness). Under the US government, however, the pueblo became "paralizad[o], conjelad[o], o mas bien dicho: 'encantad[o]'" (paralyzed, frozen, or better said: "enchanted"). Of course, the pueblo experienced a range of ecological changes: "tierras" (lands) became agribusinesses, "aguas" (waters) went into reservoirs, and "ganados" (flocks) were sold to speculators. Further, the pueblo suffered a series of imaginative blows: it received racist "sobrenombres" (nicknames), it was "embrujado" (bewitched) by evil laws, and it was left "sin protección" (without protection). Ultimately, the pueblo was "oldivado de España . . . de Mexico . . . [y] de [su] nuevo gobierno" (forgotten . . . by Spain . . . by Mexico . . . and by its new government).

"Información general" differs from the texts that inspire leading ecocritics. Like novels about "slow violence" (Nixon 2011) or the "sense of planet" (Heise 2008), "Información general" reveals preexisting problems: with verbs like "embrujar," it indicts the bureaucrats who mistreated Nuevomexicana/o communities, and with the phrase "Tierra del Encanto," it attacks the artists who misrepresented New Mexican environments. At the same time, "Información general" plays with future possibilities: sooner or later, it predicts, "Dios . . . manda un buen espíritu para desencante el Tratado de Guadalupe-Hidalgo, las Leyes de Indias, y consecuentemente todas las Mercedes" (God will send a good spirit to release the spell from the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, the Laws of the Indies, and consequently all of the land grants). By making this prediction, "Información general" inverts the normative relationships between referents and representations; according to its logic, God does not give his followers the lands themselves but, rather, the documents that make lands possible in the first place. More abstractly, "Información general" suggests that media simulate, saturate, and even create environments; to invoke

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José Esteban Muñoz (1999: 196), it points out that "performances . . . deform and re-form the world." Ultimately, then, "Información general" does not simply recount the particular past of the land grants; it models a generalizable method for re-representing—and reinhabiting—environments. To reclaim the Pueblo Olvidado, the Alianza put this method to the test: instead of arming bandidos with bandoliers, it mobilized people around texts and images. If we want to understand the imagined environment, therefore, we cannot focus solely on the ideas that these media expressed; additionally, we must figure out how these media circulated—and in the process, how they changed the borderlands.

Nuevomexicana/o Counterpublics

Over the course of the 1960s, the Aliancistas developed a distinctive approach to land reclamation: rather than articulating an abstract love of nature, they deployed concrete forms of culture, and rather than preserving environments, they produced media. When they put these media into the public sphere, however, they often received negative news coverage. Sometimes, the Anglo press represented Tijerina as a radical revolutionary; thus, *American Opinion* (Strang 1967) stoked fears about a "communist plan to grab the Southwest." Other times, the Anglo press characterized Tijerina as a charismatic con man, as when the *Rio Grande Sun* (1966) said his "high-powered oratory" convinced "people of good intentions" to donate their "hard-earned cash." The rest of the time, the Anglo press depicted Tijerina as a "primitive rebel" (Nabokov 1969: 5) and "tattooed delinquent" (Gardner 1970: 19); by mistranslating "Reies" as "king" and "Tijerina" as "tiger," they made up the King Tiger moniker. Of course, Tijerina countered these critiques; in the 1970s, he attacked biographers for (supposedly) misrepresenting his life, and in the 1980s, he sued the makers of *The Milagro Beanfield War* (1988) for (allegedly) stealing his stories (RLT: box 54, folder 6). More importantly, Tijerina cultivated a counterpublic: an "open-ended" and "self-organized" group that takes shape as "strangers" engage with media (Warner 2002: 72, 67). Whether they are marked by race, class, gender, or some other attribute, counterpublics are "structured by different dispositions or protocols from those that obtain elsewhere in the culture, making different assumptions about what can be said or what goes without saying" (119). For this reason, counterpublics destabilize not just dominant groups but also the aesthetic practices, media technologies, and social norms

