

A Trip Through the Mind Jail

A Textual History of Raúl Salinas' Magnum Opus

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ABSTRACT

This essay attends to the poetry of Chicana activist Raúl Salinas (1934–2008), specifically his most transgressive and innovative works which appear in A Trip Through the Mind Jail y Otras Excursions. I approach Salinas's poetic works as textual events following Joseph Grigely's reflections in Textualiterity: Art, Theory and Textual Criticism where he conceives of texts as works in motion that frame the work of art as polytextual and comprised of multiple iterations.

A brief biography: the poetic-politics of Raúl Salinas

CHICANO POET AND ACTIVIST RAÚL R. SALINAS [RAÚLSALINAS] was born in San Antonio, TX in 1934.¹ He grew up in the multi-racial working-class neighborhoods of Austin where he started to develop his sense of artistry, poetry, and solidarity. At the age of seventeen, Salinas joined a seasonal workers' caravan departing for the strawberry fields of California. In 1957 he began his long and painful cycle of imprisonment. Salinas spent the next 15 years surviving the brutality of the carceral state; his sentences were mostly due to low level drug offenses. These years of torment and torture cannot be downplayed and yet his stay in four federal penitentiaries (Soledad in California; Huntsville in Texas; Leavenworth in

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1. Salinas went by several names throughout his life. The nicknames of his youth were Roy and Tapón. When he started publishing, he signed his work raúlsalinas. This use of the lower case was inspired by American poet e. e. cummings. Later in life when he was doing activist work for the American Indian Movement he was given the name Autumn Sun. In his poem *On Being/Becoming* he writes, "Naming ceremonies / Autumn Sun / Speak to many nations / for red nations" (2007, 5). During the 1970's and 1980's Salinas worked closely with the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, which advocated for the release of political prisoners.

Kansas; Marion in Illinois) created the circumstances for the radicalization of his political consciousness and for his artistry to develop and sharpen.²

Upon his release in 1972 and with the help of scholars and activists in Seattle, Salinas was admitted to the University of Washington as a student and shortly after hired as an instructor of Chicano literature. Throughout the 1970's Salinas became an important member of the Chicano Movement, both in its literary and political manifestations. His poetry was published in anthologies and chapbooks, and he dedicated himself fully to the internationalist revolutionary politics arising from the Chicano, Black, and Indigenous lived experiences. By the early 1980's his parole issues were resolved sufficiently to allow him to return to his hometown of Austin, Texas. Back in Austin his political, literary, and activist lives converged with the founding of Resistencia, a bookstore for working class people in East Austin. This bookstore would eventually become Red Salmon Arts, an Austin cultural institution that operates as a bookstore, a local archive, a printing press, and a community arts center for the Chicana, Latinx, and Native American communities.

Salinas died in 2008 as a recognized and celebrated poet and activist.³ He left behind a rich legacy both material — a bookstore and printing press — and literary: his poetry is valued as a vital contribution to the canon of Chicana and Latinx letters. His life was a genuine 'trip' through the politically charged hemispheric context. His poetry reflects the solidarity work he did on Indigenous reservations in North America, his visits to socialist Cuba, Nicaragua, and Chiapas as well as his constant demand for Black and Brown liberation. It is no surprise, then, that his best known,

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2. Salinas's posthumous *Memoir of Un Ser Humano: The Life and Times de Raúl Salinas* (2018) is a vital biographical resource. It also includes unpublished poetry. For selected interviews, articles, and documents see *Raúl Salinas and the Jail Machine: My Weapon is My Pen: Selected Writings by Raúl Salinas* (2006) edited by Louis Mendoza. Salinas' published poetry can be found in *Un Trip Through the Mind Jail* (1980, reprint 1999), *East of the Freeway* (1995) and *Indio Trails: A Xicano Odyssey through Indian Country* (2007). Salinas's papers are archived at Stanford University's Special Collections; the guide can be found here: <https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf7m3nb2j4/>. Lastly, for in-depth interviews with Salinas that touch upon his life, politics and poetics see: https://search-works.stanford.edu/?f%5Bcollection%5D%5B%5D=9083941&page=1&per_page=20&q=Ra%C3%BAI+Salinas&search_field=search&utf8=%E2%9C%93.
 3. To understand Salinas within the context of Chicana poetry, see BRUCE-NOVOA 1982 and CANDELARIA 1986. For foundational articles of Salinas scholarship, see OLGUIN 1997 and MENDOZA 2003.

most cited and widely anthologized poem is titled *A Trip Through the Mind Jail* (1969), a nostalgic reflection on the Chicanx neighborhoods of his youth and his painful memories of prison life.

In this essay I will present the textual history of Salinas's *magnum opus*, and, through this textual history, track Salinas's evolution from prison poet to canonical poet. A textual history of *A Trip* shows the long and complex path from marginality that Salinas has to take to establish himself as a representative voice within a Chicanx/Latinx cultural context. As will be made apparent, the multimedia nature of this poem demands that its textual history be understood as a complex artistic network that expands beyond the page and that sends reader and critic in multiple directions.

Textual history of *A Trip Througb Mind Jail*

A Trip Through the Mind Jail was 'born' in the magazines and newspapers that Salinas and other Chicanx inmates edited and published inside Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary in Kansas. However, there is some confusion in the scholarship regarding the first public iteration of this text due to some inconsistencies between Salinas's bibliography and the epistolary accounts from this period of his life. Salinas's letters, like most his papers, are housed in his archives at Stanford University. Most scholarly sources maintain that this poem was first published by the newspaper *Aztlán de Leavenworth* on May 5, 1970 in broadsheet format (see Figs. 1–1a). However, the epistolary record mentions a few other publications in which this poem appeared at about the same time.

