

COOPERATIVE RE/WEAVINGS: ARTISTIC EXPRESSION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN A NORTHERN NEW MEXICAN VILLAGE

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Our ancestors came to this valley nearly 200 years ago seeking pasture for their sheep. They lived off the land surviving harsh mountain isolation through cooperation and self reliance. These values created Tierra Wools which is one of the programs of Ganados del Valle (Livestock Growers of the Valley). Ganados aims to insure that weaving, wool growing, and shepherding continue as a way of life here.¹

Amid the expansive, scenic rural lands of Northern New Mexico, at a distance from the tourist-congested towns of Santa Fé and Taos, in the village of Los Ojos, are a group of women and men who are developing the means to sustain their vision of rural economic development. In this region, which can claim the questionable status as one of the most impoverished areas in the nation, villagers are struggling to create and maintain themselves within a cooperative economic venture whose multi-leveled mission is the cultural reclamation, local development, and long-term planning of the region. This non-profit economic development corporation, Ganados del Valle, is the parent organization to a series of local business-based initiatives. First came Tierra Wools, a spinning and weaving cooperative; later on, the self-described Rio Arriba Wool Washing emerged; followed by Pastores Lamb, an organically-raised meat marketing and distribution enterprise; and eventually, Pastores Feed & General Store. What follows is a description of one aspect of Ganados del Valle's work; specifically, the oral histories contained herein concern themselves with the formation of Tierra Wools.

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Tierra Wools is the name of a decade-old Northern New Mexico-based weaving cooperative of Hispanas² based in the Chama Valley in the village of Los Ojos. In 1981 the cooperative existed as an idea in the minds of three people. In 1992 it operated as a quarter million dollar local economic development venture consisting of thirty workers. Of these workers, there are twenty-nine women and one man; most of the women are Hispanas of *mestiza* ancestry; two are *Indias*; and two of the women are Anglo.³ Their ages range from eighteen to sixty. They are single women and married women, mothers and grandmothers, and many come from families that have lived in the area for more than two generations. Some of the weavers learned their art at their grandmothers' knees, and others are new to the art form. They each brought a commitment to making Tierra Wools a success. Their accomplishments, in turn, have meant a number of positive things for the villagers.

Tierra Wools was begun as a means of economic survival; the weaving cooperative was created to provide an economic form of community. The resulting growing membership of women and their creative collaborations have provided the Hispanas with a certain kind of economic agency. That this small group of committed villagers would, with no personal capital, limited or no weaving skills, and no marketing experience, successfully establish and maintain a small business in a world of increased globalization of capital is remarkably significant. However, the achievements of this venture have been long in coming. In spite of the organization's seemingly large annual income, cooperative members exist close to the economic edge. The most successful weaver's annual salary is approximately \$17,000. As a young business venture, Tierra Wools is most vulnerable to the fluctuating trajectory of the economy, and because it continues to operate almost exclusively out of storefront offices in isolated Los Ojos, a rural village almost three hours north of Santa Fé, it is highly dependent on seasonal tourism. This reliance on tourist travel means that peak periods of positive cash flow are the spring and summer months. Tierra Wools members make very little money during the winter, when the mountainous roads leading to the village are snowbound.

The Hispanas of this village are not new to economic struggle, however, and this project was about more than creating a small business. The weaving cooperative was also a cultural reclamation and reinvention project. The woven art made by Tierra Wools weavers reflects the historical confluence of Native

American, Spanish colonial, and Mexican *mestizo* cultures as interpreted by late twentieth century artisans who, in their turn, are affected by the electronic media, computer technologies, and other forms of mass communication. The Hispanas of Tierra Wools, through the assistance of an Anglo weaver, and a Hispana community organizer, came to learn the various weaving traditions which were historically centered in this valley. That cultural knowledge provided them with another way of understanding themselves in relation to being Hispanas, and this self-knowledge allowed for Tierra Wools members to reconsider and to re-present themselves in the myriad ways in which they operate in the course of their lives. As a result, they have developed and woven their particular brand of political and cultural consciousness into the fabric of the venture. The women of Tierra Wools have created a space in their commercial dealings where the value of their weavings has a significance beyond the “exchange value of the product.”

In order to understand how the successes of Tierra Wools can encompass all of these separate accomplishments, it is necessary to briefly revisit some of the history that preceded the establishment of the cooperative. In this territory that is sparsely populated there is a *great* value placed on the relationship of people to the land, and on the number of generations that one can count as having family stewardship to “The Land.” This has been the case for 300 years, especially for those living in the Chama Valley. In this way, “The Land” serves as both subject and object in the social and political struggles of the area. It exists as the historically and socially constructed *object* of material desire between binary forces, such as between “natives” and “imperialists.” Examples of such binary conflicts can be seen in various moments of Northern New Mexican history: indigenous people battling Spanish imperialists; Mexicans against “Americans”; Las Gorras Blancas *contra* the Santa Fé Ring; shepherds versus cattle ranchers; La Alianza Federal de Pueblos Libres fighting the State of New Mexico; Hispana weavers in dispute with Anglo environmentalists. “The Land” serves as the imaginary *subject* of spiritual desire within Anglo cultural production: such as in the literature of D.H. Lawrence, in the artwork of Georgia O’Keeffe, and in the photography of Ansel Adams and Edward Weston. However, for people such as the Hispanas/os, who maintain another kind of relationship to “*La Tierra*,” and who call it, “Mother”; and for people, such as the Indias/os, who believe “The Land” exists in a state of animus, the earth is not

bifurcated into object/subject relations. For indigenous people as well as the Hispanas/os, who are immigrants with a long tenure on “La Tierra,” their cultural representations of it are rendered by their relationship to, or by their stewardship of the earth.

The resulting social, economic, and cultural structures that have emerged in Northern New Mexico, within the tensions of the political economy and cultural traditions, have been rendered into a particular form of belonging. This structure of belonging, identified as being unique to Latina/o populations, has been named as “cultural citizenship.” Cultural citizenship, as defined by Rina Benmayor, is based on those “affirmative actions toward empowerment [which] are claims based on human, social, and cultural values, rather than on legal rights.”⁴ The works of Tierra Wools exemplify this notion of “belonging” as the Hispanas/os have successfully shown that, despite generations of poverty and disadvantage, they are not passive, do not “accept their fate,” and are actively searching for ways to improve their lives and community life through cultural expression.

