

## First book on poetry by Chicana to appear; written by Marta Ester Sanchez

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### FIRST BOOK ON POETRY BY CHICANAS

Modern Chicana poets face a dilemma which stems from being at once female and Chicano, according to Marta Ester Sanchez, associate professor of literature at the University of California, San Diego.

Sanchez addresses this dilemma in *Contemporary Chicana Poetry: A Critical Approach to an Emerging Literature*, the first book to appear on Chicana poetry. The book was released recently by the University of California Press.

In this ambitious book, Sanchez presents a literary approach to understanding the poetry of modern Mexican-American women. She focuses on the works of Alma Villanueva, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Lucha Corpi and Bernice Zamora.

"As women and as Chicanas, these poets found themselves at the convergence of two social currents which raised contradictions for them: the woman's movement and the Chicano struggle for social justice," she writes.

"As Chicanas, they supported Chicanos in a struggle for racial equality, but Chicanos were also their sexual oppressors. As women, their ethnic position as Chicanas precluded a smooth interaction with white women's groups."

Sanchez analyzes the ways in which these poets have handled the dilemmas of their "dual relationships to American and Mexican societies and of their dual identities as Chicanos and as women writing in a contemporary setting."

According to Sanchez, her book is intended to help American audiences understand the richness and diversity of modern American culture. "It is possible, and indeed necessary, to study ethnic literatures in relation to mainstream American literature without having to desecrate the cultural and political aspirations of minority writers," she said.

One of the reasons she wrote the book, she said, was to explore her own identity as a Chicana. For Chicanas who have chosen to enter such areas as academia or the arts, the conflict becomes extremely complex, she explained.

"You're pulled in various directions," she said. "You want to be accepted by the mainstream, but at the same time you want to express yourself as a member of a minority group and pay the debt you owe your community."

Sanchez, who lives in San Diego, received her Ph.D. in comparative literature from UCSD.

(September 16, 1985) For more information contact: Susan Pollock, 452-3120