Lillian Castillo-Speed, ed.
Latina. Women's Voices from the Borderlands
New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995. Pp. 284. $13.00
Reviewed by Martín Rodríguez Pérez

Latina has a succinct and very good introduction in which the editor shares with us what is important to her and how her experience is similar to that of the Latinas represented in the anthology. Thus, at the same time, the Latina, even though she lives in two worlds, has undoubtedly made English her language for expressing her past, her current condition, and her political views. The book includes Chicanas, Cuban Americans, Puerto Ricans, as well as other Hispanic-American women.

Castillo-Speed explains why Latina literature is attractive to its audience: "Readers are intrigued by a literature that can claim antecedents in the Spanish-language Latin American tradition, the English-language literature of immigrants to America, feminist literature, and the literature of the emerging voices of America's ethnic minorities" (17). Such a collage makes for an eclectic, mature, and firm voice. Of all the excellent entries in the book I have chosen to concentrate on three, one from each chapter.

One of the outstanding selections in the section "The past we bring with us" is by the well-known Cuban-American writer, Cristina García, who has worked as a *Time* correspondent in several US cities. The passage "Lourdes Puente" (taken from her first novel, *Dreaming in Cuban*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), underlines on the one hand a woman's political break from the island and, on the other, the strong bond she feels to her deceased father. Altogether, she feels good about being an American growing up in New York City. In a way, her political views reflect those of many individuals who flee from their native countries and find a new life in the adoptive nation: "Lourdes considers herself lucky. Immigration has redefined her, and she is grateful. Unlike her husband, she welcomes her adopted language, its possibilities for reinvention. Lourdes relishes winter most of all—the cold scraping sounds on sidewalks and windshields, the ritual of scarves and gloves, hats and zip-in coat linings. Its layers protect her. She wants no part of Cuba, no part of its wretched carnival floats creaking with lies, no part of Cuba at all, which Lourdes claims never possessed her" (67).

In the section "Our Land, Our Lives" we find the essay "Only Daughter" by the internationally acclaimed Mexican-American Sandra Cisneros, whose works include *The House on Mango Street* (Random House, 1984). This autobiographical piece tells of how her father came to recognize that she is indeed a writer only after reading a sample of her work in Spanish translation. The story in question dealt with the *Tepeyac* neighborhood in Mexico City where her father grew up.

This recognition, a true rite of passage for her, gives her immense satisfaction, the kind a woman would get from a father raised in a society that openly fosters the double standard.

In the last section, "Nuestra Política," which I translate as "Our Political Agenda," there is a strong affirmation of both the ethno/linguistic element and being an American. Even though they might seem apparent contradictions, there are millions of individuals for whom that is their daily reality. Whether they live in Miami, El Paso or Portland, Oregon, is not relevant. The fact that they are bilingual, bicultural, and sometimes binational, is. The term "Hispanic" just seems too bland and general to reflect this state of mind; after all its origin was bureaucratic. That is why we come across more charged identity-words such as *Latina, Chicana,* and *Mestiza* (daughter of mixed parentage). This group demands to express itself in Spanglish, a language they claim is their true trademark. Likewise, their sense of political borders is more fluid. Thus, Gloria Anzaldúa in "Linguistic Terrorism" (taken from her classic *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza,* Aunt Lute Books, 1987) demands to be allowed to live in Spanglish, her true native tongue. "*Nosotros los* Chicanos straddle the borderlands. On one side of us, we are constantly exposed to the Spanish of the Mexicans, on the other side we hear the Anglos' incessant clamoring so that we forget our language. Among ourselves we don't say *nosotros los americanos, o nosotros los españoles, o nosotros los hispanos.* We say *nosotros los mexicanos* (by *mexicanos* we do not mean citizens of Mexico; we do not mean a national identity, but a racial one). We distinguish between *mexicanos del otro lado* and *mexicanos de este lado.* Deep in our hearts we believe that being Mexican has nothing to do with which country one lives in. Being Mexican is a state of soul—not one of mind, not one of citizenship. Neither eagle nor serpent, but both. And like the ocean, neither animal respects borders" (254).

Undoubtedly, this book belongs in every library with an interest in Latinas/os, feminist studies, Hispanic studies and anthropology. Highly recommended.

Renny Christopher
The Vietnam War/The American War: Images and Representations in Euro-American and Vietnamese Exile Narratives
Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996. Pp. 341. $19.95
Reviewed by Philip D. Beidler

Renny Christopher has written an important book on images and representations of the Vietnamese in Vietnam war and post-Vietnam war narratives by Euro-Americans and by Vietnamese exiles. Further, the realm of inquiry into which she advances our knowledge must now strike us as so crucial