

## EDITOR'S COMMENTARY

### Mapping the Exigencies of 2021

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Many aspirations have been ascribed to the year 2021. The calamity that was 2020 has left little recourse but to collectively manifest a better, safer, healthier, and more socially just 2021. Last year certainly reaffirmed just how deep, exigent and grievous the wounds that plague our country, our hemisphere, and our planet are. It also made visible how mundane inequity, violence, and dehumanization has become. Moreover, it made quite evident the staggering amount of energy and commitment it will take to mend, to rehabilitate, and to heal. It is a daunting scope of work can only happen in collaboration and in coalition.

Fortunately, building bridges is a keystone of Chicana/Latina feminist epistemology, as the essays in this issue attest. For instance, they artfully illustrate the points of convergence between Anzaldúan thought and a Caribbean-based Afro-diasporic spirituality in an analysis of a leading Afro-Puerto Rican poet, as well as the melding of Indigenous and U.S.-based race scholarship from across the American hemisphere to help stop exploitation of the earth's resources. In "Por el mar que nos une:" *boat people's* Living Waters," Rebeca L. Hey-Colón foregrounds the various ways the sea is anthropomorphized and made divine in Santería, Haitian Vodou, Indigenous Taíno, and Anzaldúan philosophies in order to highlight "an often-submerged coalitional spirituality," that connects and "exists between the region's Indigenous and Afro-diasporic cultures," (33) peoples that have been traumatized and dehumanized by slavery, conquest, migration and displacement. In her essay, "Water in the Peruvian Andes: Ecojusticia and

José María Arguedas' "Agua" (1935)," Giovanna Montenegro puts the work of environmental justice scholars from across the Americas in conversation with each other in order to conceptualize an ecofeminista and ecojusticia approach that dismantles the colonial and capitalist practices limiting the access and allocation of water in Peru.

These scholarly works also document the theoretical genealogy of an ambitious bridge-building translation project that would connect Chicana feminists with Mexican feministas and lesbiana activistas by translating the pocha Spanglish theorizations of Chela Sandoval, Emma Perez, Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga—and many others—into Spanish for the first time. As Alicia Gaspar de Alba documents in "The Codex Nепantla Project: Transinterpretation as Pocha Poetics, Politics, and Praxis," she has been championing a collective effort of a "team of theoretical border crossers, or linguistic/artistic nepantleras" (103) that would transinterpret—or recode and "translate Chicana lesbian/feminist theory into Spanish and visual art, facilitating access to this critical, oppositional, counter-hegemonic discourse for Spanish-speaking grassroots activists south of the border" (103) for the first time. And finally, a fourth essay by Aurora Santiago-Ortiz's titled "Testimonio as Stitch Work: Undoing Coloniality Through Autoethnography in Puerto Rico," illuminates the tensions when converging academic research and transformative praxis. Specifically, this testimonio about a decolonial autoethnographic study conducted in the continuing U.S. colonial project, Puerto Rico, by a diasporic Puerto Rican scholar reveals the frictions when seeking to align these different paradigms and agendas.

Together, these four essays offer constructive renderings of the potential and precarity of traversing unmapped or obfuscated waypoints, intersections, and connections using Chicana/Latina feminist epistemologies as

touchstones. These various registers offer an insight and prescience that can actualize a better world.

The creative writing in this issue—the last one to be curated by Patricia M. Trujillo—calls attention to the internal and external threats that jeopardize our spirits, pre- and post-pandemic. One is a captivating testimonio about grief, and the ways it cleaves itself within the body, injures the soul, and recalibrates relationships, aspirations, and energy. Importantly, this poignant memoir makes visible the ways that bereavement can be triggered, especially during a pandemic, normalizing both western and non-western coping strategies and belief systems about death. The second is a suspenseful, reimagined fairy tale about a dutiful nieta, a predatory and homicidal police officer, and a seventy-eight-year old abuelita poderosa whose instincts have always put her at the right place, at the right time. Together, the two pieces signify how generational knowledge often materializes in the form of instinct or intuition. For her ultima section, Trujillo has once more demonstrated the virtue of Chicana/Latina feminist narratives, storytelling, and poetry.

The rest of the content this issue offers a variety of reflections on Latina bodies. The artist featured this month, Verónica Kovats Sánchez, offers depictions of Latinas that not only capture a range of phenotypes, exalt non-European features, and body shapes and sizes, but also interpret the pain, growth, and joy that make Latinas multi-dimensional individuals worthy of being honored in portraits. The books reviewed offer nuanced analyses of the racialized, stereotyped, and objectified Latina body. *Shaming Into Brown: Somatic Transactions of Race in Latina/o Literature* by Stephanie Fetta, reviewed by Karen Mary Davalos, theorizes the psycho-social and physical harms racialized bodies experiences as a result of being shamed because of its positionality. Informed by Anzaldúa's *conocimiento*, Moraga's

embodied knowledge and the rejection of the Cartesian mind/body split, it offers clarity about how Latinas/os/xs have been shamed and why they feel ashamed. In Cristina Rhodes' review of *ChicaNerds in Chicana Young Adult Literature: Brown and Nerdy* by Cristina Herrera, Rhodes notes that Herrera's analysis of Chicana young adult literature is meant to counter deficit notions of Chicana's intellect and educability. By appraising smart Chicana characters in several novels, Herrera conceptualizes the ChicaNerd as a young Latina whose astute reflexivity and acceptance about her racialized identity is informed by her shrewd intellect. The book, *Aesthetics of Excess: The Art and Politics of Black and Latina Embodiment* by Jillian Hernandez is reviewed here by Gloria A. Negrete-Lopez. She finds the concept of sexual-aesthetic-excess explicated by Hernandez a useful way to theorize "the style and bodily comportment of Black and Latina girls and women that marks them as 'too much'" (200). This concept of "excess" allows for a critique of how the non-confirming aesthetic styles of Black and Latina girls is used to censure them, but then appropriated to generate both cultural and material capital for non-white cultural producers.

May these insights, reflections, imagery, and theorizations offered in this issue guide you safely through the rebirth and reimagining of 2021.