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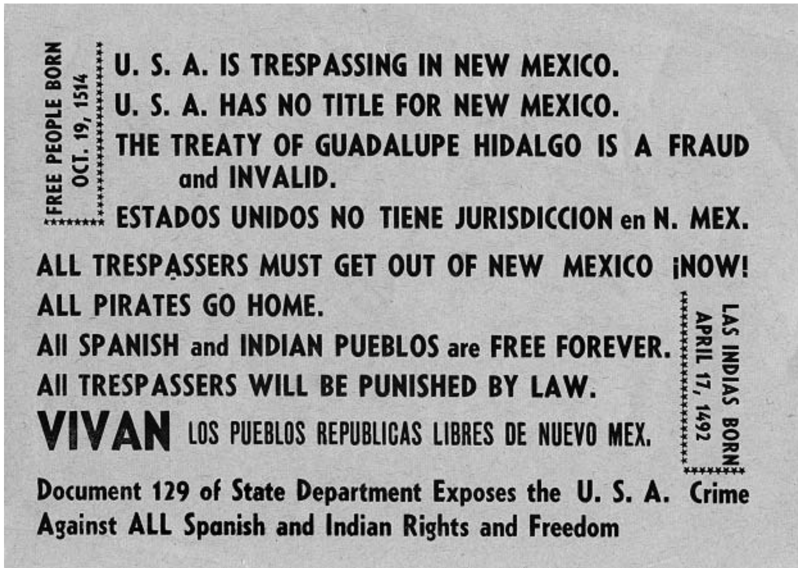

Figure 2 "U.S.A. Is Trespassing in New Mexico." Reies López Tijerina Papers, box 2, folder 1, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico

that allow these groups to exist. Even in a counterpublic, the Aliancistas could not break completely from Spanish colonialism. But while they contributed to ongoing conflicts among humans, they experimented with alternative attitudes toward nonhumans: like "environmentalists of the poor," they replaced "extraction-driven" "official landscape[s]" with "historically textured" "vernacular landscape[s]" (Nixon 2011: 17).

To create their counterpublic, the Aliancistas used a socially specific language. In theory, they understood themselves as Spanish speakers, but in practice, they explored—and exploded—the threshold between Spanish and English. Consider figure 2. This poster insists, "U.S.A. is trespassing in New Mexico." At the bottom, it proclaims, "VIVAN los Pueblos Repúblicas Libres" (Long Live the Free City-States). Throughout, it uses abbreviations ("Nuevo Mex."), mixed punctuation ("¡Now!"), and omitted accents (from *jurisdicción* and *república*). With these stylistic strategies, the poster provided fodder for critics like Richard Gardner (1970: 10), who claimed, "Few of the [Aliancistas] spoke English well or were expert in Spanish." However, the poster also opened new sites of textual and visual sociality. On the one hand, it added to the burgeoning canon of Latina/o literature, employing and legitimating a hybrid border language. On the other

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hand, it joined a longer lineage of Nuevomexicana/o place making; along with Otero-Warren's chapter "Spanish Place Names," it offered ways of talking and thinking about "free people" and "free city-states." In the final analysis, it performed the Pueblo Olvidado; without using the terms of white environmentalism, it helped recirculate an imagined environment.

While the Aliancistas alternated among several languages, they experimented with dozens of literary genres. Like earlier Nuevomexicanas/os, they used these genres to narrate individual identities; thus, Tijerina punctuated his memoir with a conversion scene, a picaresque journey, a couple of folktales, a dozen letters, and several hundred diary entries. Unlike their predecessors, they also employed these genres to restore Spain's environmental bureaucracy. On many occasions, the Aliancistas sent bureaucratic media to their antagonists; in 1967, they issued "Final Notice to the United States of America and the State of New Mexico," and in 1968, they published "Demands of the Indo-Hispano to the Federal Government" (RLT: box 1, folder 1). Even more often, they addressed bureaucratic media to each other; in their inaugural year, they passed bylaws and a constitution, and for the next decade, they maintained meeting minutes, membership lists, budget ledgers, and other records. Cumulatively, these media made a counterpublic in which it was possible to critique US environmental (mis)management—and even to call Smokey the Bear a "white racist pig" (Kosek 2006). Consider the contract about San Joaquín (see fig. 3). As a text, the contract laid out particular rights and responsibilities. But with its paratexts—gilded seals, handwritten signatures, and other bureaucratic insignia—it created a general sense of Spanish sovereignty. As Gérard Genette reminds us (1997: 2), "paratexts" are the "threshold[s] . . . [that give] the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back" from a text. In this case, the paratexts divided the Anglo public from the Nuevomexicana/o counterpublic; while the former associated national forests with leisure, the latter linked land grants to labor. In turn, the paratexts distinguished US policy from Nuevomexicana/o practice; whereas the first relied on rigid rules that damaged environments (for instance, by making wildfires more severe), the latter used an "honor-shame complex" that remained resilient amid changing conditions (Rodríguez 2006).

