Is it time yet? Have the Fates determined that Manny Pacquiao's recent aura of invincibility should be pierced? Has he been conspiring with the Fates, unknowingly, by taking his eyes off the prize in the ring, and spreading himself too thin? Has he been partying too much, soaking up the adulation excessively? Has he gotten too big for his britches, running for public office, building his business empire with Trumpian enthusiasm?

I doubt it.

I believe Manny Pacquiao's gifts as an athlete, his hand speed and reflexes, and his iron will, have not deteriorated one stitch, and that his opponent's have.

I believe Marco Antonio Barrera, Manny's foe on Saturday evening, has slipped since the two squared off, on Nov. 15, 2003.

There's no shame in that.

"A man's age represents a fine cargo of experiences and memories," a wise man once said. True, but that eloquent assertion don't do nothing to block hand-missiles aimed at your face, which you can't slip or block because your reflexes have dulled.

You think aging is cruel for an actress, because parts go to new kids on the block, and men don't slobber like they used?

Try aging in the ring… now that's a cruel joke.

Fans of the Mexican Assassin, who hasn't been Baby-Faced since Lewinsky was Leno's favorite target, could argue that I'm wrong. He's been winning, mostly, and that's the most obvious criteria for determining deterioration.

Barrera's 6-1 since Manny earned a TKO 11 win in San Antonio in 2003. But some of those wins are just a wee bit tainted. Not like those e-coli burgers that had people puking out of both ends last week, but still, tainted.

First, Mzonke Fana (4-9-05). Bless him, he arguably doesn't really deserve the sort of fights he manages to land. His record is built on suspect opposition, and he is the product of skillful management as much as anything. A win over Fana, for Barrera, is a given. A loss would've confirmed that he's slipped irreparably, but a win proves little. He could beat Fana, an inferior athlete, on muscle memory alone.

A win over Australian Robbie Peden (9-17-05), then almost 32-years old, on the downside after engaging in a few too many wars, isn't to be dismissed quickly. Peden was a tough customer, with tons of heart. All due respect to Peden, though, but Barrera just hammered the last nail into

his career coffin.

Then, back to back wins over Rocky Juarez.

The first, on May 20th, 2006, could've gone either way. That was the fight that featured scorecard follies, as the bout was initially ruled a draw. A transcribing error, by poor Rebecca Alvarez, was responsible. The error was caught and Barrera was awarded a split decision win. The fans in attendance in California didn't think so…they booed the draw lustily. They saw Barrera spit the bit, spit out his mouthpiece four times as he got hammered. They saw the blood coming from his nose and mouth. They saw a fighter in decline.

Hat off to Barrera, he used his veteran wisdom to take the rematch with Juarez with less controversy. In Vegas, on Sept 16, 2006, he was the Jerry Lewis of jabs, jab-a-thoning his way to a UD12. Could he employ the same tactic and strategy against the more-feverishly offensively minded Pac Man? Not in a million years, which is how long it seems like Barrera's been fighting.

In his last outing, against Juan Manuel Marquez in March, it was back to the fan-friendly style of old. Barrera, who is 33 ½ , traded with Marquez, and at the end of the day, his foe's face looked the worse for wear. The judges, though, didn't go by the bruising and cutting, and didn't fall for Barrera's late-round flurrying. A vet can only make his sneaky vet tricks go so far. After that bout, Barrera considered retirement. He may do more than consider the option once Pac Man opens up that whirling dervish display on his face once again.

In the first face-off between Pac Man and Barrera, there were knockdowns in the third and the 11th, which is when Barrera's corner tossed in the towel. Back then, Barrera was on peoples' pound for pound lists, and the loss had him mulling retirement. His trainer Rudy Perez wanted him to hang up the gloves then. He didn't like that Pac Man had a 309 to 172 edge in punches landed, or his man's bruised, puffed up face. That night, Pac Man's win was considered an upset. On Saturday, it will not be, though we may look back on it for another reason: the last fight in a glorious career of a Mexican fighting legend.