

Poetry as Survival of and Resistance to Genocide in Lorna Dee Cervantes's *Drive: The Last Quartet*

By Edith Vasquez¹

Abstract

This article offers a critical retrospective of Lorna Dee Cervantes, the Chicana/Chumash poet as a literary analytical overview of her most recent work collected in the multi-volume poetry collection, *Drive: The First Quartet* (Wings Press, 2006). It offers an assessment of Cervantes's impact on the development of Chicana poetry and its articulation of social change, women's empowerment, critical consciousness, and poetic innovation. Having emerged from performance poetry festivals in her early career, Cervantes went on to develop a signature poetics and to produce a number of canonical poems such as, "Uncle's First Rabbit," "Under the Shadow of the Freeway," "Poem to the Young White Man Who Asked How I an Intelligent, Well-Read Person Could Believe in the War Between Races," her tour de force, "Pleiades from the Cables of Genocide," among others. Along with being an activist, editor, publisher, and philosopher, Cervantes has previously published two award-winning books of poetry, *Emplumada* (U. of Pittsburgh, 1981) and *From the Cables of Genocide: Poems on Love and Hunger* (Arte Público, 1992). Cervantes's formation of a body of writing documenting and memorializing genocide is the central theme of this article, a theme which Cervantes with an daunting poetic vision and voice, urges her readers to consider as the central theme of poetry, society, and history. Intrinsic to her commitment to human rights which she articulates within poetic form, is her valorization of girls and women from working-class, mestizo, and indigenous communities who face and overcome ethnocide, racism, and economic and gender violence.

Keywords: Chicana poetry, genocide, women's studies, indigenous people of California

The 2006 publication of *Drive: The First Quartet*¹ by Lorna Dee Cervantes is a true cause célèbre and a historic occasion for American poetry and Chicana/o and Native American literary production.² The Chicana/Chumash poet, with two previous stunning and award-winning volumes, *Emplumada*³ and *From the Cables of Genocide: Poems on Love and Hunger*⁴ has never been one to shun a cause. Cervantes has been at the vanguard of poetry and politics, which for her have been like two fuses continuously igniting each other to flame. First emerging as a Flor y Canto poet during la causa, Cervantes's earliest poems demonstrated a structural and imagistic acumen which laid the groundwork for subsequent and stunning poetic developments. Indeed her important and wide-appealing first book, her groundbreaking if enigmatic second book, and her five-volume third book, constitute a cohesive and unique oeuvre featuring triple landmark publications spaced a decade or more apart and exhibiting an enduring aesthetic and political engagement.

¹ Edith Morris-Vásquez is Assistant Professor of English and World Literature at Pitzer College. She publishes in the fields of Chicana literature, and American poetry, and has recently published an article on the 2006 immigration megamarch in Los Angeles for the *Journal of Latino and Latin American Studies*.

Book reviews of *Emplumada* reveal the awe with which the phenomenal poet and her debut were greeted. Sandra Cisneros noted Cervantes's power to sway audiences across the ethnic spectrum. Yet Cisneros also wondered about the impact such an appeal would have on a literature struggling against the "mainstream."⁵ The Chicano scholar, José David Saldívar, was equally impressed:

No book has so carefully elucidated what living as a Chicana in the West means...*Emplumada* offers a number of troubled and delicate portraits of a woman's world and how that antipatriarchal world has come to have meaning.⁶

As this citation indicates, Cervantes had a strong impact on readers and critics alike. Indeed, *Emplumada*, which has remained continuously in print since its first 1981 edition, is a definitive classic of Chicana literature. Cervantes's poems featuring Mexican and Native American working class women's experiences and expressions brokered profound insights into the power of poetry to redress social wrongs. It also operated out of several traditions in American poetry (such as the Beats, the confessionals, the deep symbolists, and the Moderns). Significantly, during this period and because issues of literary innovation and the ways in which a marginal, ethnically-specific literature could establish itself vis-à-vis the dominant canon were part of an ongoing cultural debate, Cervantes had struck a new chord.

