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2014

Introduction

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Recommended Citation

Eliza Rodriguez y Gibson, Ellie Hernandez. "Introduction" *The Un/Making of Latina/o Citizenship: Culture, Politics, and Aesthetics*. New York: Palgrave, 2014. 1-10.

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Introduction

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The Latina/o experience, a necessary cultural and political fiction, is nothing if not varied and complex—created by media, academic discussions, and grassroots politics alike. This space of contradiction informs the present project and provides us with major and critical points of convergence for engaging the aesthetics, the politics, and the culture of citizenship—a term that encompasses far more than its legal meaning might suggest. The matter of Latina/o citizenship has been taken up in the twenty-first century with such profound exuberance across the political spectrum that it is time to consider its critical role in mapping out the difficult terrain of contemporary cultural politics and its aesthetics for the twenty-first century. Initially, we thought this project would clarify the trajectory of Latina/o experiences through the concept of citizenship as it currently stands, especially in the decade after 9/11 and the consuming cultural aftermath of two major wars. Instead, what has emerged is decidedly less linear and far more interesting—a simultaneous unmaking and remaking of citizenship has become a way of thinking about community, belonging, culture, and nation.

During this same time frame, feminist and queer cultural studies of affect and emotion have foregrounded how things feel in order to complicate how we understand culture and power. We are interested in the felt experiences of Latina/o consciousness and expression, and have had to reflect on our own positions and relationships to the subject—as two Chicanas organizing a critical conversation about Latina/o citizenship, pulling a thread through a body of varied and complex ideas that link identity and social-intellectual projects of belonging. Throughout our conversations about our social and intellectual locations, it became clear that *Chicana/o* alone cannot effectively speak to larger national issues of immigration, racial profiling, economic injustice that disproportionately impact all US Latina/os.

A critical and flexible *Latinidad*, then, is necessary to account for the simultaneous increase in visibility in the mainstream alongside a material marginalization of Latina/o populations. Many of the writers in this collection gesture toward much broader understanding of the Latina/o experience and insist on the critical importance of drawing upon the broader contexts beyond familiar Chicana/o cultural politics. At the same time, we did not imagine a project that could be explained simply in global and transnational terms; these terms have other resonances with global capital, and we still believed in the power of particular cultural communities to resist such monikers of disconnection. What we see essentially taking place is the unmaking and making of US Latina/o culture, politics, and aesthetics in the twenty-first century. With it, there is a sense of disparity and optimism, fault and recovery, pain and desire for healing, malaise and political initiative, and, to be precise, an effort to counter the many ills of the past decade.

In articulating a critical nexus, it comes to this: we need new ways of talking about the contemporary cultural landscape in which we find ourselves. At the turn of the millennium, the familiar and well-worn ground of liberatory cultural politics (where identity, authenticity, and ultimately liberation are defined and delimited as clearly and transparently oppositional) shifts under our feet when we are confronted with new ideas and trajectories. It's this shifting ground that we are trying to map out in this critical collection. The past 20 years, the millennial turn, has seen a global reworking of culture, law, politics, aesthetics, and the very notion of citizenship. Economic crises, ongoing wars, and neoliberal austerity measures have gutted the infrastructures of the twentieth century—including intellectual ones. Identity politics has been roundly critiqued on both ends of the political spectrum and, compellingly, even been identified as part of the neoliberal dismantling of civil rights protections (Duggan 2004). The contradictory space of the Latina/o experience ought to be contentious enough, and contingent enough to be expansive. To be sure, it requires work, but it is nothing that Chicana feminists like Gloria Anzaldúa hadn't seen coming. What is new, however, are the ways in which twenty-first-century discourses, such as neoliberalism, have changed the cultural landscape of resistance.

Neoliberalism has been used to describe the cultural and political terrain of globalization and transnational capitalism. It is, in its most basic form, liberalism in its latest iteration. The centrality of the ideologies of radical individualism and free market capitalism to defining and demarcating personhood and sovereignty cannot be overstated.

