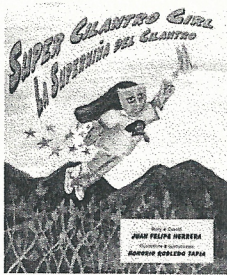


BOOK REVIEWS



Herrera, Juan Felipe. *Super Cilantro Girl/La Superniña del Cilantro*, 2003. Children's Book Press. Hardcover, 31 pages. ISBN 0892391871.

In this book, the 8-year old heroine, *Super Cilantro Girl*, flies off to rescue her mother, who needs her green card to cross the border back into the United States from Mexico. In her transformation to super-hero, Esmeralda Sinfronteras encounters other cleverly

named characters, such as Nurse Dedo and her teacher, Mrs. Contrario, as she first tries to hide her green hands and hair. Eventually, she realizes that as a green and tall *Esmeralda*, she has the strength and determination to go and get her mother, a U.S. citizen, being held in a detention center. This story boldly touches very serious and relevant social issues while appealing to children's playful imagination, hopes and dreams. A valuable language and cultural resource for school, public, and home libraries, this bilingual English/Spanish edition is notable for its creative word-play and authentic use of Spanish.

Reviewer: Gina Gamboa (Director, Proyecto hACE, Chicago Teachers' Center, NEIU)



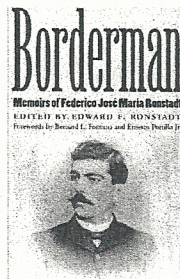
Salsipuedes: Cuentos de Ramon Betancourt, 2003. Arte Público Press. Paperback, 120 pages. \$12.95. ISBN: 1558853812.

This is Ramon Betancourt's first book, winner of the University of California at Irvine's Chicano/Latino Literary Contest. His short stories reflect the lives of Mexicanos and Chicanos in southern California and the Mexican border. The book features stories of people who understand struggle, family, love, tradition and the ever-changing world around

them. Betancourt's writing is humorous and touching, many will feel a connection with the emotions and circumstances of the characters.

The title story, *Salsipuedes*, presents the point of view of a young boy living in poverty on the outskirts of a landfill. His family must scavenge through the garbage everyday for food and items needed to survive. This unnamed boy has learned to use his nose to discover the good food that restaurants have discarded. He tells people what they want to hear. He lies to make his world more tolerable amid the struggles of his family. His mother dispenses free medicines—provided by missionaries—to the neighbors, but refuses to sell them as he suggests. But lies cause trouble in the end. And when he has to tell the truth no one can believe him. These stories are moving, loving and full of the values and traditions of border families and will make a great addition to Latino collections.

Reviewer: Selina Gomez-Beloz (Diversity Librarian, Timberland Regional Libraries, Tumwater, WA)



Ronstadt, Jose Maria. *Borderman: Memoirs of Federico Jose Maria Ronstadt*, 2003. University of Arizona Press. Paperback, 154 pages. \$16.95. ISBN: 0816523363.

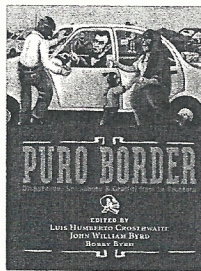
In Tucson, Arizona, when one mentions the name Ronstadt, one quickly associates it with Linda Ronstadt, one of Tucson's most famous offspring. *Borderman* is the autobiography of Linda's grandfather, Federico Jose Maria Ronstadt, a native of Sonora, Mexico. Educated in the European tradition by his

German father, Ronstadt was a driven individual whose business acumen and love of the arts contributed significantly to the economic and social life of the border region, especially Tucson.

Ronstadt describes his formative years in Sonora and Baja California and how he made his way to this side of the border in the 1880's, where he became a successful businessmen and one of Tucson's leading citizens. Ronstadt's narrative paints a fascinating picture of Tucson at a time when it was still a frontier town, far removed from the metropolis it is today.

Few first-hand accounts of borderlands life at the close of the nineteenth century exist, particularly from a *Mexicano* perspective. Another title that comes to mind is Eva Maria Wilbur-Cruce's *A Beautiful, Cruel Country* (University of Arizona Press, 1991). Both books offer complementary, yet strikingly different accounts of what borderlands life was like 100 years ago. Ronstadt's book is highly recommended for public and academic libraries with borderlands and Chicano history collections.

Reviewer: Bob Diaz (Music and Dance Librarian, The University of Arizona Libraries)



Crosthwaite, Luis Humberto, John William Byrd, and Bobby Byrd (editors). *Puro Border: Dispatches, Snapshots & Graffiti from La Frontera*, 2003. Cinco Puntos Press. Paperback, 253 pages. \$18.95. ISBN 0938317598.

Puro Border is a mixture of *corridos* (ballads), newspaper articles, photographs, short stories, statistical information, and poetry depicting all aspects of border life.

This work draws a multidimensional portrait of border life, from broad strokes to intricate details. On one hand is the chilling reality of the unofficial list of women murdered in the border town of Juarez or the struggle of Esther Chavez to bring justice for these women and the attitudes of government officials towards them (*Juarez Center Fights for Forgotten Women*). In *¿Quién Está Manejando la Plaza? (Who's in Charge?)*, facets of drug life are explored: drug lords (*La Plaza*) and *narcocorridos* (ballads about drug smugglers); as well as a tragic border incident in *Soldiers of Misfortune*. Immigration is thoroughly explored in *Everything is Going to be Different*, included are a *pollero* dictionary (*pollero*: someone who makes a living smuggling undocumented persons – *pollos* – into the U.S.), tales of border crossings, immigration policy, and Julián Cardón's photo