In a letter to Dorothy Harth dated August 12, 1972, Salinas states, "It [Trip] has appeared in 1 general prison magazine and 2 Chicano prison papers; in 2 national Chicano magazines, 2 anthologies and 1 Chicano press paper" (2006, 154).⁴ The general prison magazine he refers to is *New Era Penal Magazine* (Leavenworth, KS) for which Salinas was co-editor. One of the two Chicano prison papers he references is the above mentioned and cited *Aztlán de Leavenworth* (Leavenworth, KS) and the other may refer to *Penal Digest International* (Iowa City, IA). The two national Chicano magazines may be *Con Safos Magazine* (Los Angeles, CA) and *Entrelineas Magazine* (Kansas City, MO). The two anthologies mentioned

4. Dorothy Harth (1925–2015) was professor of Modern Languages at Syracuse University and Onondaga Community College. She specialized in Latin American and Chicano literature and co-edited *Voices of Aztlán: Chicano Literature Today* (1974).



AZTLÁN — "the lands to the north". The legendary site assumed to have been the Aztec's point of origin in their many sojourn south to Tenochtitlán, which today we know as México City.

The theories regarding the geographical location of these fabled lands are many. Yet, should one combine these theories, one would find that a number of them fix the site well within the boundaries of the Southwestern United States.

At the National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference, held in Denver in March of this year; it was decided that (among other things), indeed, the Southwestern states would henceforth be recognized as the nation of **AZTLÁN**. The Chicano consists of Leavenworth number approximately 400. By no mere coincidence, the greatest percentage of us come from the aforementioned area.

It is with this spirit of our ancestors deeply rooted within us and a pride in our homelands, that we consider ourselves, behind prison walls, true representatives of **AZTLÁN**. A miniature nation is, perhaps, more appropriate.

Therefore, in good faith and for a true cause, we feel justified in having chosen **AZTLÁN** as the title for our newspaper.

Like everything else that has gone into making the existence of this newspaper possible, the selection of the title was a group effort. It goes without saying, that the suggestion for an Aztec motif with corresponding designs were selected in the same manner for obvious reasons.

The two figures on either side of the title represent Tlaco, an Aztec king (A. D. 1481-1486). They are found sculptured on the Stone of Tlaco, which is in the National Museum of México City. The stepped border design surrounding the figures and title is taken from pictures of Aztec ceramic pottery.

The goals of our newspaper are twofold: to Destroy and Rebuild. To destroy the myth of the worthless Chicano; the misconception of his non-productivity the prejudice that exists, for lack of understanding, in the minds of many; the inferior feelings which we may, or may not, be possessed by. To rebuild the image of ourselves in the eyes of others; the dignity to face the world as Chicano and May the sense of pride in who we are. And, finally, to establish communication among ourselves and with our people, wherever they may be. We can accomplish these goals because: **SOMOS AZTLÁN!**

PARA AZTLÁN DE OSCAR J. VIGILANO.

AZTLÁN ha despertado. No ha despertado por el ruido de la casualidad, sino por el ruido, más fuerte, de la necesidad. Todos te conocen, **AZTLÁN**, pero no salíamos claro llamarte. Eras como un hombre adormido por el barrio entero, pero por miedo o por respeto no nos acercábamos a habiarte. Miedo porque hay quien te cree peligroso, respeto porque nosotros los que te conocemos sabemos que lo mereces. Hay nos reunidos con fervor de hermanos. Tú nos unes. Aun en las horas negras del pasado la Raza no te olvidaba, la Raza siempre te admiró, te necesitaba. Pero la Raza sí fue olvida, fue insultada, fue traicionada, agnata y hasta a veces... encarcelada. Tú nos unes. Quédate un nuevo horizonte se levante, quién sabe dónde. Nosotros lo buscamos. Te necesitamos, **AZTLÁN**.

Atrás quedarán aunque sea por un segundo, los crímenes cometidos y los no cometidos, los castigos, las injusticias, los horrores, todos "nuestros" recuerdos. Queremos volar contigo, **AZTLÁN**, y contigo volar, pero soltar realidades.

Muchos estamos presos, algunos de nosotros mismos, otros de otro destino. Unos con sentencia, otros sin. Unos con uniforme, otros sin. Ahora **AZTLÁN** se ha despertado y nos une a todos fuertemente. Juntos queramos hablar, queramos gritar, queramos aprender, queramos escuchar, queramos enseñar, queramos OPRER. Que por medio de **AZTLÁN** dejemos a los cuerpos encorados y hagamos volar a nuestras alas, que son libres, por las insploradas alturas de la esperanza.

AZTLÁN — "Las tierras hacia el norte". El sitio legendario que se presume fue el punto donde se originó el éxodo de los aztecas hacia Tenochtitlán, la que hoy conocemos como Ciudad de México.

Las teorías tocante a la posición geográfica de estas fabulosas tierras son muchas y variadas. Sin embargo, si combináramos todas estas teorías, encontraríamos que la mayoría de ellas fijan bien el sitio dentro de la separación del suroeste de los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica.

En la Conferencia Nacional de la Liberación de la Juventud Chicana celebrada en Denver, Colorado, en marzo de este año, se decidió, entre otras cosas, que los estados del suroeste de los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica serían reconocidos como la nación de **AZTLÁN**.

Los comunistas Chicanos de Leavenworth sonos alrededor de cuatrocientos. Pero, no por mera coincidencia, la mayoría de nosotros procedemos de las tierras antes mencionadas.

Con el espíritu de nuestros antepasados tan profundamente enraizado dentro de nosotros, y con un sentido de orgullo de nuestros estados nativos, aun dentro de estas paredes y barras nos consideramos verdaderos representantes de **AZTLÁN**. Podríamos decir, quizás, que formamos una pequeña nación.

Por lo tanto, con buena fe y verdadera causa creemos más que justificado el haber escogido **AZTLÁN** como nombre para nuestro periódico.

Como todos los pasos que se han dado para hacer posible la existencia de este periódico, la selección de su nombre también ha sido un esfuerzo colectivo. De más está decir que la decoración azteca en el título fue seleccionada en la misma forma por razones obvias.

Las dos figuras dibujadas a cada lado del título son de Tlaco, rey azteca (1481-1486). Se encuentran esculpidas en la piedra de Tlaco, que está en el Museo Nacional de la Ciudad de México. Las cornisas, alrededor de las figuras y el título, fueron tomadas de retratos de vasijas de cerámica aztecas.