In this context, then, we cannot lose sight of this cultural-political-economic impetus and philosophy that has given rise to Latinidad as a marketing category. At the same time, however, it is also the ground on which a critical Latinidad is taking shape, as a position of potential solidarity and recognition of a possibility for creating new inroads toward social power and personal empowerment.

Under neoliberalism, racism has taken on a new mask, looking like postracial or liberal multiculturalism. This moment is as disorienting and ridiculous as Paula Deen's defense of her use of the "n word" and subsequent multiple video apologies. Of course, she is summarily dismissed in the mainstream media as a relic of a bygone era—as quaint and as irrelevant as the fantasy of a plantation wedding reception complete with slave servers. And yet, other media stories cropping up during the summer of 2013 show us that racism is alive and kicking and ugly; the coerced sterilization of one hundred and fifty Latina detainees in California's prison system is revealed the same week. The Supreme Court's decisions this same summer are just as devastating: they gutted the Voting Rights Act, and almost immediately several states began to move forward on voter ID and redistricting laws that disproportionately and negatively impact people of color. While it struck down DOMA, SCOTUS made it more difficult for employees to bring formal complaints against their employers. And they refused to accept tribal sovereignty and affirmed, through adoption, threats to the survival of indigenous tribal communities. Such inconsistencies on the political stage summon the contradictory space of the neoliberal state, its "Un" Making, constructed and divested from the terms of freedom and citizenship. Empire's historical dehumanization and marginalization, of the poor, of women, of people of color, continues.

At the same time, the current moment is also colored by a new-found sense of political power for Latina/os that coincides with growing demographics for the first time ever in the United States. The re-inauguration of Barack Obama, a symbolic articulation of national identity featured two firsts: Richard Blanco, a gay Cuban poet wrote and performed the inaugural poem, and Sonia Sotomayor, the first Latina Supreme Court Justice administered the inaugural oath to the Vice President. In light of the systematic dismantling of civil rights protections, these gestures are not mere instances of tokenism. Rather, they are symptoms of a perfectly neoliberal politics of inclusion. Where it differs from tokenism matters: while both put forth the individual, in effect erasing structural inequalities, the politics of inclusion are perhaps more insidious because they are accompanied by an important affective element: not only are Latina/os proud of

Blanco and Sotomayor, but so is the rest of the country. Rather than dismiss these gestures, we need to reappraise our critical models to navigate this neoliberal landscape.

This collection grapples with these seemingly contradictory dynamics that are confronted within Chicana/o and Latina/o cultural production. It explores the borders between Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies, not only as a way to think through this historical moment, but also to continue the critical legacy of self-reflection, self-critique, and analysis that characterizes the intellectual history of Chicana/o Studies. While not identical intellectual projects, Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies are more than content; some four decades after their earliest institutional articulations, both of them are driven by methodological questions. This collection reflects that theoretical drive. The chapters in this collection are not only concerned with the objects and effects of state and ideological violence, but they stand as an alternative to discourses of victimization and disempowerment as the only, or even most likely result. One of the clearest issues that has presented itself in organizing this anthology is the semblance of Latina/o culture, aesthetics and politics as temporal, located not with the nation itself, but beyond and outside it. We are seeing aspects of the Un/Making, and in a sense its remaking, through corridors and fissures, and not the conventional geographical mappings of transnational or global citizenship. This collection speaks to the disassembled and disaffected nature of marginalized experience; it is not the least bit triumphalist, and still situated in the quandary of belonging and relatedness.

What do we call ourselves as our lives have been torn asunder by economic and political uncertainty and made more confounding within the terrain of the neoliberal? How do we name our politics? What does resistance look like, sound like...feel like? Take, for example, the idea of promise and nostalgia; there are few if any links between utopian ideals and reminiscences about the past. It is as if the vortex of neoliberalism has sucked out the dimensions of time and space, so as to leave any promising feelings about the past out of the affective landscape of social relations. Instead, what we have come across time and time again are instances where therapy and recovery and healing come into play. We can see these fissures as the unmaking of a culture and politics that was once familiar.

