BOOK REVIEWS

Editorial note: Book reviews are lightly edited for clarity and typographical errors.

THE BREAKBEAT POETS VOL. 4: LATINEXT. By Felicia Rose Chavez, José Olivares, and Willie Perdomo, eds. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2020.

The stated purpose of the fourth volume of The BreakBeat Poets series collection, *LatiNext*, edited by Felicia Rose Chavez, José Olivares, and Willie Perdomo, is to bring "the aesthetic of hip-hop practice to the page." It is the latest from *Haymarket* in a series that has published several collections based around sets of marginalized identities. The editors highlight poetics that have been excluded to center the works as serious subjects of study and literary merit. During a moment in which the analytical use of the term "latinidad" in the United States trembles (se tambalea, por de alguna manera decirlo), revealing both the possibilities and fissures in better understanding or wielding concepts like identity or relation, the voices in *LatiNext* complicate, rather than attempt to foreclose, those discussions. As a whole, the book celebrates what Perdomo in the introduction calls a "somos más" moment. This proclamation seems to be simultaneously referring to the diversity of communities to which the label of Latinx/a/o may or may not apply, but also to a growing number of artists making noise in increasingly visible stages. There are 125 poets in this anthology. They hail from Houston, New York, Chicago, many places in California, the DMV — but also Cuba, New Mexico, Chile, the Dominican Republic. They are Nuyoricans, Afro-Latinx, Ch/Xicanx/o/as, Central American, Queer, Black, poet laureates, established voices, and young new-comers.

In Mariana Goycoechea's "PoEma for MaMi," to highlight just one, the speaker mourns a mother who struggled with writing: "Mujer,/... I don't know what I'll/ write from here on/ other than to remember to write the entire alphabet/ every time I write your name" (43). Gabriel Ramirez's "Afro-Latinx Manifesto (or I learned to Count Salsa Steps to Laffy Taffy by D4L)" proclaims that "I let go of my father's abandonment to carry a name I knew better than any," that of the mother whose belly was kissed by Celia Cruz (73-74). Too many to name here, the collection includes explicit odes to the peacock, to the chola, to Kendrick Lamar, to dipset, to new money, to Tego Calderón — along with many others to place, memory, and future. "These poems, though, they wanna be about something beautiful like birds 'n' shit," writes Joseph Rios in "Fellowship Application." The poem continues (57-58):

> This poetry is for the birds...
> ...Birds that get
> cancer. Birds that get valley fever. Birds that die of
> diabetes. Birds that watch professional wrestling and
> own cats with feline leukemia. I hate that my poetry has
> to be about this shit, but it's true....

The poems in the collection constitute remembrances, eulogies, portraits, and celebrations. Ashley August's "Luanne" celebrates a young woman at school, much less concerned with what others may think or say and more with living in her joy. She (23-24):

Run when it scares her
Stay when it feel good
Say nothing when she ain't got nothing to say
Don't fake the funk
She don't be polite for nobody's feelings
Tell you she want it, tell you to take it back
Tell you you stupid when you is stupid

The speaker in Victoria Chávez Peralta's "Dios te Salve, María" insists that "la virgen de guadalupe loves me, even though i'm queer." Susi García's "The Bridge is out" defiantly declares that "The bridge is out/ but it won't stop us, amigax –/ we under water walk" (131). Jonathan Mendoza's "On nationalism" critically states: "I do not need to wave an empire's flag/ to prove I am deserving of a life" (183). Cierto es, como el poema de Raquel Salas Rivera "preguntas frecuentes" nos dice, que (246):

en inglés el plural singular ya exitse
el yo muchamente
en español tenemos que inventar el plural
ellx
    elle
un singular bastardo
    una caja de galletas/
duct tape /
unas espordosas descompuestas/ en pegamento

Cierto también es que en los versos de muchos de estos poemas hay acertijos, puntos suspensivos, a veces intimaciones y a veces no-respuestas a los tantísimos ¿por qué? que se han extendido hacia el tunel de la ascendencia y sido contestados con un eufemismo, como relata la abuela en el poema "Rain" de Janel Pineda: "porque allá llueve mucho" (295).

Willie Perdomo writes in the introduction: "If poetry is truly a decolonial practice, then this anthology lifts its lyrical machete, its formalistic authority, its innovative approach toward language, its queerness, its nonbinary *they*, its sense of lineage, family tradition, pride, and, refreshingly, its Blackness" (1). Part of Perdomo's presentation of the anthology states that the poems redraw the lines around notions such as nationhood and nationalism, patriarchy, and gender. Especially ascribing to a hip hop aesthetic, important contributions open up creative and analytical space to ponder the often fraught or exclusive relationship between Blackness and "latinidad" — a relationship embodied or addressed in many of the poems in the collection.

