

sexual spheres, and with all these elements sparks a dialogue of unprecedented intensity.

In this very same way, the first few pages of *Rito de iniciación* reveal to us a Cecilia, the main character of the novel, whose talents as a polemicist begin with the desire to decipher some "family papers," of more of a personal than historical interest to her. All in all, her curiosity provides her with a lesson on the history of one of the regions of Mexico where the presence of criollos and their relationship with the first settlers of those lands are more complex and painful, just as her relationship with those of her forebears who will not restore to her a clear, tranquil image of herself will be complicated and painful.

When you read *Rito de iniciación* you cannot help but think of what the English poet W.H. Auden said about novelists: they must jealously accumulate, if they are able, all the errors of Man. This recognition has implications both for the psychological characterization of Cecilia and other characters in the novel and for the many-edged or "cubist" structure that Castellanos picks for constructing a story, with multiple foci, with the center everywhere and nowhere.

If, before leaving her small provincial city, in moments of sleepless introspection, Cecilia was already implacable to the point of cruelty, her lucidity grew in Mexico City upon coming into contact with her fellow students at the School of Philosophy and Letters, some of whom were avidly seeking political prestige, others laurels as writers and still others simply to shock the new members of a circle of friends. The young student goes to live with her aunt Beatriz, whose spiritual ambiguity troubles the younger woman; she participates in social evenings with the poet Manuel Solís, the pride of the nation with a distrustful disposition; later she witnesses the erratic behavior of the tortured poet Matilde Casanova. In a word, Cecilia is a pole of attraction, the being absorbed in thought who hears fragments of conversation, agile verbal fencing matches, boasting of genius or humiliations that damage her erotic experience. We, together with her, come to contemplate a series of images drawn from myriad perspectives, but we also see, thanks to the intense use of irony in Rosario Castellanos' prose, the constant destruction of the images displayed.

Cecilia calls herself "nobody" and, like "nobody," she represents the sum total of all the errors of which Auden spoke, and which, of course, make possible the emergence of a new, more intense, more profound look at the drama that is the condition of women who are trying to find themselves. In this way, one by one, the suppositions, the most dearly held convictions crumble before a look which contemplates everything under the sign of sensitivity and intelligence, or what Mexican poet José Gorostiza called "solitude in flames."

One of the chapters of the novel, "Family Album," is representative of Rosario Castellanos' narrative technique: her ability to make the image of Matilde Casanova disappear and to question the outlook that her followers had on marriage, maternity, fame and the writer's craft. But the chapter also offers up to us the most fertile obsessions that Castellanos developed through that handful of characters during the period she spent writing. For that reason, it is not at all clear as Eduardo Mejía says it is—he was who rescued the book from obscurity and wrote an essay published as an appendix to the first edition—that the novelist intended to simply mock Matilde Casanova. Quite the contrary: the portrait that emerges from these pages is moving in its psychological depth and the expressive strength of the character, in the compassion with which the author draws her defining traits, even though they are contradictory. And this is because the novelist herself was also plagued by many, very contradictory demons.

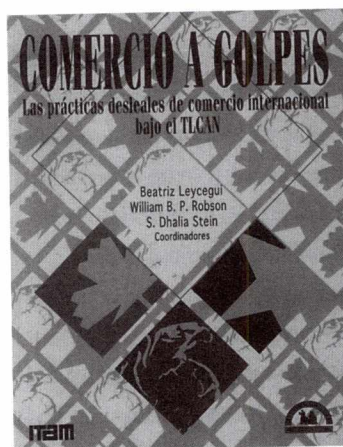
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Comercio a golpes

Las prácticas desleales de comercio internacional bajo el TLCAN

(Cutthroat Trade. Disloyal International Trade Practices Under NAFTA)

Beatriz Leycegui, William B.P. Robson, S. Dhalia Stein, compilers
ITAM-Miguel Angel Porrúa, Mexico City, 1997, 295 pp.



