


sea power. The wars of the twentieth century, in particular from World War Two on, were fought in the air as much as on the sea or land. As we enter the twenty-first century they show signs of being dominated by air power.

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VICTOR M. VALLE AND RODOLFO D. TORRES, *Latino Metropolis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000. Pp. 288. \$18.95 paperback)

What research methods and textual conventions can aspire to articulate the complexity of global cities? After all, such places are culturally rich localities, replete with contradictions and ambiguities, and shaped by political, symbolic, and material forms. Valle and Torres succeed admirably in this interpretive task by adopting a scholarly position that mirrors the radical hybridity of their area of study—Los Angeles. The book combines chapters on the creation of “single-use industrial cities” within L. A., media (mis)representations of the 1992 “race riots,” the historical appropriation and sanitization of Mexican cuisine, and the political manoeuvring behind the building of the Staples Center sports arena in downtown. The narrative flows smoothly through these case studies because the authors shift their methods flexibly with the terrain, sometimes culling archival materials and biographies, other times juxtaposing discourse analysis and critical media studies with statistical data, and in other chapters combining ethnography with what I can only call postmodern political science. In spite of the diversity of topics and methods, continuity is established across the chapters of *Latino Metropolis* through the development of a politically oriented conceptual framework. The authors introduce the organizing concept of *mestizaje* as an emerging semantic category that stresses the significance of cultural ambiguity as a force for mobilizing political action. They assert that a new type of *mestizaje* politics (and research) is needed in the post-Fordist landscape of global cities, one that connects geographically dispersed groups, exploits the symbolic production capabilities of new technologies, and reinvents “class” as an identifying and unifying category in the face of global capital. Valle and Torres demonstrate the potential of this concept through their case studies (which I will turn to in a moment), but also through their theoretical sensibilities. Marxist and critical postmodern theory, they assert, must be used in tandem to address the convolutions of racialization in global political economies.

An analysis of media representations of the 1992 social uprising affords insight into the need for fluid cultural categories. By characterizing this event as a crisis in “race relations,” the mainstream media avoided inquiry into the multiple underlying causes and conditions and instead reified simple (and simplistic) race oppositions in the public imaginary. The media framed the uprising as black versus white, and in some cases black versus Korean, even when the neighbourhoods were predominately Latino. This egregious reporting was aggravated by frequent television interviews of black individuals as experts and “event insiders” in Latino communities (p. 51). The message communicated by this reporting was one of Latino silence, under the assumption that Latinos must be illegal aliens if they are silent about such events. In response to these representations, Valle and Torres observe: “the arrest records indicated that the rioters were united more by lives of joblessness, homelessness, and educational failure than by race” (p. 47). In situations like this, the concept of *mestizaje* would productively blur racial categories to allow for cross-ethnic connections through class and thereby more accurately reveal root causes of strife. In another chapter, Valle and Torres describe the

post-Fordist and postmodern political tactics employed by Latinos in response to the city's subsidization of the Staples Center (where the Lakers and Kings now play). Instead of affecting an overtly oppositional stance to the sports arena and its negotiations, Latino union members, working mostly in hotels, used stealth manoeuvres of media manipulation and coalition building. A strike in this circumstance would only have encouraged the hiring of illegal immigrants to take the place of union workers, so members created a special spin-off organization (Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy) that produced and distributed a video documenting unfair labour practices and advocating for a living wage. The outcome of this approach was one of mixed success—the arena was built and subsidized by the city, after all—however, “The arena development agreement guaranteed union access to the job site and a living wage for the arena's permanent jobs, a stipulation that could benefit as many as twelve hundred full-time arena service jobs” (p. 126). Valle and Torres flag the successful stealth tactics of Latino union members as an indication of the networking potential of *mestizaje* politics in the communities of global cities.

There are few shortcomings in this concise yet generative book, and they are minor considering the agenda of the authors. First, the global connections among cultural politics and places are not clearly articulated, but they are convincingly performed. Second, the authors construct technology as a deterministic mode of empowerment, whether through Latino access to media production equipment or to computers. Since giving “gifts” of technological access can be a political technique for ignoring deeper issues of inequity, *Latino Metropolis* could have elaborated upon the specific conditions under which technology access does and does not catalyze empowerment. Overall, however, this book is an exemplar of what research on culture, place, and globalization should be.

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