

Introduction

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This issue of *Arachne* includes three of the four presentations delivered on March 30, 2001, at the Rutgers Student Center, as part of our 11th Annual Distinguished Lecturer Series, and 5th Annual Undergraduate Workshop Series. This event was sponsored by the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, and the Rutgers University Program in Latin American Studies (RULAS).

The theme of this conference was "The City: Mapping Urban Spaces and Subjectivities." Whether a fortress for preserving traditions or a blueprint for claiming and taming new territory, the city's shape depends on political agendas, national consolidation, and cultural behaviors. This dynamic makes the city both a product as well as a producer of cultural signs, practices, and subjective experiences. Our purpose was to contribute with a forum for further exploration of these issues in relation to the current urban crisis in the Iberian and Latin American contexts: crisis of identity and representation, urban violence, national consolidation and globalization, racism and segregation, social inequity, environmental pollution, etc.

The guest speakers, and the titles of their presentations, were:

- Malcolm Compitello, University of Arizona, "Recasting Urban Identities: The Case of Madrid 1977-1997."
- Flora Süssekind, Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa, Rio de Janeiro, "A poesia brasileira contemporânea e a experiência urbana." (Translated by Marise Barros as "Deterritorialization and Poetic Form - Brazilian Contemporary Poetry and Urban Experience").
- John M. Lipski, Pennsylvania State University, "The Role of the City in the Formation of Spanish American Dialect Zones."
- Carlos Monsiváis, "La ciudad de México: pecadora de día, virgen de noche." (Not included in this issue of *Arachne*.)

It is our hope that this issue of *Arachne* would be a contribution toward the understanding of the changes taking place in the city as well as of the city as an agent of change.