Social Conditions in Northern New Mexico

One significant effect of colonization was the cultural and social mixing of indigenous people, Indias/os, and the Spaniards, *Españoles*. Their progeny were called mestizas/os, mixed-blooded people, who would later call themselves Mexicanas/os, and even later, Hispanas/os. Initially, mestizas/os were generally unwelcome and held in low-esteem by Indias/os and Españoles because of their perceived lack of ethnic purity. As the mestiza/o population increased, they come to be tolerated if not accepted. This co-existence was frequently tumultuous, but the harsh climate and terrain of Northern New Mexico forced a certain level of cooperation among the people inhabiting the region. Shepherding, itself, demanded cooperative behavior and sharing of resources: grazing land, breeder sheep, and water. The distribution of land through the Spanish land grant system tended to include a large number of communal land grants, which Malcolm Enbright, a New Mexican land grant legal scholar, described as follows:

A community grant is made to a group of usually ten or more who receive private allotments of land for their homes, gardens, and fields. They use the rest of the grant in common for grazing their animals, gathering fire-

wood, collecting building materials, and gathering other resources from the land such as herbs and acorns.⁵

In addition to land holdings and shepherding activities, aesthetics from the different cultures were shared, merged, and altered among the *Indias/os*, *Españoles*, and *mestizas/os*. One aesthetic and economic tradition that emerged from this period was the weaving of wool blankets, rugs, and clothing. During this period certain weaving patterns, colors, and techniques emerged as the core elements in the fundamentals of contemporary weaving.⁶

After the U.S.-provoked “Mexican War” in 1848, the United States appropriated a region, approximately half the land of the nation of Mexico. Geographically, it consisted of what is now called the Southwest: New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, California, Texas, as well as parts of what would become the states of Utah, Nevada, and Wyoming.⁷ The taking of communal land, contrary to the provisions of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, was detrimental to the local economies of the region, because the structure of community lands generally meant “the combining of private ownership of small individual plots with communal ownership and governance of vast areas of common lands for purposes of grazing and harvesting.”⁸ The near annihilation of the cultural and economic notion of pastoral communality in Northern New Mexico resulted in the impoverishment of, and eventual migration out-of-area by many families. However, some villagers chose to resist the incursion and remained. Those families who stayed did so because of “fierce cultural pride and deep ancestral connections to the land.”⁹

In addition to these individual forms of resistance, there were loosely organized responses to the expropriation of lands. *Las Gorras Blancas* was active in Northern New Mexico, where most of the land grants were awarded to communities rather than to individuals.¹⁰ Between 1889 and 1891, *Las Gorras Blancas*, whose primary organizers were members of the small, but influential middle-class, engaged in a series of direct actions that included cutting fences and destroying the property of the Anglo ranchers who had expropriated what was formerly communal grazing land. They operated in a rather fragmented fashion and outside of these activities, seemed lacking in strategy and goals.¹¹ *Las Gorras Blancas* were allied to the Knights of Labor, a national anti-capitalist organization of workers, with a predominantly Anglo membership. The Knights of Labor were more interested in building upon the anti-monopolist sentiments

aroused in the Mexican community by the direct actions of Las Gorras Blancas than they were in helping reclaim communal land grants.¹² However, they cooperated in the effort to assert the claims of Las Gorras Blancas. In turn, both groups worked within an electoral coalition that evolved—El Partido del Pueblo Unido. The alliance that comprised El Partido included Las Gorras Blancas, Hispano Democratic Party activists, Anglo Knights of Labor, and disaffected Hispano Republicans. With such an eclectic group, competing strategies emerged, but were never fully realized. El Partido had some initial electoral successes, but eventually fell victim to factionalism. However unsuccessful they were in the long run, the combined activism of these groups did stave off, for a few years, the ever expanding use of land for single-family ranching.

During this same period a new form of colonization developed in the name of conservation in the form of the National Forest Service.¹³ Nearly a million acres were taken from Northern New Mexico villagers between 1854 and 1930 by the Forest Service on behalf of the federal government.¹⁴ Sheep ranchers paid grazing fees to the Forest Service to use lands that were once theirs. This taxation and the economic difficulties confronted by small-scale sheep ranchers created severe economic hardship for the villagers. The loss of communal grazing lands required pasturing the sheep on small family plots that were inadequate to ensure a profit. In spite of the hardship, some families held on to their flock, as the sheep served as a connection to the old pastoral way of life. The flock also served as an important food source and as a buffer from total impoverishment.¹⁵ No one who was a sheep rancher in this period escaped the winter storms in the early 1930s or the general economic malaise of the Great Depression. These two factors destroyed most of the large-scale sheep operations which were primarily operated by Anglos.

During the period dating from the days of Las Gorras Blancas in the 1890s to the time of La Alizana Federal de Pueblos Libres in the 1960s, the residents of Northern New Mexico carried on the struggle to reclaim their lost lands and to hold on to their cultures.¹⁶ In the 1930s, many people left the villages in order to secure jobs through the Works Progress Administration (WPA) with mining firms, and by following seasonal agricultural work. During the three decades between 1930 and 1960 more than half of the population of the Rio Arriba region migrated to urban areas as the local economies failed to sustain the people living there. By the 1960s, 41 percent of the remaining population

of Rio Arriba County survived on less than \$3,000 a year.¹⁷

In 1963, the villagers of Northern New Mexico organized themselves into the La Alianza Federal de Pueblos Libres. They intended to accomplish nothing less than recovering their ancestral lands and regaining water access rights.¹⁸ In response to their activism, the National Forest Service systematically reduced the number of grazing permits it issued to the locals. As the government action became more punitive, the membership of La Alianza grew. The traditional communality of the Hispanos/os was reflected in their almost exclusive focus on matters directly related to community cohesion.¹⁹ There were attempts, particularly by the older members of La Alianza, to extend the practice of communality by creating a shared leadership. It was suggested that this could occur among members representing the various contested land grants by constituting a ruling *mesa cósmica*.²⁰ The potency of the younger, male-dominated leadership, most notably that of Reies López Tijerina, thwarted such egalitarian aims.²¹ The village of Tierra Amarilla and the surrounding area situated in the northern quarter of Rio Arriba County, was the site of La Alianza's major activities in 1966 and 1967. While those actions are not recounted here, it is important to note that they brought national attention to the severe economic and social circumstances of the villagers living in Northern New Mexico.²²

Kitchen Table Activism

María Varela had been a part of the Civil Rights Movement as a member of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). She served as both a national staff member in New York and as an organizer in Mississippi.²³ During her tenure with SNCC, Julian Bond introduced her to Reies López Tijerina.²⁴ López Tijerina was, at the time, the primary leader of the Northern New Mexico land grant movement, and he invited María to work with him. She arrived in Northern New Mexico in 1969. After a few months with López Tijerina, she left his organization and worked on land-related issues with other people living the Chama Valley. She fell in love and married one of the villagers. María and her husband lived modestly in their trailer on the edge of the village of Los Ojos. In the years that followed, María worked with other villagers to establish first an agricultural cooperative, then later helped re-establish a local health clinic.²⁵

Ironically, it was her history of activism and tendency to engage in direct action that made her suspect in some people's eyes. So, when she sat down for a kitchen table meeting in 1981, with two other villagers of Los Ojos, she was still thought of as an "outside agitator" by one of them, Antonio Manzanares. Manzanares was a sheep rancher, who found himself at this meeting, which had been called by Gumercindo Salazar, a school teacher and part-time sheep rancher. Both Antonio and Gumercindo counted generations of their families as villagers in Northern New Mexico. Their provinciality was not so paramount as to obscure their shared visions of an improved quality of life for the villagers of the area. They talked about their visions *and* they also shared their suspicions regarding each others' political motivations.²⁶ In deference to their political suspicions and in respect to the need for a social strategy, the three chose to participate in a series of informal kitchen table sessions.

