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Author

Guardiola, Cristina

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Editor's Column

Defining Marginality in Hispanic literature¹

This year we celebrate the seventh anniversary of *Lucero*, with this issue dedicated to the special topic of "marginal" literatures. This theme was suggested to us by the Townsend Center group "Otras voces, otros ámbitos," with whom I worked closely last semester (Fall 1995). This study group emerged from the concerns that various students had regarding the marginal status of their homeland literatures within the field of Latin American cultural studies. Its members soon learned nevertheless that each one held quite different interpretations of "marginality". For some, this terminology seemed synonymous with a historical "underrepresentation" or lack of "recognition", for others it simply meant a region or group currently "understudied", and for those who found a political implication in the word marginality, it stood for anti-hegemonic ideology. The group managed to resolve these differences by accepting each other's interpretations of marginality and by agreeing that the concept of "marginality" could encompass the divergent interests of its heterogeneous members.

This term however became more problematic when *Lucero* began to review submissions for this year's issue. We received a number of critical essays on Latin American marginalized literatures as well as on Spanish, Catalan, and Brazilian literatures. Once again we had to re-define what we meant by marginal writings. We learned through this experience not only that the center is moveable as Argentinean literary critic Walter Mignolo suggests,² but also that the margins are themselves relative to the center, and depend on where one locates the center and from which perspective s/he contemplates this center. Thus, prior to determining the parameters of this issue's special topic, we tried to locate our idea of "center", from which we could

define marginality. First in a self-reflective—but not narcissistic—evaluation, we needed to understand where and who we are, and to start admitting our limits and privileges as scholars in the field of Hispanic literature and humanities in the United States. Consequently we came to define "marginal" literatures as those that are little recognized and understudied in our professional field in this country. By doing so, we are perhaps overlooking other types of literatures marginalized with reference to other centers for each reader of *Lucero*. In this issue, therefore you will find articles that deal with Latin American literature, contemporary Spanish literature, contemporary Brazilian literature and medieval literature. As heterogeneous as the backgrounds of the scholars published here and the topics they explore are their understandings of marginality, which also possibly shift with each reader's perspective.

Even though we have left the term "marginality" still open to debate, we are more hopeful than before because a quintessential part of exploring "marginality" is the willingness to interact and communicate with others as well to recognize the possible differences among "us," the marginalized. We hope that this issue will stimulate our readers to participate as well in this kind of communication, interaction and recognition.

Song No

Notes

¹Here the term Hispanic literature includes Spanish, Latin American, Portuguese, Catalan, Galician literatures.

²Mignolo, Walter. *The Darker Side of Renaissance*. Ann Arbor: The Univ. of Michigan P, 1995. 219-58.