

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Facing the Change: Personal Encounters with Global Warming* by Steven Pavlos Holmes, ed.

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*Lotería Jarocha* is a collection of sixty block prints corresponding to a *son jarcho*, each with an accompanying prose description. The descriptions and the illustrations are whimsical. For example, “Cascabel,” which means “rattlesnake” in English, describes a *son* that includes elements of flamenco while incorporating a musical instrument sounding like a snake’s rattle. Dempster’s linoleum block print illustrates the musical instrument, but instead of appearing as a rattlesnake’s tail and rattle, it has the shape of a human heart. The *son* itself incorporates elements of seventeenth-century Andalusian Spain and a passionate dance performed by women.

*Lotería Jarocha* reminds one of the deeply liberating and subversive nature of folklore and folkloric production. Subversion occurs on several levels. An example is “El Jarabe Loco” (The crazy elixir), a *son* that can be dated back to the seventeenth century with lyrics that refer to an elixir created by Lucifer to revive the dead. The idea that the underworld generates life is profoundly subversive. So, too, is the practice of performing this *son*, which encourages anarchic sessions that could go on for hours, where singers improvise.

Folklore fashions a unique collective culture and unites a community with its songs, patterns, art, and beliefs. For example, “El Fandanguito” (The little fandango) is not just a *son* but also a dance form that provides the foundation of many of the characteristic *sones jarochos*. While the fandango clearly hails originally from Spain, once arrived and situated in Veracruz, the *son* was appropriated and modified and continues to evolve and reflect new generations.

In addition to the sixty prints and descriptions of *sones*, Dempster’s

book comes with a CD collection of recordings of *sones*, some with traditional lyrics and others with new ones written by Kali Niño. Written and performed by both Dempster and Niño, the songs allow the listener to hear the intersections of cultures that come together in the *sones* and the humor and ironies expressed both in lyrics and in the way that the European, African, and indigenous melodies, harmonies, and rhythms comment on the original.

Dempster’s collection of songs, linoleum prints, and prose descriptions create an amazing reminder that it is an error to treat folklore as simply sentimental material to be preserved as cultural history. *Lotería Jarocha* joyously posits folklore as resistance to a monolithic way of thinking or expressing oneself and an embrace of community and cultural diversity.

Susan Smith Nash  
University of Oklahoma

#### **Facing the Change: Personal Encounters with Global Warming.**

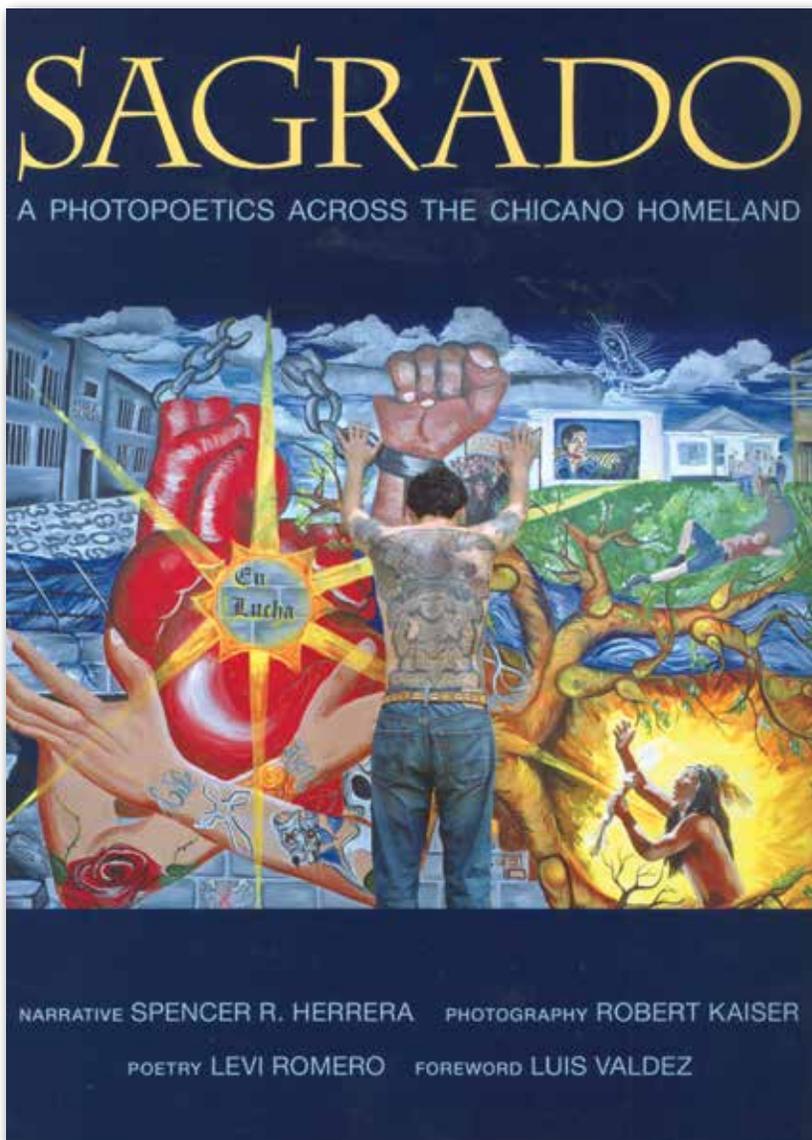
Steven Pavlos Holmes, ed. Salt Lake City, Utah. Torrey House Press. 2013. ISBN 9781937226275