The trio came together with the common desire to improve the quality of life for the village that included: developing a business enterprise that would utilize local resources, creating jobs for people living in the area, and preserving the region's unique cultural identity. Antonio and Gumercindo were frustrated by the lack of sufficient grazing land for their small flocks²⁷ and the out-migration of local people seeking work. All three were interested in asserting more local control over the prevailing economic conditions of the region; but above all, they were all three committed to the people and the land. María, Antonio, and Gumercindo were college graduates who, over the years, had opportunities to build professional careers. These jobs, however, required that they, like so many before them, leave the village. For their own reasons, each chose to remain in Rio Arriba County.²⁸

The three held regular brainstorming sessions in which a collectively created vision and strategy began to emerge. In keeping with many of the cultural and economic traditions of the area, they imagined a cooperative venture where villagers could raise sheep, which in turn, would provide wool for spinning.²⁹ From 1981 to 1983, Gumercindo, Antonio, and María were able to launch their program by successfully reinstituting communal shepherding practices in the area.³⁰ The interest of local residents and the propitious collaboration of the organizers meant that the establishment of an institution was now feasible and desirable. It was possible for Ganados del Valle to be born. The market for lamb fell into two categories: wool and meat, as did the division of labor and efforts

of the Ganados leadership. Antonio and Gumercindo coordinated the sheep ranching; María headed the wool production component that eventually became Tierra Wools.

A Weaving of Economics and Cultural Production

Ganados members chose the craft of spinning as their initial project. This allowed them to enter into wool production with little capital outlay. They began their research and development work by meeting and talking with weavers and spinners throughout New Mexico. Rachel Brown, a nationally regarded Anglo weaver, spinner, educator, and successful business owner from Taos,³¹ was introduced to María. Rachel said of this first meeting:

I was working with a group called The Mountain and Valley Wool Association, and Lorraine Mooney, who was active in that group, introduced us. We met for lunch one time and we just got along great immediately.³²

When she arrived in Los Ojos in 1983, Rachel found “the lustrous, long-stapled wool of the region perfect for hand spinning. “[I also] saw in the community an intense interest in spinning and weaving. . .and an interest in learning to use a spinning wheel.”³³ Most spinners in the area had spun wool on a hand spindle called a *malacate*. They had never used the more expedient spinning wheel. Because of the speed and the opportunity for greater quality control made possible by the use of the spinning wheel, it became a tool that was vital to the success of the nascent art project. Rachel suggested holding a workshop to introduce the wheel to the local spinners. A few weeks later she returned to conduct a spinning workshop and more than fifteen participants attended.

Afterwards, she visited an exhibition of weavings by local residents at the community health center. After viewing the exhibit, she asked to meet the weavers and was taken to a former convent in the village. There she found several women elders working on looms crowded next to each other in a tiny room. Both María and Rachel agreed that the interest in weaving, and quality of the local weavings suggested the inclusion of woven goods into their enterprising efforts.³⁴ The parameters of their artistic venture were established: Tierra Wools would be involved in the spinning and weaving of locally grown wool products. The hand-woven items, produced by the local weavers, were initially

done in the traditional weaving style of the Rio Grande. Rugs and blankets with stripes and geometric designs such as the *saltillo*, a chevron design typical in Mexican and New Mexican weaving, and the *vallero*, a star design of Spanish origin, were made with natural and hand-dyed colors.³⁵

Rachel Brown was hired as a consultant with money María raised from progressive funding organizations such as the Shalan Foundation and the New World Foundation.³⁶ For the first year Rachel commuted the 160 mile round-trip to Los Ojos once a week on Tuesdays to conduct spinning and weaving classes.³⁷ The curriculum, specifically designed for Tierra Wools by Rachel, was covered in fifty lessons. The class content included beginning and advanced weaving, spinning, dyeing, and marketing. The training required applied arts projects, two-hour lectures and demonstrations, and reading assignments. The first training series was, of course, conducted by Rachel; those participants who graduated earned the title of *maestra*. They were expected to teach the curriculum to subsequent classes. Rachel had designed and written the curriculum specifically for the needs of the cooperative. Her contract with the cooperative, however, included a provision specifically stating that the curriculum was the property of Tierra Wools. This contractual provision ensured the continuation of the training through peer education, and made the cooperative more independent of Rachel.

Collective and Personal Development

In addition to the technical training, Rachel also “taught” the women aesthetics as they created their woven projects. Rachel said:

I was designing the products that they would do. . . [and providing]. . . guidelines for picking colors because their color sense was kind of wild. Their color sense was very limited.

At first, I made the guidelines, and I said, ‘OK, now the rug had to be two-thirds one value, not just half light and half dark. I kind of figured things out in my head that were a few simple rules, and within that they could choose whatever colors they wanted.’³⁸

This aspect of the training raises questions about the nature of and the formulation of creative expression within the parameters of aesthetics that were imposed upon the weavers. However, all of the four weavers that were interviewed felt that Rachel helped them improve their work. When Rachel estab-

lished an aesthetics guideline, she was probably grounding her criteria in the marketing and sales of the woven products as much as in her own personal sense of weaving aesthetics. This aspect of the training might have contributed to the initial sense of fear the Hispanas had in thinking of themselves as artists. But, as the beginning weavers came to have faith in their abilities, they lost the fear and gained confidence in their work, as well as in their personal lives.³⁹ Today they need no encouragement or prompting to call themselves artists or weavers. They actively seek out and work with other weavers, such as neighboring Navajo women, for ideas and support. As has been the case over the centuries in New Mexico, there continues to be a blending of cultures. Most notably for the weavers, the manifestation of the cross-over occurs in their woven works. For example, the pattern of a tapestry woven by María “Nena” Russom was inspired by a tile floor she saw while watching a video. About this technologically induced inspiration, she said:

One day I was watching the movie *Beetlejuice*, and I saw that the tile on the floor looked three-dimensional. So, I stopped the video and copied the pattern onto a sheet of paper. I later wove a rug that had the three-dimensional look like the tile had. I like doing stuff like that.⁴⁰

Or, as in the case of Sophie Martínez, some weavers look to the everyday for inspiration in their weaving patterns and combine their ideas with material from art books and museum catalogues. She said:

Most of the ideas that I have are from things that I see. It could be a shape or something. Lots of times I take ideas from books on weaving and make them unique. I combine those ideas with my own shapes.⁴¹

Because the work of Tierra Wools eventually attracted international attention in the world of weavers and wool growers, it has not been uncommon for people from as far away as Germany, England, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, and Argentina to make the long trek to the Tierra Wools store. During such visits there are frequently exchanges of weaving ideas, patterns, and technologies between the Hispanas and their visitors. One of the most influential opportunities for inspiration happens when the weavers travel out of the area on behalf of Tierra Wools. When they are “on the road,” whether it is to the Smithsonian Museum for a cultural fair, or to Bloomingdale’s in Manhattan for a display of weavings, or to a wool growers convention in San Antonio, the

Hispanas who travel seize the moments for creative inspiration.

While it can be said that Tierra Wools is a weaving cooperative of Hispanas, it is important to note that it was not born of a sisterhood whose foundation was a “‘politics of unity’ solely based on gender”;⁴² rather, Tierra Wools came out of “‘pursuit of solidarity’ through different political formations.”⁴³ The weaving cooperative members were not unlike many of their Chicana urban and suburban counterparts in that they saw themselves as operating within a broad political and cultural terrain that includes making many kinds of alliances. As a result, they did not hold rigid or fixed notions about the ethnic or cultural backgrounds, or the sex, or the class position that allowed or permitted one to become a member-owner of the cooperative.⁴⁴ This attitude likely contributed to the fact that even though the weaving cooperative is predominantly Hispana, there are weavers who are of other cultural backgrounds, and there is one man who weaves.