To complete their counterpublic, the Aliancistas employed a variety of media. In their earliest days, they published pamphlets for their members, posted signs in their communities, and wrote letters to

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CONTRATO FORMAL Y OFICIAL

EN EL NOMBRE DE DIOS TODO PODEROSO, CONOCER TODO HOMBRE POR ESTOS PRESENTES, Este acuerdo, hecho este dia **doce** de **Septiembre**, 19**66**, por y entre el Pueblo de **San Joaquin del Rio de Chama**, una corporacion municipal, fundada y establecida en **Agosto 1, 1806**, por **Don Joaquin Alencastre**, Gobernador de la provincia de Nuevo Mexico, una de las Provincias Internas de los Reinos de Las Indias, de aqui en adelante llamada la parte de la primera parte y la Alianza Federal de Mercedes, una corporacion Nuevo Mexicana de Albuquerque, Nuevo Mexico desde aqui llamada la parte de la segunda parte, de buena fe se obligan a si mismos y prometen de llevar a efecto y de hacer lo siguiente:

Por cuanto, la parte de la primera parte contrata con la parte de la segunda parte, de dejar, permitier, ceder, consentir a lisencia, garantia, autoriza, comisiona la parte de la segunda parte, a, ya sea representar o nombrar, elegir, designar a persona o personas o sociedad a representar la parte de la primera parte, ya sea en el nivel administrativo Estatal o Federal, o ante el Gobernador del Estado de Nuevo Mexico o la Legislatura del Estado de Nuevo Mexico, o en y ante cualquier corte del Estado de Nuevo Mexico o de los Estados Unidos de America, o ante el Presidente y Congreso de los Estados Unidos de America o cualquiera agencia o departamento del Gobierno de los Estados Unidos de America.

Por cuanto, los hereditarios puebleros y pueblcras del Pueblo de **San Joaquin del Rio de Chama**, miembros de la Alianza Federal de Mercedes, la parte de la segunda parte, hicieron en o como en Septiembre 3, 1966, votaron y pasaron cierta resolucion, el texto de la cual es acentado aqui como sigue y por esta referencia incorporada aqui como parte integrante e inherente de este contrato, y saber:

> Resuelvase por la Asamblea general de esta Convencion, que una ley obligatoria sea establesida para que todas las Mercedes (cada una) den pleanos poderes, poder de abogado, poderes extraordinarios en toda su plenitud, para redimir, restituir, rescatar, proteger y administrar sin perjuicio de los dedechos independientes que cada Merced tenga o tiene por las Leyes Reales de las Indias y segun lo estipulado en el Tratado de Guadalupe Hidalgo y el Articulo II y Sec. 5 de la Constitucion de Nuevo Mexico, como tambien el Articulo VI de la Constitucion de los Estados Unidos: a la ALIANZA FEDERAL DE MERCEDES.
>
> Quede entendido, que esta ley, y el fin de ella, sera con el unico fin de proteger los derechos que cada Merced tiene, de los poderes extranos organizados para perjudicar a las Mercedes y los Herederos.
>
> Quede entendido, que esta ley, no dara poder a la Alianza Federal para confiscar, ni alterar los derechos independientes de cada Merced. Sino que sera solo para quardar la confederacion de Mercedes y Herederos para nuestra mutua proteccion en contra de todos los que procuran el nal de los Herederos.
>
> Entiendase, que si esta resolucion es aprobada por la mayoria de los Herederos: automaticamente, la LEY quede ya establesida, y queda por lo tanto hecha LEY, desde el memento que esta resolucion sea aprobada por el Pueblo o la Asamblea de la Cuarta Convencion Nacional de la Alianza Federal de Mercedes.

