

Fetta, Stephanie. *Shaming into Brown: Somatic Transactions of Race in Latina/o Literatures*. The Ohio State University Press, 2018. 209 pp.

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Stephanie Fetta's *Shaming into Brown* is a much-needed contribution to, and beyond the field of Latinx Literatures/Latinx Studies, as Fetta's examination of hegemonic processes of racialization affirms the pivotal role of the body in current understandings of race, ethnicity, and Latinx identities despite the traditional Cartesian mind/body binary. To these ends, Fetta builds on Greek etymology to recognize the soma as "a psychophysical and emotional register of our subjectivity" (xiii), and draws on multiple fields—namely, "Latin@/x studies, literary and critical theories, social psychology, sociology, and critical race studies . . . cognitive science, neuroscience, and social epidemiology" (23)—to propose "somatic analysis, or the semiotic study of somas as a method" (9). Applying her methodology to the study of various Latinx literary texts, Fetta demonstrates the role embodied and somatic experiences play in one's reading and writing practices; experiences of racialization and racism; and ultimately, on current understandings of race, ethnicity, and (the) Latinx/Hispanic Self.

It is essential to note the distinction Fetta makes between the soma or somatic expressions compared to our body image and language. While we may learn how to control our body image and language, as common scenarios such as a job interview demonstrate, somatic expressions such as sweaty hands or a pounding heart will truly reveal the responses of our soma (33-35). Fundamental to Fetta's study is her use of the term racialization rather than race, as *Shaming into Brown* critiques current understandings of race as biological and demonstrates that race is but a social construct. Fetta's study focuses instead on what she calls processes of racialization and their consequent racism, defining racialization as "an entrenched U.S. cultural practice of using phenotype and performative markers to designate a subcategory of people as separate and inferior" (3). Further, Fetta insists on using the collective *we* through her analysis, rather than the individual I typical of scholarly discourse, because "we all participate in racialization in some way" (xix). These processes of racialization and their somatic effect become interpersonal transactions of social power enacting intersectional racial shaming on Latinx individuals and others. This is because, as Fetta condemns, U.S. racial hierarchies are rooted on the normalized shame forced onto the soma through processes of intersectional racialization.

With this groundbreaking transdisciplinary scholarly contribution, Fetta urges scholars to question the concept of race as currently understood to instead examine the great impact of social racialization processes onto the soma, as especially illustrated through various literary texts. Fetta weaves her methodology and somatic literary analysis with narrations of her own personal experiences since childhood, along with her own somatic reactions to current events. Fetta's book becomes, thus, partly autobiographical, while she also invites readers to reflect on their own somatic expressions, demonstrating that, indeed, reading is an embodied act. In fact, as I read Fetta's descriptions of her own somatic reactions to the violent processes of racialization she examines or experienced, I could feel my own somatic reactions—the fear and shame overtaking my body as I was confronted with these racialization processes and their harmful somatic impact.

Her book is divided into five chapters, along with a preface and conclusion, where her transdisciplinary approach allows her to closely examine the literary representations of somatic expression, focusing each chapter on different aspects of the soma. The first chapter describes Fetta's transdisciplinary approach along with her somatic expressions as she reads Piri Thomas's autobiographical narrative, *Down These Mean Streets*, and the negotiations of his racial-ethnic identity as a black New York-Puerto Rican. Acknowledging the complexity of her somatic literary analysis, and the fact that most readers may not be knowledgeable of the different fields mentioned above, she continues to explain and expand her methodology throughout the next chapters. In Chapter 2, Fetta focuses on the role vision, audition, and smell play in somatic experiences of racial shaming as portrayed in Yxta Maya Murray's novel *Locas* (sight), Nelly Rosario's *Song of Water Saints* (smell), and Angelo Parra's play *Song of the Coquí* to study hearing and racializing reactions to Spanish accents.

Chapter 3 further builds on the methodological approach articulated in Chapters 1 and 2 to analyze *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo*, a novel by Oscar "Zeta" Acosta. In this chapter, Fetta articulates the effects of intersectional racial shaming had on Oscar and his body, specifically, his stomach, somatically materialized with ailments such as ulcers, nausea, vomiting, or constipation (71). This chapter is especially enlightening, as Fetta draws attention to scientific studies highlighting the role of this internal organ in knowledge creation and communication, which we indeed tend to recognize with common sayings such as "I had a gut feeling" (72). Racial shaming is internalized in Oscar's gut, leading him to be chronically ill—a literary representation of the high impact processes of racialization has on the soma and the Self.

In Chapter 4, Fetta analyzes Octavio Solís's play *Lydia*, which has been nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, and the representation of "the ugly soma" (90). Fetta not only focuses on the

published script but also on a representation of the play she attended—a literary analysis that also centers her own somatic expressions when encountering Solís’s portrayal of disability in connection to gender, homophobia, and undocumented labor. Through her somatic analysis, Fetta highlights the power of theater productions, and especially of *Lydia*, to center (on) the body. This chapter is also informed by theater scholarship and acting theories and methods, which contribute to Fetta’s somatic analysis and the crucial distinction between the soma and the body image represented by the acting body (the actor’s) and the acted one. Finally, Chapter 5 pays attention to Andres Montoya’s *The Ice Worker Signs and Other Poems*, a conversion narrative written in verse. Fetta examines Montoya’s representation of “the blessed soma, the conversion narrative, and shame” (125), introducing Sophology into literary analysis, and studying the historical role of Puritanism in racialization processes and racism to the present day.

In this way, Fetta’s interweaving of literary somatic analysis with cross-disciplinary scholarship and personal accounts demonstrate the social role somatic shaming plays in processes of intersectional racialization—the *Shaming into Brown* that titles her book—and therefore how social articulations of race, ethnicity take place as Latinx peoples are transformed by, and also transform others, through these racialization processes: a complex demonstration of the pressing need to engage with the soma and its multiple (literary) manifestations to better understand Latinx experiences and current U.S. understandings race relations.