Playing a crucial role within the context of contemporary poetry, the poetry of Cervantes secured the attention of readers within the Chicana/o community as well as in the "mainstream." In effect, she was fitting a radical poetry and politics to what appeared to be a dominant language (her poems are predominantly English-language poems) and thereby amplifying the discourse on Indigenous/Chicana non-essentialized identities. For example, her poetry offered more than mere code-switches between the two languages of Chicana/o poetry, English and Spanish; they were also able to depict the visual world in sharp detail and form highly moving contrasts between objects of that visual world, and they documented the survival, resistance, and personal agency of intergenerational female social and familial organization.

Foregrounding the power and importance of women-centered artistic, social, political and intellectual identities, Cervantes steadily produced a body of poetry which insisted on the historical reckoning of injustices committed against her Mexican and Native communities and by extension other populations who have been subject to violence, genocide, or oppression. Tragic, brutalized, or moribund female figures--from the miscarried daughter of domestic violence in "Uncle's First Rabbit" in *Emplumada* to the lost innocent in the mass grave of "Coffee" in *Drive: The First Quartet*—testify to the dark lineage of violence perpetrated against women. Yet her poetry also abounds with poignant verbal portrayures of female personas as survivors, interlocutors, visionaries, and leaders who assert agency in unexpected places and by unexpected means. Poor women, young women, and racialized or subjugated women, are heroines whose untapped power and intelligence the poet valorizes in her own assertion of a singular aesthetic which speaks shared and communal circumstances in the shadows of domination.

Cervantes's ability to produce a viable and coterminous self-definition along with a shared communitarian identity is more than likely one of the most important contributions she achieves within the sphere of contemporary poetry for she reverses the privilege granted to the center in her appreciation of what exists outside of the center. In this reversal, the political import of her work put poetry to a test of values. Like the Argentine poet, Alfonsina Storni who also achieved early acclaim and then turned from a very accessible style to a more demanding one, Cervantes followed *Emplumada*, a critically-acclaimed volume, with a book concentrating on genocide. All and all, while her debut book signaled the introduction of a major force in American poetry-- a force which was distinctively female, indigenous ethnic, and revolutionary—her second book performed a sustained examination and redress of the genocide, racism, sexist exploitation, and ethnocide which it contested.

The literary as well as historical trajectory of Cervantes's oeuvre is noteworthy, even spectacular, for the way it evidences a poetics built upon Chicana/Indigenous women's self-reliance or what I have called elsewhere, its autogenesis.⁷ For her ongoing innovations in poetic forms, tone, and structure, and ever since the beginning of her illustrious career in letters, Cervantes has carefully constructed a body of poetry built out of personal symbols that refute oppression, for example, ubiquitous bird and feather imagery constitute a major feature of a poetics of self-reliance and autonomy referenced in the titular word "emplumada" which means indicates a noun phrase for being both female and feathered. From the deeply resonant and imagistic poems about coming-of-age in *Emplumada*, to the dense and more demanding poems dealing with mature themes such as divorce, murder, sexuality, and ecology set against the background of cultural genocide in *Cables of Genocide: Poems on Love and Hunger*, Cervantes pioneers what it means to be a lyric poet and a political poet in the United States today, as a twenty first century poet and blogger-activist,⁸ Cervantes composes through digital media, a form of communication appropriate both for the times as well as for an author whose urgent messages would seem both to necessitate instantaneous expression and demand ongoing, focused interpretation.

In *Drive: The First Quartet*, Cervantes returns immediately to a personal connection to the history of genocide and a critique of the logics of oppression through effusive poetic segues combining rich imagery with haunting verbal reveries. Indeed as the close readings of poems out of each of the five books which I offer here indicate, genocide and violence trouble the poetic conscience which cannot unfettered seek its own individual satisfaction without also commemorating those whose lives are lost. The particular means by which the poet communicates her desire to see a restoration of humanity reveals the value, power, and uniqueness of the individual woman poet's assertion of a viable and meaningful life force which permits poetic expression but which is irrecoverably lost to those whose lives are lost due to genocide. So it is that the poet can depict panoramic and historically-attuned portraits of a devastated and violated humanity as well as portray an aesthetic redemption of this beauty through the pleasures of the living. Life, then, is ultimately rarefied and sensually and psychically pleasing.