In answering some of the remaining questions of how we assemble a critical sense of Latinidad, Alicia Gaspar De Alba's chapter "Dyad or Dialectic: Deconstructing Chicana/Latina Identity Politics" engages

the construction of Latina/o identity when she asks, “If Chicanas can be Latinas, can Latinas be Chicanas?” In turning this question over, Gaspar De Alba confronts confusing and problematic issues, but also hopeful compromises, articulating thoughtful reasoning about distinctions across the Latina/o spectrum. How this collection addresses the usage of the term *Latina/o* instead of or in addition to national cultural terms such as Chicana/o, Boricua or Cubana/o (to name a few) is to look at various Latina/o identity constructions that constantly resist assimilation. Are Chicana/os also Latina/o? Yes, and not always. No singular term of identification is sufficient, and always exceeds its own boundaries. In this collection, we find that “UnMaking” is a philosophical fact of Latina/o life, based on being (colonial) and becoming (citizens of the United States), referencing the neoliberal condition as one that promises so, so much and yet, rarely delivers. In the gap between promise and actuality, we find other, alternative connections—between Latina/o immigrants and queers, for example, and the discourses that frame them as racialized others.

Eliza Rodriguez y Gibson’s “Drag Racing the Neoliberal Circuit: Latina/o Camp and the Contingencies of Resistance” draws from these liminal corridors when she discusses the neoliberal with respect to camp and immigration in her chapter. Where state and cultural displacements remind us how we are indeed engaged in a reshaping of social and political spheres, representations of queerness and of the undocumented tell the story of a different kind. This chapter takes as its departure both how and why mass media representations of race, class, gender, and sexuality matter to how we understand both the ways neoliberalism obscures its organizing structures, and conversely, the ways in which mass media representations can make those structures visible for critique. The chapter focuses on *Ugly Betty* and *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, television shows that explicitly thematize self-fashioning, and articulate a Latina/o camp sensibility that presents challenges to neoliberal models of subjectivity and citizenship. These challenges, however, depend on humor. Drawing on queer Chicano and Latino theories of camp and utopia, Rodriguez y Gibson argues that Latina/o camp articulates the ironies and contingencies of resistance on television, and can produce critical moments of engagement with oppressive systems that discipline and police both the social and the physical body.

Rendering resistance legible within the mainstream is one part of our challenge as readers of culture; how we articulate an affective historiography is another. The practice of memory and mourning also

take on an added new understanding of the past. Chela Sandoval and Peter Garcia's chapter, "Decolonial New Mexican@ Travels: Music, Weaving, Melancholia and Redemption, or 'This is Where the Peasants Rise Up!'" returns to the place of coloniality, and inspires by imparting the way to recall one's intellectual project, to tell the story of the family and its past. Written as an auto-ethnography, Sandoval and Garcia urge the reader to think about the "abuses of government sponsored imperialism and linguistic terrorism." Returning home to Sandoval's and Garcia's family in the liminal spaces of New Mexico, the chapter bears witness to the legacy of Nuevo Mexico's past filled with Spanish and Indian legacies amidst the globalization of major cities such as Santa Fe and Albuquerque. Here we find a desire for new history making through memory and an affective recollection of the past. The haunting elements of a forgotten New Mexico experience details the diverse Latina/o experience in Peter Garcia's and Chela's reflection *on el pasado*. The longing for hope clearly follows their travels and this tale of mourning moves through memory, desire, and belonging.

Hopeful elements can also be found in Juan Mah y Busch's chapter "The Importance of Heart in Chicana Artistry: Aesthetic Struggle, Aisthesis, Freedom" as well as in Kristie Soares's chapter, "The Political Implications of Playing Hopefully: A Negotiation of the Present and the Utopic in Queer Theory and Latina Literature." In spite of the tragic and disheartening aspects of the neoliberal condition, we find reminders of a critically engaged optimism. Juan Mah Busch's chapter locates Chicana poetics as a place where the aesthetic dimension is not only critical for poetry, but is also at the heart of social and political struggle. Taking the metaphor further, Mah y Busch argues that the heart is an organ of perception. In his discussion, *Aisthesis* serves as the point of intersection through which a broader, pre-Kantian notion of the aesthetic is linked with heartfelt awareness and struggle. Invoking the twentieth century debate in Latina American thought regarding the proper character of freedom, Mah y Busch concludes with a reflection on how this understanding of the heart might further develop the idea of "freedom," which he describes as unnecessarily abstract and vague. The Chicana heart, by contrast, offers a way of contemplating the possibilities of spaciousness—what freedom feels like—in order to explore a theoretically viable as well as tangible model of liberation.

