

Zimmerman, Marc. *The Rise of Mexican and Chicano Literature in Chicago: Transplanting Early Roots to the Barrios and Beyond*. LACASA Books and MARCH Abrazo Press, 2024. 362 pp. ISBN 9798878786218.

Marc Zimmerman's 2024 monograph updates our understanding of Chicano literature, focusing on twentieth-century cultural production in Chicago. The book, which is divided into a preface, five parts, and an epilogue, explores the work of two of the most famous Chicana authors, Ana Castillo and Sandra Cisneros. The text also attests to the richness of this Midwestern literary corpus in its analysis of poetry and prose by a range of other noteworthy writers, including Hugo Martínez-Serros, Carlos Cortéz, Carlos Cumpián, Raúl Niño, and Luis J. Rodríguez. What unites all of these artists is their connection to Chicago. Appropriately, Zimmerman shares a hand-illustrated map of Chicago's neighborhoods (by Jordan Sondler) in the text's preface, which orients the audience to embark upon a literary tour through the urban hub. As Zimmerman himself avers, this book considers geography, history, and creativity – and the recurrent connections between the three – to explore artists' efforts and struggles. Through these writers' cultivation of an oppositional third space in Mexican Chicago and its literature, the scholar proposes, they counteract discrimination and find freedom.

The first chapter serves as an extended introduction, in which Zimmerman takes special care to acknowledge traditional conceptualizations of Chicano and Mexican-American literature as a foundation from which to articulate a vision of Chicagoan difference. A review of diverse studies (by Mario García, José Limón, Juan Bruce-Novoa, Gloria Anzaldúa, Olga Herrera, Ramón Saldivar, and Michael Innis-Jiménez) helps to outline features that distinguish Chicagoan cultural production. Latinos in Chicago do not have the same long-term history in the region that Tejanos do in Texas. Artists of Mexican heritage write from a broader Latino and working-class context, which is influenced by the work of creators of Argentine, Cuban, and Puerto Rican descent. In lieu of a borderlands fiction, their writing is frequently concerned with the industrial context. Finally, their cultural referents are distinct, often prioritizing more assertive female roles. Overall, Zimmerman proposes that a study of these Chicagoan works, which are “more fully Mexican than the Chicano literature developed elsewhere,” counters the popular understanding of Chicano literature as a homogenous body of work (14).

The remainder of the book's first part emphasizes the value of historical contextualization for our understanding of Mexican and Chicano cultural production in Chicago. Over time, Zimmerman explains, “Chicago became a U.S. vanguard center of post-national Latino identifications,” with a Latino population that grew in response to industry demands in steel mills, the railroad, and factories (23). The author clarifies that the Mexican Revolution of 1910 sparked some migration to Chicago, while the cristero rebellion of the 1920s spurred additional displacement. Currents of relocation to the urban hub correspond to the growth of distinct Mexican colonias across Chicago, which reflect regionally- and

culturally-based characteristics that gradually translate into particular artistic perspectives and inclinations.

Zimmerman acknowledges doubts about provenance, language, and popular value given to early twentieth-century Mexican and Chicano production in Chicago. These obstacles notwithstanding, he offers a compelling outline of artistic exploration in the first half of the 1900s, which appears in newsletters, newspapers, bulletins, and magazines, as well as verbally at bars and celebrations, in both Spanish and English. Undergirding this brief study is Zimmerman's confirmation that it's not until the early 1970s that Mexican and Chicano writing really gains momentum in Chicago, rapidly boiling into an explosion of activist artwork. He therefore turns his attention to Hugo Martínez-Serros's *The Last Laugh and Other Stories* (1987) in the monograph's second part as a means of understanding the Latino experience of Chicago in the 1930s and 40s.

Part Two of *The Rise of Mexican and Chicano Literature in Chicago* provides a deep look into the narrative of Martínez-Serros, a child of Mexican immigrants who was born in Chicago in 1930 and grew up in the far southside steel mill area. Zimmerman is particularly interested in Martínez-Serros's approach to gender dynamics and highlights the author's prioritization of strong masculine figures and negative representation of women. Another important narrative thread is the pursuit of vengeance in the face of rampant anti-Latino discrimination. Zimmerman walks us through several of Martínez-Serros's stories, outlining the writer's portrayal of the Chicago Mexican drive to survive, in which men must cling to sexist and patriarchal tactics in order to overcome the obstacles omnipresent in daily life in the city's poorest industrial neighborhoods. This analysis of the anthology's treatment of gender relations functions as a foundation to understand later literature, since they "begin to explain the world against which Chicago's Chicana writers will subsequently be seen and would have to rebel" (59). In this narrative world, women are not to be trusted, and neither are the steel mills or the Catholic church – each of these is yet another source of prejudice and suffering.

While the book's second part unveils the discriminatory side of life in Chicago, Part Three underscores its role as an attractive cultural hub where Chicano poets, mostly male, begin to congregate in the late 1960s. Carlos Morton, Rubén Sánchez, and Ken Serritos emerge as pioneers of this cultural movement, who pave the way for the poetry to follow in the late 1970s, written by Mexicanas and Chicanas such as Marilú Castillo, Emma Yolanda Galván, and Rina García Rocha. Connecting these six poets is their exploration of cultural interactions between Mexico and the United States, as well as, of course, their relationship with the specific Chicago setting. In this wide-ranging study, Zimmerman lifts up voices that have previously been understudied and crafts a vision of a distinctly Chicagoan manifestation of the Chicano movement's push for solidarity. This city's activist art is multicultural and influenced by Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Black perspectives in addition to Mexican ones. Zimmerman's subsequent discussion of more well-known poets who surface in the 1980s (Carlos Cortéz, Carlos Cumpián, Raúl Niño, and Luis J. Rodríguez) confirms this depiction of an urban and multifaceted Chicano activism that considers both ethnically-based concerns and ones rooted in sociopolitical division.

Parts Four and Five turn to the volume's study of its most famous Chicagoan Chicana writers, Ana Castillo and Sandra Cisneros. As Zimmerman explains, Castillo and Cisneros were both born in Chicago and began their artistic careers there, but achieved fame elsewhere. The monograph at hand offers a fascinating focus on the writers' relationship with Chicago as a point of origin for their artistic evolution. For both women, Zimmerman argues, their Chicagoan childhood has been formative – Chicago manifests not only in their specific geographical references but also in their efforts to represent the working class and the multicultural influences in writing style. The Rise of Mexican and Chicano Literature in Chicago gently leads the reader across the city and time, moving from Hugo Martínez-Serros's childhood on the southside, to Carlos Morton's meanderings around Lincoln Park, to Ana Castillo's youth on Taylor Street, to Sandra Cisneros's famous fictionalization of her memories of Mango Street. Through his carefully-cultivated collection of a wide range of authors, writing styles, and moments in history, Zimmerman invites us to perceive twentieth-century Mexican and Chicano literature as an oeuvre that goes far beyond the traditional Southwestern context. Our prior understanding of Chicano Literature maintains validity, but after enjoying Zimmerman's 2024 monograph, it expands. To be Chicana/o/e/x is also to be urban, industrial, multicultural – in a word, Chicagoan.

Adrienne Erazo, *Appalachian State University*