In contrast to the abundance and beneficence of life, unmet human needs, are one part of the larger legacy of racial ideologies, genocide, and conquest discourses. As intimated above, Cervantes continues to focus on material inequalities in the much-anticipated *Drive: The First Quartet* in a world of deeply scarred locales and mass death

of innocents—genocide and war extend across all geographical places—hence the title/query of the first book “How Far’s the War?” The phrase “how far is the war?” inquires of war’s whereabouts in order to witness its destruction.

The book begins with a poem dedicated to Cervantes’s Chumash ancestors. A poem/prayer, it catalogues the missionization, dispossession, enslavement, and genocide of the Chumash of California. Operating as antithesis to figurative language, the bones of her dead ancestors remain bone; they are intoned within the poems thus,

Bones stripped of their acorns.
Bones nipped from the grave....
Bounties of bones
with the people inside.

Forced to labor in the Santa Barbara Mission, the Chumash are converted by this brutality into commodities, “mere tools to raise/A nation.” The bones reference death not so much as symbols but as unmediated fragments of the whole body that is dead yet not properly buried. Bones remain where death has come and gone. They are bereft of life, yet they are material and viable parts of what remains after death. Sacred because they continue to exist after death, the bones of those killed en masse tell of ethnic cleansing and of commonly shared histories of genocide.

Genocide is a central preoccupation for Cervantes. Genocide is what it is because it selects and re-inscribes identity within mass violence. “For My Ancestors Adobed in the Walls of the Santa Barbara Mission” tells of the history of the genocide of her people, the Chumash of California. The poem is an important structural and thematic starting place for the volume “How Far’s the War?,” which contains twenty-eight poems that move back and forth through time, tracing the destructive path of war, military violence, genocide, and industrial accidents related to war, such as nuclear spills. The second poem of the book, “In the Waiting Room,” meditates on the inevitability of ongoing war and is followed by the long five-part poem and major composition “Coffee,” which centers on ethnocide in contemporary Chiapas in the Acteal massacre.

Indeed, I would argue that Cervantes’ works on genocide belong alongside the most important works on Holocaust literature, such as Elie Weisel’s *Night*. Cervantes’s works details the ugly truth of genocide as a disruption of the cyclical process of regeneration which creates the individuals who make up a community. If death is finiteness, what does one do with the horrors of genocidal murder, which would appear to expand the annihilation of its victims limitlessly? By revealing the names of the 45 persons killed at Acteal, the poet makes those 45 deaths less anonymous and thus performs an homage to them. In effect, the moral universe is restored through the recovery of remains and a process of mourning, traditional rites, and proper burial. Exhumation is an important process for reconciliation, and Cervantes performs a poetic exhumation. The mass grave of “Coffee” is alive with death; the poem offers a reenactment of the scene:

Acteal. December 22, 1997. Bloodied
mud sucks the plastic sandals of a child,
velas gutter through the saged prayers

in the little church blasted through with
twenty-two splintered holes the size
of a baby's tender fists. Melon heads pop
and the hacking drum of a machete
meeting bone counts down the hours
of matanza.

Here, the machete cutting into bone forms a deathly rhythm of the massacre. The onomatopoeic words "sucks" "drum," "pop" and "blast," remake the soundscape of this violent tragedy. Through her careful deployment of poetic techniques, Cervantes works to reveal the reality of this barbarous act through poetic reenactment. She performs a poetic tribute which does not gloss over the ominous visual and aural particulars of this gross act of violence.