Less highlighted in the theoretical context of the introduction is the interaction between Indigeneities and the exceedingly large and increasingly challenged category of "latinidad" — especially considering waves of migration from Indigenous communities

from what we know as México and Central America — the latter diaspora, I am happy to report, finds many contributors in the collection. The questions that scholars like Gloria Chacón ask remain relevant. Referring to what she terms "Indian trouble — the trouble of Indians not fitting into US LatinX diasporic communities and their troublesome possibilities," Chacón urges us to consider experiences that are "peripheral to the nation-state and even marginal to what LatinX being constitutes at the present moment" (52).

In thinking, broadly, of the categories that bring together the series (*New American Poetry in the Age of Hip Hop;* vol. 2 *Black Girl Magic;* vol 3. *Halal if you Hear Me;* and vol. 4 *LatiNEXT*), analytical space opens up to think about the ways that state and cultural categories influence or are challenged by authors in the collections. Collections such as this one invite important questions regarding spaces both within and without the literary sphere. How do or don't cultural works centering Indigeneity fit into a "broader LatinX archive" (55)?[1] How could we apply concepts such as "Critical Latinx Indigeneities" — which urge us to "seek out a more engaged reading and analysis of history and the various structural systems that impact the experiences of Indigenous Latinx migrants and their future generations in the US" — to understanding the formations of poetry communities and anthologies within the literary purview of the so called United States?[2]

For those of us interested in creative, literary, or scholarly interventions, these questions can be helpful in continuing to challenge homogeneous conceptions of what it might mean to draw coalitions or separations along/against contemporary ethnic, racial, national, and class categories. The provocations of the poets in the collection can certainly be fruitful in continuing to dislodge homogenous conceptions of what is here termed LatiNEXT, hinting at a (perhaps otherwise!) future or futures.

Poems in the collection flood the categorization of its sections — named after a traditionally Mexican or Mexican-American cultural object: lotería cards. Las rebasan. In denouncement and celebration — mundane, sacred, and profane — many voices in this collection push against and, at the same time, invite us to consider both the utility and shortcomings of Latinx/o/a as a category, while simultaneously engaging generative creation within a larger (set of) community(ies). As Raque Salas Rivera's poem cited above puts it: "no importa el presente/ tanto como el presente plural" "the present doesn't matter/ as much as the plural present."

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Notes

[1] Chacón, Gloria. "Indian Trouble. Cultural Dynamics. 31 (1-2): 60-61, 2019.

[2] Blackwell, Maylei, Floridalma Boj López, and Luis Urrieta Jr. "Special Issue: Critical LatinX Indigeneities." Latino Studies, 15: 126-137, 2017.

WE GOT THIS: EQUITY, ACCESS, AND THE QUEST TO BE WHO OUR STUDENTS NEED US TO BE. By Cornelius Minor. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2019.

Despite the pervasive, yet misleading narrative that teachers cannot deviate from the curriculum because they "must teach to test," teachers have agency and hold more power than they realize. The mandated curriculum in schools dictates *what* teachers are required to teach, but it does not dictate *how* it must be taught. This loophole allows for teachers to use their creativity and passion to make necessary adjustments to their teaching to ensure student learning and success. In *We Got This*, Cornelius Minor reminds us that with great power comes great responsibility. In this way, this book serves a call to action for teachers to strive toward (or continue striving towards) more equitable student engagement practices as a way to combat structural inequalities. Specifically, Minor seeks to address the following question: "What does it mean to be appropriately equipped to serve a community and its most precious resource—the children?" (xiv-xv).

Throughout *We Got This,* Minor uses his love for comic books to make comparisons between the journeys of superheroes and teachers. While most recognize and admire superheroes for who they are and what they do, many fail to recognize the process of what it took for those superheroes to get where they are. Thus, like the journeys of superheroes, Minor emphasizes that the journey of teachers striving to employ equitable teaching practices is a messy and imperfect one. Teachers must accept the idea that everyone has their own journey of pursuing equity and they must not rely on a formula that will teach them how to do it. Though many teachers may feel as if the odds are stacked against them and that they are able to do very little, if at all, about social injustices that negatively impact their students, Minor argues otherwise and suggests that disrupting these injustices, even if it is on a smaller scale, can happen in school classrooms. However, in order to do so, teachers must critically self-reflect about their practices, adjust accordingly, and be willing change their teaching. After all, as Minor insists, we can't expect teachers to change the lives of their students if they are unwilling to change themselves.

