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## Jaqueline M. Hidalgo - Revelation in Aztlan: Scriptures, Utopias and the Chicano Movement - Review

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Jacqueline M. Hidalgo. *Revelation in Aztlán: Scriptures, Utopias, and the Chicano Movement*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. 272 pp. \$83.00 Hardcover. ISBN: 978-1-137-59213-2.

Jacqueline M. Hidalgo's book *Revelation in Aztlán: Scriptures, Utopias, and the Chicano Movement* is a thoroughly insightful exposition of the complex classical Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s and its uses of utopian themes. One popular utopian theme in the movement was Aztlán, whose rich historical mythology was often invoked for memory, space, and ambition as a tool for communal belonging in a culturally diasporic environment in the United States. Hidalgo explores how Aztlán's utopian image reflected the utopian themes and social complexities in the Book of Revelation. She reflects on the scriptural struggle of the Chicano movement by studying Aztlán's image with a socio-cultural exegesis of Revelation. Her skillful weaving together of themes such as scripturalization, Aztlán, Revelation, diasporic contextuality, Chicano activism, and queer and feminist perspectives bespeaks an author who has the utmost care for and dedication to her investigation.

Foundational to Hidalgo's thesis is her socio-epistemological approach to scripturalization, a process she argues is not about holy texts in history but rather about dynamic social processes wrestling with existential questions in pursuit of identity formation. Hidalgo persuasively broadens scriptures from a solitary exegesis to communal practices which "make and contest social worlds" (5). This scriptural reimagining enables her to do two things: 1) examine the classical Chicano movement as diverse conglomerations of activists engaged in creating and interpreting their scriptures to empower themselves, and 2) explore more intimately the minority voices often overlooked in broader scriptural narratives. Hidalgo's methodologies must also be commended for her extensive endnotes and her caution not to overextend her analysis. Indeed, she largely limits her focus to a minority perspective within the minoritized

Chicanx movement by focusing on educated Chicanxs in California who do not conform to cis-heteronormative structures.

The first part of Hidalgo's book revisits the major scriptures of the classical Chicanx movement with special attention toward *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* and *El Plan de Santa Barbara*. She investigates the complexity of the conferences that produced them and the influences they have had, positive and negative. These scriptures utilized Aztlán as mytho-historical alternative and utopian ideal to contest colonial conquests. In later chapters, Hidalgo explores minoritized voices within the Chicanx movement and their scriptural efforts. Worth noting is Hidalgo's resistance to romanticizing either Aztlán's image or the united character of the Chicanx movement. She is unafraid to survey how the classical movement tacitly adopted Euro-American epistemologies and Spanish colonial patriarchal modes of thought. Her balanced investigation is refreshing.

The concluding two chapters of *Revelation in Aztlán* are among the most insightful. The penultimate chapter explores scripturalizations of the Chicanx movement through a feminist and queer critique. Hidalgo argues that those minoritized non-heteronormative perspectives do not exist at the periphery of the movement but are "among the active participants in fields of scripturalization" (174). Their social locations and experiences offer new dimensions in framing what utopia might mean. Here Hidalgo makes the case for a more inclusive, non-binary approach to utopian scripturalization.

The final chapter delves into some powerful testimonies of scripturalization, highlighting Cherríe L. Moraga's scriptural attempts to break from the textual dominance of Euro-American practices and imagine the new possibilities through a cultural codex. Moraga believes non-

textual practices and a paradigm of codex reject traditional dualisms in scriptures to make space for multiple loci of belonging.

Hidalgo's work is commendable, informative, and illuminating. It is simultaneously descriptive and normative, describing events that have taken place while showing the reader the ways with which they too may engage in similar scriptural practices. Hidalgo's great success is affirming the natural complexity of any attempt at scripturalization, in that any such attempt is mediated by historical memory and must contend with other scriptural forces, especially in a diasporic context, to search for a home of belonging. The reader can read feel the passion within the pages and the gleam of possibilities in Hidalgo's project.

I briefly offer two observations and a critique. 1) Hidalgo's description of scripturalization implies a "reader-response approach that does not privilege authorial intent" (78). I was often reminded of Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutical approach and the similarities between Hidalgo's approach and Gadamer's epistemological focus, dynamic process of interpretation, and optimistic aspirations of what scripturalization might produce. Gadamer was, however, a white Nazi-era German philosopher. Nevertheless, his philosophical support might further contribute to Hidalgo's analysis. 2) While Hidalgo deconstructs dualisms admirably (e.g. center/periphery, New Jerusalem/Aztlán), the dualistic us-versus-them tendency felt in the classical Chicana movement era encounters a measurably different socio-political landscape today. At the very least, Chicanas enjoy considerably more visibility and place in American culture. This visibility includes shifting demographics, greater political influence, and even a broadening of cultural currency such as Tejano music, to name a few newer experiences. To Hidalgo's credit, she does briefly speak about those Chicanas who feel a strong identity with

the United States of America, but it seems this scriptural interpretation of “American” belonging requires more attention today.

Finally, while I applaud Hidalgo for richly exploring epistemologies, power imbalances, and social memories, the missing component in the book is an anthropology. Hidalgo’s focus is on communities within communities (educated non-heteronormative ones within the Chicana movement) and she concludes her work, understandably, with a single approach to scripturalization, Moraga’s reimagining of codex. But if one desires a nationally inclusive, polycentric scripturalization process, a further reimagining is required to identify interracial scriptures and utopias. Hidalgo demonstrates the importance of epistemology in racial scripturalizations, but a shared socio-political anthropology is required to construct newer, more inclusive social realities in an interracial context. Hidalgo’s work can undoubtedly contribute to a process of scripturalization of that magnitude.

Hidalgo accomplishes her goals in capturing sacred moments of scripturalization in a diasporic Chicana community and excavating their utopian themes. She artfully challenges traditional modes of epistemologies, be they theological, racial, or cultural. This is a fine work of spirituality in that it resists easy categorization, draws on interdisciplinary methodologies, and dwells in the experiential. This book could easily be a part of biblical studies, Chicana studies, LGBTQ studies, or Christian spirituality programs. Appropriately reflecting her analysis, her work occupies polytemporal spaces and enables a grounded look at utopian possibilities now and yet to come.

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