Cervantes situates the evil, brutality, and hatred directed at innocents for the purpose of ethnic cleansing, with the predominately autobiographical, poetic persona who attends to the suffering of other lost or surviving victims of historical injustice. In other words, Cervantes posits her identity as one constituted through a shared history of marginalization and genocide. Thus, the indigenous aspect of Cervantes's poetics speaks to the interrelatedness and cyclicity of life histories tormented through violence but made sacred through survival. Genocide of Native Americans then is not separate from the Jewish Holocaust; these are intertwining and devastating episodes shared by these cultures.

The poem "Bananas" follows after "Coffee" and moves the poetic field to Estonia, Sarajevo, Colombia, and Big Mountain where the land base of ethnic populations is despoiled through nuclear waste; its final lines lead directly into the poet's self-affirmation: after an imagined accounting of an Estonian winter without food for the hungry and a portrait of American despoiled land bases, Cervantes returns to her poetic and political identity: "Poetry is for the soul...Your friend,/a Chicana poet."

In "Murder," poetic articulation is a vital weapon against violence and oppression:

they'll have to kill us first
that should be a given
they will have to take us
each one of us
clamp our wet mouths shut
with their star-grinned hand
full of lies
or they have to kill us...
this is a poem
about writing poems

And in the end of "Coffee," Cervantes makes clear that the purposes of her poetry are to struggle against genocide and war:

I will fight this way forever. Estas son mis armas:
la computadora, el video, la pluma

A culture isn't vanquished until the hearts
of its mothers are lying on the ground.

Clearly, she sees her writing tools, including digital ones, as weapons against tyranny, oppression, and genocide. In "Untitled," another poem from "How Far's the War," the poet asserts that there is no justification for material human suffering:

Open the hand that racks
cinder from a nesting of hovels, the cardboard
city where bread is never warm and
memory lines the alleys in a windsuit of denim.
After the winter of order, the black patrol
breaks the camp with billy clubs and bits, a
music of sirens and silence punctuate
the coffin refrain of hunger.
Despair the hand as you would
a stone in the border, and remove it.

The poem depicts state power implemented through the violence of a police force raiding an encampment of the poor and hungry. After winter passes, the violence appears as one more phase of the seedy underside of civic planning: the physical reminder of subjection is not spontaneous but, chillingly, as predictable as the seasons. Society orphans its own in an orderly fashion that imitates natural weather changes. The finiteness of the border and the overabundance of misery—memory haunts the wind, hunger is ever present—exist in permanent contrast. The middle section of the poem builds upon the specificity of state control as prescribed through billy clubs, and overall the poem presents an ambiguous meshing of sound and image. The "hand that racks" of the first line concentrates on oppressive government and works to initiate an accentuated musical reverie describing the social order as a dismal musicality in which the only constant is unmet need, "the coffin refrain" of the music in a reality in which "the bread is never warm."

Driving beyond the level of the confessional lyric, both generically as well as ethically, this poet does not confess in order to bemoan futility or furnish catharsis, but decries the simple-minded and deterministic logic of violence and oppression vis-à-vis the mysterious expansiveness of creation. "If love/is not the answer, hate is not/the question," she asserts in the poem, "Tierra y Libertad." A resounding *sí se puede!* clamors through the devastation she witnesses and memorializes. However, and perhaps contrary to expectations, violence versus creation is not a gender-bound binary.

In her early work, the poet belongs within a female household which does not dictate a sex gender order. The poet does "man-work":

Myself: I could never decide.
So I turned to books, those staunch, upright men.
I became Scribe: Translator of Foreign Mail,
interpreting letters from the government, notices
of dissolved marriages and Welfare stipulations.

I paid the bills, did light man-work, fixed faucets
insured everything
against all leaks.

She is the masculine force in the midst of a matriarchal domestic space. Elsewhere, poems offer vivid depictions of a woman poet's affection for male poets, her own son, and other men. She does not see poetry as a male vocation, but she does not proceed from the assumption that American literature is a liberated space for women either.

