

[2001]), and Nayan Shah (*Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* [2001]).

Any critique of this work can only be the tiniest of quibbles. Near the end of his narrative, Heap somewhat reifies urbanism and modern queerness in his explorations of “vibrant urban community” development (p. 233), and post-1940 slumming ventures continued in various forms prior to the “second wave” of the 1990s in mediums such as print culture and cinema. These are, however, minor points of qualification for the many achievements that this book makes. The text offers up lasting contributions to queer studies, whiteness studies, and to studies of straight urbanity that helped normalized whites expand “the repertoire of the modern cosmopolitan” (p. 194). The metronormativities of the Progressive era and its jazzy follow-up have now been indelibly reconfigured.

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CATHERINE S. RAMÍREZ. *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press. 2009. Pp. xxvi, 229. Cloth \$79.95, paper \$22.95.

A short skirt, fishnet stockings or bobby socks, a tight v-neck sweater, a fingertip-length boxy jacket, heavy eye makeup and dark lipstick, hair teased and piled into a high bouffant: these were the signature fashion elements of the young Mexican American women who participated in the zoot suit subculture in Los Angeles in the World War II era. These women were just as daring and dissident as their brothers, with whom they shared both a style politics and the disapproval of white society. However, the women, sometimes called *pachucas*, remained largely invisible and unintelligible in comparison to their male, *pachuco* counterparts. Police, white servicemen, newspapers, and the courts cast male zoot suiters as unpatriotic, criminal delinquents during the Sleepy Lagoon incident of 1942 and the zoot suit riots of 1943; Chicano nationalists reinterpreted them as icons of resistance during the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s. In an innovative twist on an old question, Catherine S. Ramírez asks, “Where were the pachucas?” By this, she means to investigate both the subculture of the historical subjects and the role of the iconic representation—*la Pachuca*—as it figured into World War II nationalism as well as later, insurgent Chicano nationalist and Chicana feminist reinterpretations. The result is a fresh interdisciplinary history that tells us as much about nationalisms, gender, race, and culture from 1942 to the present as it does about young women who embraced a defiant public style.

Ramírez argues that women who participated in zoot suit culture challenged the gendered expectations of their parents as well as those of the wider society. Their extreme fashions and overt sexuality—exaggerated versions of glamorous Hollywood styles—appeared to many to represent a monstrous femininity. At the same

time, their assertiveness, presence in public space, and use of *pachuca/o* slang marked their behavior as transgressively masculine. In addition, some wore pants or the male zoot suit ensemble, and some joined girl gangs. Ramírez shows that the achievement of these styles at considerable expense could signal class mobility within the subculture. However, in the context of World War II celebrations of Rosie the Riveter and the soldier’s pretty and faithful girl back home, mainstream representations of the “zoot girls” cast them as inherently delinquent and even treasonous in their refusal of traditional domesticity. Both young men and women in this subculture, then, appeared as the internal enemy during wartime in the mainstream press. Ramírez conducted oral interviews with women who were teenagers during the World War II era and found some who recalled their subculture with pride. Many others, however, disavowed *la pachuca* and continued to experience her as a deviant figure.

While *la pachuca* remained disavowed, Chicano nationalists redeemed *el pachuco*, reinterpreting him as an icon of resistance to U.S. nationalism and racism. Ramírez analyzes a number of Chicano nationalist documents, including *Lowrider Magazine* and Luis Valdez’s 1978 play *Zoot Suit*. Valdez’s play retold the story of the zoot suit riots (ten days of urban violence between white servicemen and Mexican American youth) and the Sleepy Lagoon incident (the “zoot suit murder trial” that convicted seventeen Mexican American young men for the death of another Mexican American, overturned on appeal two years later). Valdez’s rendition traced the origins of the Chicano Movement of the 1960s to zoot-suit-wearing *pachucos*, and they appear as defiant heroes in his play. As Ramírez reveals, however, Valdez positions Chicano insurgent nationalism in opposition to the *pachuca*. Ramírez shows that the Chicano notion of the community as *la familia de la raza* positions the heteropatriarchal family as its nationalist foundation, similar to the way that U.S. nationalism rooted itself in the white normative family. While *el pachuco* could be incorporated into the family as father or son, *la pachuca* was excluded because of her dissident gender expression and sexuality. In a compelling discussion, Ramírez analyzes the testimony of Bertha Aguilar at the Sleepy Lagoon trial against that of Valdez’s character Bertha Villarreal, who was clearly based on Aguilar. Ramírez shows that Aguilar courageously refused to be bullied by prosecutors and was “self-possessed, clever and articulate” on the witness stand. In contrast, “*Zoot Suit* reduces her to a boisterous buffoon and ‘cheap broad’ . . . [and] makes this extraordinary young woman intelligible by transforming her into a whore” (p. 106).