Until recently, writers in the United States have found it difficult to put a human face on climate change. After all, invisible greenhouse gases lack the photogenic villainy of soot-dark pollution. Rising seas reveal themselves only gradually or far away—say, in ever-suffering Bangladesh. Even Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, those Twin Towers of environmental vulnerability and so many individual tales of woe, can’t be directly or solely blamed on our warming planet. Fiction writers have tried to humanize this slow-motion catastrophe. Environmental literature scholar Adam Trexler has compiled a list of three

hundred-plus novels published in English from 1962 to 2011 that at least mention climate change. Many of them, like the trilogy of science-fiction writer Kim Stanley Robinson, employ apocalypse or the future to make their point. Good news for cli-fi fans, but who is exploring the here and now of ordinary people?

Enter the wide-ranging and honest voices in this smartly edited collection. These are poets and essayists whom editor Steven Pavlos Holmes calls “our emotional and cultural first responders” who tell us “what it *feels* like” and what it means to live in what some scientists now call the Anthropocene, a world genuinely altered by humans. Most of the contributors are not famous. And if some of them, like Alaskan Marybeth Holleman, employ familiar images such as stranded polar bears, they do it with a thoughtfulness that lends new life to their subject. Holleman is struck by how global warming, unlike other environmental problems facing animals, leaves us almost no room to act between “*threatened* and *extinct*.”

Many pieces proceed effectively from seemingly mundane observations. Willow Fagin equates his tendency to joke away a too-warm Michigan winter with his years of trying to deny his “queerness,” noting that “facing the truth (of) my identity has led me to a deeper appreciation for my life, a new way of tasting the skin of the world . . . of being at home in my own skin.” In a sequence of fifteen amazingly conversational sonnets, Kathryn Kirkpatrick also explores denial, admitting that her book on tape makes wrecked land bearable via a narrative to “let us go elsewhere.” After watching passengers on a commuter train freeze up when a young mother suffers a seizure, Audrey Schulman wonders if



the “bystander effect” isn’t gripping us, worldwide, in the face of climate change. Jumping in to help, finally, and spurring others to action, Schulman realizes that even if she doesn’t know what to do, the doing is necessary and empowering.

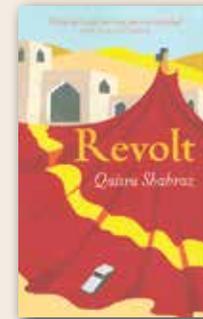
These crisp contributions read like the thoughts of ordinary folks trying to figure out how to live sustainable and meaningful lives in thrall of enormous changes that so often seem beyond the reach of individual action. This book is an important and often moving contribution.

*John Calderazzo*  
Colorado State University

Spencer R. Herrera. **Sagrado: A Photopoetics across the Chicano Homeland.** Luis Valdez, foreword. Robert Kaiser, photography. Levi Romero, poetry. Albuquerque. University of New Mexico Press. 2013. ISBN 9780826353542

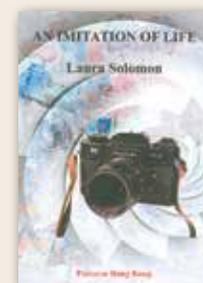
This book by Spencer R. Herrera, coauthored by poet Levi Romero and with photography by Robert Kaiser, tells the remarkable story of a cruise through the United States Southwest by two professors and a photographer artist, an itinerant trio led by a compass of cherished writers—Rudolfo Anaya, Tomás Rivera, and, among others,

## Nota Bene



Qaisra Shahraz  
**Revolt**  
Arcadia Books

An upcoming marriage of two wealthy cousins in a small town intimately reveals Pakistani family life. Traditional Muslim values meet modern Western ones, setting off a whimsical collection of problems and events. Regardless of whether the action is in England or Pakistan, *Revolt* shows what happens in a family where nothing is kept private.



Laura Solomon  
**An Imitation of Life**  
Proverse Hong Kong

A giantess aging three times the normal rate, Celia Doom experiences firsthand the horrified harshness of a world displeased with her appearance. Her talent at photography allows her to document the everyday existence of the town she is partly responsible for devastating. Solomon’s first-person novel realistically vocalizes the grotesque beauty this character offers.