The second volume of *Drive: The First Quartet* named *BIRD AVE* offers a recollection of girlhood friendships, particularly Chicana street kinships that the poet enjoyed as a young girl and which provide an important thematic juxtaposition to genocide and violence directed at women in poems discussed up to now. Countering the isolation and repugnance attributed to genocide and which makes any other topic seem superfluous, the poems of *BIRD AVE* manifest a concern for the plural forms of oppression of economically at-risk ethnic female youth who band together to form their own forms of moral codes. The girl gang is a complex female-centered social organization with valid critiques of adult and powerful societal structures. Not the victims of genocide, still these young urban women have a great deal at stake in what would otherwise appear to be a powerful male-ordered society with little regard for their prospects. Young and alert, the teenage women may be certain that their own plights are perilous, still they insist on self-representation as one form of self-defense in dangerous environs.

A number of these poems portray the vivid scenes of female youth culture and present a young feminine subjectivity from which the poet draws important life knowledge rebutting stereotypes and dehumanizing marginalization. In the title poem, "BIRD AVE," poetry emerges from this gleeful, boasting, and flamboyant female community:

we wore tease
tight skirts
tough teased hair
talked tough
rhymes
developed
una re-putación

Cervantes memorializes this formative time in two subsequent poems, "Oda a las gatas" and "Pachucando." What is most important about these poems' description of a bold female youth culture is precisely that this culture confronts patriarchal values, reverses them and even scoffs at them. In the poem cited above, the girls take pride in achieving a bad reputation: una reputación, a whoredom. The bodies of the young woman become political sites; while they may be subject to overly sexualized representation from without, they are nevertheless powerful vehicles for a commonly shared resistance to such exploitation. Over her career, Cervantes continuously deploys the female body, its orifices, features, needs and desires as poetic and political resources. The sisterhood of young women here reveals a sense of utopian all-female societies living by their own

standards. These standards, first of sexual liberation and whoredom but leading into standards of moral comportment, knowledge, and social institutions, become the testing ground for the powerful female poetic persona who will go on to report on the damning history of force executed against youth, innocence, and vulnerability. So it is that girl culture here becomes an important rite of passage into adult realities. In other words, once a girl child survives the at-risk home and street environment, she has the ability to connect with the plight of oppressed people and document the transition from individual rights to women's and human's rights. Certainly the emphasis on girlhood is critical for the formation of the poet's full range of powers to redress greater problems. Most notably, Cervantes's girlish poetic perspective gives Chicana/o poetry the all-time classic work *Emplumada*, and a return to girlhood in *Drive: The First Quartet*, brings about a consolidation of women's life cycles as a poetic development over time.

Despite the passing of time, some things remain the same. Self-knowledge is the most important form of knowledge. This is what the girls of "Oda a Las Gatas" know very well which is why the poem which boasts, "we knew it all/ the code and the symbology/ the poetic and the order," ends with the assertion:

Man
it was tough
to know it all
and we haven't
learned anything
since

Prizing the self-knowledge and the social and political savvy of the young and at-risk youth of the barrios of California, Cervantes relishes the street smarts, the life knowledge, and the solidarity of community youth who must resist experiences as educational disenfranchisement, stereotyping, and socio-economic marginalization. By returning the poetic work to her early life, Cervantes valorizes youth cultures as capable of a bountiful intelligence and ongoing and early-initiated constructions of poetic and personal meaning.

PLAY, the third volume contained in *Drive: The First Quartet*, extends the notion of play first summoned in the girl poems of *BIRD AVE* but comes to signal poetic experimentation, fluency, and composition. These poems use a wide range of syntaxes, vocabularies and segues, and seem to mimic the energy of painting or that of music. According to Cervantes, this is a spontaneously and unedited collection: "I call these my 7 Minute Poems. All are unrevised except for punctuation. All are spontaneous, with given titles." The book is dedicated to her students and points to her personal investments as a teacher of other poets. She also relishes her poetic powers, especially the instantaneously gratifying processes of self-discovery, such as in the poem "Searching for a Thought:"

I picked a plum instead.
I rubbed the sweet skin,
smelled the blood inside,
opened it for the first and last.