Por cuanto la parte de la primera parte accede a pagar a la parte de la segunda parte diez por ciento (10%) annual de cualquiera y todas las ingresos colectadas por la parte de la primera parte, para que la parte de la segunda parte pueda especificamente desempenar sus obligaciones bajo este contrato y convenio segun aqui asentado.

Por cuanto, en consideracion de lo emprendido por la parte de la segunda parte y sus oficiales y agentes, la parte de la primera parte debera de ejecutar y expedir cartas de comunidad perpetuamente e identicos con derechos iguales a todos los Herederos y Herederas, puebleros y puebleras de este pueblo, en todos los numerosos y diversos aspectos, e otras persona nombradas y designadas por la parte de la segunda parte de tiempo en tiempo por el Ayuntamiento de la parte de la primera parte a aprobar. Cartas de Comunidad deberan de ser fechadas con la misma fecha que este contrato, y tomara efecto desde esta fecha.

Y POR EL VERDADERO Y FIEL desempeno de todos y cada uno de los convenios y tratados arriba mencionados, tales partes se obligan, una a la otra a una pena de $1.00, como liquidacion de perjuicios pagados por la parte delincuente por cada descuido u omision.

EN TESTIMIONIO DE LO CUAL, las partes aqui presentes ponen sus manos el dia y ano arriba escrito.

PRESIDENTE DE LA ALIANZA FEDERAL DE MERCEDES

ALCALDE ORDINARIO Y PRESIDENTE DE LA CONSEJO

MAYORDOMO Y REGIDOR

JUEZ DEL CAMPO Y REGIDOR

ALGUACIL MAYOR Y REGIDOR

ESCRIBANO DE LA CONSEJO Y REGIDOR

ALFEREZ Y REGIDOR

Ejecutado en la presencia de:

Figure 3 "Contrato formal y official." Reies López Tijerina Papers, box 45, folder 14, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico

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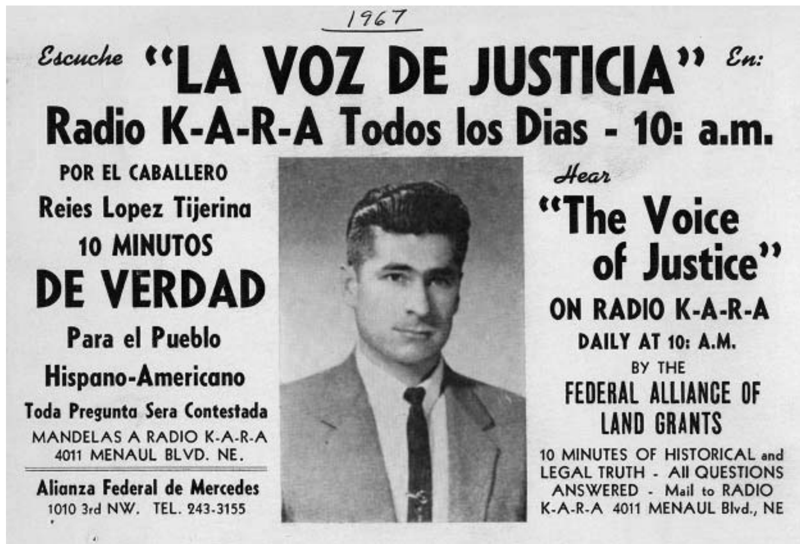

Figure 4 "La voz de justicia." Reies López Tijerina Papers, box 1, folder 36, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico

government officials. As time passed, they started making electronic media. In April 1965, they launched a daily radio show for audiences across New Mexico. In August 1965, they created a weekly television program that aired in Arizona, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Texas. Finally, in August 1968, they founded a newspaper that circulated around the borderlands. With each of these media, the Aliancistas advertised events; for instance, Tijerina (1978: 114) remembers, "la gente comenzó a correr la voz sobre [las] programa[s] . . . [y] la sala de la Alianza se llenaba" (the people started spreading the word about the programs . . . and the Alianza's offices filled up). But even when they could not bring people into physical contact, the Aliancistas formed virtual ties; for example, Tijerina (116) recalls, "telefonemas, cartas y telegramas llegaban de todas partes" (telephone calls, letters, and telegrams arrived from all parts). By blending physical and virtual socialities, the Aliancistas sustained the reciprocal relationships that are crucial to counterpublics; thus, while an advertisement for "La voz de justicia" ("The Voice of Justice") (see fig. 4) promises "10 minutes of historical and legal truth," it also asks listeners to mail questions into the radio station's offices. Ultimately, then, the Aliancistas helped the United Farm Workers, the Royal Chicano Air Force, and El Teatro Campesino fight for the future of electronic media. As Curtis Marez

