

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979) and Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* (1987) are two polemical works that have ignited debates in the academy over the ways in which the "classics" have been used to aggrandize a European identity that participates in the creation and marginalization of the "other," and the Nazi and Fascist performances of Athenian tragedy have testified to this process. In this paper, however, I am interested in contemporary productions of Athenian tragedy that have challenged the stereotypical associations of elite, Western culture with the classics. I will examine the critical role that corporeality (i.e., embodied social codes exhibited through costume, gesture, and acting style) has played in a number of contemporary productions that reclaim the classics for minority cultures, including The Celebration Theater's *Bacchae* (2007), Will Power's *The Seven* (2006), Luis Alfaro's *Electricidad* (2005), and Lee Breuer's *The Gospel at Colonus* (1983). Using examples from these performances, I will argue that the productions' corporeal resignification of identity functions as a means to empower minority American cultures. For example, in *Electricidad*, performed at the Mark Taper Forum, Los Angeles on April 6, 2005, MacArthur fellow and solo performer Luis Alfaro reimagines the ancient Western classic by adapting its murder-for-justice motif into the context of contemporary gang violence among the Cholos in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles. He presents the Sophoclean Electra as *Electricidad* a plaid-shirt wearing Chola, who longs for her brother Orestes to return from "X-file" in Las Vegas to avenge their father's murder. The resulting revision is a distinctly Cholo version that becomes a substitute for one of the central myths related to Western democracy. In this case, Alfaro seems to participate in a "new school" of translation forged by productions' such as the (1983) *Gospel at Colonus*, which opened at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and staged Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* in the context of an African-American Pentacostal Gospel service. With the election of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa on May 17, 2005, just a month after *Electricidad*'s opening at the Taper and with 1983's being the year that more African-Americans than ever before became mayors in many of the largest cities in the United States, both plays have participated in historical moments that have advanced the representational and political power of minorities in the U.S. Therefore, productions such as *Electricidad* and *The Gospel at Colonus* participate in a (re)casting of Athenian tragedy on the contemporary stage that functions as a tool to critique hegemonic culture rather than as a means to legitimate it.