To initiate this journey of change, Minor prompts teachers to do something they ask their kids to do on a daily basis—to listen. One can transform their teaching by listening to the needs of their students, and by actively incorporating lesson plans that address those needs. Yet, according to Minor, a teacher is unable to adequately address the needs of students if they are reluctant to disrupt the status quo in their classrooms. Systems of oppression like racism, sexism, ableism, and other -isms exist in and outside of a classroom. Thus, teachers can directly challenge and change the systems that govern their classrooms. This change requires for teachers to share their power with their students, which is daunting, except when considering that "[one] can let go of power without letting go of control" (82). Sharing power with students not only shows them they are an integral part of the classroom, but also allows them to see and understand that their voices can change a classroom, and also change the world. In underscoring the idea that schools celebrate innovation, but encourage and reward compliance, Minor makes an important distinction between being a good teacher versus being a good employee. While being a good teacher entails constantly learning and challenging yourself to change your teaching accordingly to suit the needs of your students, a good employee who teaches means being complicit in order to be well

liked by colleagues and supervisors. That said, good teachers, Minor claims, do their homework/research on equitable teaching practices and apply it, even if it's imperfect, in order to make the curriculum work for their students.

Unlike the aforementioned paragraph, which prompts teachers to make changes to their teaching with very little instruction on how to do so, Minor provides various step-by-step scenarios on how he made these changes in his own teaching throughout this book. *We Got This* is a recommended read for teachers interested in better serving their students, but who do not know where to start. Teachers who want to be part of the solution and not the problem.

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SPATIAL AND DISCURSIVE VIOLENCE IN THE U.S. SOUTHWEST. By Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita. Durham: Duke University Press. 2021.

Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita have made enduring contributions to Chicana/o studies. In *Telling Identities* (1995), Sánchez examined the testimonios of Californio elites who lost their land after the U.S.-Mexico War. She discovered a counter-history that revealed the social conflicts that resulted in the Californios' dispossession. *Telling Identities* was a milestone early study of 19th century Mexican American history and writing. Together, Sánchez and Pita edited the writing of 19th century writer María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, whose work, especially the novel *The Squatter and the Don* (1885), galvanized the study of 19th century Latinx literature and drew attention to the recuperation of texts through the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage project, initiated in 1992. In their new book, *Spatial and Discursive Violence in the U.S. Southwest,* Sánchez and Pita continue to examine land loss, expanding their consideration to three new regions — Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Texas — and taking into account the effect of overlapping colonizations on Indigenous as well as Mexican American communities.

The Marxist term "enclosure" is key to their study. The classical view of enclosure posits it as a shift from feudal to capitalist modes of production as communal spaces are transformed into private property. Sánchez and Pita see enclosure as "an ongoing and recurrent process" (3). Their title names the two aspects of enclosure they examine: spatial violence that is associated with state actions like war, genocide, and theft, and discursive violence that produces new subjects as modes of production are transformed, generating new discourses of citizenship and race. In the work of dispossessed writers, Sánchez and Pita detect a "critical memory" that has no nostalgic relation to the past, but instead registers "the collective scars left by history" (204). As they examine each region, they provide periodizations of the enclosures specific to a locale, taking us from Indigenous communal systems of production through the semifeudal systems associated with Spanish colonization to the capitalist modes of the United States. These deep histories are distinct for each region and always involve a multiplicity of temporalities.

The chapter on Oklahoma considers the seizure of Indigenous land through a sustained reading of Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit* (1990), which chronicles the Osage

murders of the 1920s that were motivated by a desire to obtain the Osage's oil-rich land. Sánchez and Pita's reading of Hogan's novel clearly contextualizes the events in the novel, and demonstrates how Hogan remixes and critiques the dominant historiography about these events. Unlike the chapters on New Mexico and Texas, this chapter moves from *Mean Spirit* to Hogan's other novels and works by Leslie Marmon Silko and N. Scott Momaday, none of which take place in Oklahoma. One wonders why the Native American writers are all contained in this chapter, and why the chapters on New Mexico and Texas deal only with Mexican American writers. The New Mexico chapter, in particular, would have conveyed a richer sense of the multiplicity of temporalities by including Indigenous voices like Silko's.