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(2016: ix–x) demonstrates, these organizations used film and photography to explore "relations of power" and envision "more egalitarian social orders." Through their experiments, they "did not simply change *what* audiences saw [and heard] but instead attempted to alter *how* they saw [and heard]" (x). In Tijerina's (1978: 116) evocative terms, they made electronic media the "mejores armas para reeducar [la] raza" (best weapons for reeducating [the] people).

Counterpublics are conditions of possibility. Because the Aliancistas switched languages, combined genres, and used various media, they were able to rewrite—and to some extent reshape—history. In texts like "Land Grant Officials State Their Claim" (1966) (RLT: box 2, folder 1), they communicated in the conflicting registers that Walter Benjamin (1968) calls "homogenous time" and "messianic time." With some sentences, they explained how Nuevomexicanas/os lost their lands, whereas elsewhere they insisted that Spanish laws had "never been repealed," that Mexican land grants had "never been dissolved," and that their pueblo's "rights" had never been "usurped." The Aliancistas blurred the boundaries between what was and what might have been, between what is and what might yet be. In a practice I refer to as "strategic anachronism," they created worlds that were at once incompatible and indissoluble; to invoke Benjamin (1968: 263), they "blast[ed]" worlds out of the past, restored them to the present, and treated "the entire history of mankind [as] an enormous abridgement."

By exploring this plurality of possible worlds, the Aliancistas departed from the dominant traditions of environmentalism. Throughout the twentieth century, white environmentalists relied on consciousness-raising; whether they appealed to scientific rationality or Romantic sentimentality, they encouraged followers to forsake civilization and embrace nature. In contrast, the Aliancistas used world-making; with "city-state" maps (RLT: box 45, folder 14), "No Trespassing" signs (see fig. 5), and other eco-media, they simultaneously created a new counterpublic and re-created old land grants. As they made their worlds, the Aliancistas contributed to Spanish colonialism—and, more generally, to the human "possession" of nonhuman environments (Ybarra 2016). At the same time, however, the Aliancistas fought against US colonialism. Although they never self-identified as environmentalists, the Aliancistas still invented a resilient imagined environment. In the end, they hoped to reverse the interlocking processes of capitalist dispossession and ecological degradation—to turn private properties into communal pueblos, to replace exploitative economies with subsistence strategies, and to accept (rather than avoid) labor in, on, and

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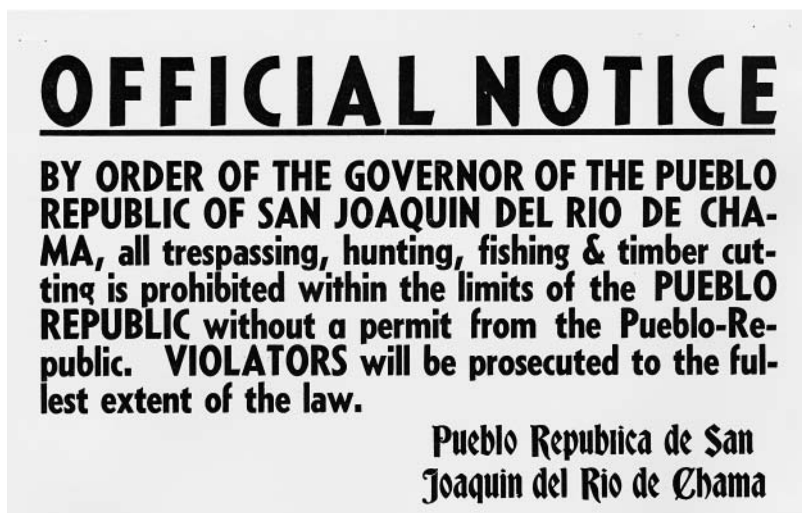

OFFICIAL NOTICE

BY ORDER OF THE GOVERNOR OF THE PUEBLO REPUBLIC OF SAN JOAQUIN DEL RIO DE CHA-MA, all trespassing, hunting, fishing & timber cut-ting is prohibited within the limits of the PUEBLO REPUBLIC without a permit from the Pueblo-Re-public. VIOLATORS will be prosecuted to the ful-lest extent of the law.