Taking up a similar concern for the framing narratives that shape how we read, Kristie Soares examines the methodology of hope circulating in the Obama age, and acquaints us with the desire for positive outlooks on the future espoused and proclaimed by queers of color as well as feminists of color. Her chapter looks at the various

ways in which hope, optimism, and queerness inspire a new vantage point for thinking about decolonization. Her thinking is informed by feminist of color methodologies as well queer theory to talk about situating oneself in the present moment. Soares contends that the current trend in queer theory toward utopianism and queer futurity represents a potentially dangerous departure from the US Third World feminist scholarship to which it is indebted. Whereas the former imagines alternate existences and queer utopias, such as those created by performers in their one-woman shows, the latter focuses on concrete activism in opposition to present-day conditions. This chapter—which terms these two schools “utopic creation” and “present-based resistance,” respectively—argues that theorizing creation without theorizing resistance is not only fruitless, but it is also dangerous.

In a similar synthetic impulse, Araceli Esparza reflects on feminist of color to call forth a revolutionary intellectual practice. Her chapter, “Cherrie Moraga’s Changing Consciousness of Solidarity,” locates the continuing influences of women of color praxis and contextualizes Moraga’s changing consciousness within the historical span of her writing: her discussion of sexism, racism, and homophobia within the Chicano and feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s; the displacement of refugees and immigrants due to US intervention in various countries during the 1980s; and her subsequent reflections on the escalating violence both in the United States and abroad after the attacks of September 11, 2001. Esparza contends that these writings reveal that Moraga’s preoccupation with US imperialism, patriarchy, and heteronormativity is part of a revolutionary desire in which she envisions nothing less than global liberation, particularly for the populations that she most often writes about including women of color, indigenous and other colonized people, and LGBTQ people. In Moraga’s conceptualization, revolutionary change requires solidarity across multiple positionalities. However, as discussed in this chapter, Moraga’s writing also underscores that coalition building is laced with contradictions and difficulties, suggesting that solidarity between marginalized people can be risky and without guarantees.

This invocation of Moraga serves as a reminder of possibilities for returning to methodologies that were useful in the 1980s and 1990s. Indeed, this collection witnesses a reconsideration of approaches that have fallen out of fashion. And yet, these critical rearticulations bring with them a renewed clarity of purpose, and in these reconsiderations, we can see things anew. Cathryn Josefina Merla-Watson’s “Revolutionary Love: Bridging Differential Terrains of Empire”

examines the metaphors elaborated within the publications of radical women of color in the 1980s in order to perform a critical reading of Antonio Negri's and Michael Hardt's *Empire* trilogy. She contends that they overlook the power and possibility in notions of community and in the political concept of love. Merla-Watson argues that the power of resistance is located in the presence of love—not a Romantic love, but a radical love that refutes empire's predominance. She counters the overbearing aspects of empire to fully occupy consciousness of people and their prerogatives to find value, presence, and validity under a set of economic conditions that might want to eradicate love's influence.

As the figurative embodiment of the past, the monument forms a fascinating critique of the object proper. In Chapter 8, "The Postmodern Mo(nu)ment," Ella Maria Diaz analyzes tensions between American citizenship and its representations in the United States through an examination of three performance projects that take place around monuments. The chapter begins with a critical inquiry of modern American citizenship as grounded in the ideal of individual freedom. Diaz contends that this notion physically manifested into architectures of containment, and considers the postmodern state in the United States as both a condition and an actual absence of social cohesion, both of which derive from a diminished sense of locality due to global technologies, like the Internet. The postmodern state, Diaz asserts, is characterized by the sense of sameness everywhere, and her analyses of American citizenship and the postmodern state frame her consideration of three performance projects that took place in California in the first decades of the twenty-first century. The Pocho Research Society's *Operation Invisible Monument* (2002), the San Francisco Bureau of Urban Secrets' *Travels with Carlos & Anza* (2004), and Stephanie Sauer and Ella Diaz's film, *The Ancient Documentaries of Southside Park* (2010) reflect new relationships and approaches to American citizenship.

