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Juan J. Alonso, *Badmen, Bandits, and Folk Heroes: The Ambivalence of Mexican American Identity in Literature and Film* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009, \$49.95). Pp. 208. ISBN 978 0 8165 2868 4.

From the very origins of popular culture in the United States, Mexicans have occupied a preponderance of roles as bandits and badmen, to echo the title of a new work by Juan J. Alonso, *Badmen, Bandits, and Folk Heroes: The Ambivalence of Mexican American Identity in Literature and Film*. Alonso argues that the limited range of mostly negative representations of Mexican Americans in US popular culture includes not just bandits and badmen, but roles and figures that are reworked and restaged to generate new ethnic subjectivities. Rather than disposing stereotypes as simply negative, they are instrumentalized as part of a larger representational apparatus that includes histories of contestation and critical interpretation; taken together these discourses lend visibility to marginal groups. Alonso draws on the work of Homi Bhabha to trace the fascination with and ambivalence towards stereotypes as a salient point of reference for the production of Mexican American cultural identity. He goes beyond the debates about good or bad representation to engage bad representation, exposing what makes it so emotionally and culturally compelling. Stereotypes like the Mexican bandit gain currency through repetition, but they are repeated because they engage conflicting emotions in the audience or readership. Alonso offers two unique propositions in the domain of the stereotype. One, named above, is to restore ambivalence as a viable point of departure for interpretation, and the other is to examine this ambivalence across two distinct modes of representation in popular culture, the verbal and the visual, or in this case, literature and film. This bimodal approach locates its point of departure during a key historical moment marked by both the emergence of the cinematic industry and the Mexican Revolution of 1910. The Mexican Revolution and its aftermath are a significant era in the history of US–Mexico relations which inaugurated a long history of cross-border migration and cultural contact. Alonso also marks this era as a significant point of interpretive density across literature and cinematic representation of Mexico and Mexicans. Thus the intensity of this relation produced an unending flow of representations that affects the processes of Mexican American identity formation. From a personal history of reception in his family, to redeployment of negative stereotypes and discourses in civil rights discourse, to new readings of popular cultural texts, Alonso shows how stereotypes of Mexican Americans can be reclaimed and reworked both to forge a history of visibility and ultimately to empower the group they denigrate. The analysis covers the history of the greaser in Stephen Crane and D. W. Griffith's work, Jack London's depictions of the Mexican Revolution and Hearst's vilification of all those associated with the Revolution. This work also includes analyses of literature and film of the Mexican Revolution and post-Revolution popular culture. The final instalment offers critical reexaminations of stereotypes by Chicana/o writers and filmmakers: writer Américo Paredes, filmmaker Jim Mendiola, playwright and filmmaker Luis Valdez, and poet Evangelina Vigil. This new work by Juan J. Alonso adds an

important new dimension to the analysis of stereotypes and their role in ethnic identity formation.

DePaul University

CAMILLA FOJAS