


War echoes: gender and militarization in U.S. Latina/o cultural production

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War echoes: gender and militarization in U.S. Latina/o cultural production, by Ariana E. Vigil, New Brunswick, Rutgers UP, 2014, 234 pp., \$26.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-8135-6933-8

In *War Echoes: Gender and Militarization in U.S. Latina/o Cultural Production*, Ariana E. Vigil provides an interdisciplinary analysis of U.S. Latina/o cultural productions, specifically novels, memoirs, plays, and films by U.S.-based Chicana/o and Latina/o artists, activists and writers. Combining Latina/o and gender theories, glocal studies, and feminist theoretical approaches, particularly transnational Latina feminism and U.S. third world feminism, Vigil theorizes the complex ways in which these texts depict intersectionalities of gender, identity, sexuality, and ethnicity, while simultaneously responding to post-Viet Nam U.S. militarization and intervention. Moreover, *War Echoes'* larger narrative explores how U.S. Latina/o cultural productions connect cultural histories of U.S. military intervention in both Latin America and the Middle East, specifically in Central America during the 1980s and in Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan during the 1990s and 2000s.

Vigil emphasizes that the accounts and experiences represented in the texts she examines portray underrepresented perspectives of individuals who are impacted by war and militarization in their everyday lives. These subjects are shaped by these facets regardless of their proximity to the frontlines of armed conflicts. In other words, Vigil acknowledges “institutionalized violence and militarism not just on the battlefield but also within the family, the nation, and the community” and calls attention to the “myriad ways in which war ‘comes home,’ particularly for women of color and communities of color in the United States” (3). Keeping this in mind, Vigil argues that U.S. Latina/o cultural productions enact glocal perspectives, signifying the performative aspect of these cultural texts. She theorizes these glocal perspectives through five particular mechanisms used within the works examined, which also outline the chapters of the book: interpersonal modes of communication, polyvocality, decolonial love, ambivalent homonationalism, and non-militarized citizenship. *War Echoes* engages glocal perspectives not as a new phenomenon of local and global frameworks deriving from contemporary discourses of globalization, but as already present conceptualizations of “interconnectedness and transnationalism” articulated, or rather performed, within the creative works of Latina/o artists and activists in the mid-to-late twentieth and early twenty-first century (6). Such perspectives offer contextual ways of understanding the reciprocal impacts between the global, national, transnational, local, and individuals, especially U.S. Latina/s subjects.

Chapter one of *War Echoes* examines how *Southern Front* (1990), a collection of short stories by Alejandro Murguía and *Despues del Terremoto* (1979), a film by Lourdes Portillo and Nina Serrano, two texts that respond to U.S. intervention in Nicaragua and are products of the Nicaraguan Solidarity Movement, reflect “interpersonal modes of communication [that] enact and express glocal perspectives” (23). Chapter two continues to explore communication through the use of polyvocality as an expression of glocal perspectives. Here, Vigil utilizes narratives that engage the Guatemalan Civil War, particularly *The Blindfold's Eyes: My Journey from Torture to Truth* (2002), a memoir by Sr Diana Ortiz, and *Psst ... I Have Something to Tell You, Mi Amor* (2005), a play by Ana Castillo, which is based on Ortiz's memoir.


In Chapter three, Vigil theorizes decolonial love in Demetria Martinez's novel *Mother Tongue* (1994), illustrating how the protagonist character, Maria, develops a sense of love for herself and others, enabling her to engage transnational political activism. This political engagement is reflected as a potential result of decolonial love, through communicating one's narrative and listening to another's as an act of love that opens up the possibility for transnational political activism and solidarity. Chapter four offers an analysis of U.S. Army veteran José Zuniga's memoir *Solider of the Year: The Story of a Gay American Patriot*

(1994) and its depiction of ambivalent homonationalism through its portrayal of U.S. military violence against LGBTQ soldiers and Iraq. In Chapter five, Vigil engages veteran Camilo Mejía's memoir *Road from Ar Ramdi: The Private Rebellion of Staff Sergeant Camilo Mejía* (2008) and explains how it illustrates an "identificatory development" of "non-military-based-citizenship," which further offers a depiction of global citizenship (24).

War Echoes' concluding chapter analyzes the music video of the Pan-American music group La Santa Cecilia "ICE/El Hielo" (2013), directed by Alex Rivera, and incorporates a reading of the "U.S. war of drugs" narrative. Vigil examines how the narrative of the U.S. "war on drugs" justifies the growth of militarization and high surveillance of communities of color in the U.S. as well as military intervention in other areas, particularly the U.S.–Mexico border and Colombia. Furthermore, her reading of the music video underscores its depiction of a glocal perspective that delineates how militarization and policing of Latinas/os in the U.S., shape the everyday lives and histories of these subjects as well as their narratives of the structures themselves.

War Echoes provides historical depth to the concept of glocalization and further highlights its broader narrative as Vigil examines how U.S. Latina/o cultural productions respond to the "histories and continued effects of colonial projects and their relation to ongoing military conflicts" (14). *War Echoes* offers a critical look at not only how ongoing colonial projects, histories, and U.S. military interventions are connected, but asserts the importance of "social and political identity, activism and art" as "part of such discussions" that also reflect glocal perspectives as performance (25). As an interdisciplinary text, *War Echoes* presents a valuable contribution to Latina/o, literary, and cultural studies, as well as gender, glocal, and performance studies, and critical scholarship on U.S. militarization. In addition, the language employed in *War Echoes* is accessible to broad academic audiences, including undergraduate and graduate students, which lends itself as a pedagogical resource for exploring U.S. Latina/o cultural productions, subjectivities, and performances, as well as transnational feminism, gender, modes of institutionalized violence, U.S. militarization and intervention, and queer politics.

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Embodied avatars: genealogies of black feminist art and performance, by
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Uri McMillan's *Embodied Avatars: Genealogies of Black Feminist Art and Performance* is a model of how thought experiments in the ontology of black female objecthood might proceed. In this beautifully written, theoretically sophisticated, and provocative study, the author chronicles the perils and promises that have animated black women's performances of objecthood, from the nineteenth century to the present. *Embodied Avatars* contributes to and expands a growing body of scholarship – by Fred Moten and others – that "reimagine