

Critique

The findings of Professor Reinhardt as they relate to his survey of the image of homosexuals in Chicano prose fiction are interesting and informative, but not surprising given the "macho" mental set often associated with this culture. His first two points, which seem to hold about the homosexual in contemporary society, also seem to be the viewpoint held by most Americans. In other words, a lack of tolerance towards the homosexual is not unique to Chicanos. As for the fact that Chicanos are ignored in writings which have homosexuality as a theme, this probably stems from the tendency for writers in many fields to ignore the role that minorities play in all facets of American life and culture. Just the same, the conclusions arrived at through this survey of Chicano literature provide further insight into a controversial aspect of human sexuality as viewed from one cultural setting and expressed through literature. The research also suggests some other avenues of inquiry into the image of homosexuals as portrayed in other cultures' literatures.

In looking to future research possibilities one avenue of investigation could be the image of homosexuals in literature from an historical perspective. The idea here would be to see if over time the image of homosexuals as found in literature in general or in a particular cultural setting has changed to any extent and if so, in what direction. For example, one might try to find out if attitudes have grown more liberal or conservative in various writings. Or perhaps cultures as reflected in their literatures have taken a cyclical view of homosexuality with some periods being less or more tolerant towards the homosexual in society. The time span covered in such a survey could be whatever the researcher had time and resources to cover.

Another possible direction for further study would be to see how the topic of homosexuality has been treated in the literature of other cultures. Does the image of homosexuals in Chicano literature differ from portrayals in British, French, Arab, or Japanese literature? Such a pursuit, while time consuming, would be an interesting cross-cultural study and might reveal many similarities in points of view or some significant differences.

One might also examine the writings and comments on homosexuals as found in contemporary or historic writings of various theologians. In today's climate of apparently increased levels of intolerance on the

part of some fundamentalist groups such as the so-called "Moral Majority," it might be helpful to those committed to toleration and understanding to find out that there are religious points of view different from those which seem to advocate "Kick a queer for Jesus." Such investigations need not necessarily be restricted to the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Studies such as Professor Reinhardt's should be helpful in defusing a highly emotional and controversial issue by providing information which could help explain the stereotypic images of homosexuals. Perhaps a more objective study of this social issue and the role various cultures' literatures may have played and still play in defining peoples' views of others will increase the general public's understanding of the homosexual, their feelings and contributions as *people*. And perhaps increased levels of understanding will lead to the end of negative stereotyping of people and a greater degree of tolerance in the sense of the democratic ideal.

W. Thomas Jamison
Appalachian State University

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In "The Image of Gays in Chicano Prose Fiction," Karl J. Reinhardt surveys a variety of outstanding works of contemporary fiction by male Chicano writers which include homosexual references that are often so hidden that they may not even be apparent to heterosexual readers.

Reinhardt draws three basic conclusions from his research: 1) that gay characters in the fiction surveyed are often incidental rather than central to the plot and are identified not by their sexuality but by degrading social stereotypes of homosexuals; 2) that gay characters who are important to the plot are kept in their place or are punished for their "sin" by being banished for committing an unacceptable act; and 3) that when homosexuality is the central theme, as in the works of gay activist writer, John Rechy, the homosexual characters are never Chicanos.

This survey article is significant in that it provides a beginning and a basis for research into a theme that has barely been touched by literary criticism or