Its breath was still warm
from the sun's abrazo, rivers
of tart sinews flowed through
the veins. I heard the ghosts
of birds in its seed, saw
the flesh shine with tiny mirrors,
and tasted the firm ripe body
of my mind.

Poetry as pleasure and thought as pleasure are as tartly flavored as the plum. Love of self, sensuality and the possession of the body as a carnal delight are all present in the poem, and yet it is a poem about thought. In fact, it serves very well as a poetics for the poems of *PLAY*, as it demonstrates the viability, energy, and active nature of thought combined with physical and sensual nurturance that altogether form an icon of the Chicana revolutionary poet who is both an activist and an artist--a woman who relishes the body and life's pleasures yet does not forget the suffering of others. Very much a framing of poetry itself, this work arranges time sequences as a maturation of fruit and gives a strong sense of the associative power of the senses.

Turning now to the fourth volume of *Drive: The First Quartet, Letters to David: An Elegaic Mass in the Form of a Train, for David A. Kennedy*. This is a fascinating self-contained long poem written as a train making stops at thirteen sequential stations. Each individual poem is a stop. Here, Kennedy is memorialized as admittedly different yet paradoxically similar to the poet. Cervantes likens the Kennedy curse to the genocide of indigenous people like herself. In "Third Station," she notes that they both belong to the same generation:

we were
the same age
in a decade
of curious
parallels

He, like herself, is a young idealist and a child of idealists whose lives are marked by violent death. He, unlike her, is white and male and thus privileged in a way she can only imagine, yet his life becomes a mirror for her own and his death the death of something within her. Most touchingly, the poem weaves together the death scenes of Kennedy and Cervantes's own mother, who met her death at the hands of a rapist. This fact will continue to emerge in *Drive: The First Quartet*. In other words, Cervantes's private experience of death bears directly upon her apprehension of death as an individual loss connected to historical or global loss.

In yet another important contextualization of poems on genocide, Cervantes meditates on death as an absolute or universal rite of passage. Life is ever more valued when one considers the proximity of death. "The curious parallels" between Kennedy's life and her own speak of eerie resemblances; death is a game, an enigma, or a bad luck draw of the cards. In other words, there are unexplainable patterns which occur and recur in life.

Hard Drive, the fifth volume, is divided into three parts, "Striking Ash," "On Line," and "Con una poca de gracia," which form an interesting set of objects, especially in so far as they philosophically convey both fixedness and infinite substances. Of course, ash is the remnant substance of burnt organic matter and invokes death. The titular poem, "Striking Ash," about the author's murdered mother, is a poem about an unnatural and violent death of a woman at the hands of genocidal physical violence which indigenous women like those of Acteal, have had to confront and resist. In the poem, equally sleepless, murdered mother and insomniac daughter share an odd space where they appear to be sisters understanding each other's pain: the mother, whose potential was eclipsed at a young age, and the daughter, whose lack of sleep would slowly diminish her if it were not for the vital connection she sustains with dreams, poetry, and the italicized memory "*because love was what it was we put our trust in time.*" Time would have resolved complex mother-daughter relations, but the mother's time was cut short by violent death. Poetry seems a strong remedy against the unsettled affairs of life. It rushes to the mass graveside and the vanquished maternal body as well as to the ephemeral experience of eating a piece of fruit.

Often enough, however, poetry instead of acting to prevent genocide has posed the woman as love object or muse. In particular for Cervantes, references to Neruda may imply that masculinity and poetry are closely aligned, even though it is through her love of Neruda as both poet and man that Cervantes apprehends her own role as poet for whom personal, familiar, and romantic relationships mean a great deal. In "From the Heights of Machu Picchu, the strong anti-patriarchal dimension of her poetry shines through. Cervantes emphasizes her matrilineal family heritage in California: the phrase "Women/the size of acorns ruled" references the strong historical and cultural presence of women who people a time and space from which the poet derives her own sense of poetic lineage as well as her survival in spite of the campaigns of genocide against indigenous Californians. Then moving to the literary world in which she also extends her presence, the poet turns to the figure of Neruda. In the following poem of this sequence, "Sleeping Around (On Dead Pablo's Birthday)," Cervantes again speaks of the Chilean poet and opens the poem speaking of her exhaustion involving women's position as sexual objects for male poets: "It seems I am tired of being a woman." Through the act of poetic composition, Cervantes reigns over masculinist poetics. After all, she lives and makes love while Neruda, referred to by his first name, Pablo, is no longer alive and thus unable to convert women into love objects any longer.