Los propósitos de nuestro periódico son dos: Destruir y Reconstruir. Destruir el mito de la poca valía del Chicano; el falso concepto de su falta de productividad; el prejuicio que exista por falta de comprensión, en las mentes de muchos; los sentimientos de inferioridad de los cuales podemos o no estar poseídos. Para reconstruir la imagen nuestra ante los ojos ajenos; la dignidad de enfrentar al mundo como Chicanos y Humanos; un sentido de orgullo en quienes somos. Y, finalmente, para establecer comunicación entre nosotros y con nuestro pueblo, en donde quiera que estemos. Nosotros podemos lograr estos propósitos porque: **SOMOS AZTLÁN!**



A Trip Through The Mind Jail

LA LOMA

for Eldridge

Neighborhood of my youth
demolished, erased forever from
the universe.
You live on, captive, in the lonely
cellblocks of my mind.

Neighborhood of endless kills
muddled streets—all chuckhole lined--
that never drank of asphalt.
Kids barefoot/another-messed
playing marbles, munching on bean tacos
(the kind you'll never find in a café)
2 peaceful generations removed from
their abuelos' revolution.

Neighborhood of dilapidated community hall
---Salón Cinco de Mayo---
yearly (May 5/Sept. 16) gathering
of the families. Re-asserting pride
on those two significant days.
Speeches by the elders
patriarchs with evidence of oppression
distinctly etched upon marlboro faces.
"Sons of the Independence!"
Emphasis on allegiance to the tri-color
obscure names: Juárez & Hidalgo
their heroic deeds. Nostalgic tales of war
years under Villa's command. No one listened,
no one seemed to really care.
Afterwards, the dance. Modest Mexican
maids dancing polkas together
across splintered wooden floor.
They never designed to dance with boys!
The careful scrutiny by curbside sax-perts
8 & 9 years old. "Minga's how-legged,
so we know she's done it, huh?"

Neighborhood of Sunday night Sanctus
at Guadalupe Church.
Fiestas for any occasion
holidays holy days happy days
'round and 'round the promenade
sitting snow-cones---rajes---I tangle
the games--bingo cake walk spin the wheel
waking eyes at girls from cleaner neighborhoods
the unobtainables
who responded all giggles and excitement.

Neighborhood of forays down to Buena Vista--
Santa Rita Courts--Los projects--friendly neighborhood
cops n' robbers on the rooftops, sneaking peeks
in people's private night-time bedrooms
bearing gifts of Juicy Fruit gum for
the Projects girls/chasing them in adolescent heat
causing skinned knees & being run off for the night
disenchanted walking home affections spurned
stopping stay-out-late chicks in search of
Modern Romance lovers, who always stood them up
unable to leave their world in the magazines pages.
Angry fingers grabbing, squeezing, feeling,
french kisses imposed; close bodily contact, thigh &
belly rubbings under shadows of Cristo Rey Church.

Neighborhood that never saw a school--but
the cross-town walks were much more fun
embarrassed when acquaintances or friends or relatives
were sent home excused from class
for having cooties in their hair!
Did only Mexicans have cooties in their hair?
Queo gacho!

Neighborhood of Zaragoza Park
where scary stories interspersed with
inherited superstitions were exchanged
waiting for midnight and the haunting
lament of La Llorona---the weeping lady
of our myths & folklore---who wept nightly,
along the banks of Boggy Creek,
for the children she'd lost or drowned
in some river (depending on the version).
I think I heard her once
and cried
out of sadness and fear
running all the way home nape hairs at attention
swallow a pinch of table salt and
make the sign of the cross
sure cure for frightened Mexican boys.

Neighborhood of Spanish Town Cafe
first grown-up (13) hangout
Andrés,
tolerant manager, proprietor, cook
victim of bungling baby burglars
your loss: Priton n' Pepel-Colas---was our gain

SUPLEMENTO - PAG. UNO - AZTLÁN - LEAVENWORTH
5 DE MAYO DE 1970

you put up with us and still survived!
You too, are granted immortality.

Neighborhood of groups and clusters
sniffing gas, drinking muscatel
solidarity cement hardening
the clan the family the neighborhood the gang
Koms!

Restless innocents tattoo'd crosses on their hands
"just doing things different"
"From now on, all troubling mex kids will
be sent to Gatesville for 9 months."
Heavy hose from la corre
khakis worn too low---below the waist
the stomps, the greña with duck-tail
---Pachuco fo---

Neighborhood of could-be artists
who pined their talents on the pool's
bath-house walls/ intricately adorned
with esoteric symbols of their cult:

the art form of our alums
sore meaningful & significant
than Egypt's finest hieroglyphics.

Neighborhood where purple clouds of Tapon
smoke one day descended, enshrouded us all.
Skulls unscaped---Rhythm n' Blues
Charlie's 7th. St. Club
loud negro music-wise spodee-odee-barbecue-grass
our very own connection man: big black Johnny S-----

Neighborhood of Hupper Bar
where Lalo shotgunned
Pete Evans to death because of
an unintentional stare,
and because he was secundaria,
only to end his life neatly sliced
by prison barber's razor.
Durán's grocery & gas station
Ultero drunkenly stabbed Julio
arguing over who'd drive home
and got 35 years for his crime.
Raton: 20 years for a matchbox of weed. Is that cold?
No lawyer no jury no trial it's guilty.
Aren't we all guilty?
Indian mothers, too, so unaware
of courtroom tragi-comedies
folded arms across their bosoms
saying, "Sea por Dios."

Neighborhood of my childhood
neighborhood that no longer exists
some died young---fortunate---some rot in prisons
the rest drifted away to be conjured up
in minds of others like them.
For me: only the NOW of THIS journey is REAL!

Neighborhood of my adolescence
neighborhood that is no more
YOU ARE TORN PIECES OF MY FLESH!!!
Therefore, you ARE.

LA LOMA---AUSTIN---MI BARRIO---
I bear you no grudge
I needed you then...identity...a sense of belonging.
I need you now.
So essential to adult days of imprisonment,
you keep me away from INSANITY's hungry jaws;
Selling/Laughing/Crying.