When asked if they considered themselves “feminists,” the members of Tierra Wools neither embraced nor rejected the category; they were all indifferent to the notion. While their lives as women had clearly been marked by the experiences of building the weaving cooperative, and while they were very much a part of a cooperative of women weavers, their work within a woman-run business was not critically examined. The notion of a tentative “sisterhood” existed for some of the women as they talked about their relationship to another group, the Rainbow Weavers, which was composed of Navajo women. Nena Russom said of their relationship:

The Rainbow Weavers are Indian weavers. We kind of call them our sisters because we help them out and they help us out.⁴⁵

Some of the women responded to the question by talking about how their lives had been altered by becoming weavers. Joanna Terrazas was one woman for whom becoming a weaver meant a change of direction in life.⁴⁶ As of 1992, Joanna was a member of the Ganados del Valle Board of Directors as well as a member-owner of Tierra Wools. Joanna’s affiliation began in 1983 when her husband, Randy, was talking to Antonio Manzanares. Antonio mentioned the new weaving enterprise and encouraged Randy to send Joanna over to the classes. At the time she earned money by painting details on brass model trains and crocheting apparel. Joanna approached the spinning group and was invited into

the class; she, along with seven others, formed the first class of Rachel's training program. Joanna said of her early experiences in the cooperative:

I started just crocheting, and then I went on to spinning and to the weaving. Then I started to get into the management part of the business. I was the marketing manager. Last year my health got real bad, and I felt it was because I was marketing manager, vice president of Ganados, and I was weaving. I felt like an octopus. So, I eliminated a lot of things. Right now I'm not doing any administrative jobs. I'm just weaving.⁴⁷

In actuality, Joanna was involved in more than the weaving aspects of this "sheep to shawl" enterprise. Both she and her husband, Randy, raised sheep, and in 1991 their flock of 70 included the churro and karakul breeds. Her children also worked with the flock. Her daughter was raising two sheep, a ewe and a ram; and her son accompanied his father on his rounds of tending the sheep. The familial effort in sheep ranching was fairly common among the members of Ganados. Adults and children alike, regardless of sex, had opportunities to learn some aspects of sheep ranching. In addition to the pastoral work, children were encouraged to learn traditional arts through a cultural program which taught them the crafts of weaving, tin work, and pottery. Classes were held in a space just off of the main showroom in the Tierra Wools outlet.⁴⁸

Peer training among the weavers was always an intentional aspect of the Tierra Wools program. Joanna, now a maestra, trained several other women in the spinning and weaving processes. Shortly after she became a maestra in 1983 she trained Nena Russom.⁴⁹ Before Nena became a weaver, she worked as a bookkeeper for Tierra Wools. After a few weeks of working in the outlet and watching the weavers at their looms, her interest grew. She asked to join a newly begun series of classes where she learned weaving from Joanna and Rachel. Nena described spending long periods of time, six to eight hours a day, five days a week, in front of the loom as she learned the art; she also said that she asked everyone, especially Joanna and Rachel, a lot of questions. Since that time she has become one of the most esteemed weavers and her work is in high demand.⁵⁰

Nena was also expanding her interests and abilities beyond weaving for Tierra Wools. She was taking general education courses at the local community college ("local" in this sense means the school is 75 miles from Los Ojos). She planned to receive an A.A. in art and then transfer to the University of New Mexico at Los Alamos to work on a bachelor's degree. Nena ended her first

semester in school in the spring of 1992 with a perfect 4.0 average. Even though she has her sights focused on other work for herself, she, like Joanne and other member-owners, echoed similar feelings regarding the personal and creative fulfillment weaving gave them. Nena said:

I like weaving because of the fact that you can see the finished product means more. If you type a letter and you mail it, you don't appreciate the work that went into it as much as you can when you see a rug hanging on the wall. It's especially exciting when somebody comes in, loves it, and buys it.

I really like the weaving more than I like the bookkeeping. Now that I am the Treasurer of the Board, I oversee the bookkeeping, but I don't do the work. I have a bookkeeper. But, now she's gotten into weaving, so I'm scared. I don't want to loose her as a bookkeeper!⁵¹

Joanna also made distinctions between the creative satisfaction she received from weaving and the more mundane but important aspects of the Tierra Wools work when she said:

Weaving is a lot more rewarding because you can see it being worked on, and little by little you create this wonderful, beautiful thing. In administrative work, you really can't see until the end of the year if you did well.⁵²

Because so many of the administrative workers have been drawn by the creative work of the weaving, the cooperative is not encouraging any more prospective weavers. As of the summer of 1992, they had stopped training new weavers. Individuals were permitted to come into the loom room and learn by watching and by working on small pieces, but there were no classes taking place. This was a frustrating, yet understandable, hiatus for marketing manager Cindy Friday, who after working in the administration of the organization, had the same attraction to the weaving component of the organization.⁵³ Initially, she worked as a part-time shopkeeper in the Tierra Wools outlet.

In 1991, Molly Manzanaras, the only Anglo member-owner, knew that Joanna Terrazas would be leaving as the marketing manager in order to weave full-time. Molly invited Cindy, an Anglo, to apply for the opening of shopkeeper with the possibility of advancement to the position of marketing manager. After a few months as shopkeeper, the member-owners offered to pay for Cindy to attend a class taught by Rachel Brown on marketing woven products. When she completed the course, she was asked to become the marketing man-

ager. Cindy said, "I think they [member-owners] wanted me as marketing manager because I'm good talking with people. . .doing things like greeting them and telling them about Tierra Wools."⁵⁴

Organizational Growth Through Social Conflicts

Two significant issues arose among the Hispanas of the cooperative, one early in its history and the other within the past two years. The first large cultural disjuncture took place along generational lines. It has not been resolved, and there remains a tension about the relationship of elder women, who were weavers long before there was a Tierra Wools, to the weaving cooperative. It seems there was a generational split between the elder weavers, with whom Rachel Brown first met in the convent, and the mostly younger weavers, who eventually became the driving force of Tierra Wools. None of the weavers interviewed, all of whom were of the younger generation, spoke about this part of their histories. When later asked about this historical lacuna they demurred on the matter. It was Rachel who talked about the elders. She said:

[At the beginning] there were several older women and they were doing rugs. Kika Chávez was doing some very wonderful tapestry. She knew her stuff. They all just wove along on their own.

In some ways I feel kind of bad because the starting of Tierra Wools discouraged some of those older women. They were kind of left in the dust because the group got so energetic. The older women who had loved to come over got discouraged because you had to work at it a certain number of hours a day in order to be affiliated with the project.

Some of the older ladies who really weren't into taking hold of this thing and making something of it kind of dropped behind—I hope they have continued weaving at home.⁵⁵

However, not all of the older women were discouraged. Kika was one of the two elders who remained, providing a cultural and historical continuity to the group. Kika completed the weaving curriculum as one of the original graduates and earned the title of maestra. This was an exciting moment because, while Kika Chávez understands spoken English, she is unable to read in the language. Rachel's class materials and exams were written entirely in English. Therefore, all materials were read to Chávez and she performed all exams orally.⁵⁶ In spite of her successes over the eight years in which she was closely connected to

Tierra Wools, she cut back on her hours as her husband objected to her working outside of the home.⁵⁷ Over time she did manage to entice her daughter-in-law, Sophie Chávez, to enroll in the weaving classes. Sophie was also successful in her work and today is the production manager for Tierra Wools.

