

and Larue, continue to show little effort to acknowledge their involvement in the affair. Whilst this dichotomy continues to play out, at least for the time being, it is time for us to learn from the EJI and use our platforms as public historians to implement long-term change. As similar horrors of lynching continue to take shape in new forms, like police brutality and mass incarceration, such efforts appear as important as ever.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Mia Blainey completed her undergraduate degree in history at the University of Warwick in 2023 and is currently studying for an MPhil in American history at the University of Cambridge. At present, she is working on her master's thesis, which, broadly, looks at race, memory and the civil rights movement.

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Ralph Rodríguez, *Latinx Literature Unbound: Undoing Ethnic Expectation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018, \$32.99). Pp. 200. ISBN 978 0 8232 7924 1.

José Esteban Muñoz, *The Sense of Brown* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020, \$26.95). Pp. 224. ISBN 978 1 4780 1103 3.

The Latino experience in the United States traces back to the Mexican – American (1846–48) and Spanish – American (1898) wars. Fueled by the race- and class-related political agendas inherited from civil rights organizations in the 1960s, Latino/a/x – “the category that made us the same,” according to scholar Arlene Dávila – has advanced the intentions of its proponents’ marketing, cultural, and political agendas for over half a century. Latinx as a strategic essentialized identity (Spivak) works to target new consumer groups, raise louder political claims, and acquire visibility for aesthetic canons, while simultaneously encouraging the cultural erasure of subgroups within Latinidad. The upward mobility acquired by some Latinx groups during recent decades has created a new debate that challenges the very ground of the category – a nascent ontological and epistemological space addressed by Ralph Rodríguez in *Latinx Literature Unbound* and José Esteban Muñoz in *The Sense of Brown*. Rodríguez and Muñoz outline very different futures regarding class-related assumptions for the signifier “Latinx,” both as a common political and as a cultural constituency.

Ralph Rodríguez, a professor at the American Studies and English Departments at Brown University, in conversation with Muñoz’s reordering of “Brownness,” calls for a revision on the taxonomy that has historically concealed Latinx literature in order to expand its boundaries towards nonethnic themes and aesthetics. On the other hand, celebrated scholar José Esteban Muñoz’s book *The Sense of Brown* departs from the idea of “Brownness” as the shared experience of harm to revise the genealogies of political resistance present in Latina/o drama and performance. While both engage with the very same set of questions, the two texts lead to significantly different interpretations of Muñoz’s insights on “feeling brown” as shared life experiences, eventually pointing to very different paths and horizons for Latinx as an ontological and epistemological category.

“Undoing ethnic expectation,” the subtitle to Ralph Rodríguez’s *Latinx Literature Unbound*, is particularly telling of the anxieties of a new generation of authors and critics alike that seeks to move away from the preconceived class assumptions embedded

in the field of Latinx literature. Rodríguez argues that “the Latinx label can also limit the aspirations of the writers themselves” as its themes condition “the majority of Latinx works [to] call up familiar stories of migrant workers, embattled barrios, tightly knit *familias*, and so on” (Rodríguez 13, 2). Rodríguez draws from Muñoz’s preliminary essays in *The Sense of Brown* to offer shared experiences and genre as the criteria behind a new taxonomy capable of bringing forward a new string of works. Grappling with Muñoz, Rodríguez claims that the author “suggested turning to affect and feeling rather than identity politics” as a way to better understand the “affiliations and identifications between racialized and ethnic groups” (Rodríguez 11). Interestingly, Rodríguez suggests a provocative reading of Muñoz’s project, one that opens up the field towards the inclusion of Latinx cultural production into the realm of high art.

On the other hand, José Esteban Muñoz’s *The Sense of Brown* engages with Rodríguez’s critique of an undue stress on biological and identarian assumptions. Muñoz argues that “Latinidad is ... an anti-identarian concept that nonetheless permits us to talk about Latinas/os as having a group identity, which is necessary for social activism” (Muñoz 63). While agreeing with Rodríguez in centering shared experiences and affective textures to reassemble the criteria for belonging, Muñoz centers the civil rights-nurtured heritage in the term “Brown Commons.” For Muñoz, “How these things are brown, or what makes them brown, is partially the way in which they suffer and strive together but also the commonality of their ability to flourish under duress and pressure. They are brown in part because they have been devalued by the world outside their commons” (1). Paralleling conversations in critical race theory regarding the use of Black in place of African American, Muñoz’s turn toward Brownness as an identarian category shatters the limitations of Latinx political identities and boundaries.