Some Chicana feminists of the 1970s and 1980s, however, reclaimed *la pachuca* as a way to reimagine Chicana/o community and its subjects (p. 119). Examining poetry and visual art, Ramírez charts this third moment in the career of *la pachuca*, demonstrating that her feminist incarnations do not create a static notion of *la familia de la raza* but configure community as constructed,

“fragile, messy, temporal, and imperfect” (p. 136). Ramirez’s book restores *pachucas* to history and also provides astute analysis of the role of cultural production in emerging political formations. It is an excellent accomplishment and a superb model of truly interdisciplinary history.

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ANITA CLAIR FELLMAN. *Little House, Long Shadow: Laura Ingalls Wilder’s Impact on American Culture*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press. 2008. Pp. xi, 343. \$34.95.

Since the 1932 publication of *Little House in the Big Woods* (the first in what was to become known as the Little House series), few authors have maintained a more steady presence in the field of American children’s literature than Laura Ingalls Wilder. Anita Clair Fellman’s book explores the persistence of the Little House series in the American cultural scene, from the home to the classroom, in public life, and, most surprisingly perhaps, in the arena of politics. Arguing that Wilder’s celebration of values widely associated with an ethos of the American pioneer functioned in part as a critique of the New Deal policies of the 1930s and 1940s, Fellman examines the possibilities of a formative relationship between childhood reading and adult political worldviews. Readers of this book will likely assent to the claim that, from within an oppositional discourse at odds with the collectivism of New Deal philosophy, “other sources besides mainstream political rhetoric were responsible for maintaining an individualist vision among the populace at large” (p. 3). This book’s central challenge, however, lies in its assertion that children’s literature is an effective venue for the advocacy of political views and that the Little House series itself retained a strong influence in the lives of adults who read Wilder’s books as children. Fellman is well aware of these problems, and while her examination effectively explores Wilder’s political beliefs during the period in which the Little House series was published, it is also largely concerned with the persistence of individualist, anti-statist thought among the American populace into the Reagan years and beyond. Thus, Fellman argues, her interests lie with “exploring the overlap between the ideas present in the Little House books and the particular form that contemporary conservatism in the United States has taken” (p. 9).

The monograph’s subtitle is perhaps a bit misleading since the two most interesting chapters provide a rich account of the collaborative relationship between Ingalls Wilder and her daughter, Rose Wilder Lane. Anchored in shared political convictions, yet strained by Ingalls Wilder’s dependence on Lane for assistance with writing, editing, and promoting the Little House series, the mother-daughter relationship as revealed by Fellman provides for an engaging read. The extent of collaboration involved in these staples of children’s lit-

erature will be a surprise to those who are unfamiliar with the behind-the-scenes details of their authorship. Chapters one and two are carefully researched studies based largely on correspondence; letters written between Ingalls Wilder and Lane clearly state their opposition to New Deal politics, while those between Lane and her friends explore the nuances of a mother-daughter relationship often troubled by periods of economic hardship and interdependence. These two chapters also provide important biographical information about the Ingalls family history.

It is the Ingalls family life itself that provides the subject matter for the Little House series, and chapter three, “Revisiting the Little Houses,” is devoted largely to close readings designed to reveal the anti-government, individualist views that, according to Fellman, underwrite each of the books. Heavily dependent on a Turnerian typology of the pioneer spirit, she makes a case for Wilder’s and Lane’s investment in rugged individualism and family self-sufficiency as a consistent paradigm for representational strategies utilized by the authors in their writing. Taking advantage of several historical resources, Fellman makes good use of the authors’ omissions from, and revisions to, genuine historical detail; much of what has been reworked in the Ingalls family history clearly reinforces those values that both Ingalls Wilder and Lane held in opposition to New Deal politics.

The close readings of chapter three are stronger in their exploration of individualism and traditional family values than they are with respect to clear anti-government sentiments; the latter seem isolated aspects of the series’ ideological agenda, though, again, Fellman makes a convincing argument. Where the book struggles most is in its final four chapters, which explore the “impact” of the Little House series in the classroom, the home, the public sphere, and in politics. Given the broad popularity of Ingalls Wilder’s books and their ubiquitous presence (as Fellman aptly demonstrates) in the American cultural landscape, it becomes hard to link them specifically to conservative agendas, and there is a self-conscious tendency in the writing that acknowledges the problematic nature of speculation on the relationships between readers’ emotional attachment to books and their political convictions. One feels much more convinced, in other words, of Ingalls Wilder’s and Lane’s political views than of the impact of the Little House series itself on American culture. Still, this book offers a welcome exploration of the powerful influence of the imagery of the American frontier on the childhood imagination, and it is a strong addition to scholarship that explores both the ideological potential of children’s literature and the political implications of nostalgia for a heavily mythologized version of the pioneer spirit.

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