I respect your having been:
My Loss of Austin
my Rose Hill of Los Angeles
my West Side of San Antonio
my Quinto of Houston
my Jackson of San Jo
my Segundo of El Paso
my Barrels of Alburque
my Westside of Denver

Flats, Los Marcos, Maravilla, Calle Guadalupe, Magnolia,
Buena Vista, Mateo, La Seia, Chiquis, El Sur and all
Chicano neighborhoods that now exist and once
existed; somewhere..... someone remembers.....

rádicalismo
18, Sept.-'69

are *Aztlan: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature* (VALDEZ AND STEINER 1972) and *Literatura Chicana: Texto y Contexto/Chicano Literature: Text and Context* (CASTAÑEDA-SHULAR, YBARRA-FRAUSTO AND SOMMERS 1972). I cannot speculate as to the Chicano press paper Salinas refers to.

I can only assert with confidence that *A Trip Through the Mind Jail* was published in *Aztlan de Leavenworth* because copies of this newspaper survive and are archived at Stanford's Special Collections. It has been impossible to track down the other newspapers and magazines; none of them are archived at the Special Collections or available online, at least not to the best of my knowledge.

To set the record straight, Salinas's posthumous *Memoir of Un Ser Humano: The Life and Times de Raúl Salinas* (2018) includes a detailed bibliography outlined by Lilia Raquel Rosas. By combining Rosas's comprehensive bibliography with Salinas's partial record as mentioned in his 1972 letter, it is possible to reconstruct the public iterations of *A Trip Through the Mind Jail*.

Known and accessible public iterations of *A Trip Through the Mind Jail*

Anthologies:

- VALDEZ, Luis and Stan STEINER. 1972. *Aztlan: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature*. New York: Knopf.
- CASTAÑEDA-SHULAR, Antonia, Tomás YBARRA-FRAUSTO, and Joseph SOMMERS. 1972. *Literatura Chicana: Texto y Contexto/Chicano Literature: Text and Context*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- ORTEGA Y GASCA, Philip. 1973. *We are Chicanos: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature*. New York: Washington Square Press.
- GILB, Dagoberto. 2006. *Hecho en Tejas: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Chapbooks and books of poetry published by Salinas:

- SALINAS, Raúl. 1973. *Viaje/Trip*. Providence: Hellcoal Press.
- SALINAS, Raúl. 1980. *Un Trip Through the Mind Jail y Otras Excursions: poems by Raúl Salinas*. San Francisco: Editorial Pocho-Ché.
- SALINAS, Raúl. 1999. *Un Trip through the Mind Jail y Otras Excursions: Poems*. Reprint. Houston: Arte Público Press.

Newspapers:

- *Aztlán de Leavenworth*. 1970. Kansas: Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary.

Iterations mentioned by Salinas but not accessible, available or archived:

- *New Era Penal Magazine* (Leavenworth, KS)
- *Penal Digest International* (Iowa City, IA)
- *Con Safos Magazine* (Los Angeles, CA)
- *Entrelíneas Magazine* (Kansas City, MO)

First public text: the carceral iteration

I will assume that the version of *A Trip* published in *Aztlán de Leavenworth* on May 5, 1970 is the first public iteration of this text given that this is the earliest available text and that the other contemporaneous ones are at present time out of reach. With that caveat and demand for future research, let us begin an analysis of the textual history of *A Trip Through the Mind Jail*. This poem was published on a newspaper broadsheet with the dimensions of 29.5 y 23.5 inches. The bilingual newspaper in which it appeared was edited and published by inmates at Leavenworth. In 1972 Salinas explained,

A newspaper, which bears the name Aztlán, meaning “the lands to the North”, assumed to have been the point of origin for the Aztec nation, came to existence with the first issue printed in May 1970. To date, there have been four issues printed. With rare exception, the material for the paper is strictly Chicano convict work. We do not solicit outside material, and only on one occasion have we featured an article by someone other than the Chicano population of Leavenworth. In this manner we try to stress the importance of originality and the nurturing of unknown hidden talents in the arts, poetry, journalism, publication work, and public speaking.

(2010, 49).

As can be seen below (see Fig. 2), the team in charge of *Aztlán* was made up of Albert Mares (correspondence), Rubén Estrella (publicity), Alfredo Arellanes (reporter), Ricardo Mena (Vice-president), Raúl Salinas (editor) and Beto Palomino (programming). The editorial team found political and

artistic inspiration in Aztec iconography and history. The name of the newspaper is 'protected' by two images of Mexica King Tizoc (1436–1486). Also, the title and these figures are framed by a running design inspired by Aztec tiles and artwork on ceramic pottery. A slightly less elaborate running design also appears on the bottom of the page where the poem is published. These Indigenous patterns and figures are taken from the Stone of Tizoc, a basalt monolith measuring 26 ft. in diameter. This monolith resides at the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City.⁵



Figure 2. Raúl R. Salinas Archives, MO774, box 7, folder 3. With permission from Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries.

The same Serif type is used for the editorial on the front page as for the poem, except for the title of the poem, which appears to be in a stylized Helvetica type. The poem proper is dated September 14, 1969 and signed by the poet in all lower-case letters, a nod to the American poet e. e. cummings (1894–1962). The poem is dedicated to Eldridge Cleaver (1935–1998), a political activist and leader of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. As will be noted, Salinas withdrew this dedication years later

5. For more on this see issue, see LÓPEZ AUSTIN AND LÓPEZ LUJÁN 2010.

when Cleaver's own political commitments changed.⁶ As can be seen, the poem's first iteration is presented on a broadsheet broken up into two columns made up of 164 verses. Note that all words in Spanish are underlined as an educational tool.

Without a doubt the most appealing and engaging aspects of this poem are the three visual elements on the right-hand side. These *placas* ('placas' are Chicano shorthand for graffiti or tags) are considered by Salinas as stanzas fundamental to the poem. In a 1994 interview he states, "In our modern times of Chicano writings it is one of the first poems that utilizes graffiti as a stanza, that's a stanza inasmuch as I understand the construction of the poem".⁷ These graffiti stanzas will not always be published in future iterations as we will see shortly. Another noteworthy comment is that no subsequent iteration reproduces this poem in two columns on a broadsheet; rather, all future texts appear in books and 'break' the poem onto multiple pages.

