

*Countering the Counterculture: Rereading Postwar American Dissent from Jack Kerouac to Tomás Rivera.* By Manuel Luis Martínez. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003. Pp. ix, 353. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$29.95 paper.

Martínez's book makes a compelling case for an unlikely pair. Under the rubric of "movement discourse," he couples an analysis of the American Beats with Chicano authors and activists. What the two have in common is that each cohort figures personal mobility as a form of resistance to the standardization and consumerist mentality of the dominant culture. While both groups conceive of themselves in oppositional terms, Martínez contends that they are less radical than they might seem. Genuinely countercultural expressions, he claims, would also lay the groundwork for the formation of viable alternative communities. This perspective is best expressed by the "Americano" strategies of migrant writers and activists. Martínez argues that because Mexican American migrants have been the victims of forced movement, they are ideally poised to critique the dominant culture's linkage between mobility and success and to advocate for a radically democratic agenda that would lead to meaningful political inclusion. This political agenda is the framework for the literary analysis that is the subject of individual chapters.

The first section of the book is a reading of countercultural authors William Burroughs, Jack Kerouac, Alan Ginsberg, Ken Kesey, and Hunter S. Thompson. In their quest to escape the constraints of the dominant culture, the Beats went on the road. However radical they believed themselves to be, Martínez shows that the Beats' endorsement of personal mobility relies on a conventional affirmation of American individualism. Despite their expressed opposition to the cultural mainstream, the Beats lose the potential to enact more widespread systemic change by articulating a longstanding American tradition that values personal sovereignty over communal obligation. This explains their attraction to marginal identities, which they freely appropriated as signs of their own transgressiveness while declining to participate in actual minorities' struggles for political recognition. Martínez is not the first to accuse the Beats of an underlying political conservatism. While there is truth to this charge, the singular political narrative that governs his analysis leads him to dismiss the radicalism of their formal innovations (he rather reductively labels Burroughs' cut-ups "a form of literary colonialism" [p. 57]), and to downplay significant political differences between authors such as Ginsberg and Thompson or Kerouac.

If Martínez's approach to the Beats is at times strained, the payoff comes in his powerful analysis of postwar Mexican "Americano" narratives. He focuses on Oscar Zeta Acosta, Raulsalinas, Jose Montoya, and Luis Valdez, authors who are well aware of the economic and political obstacles that confront Mexican Americans. Their work exemplifies both the powerful potential and ultimate failures of the Chicano movement. Like other social movements of the 1960s, Chicanismo was torn between *communitas* (the endorsement of an individualist agenda or single issue) and *civitas* (a more inclusive and participatory model, with an emphasis on creating an egalitarian civic sphere within the nation state). Confronted with ongoing opposition, the Chicano movement would ultimately sacrifice its demands for

inclusion to a separatist agenda. Unable to articulate the grounds for civic incorporation that would not simply look like another version of assimilation, the movement thus retreated into a purely oppositional stance that has led to a disempowering self-marginalization.

The final chapter of the book is both a reading of the migrant intellectuals Tomás Rivera and Ernesto Galarza and an impassioned polemic for rethinking the separatist politics that have divided the current generation of Mexican Americans. In the work of migrant writers and activists, Martínez finds a strong tradition of egalitarian, participatory dissent. In place of the mobility so valued by the dominant culture, the migrant longs for stability, inclusion, and community, values that Martínez sees as the basis for a genuinely inclusive democracy. These authors provide the ground for imagining a mode of civic incorporation that would not simply mean assimilation into the dominant culture.

Secondary to the book's political agenda is a disciplinary intervention into the fields of Chicano and American Studies. Martínez argues that the two fields have failed to sufficiently acknowledge one another, leading to the impoverishment of both. Instead, he proposes an "Americano Studies" that would emerge from mutually beneficial dialogue between the two fields. While this is an attractive concept, Martínez does not give enough credit to the many ways in which American Studies has already embraced Americano Studies. His description of an American Studies that "continues to marginalize minority narratives, histories, literatures, and is especially ignorant of the Mexican American subject's role in the making of national culture and politics" (p. 5) would not be recognizable to those who have attended recent meetings of the American Studies Association, where Chicano scholars and research on Chicano, Mexican, and Mexican American subjects is prominently featured. Indeed, if there is a problem here it might be that powerful concepts that emerged from Chicano Studies, such as the borderlands, have so permeated the discourse of American Studies that they may have lost their initial resonance.

Martínez' critique of the fields he straddles is a relatively minor aspect of his overall project and should not diminish the very real accomplishment of this book. Impassioned and inventive in its unexpected pairing of beats and Chicanos, Martínez gives us fresh perspective on both groups, as well as the American political culture that produced them.

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*The Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader* is the only book published by the Latin American subaltern studies group. Immediately after its publication the group