

Body of Writing: Figuring Desire in Spanish American Literature

René Prieto

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Body of Writing focuses on the traces that an author's "body" leaves on a work of fiction. Drawing on the work of six important Spanish American writers of the twentieth century, René Prieto examines narratives that reflect—in differing yet ultimately complementary ways—the imprint of the author's body, thereby disclosing insights about power, aggression, transgression, and eroticism.

Healthy, invalid, lustful, and confined bodies—as portrayed by Julio Cortázar, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Gabriel García Márquez, Severo Sarduy, Rosario Castellanos, and Tununa Mercado—become evidence for Roland Barthes's contention that works of fiction are "anagrams of the body." Claiming that an author's intentions can be uncovered by analyzing "the topography of a text," Prieto pays particular attention not to the actions or plots of these writers' fiction but rather to their settings and characterizations. In the belief that bodily traces left on the page reveal the motivating force behind a writer's creative act, he explores such fictional themes as camouflage, deterioration, defilement, entrapment, and subordination. Along the way, Prieto reaches unexpected conclusions regarding topics that include the relationship of the female body to power, male and female transgressive impulses, and the connection between aggression, the idealization of women, and anal eroticism in men.

This study of how authors' longings and fears become embodied in literature will interest students and scholars of literary and psychoanalytic criticism, gender studies, and twentieth-century and Latin American literature.



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