Subsequent anthological iterations: Valdez-Steiner 1972

In 1972 Salinas's poem was published in two anthologies. In *Aztlán: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature* the poem appears not on a broadsheet but broken up across six pages. All Spanish underlined words in the original are italicized in this anthology. The only major difference is that the Valdez-Steiner iteration does not include the graffiti stanzas that make this poem such an innovative and disruptive work of art. The editors and publishers at Knopf may have had difficulties in adding these images, which speaks to the creativity and ingenuity of the editors of *Aztlán de Leavenworth*, who edited and published this work behind bars and under duress.

6. See MENDOZA in SALINAS 1999, 3.

7. I refer here to the interview mentioned in footnote 2. This interview conducted by Olguín and Mendoza is also partially transcribed and published in SALINAS 2006.

Subsequent anthological iterations: Castañeda, Ybarra-Frausto, and Sommers 1972

The other anthology from 1972, *Literatura Chicana: Texto y Contexto/ Chicano Literature: Text and Context*, includes the graffiti stanza and also chooses to italicize rather than underline all Spanish words. Furthermore, this iteration expands the dedication to Eldridge Cleaver, which in previous iterations simply states, “For Eldridge”. This iterations reads:

[A Trip Through the Mind Jail is dedicated by a Chicano poet, Raúl Salinas, from his little room at Leavenworth, to his camarada wherever he is, El Eldridge (Leroy) Cleaver de Rose Hill, barrio Con Safos]

The editors of this anthology were the very scholars at the University of Washington who, through activism and advocacy, facilitated Salinas's release from prison and his entry to the University. Given this close relationship it is fair to assume Salinas participated in elongating this dedication.

Subsequent anthological iterations: Ortego y Gasca 1973

The 1973 iteration in *We are Chicanos: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature* does not include the graffiti stanza, italicizes Spanish words, and replicates the simple dedication while including the last name “For Eldridge Cleaver”. A pedagogical addition made by this text is explanatory footnotes. For example, there is a footnote explaining that the Spanish term ‘tricolor’ refers to the Mexican flag, that the date May 5 celebrates the expulsion of the French Empire by Mexico, and that September 16 is Mexican Independence Day. These footnotes are directed at an audience that may not be bilingual and/or bicultural. As an interesting ekphrastic addition, this anthology includes a small painting within the pages of this poem by artist Salvador Valdez. Valdez's painting has the same name as the poem and is a surrealist representation of the psychological suffering of inmates.

Subsequent anthological iterations: Gilb 2006

The most recent anthology, *Hecho en Tejas: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature*, includes the graffiti stanza, omits the dedication, and chooses to neither underline nor italicize any Spanish words. At the bottom of the first page of this poem, this anthology adds a brief biographical note about Salinas, explaining that Salinas was editor of *Aztlán de Leavenworth* “whose inaugural issue contained Salinas’ most famous poem, ‘Un Trip Through the Mind Jail’” (GILB 2006, 286). There are several errors in this anthology: first, the poem is called *A Trip*, not *Un Trip*; second, the poem is erroneously titled *La Loma*; and lastly, the “Contents” also uses this erroneous title to refer to Salinas’s *magnum opus*. Neither Gilb’s “Introduction” nor any other part of the anthology explains these changes to the title.

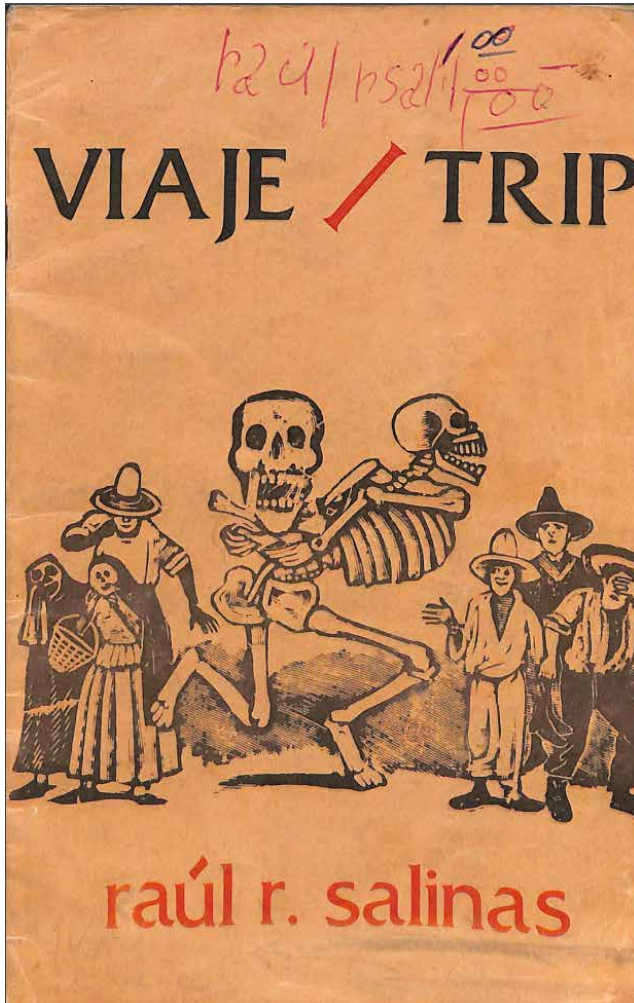
Subsequent book iterations: The chapbook *Viaje/Trip* from 1973

In 1973 Hellcoal Press published Salinas’s five-poem chapbook *Viaje/Trip*. This collection included *A Trip* as well as the poems *Los Caudillos*, *Ciego/Sordo/Mudo*, *Journey*, and *Journey II*. Hellcoal was a small, student-run press that received a small amount of institutional support from Brown University. The co-editors of Hellcoal were Jaimy Gordon and Bruce McPherson, who were in epistolary contact with Salinas and worked closely with him to make this his first published poetry collection.⁸ In 1972, Gordon was at Brown studying for her Masters when she took the class “American Poetry since 1900” with professor Glauco Cambon.⁹ Cambon had received one of the carceral newspapers, either *Aztlán* or *New Era*, had been fascinated with Salinas’s poem, and had decided to include it in his courses. Through these particular circumstances and the friendships that were thus formed,

8. Jaimy Gordon (1944–) is a writer and professor. In 2010 her novel *Lord of Misrule* won the National Book Award. She was Hellcoal’s point person for communicating with Salinas. Their letter exchanges are archived at Stanford and some of them are transcribed in SALINAS 2006.

