

“Collage Artifacts of Witness: Poetry and the Zine in Isabel Quintero’s *Gabi, a Girl in Pieces*”

In this presentation, I explore Isabel Quintero’s *Gabi, a Girl in Pieces*, the 2015 winner of the Tomás Rivera Mexican-American Children’s Book Award and an artist’s coming of age novel that traces the experiences of sixteen-year-old high school senior Gabi Hernandez. The cover of *Gabi* features a collage of the female body, which the narrative later indicates is created by the eponymous protagonist as the cover of her poetry zine (195). Gabi’s collage consists of cut-out body parts of various sizes layered on top of one another to create a fractured composite image of a young Latina woman—a smiling mouth, a single eye in mid-roll, a pair of crossed legs, her décolletage with an anatomical heart pinned to it by an arrow, a bare rib cage, a skeletal hand, and a flesh-and-bone hand adorned with jewelry. After receiving an inadequate health book about the female body entitled *All About Your Body* from her mother, Gabi is inspired to create a collage that includes, as she details, poetry and images that “have all the information that that book left out—the truth about the female body from a female point of view” (191–92).

Gabi combines multiple confessional forms (such as journal entries, poetry, and letters) and a collage of visual artifacts (including drawings, images clipped from magazines, and various fonts) in order to examine the collaged self of her adolescent protagonist and to raise questions about cultural, political, and ideological discourses surrounding the adolescent body and race. I argue that Quintero uses confession and collage to confront the individual and social impact of racial tensions in US culture through the use of the diary narrative form as well as creative writing by her protagonists.