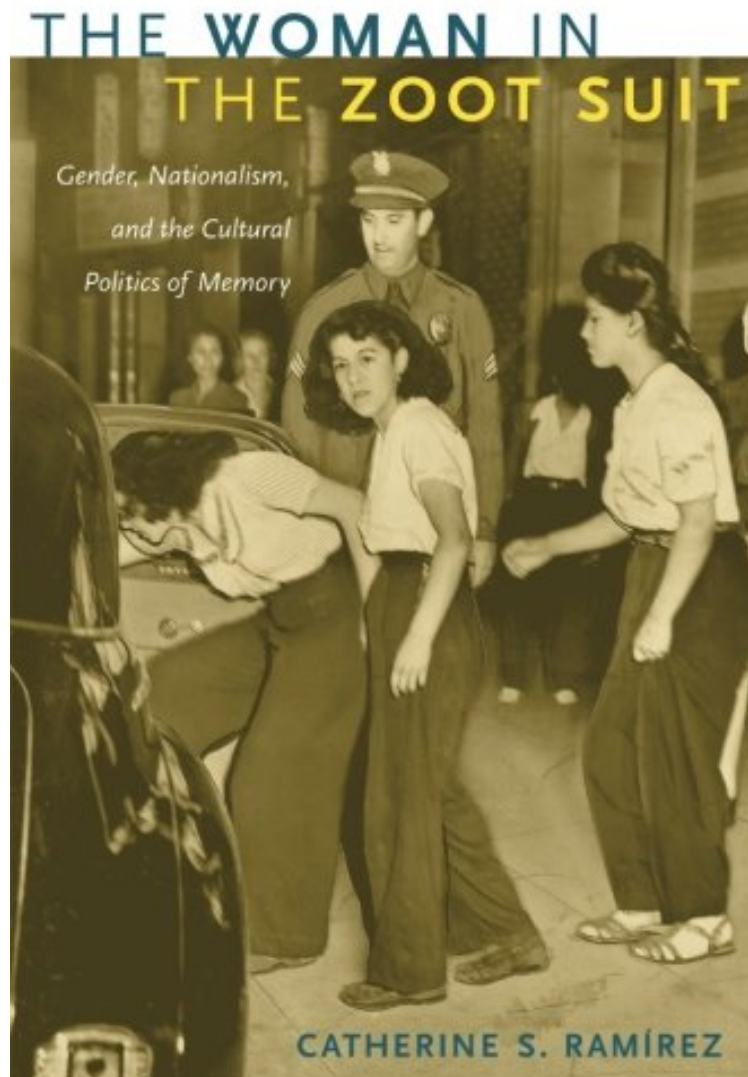


The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory

Catherine S. Ramrez

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Catherine S. Ramrez : The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory
before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Jessica Saenz must read for any chicanos out there 12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Feminist Analysis of Women in Zoot Suit By Gerardo

Licon This book is a historical work which covers the topic of Women and Zoot Suits from World War II to the Chicano Movement. Ramirez emphasizes the participation of women in zoot suit culture during WWII making use of the few sources that exist, including some important ones that have been neglected by other academics on the subject. Throughout the book, Ramirez employs feminist analysis, which had not been utilized to understand the female participants of zoot suit culture to this extent. Feminist analysis was popular among scholars and artists during the late 1970s and 1980s to interpret the sources from the Chicano Movement which either neglected or caricatured the female counterparts of pachucos. In this sense, Ramirez first summarizes feminist interpretations of sources from the Chicano Movement and then adds her own additional level of analysis. Overall, this is an excellent monograph which should be read by all students of Mexican American History, World War II History, and 20th century U.S. History.

The Mexican American woman zoot suiter, or pachuca, often wore a V-neck sweater or a long, broad-shouldered coat, a knee-length pleated skirt, fishnet stockings or bobby socks, platform heels or saddle shoes, dark lipstick, and a bouffant. Or she donned the same style of zoot suit that her male counterparts wore. With their striking attire, pachucos and pachucas represented a new generation of Mexican American youth, which arrived on the public scene in the 1940s. Yet while pachucos have often been the subject of literature, visual art, and scholarship, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit* is the first book focused on pachucas. Two events in wartime Los Angeles thrust young Mexican American zoot suiters into the media spotlight. In the Sleepy Lagoon incident, a man was murdered during a mass brawl in August 1942. Twenty-two young men, all but one of Mexican descent, were tried and convicted of the crime. In the Zoot Suit Riots of June 1943, white servicemen attacked young zoot suiters, particularly Mexican Americans, throughout Los Angeles. The Chicano movement of the 1960s-1980s cast these events as key moments in the political awakening of Mexican Americans and pachucos as exemplars of Chicano identity, resistance, and style. While pachucas and other Mexican American women figured in the two incidents, they were barely acknowledged in later Chicano movement narratives. Catherine S. Ramirez draws on interviews she conducted with Mexican American women who came of age in Los Angeles in the late 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s as she recovers the neglected stories of pachucas. Investigating their relative absence in scholarly and artistic works, she argues that both wartime U.S. culture and the Chicano movement rejected pachucas because they threatened traditional gender roles. Ramirez reveals how pachucas challenged dominant notions of Mexican American and Chicano identity, how feminists have reinterpreted la pachuca, and how attention to an overlooked figure can disclose much about history making, nationalism, and resistant identities.

From Publishers Weekly This engrossing, unexpectedly timely study of the politics of cultural nationalism resurrects the hidden history of la pachuca, the female counterpart to the 1940s pachuco, the zoot suitwearing Mexican-American hipster made notorious by two consecutive wartime flashpoints: 1942's Sleepy Lagoon case and 1943's Zoot Suit Riots. Ramirez (Through an East-West Gaze) builds on the best recent scholarship to argue that la pachuca's sexually charged and gender-ambiguous presence in WWII-era Los Angeles made her so fraught a figure of resistance to both dominant and ethnic norms of feminine behavior that she was difficult to incorporate in narratives shaping Latino identity. A generation later, a nascent Chicano movement re-appropriated the pejorative archetype of el pachuco as a symbol of rebellious pride but continued to vilify or ignore the female zoot-suiter reflecting, the author contends, the entrenched patriarchal and traditional gender norms in Chicano and U.S. nationalism at large. A vital addition for those interested in American ethnic and cultural studies as well as studies of sexuality and visual culture, this book speaks forcefully to current Obama-era and postProp 8 debates over race, ethnicity, sexuality, patriotism and citizenship. (Feb.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. 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. - Nan Enstad, American Historical