9. Glauco Cambon (1921–1988) was an Italianist with specialization in European and North American poetry. He started communicating with Salinas while he was still in prison and developed a friendship with him. Cambon would go on to write and publish an article on Salinas’s work: see CAMBON 1971.

Hellcoal Press published 291 chapbooks, which were distributed to bookstores and amongst friends and academics (Salinas 2006, 189–207). Salinas, who by now lived in Seattle, received 30 copies, one of which is archived (see Figs. 3–3c). As can be seen, this iteration includes the graffiti stanza and the simple dedication to Eldridge Cleaver. Spanish words are neither underlined nor italicized.



Above and following pages, Figures 3-3c. Raúl R. Salinas Archives, MO774, box 27, folder 23. With permission from Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries.

A TRIP THROUGH THE MIND JAIL

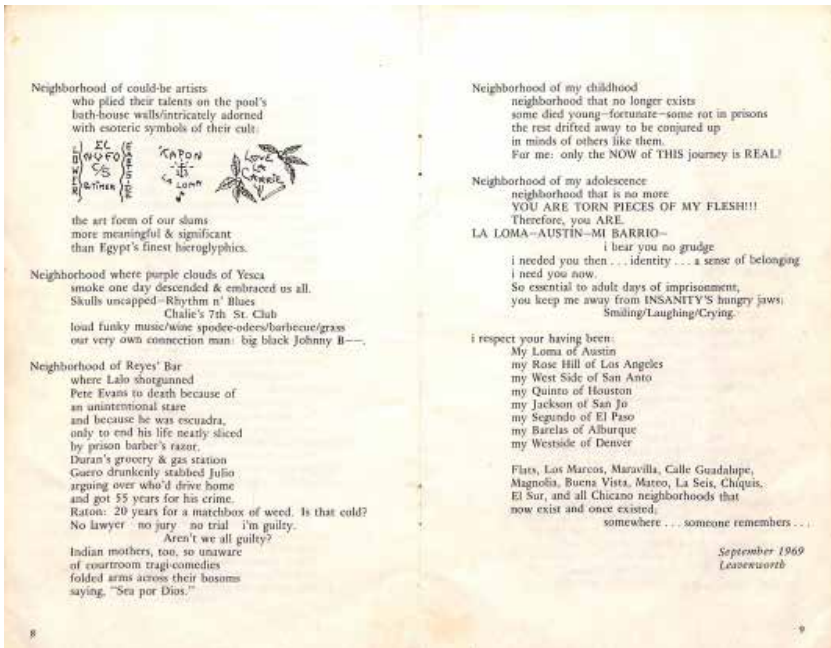
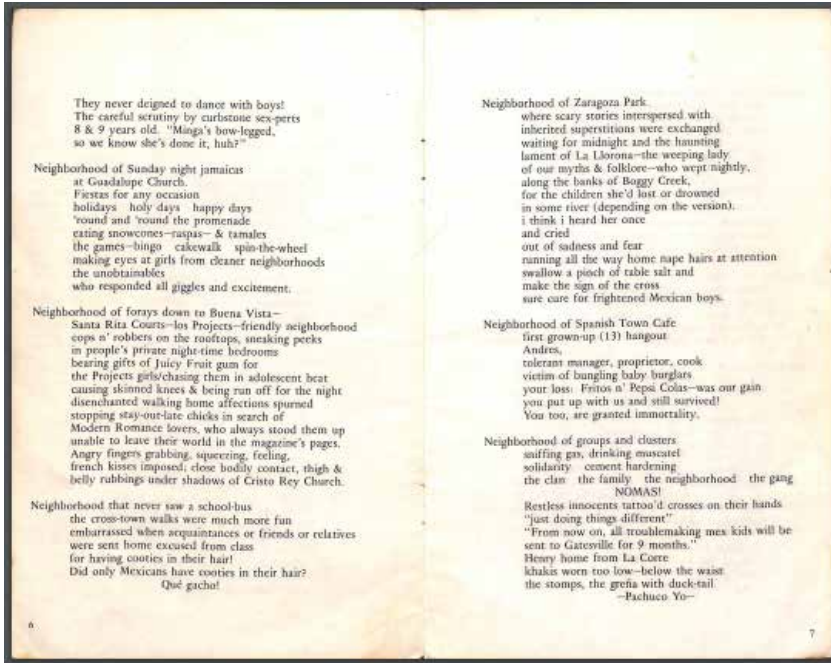
for Eldridge

LA LOMA

Neighborhood of my youth
demolished, erased forever from
the universe.
You live on, captive, in the lonely
cellblocks of my mind.

Neighborhood of endless hills
muddied streets—all chuckhole lined—
that never drank of asphalt.
Kids barefoot/snooty-nosed
playing marbles/munching on bean tacos
(the kind you'll never find in a cafe)
2 peaceful generations removed from
their abuelos' revolution.

Neighborhood of dilapidated community hall
—Salón Cinco de Mayo—
yearly (May 5/Sept. 16) gathering
of the families. Re-asserting pride
on those two significant days.
Speeches by the elders,
patriarchs with evidence of oppression
distinctly etched upon mexizo faces.
"Sons of the Independence!"
Emphasis on allegiance to the tri-color
obscure names: JUAREZ & HIDALGO
their heroic deeds. Nostalgic tales of war
years under VILLA'S command. No one listened;
no one seemed to really care.
Afterwards, the dance. Modest Mexican
maidens dancing polkas together
across splintered wooden floor.



