

REVIEWS

Gabriela F. Arredondo, Aida Hurtado, Norma Klahn, Olga Najera-Ramirez, and Patricia Zavella, eds. *Chicana Feminisms: A Critical Reader*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003). xi, 391 pp., \$23.95 paper.

Chicana Feminisms: A Critical Reader is a multidisciplinary anthology of twenty-two essays--eleven essays by scholars and creative writers, followed by eleven "respondent" essays. Edited by five professors from UC, Santa Cruz, *Chicana Feminisms* focuses on three major themes: (i) "lived realities" (ii) "creative expression" and (iii) "the politics of representation" (7). These themes are about the diversity of Chicana experience relative to socio-economic status, sexual orientation, language, and geographical region.

The authors' analyses derive from personal observations, letters, interviews, poetry, and art. To "foster dialogue" and to "generate a lively exchange," each author suggested an essay respondent. Respondents represent the younger generation, different racial/ethnic groups or nationalities, those outside academia, and male critics.

The essays constitute a rich but demanding collection that on first reading may be both overwhelming and frustrating. Each essay is a "stand alone" piece that requires careful reading because new terms and concepts at times are introduced without clarification. The editors and authors assume readers' conversance with terms such as: "situated knowledges," "contestatory nature," and "counterpublic."

The strength of the essays varies considerably. For example Maylei Blackwell's essay on Chicana print culture falters in its effort to provide a balanced historical account. Accusations are repeated without adequate documentation. For instance in her discussion of the walkout at the 1971 Houston Mujeres por la Raza meeting, Blackwell reports that "several claim" that "the women who staged the walkout" were "sent" to Houston" by a certain faction of Chicano nationalists based in Los Angeles with whom the splinter group was affiliated"(76). Who were these women and what point is the author making? Some of her conclusions are drawn from a 1988, Third Edition of Rudy Acuna's *Occupied America*. Why did Blackwell not cite from the revised fourth edition? Updating would seem to be in order.

The format, consisting of eleven essays with eleven responses, has considerable merit, but it does not consistently "foster dialogue" or "generate a lively exchange"(6). For example, respondent Ruth Behar states, "There is nothing I disagree with in Cantu's essay" and adds little critical analysis.(110) Why didn't the editors select a respondent who might offer an alternate viewpoint, a critical analysis?

Overall the editors of *Chicana Feminisms* make a lot of promises but leave the reader with a lot of unanswered questions. Who is the target audience? (The collection seems too sophisticated for the casual reader or for use in many undergraduate courses.) What can the reader conclude about "Chicana feminisms"? How do these essays reflect the three major themes of *Chicana Feminisms*? Are there boundaries to Chicana feminisms? If so, what are they?

Reviewed by: Shirlene Soto
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Catherine Ceniza Choy. *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), xiv, 257 pp., \$19.95 paperback.

This book takes a look at the topic of the twentieth-century migration of Filipinos to the United States and focuses