

interpretation of a process that is still rapidly unfolding and reshaping itself. The value of this volume lies in its reciprocal resonance—not as an ultimate verdict where exchange ceases but as a starting point where future conversations ensue.

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A Kiss across the Ocean: Transatlantic Intimacies of British Post-Punk & US Latinidad

By Richard T. Rodríguez. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022; pp. xv + 264, 28 illustrations. \$99.95 cloth, \$25.95 paper, \$25.95 e-book.

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On a Saturday morning in Santa Ana, California, a young Chicano boy sees Boy George singing “Karma Chameleon” on television, and his life is changed forever. This is the catalytic moment that opens Richard T. Rodríguez’s engagingly personal and lively *A Kiss across the Ocean: Transatlantic Intimacies of British Post-Punk & US Latinidad*, which examines the intersectional relationship between British postpunk music and US Latinidad and queer identity formations. Threading the needle between cultural and sociological performances of gender and shape-shifting theatricality while tracking the methods by which a self can become another in the quest for a different kind of nonessentialized authenticity, *A Kiss across the Ocean* serves as a welcome and provocative addition to academic discussions on pop culture and how pop music wears itself on the bodies and minds of listeners as both political liberation and affective disguise. However, what makes Rodríguez’s book unique is his ability to consider how queer emancipation can be inflected as well by cross-cultural and intercultural registers, pitches, cadences, and valences that cut across expected norms within a community. The tired academic and wider cultural take that seeks to define and inscribe Chicanoness and/or US Latinidad through a handful of ready-made signifiers and tropes—mariachi music, narco culture, and Frida Kahlo’s visual appropriation of indigeneity, to name just a few—is one that this book rebels against continually and productively. As such, it amplifies the boundaries of possibility to consider, reflect upon, and view US Latinx subjects within the greater social fabric. As Rodríguez states, “[a]lthough the 1980s categorically fomented a chilling moment of notorious conservatism, it was also a time of queer-subversive possibility” (19).

Citing Karen Tongson’s *Relocations: Queer Suburban Imaginaries* and Laura U. Marks’s *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media*, among others, Rodríguez notes how connectedness and belonging for queer youth of color, especially, can be inhabited in ways that are symbiotic and expansive: communities that

find homes elsewhere through an intimacy with subjects and experiences outside their immediate and narrow constraints. Rodríguez states that

Tongson's articulations of remote intimacies capture my own and many others' (urban and 'suburban queer kids of color') attachment to many singers and bands from across the Atlantic. Indeed, 'remote intimacy' helps charge the sense of touch on which this book focuses. But as I disclose the sweetness of this 'Anglophilic ear candy' for Latina/o/x audiences (particularly relating to my own status as an adoring fan), I additionally document the allure of US Latinidad for British post-punk artists to underscore the interplay of reciprocal intimacy. (8–9)

Why can't a young Chicano boy dream of being like Boy George or Marc Almond, and why couldn't Almond and other British postpunk singers be inspired by signifiers of US Latinx culture? Indeed, why shouldn't "Tainted Love" be as much of an anthem to a Latinx person as Bad Bunny or J. Lo's music?

Comprising seven chapters, *A Kiss across the Ocean* traces the complex performative gestures (visual and aural) that begin with The Cure and Siouxsie and the Banshees through Adam and the Ants, Bauhaus, Frankie Goes to Hollywood, Boy George, Pet Shop Boys, and The Specials, as he weaves in discussions about the masculine drag that the zoot suit epitomizes and has the potential to subvert. In the first chapter, "Red over White," Rodríguez traces how initially the music of The Cure helped him find solace as a traumatized adolescent. The chapter evolves into a detailed discussion of the impact that the band Siouxsie and the Banshees had not only on him as a listener and viewer of their videos in the early days of MTV music videos, but also as someone studying the impact of Siouxsie's self-created Goth persona on the fashion sense of Latinas based in southern California and elsewhere. The second chapter, "Touching Prince Charming," explores the symbolism of Adam Ant's stage and sonic persona to focus, as he states, on "the vagaries of tingle and touch based on my encounter with various discordant representations in the pantheon of figures constituting this British Prince Charming's expressive oeuvre" (51).

The chapters that follow, "Darker Entries" and "The Shining Sinners," look at the musical work of the bands Bauhaus and Soft Cell (and its lead singer, Marc Almond). The study of the darkly iconic, furtive glamour of both of these bands leads Rodríguez to explore in Chapter 5, "Zoot Suits and Secondhand Knowledge," how British bands like Blue Rondo a la Turk and American bands like Kid Creole and the Coconuts adopted and repurposed the zoot suit in "divergent social contexts across a number of temporal divides" (113). In Chapter 6, "Mexican Americanos," Rodríguez encounters the explosive impact of groups like Frankie Goes to Hollywood and Bronski Beat that were gay bands, out and proud, as well as his own personal connection to Frankie Goes to Hollywood's singer Holly Johnson. The seventh chapter, "Latin/o American Party," revels in the music and videography of the Pet Shop Boys. The book's Conclusion, "Dedicated to the One I Love," contains an appreciation of tribute bands he followed in SoCal, and how these bands do more than pay homage to the originals they cover; they instead act out an alternative, cross-cultural reinscription of the beauty of dedication and devotion that touches the bodies and minds of their audiences with the promise of queer emancipation.

Written in a warm, wide-ranging manner, Rodríguez also is sure-footed in uniting the political queer stances taken by British postpunk musicians and how these ignited a flame of resistance, passion, and drive in Southern California Latinx queer working-class communities. Hands across the water, a kiss across an ocean, the lips that touch here in this book are ones devoted to enacting joyful resistance. Tender, wry, delicate, and rich, *A Kiss across the Ocean* is a love letter to the theatrically potent musical and visual gestures of the artists and bands of the British postpunk scene that made a difference in the mid-1980s and continue to do so today, even when people may have forgotten some of the bands' names.

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Middle Eastern American Theatre: Communities, Cultures, and Artists

By Michael Malek Najjar. *Critical Companions*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021, pp. xvi + 237, 5 illustrations. \$115 cloth, \$39.95 paper, \$35.95 e-book.

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With an impressive degree of nuance, Michael Malek Najjar's *Middle Eastern American Theatre: Communities, Cultures, and Artists* offers a timely, far-reaching study of an emerging genre of American theatre repeatedly sidelined by mainstream theatre institutions. Middle Eastern American theatre, as delineated by Najjar, "is in the same state that other great theatre communities (such as African American, Asian American, Latinx, and Native American) were in decades ago when they, too, were trying to create an entirely new genre" (xv). *Middle Eastern American Theatre's* aim is to give voice to the playwrights and theatre makers whose body of works evinces the diasporic, liminal space in which Middle Eastern Americans find their lives. For Najjar, all the Americas, not only the United States, fall within the scope of the word "American." Taking his cue from this definition, Najjar has selected for study a variety of representative plays from the rich multiplicity of the Middle Eastern American theatre corpus; one should note, however, as Najjar himself apprises us, that the focus of the volume is on North America.

Throughout the book, the capaciousness and vitality of Middle Eastern American theatre depicted in dramatic and comedic forms serve as reminders of the urgent "need for positive action, creative solutions, and dialogue to solve the intractable problems facing the Middle East" (xiv). This prompt acquires a high-priority significance as Middle Eastern American artists come "from many nations