Subsequent book iterations: The poetry book published by Editorial Pocho-Ché

Editorial Pocho-Ché was established in the 1970's in San Francisco by its founders Roberto Vargas and Alejandro Murguía. In his book *The Medicine of Memory: A Mexica Clan in California* (2002), Murguía explains that it was very difficult to find books about the Chicana experience and there were few or no Chicana or Latina presses. By founding Pocho-Ché, their aim was to break the publishing industry's monopoly and find ways to publish the works of up-and-coming Chicana and Latina writers. As an artists' collective, Pocho-Ché published poetry and photography books and also magazines and newspapers covering revolutionary and radical content such as the guerrilla wars in Nicaragua and the FBI attacks against the Oglala people at the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota (MURGUÍA 2002, 124).

Salinas was by now an active member of the Chicano Arts Movement, and thus his poetry fit in well ideologically with the politics of Pocho-Ché. He did not live in San Francisco, but he was part of Pocho-Ché's editorial board and in 1980 published his first book of poetry titled *Un Trip Through the Mind Jail y Otras Excursions: Poemas de Raúl Salinas*. This book contains 68 poems including the five from *Viaje/Trip* (1973). This iteration presents the poem *A Trip* with the graffiti stanza, with no words underlined or italicized, and is the first text in which Salinas withdrew the poem's dedication to Eldridge Cleaver. By 1980 Cleaver had become a conservative evangelical; he had also registered as a Republican.

Subsequent book iterations: The reprint by Arte Público Press

In 1999 Arte Público Press, an academic press for the University of Houston, published a reprint of *Un Trip Through the Mind Jail: Poems*. This reprint was part of their series "Pioneers of Modern U.S. Hispanic Literature", which is part of a larger project of recovering and disseminating Hispanic culture in the US.¹⁰ This reprint in a prestigious academic press signals Salinas's canonization and the general recognition that his work is an important contribution to Latina and Chicana letters. This 1999 itera-

10. For more information on this project, see <https://artepublicopress.com/recovery-program/>.

tion of *A Trip* is identical to the one published by Pocho-Ché in 1980: it includes the graffiti stanza, it does not underline or italicize any words, and it excludes the dedication. The only major difference between these two books is that the 1999 reprint includes one more poem [Untitled] *Lightning Steed Immaculate*.

Access to these texts and the process of Salinas's canonization

The chapbook *Viaje/Trip* published by Hellcoal Press (1973) seems almost impossible to track down. It has not been reprinted, it is not sold online, and it is not in circulation within academic libraries. The archives at Stanford do hold a copy, previously cited and referenced, that belonged to the poet. Salinas's first book of poems, *Un Trip Through the Mind Jail*, published by Editorial Pocho-Ché (1980), is out of print but available online from small bookstores even though most university libraries do not hold this edition. The 1999 reprint of this book by Arte Público Press is widely available online and in print as well as in university libraries. The four anthologies in which this poem appears are available for purchase online and can be found in circulation in university libraries.

These authorized texts published by Salinas in various presses over four decades reflect the canonization process of his work and the way his poetry has gained prestige. The 1973 chapbook is a text that is almost lost to time but is very important since it is the first Salinas publication outside of prison. It also indicates the kind of literary networks that existed between academia and prison print culture in the 1960's and 1970's. The 1980 poetry book published by Pocho-Ché locates Salinas at the flourishing of the Chicano Arts Movement and demonstrates his commitment to the revolutionary politics of the Civil Rights Movement. The 1999 reprint by Arte Público canonizes this work (academically) and gives this book a much wider audience. Given that this book was published within a series called "Pioneers of Modern U.S. Hispanic Literature" and as part of a wider recovery and dissemination project, it also signals that Salinas is recognized as an exemplary voice of Chicanx and Latinx letters.

Toward a multimedia textual history

Arguably the most innovative and appealing aspect of this poem is the inclusion of the graphic stanza (see Fig. 4). As has been shown, the inclusion of this vital part of the poem has not always been prioritized in all

iterations. It is also noteworthy that there has been rather little critical engagement with the importance of this multimedia poetic innovation. Cordelia Candelaria in her 1986 *Chicano Poetry: A Critical Introduction* engages at length with the poem and its relation to Salinas's wider poetic project. Absent from her detailed and informative analysis is a deeper reflection on these placas. She does allude to Salinas's originality by stating that his "experiences [. . .] have produced a multilayered style of striking individuality" (1986, 109). Her main takeaway is related to Salinas's multilingual poetics and implicit in her statement is the originality of this poetics.

Prior to Candelaria, Juan Bruce-Novoa critiqued Salinas's poem in his 1982 *Chicano Poetry: A Response to Chaos*. Bruce-Novoa engages at length and in detail with this poem and provides a robust literary analysis of its themes, motifs, and characters. When analyzing the placas he states: "The graffiti included in the poem center the image of the cross, flanked by the number 13, marijuana and the protective-aggressive symbol are joined and placed at the heart of what the poem reveals as the sign of frustrated aspirations" (1982, 43). This is a rather superficial reading of these placas since each one of those images has a history, emanates from a semiotic Chicano tradition, and expresses an important part of Salinas's life.

Pushing against this superficial reading Ben Olguín emphasizes that this graphic stanza "historicize[s] [Salinas's] corpus by grounding it in the lived experiences and corresponding Chicana/o political unconscious" (2010, 134). Following Olguín it is thus possible to understand that the central placa of this tryptic is a biographical inscription: Tapón is the nickname Salinas used in his youth; La Loma names his childhood neighborhood; the musical note at the bottom reflects Salinas's love for jazz and his role as a prison saxophonist; and the cross framed by the number 13 alludes to a tattoo that Salinas carried on his right hand. These tattoos serve as signs of solidarity amongst Chicanx people and have historically been seen by Anglo America as symbols of crime and violence (OLGUÍN 2010, 287). Notice the artistic multiplicity and circularity that unfolds: the poem has a placa embedded in its text and the embedded placa was partially tattooed on the poet's body, thus creating a poetic dialectic between body and text.

