

*Number 15 (Summer 1995)*

**Carl Gutiérrez-Jones. *Rethinking the Borderlands: Between Chicano Culture and Legal Discourse*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) xi, 219 pp., \$40.00 cloth, \$15.00 paper.**

In this ambitious book, Carl Gutiérrez-Jones musters ideas from *Critical Race Studies*, *Critical Legal Studies*, and literary scholarship to explicate the relationship between Chicanos and the law. Contrary to the notion that American jurisprudence is a neutral, value-free institution, the author argues that, as Chicano and especially Chicana artists have depicted, the legal system's emphasis on individual responsibility ignores the economic and social milieu entangling Chicanos. The broad scholarship, incisive analysis, and careful reasoning make this book a valuable contribution to our understanding of the Chicano experience.

For example, the author notes how Luis Valdez's film *Zoot Suit* exposes the anti-Chicano bent of American justice by depicting the prejudicial tactics used by the judge against the Pachuco defendants in the Sleepy Lagoon murder case of 1942, which led to the Servicemen/Zoot Suit riots in Los Angeles. Although such counter-hegemonic criticism is nothing new, Gutiérrez-Jones's willingness and ability to probe more deeply in this instance—as in others—add rare subtlety to our understanding of American social institutions vis-à-vis Chicanos. He explains that Valdez's bracketing of the implicit guilt of the protagonist's brother effectively renders the issue of innocence or guilt irrelevant. According to Gutiérrez-Jones, Valdez implicates the socioeconomic system, which the law protects and perpetuates, rather than a Chicano defendant who may have been guilty according to American law. Valdez thus validates a "Chicano community perspective" (45) which resists the court's scapegoating ploy enabled by the law's rhetorical emphasis on the individual. The author argues that Valdez's strategy exemplifies Chicano artists' resistance to the dominant legal discourse by questioning the myth of disinterest underlying American law.

After discussing the resistance in male Chicano art, Gutiérrez-Jones then critiques it. In his most daring chapter, he turns to Chicana writing to expose the masculinist orientation of Chicano resistance and criticism. Carefully placed in the context of the "specific Mexicano iconography of rape and the politics of shame it mobilizes" (109), the author's argument traces subtle parallels between Chicana writers' exposés of rape and the American legal system's treatment of Chicanos. In both situations, he provocatively argues, an illusion of consent masks the violence of the domination.

The book adds significantly to the *Critical Legal Studies* project of exposing the hidden, false assumptions of legal discourse by demonstrating how Chicano artists present images of resistance to the system. Moreover, it complicates legal-rhetorical issues by presenting Chicana critiques of Chicano critiques. In its methodical analysis of texts ranging

## *Explorations in Sights and Sounds*

from the film *Giant* to *American Me*, and from Helen Hunt Jackson's novel *Ramona* to recent fiction by Cherríe Moraga, the volume is at times dazzling in its ability to engage institutions on many fronts and on many levels. Despite the wide-ranging resources cited in the text and in twenty-two pages of endnotes, and despite manifold, multilayered arguments, Gutiérrez-Jones never loses control of the work. Many readers will, indeed, be rethinking the borderlands between Chicanos and the law.

David Goldstein-Shirley  
University of California, Irvine

**Kenneth Robert Janken. *Rayford W. Logan and the Dilemma of the African-American Intellectual*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993) 319 pp., \$35.00.**

In this superb reconstruction of the life of Rayford W. Logan, Kenneth Robert Janken, an assistant professor of African American studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, draws on his protagonist's somewhat tormented life to document the veracity of John Hope Franklin's thesis that, "it was the American Negro scholar's dilemma to be obligated constantly to challenge the notion of black inferiority". Put another way, despite Logan's credentials—he held a Ph.D. from Harvard University in history; wrote twelve books, including the classic, *The Betrayal of the Negro*; edited several others, among them, *What the Negro Wants*; and penned hundreds of scholarly articles—his racial identity negated all of his assets. For a person who believed that he was different from most other African Americans, the snubs of the white establishment were extremely disconcerting. "Yet time and again," Janken reminds us, Logan "sought its [white academia's] approval."

Janken's easily accessible volume thoroughly documents Logan's contradictions and his strengths and weaknesses as he traces his life from its humble beginnings in Washington, D.C.. to Logan's Pan-Africanist stance in France in the 1920's; to his pioneering voter registration drives and citizenship schools in the South during the 1930s; to his activities in fighting racial discrimination in the United States' military in the 1940s; and finally to his embattled career as a history professor and administrator at Howard University from 1938 until his death in 1982. Those persons looking for an unblemished hero in Logan will find Janken's account disappointing.

Contemporary nationalists would be disturbed by the fact that Logan—to use Janken's words—"spent most of his life from adolescence on struggling to be accepted by the white world." In addition, "his regard for the West was so high that it was inconceivable to him that African