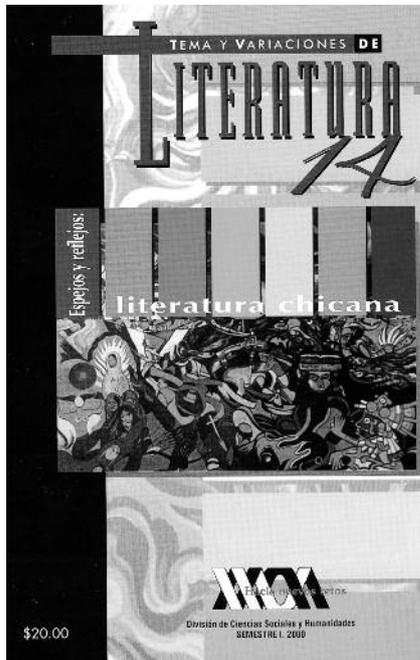


Reviews



Tema y variaciones de literatura 14 “Espejos y reflejos: literatura chicana”

(Literature, Theme and Variations 14
“Mirrors and Reflections: Chicano Literature”)
División de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades
Autonomous Metropolitan University,
Azcapotzalco Campus
Mexico City, September 2000, 431 pp.

As part of the variety of styles and diversity of focuses that a magazine must include, this publication brings us everything from analytically and theoretically rigorous essays and critiques to less formal, more polemical texts and interviews. They all make for useful reading, necessary for any student of the topic, as well as for Chicanos themselves, who continue to be partly Mexican.

The articles, by specialists from Mexico, the United States, South America and Europe, analyze mainly the

images of Chicanos and Mexicans from both their perspectives to see whether they are reflections or distortions, although they don't only focus on questions of otherness and difference between Chicano and Mexican realities or between the Chicano and Anglo realities.

As its title suggests, this issue of the magazine examines variations on the theme of literature, a history of Chicano literature, critiques of novels, poetry and stories, as well as theoretical linguistic studies and inquiries into Chicano culture in general, thinking about the historical-political importance of Chicano-ness as a social movement and the relationship between literature and film and the visual arts.

The articles warn against falling into the relativism of thinking too much about difference, an absurd, ironic attitude common among Chicanos and Mexicans that stems from their mutual fears, particularly the fear of meeting up with the “other” who furiously demands its own identity/authenticity. That is the worst mistake we could make, a mistake arising from exaggerated nationalism on the part of Chicanos and Mexicans alike “Life ... has no specific nationality, race or language,” says Ignacio Trejo Fuentes on page 231 in his study of novelist John Rechy.

From very different perspectives, the authors of these essays contribute to averting a clash of passions and try to continue to build bridges of knowledge. Without simply using the cliché according to which more things unite than divide us, the writers not only analyze, critique, study and create different genres of literature, but also seek to destroy myths and erase cultural borders—whether real or imaginary—thereby crossing borders through literature.

The general view in these essays is that Chicano literature should be analyzed as a vital part of U.S. American literature, given the way it reflects the Chicano struggle for civil rights. Specific studies, like those of poets “Corky” Gonzales and Tito Villanueva, are outstanding in their profundity and present novel outlooks.

Joaquina Rodríguez Plaza's study of Daniel Venegas' *Las aventuras de don Chipote o cuando los pericos mamen* (The

Adventures of Don Chipote, or, When Parakeets Suckle) (1928) situates it as a picaresque novel. Oscar Mata exemplifies the so-called “epic of misery” in Miguel Méndez’s *Peregrinos de Aztlán* (Pilgrims from Aztlán) (1974); and Ezequiel Maldonado classifies *Klail City y sus alrededores* (Klail City and Environs) (1976) by the “Chicano Faulkner” Rolando Hinojosa as mature literature.

Other articles include a very original text about the Chicano character Jack Mendoza in José Revueltas’ novel *Los motivos de Caín* (Cain’s Reasons), and Ignacio Trejo Fuentes comments about John Rechy’s novel *City of Night* (1963) that a great many young Chicanos today do not speak Spanish, are not interested in learning it or in the questions that concern Chicano communities committed to the quest for an identity.

The chronology at the end of the magazine that spans literature from Cabeza de Vaca’s *Naufragios* (Shipwrecks)

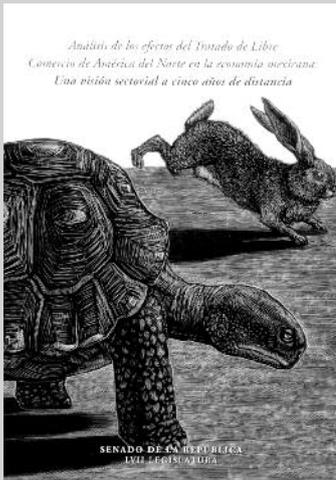
(1542) to Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s *The New World Border* (1996) is very useful.

The section with original literature offers five poems by Alfonso Rodríguez, three short stories and a brief piece in English, a contemporary metaphor about Chicano-ness, and two essays on novels centering on detective stories and the affairs of the different Chicano communities.

Regarding “the history both shared and rejected” (p. 53), we find very well documented essays about the Chicano community’s passive and active resistance in the face of political and economic repression in the United States.

The magazine is proof of how a perspective as different from that of the social sciences as that of the arts can teach us a great deal about one facet of life in the society of our neighbor to the north: the life of the Chicano community.

Teresita Cortés Díaz
Staff writer



Análisis de los efectos del Tratado de Libre Comercio en la economía mexicana: una visión sectorial a cinco años de distancia

In our last issue we printed a review of this book. Unfortunately, the information about the author was incomplete: José Luis Valdés Ugalde, in addition to being the research director, is also the author and editorial coordinator.

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