The chapters on New Mexico and Texas use writings by Mexican Americans to reveal the social conflicts at play in the contest for land while also demonstrating how these writers came to understand themselves as historical subjects. These chapters are noteworthy for drawing our attention to Mexican American complicity in the dispossession of Indigenous peoples and showing the ways Mexican American writers negotiated accommodation to the forces overwhelming them as they attempted to hold onto ways of life that they were rapidly losing. Working across a large body of writing, Sánchez and Pita demonstrate how literature helps us understand the everyday experience of enclosure from the standpoint of the dispossessed and how "Chicano/a land narratives in differing ways respond to, reject, or acquiesce to hegemonic narratives of US settlement in the Southwest" (203).

Given their interest in both Indigenous and Mexican American dispossession, one wishes the book engaged the emerging field of Critical Latinx Indigeneities. Indeed, Sánchez and Pita's New Mexico chapter could be profitably read alongside Simón Ventura Trujillo's *Land Uprising* (2020), which shares Sánchez and Pita's concerns but situates them within conversations in Critical Latinx Indigeneities. The closest the work comes to engaging this thought is a dismissal of the term "decolonial" as offering a form of liberation that is epistemic but not material. They do not offer readers a way of making material interventions but instead see literary criticism as part of a consciousness raising process that can catalyze activism. They make a persuasive case for the necessity of delineating these histories as enclosure assumes new forms such as gentrification and environmental extraction. Sánchez and Pita give us tools for understanding the long history of these contemporary conflicts, and push us to think more deeply about what liberatory futures may look like.

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THE BONDS OF INEQUALITY: DEBT AND THE MAKING OF THE AMERICAN CITY. By Destin Jenkins. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021.

Focusing on the city of San Francisco from the aftermath of World War II through the late 20th century, this book creatively documents the role of municipal debt in the creation and maintenance of a class and racially fragmented and unequal metropolis. Carefully conceptualized, deeply researched and persuasively argued, this book makes a signal contribution to knowledge by focusing on the social, cultural, and political as

well as economic history of municipal debt. Unlike most existing studies of finance capitalism that give the lion's share of attention to the ideas and behavior of the organized white labor movement, the real estate industry, and journalistic accounts among other similar sources, *The Bonds of Inequality* places the municipal bond market and a coterie of heretofore little acknowledged actors at the center of the story.

This study revolves around the activities of what the author describes as a "fraternity" of white professional and business elites — specifically, city controllers, accountants, bondholders, lenders, bond financiers, peddlers of debt, credit analysts and bond raters (11). In careful detail, Jenkins demonstrates how municipal finance officers collaborated closely with banks and professional credit and bond rating agencies to sell municipal bonds. Together, bankers and their allies and city finance officers crafted a system of urban finance that depended on the sale of municipal bonds to secure capital for a variety of urban infrastructure projects — including schools, roads, public parks and playgrounds.

The tasks of financial officers was by no means left to chance. Working through their "modernized" national Municipal Finance Officers' Association of the United States and Canada (MFOA), city finance officers not only successfully accessed the municipal bond markets, but also used credit rating professionals, bankers, lawyers, and legal experts to stymie popular input into their actions. As such, they were able to shield municipal debt from the close scrutiny and demands of activist public service and civil rights groups. The buyers of municipal debt took a seat at the influential heart of urban financial strategy discussions. They served as members of urban governmental advisory committees and diverse governing bodies responsible for such local spending projects as urban renewal, public housing, and city transportation systems. Such in-house influence of bondholders ensured policy decisions that repeatedly favored the profit-making interests of finance capitalists over the social welfare and infrastructure-building needs of the vast majority of the city's people.

Moreover, the statutory power of such municipal organizations as the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency and the San Francisco Housing Authority enabled the approval of bond issues without a public referendum on the matter. When the interests of the broader public good clashed with the profits of funders, the former always gave way to the latter. But the broader public good was by no means monolithic. In the wake of the Great Depression and passage of the Glass-Steagall Act, New Deal financial policy helped to transform what Jenkins calls the "rights consciousness" of white Americans in "new ways." To the painful and destructive disadvantage of African Americans and Latinx people, New Deal social policy facilitated the emergence of what Jenkins describes as an "*Intraracial* [white] cross-class compact." The collusion of white workers and their middle-class counterparts enabled municipal government to dramatically expand the bonded debt by extensive borrowing for a series of infrastructural improvements: schools, roads, museums, and other leisure facilities, to name a few. These projects benefitted white citizens, particularly elite white men through such entities as the San Francisco Bond Club.

