

The Painful Chrysalis

Essays on Contemporary Cultural and Literary Identity

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Juan Ignacio Oliva (ed.)

The Painful Chrysalis

I dentity, or so to say, growing up and acquiring a definite adult personality always proves a painful process. Defining your place as an individual in a specific community, confronting the hidden self with the normative social cliché is, indeed, a difficult task, especially when the norm that rules cannot be applied easily, because of gender, sexual, or racial difference. It seems that there is no place for happiness if dissidence becomes too apparent in the public scenery, or if one's origin or belief differs culturally from the land of adoption, because of exile, expatriation or mere choice. Hybridization, cultural contamination, and cross-pollination seem far-fetched and are looked upon with uneasiness, suspicion, or even contempt. Throughout the history of the 20th and the first decade of the 21st century, it has been patent that open-mindedness is not an easy task, even for the so-called occidental liberal societies. Social instability and political turmoil regarding emigration (whether legal or illegal) in a given country, or the coexistence of ethnic groups in a limited territory, demonstrate that the world identity is based on difference and power (being the Tower of Babel symbol and the old Latin phrase, *homo homini lupus*, in full force, as always), with very limited exceptions. It is our aim, thus, to investigate the ways in which writers, artists, and intellectuals depict the great variety of disturbances generated by all sort of contesting identities and, also, to inquire into the possible alternatives to cope with human deafness with regard to difference.

The Painful Chrysalis, therefore, consists of a bunch of twelve essays, which embody a full-fledged mosaic of studies about contemporary cultural and literary identity, from a heterodox perspective.