Elder Hispanas were not the only group for whom there arose difficult issues. For those with young families, the matter of child care was and is critical.⁵⁸ Until the spring of 1992, weavers brought their children with them to the weaving room at the Tierra outlet. At that time, the member-owners determined that, with the increase of volume, the decrease of space, and the numbers of children, the weaving room would be off-limits to children. The result was a reversal of the long-standing policy allowing pre-school children to accompany their mothers to work. In the absence of low-cost, quality child care options and/or the means to pay for child care, the mothers of young children were unable to weave regularly if at all. For some Hispanas the alternative was to purchase a loom and to weave at home. However, looms can cost between \$2,000 and \$4,000, and most families were unable to make such a costly investment. The member-owners were beginning to look at other options such as providing on-site child care for weavers. In an effort to create a more suitable environment for children, Tierra Wools applied for and received a grant from the Save the Children Fund; this money made it possible for them to purchase playground equipment. However, the ban on children at the work site was still in effect as of the summer of 1992. Sophie Chávez noted of this situation:

There were just too many small kids. It was getting dangerous. We have to build some kind of child care. But, I have noticed that production is down a little bit now that children can't come.

Some of the mothers can't afford child care, so they stay at home most of the day with their kids, and they come in the evening, or they come early in the morning.⁵⁹

This type of decision-making, especially within the consensual process, was not simple or easy for the weavers. Many member-owners cited the decision-making process as the most difficult part of working in the cooperative. A variety of management configurations were in effect over the years. Joanna remembered one particularly difficult period when:

Instead of having three different managers, we decided to try out only having one. It didn't work. I think that the reason it didn't is because we don't have the right training. All the people in management don't have any training. Everything they learn is 'on the job,' and it is really difficult to learn like that. I think that's the one mistake. We don't train people to have some idea of what and how they are going to do in the job.⁶⁰

Production manager Sophie Chávez, whose mother-in-law, Kika Chávez, was a co-founder, held a job which required her to assign weaving tasks and production goals to all weavers including the member-owners. She was acutely aware of the stress these responsibilities brought. She also talked about the difficulty of working with people who are related to each other in an intimate way:

We have mothers, daughters, and people who have been friends for a long time. It is kind of hard to say 'no.' Also making the right decisions is hard. Sometimes you make decisions and it just doesn't work out and it is stressful.⁶¹

Nena expressed both her frustration and love for working with women who are close friends:

It is hard working with women. We have a lot of conflicts going on a lot of time, and we're ready to kill each other half the time. But, at the same time, we are real supportive of each other. When it comes down to it, we would do anything for each other. If anybody is going through something, everybody pulls together, and we all kind of go through it with them. We try to be there for them.

Then the next day, we are talking about them. That's how it is. . . living here as long as we have, knowing each other, growing up with each other . . . knowing everything! I tell people that we live in Paradise and we pay a price. We can't have really good jobs, but we have a little modest house, and it is all kicked-back. The children are growing up in an atmosphere that is really nice.⁶²

There was a price for the sense of community and well-being, but for many villagers the rewards outweighed the difficulties. The cooperation and self-reliance of the weavers of Tierra Wools seemed to be a direct extension of the villagers' need to be flexible and creative in the face of tough economic, political, and environmental conditions. While it would be a mistake to believe that these histories will eventually unfold with a happy ending where the villagers shepherd their way into the sunset, there are certain indicators which point in the direction of success. The most obvious evidence of a positive economic

change for the villagers was seen on the main street of Los Ojos. Cindy Friday summarized the ways in which economic success physically manifested itself:

When we first started here, there was not a single thing on Main Street that was open for business except for Tierra Wools. Nothing was here. Everything had gone out of business. Then after us came Pastores Feed & General Store; then the gentleman across the way started his printing press and art gallery. Now we even have Mary Ann's *cafecito*. And several people have shown an interest in buying the building across the street and opening a business.⁶³

The path to this economic recovery was not smooth and required the member-owners of Tierra Wools to acquire a working knowledge of macro-economics, and skill in small business management. In ten years time, Tierra Wools' annual operating budget grew from zero to \$225,000. This was an amazing rate of growth given that 90-95 percent of all sales occurred at the isolated rural outlet. Because their marketing budget was quite tiny, the predominance of advertising about the cooperative is word-of-mouth, generally by the proud out-of-area owners of Tierra Wools weavings. Rugs and blankets ranged in price from \$175 to more than \$4,000. Smaller items such as coasters, pillows, and throws were priced between \$20 and \$250. One of the more thorny issues the organization grappled with in the early months of existence was the seemingly high price of their goods and the wages paid to the weavers. When the outlet first opened there were disgruntled rumors of exploitation. To deal with the situation, María and Rachel held several meetings in which the wage and pricing system was explained.

Each product in the cooperative had a "labor allowance." Spinners and weavers were paid every two weeks, using that allowance as the basis for their pay. For example, it might be determined that a single pillow had a "labor allowance" equivalent to four hours wages; a weaver who was contracted to create ten pillows would be paid at the prevailing wage (approximately \$10 an hour) times four hours per pillow times ten. In other words, a weaver would earn \$400 for weaving the ten pillows. In addition to the weavers wages, costs such as yarn, the shop-keeper's wages, rent, and utilities were factored into the final price. It was the disparity between the wages and the sales prices which caused alarm and suspicion among weavers and villagers alike in the early days of Tierra Wools. However, after public discussions of the factors involved in the pricing policies, the initial fears of exploitation were dissipated.

Both María and Rachel had training in business administration and were able to share these skills. Member-owners learned basic business practices such as the development of income statements, balance sheets, and cash flow projections as part of the basic curriculum required of all prospective member-owners. In addition, the weaving cooperative acquired a computer system. The introduction of this technology was a result of the involvement of Robin Collier⁶⁴ of San Francisco. He has a background in computer systems and crafts cooperative management, and initially came to Rachel Brown to assist her in computerizing her business. After working with Rachel, he began to spend time at Tierra Wools. Robin trained the member-owners so that they were able to bring all of their financial, stock inventory, and word-processing information on-line. There was no question for member-owners that María, Rachel, and Robin were critical, at different junctures, to the growth of the cooperative. Yet one of the benchmarks of success for member-owners is the absence of all three from the 1992 Tierra Wools' annual meeting. They had determined that they were able to conduct the planning for the upcoming fiscal year on their own; so the member-owners did not invite anyone outside of the immediate body of governance to attend.

One of the items on the 1992 annual meeting agenda was the matter of wholesale and consignment sales. The member-owners might take weavings and spun wool to three or four fairs such as the Taos Wool Fair, but the majority of the sales occurred out of the Los Ojos outlet. Outside vendors continued to show a great deal of interest in selling Tierra Wools goods, but the move to expand the business in this direction was slow in coming. In fact, in 1992 the cooperative was turning down all requests from outside wholesale vendors. There were two reasons for this reaction. First, the weaving cooperative was at a level of production in which they were adequately stocking their outlet, but they did not have a surplus of woven goods to ship out of the store. It was possible that when the business at the outlet slowed down in the autumn and winter months that the member-owners would consider these requests. However, the second reason for the cautious approach was a bit more complicated, as Cindy Friday explained:

We are really, really, really particular. We have a four-page application that we send to prospective wholesalers. We include a letter of explanation of the conditions of sale. They have to agree to tell the story of Tierra Wools,

and not just sell the piece. We go through those applications and we very carefully check into them and find out if they are the kind of business we want to carry our products. Right now we have only two places that are carrying our products—Rachel Brown's gallery in Taos and a gallery in Albuquerque.⁶⁵