Pueblo Republica de San
Joaquin del Rio de Chama

Figure 5 "Official Notice." Reies López Tijerina Papers, box 45, folder 14, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico

with the land. As a start, they saturated the Anglo public sphere with Nuevomexicana/o eco-media—and, for a few weeks, turned a national forest back into a land grant.

Possibilities in the Past

During the Echo Amphitheater occupation, the Aliancistas set themselves on a collision course with the US government. In the winter of 1966–67, they fought with state and federal officials. Then, in the summer of 1967, they attacked the courthouse in Tierra Amarilla. By sending a "flash of indigenous revolution [across] American TV screens" (RLT: box 2, folder 10), the Aliancistas became prominent figures in the Chicana/o movement. But as they resituated their regional counterpublic within a national public, they closed down world-making possibilities.

In some ways, the costs of publicity were all too clear: the state police carried out dozens of arrests, the National Guard deployed hundreds of troops, and prosecutors subjected Tijerina to four trials and two years in prison. In other ways, the costs of publicity were harder to tally. Like César Chávez, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, and José Angel Gutiérrez, Tijerina started addressing a national public.

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But in contrast to the other so-called Horsemen of the Chicano Movement, Tijerina became known as a bandido. As Busto (2006), Bebout (2011), and Trujillo (2013) have shown, this trope encouraged Chicanas/os to celebrate Tijerina's individual heroics and ignore the Alianza's collective experiments. Just as important, it pushed Chicanas/os away from the Pueblo Olvidado.

Amid all the publicity, the Aliancistas stopped focusing on their land grants and started fantasizing about the Aztec homeland of Aztlán. Since the twelfth century, Aztlán had existed as an oral tradition, and since the sixteenth century, it had circulated in Aztec codices and Spanish reports. In 1969, it resurfaced in "El plan espiritual de Aztlán," which the poet Alurista presented at the First National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference. At times, Alurista (2017: 27) evoked the Alianza's environmental struggle; thus, he claimed that "Aztlán belong[ed] to those who plant[ed] the seeds, water[ed] the fields, and gather[ed] the crops." For the most part, though, Alurista drew on José Vasconcelos's theory of "La Raza Cósmica" (the cosmic race), insisting that "the call of our blood [was] our power" (27). By idealizing the "bronze race," Alurista called on Chicanas/os to use "their nationalism as the key or common denominator for mass mobilization and organization" (27). The Aliancistas heeded his call: while Tijerina was behind bars, they voted "for the creation of the new nation of La República de Aztlán" (RLT: box 2, folder 2), and in the fall of 1969, they sent officials a map of "the minimal fair area to which . . . [they were] entitled" (RLT: box 1, folder 7). As Trujillo (2013) and Saldaña-Portillo (2016) argue, Chicanas/os bonded with Aztecs by erasing their ties to—and their expropriation of—other Natives. And as Bebout (2011: 95) shows, the Aliancistas produced the "pliable past" of Aztlán by spurning their concrete history of communal land tenure. In the end, they became cultural nationalists; by essentializing human identities and nonhuman environments, they imagined an indigenous homeland that resembled a settler state (see fig. 6).[8]

Like so many Latina/o "worlds," the Precarious Desert and the Pueblo Olvidado were "not to come" (Coronado 2013). But though they never rematerialized in physical space, they continue to exist in Otero-Warren's essays, Cabeza de Baca's recipes, and the Alianza's archives. During the trial that followed the Echo Amphitheater occupation, the United States, as always, tried to reduce the Aliancistas to their acts of armed resistance. In the process, it gave them yet another stage for their world-making performance. During the closing