This kind of multimedia circularity and artistic multiplicity also applies to the placas that flank the triptych. The note on the right, "Love La Carrie", refers to an unknown lover of Salinas. Given Salinas's five-year sentence for purported "possession of five dollars' worth of marijuana" (OLGUÍN 2010, 132), the marijuana leaves and joint that frame this message are also biographical symbols. Here the placa on the right is con-

Neighborhood of groups and clusters
sniffing gas, drinking muscatel
solidarity cement hardening
the clan the family the neighborhood the gang
NOMAS!
Restless innocents tattoo'd crosses on their hands
"just doing things different"
"From now on, all troublemaking mex kids will be
sent to Gatesville for 9 months."
Henry home from La Corre
khakis worn too low--below the waist
the stomps, the greña with duck-tail
--Pachuco Yo--

Neighborhood of could-be artists
who plied their talents on the pool's
bath-house walls/intricately adorned
with esoteric symbols of their cult:

LOWER
EL
NUFO
C/S
2-TIMER
EASTSIDE

"KARON"
-if-
1/3
LA LOMA
♪



the art form of our slums
more meaningful & significant
than Egypt's finest hieroglyphics.

Neighborhood where purple clouds of Yesca
smoke one day descended & embraced us all.
Skulls uncapped---Rhythm n' Blues
Charlie's 7th. St. Club
loud ~~funky~~ music/wine spodee-odees/barbecue/grass
our very own connection man: big black Johnny B-----.

Neighborhood of Reyes' Bar
where Lalo shotgunned
Pete Evans to death because of
an unintentional stare
and because he was escuadra,
only to end his life neatly sliced
by prison barber's razor.

Facing, Figure 4. Raúl R. Salinas Archives, MO774, box 1, folder 21. With permission from Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries.

nected with the central placa's representation of the number 13: "M", for marijuana, is the 13th letter in the alphabet. Again it is important to note that this placa is also a tattoo that Salinas carried on his body, thus continuing the text-as-body and body-as-text dialectic.

The placa on the left may be the most hermetic and complex of all to untangle. The outside perpendicular script "Lower Eastside" refers to Austin's La Loma neighborhood where Salinas grew up. The bottom script "2-timer" refers to his time in prison, though it is not clear if this refers to how many times Salinas had gone to prison or how many times he had spent in isolation. The central part of this placa highlights the abbreviation "C/S", meaning Con Safos. C/S is a Chicano homegrown, intellectual copyright create to safeguard Chicana work (graffiti, paintings, poems, letters) and reaffirm Chicana identity as part of a larger culture. It connects the writer with previous generations and indicates their participation within an artistic community.¹¹ Lastly, the script above this copyright, "El Nufo", may refer to another of Salinas's nicknames, though I have been unable to find confirmation for this interpretation.

Conclusion

Salinas's most cited, anthologized and celebrated poem *A Trip through the Mind Jail* has had a long textual life. In tracking the various publications of this poem we can trace Salinas's rise as an exemplary voice of Chicana and Latina letters and thus also glimpse the wider artistic development of the Chicano Movement. Each public iteration of this poem, each different material manifestation of the poem, adds to its life as a work of art. The variance in textual manifestations of this poem demonstrate Salinas's evolution from prison poet to canon poet and the growth of the Chicano Literary Movement itself. Here the theoretical contributions of Joseph Grigely are useful by buttressing the aforementioned textual history:

The work is a series, and the series is comprised not of acts of production compliance, but acts of variance. In this sense a literary work – be it a poem, a play, or a letter to Auntie Em – is an assemblage of texts, a poly-text of seriated texts and versions. This formulation can be expressed by the equation:

$$W \rightarrow T_1, T_2, T_3, \dots T_N$$

11. See FRANCO 2018.

Where W = Work and T= Text. It is important to note that the work is not equivalent to the sum of its texts [. . .], but instead is an ongoing – infinite – manifestation of textual appearance, whether those texts are authorized or not.

(1998, 99).

What I have put forth in this essay is a seriated textual history that attends to the variances of this poem in its many different textual manifestations. In assembling a finite series of public texts that are more or less accessible, my aim has been to contribute to and clarify the passage of this poem in print. However, the open question that remains is how to understand and assemble the multimedia iterations of this work of art. Two projects, therefore, remain outstanding. As mentioned previously, the dialectic that the graphic stanza creates between the body of the poet and the text of the poem remains understudied. In an act of radical poetic innovation Salinas inscribed his body, via his tattoos, into the textual manifestation of this work. His body thus becomes a readable extension of the poem. Following Olguín's detailed study of Chicano carceral tattoo culture it is possible to read Salinas's tattooed body (there is a significant photographic archive of Salinas's tattoos) as part of the assemblage of this poem. The tattooed body of the poet becomes a vital extension of the poem, which in turn connects his tattoos with the graffiti and murals of his youth.

A second project that must be undertaken concerns the iterations of this poem that were performed at open mics, rallies, readings, and other kinds of live presentations. Salinas referred to himself as a "performance oral poet within the oral tradition", which indicates that *A Trip* would have been recited by him.¹² A number of video recordings exist in the archives, and it will be valuable to analyze these performances and track the variances that an oral performance brings forth. Furthermore, it will be fascinating to observe how such a performance deals with reading the placas, how the poet references (or not) the dedication, and if there is an explicit connection made between the tattoos on the page and on the body.

Lastly, as has been shown, the study of *A Trip Through the Mind Jail* remits the reader to multiple texts, spaces, media, and bodies beyond the singular textual iteration. The wider project on which I am embarked to study Salinas's poetry seeks to create an open-source digital platform where the multiplicity of Salinas's creative productions can be accessed in a fluid

12. See the 1994 interview conducted by Olguín and Mendoza. This specific assertion is made at minute 23. <https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/qy544qy8912>.

manner. The end goal is to have a digital project that facilitates access to the texts, images, and histories that Salinas references. A radically innovative poet like Salinas deserves a radically innovative hermeneutics that does justice to his artistic ingenuity.

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