The Tierra Wools Terms and Letter of Agreement also included specific directions to wholesale vendors on the telling of the Tierra Wools history. The latter point was particularly important to the member-owners. As Sophie Chávez, production manager, pointed out, "A lot of people want to buy our stuff wholesale and they don't know anything about us."⁶⁶ Prospective vendors were also expected to answer questions regarding their promotional capabilities, annual retail sales, and the types of products sold. Finally, wholesalers were asked to complete an essay describing "why you feel that your outlet would be a good place for the display and sale of Tierra Wools' weavings."⁶⁷ This request was included so as to try and avoid situations such as the one Sophie Chávez remembered:

Once we did some wholesaling with these people in Sutters Dam. So, Joanna and I dropped by one day to see how things were going. One of Joanna's tapestry blankets was on the floor, dirty, and it didn't look good. Plus it was very expensive. It wasn't ours anymore, but they weren't being respectful. Joanna talked to them, and they said they'd try to display it a little better.⁶⁸

Because of the success of Tierra Wools, the villagers of Los Ojos have begun other ventures including: Rio Arriba Wool Washing, Pastores Lamb, and Pastores Feed and General Store. All of these serve as models for other rural self-sustainment programs. Because of the positive results produced by the economic development strategies, the villagers of Los Ojos and the surrounding area are beginning to believe that they may be able to collectively improve their family economies with their own resources and talents. It is possible that migration out of the area by many young people will quite possibly diminish as the opportunities for meaningful employment increase. María's, Antonio's, and Gumercindo's early vision has grown with each successive achievement. The three organizers continue their belief and involvement in the projects with an eye to the future. They are rather realistic in their assessments of the struggle that successes born of collective action require. Of the human struggle involved in collaborative efforts such as Tierra Wools María said:

The growth of the sense of ownership in a cooperative business often develops unevenly among members. The larger the member group, the longer it takes the entire group to 'own' the business. Human development is a long-term, labor intensive process, and changes in markets, competition for the resource base, or new production technologies can derail fragile new businesses whose operators do not possess advanced skills.⁶⁹

Another level of struggle occurs in the long-time conflict over land and land use. Member-owners are generally part of the "sheep to shawl" process, which means that they raise sheep as well as spinning and weaving the wool from the sheep. The most pressing problem facing the ranchers is the perennial lack of adequate grazing land. In their efforts to develop alternatives to the annual search for grazing sites, Ganados members are working with such unlikely allies as government bureaucrats, university researchers, and environmental activists. However, Ganados' grazing recommendations are not always met with support or enthusiasm. In fact, many of their current grazing proposals are openly and vigorously opposed by some government agencies and environmental organizations.

Wool Growers Facing a Wall of Green Opposition

When the sheep ranchers were forced to continually feed their flock on their small home properties, the sites quickly become overgrazed. This meant the vegetation that the sheep consumed did not have a resting period wherein it could regenerate and be available for grazing in a subsequent year. Another problem with the small sites was that such plots do not allow for increasing the flock. This inability to grow made it impossible for the wool growers to increase flock numbers to the profit point. As has been the case over the last 150 years, local villagers were unable to acquire multi-year grazing leases. In the absence of such land, the Ganados projects, including Tierra Wools, faced certain limitations in their abilities to prosper and grow.

One controversial solution proposed by Ganados del Valle members was the acquisition of grazing leases for the 44,000 acres of elk game lands located in Rio Arriba County. This proposal was based on a successful program under way in the state of Oregon that permitted closely supervised and managed live-stock grazing on game and park lands. Huntsmen, fishermen, and environmentalists argued that such a proposal would, in effect, discourage the grazing of elk

and thereby destroy that aspect of the local economy that relied on hunting and tourism as a source of capital. María Varela countered:

Ironically, compared to resort tourism, mining, or timber cutting, [the] Ganados approach to development is more sustainable and ecologically sound. Yet we have not been successful in persuading environmentalists of the need to balance conservation of gamelands with the development needs of local human communities.⁷⁰

Even among the various government bureaucracies there was no agreement as to the viability of the Ganados proposal. New Mexican Department of Agriculture officials argued that “Vegetation needs something to recycle it, and grazing has been shown as a good way to do that.”⁷¹ Former New Mexico Commissioner of Public Lands, Bill Humpheries, agreed that good management of the grazing land can insure Ganados’ future while protecting wildlife. He said:

Ganados is people trying to help themselves and their culture, and they deserve our support. I think the wildlife areas can adapt to a reasonable number of sheep.⁷²

The New Mexico Department of Fish and Game was resolutely opposed to the proposal on the belief that sheep destroy grasslands through overgrazing. And, indeed this has often been the case. But, as Ganados members were quick to point out overgrazing was a problem with the relatively newer Anglo-based system of large-scale sheep ranching. By following the older traditions of Hispana/o ranching, which meant moving the flock from winter to summer lands and back, the issue of overgrazing was moot. In the absence of any unified governmental response, Antonio and María proposed that the Department of Fish and Game and Ganados sponsor a joint study to confirm or reject the Ganados’ and Department of Agriculture’s assertions. The Fish and Game people demurred.

These debates were complicated by other factors. For example, prior to the Ganados del Valle requests for grazing permits, other ranchers, mostly Anglos, had been allowed to graze their livestock on these same lands. The Hispanas/os of Ganados felt that not a small amount of racism was being practiced in the releasing of grazing permits. In addition, there was dissension among the various environmental organizations regarding the Ganados proposal. The Nature Conservancy and the Sierra Club were unequivocally opposed to the idea. The Audubon Society’s David Henderson had a historical perspective on the matter:

We've made some myopic decisions in our desire to protect wildlife. We haven't considered the human factor as much as we should. Maybe there should be more flexibility.⁷³

For Antonio Manzanares, there was no ambivalence or confusion on the matter. "We're looking for a home in our homeland," he said.⁷⁴ In 1989, after having spent every single year of the decade in grazing lands negotiations, Antonio decided to take a more aggressive approach to the dilemma. In a direct action move that harkened back to the days of La Alianza and before that to Las Gorras Blancas, Antonio and his wife, Molly, drove a flock of 1,000 ewes and lambs onto the Humphries Wildlife Management Area. Some Ganados members were hesitant to agree with this action because of its militancy. But, in the wake of yet another denial for an emergency grazing permit from the Commission for Public Lands, the entire group rallied behind Antonio and Molly. They grazed their flock for four days until park rangers arrived and threatened to arrest the Manzanares and confiscate the sheep. In an effort to avoid a more serious confrontation, the governor interceded and offered grazing land in a nearby state park. Antonio and Molly left with their flock and the point was made.⁷⁵

This direct action was successful in attracting national attention to the conditions of the villagers in Rio Arriba County,⁷⁶ and forced the interested parties to the negotiating table. A historic meeting took place during the summer of 1990. Some of those present included representatives of the Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, Audubon Society, Southwest Organizing Project, Southwest Research and Information Center, and of course, María Varela, Antonio Manzanares, and Gumercindo Salazar of Ganados del Valle. However, a resolution on the matter of grazing lands was not reached, and Ganados del Valle members continue to scramble through their contingencies each year.

Lucha Con Esperanza

Important questions were raised by the villager activists as to whether people in an economically depressed area have the right to use public land—land they once held in common—for their own sustenance, even when that land is set aside for the important purpose of preserving wildlife and biodiversity. The answers to their questions have significance beyond the valleys of Rio Arriba County, for these are issues that many indigenous people are grappling with in

other states such as California, Hawai'i, New York, North Dakota, and Arizona. Indeed these are similar struggles to those being fought by indigenous people in Latin America, Africa, and Australia.

