

**Magdalena García Pinto. *Women Writers of Latin America: Intimate Histories*. Transl. Trudy Balch and Magdalena García Pinto. The Texas Pan American Series. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991) 258 pp., \$30.00 cloth, \$13.95 paper.**

Talking with Mexican writer and critic Margo Glantz, Magdalena García Pinto describes the interview process as “a dialogue with your mirror” (117). The exchanges she has with ten Latin American women are less transparent reflections of these writers, however, than they are guided conversations about their development as writers and their views about the distinctiveness of female literature. As a general introduction to Latin American women writers, García Pinto’s interviews do not provide the reader with a coherent or thorough view of how these women fit into (or break free from) Latin American literary movements or feminine/feminist traditions; rather, the volume is a collection of facts and insights about a heterogeneous group of women from Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Uruguay.

As their geographical origins indicate, the women interviewed do not represent the diversity of Latin American women writers. García Pinto herself points out that her selection of writers had much to do with circumstance (half of them participated in a 1983 colloquium García Pinto attended in Amherst, MA). Originally published as *Historias íntimas* by Ediciones del Norte in 1988, this volume showcases writers with whom North American readers may be familiar—Isabel Allende, Rosario Ferré, Sylvia Molloy, and Luisa Valenzuela—as well as those less familiar here: Albalucía Angel, Margo Glantz, Elvira Orphée, Elena Poniatowska, Marta Traba, and Ida Vitale. Before the texts of the interviews, García Pinto provides brief profiles of each writer, focusing on the mediums in which she works, common themes, and critical reception. The interviews themselves dwell mainly on childhood experiences, specific literary works, and, in most cases, the author’s position vis-à-vis feminism. A “Selected Published Works” section is neither complete nor up-to-date after 1988. The index, too, is only useful up to a point, as a spot check revealed several incomplete listings and some inaccuracies.

Guiding García Pinto’s project is what she calls her own “radical position on feminism” (142) and her belief in a distinct body of “feminine fiction” (3). Feminist readers will be interested in the writers’ thoughts about the place of feminist ideology in literary praxis, but García Pinto’s own opinions can sometimes overwhelm these conversations so that the writer’s role is simply to echo her interviewer’s theories. Aiming to mediate conversations between the

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individual writer and the (female) reader, García Pinto at times achieves such intimacy, as, for example, when Puerto Rican writer

Rosario Ferré reveals, “Perhaps deep down what I’m trying to do is recover a world that has disappeared, even though it’s a world based on such tremendous injustice that I’m glad it’s changed. ...For me, it’s a world full of memories and terrible rancor, a mixture that makes for excellent literary material. It’s a fight over the bones and the leftovers, since nothing else remains” (87). In passages such as this, metaphors take on flesh as the writer speaks of painful relationships of exile or marginality with her homeland.

Although not thematized, issues of ethnic marginality and social oppression emerge in several interviews. Feeling squeezed between different cultures is a common experience. Margo Glantz not only never learned Yiddish, her father’s literary language, but she was also too poor to attend Hebrew school and was thus ostracized when she attended the Jewish high school in Mexico City. French-Mexican-Polish Elena Poniatowska arrived as a refugee in Mexico during World War II, and, while attending English school, learned Spanish (“thought to be the language of the colonized” [166]) from the servants. Learning to manipulate this language marked by race, gender, and class, the women interviewed interest us most when they are prodded to dwell on their “intimate histories,” the accumulation of sensual, painful, and joyful memories that reveal their stature as great writers. For such moments of illumination, García Pinto’s book rewards the reader, but, for a comprehensive view of the state of Latin American women’s literature today, the reader must look elsewhere.

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**Diane Glancy. *Claiming Breath*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992) 160 pp., \$15.95 cloth.**

In her seventh book of poetry, Diane Glancy presents a moving account of the portrait of the artist as Native, woman, and poet. Of German, English, and Cherokee descent, Glancy’s prose poetry, as she states in her “Preface,” is often “about being in the middle ground between two cultures, not fully a part of either. I write with a split voice, often experimenting with language until the parts equal some sort of a whole.” The sixty-three poems in this volume (with the last composed of eight parts) are a non-linear journey, a physical and psychological traveling through the senses and intellect. The details of the poet’s life accumulate initially through