Competition in international trade is often distorted by what are called unfair trade practices, among them, dumping and subsidies. Through dumping, exporters often try to win markets by lowering their prices below those on their domestic markets to displace suppliers or place production surpluses. Govern-

ment subsidies, on the other hand, artificially lower the price of exports and are sometimes granted to increase competitiveness in foreign trade. Of course, both practices are prejudicial for domestic producers in the target country, which suddenly finds its natural market invaded by very low-priced products, not because they are manufac-

tured at a higher rate of productivity or with more sophisticated technology, but because they are supported by unfair trade practices.

While other unfair international trade practices exist, such as disregard for international intellectual property rights, *Comercio a golpes* zeroes in on dumping and subsidies.

To defend domestic producers from the impact of these practices, governments usually establish legal measures imposing compensatory quotas (like import taxes) which raise the prices of imports whose original prices were artificially lowered. However, governments also sometimes use defending their economy as a pretext, following spurious procedures to impose compensatory quotas to unduly raise the cost of certain imports which are not actually subsidized or part of a dumping operation. The aim of this kind of government operation is to protect domestic producers from more efficient foreign producers. The United States is one of the countries most famous for resorting to this kind of protectionist measure against foreign exporters. The problem becomes even sharper when exporters try to seek legal recourse against illegal quotas because then they come up against specialized tribunals little prone to nullify inappropriately established quotas.

Since the Canadian and Mexican economies depend to a great extent on their exports to the United States, both have attempted to fight the frequent bias of this kind on the part of U.S. officials. To that end, as well as for other reasons related to foreign trade and investment, Canada sought and signed a Free Trade Agreement with the United States in 1987. Later, in 1993, Mexico became part of that regional trade bloc with the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). NAFTA's Chapter XIX deals precisely with a way to review the administrative procedures used for setting compensatory quotas for dumping or subsidies through impartial bilateral panels. The procedure seeks to avoid the authorities who set the quotas being the same ones to review their legality; instead, it creates a legal body, a panel, composed of citizens of each of the two countries involved.

Comercio a golpes presents a series of articles divided into five parts, all written by specialists, who look at antidumping and antisubsidy quotas in North America from different angles.

The first part attempts to put conflicts over dumping and subsidies in their context. For that reason, the title, "General Panorama of Trade Controversies in North America," is somewhat ambitious.

The second section explains the origins and functioning of NAFTA's Chapter XIX in a language accessible to professionals from different disciplines. It does not attempt a profound legal analysis that would look in detail, for example, into the concrete cases that have been tried under this chapter.

The third part of the book presents the reader with three articles written by experts in the field who explain the essentials of the legal procedures for setting antidumping and antisubsidy quotas in each one of the three signatories to NAFTA. It is commendable to try to compare the three national governments. However, each of the articles is about a different country, written by a different author, each using a different methodology, instead of looking at each country's legal procedures, point by point, comparing them and pointing out the similarities or the nature and effects of the differences, then, it is sometimes difficult for the reader to determine the commonalities and divergences of the three systems. From another angle, the explanations do not refer to the practical problems that applying the procedures in each country actually creates, thereby underutilizing the unquestionably long experience of the authors themselves.

The fourth part of the book in principle offers the reader an economic analysis of the application of antidumping and antisubsidy laws from 1987 to 1995. It is a mainly quantitative analysis of the kind of goods subject to investigation, their relative importance among imports, their origin, etc. Some of the significant data in this section includes the fact that the success rate of applicants is lower than 50 percent, and this drops to 30 percent when the goods come from countries with market economies. The section does not analyze what significance rejected applications had in Mexico's national economy. This would have been interesting for evaluating whether any of the domestic companies that went bankrupt —particularly small and medium-sized firms— did so because, under the pretext of fighting inflation, dumping practices were not sufficiently combatted. Also included in this part of the book is a quantitative study of the use of legislation against unfair trade practices between Canada and the United States, as well as a general overview of the impact of relevant U.S. laws on international trade, both of which are important contributions for the study of the topic.

The fifth and final part of the book is an article exploring alternatives to antidumping and antisubsidy legislation with regard to NAFTA. It proposes worthwhile lines of research which will undoubtedly be opened up and explored.

Overall, this book is an important and useful contribution to a topic new to our country, even though in Canada it has already existed for almost a century. The analysis is illustrative and should serve as the basis for encouraging more and more specialized studies that will in turn foster the training of Mexican experts. ■■■

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