In addition to raising issues regarding a people's self-determination and the environment, there is no doubt that the work of Ganados del Valle has had a profound impact on the lives of the villagers of Rio Arriba County. These consequences are seen most dramatically in the lives of the Hispanas who are the member-owners of Tierra Wools. In the work of managing the weaving cooperative, the Hispanas are personally empowering themselves and rethinking the possibilities of their lives; they are learning about the inter-connectedness of political and social issues; they are reacquainting themselves with their cultural history and heritage, and they are learning the very specific creative and technical skills of being weavers and spinners. All of these achievements have come within the context of an on-going struggle over the use of land and the right of a community to take responsibility for planning and realizing its future. The future stories of Tierra Wools are not yet written, but if the recent past is any indication, the Hispanas of the weaving cooperative (and their affiliated business ventures within Ganados del Valle) will emerge more tenacious than ever from the intense social and political struggles that are certain to come.

NOTES

- ¹ Tierra Wools marketing brochure, 1991.
- ² "Hispanas," is the name used in New Mexico by *mestizas*, women of Indian and Spanish descent. They do not use the term "Chicana," which is more commonly used by mestizas living in other parts of the Southwest and West; nor do they use the term "Hispanic," which is U.S. government-developed and issued. For further discussion on the specific New Mexican use of "Hispana," see the work of Patricia Zavella, "Feminist Insider Dilemmas: Constructing Identity with 'Chicana' Informants," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 13:3 (1992). In this insightful essay, she deconstructs her own political relationship to the category "Chicana," while concurrently discussing the role of naming within Chicano cultural nationalism. She explores the effect of categories such as "Chicana," "Hispana," "Hispanic," and "Spanish" on her work as a Chicana cultural anthropologist conducting ethnographic studies among mestizas in New Mexico. She also remarks on the reception her work received when the way in which she spoke of mestiza/o identity did not comply with the pre-conceived notions of naming and identity held by Chicana/o scholars. In "The Folk Performance of 'Chicano' and the Cultural

Limits of Political Ideology,” José Limón examines the process of group naming; and while he situates his critique within the borderlands of Texas-Mexico, he does comment on the use of the category *Hispanos/os* by New Mexicans. He says “Younger people in New Mexico preferred [being called] Chicano although the majority chose “Spanish-American,” “Hispano,” or “Mexican.” New Mexico has a peculiar denial of things Mexican and its apparently still continuing romance with the Spanish past.” *And Other Neighborly Names: Social Process and Cultural Image in Texas Folklore*, eds. Richard Bauman and Roger D. Abrahams (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981) 197-225.

- ³ In this work “Anglo” refers to persons of European descent.
- ⁴ Rina Benmayor, “Testimony, Action Research, and Empowerment: Puerto Rican Women and Popular Education,” *Women’s Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, eds. Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (London: Routledge, 1991) 158-174.
- ⁵ Malcolm Enbright, *Spanish and Mexican Land Grants and the Law* (Manhattan: Sunflower University Press, 1991) 10.
- ⁶ For example, the form of the Río Grande blanket and the application of the *saltillo* (chevron) and *vallero* (eight-pointed star) pattern are design elements descended from this early period. Guadalupe Tafoya, *Shared Traditions: New Mexican and Peruvian Weavings* (Taos: Millicent Rogers Museum, 1992) 2.
- ⁷ Elizabeth Martínez, *500 Years of Chicano History in Photographs* (Albuquerque: Southwest Organizing Project, 1992) 36.
- ⁸ María Varela, Unpublished manuscript, 1990, 17.
- ⁹ Varela, 18. Enbright, too, emphasizes the importance of the relationship of Northern New Mexicans to the land.
- ¹⁰ Mario Barrera, *Beyond Aztlán: Ethnic Autonomy in Comparative Perspective* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990) 11.
- ¹¹ Barrera 12.
- ¹² Barrera 13. Ironically, even as they sought to capitalize on the sentiments stirred by Las Gorras Blancas, the Knights of Labor were disapproving of their actions!
- ¹³ Enbright 5.
- ¹⁴ Shirley Flóres-Muñoz, Ph.D. Qualifying Essay, University of California, Santa Cruz, 1990, 5.
- ¹⁵ Varela 20.
- ¹⁶ Barrera 35.
- ¹⁷ Frances Quintana. *Pobladores Two: Hispanic Americans of the Ute Frontier*. (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1991) 145.

- ¹⁸ Barrera 35. Quintana 144. Juan Gómez-Quiñones. *Chicano Politics: Reality and Promise 1940-1990*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990) 115.
- ¹⁹ Barrera 36.
- ²⁰ Flóres-Muñoz 6.
- ²¹ Telling the story of the Alianza is problematic in that many of the histories of this period of land grant activism tend to dwell on the role of Reies López Tijerina. Tijerina, a Christian fundamentalist from Texas, was for many years the spokesperson and a primary strategist for La Alianza. However, he cultivated a personal leadership style as a bold, action-oriented charismatic; he was uninterested in developing a leadership model which allowed for a collaborative ruling force.
- ²² For an elaboration on these activities see the works of Elizabeth Martínez, Carlos Muñoz Jr., and Juan Gómez-Quiñones.
- ²³ María was one of two Chicanas who worked in this organization, whose leadership and rank and file members were predominantly black and white people. The other Chicana activist involved with SNCC was Elizabeth “Betita” Martínez, who like María, moved to New Mexico and became involved in many of the popular movements of the region. She was the founding editor of the Northern New Mexican newspaper *El Grito del Norte*. Today, Elizabeth regularly publishes commentary in the journals *Crossroads* and *Zeta*.
- ²⁴ Donald Dale Jackson. “Around Los Ojos: Sheep and Land Are Fighting Words,” *Smithsonian Magazine* (April 1991) 37.
- ²⁵ Shortly before the research for this project began, María was the recipient of a “genius award” from the MacArthur Foundation. The foundation cited her long-term community involvement, stemming from the Civil Rights Movement, and her critical role in the development of Ganados del Valle.
- ²⁶ Gumercindo was the instigator of this working trio. It was he who introduced María and Antonio to each other. “‘I’d seen her around,’ Antonio recalled. ‘A lot of people thought she was, you know, a subversive. Well, she is—in a good way.’ María, for her part, wondered about Antonio’s willingness to commit to a collective project. ‘It wasn’t an easy relationship,’ she says.” Michael Ryan, “The Village That Came Back to Life.” *Parade Magazine* (May 3, 1992) 39.
- ²⁷ In the current struggle for grazing land, sheep ranchers usually begin negotiating with large landowners in February and March. In some cases, they must deal with up to 15 different contingencies in the effort to find adequate land for foraging. Some of these sites include use of U.S. Forest Service land, land situated on the site of a proposed ski resort, and land owned by the Jicarilla Apaches. Sometimes the negotiations for grazing land can extend into the late spring, a critical time when lambs are being born. This can make it almost impossible to move flocks the considerable distances from the winter to

the summer grazing sites. Jackson 41.

