Judith Sierra-Rivera. *Affective Intellectuals and the Space of Catastrophe in the Americas*. The Ohio State University Press, 2018. 217 pp.

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Affective Intellectuals and the Space of Catastrophe in the Americas studies the cultural politics of emotion in Latin America, an area that merits much more attention, especially when it comes to the role of the intellectual voice in a neoliberal space. Across the chapters, Judith Sierra-Rivera studies the emotional discourses of Carlos Monsiváis, Francisco Goldman, Pedro Lemebel, Josean Ramos, and Sandra Álvarez Ramírez, which she puts in conversation with an array of other intellectual and critical discourses. The book's inquiry pivots around the material, ideological, and emotional connections between the "real and the lettered city" (5) in which the author respectively studied in each chapter operates. By choosing a different context (roughly, Mexico, Central America and the US, Chile, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, all in the twentieth century) for each chapter, the study gains in amplitude, for it shows the variety of crises in which discourse emerges and the dissimilar audiences to whom these discourses can reach out.

The objects of this study include a radio program, a blog, and numerous books and essays, together with songs, anecdotes, and interviews. The book's emphasis on the space of catastrophe echoes in the everyday buzz of our 2020 reality: it is impossible not to see its currency with the pandemic, the Black Lives Matter 2020 protests, and the migrants' crisis at the border. Its new currency arises from the recently overexposed modes of production forced upon a new dispossessed collectivity. This collectivity is not monolithic, and the book clearly proves that. Throughout its chapters, different forms of collective enunciation are presented, together with an analysis of the public sphere in which intellectual subjects insert their voices. Following Sara Ahmed's work, Sierra-Rivera directs attention to "intellectual discourses [in which] unhappy bodies stitch together and seek to form another kind of 'we'" (16).

The book consists of five chapters and a brief epilogue. Chapter one focuses on Monsiváis's writings in the space that goes from the tragedy of Tlatelolco in 1968 to the one brought about by the 1985 earthquake. Directing the study's gaze on Monsiváis's attention to urban bodies, Sierra-Rivera shows how two apparently very different events share the structures of feeling of a space of

catastrophe that is not clearly located inside a political/natural binary, as one would expect. In this way, the chapter traces a political reconfiguration of the relationship between the national "we," intellectual work, and the Mexican State. Capturing "the epic around the corner" that Monsiváis, in his turn, sought to catch, this first chapter revisits public intellectual notions of the national "we."

Chapter two follows with a study of Francisco Goldman's work on Central America and its relationship to US international measures that deal with war zones, forced displacements, and survivors' lived realities marked by military and economic colonialism. Sierra-Rivera sees Goldman's identities as a force that propels him to act as a bridge in a space that, although occupied by vulnerability and fear, still holds strong to the belief of a different future. A wide range of Goldman's intellectual trajectory is presented to the reader in a gradual and graspable display. A commentary on his earlier work for *Harper's Magazine* opens the section, but later on, his contributions to the *New York Times* and *The New Yorker* are compared to this first public space to contrast audiences and carefully observe Goldman's writing with an eye for the everyday *affect* of traumatizing events, such as Bishop Gerardi's assassination in Guatemala, and the reality of a terrorized country. The diverse national "we's" that Goldman encompasses have in common that they go against the grain of international media's attention on Central America.

Chapter three jumps into the space of a voice that recreates haunting memories as a form of protection. Sierra-Rivera presents the multifaceted Pedro Lemebel in full bloom by focusing on *Cancionero*'s chronicles, aired on Radio Tierra in Chile, some of which the author could access in their original versions through the internet. The space of catastrophe of postdictatorial Chilean reality contrasts the empty gestures of monuments devoid of justice with an archive of repertoires that Pedro Lemebel tested and perfected through his radio program, conference appearances, and published works. This chapter posits Lemebel's gesture of associating his voice with the *loca*'s voice in the text "De perlas y cicatrices" as an instance in which "Lemebel's intellectual discourse breaks" the many binarisms that inform the lettered city (131). The audience, to whom the intellectual speaks, is here fully cross-examined, as Lemebel cross-dresses with ease among realities and milieus. This chapter brings to the fore Audre Lorde's distinction between hatred and anger—one geared to death, the other aiming for change—that sheds a new light on discussions of Lemebel's corpus, as well as setting the stage for the next chapter.

Chapter four studies the work of the Puerto Rican journalist Josean Ramos. Sierra-Rivera follows the track of Ramos's "angry calling … against the effects of militarism on Puerto Rican social space and bodies" (145). Here angry brotherly love is an emotion that "demands us to politically

imagine the present and the future" (142). The chapter has a section on the fight against *terrorismo doméstico* as used to repress protests that are still painfully current in the contemporary US. The theme of the "right to live" that Ramos revisits to advocate against enrollment in the military as the only way of accessing education and/or economic stability resonates with the few options the pandemic leaves open to many.

From angry brotherly love, we the readers transition to cyberfeminism and polyamory in the works in Sandra Álvarez Ramirez's blog, *Negracubana tenía que ser*. Digital networking and polyamory function in this theoretical proposal to subvert the unitary, hierarchical, fixed brotherly love for the Revolution that the traditional Cuban socialist proposition values first and foremost. The blog is an instance of how "Álvarez Ramírez criticizes restrictions on other kinds of associations and affiliations" (173). Here, Sierra-Rivera inquires into the role the black woman's body plays in the revolutionary narrative (174). Low and high forms of love are, for this analysis, forms of accessing everyday experience and ideology. Pain, suffering, and anger are analyzed in terms of body politics, politics that need to respond, ignore, and/or supplement the revolutionary discourse on love and sacrifice.

Regarding the notion of "affective intellectual," the question of how intellectuals insert their speech into the ongoing conversation is followed by other, particularly refreshing, ones: Why? To whom—not *about* whom—do they speak? Now, in the new space of catastrophe that the pandemic has opened in the US, I cannot help but reread this study of Latin America against our present reality. The book ends with an epilogue in which Sierra-Rivera affirms that "when the vast majority in the US finally experienced the effects of the neoliberal space of catastrophe … it can be said that a rumor [murmur] became loud enough for U.S. academia to take public action" (190). Well, we can say that the murmur is now at top volume. The material, ideological, and emotional locus of enunciation of the particular intellectuals studied in this book advances a scholarly understanding of emotional discourses in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Latin America.

Enthusiasts of theory will enjoy this study for its clever way of intertwining different lines of critical approaches. Others may miss a more linear, narrative approach. In the classroom, some chapters are more appropriate for the graduate level, while others, with sufficient presentation of the basic theory underlining them, would work at all levels.