



Fires on the Border: The Passionate Politics of Labor Organizing on the Mexican Frontera

Rosemary Hennessy

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The history of the *maquiladoras* has been punctuated by workers' organized resistance to abysmal working and living conditions. Over years of involvement in such movements, Rosemary Hennessy was struck by an elusive but significant feature of these struggles: the extent to which organizing is driven by attachments of affection and antagonism, belief, betrayal, and identification.

What precisely is the "affective" dimension of organizing for justice? Are affects and emotions the same? And how can their value be calculated? *Fires on the Border* takes up these questions of labor and community organizing—its "affect-culture"—on Mexico's northern border from the early 1970s to the present day. Through these campaigns, Hennessy illuminates the attachments and identifications that motivate people to act on behalf of one another and that bind them to a common cause. The book's unsettling, even jarring, narratives bring together empirical and ethnographic accounts—of specific campaigns, the untold stories of gay and lesbian organizers, love and utopian longing—in concert with materialist theories of affect and the critical good sense of Mexican organizers.

Teasing out the integration of affect-culture in economic relations and cultural processes, Hennessy provides evidence that sexuality and gender as strong affect attractors are incorporated in the harvesting of surplus labor. At the same time, workers' testimonies confirm that the capacities for bonding and affective attachment, far from being entirely at the service of capital, are at the very heart of social movements devoted to sustaining life.

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