- ²⁸ During the Carter administration, María was invited to head VISTA. She declined saying, "I didn't believe government could do anything for communities anyway." Antonio, who has a B.A. in psychology, abandoned his plans for a career in law in order to work the land that his family had owned for generations.
- ²⁹ Jackson 39. Ryan 10.
- ³⁰ This occurred through the development of a *partido* (shares) system. People are initially loaned 10 sheep apiece. They are supposed to return a lamb every year to the loan stock. At the end of five or six years they will be expected to contribute 10 sheep to the loan stock. In addition to this commitment, each sheep rancher must pay the price of one lamb each year to the Gandos del Valle Scholarship Fund,. The fund assists local high school graduates who wish to continue their education in agriculture or related fields.
- ³¹ Rachel Brown is best known for her development of a portable spinning wheel and her book *The Weaving, Spinning, and Dying Book*, first published in 1978. In its first edition there were five printings; it is now in its fifth printing of the second edition. She is the current owner/manager of Rio Grande Weavers supply in Taos.
- ³² Interview with Rachel Brown on June 13, 1992.
- ³³ *National Wool Growers Magazine* (December 1989)
- ³⁴ Interviews with María Varela on November 1, 1990, and Rachel Brown.
- ³⁵ Tafoya 2.
- ³⁶ Interview with María Varela.
- ³⁷ In the winter, when snow storms blocked the mountainous pass between Taos and Los Ojos, she travelled an additional 100 miles each way in order to teach classes.
- ³⁸ Interview with Rachel Brown.
- ³⁹ One woman, Sophie Chávez, is often cited as an example. She was so shy that when she came into the village stores she would order her goods without so much as raising her head to look someone in the face,. However, she is now the head of production; in this role she leads groups of people on tours of the Tierra Wools and Rio Arriba Wool Washing facilities. Interviews with Cindy Friday and Joanna Terrazas on June 12, 1992, and Sophie Chávez herself, on June 11, 1992.
- ⁴⁰ Interviews with Cindy Friday, Joanne Terrazas, and Sophie Chávez.
- ⁴¹ Interview with Sophie Martínez on June 12, 1992.
- ⁴² Norma Alarcón, "This Bridge Called My Back and Anglo-American Feminism," *Criticism in the Borderland: Studies in Chicano Literature, Culture, and Ideology*, eds. Héctor Calderón and José David Saldívar. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991) 28-41.

- ⁴³ Alarcón 28-41.
- ⁴⁴ In order to become a member of Tierra Wools, one must have completed the weaving curriculum and performed unpaid work of twenty hours a month for three years. Member-owners are persons with decision-making powers and responsibilities. As of the summer of 1992, there were six member-owners: Joanna Terrazas, María "Nena" Russom, Molly Manzanares, Sophie Chávez, Norma Martínez, and Irma Martínez; three were interviewed for this study: Joanna, Nena and Sophie. They meet once a month for policy-related decisions. Management meetings are held weekly and have to do directly with the day-to-day affairs of Tierra Wools. These meetings include Nena Russom, treasurer; Sophie Chávez, production manager; and Cindy Friday, marketing manager.
- ⁴⁵ Interview with Nena Russom on June 12, 1992.
- ⁴⁶ Interview with Joanna Terrazas on June 12, 1992.
- ⁴⁷ Interview with Joanna Terrazas.
- ⁴⁸ When their projects were completed, the children also had the opportunity to sell their finished works through the Pastores General Store; the money made from these sales was theirs to keep. Thus, the children of the village were able to participate in the cultural and economic projects of Ganados, even as they learned about the histories of their people and the land.
- ⁴⁹ Interview with Nena Russom.
- ⁵⁰ Nena's weavings were in a joint exhibit with Joanna Terrazas' and Sophie Martínez's work at the prestigious Millicent Rogers Museum in Taos.
- ⁵¹ Interview with Nena Russom.
- ⁵² Interview with Joanna Terrazas.
- ⁵³ Interview with Cindy Friday on June 12, 1992.
- ⁵⁴ Interview with Cindy Friday.
- ⁵⁵ Interview with Rachel Brown.
- ⁵⁶ Interview with Rachel Brown.
- ⁵⁷ Interview with Rachel Brown. At the time of these interviews, rumor was the Kika Chávez would be rejoining Tierra Wools shortly.
- ⁵⁸ Interviews with Sophie Martínez, Joanna Terrazas, Sophie Chávez, and Nena Russom.
- ⁵⁹ Interview with Sophie Chávez.
- ⁶⁰ Interview with Joanna Terrazas.
- ⁶¹ Interview with Sophie Chávez.
- ⁶² Interview with Nena Russom.

- ⁶³ Interview with Cindy Friday.
- ⁶⁴ One note of irony is that during the early part of this century Robin's grandfather, John Collier, was Commissioner of the much-hated U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The BIA was and is responsible for the administration of the repressive policies, which have been promulgated by the government, against indigenous people of the United States.
- ⁶⁵ Interview with Cindy Friday.
- ⁶⁶ Interview with Sophie Chávez.
- ⁶⁷ Tierra Wools Terms and Letter of Agreement for 1992.
- ⁶⁸ Tierra Wools Terms and Letter of Agreement for 1992.
- ⁶⁹ Interview with María Varela.
- ⁷⁰ Interview with María Varela.
- ⁷¹ James N. Baker, "A Land Battle in New Mexico," *Newsweek Magazine* (September 18, 1989) 27.
- ⁷² Jackson 48.
- ⁷³ Jackson 46.
- ⁷⁴ Jackson 42.
- ⁷⁵ "Tierra o Muerte: Land or Death," the documentary video about the work of Ganados de Valle, captures on film the events that transpired during this non-violent direct action. The video was produced in 1991 by KDHI, the Denver public television station.
- ⁷⁶ Robert Redford, the filmmaker and actor, became an ally of the Ganados efforts. In 1989, Redford offered, as a fundraising event, the Santa Fé premiere of *The Milagro Beanfield War*, a film that he produced and directed. He has also featured for sale some of Tierra Wools' woven goods in his "Sundance" mail order catalogue.

TROUBLE RODE IN TEXAS, on a fresh mount. It galloped over the plains, lay at ambush in the hills, stalked the mesquite thickets, camped at the waterholes, swaggered and strutted in the towns. Trouble whispered to the domineering Anglo, to the marauding Indian, to the mercurial, high-tempered Mexican. Trouble kindled the fire beneath a pot where simmered racial antagonisms, religious fanaticisms, wrongs fancied and wrongs real—and brought it from the simmer to boiling, up to the edge and spilling over. The adventurer, the outlaw, the siftings of the East, came to the new state and each took what suited his individual fancy. Mexicans were killed for a cow or horse, for no reason at all. The Texans, grabbing the spoils, fixed the southern boundary of the state at the Rio Grande and marked it down with the black of gunpowder and the red of blood. The Mexicans marked it at the Rio Nueces and harassed the invaders of what they considered Mexican territory. The Rangers, formed of dire necessity and recruited, too often, with men whose sole virtue was a daring courage, were reluctantly recognized by the army units which came now by water and by land . . . The Rangers hated the Mexicans, who hated and feared them in return. Politics stretched out its tenuous fingers and drew in the weak, the ignorant, and those lusting for power.

There was turmoil and strife unending.

There was blood. Texas dipped a pen deeply in it, and wrote its history with it.

Yet slowly, relentlessly as Time, the idomitableness of the Americans laid its foundations for permanency and order and built firmly upon them. The Mexican hidalgo and the high-bred ranchero, by nature slow to recognize the logic of events, failed to gauge the future by happenings of the past. Serene in the belief that his heritage of conquest was a sort of super-bravery which must, inevitably, conquer again, he built a wall against the Americans—against everything American—and excluded himself within it.

(Caballero, Chapter Three)