

part of the 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.

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Critique

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

sociological investigation. Although there is a pre-occupation with homosexuality and an emphasis on machismo in Mexican and Chicano culture, much of the sexual innuendo common in adolescent male conversation is nearly absent in literature. In short, Chicano homosexuality is still "in the closet." Reinhardt argues that forced secrecy regarding homosexuality is even greater among Chicano writers than among other writers. When homosexuality is dealt with in fiction, it is usually designed to reinforce heterosexual stereotypes of gays and to degrade and deride homosexuals. References to lesbians are even rarer and when included they are brutally derogatory. Lesbians are portrayed as loud, crude, vulgar and profane, if portrayed at all.

Reinhardt's paper should provoke keen interest in and provide a much-needed impetus for further research and literary criticism on the images and attitudes toward gays in Chicano literature. It may also encourage a deeper analysis of the particular stereotypes regarding homosexuality in Chicano culture.

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Critique

The author speaks truly in stating that gays in literature have remained, for the most part, in the closet. Generally authors have been concerned with presenting a given philosophy, advocating social change, creating aesthetically satisfying literature, not primarily with sexuality, per se. Rather sex has ostensibly served a purpose and has not functioned as a goal, unless one wishes to consider the erotic literature, as, for example, Anais Nin has produced. Nevertheless, it is true that societal bans have been incorporated into the literature. Hemingway toys with the homosexual issue in "Big Two-Hearted River," but his short story and inferences exist solely in the realm of symbolism. Until recently very few American authors, regardless of ethnic origin, have focussed on this subject. Possibly Nathaniel West in *Miss Goody Two Shoes* with the creation of a male fulfilling a female role borders on homosexuality. And of course James Baldwin's *Another Country* deals honestly and straightforwardly with the issue, building his story around a homosexual protagonist. Recently we have seen a flurry of authors tackle the subject, as Marge