

The Latino/a Canon and the Emergence of Post-Sixties Literature. Raphael Dalleo and Elena Machado Sáez. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. 216 pages. \$74.95 cloth.

The first book to look at seriously the process by which a panethnic US Latino/a literary "canon" has been constructed, *The Latino/a Canon and the Emergence of Post-Sixties Literature* documents a critical reception of Latino/a writing which celebrates the 1960s generation as progressive, oppositional, and even revolutionary, while lamenting the demise of the radical spirit in post-60s writings. As Raphael Dalleo and Elena Machado Sáez demonstrate, recent Latino/a writers are frequently read as virtual "sell-outs" to the market who lack a progressive political edge, having been co-opted into a mainstream sensibility. The authors rightly comment that scholarship on Latino/a writing has constructed a dichotomy between market success and a "politics of social justice" (3). It is this dichotomy that the authors seek to problematize. Dalleo and Machado Sáez posit that "rather than turning away from politics, contemporary Latino/a writers are renewing that political tradition by . . . formulating political projects that will mark our future horizons" (7). The overarching sense of the book, however, is less that Latino/a writers have achieved successful political engagement from within the marketplace, but that they have engaged in an ambiguous struggle with the more stridently political and anticolonial legacies of the past—a struggle with as yet undetermined results. One of greatest strengths of *The Latino/a Canon* is its sustained attention to the market—as constitutive of certain modes of reception for these texts, as a force with which the authors themselves must engage, and as it is represented *within* the texts themselves, especially in its relation to politics. Another strength is the book's treatment of *latinidad* as a panethnic category that has been constructed over time, precisely by such forces as the marketplace, rather than as a pre-existing category that need not be extensively interrogated.

The introduction takes on paradigmatic canon-shapers, among them Ilan Stavans, who has had an inordinate influence on the framing of Latino/a literature for the "mainstream," thanks to his *The Hispanic Condition* (1995), his work on several anthology projects, and his many reviews of particular works. In opposition to Stavans, the writers position the figure of Juan Flores, who has been vocal in his condemnation of both Stavans and Gustavo Pérez Firmat for their depoliticized view

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of Latinoness (and their celebration of depoliticization). An influential canon-shaper in his own right, Flores decries the turn of Latino/a writing to the market-friendly and immensely popular texts of Julia Alvarez and Cristina García, which Flores views as assimilationist and decidedly middle class in their sensibilities. As an overview of the field and of the fundamental paradigms that have informed much Latino/a literary scholarship, the introduction is, quite simply, indispensable; it would supply a valuable framework for any course on Latino/a literature.

In the first three chapters, Dalleo and Machado Sáez examine literary texts that have been classified as “ghetto literature,” in order to reconsider the automatic equation of such literature with a resistant and anti-colonial politics. Chapter One takes Pedro Pietri’s well-known and now classic poem, “Puerto Rican Obituary” (1973), as paradigmatic of “anticolonial” Latino/a literature of the Civil Rights generation. The chapter continues the examination of canon formation by focusing on two critics, Juan Flores and Lisa Sánchez González, both of whom, the authors argue, turn from recent Latino/a literary production (which is perceived as largely emptied of political content) to privilege music as an alternative form of resistant cultural production that continues the oppositional legacy of the Civil Rights era. As Dalleo and Machado Sáez point out, however, this privileging is problematic; popular music is certainly just as much a product of the market, and just as subject to market forces, as literature. Chapter Two examines how two novels, Abraham Rodríguez’s *Spidertown* (1993) and Ernesto Quiñonez’s *Bodega Dreams* (2000), both of which rightly take their place in a literary genealogy of the “ghetto aesthetic” in Latino/a writing, also complicate notions of an anti-colonial and purely oppositional politics that can operate outside of and against the marketplace. The authors’ engagement with Latino/a literary scholars’ efforts to give shape to a particular kind of Latino/a canon in these two chapters is thoughtful and smart. Indeed, it is their reading of the literary scholarship, rather than the literary texts themselves, which is arguably the hallmark of these two chapters. Flores and Sánchez González get the lion’s share of the attention here as examples of the critical tendency to privilege the anti-colonial and oppositional thrust of Civil Rights-era literary production. Chapter Three takes up Dominican American writers Junot Díaz and Angie Cruz as writers who challenge the critical distinction between the cultural productions of “resident” and “immigrant” Latino/a groups—that is, between internally colonized groups such as Puerto Ricans and Chicano/as and populations of more recent arrivals such as Dominican Americans.

In Chapters Four and Five, Dalleo and Machado Sáez turn to two of the best known recent Latino/a writers, García and Alvarez, to investigate their negotiations with politics and the market. García’s by now canonical text *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) is read as a lament of the

demise of a revolutionary vision. Alvarez's later novels, including *In the Time of the Butterflies* (1994) and *In the Name of Salomé* (2000), likewise demonstrate nostalgia for grand anti-colonial struggles in which the writer plays the role of public intellectual, but finally move toward a vision of a more quotidian politics. Dalleo and Machado Sáez conclude by examining the ways in which the shaping of a Latino/a canon by scholars has historically excluded Cuban American writing, as well as the means by which recent Cuban American writers have themselves challenged the production of a particular notion of authentic "Cubanness" within Miami.

In exploring the shaping of the Latino/a canon, the authors limit their study (until their conclusion) to novelists "from New York" of Caribbean descent: Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Dominican. (This criterion is rather loosely construed, and problematized by the inclusion of Alvarez and García, neither of whom is working in New York.) Although the text selection has the merit of being well focused, as well as allowing sustained consideration of New York as a "contact zone" for various Latino groups, it seems odd to exclude Chicano/a writing from a text about Latino/a canon making, when arguably Chicano/a literary production has been *the* defining production for the canon. The very celebration of an oppositional 1960s Latino/a literature was predicated on the Chicano movement and the writings that emerged out of it. An examination of the developing Latino/a "canon" thus seems incomplete without consideration of major Chicano—and especially Chicana—figures in that canon, including Gloria Anzaldúa, Rudolfo Anaya, Sandra Cisneros, Ana Castillo, and Helena María Viramontes. On its own terms, however, *The Latino/a Canon and the Emergence of Post-Sixties Literature* is an important contribution to Latino/a literary studies and will be of enormous value to anyone wishing to attend to the politics and process of canon formation.

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American Elegy: Puritans to World University of hardcover, \$25.00

Elegy, a genre of poetry, is a form of literary expression that deals with death, loss, and grief. In *American Elegy: Puritans to World*, the author explores the history of the elegy in American literature, from the Puritans to the present. The book is a hardcover, 250 pages, \$25.00.

American Elegy: Puritans to World shows that the elegy was by no means a new form. Enabled by the history of the elegy, New England's elegiac tradition was. Apparently, however, were in fact the elegies between the elegy to what they were, facts, male elegies, restrained, and female elegies.

Cavith is a book bedded in the history of the elegy. It cites David Smith's definition of the elegy as a form of poetry that effectively communicates the author's social position, representation, and and eighteenth-century