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## **War Echoes: Gender and Militarization in U.S. Latina/o Cultural Production by Ariana E. Vigil (review)**

Natalie Havlin

Feminist Formations, Volume 27, Issue 2, Summer 2015, pp. 200-202 (Review)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press  
DOI: 10.1353/ff.2015.0018



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*War Echoes: Gender and Militarization in U.S. Latina/o Cultural Production* by Ariana E. Vigil. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014, 250 pp., \$85.00 hardcover, \$26.95 paper/e-book.

Natalie Havlin

Ariana Vigil's *War Echoes: Gender and Militarization in U.S. Latina/o Cultural Production* examines US Latina/o subject formation and transnational feminist politics in relation to US warfare in Central America and the Middle East. Assembling a new archive of contemporary film, fiction, drama, and memoirs by Chicana/o and Central American US artists and soldiers, Vigil persuasively argues that Latina/o art responding to US militarism exposes the linkages between the heteropatriarchal and racial logic of military violence abroad and the militarization of US national borders and culture. Centering US Latina/o cultural production that captures the continuities of US militarism and neo-imperialism in multiple locales, Vigil provides a timely intervention in feminist scholarship and transnational antiwar activism. *War Echoes* not only recovers the specific histories of Chicana feminist and Latina/o responses to US militarism, but also elucidates how Latina/o art contributes a much-needed perspective on the productive tensions and transformative potential of transnational feminist movement-building.

A key contribution of Vigil's work is situating US military policies, such as "Don't ask, don't tell" (DADT) and the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan since the 1990s, in relation to earlier US military interventions in Central America during the 1980s. She illuminates the connections between institutional and foreign policies by tracing what she describes as *glocal* forces, or the "events and processes at the level of the family and ethnic community" that occur in relation to "multiple national contexts" and global forces, such as capitalism, that exceed national borders (5). Clarifying that *glocal* first emerged as a sociological concept to explain relationships between hyper-local and global processes, Vigil argues that an interdisciplinary adaptation of *glocal* offers a helpful framework for transnational feminist theory and activism. It uniquely describes the complex local and global connections between histories of colonialism and the ongoing racialized, gendered, and militarized violence of neo-imperialism following the Vietnam War. The benefits of adapting a *glocal* framework become increasingly clear in each chapter of *War Echoes* as Vigil analyzes Latina/o writers' portrayals of identities and collaborations that exceed or are obscured by the national frameworks often anchoring feminist scholarship and transnational activism. In her readings of Lourdes Portillo and Nina Serrano's film *Después del Terremoto* (1979), Demetria Martínez's novel *Mother Tongue* (1994), and Ana Castillo's play based on Sr. Dianna Ortiz's memoir *The Blindfold's Eyes: My Journey from Torture to Truth* (2002), Vigil foregrounds the narrative strategies and formal structure that Chicana artists and activists develop to identify

both the parallels and the uneven experiences of gender-based state violence in the United States, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. As she convincingly argues, these texts encourage readers to explore decolonial love and alternative modes of revolutionary consciousness as strategies for building transnational feminist movements that are attentive to the interlocking and differential effects of US militarism along racial and national axes.

Subsequent chapters of *War Echoes* offer particularly innovative models for bridging the study of gender and US foreign policy with a feminist analysis of the institutional dynamics of the US military. In her readings of memoirs by Latino soldiers deployed in the Middle East, Vigil demonstrates that racial hierarchies within and outside the United States, as well as heteropatriarchal protocols of belonging and immigration policies, structure the US military. Drawing on Jasbir Puar (2007) and Richard T. Rodríguez (2009), Vigil traces what she calls an “ambivalent homonationalism” and potential queer model of kinship in the memoir *Soldier of the Year* (1994) by José Zuniga, a decorated Chicano soldier who publicly disclosed his sexuality to challenge DADT (123). Vigil deftly argues that Zuniga’s effort to balance his critique of heterosexism in the US military with his nationalist support for US militarism abroad exemplifies the mutually constitutive relationship between intra-national sexual politics and global processes of war and militarism. As she traces the limits of Zuniga’s gay rights discourse and vision of national-belonging, Vigil also highlights the queer potential of Zuniga’s participation in an alternative bisexual kinship network outside of both the heterosexual imaginary of the army and the mainstream gay rights movements that eventually overturned DADT. In the final chapter of *War Echoes*, Vigil reads Camilo Mejía’s *Road from ar Ramadi* (2008) to trace his political trajectory as he recounts his parents’ background as Sandista revolutionaries in Nicaragua, his experience as a US soldier deployed during the War on Terror, and his subsequent decisions to become a conscientious objector and a youth advocate critical of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. For Vigil, Mejía’s memoir models a process of working through personal trauma and building new antiwar collaborations that recognize national, citizenship, and patriarchal hierarchies.

Vigil’s choice of texts—from Chicana feminist film and fiction to the memoirs by Zuniga and Mejía—builds a feminist and queer studies foundation for future scholarship on Latina/o soldiers’ and Latina/o communities’ relation to US militarism. From George Mariscal’s foundational *Aztlán and Viet Nam* (1999) and Lorena Oropeza’s *Raza Si! Guerra No!* (2005) to John Alba Cutler’s *Ends of Assimilation* (2014), scholarship in Chicana/o studies has primarily focused on Chicana/o antiwar activism and Chicano soldiers’ experiences in the US military during World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War. *War Echoes* marks the start of a new conversation about Chicana/o antiwar and military activism by demonstrating that Chicana feminist insights on the intersections of personal and state violence are critical for understanding Chicana/o artists’ and

soldiers' evolving responses to US interventions in both Central American and the Middle East. Vigil also makes an important contribution to Chicana/o and Latina/o studies by modeling an interdisciplinary comparative methodology that attends to the tensions and creative political strategies that emerge across and within Chicana/o, Central American, and Central American US communities.

*War Echoes* will serve as an excellent text for advanced undergraduate and graduate courses exploring transnational feminism, theories of gender and violence, Chicana feminism, queer politics, and US Latina/o cultural production. Due to Vigil's accessible style and clear argumentation, individual chapters from *War Echoes* will also generate useful discussions in introductory undergraduate women's, gender, and sexuality studies courses addressing current debates about sexuality, gender, US interventions abroad, and the militarization of US police and borders. Vigil's analysis of solidarity praxis in her readings of Chicana feminist literature and Zuniga's and Mejía's memoirs in light of the stakes of military recruitment, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and DREAM Act proposals are also relevant to social justice activists working outside of academia. In *War Echoes*, Vigil builds a forceful argument that US Latina/o art not only provides a more complete understanding of US militarism, but also presents creative strategies for organizing collective resistance to gender and sexual violence across multiple locales.

**Natalie Hawlin** is an assistant professor of English at LaGuardia Community College in the City University of New York. Her research focuses on feminist theories of coalition, Latina/o cultural production, and representations of race, sexuality, and gender. She is currently working on a book manuscript tentatively titled *Feeling Movements: Race and the Affective Politics of Alliance in Latina/o Cultural Production*. She earned her PhD in English and a graduate minor in gender and women's Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She can be reached at [nhawlin@lagcc.cuny.edu](mailto:nhawlin@lagcc.cuny.edu).

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