Enveloping the book’s four chapters, each built around a different genre, *Latinx Literature Unbound* explores the novel, the metafiction novel, the short story, and poetry. Rodríguez calls for a decentering of representation and thematic structures to favor a deeper analysis through slow reading that allows us, as informed readers, to capture the event behind the sentence, a premise that will become crucial in the last chapter on the lyric and Latinx verse. Chapter 1, “Brown Like Me,” engages most clearly with Muñoz’s notion of Brownness. Rodríguez builds on notions of identarian authenticity and belonging to explore the cases of three authors who share complex identity formations and do not identify with the Latinx category. In turn, Rodríguez links their aesthetics through an exhaustive formal analysis of their works with the new literary Latinx canon he proposes. Building on the Foucauldian author–function framework, Rodríguez dissects the fictional situatedness of Daniel Santiago, Brando Skyhorse, and Eduardo Halfon, underscoring the difference between lived identities and blood identities while prioritizing lived experiences over biological assumptions as the main output of their pieces of literature. These assertions, framed neither in a sympathetic nor a contrary lens, outline a way to underscore the problematic outcome of equating the Latinx literature project with the project of the author’s identity. Although Rodríguez’s powerful analytics for reassembling a new taxonomy for Latinx literature seem cogent within cultural criticism, one of the main weaknesses of his project is the lack of an alternative structure for a publishing industry with respect to a contemporary audience that relentlessly relies on authorial identity and authenticity as a base for credibility.

Over the course of the next three chapters, *Latinx Literature Unbound* continues to blur the boundaries of Latinx literature as it explores the master craft of a new generation of Latino writers within other genres such as poetry and the short story.

Rodríguez's powerful work demonstrates the diverse tactics that contemporary Latinx writers utilize to communicate the fictional worlds they construct through affective textures and a wide variety of techniques present in postmodern genres, ultimately pairing their works with those by nonethnic writers. Despite his undeniable intentions to overcome the insufficient attention literary criticism pays to the complex techniques at play in the work of contemporary Latinx writers, Rodríguez's overreliance on the institutionalized cultural capital of the Ivy League limits the extent of what is "unbound." While the author does not address these class boundary concerns, the volume may serve as a useful guide to this dilemma.

"Brown Commons," Chapter 1 of José Esteban Muñoz's posthumous book *The Sense of Brown*, pays tribute to the history of Brown political power in the United States, a product of the student civil rights movements exemplified in the Chicano marches and the Brown Berets. For Muñoz, Brown – as a subject position – is both an individual condition and a collective space capable of creating a common aesthetic. Muñoz's concept of Brown establishes the entire theoretical framework of his book. According to the author, what consolidates a resistance group is not the identitarian project, but the way of performing dissent – *manera de ser*, in his own words – against a dominant public sphere, which he describes as the national affect (Muñoz, 14). His analysis focusses on the field of media culture as the main way of disseminating this national affect that often constructs and popularizes negative and exoticized images of Latinx subjects. Thus the object of his study is, in his terms, "Latina drama" and performance as a response apparatus and a sphere of political resistance against this national affection.

One of the noteworthy aspects of *The Sense of Brown* is the construction of this theoretical framework of Brownness throughout the chapters that focus on discrete objects of study, including Ricardo Bracho, Nilo Cruz, Isaac Julien, Nao Bustamante, Luis Alfaro, Carmelita Tropicana, and Tania Bruguera. In Chapter 2, "Feeling Brown," the author expands some lines of his critical apparatus through Norma Alarcón's concept of the "identity in difference" – like that identity that disappeared from the maps of the public sphere – and Richard Williams's "structure of feeling." Likewise, the author places Latinx affect as an agent that destabilizes the affective base of whiteness. