Sandra Cisneros
(1954 -- )

*Feminist, Mexican-American voice not only playful and vigorous, it's original--we haven't heard anything like it before.*

*Peter S. Prescott*

-- was born and grew up in Chicago;

-- father--Mexican; mother-- Mexican-American, a self-educated woman;

-- Sandra has six brothers;

-- began her literary career in poetry;

-- mother "nurtured" the writer's "love for language"

--worked as a teacher of high school dropouts making $12,000.00 a year and did not dare to apply for a university position (race+gender);

--lived in socialist countries; traveled in Europe;

--writer in residence at different schools;

--received fellowships and literary awards;

--*My Wicked Wicked Ways (1987)*

--*The House on Mango Street (1984)*

--*Woman Hollering Creek (1991)*

--22 stories about the experiences of Chicanas;

-- According to Cisneros, she writes about people she knew and loved, but never saw in the pages of the books... (Cahill, p. 459);

-- Why write? --"absence of brown people in mainstream literature";

-- Her equation of "the spiritual and political": solidarity of all classes as the imperative of a democratic society;

*From Interviews:* --The term 'Latino' vs. 'Hispanic'

- Key themes:

  -- *conflict of cultures*

  conflict inside "Hispanic" culture; fear of the English language; native language as a road back;
-- **class politics**: she's a feminist (femininity & ethnicity); feminism is tied to her class i.e., feminism = race; committed to the neighborhood; tried to improve things in the neighborhood by working at a cultural center; a society creates a rout for a woman, but she doesn't have to take it (e.g., "I don't have to get married and have babies now"); women need to develop a sense of self; women have to fight against patriarchy; fight for education; Latino men--disappoint; traditional Mexican women are strong and fierce; men are in privileged position; gender politics in writing (e.g., male Chicano writers were published/recognized before women); men were better educated than women;

-- **What's a colonized person?** --no house; a different house; ashamed of her house; a house doesn't define a person, but others just don't get it; first wrote a poem then stories for "The House on Mango Street"; one should not be ashamed of the background; **Cosneros' background empowered her**; she stopped being ashamed when she realized that she know something that others did not know; "the university f the street," "the university of life": neighbors; poverty; started intentionally writing about the things that were culturally difficult: class, culture, and color;

**Favorite writes**: Manuel Puig; Juan Rulfo; Borges; Merce Rodoreda (she's Catalan and her writing is very emotional); likes American working class women writers; also, other minority writers, e.g., Maxine Hong Kingston, an Asian female writer; is interested in black feminist writers; Chicano writers (e.g., Tomas Rivera; Denise Chavez) built up a mosaic of short stories rather than doing a continuous narrative; Why? She wanted to write a series of stories that a reader could open up at any point; no prerequisites--each story is like a little pearl;