Although communities of color paid taxes and put the weight of their votes behind most bond issues during the first two postwar decades, they received little in return for their support. After several decades of delivering benefits to white citizens, *The Bonds of Inequality* shows how this system finally broke down under the demands of the Modern Black Freedom Movement, an emerging left-wing critique of municipal bonds as lopsided "redistributionary" elite claims on the resources of the many in

the interests of the few, and, most tellingly, conservative reactions against the New Deal social welfare state with the rise of Reaganomics in the 1980s. In short, this is a stellar model of the impact of municipal debt on one city, but it provides a clear and persuasive model for future research on other places during the same period. This is no small accomplishment.

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ABSTRACT BARRIOS: THE CRISIS OF LATINX VISIBILITY IN CITIES. By Johana Londoño. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020.

My mom lives in Santa Ana — I grew up there. To say that I strongly identify with the Orange County city, its social geography as a largely diverse Latinx community shaped by a history of Mexican-origin and African American migrant marginalization and segregation, strength and resilience (*Mendez v. Westminster* (1947); *Reitman v. Mulkey* (1967)), would be an understatement. So, when I read Londoño's *Abstract Barrios*, which has a chapter on the late-1980s construction of a downtown Santa Ana shopping center (the Fiesta Marketplace), my mind raced to those early childhood memories of being an undocumented child amidst the colorful ethnic niche business that occupied that space. I was struck by Londoño's deep accounting of just how the construction of the Fiesta Marketplace abstracted Latinx cultural difference as a way to visually index a kind of Latinidad in the built environment that would appeal to Latinx residents and business owners, a new space for belonging and economic opportunity, while simultaneously sanitizing, domesticating, the history of Mexican presence in the city and county, which had, at the time, increasingly been aligned within narratives of urban blight. Of course, Londoño has us understand, that the result was an urban shopping center where competing and often contradictory meanings and claims challenged the originally conceived consumer-friendly representation of the city's Latinx population, making Fiesta only ever a partial *fait accompli*. And, as *Abstract Barrios* has us further consider, capital urbanism constantly reproduces itself anyway: so, by the time the Fiesta Marketplace was demolished in the mid-2010, it was no longer seen as the solution to urban blight but had actually come to be an example of it, thus needing, once again, to be remade, this time, as a playground for the county's primarily white economically advantaged population — now an anchor, however tenuous, for the city's ongoing downtown gentrification (138).

This concerted attempt to domesticate Latinx racial difference, what, to me has always seemed a particularly Orange County move, crystalizes a primary concern of Londoño's text: Latinx culture and the symbolic anxiety-inducing racial difference that it represents for white people is sublated into the urban built environment, where, as part of a late-capitalist logic that spatially reifies the contradictions of modernity, "Latinx visibility," ironically, also becomes the life force, the very "key to the cyclical nature of U.S. capitalist urbanism: its decay and reconstitution of its normativity" (5).

Rather than offer a book-length case study of one particular urban geography, *Abstract Barrios* shuttles across the U.S., from Puerto Rico, to New York, to Southern

California, to demonstrate how the abstraction of Latinx culture into the built environment as complexly tied to the *barrio*, a social space where poor and racialized people are perceived to live outside of modernity's fold and spatial reach. Londoño provides a historical lodestone for understanding how, since the middle of the twentieth century, a quintessential U.S. city-making process — development projects — have served as a modality of urban capitalist accumulation by attempting to appropriate surplus value from racialized communities (from the *barrio*) — by appropriating their visual culture as a resource for urban design. This is achieved not only by capturing value from people's labor and by hounding them through policing efforts across cities but, as Londoño notes, also through seemingly benign efforts like the development of housing, as seen in the chapter "Design for the 'Puerto Rico Problem,'" where U.S. urban planners and settlement workers fomented transnational connections to their Puerto Rican counterparts to glean from Puerto Rico's self-help housing models as a way to plan housing — in a digestible design kind of way — for New York's Puerto Rican community; an antidote to the perceived danger of Puerto Rican *barrioization* and the *barrio's* purported deviance from and incommensurability with U.S. urban modernity.

Abstract Barrios enriches the fields of American, Latinx and urban studies and planning by having readers rethink the concept of the *barrio* as something much greater than the literature has heretofore defined as spatially relegated as outside from, peripheral to, and excluded within city making processes. In this work, the very abstraction of racial difference and space (the *barrio*), as the progenitor of a visual threat — *crisis* — to white people and white supremacy, is assuaged into the built environment in ways that enable new arenas of accumulation built from the marshalling of difference, its abstraction signaling both a kind of extraction and inclusion.

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