



Show and Tell: Identity as Performance in U.S. Latina/o Fiction

Karen Christian

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What makes John Rechy a Chicano writer? To be Latino, must writing have a touch of "magical realism"? Can one talk of U.S. Latina/o identity, considering the diversity of the Latina/o experience?

Through the analysis of nine recent Latino/a novels, Karen Christian answers these and other questions, thereby adding a fresh, bold voice to the anti-essentialist debate surrounding ethnic and gender identity. Christian melds the theory of "performativity" with the latest scholarship on ethnicity and ethnic literature to create a framework for viewing identity as a continuous process that cannot be reduced to static categories. Through their narrative "performances," U.S. Latina/o writers and their characters move among communities and identities in an ongoing challenge to the notion of Latina/o essence.

This study is also among the first to examine trends across the spectrum of cultures represented in U.S. Latina/o literature--from Chicano to Cuban to Puerto Rican to Dominican.

Show and Tell is essential for any serious student of Latina/o literature and identity.

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