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The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory (review)

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to their concern with the internees. From an American Studies perspective, Muller's analysis and archival work can be a springboard for the investigation of other closely or loosely related problems. One such concern, only alluded to by Muller, is the character of modern evil, which, though horrific in its consequences, may be characterized as banal (Hannah Arendt) and depersonalizing (Zygmunt Bauman) in its mechanics; another, is to understand how loyalty functions when diversely qualified as "national", or "racial", or as a necessary attribute of a juridical understanding of citizenship. From this reviewer's perspective, this book exhibits one limitation, namely a diminutive view of the political, visible in the (not infrequent) suggestion that agencies and individuals were motivated by "just politics." (82) This approach precludes areas of inquiry which, although more ambivalent than Muller's excellent evidence-driven research, should remain open. In modern political systems, legitimated from below, mere *being* is already political behavior. Thus, the anxiety of the military and the inquisitiveness of civilians, both so well documented by Muller in this valuable contribution, may be rooted in different understandings of the political.

John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Andrea Pacor

THE WOMAN IN THE ZOOT SUIT: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory. By Catherine S. Ramírez. Durham: Duke University Press. 2009.

This unique, important book comes out swinging and packs a punch. In pithy prose Ramírez reassesses pachucas—everyday, working-class female zoot suiters, and la pachuca—iconographic, symbolic figure. Both "pachucas as agents and la pachuca as icon," (xiv) she argues, were "silenced" and "rendered invisible by Chicano cultural nationalism." (12) Using gender as a category of analysis from start to finish, she convincingly shows how "the conflation of the ideal Chicano subject with the male Chicano body erases Chicanas." (13) Ramírez places pachucas at the center of history, reversing the accusatory tropes of *vendida* ("sell-out") and *malinche* ("traitor"), and skillfully answering her own question, "who has betrayed whom?" (21). The book is thus a critical "intervention" presenting "alternative interpretations." (xviii) and a self-confident, "self-conscious recovery project" (xv) that reinserts Chicanas into the historical record, particularly regarding the wartime Los Angeles Sleepy Lagoon incident and zoot suit riots, and Chicano expressive culture.

Her main arguments are that pachucas have been mostly invisible in twentieth-century Chicano history, and that la pachuca has much to teach us about both U.S. nationalism and Chicano cultural nationalism, Americanism, full or first-class "citizenship, and resistant cultural, gender, and sexual identities and their contradictions." (xv) Structurally, the book's "dual perspective" encompasses the World War II and Chicano Movement eras, statist and insurgent nationalisms, thereby allowing her to "use one nationalism to relativize and shed light on another." (xvi) To substantiate her arguments, Ramírez draws from numerous sources, including archival special collections and personal papers, oral history interviews, periodicals and newspapers, poems, plays, films, short stories, novels, paintings, photographs, *corridos* (ballads), etiquette guidebooks, patriotic propaganda posters, trial court testimony transcripts, and *Lowrider* magazine cartoon strips and advertisements.

Engaging with feminist and queer studies, Ramírez analyzes bourgeois conventions of proper domesticity and respectability, the performance of oppositional masculinity and "dissident femininity," (110) the blurring of public and private spheres, and the politicized "heteropatriarchal" *familia* of Chicano power ideology. (113) Her fresh rereadings of the

secondary literature contribute to conversations in American studies, ethnic studies, and cultural studies, especially work on visual culture, hipness and coolness, and spectacular subcultures marked by conspicuous consumption “and conspicuous occupation of public space.” (23) Some critics may question the notion of “style politics” or “style as resistance,” (56-57, 84-85) but Ramírez persuasively provides ample examples, ultimately proving the power of culture “not only to reflect but to produce history, narrative, and meaning.” (xv)

After a preface, an introduction, and four research chapters, an epilogue links the participation of U.S. Latina soldiers in the war on terror to her larger rumination on nationalism, violence, homegirls, and the home front. In the end, Catherine Ramírez’s informative, illuminating book responds respectfully to one of the Chicana historical actors she quotes, who said, “We have not been able to have our side of the story told.” (44) With an ear for language and an eye for fashion, the author validates the legacy of once vilified women who shook up the status quo with panache, impudence, insolence, insouciance, and insubordination.

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Anthony Macías

OPPENHEIMER: The Tragic Intellect. By Charles Thorpe. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2006.

The year 2004 was the centennial of the birth of the American physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer, father of the atomic bomb and the most recognizable scientist of the twentieth-century after Einstein. During the years centered around 2004, Oppenheimer scholarship moved to a remarkably high level. One immediately thinks of the Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of Oppenheimer, *American Prometheus*, by Kai Bird and Martin Sherwin. But there are other outstanding books and Thorpe’s *Oppenheimer: The Tragic Intellect* is definitely one of them. In a review, historian Richard Polenberg (Cornell) wrote that Thorpe’s book “is one of the finest books I have ever read.” The journal *Metascience* devoted a 37-page symposium to Thorpe’s book with reviews by Sheila Jasonoff (Harvard), Michael Gordin (Princeton), and Andrew Jewett (Harvard) along with Thorpe’s response.

Thorpe is a sociologist of science at the University of California, San Diego, and his book “grew out of [his] doctoral dissertation” done under the supervision of historian and sociologist of science Steven Shapin. Thorpe’s book is unique in Oppenheimer scholarship since his aim is “to provide a biography that draws together individual character structure and social structure, looking at the social processes and collective work through which individual identity is constituted.” (xv) In other words, it is “a sociological biography.” One is reminded here of C. Wright Mills and “the sociological imagination” which enables us “to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals.” Thorpe’s choice is ideal for Oppenheimer was uniquely placed—shaping, as well as being shaped by, the historic forces and violence of his times.

Though Thorpe covers Oppenheimer’s youth, his becoming a theoretical physicist, and his early years as a Berkeley professor, Thorpe’s main focus is on Oppenheimer’s later life—his leadership at Los Alamos during WWII, the loss of his security clearance in 1954, and Oppenheimer as a public intellectual especially after 1954. Magnificently researched with wonderful detail, the book develops several themes in the spirit of Max Weber—Oppenheimer’s charismatic leadership at Los Alamos as “a collective accomplishment,” Oppenheimer’s security hearing as epitomizing the public “disciplining [of] experts” and the bureaucratization of science into the national security state, and Oppen-