

A B S T R A C T

This thesis examines a number of selected, twentieth century, indigenista novels and short stories from Mexico and Guatemala with the aim of projecting and correlating the major themes: political problems cultural and anthropological aspects of Indian society as they appear in fiction.

We attempt to illustrate, as well, that the indigenista narrative can accurately portray reality without losing its literary perspective. We wish to test also, the authenticity of the narrative, and show how literature can reveal many facets of Indian civilization with more flexibility and empathy, than anthropology. If the anthropologist is mainly concerned with giving us a rational, factual depiction of Indian life, an indigenista writer can go further by translating these impressions more sympathetically without distorting the scientific basis. Throughout the thesis, we have documented the study with findings from anthropology, history and sociology. We have not described the literary events in chronological sequence. Rather, in the analysis, related themes from different texts and periods have been selected and systematically organized to ensure coherence and thematic balance.

Chapter one proposes to find literary interpretations which convey the many ways in which the Indian is exploited, and features education as a means of improving his condition. Methodologically, the combination of themes in this chapter has been effected through content analysis.

Chapters three and four are concerned with the cultural dynamics of Indian society. The former illustrates the values and traditions which are typical of the Mexican and

Guatemalan Indians. The latter investigates the rôle of the curandero and relates his experiences to anthropological findings, asserting that the indigenist narrative is a source of information on Indian healing arts and practices. Indo-ladino relations based on economic, religious and personal interests are outlined in Chapter Five. The study concludes with an aesthetic and stylistic evaluation of outstanding indigenista works.