In addition to functioning as theoretical sites where alternative ways of knowing can be articulated, cultural production renders struggles against oppression legible, and reading cultural production expansively is a recurring theme in many of the chapters in this collection. Extended consideration of the metaphoric opens up ways of thinking through the impasses of neoliberalism and forms of identification and solidarity. In **Chapter 9**, "Sucking Vulnerability: Neoliberalism, the Chupacabras, and the Post Cold-War Years," William Calvo-Quiroz looks at the Chupacabras as a metaphor for neoliberalism. The creature symbolizes an entity with an insatiable appetite, "always

sucking” away at the resources of others and always expanding its predatory territories as a monster that is clouded in the dark hours. In such imagery, capitalism promotes and envisions the planet as one single market block, and El Chupacabras begins to appear. Calvo explores how Chicana/os and Latina/os have utilized El Chupacabras to enact social change and reinscribe innovative narratives for themselves and their communities. These epistemic *movidas* utilize the creature as an analogy to the social and economic diseases affecting the people. Calvo-Quiroz posits El Chupacabras as an alternative narrative to official histories, as a device to pass on knowledge required for survival, to make “sense” of people’s realities as they encounter the injuries of late capitalism, and as a way to expose and navigate power. At the same time, El Chupacabras creates a space of insubordination, rebelliousness, irony, and insolence. It reveals how America is Latinizing, as well as how a new pantheon of “scary” beasts, a new vocabulary of monsters, is needed in order to accommodate the new desires, and illusions of the emergent neoliberal landscape.

In her chapter, “Pictures of Resistance: Recasting Labor and Immigration in the Global City,” Irene Mata also takes up the power of the counternarrative, examining the challenges to neoliberal images of immigrant work in Dulce Pinzón’s NYC-based photo series, “Superheroes,” which captures multiple Mexican immigrants in superhero costumes, performing various forms of labor, and was created between 2004 and 2005 as a response to the rhetoric of superheroes circulated to honor the many rescue and aid workers who risked their lives on September 11, 2001. Influenced by a growing scholarship on the transnational role of Latina/os in global circuits of labor, and the works of Latina/o cultural producers, Mata articulates a new way of looking at immigrants and posits that Pinzón’s photo series advocates for a more sophisticated understanding of a global system of labor under which workers and capital are mobilized in the interest of much larger national economies. Instead of discussing immigration within the parameters of the typical debate that positions it only as an issue that affects the United States, she visibly links the country of origin and the host country in two very specific ways, through the notion of home and by addressing the subject of remittances. By incorporating these two elements into her series, Pinzón encourages her audience to question assumptions they might have about labor, immigration, and acts of heroism. She persuades her viewer to see the series’ subjects as modern day superheroes, laborers caught in a circular system of movement. Through her visual text, she inserts immigrant bodies into the myth of the “American superhero” and, in

the process, questions both identities. Who gets photographed, how one is photographed, and how those photos are framed tell a story. Pinzón's photographs offer a visual counter-narrative of immigration and labor that expands on the "anthology of images" a mainstream audience holds. She is telling a different story, one of community, labor, and transnational connections.

In the end, that's what this collection is trying to do: tell a different critical story that explores the cultural politics and aesthetics of citizenship—which is another way of talking about legitimacy, about nation, and ultimately, about belonging. These chapters trace some of the emergent lines in the field of Latina/o cultural studies and brings together familiar articulations and questions about structures and circulations of power to bear on a shifting economic and political landscape. Feeling and knowing complicate each other and intersect with memory, identity, and intellectual work. Belonging, after all, is primarily a felt experience of community and collectivity. It becomes the grounds on which we imagine resistance and resilience and it is in our capacity for an expansive sense of belonging and identification that radical models of intellectual/social/political solidarity can emerge.