

**Carmen M. Méndez-García, editor. *Tradition and (R)evolution: Reframing Latina/o Identities in Contemporary US Culture*. Biblioteca Benjamin Franklin, 2018, pp. 158.**

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Identity politics has always been and still remains a crucial issue among 21<sup>st</sup> century minority groups. How this issue reflects in the humanities and most particularly in literature constitutes the focus of this collection of essays. The formulation of fictional identities that are local but not parochial or exclusionary, multicultural but not diluted, polemical but not without political alliances, transformative and fluid but not unmoored preoccupy the writers of the individual chapters. The paradigm is Latina/o, Chicana/o, Hispanic; the search and analysis target what lies behind such terms/names, ethnically-wise, politically-wise, gender-wise.

The book is divided into three sections: “Identities and Interculturality, Drawing Identities,” “Identities and Tradition, Remembering Identity,” “Identities at the Margins, Reframing Identities.” A total of fourteen chapters in addition to an introduction by the editor Carmen M. Méndez-García read through a long list of Latina/o, Chicana/o, Hispanic authors, old and new, pioneers and well established in the US literary canon. One of the chapters, Daniel Enrique Pérez’s “*Jotería* Legacies: Queer Chicana/o Cultural Production as a Cultural Heritage Site,” even proposes to go beyond the boundaries of the US literary canon and establish the connections with a broader global tradition. As I have pointed out, this is one of the intentions of the volume: to connect the local with the transnational, to propose a transnational localism, if I may suggest such a term.

Militating against the idea that ethnic and minority literatures are subject matter limited and parochial has been the project of the scholars who entered the academy since the sixties and seventies. Ellen McCracken’s “Truth in the Middle: Trauma and Collective Family Memory in Reyna Grande’s *The Distance Between Us*” adds her own voice to discuss the panhuman meanings of ethnic and minority literatures. Through a memoir and photographs and by employing trauma theory to discuss diaspora, the author demonstrates how the personal is made universal. Carmen González Ramos’ “Recipes for a Latina Identity: Feminist Food Politics in Children’s Literature” argues how female empowerment can be strengthened through the positive imagery of kitchen and recipes. Marina Bernardo Flórez’s “Representing Identity beyond Multiculturalism in Chicano Children’s Literature: Maya Christina Gonzalez’s Picture Books” maintains that Chicano children’s books/picture books can be made appropriate for Chicanos but even more so for a more inclusive audience.

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One could suggest that such chapters may imply that a post-ethnic identity predicates that ethnicity is no longer important in the self-identification of the subject socially, culturally, existentially. Such a stage sounds suspiciously like a stage of complete assimilation. And yet, could post-ethnicity or even assimilation be conceived as nothing more than still another identity assumed by the immigrant, the ethnic, the diasporic in an effort to belong? Could home permanently erase the memory and the influence of homeland?

Francisco José Cortés Vieco's "Interculturality Interrupted: Judith Ortiz Cofer's *The Latin Deli*" places its emphasis on interculturalism as didacticism for the younger generations. The chapter implies symmetric relationships between different social groups living in one same place, leading ultimately to integration, cohesion and mutually enriching exchanges. It does not predicate oblivion of one's ethnic background. Neither does María Laura Arce Álvarez's "The New Mordor: Dominican-American Identity and the Reconstruction of the Other in Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Woo*." Arce Álvarez introduces us to a third space, a fantastic universe, where identity is perceived as in a constant conflict. The author employs the metaphor of the third space, of in-betweenness, of uncertainty and dislocation. Maria Teresa Monroe's "Spring Is for Me! Floral and Binary Representations in *The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gómez*" focuses on a legendary figure of Chicano Studies, John Rechy, and predicates that for Rechy the recognition of a double consciousness that accepts the ambiguities inherited by religious observance, especially Catholic beliefs, is crucial. Nevertheless, along with Vanessa de Veritch Woodside's "Prickly Politics and 'Becoming' Chicana in Palacio's *Ocotillo Dreams*," we are reminded of the hazards of border-crossing and racial profiling affecting all brown-skinned individuals. The road towards integration and a post-ethnic identity is not always feasible.

Inéz E. Veauthier's chapter "Past, Present, and Future: Memory and Belonging in Chicano Literature" focuses on the work of Ana Castillo and Helena María Viramontes. Veauthier maintains that a politics of transformation is crucial for the Latina/o, Chicana/o, Hispanic. Memory guarantees survival but also becomes a means of redefinition of cultural, gender and political identity. For Erin A. Montero Rangno in "*Mujeres Abnegadas*, Disobedient Eves and the *Mariposa* Consciousness: Finding a Darker Shade of Queer in Rigoberto González's *Butterfly Boy: Memories of a Chicano Mariposa*," lexical transformation is an act of empowerment. As Montero Rangno suggests, Rigoberto González's autobiography demonstrates that discourse does not belong to white gay males alone. Much in the same way, Xamuel Bañales, in "Toward a *Cinema de Jotería y de Liberación*," underscores the pejorative use of words. His chapter aims at raising awareness that Cinema de Jotería films should emphasize power relations and authenticity in the presentation of their content and seek to transform deeply ingrained lexical prejudices.

Sophia Emmanouilidou's "*La Pinta* Poetics and the Creation of the Social Imaginary in Raúl Salinas' *Un Trip Through the Mind Jail y Otras Excursions*"

undertakes to discuss the politics of marginal identities in a broader ethnic context. Life in prison and in the margins is transformed by *raúlsalinas* into a poetry for the formation of communal identity and political alliances. This is the only chapter in the volume that deals with poetry and that comes as a surprise. Poetry has always been a far more effective conscience forming genre, and certainly a more political and politicized form of expression.

All in all, this is definitely a well thought and organized volume that merits the attention of a wider audience.