Certainly, the poems of this book are about being a daughter, a granddaughter, a lover, a woman. They concentrate on the self, relations, life cycles, and identity to form the female Indigenous persona standing at the center of the poems who declaims, renounces, and redresses historical wrongs. In the fullness of life, the poet also becomes a maternal lover and creator singing of the joys and awe of regeneration. For example, "Son: Book I," "First Beating," "Now," and "Homing," are all touching tributes to the poet's child. The long poem, "To Line on Our Forty-Somethingth Birthday," as well as "Titillating," "Line of the Giant," and "I Was Born: But Not Quite News," concentrate importantly on female rites of passage such as birthdays. "I Was Born; But Not Quite News," in fact contains the poet's invocation of her own name. "Portrait of the Poet at 33" is a self-portrait from the third section "Con una poca de gracia," in which the poet relishes in a life dedicated to poetry over two and a half decades. The portrait contains all

of her life scars, but there is jubilation in the reconciliation. These are all important poems for women's literary production. They convey a sense of boasting, of confidence, and of overcoming importantly, the patriarchal literary tradition.

For Cervantes, the magnitude of life, which extends throughout the reaches of the universe, and the finiteness of the dead bodies exhumed from mass graves are poetic presences, not so much the material of dialectics but indivisible categories whose mysteriousness lies in their apparent opposition and ultimate coexistence. The five volume collection, *Drive: The First Quartet*, serves as an important crossroads for Chicana/o literature as well as for the lyric tradition in the U.S. Here is one poet whose work, which first emerged historically through el movimiento continues to clamor. Thus the poet both extends the momentum she initiated with the classic *Emplumada*, while consolidating its ties with an Indigenous social and political history in songs of protest, survival and witness *Cables of Genocide: Poems on Love and Hunger*, continues to harken to a more just society and historical redress in *Drive: The First Quartet*.

¹ Cervantes, Lorna Dee, *Drive: The First Quartet*, San Antonio: Wings Press, 2006.

² For discussions on connections between

Chicana/os and Native Americans see: Ana Castillo's *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma* (Plume, 1994), Arutro J. Aldama's, *Disrupting Savagism: Intersecting Chicana/o, Mexican, Immigrant, and Native American Struggles for Self Representation* (Duke, 2001), Eliza Rodríguez y Gibson's article "Love, Hunger and Grace: Loss and Belonging in the Poetry of Lorna Dee Cervantes and Joy Harjo," (*Legacy*, 19.1, University of Nebraska: 2002, pp 106-114.)

³ Cervantes, Lorna Dee, *Emplumada*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980.

⁴ Cervantes, Lorna Dee, *From the Cables of Genocide: Poems on Love and Hunger*, Houston: Arte Público Press, 1991.

⁵ Cisneros, Sandra, *Emplumada* book review, *Third Woman*, Bloomington, Indiana: Third Woman Press, v. 21, no. 1-2, pp. 110-113, 1984.

⁶ Saldívar, José David, *Emplumada* book review, *Revista Chicano-Riqueña*, v. 12, n. 2, Bloomington, Indiana: 1984, pp 87-89.

⁷ See author's doctoral dissertation, *The Shape and Range of Latina/o Poetry: Lorna Dee Cervantes and William Carlos Williams*, University of California at Riverside, December 2004, p. 79.

⁸ Lorna Dee Cervantes's blog can be found at <http://lornadice.blogspot.com/>