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Figure 6 "Map of La República de Aztlán." Reies López Tijerina Papers, box 1, folder 7, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico

statements, one defendant proclaimed, "I am Don Barney Quinto Cesar, King Emperor of the Eastern and Western Indies and Islands and Mainlands of the Oceans and Continent, and King of Nueva Galicia and of Nuevo Toledo and of several other kingdoms. . . . The acts complained of . . . transpired in the República de San Joaquín del Río de Chama, one of my vast isles, wherein it is I who say what is lawful and unlawful, and not the United States" (RLT: box 39, folder 9). With these words, the king did not just defy US laws; he defied Anglo imagined environments. Despite (and in some ways because of) their debts to Spanish colonialism, the king and his companions had become attached to a particular place. Through their struggles to survive in this place, they had developed a unique vision of economic equality, ecological sustainability, and cultural identity. Instead of seeing nature as something to be preserved, they acknowledged it as a site for work. And instead of instructing individuals to find their inner freedoms, they helped communities "stay with the trouble."

As climate change intensifies, the borderlands will experience longer droughts, worse wildfires, and hotter summers. In response, we could craft a master narrative for the future—for the Anthropocene, for the "Chthulucene" (Haraway 2016), or for the "New Climatic Regime" (Latour 2018). Alternatively, we could reconstruct a plurality of possible pasts—cultures we could have celebrated, environments we could have inhabited, and worlds we could have made. These pasts

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might not support simple slogans like "Toward the Terrestrial!" (Latour 2018: 58) or "Make Kin Not Babies!" (Haraway 2016: 5–6). Nevertheless, they might teach us new ways of representing, relating to, and residing in our environments. In some respects, Otero-Warren, Cabeza de Baca, and the Aliancistas perpetuated the "possession" of the planet (Ybarra 2016: 96). But in other respects, they experimented with resilient and respectful attitudes toward humans and nonhumans. To prepare for our precarious future, we need to tell both of these stories in their indissoluble interdependence. Even as we reconcile "human history" with "natural history" in the larger epoch of the Anthropocene (Chakrabarty 2009), we must learn how Nuevomexicanas/os, Latinas/os, and all other peoples have created imagined environments.

Carlos Alonso Nugent works at the intersections of English, Latina/o studies, and the environmental humanities. He is writing a literary and cultural history of the "imagined environments" that have shaped the US-Mexico borderlands. He has articles forthcoming in *Modernism/Modernity* Print Plus and *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*. In 2020–21, he is participating in the Mellon Fellowship of Scholars in the Humanities at Stanford University, and in 2021–22, he is joining the faculty of Vanderbilt University.

Notes

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1 Throughout this article, I use the abbreviation "RLT" to designate the Reies López Tijerina Papers. Whenever I cite a Spanish-language source, I place the original between quotation marks and my English translation in parentheses.

2 Kosek (2006), Correia (2013), and Oropeza (2008, 2014) have cited RLT but have not paid much attention to its aesthetic properties. Meanwhile, Busto (2006) and Bebout (2011) have close-read several texts but have not drawn on RLT. Trujillo (2013, 2017) has applied literary-critical methods to RLT but has still based most of his arguments on Tijerina 1978.

3 For an alternative interpretation, see Ybarra 2016: 80–84. I agree that Otero-Warren "expresses wistfulness about the passing on of intimacy with the natural environment" (81). But as I mourn Otero-Warren's loss,

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I also acknowledge her racism. And as I treat her storm as a "trope" for "American colonization" (82), I also read it as a material phenomenon.

4 For reminding me that El Cuate "serves at the family's pleasure," I want to thank one of my anonymous reviewers. For a different perspective, see Roybal 2017: 101–26.

5 According to Oropeza (2008: 50n6), Tijerina "sexually molested" his daughter Rose "when she was a teenager." Also, as documented by Busto (2006: 185–200), Tijerina spent the end of his life inventing anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. Scholars suspect that Tijerina lost some of his sanity in prison. Nevertheless, his deeds and words are repulsive.

6 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, U.S.-Mex. Rep., February 2, 1848, 9 Stat. 922.

7 Indeed, the Aliancistas used this term so frequently that Trujillo (2013) referenced it in the title to "Forgotten Pueblos."

8 For similar points about different maps of Aztlán, see Saldaña-Portillo 2016: 198.

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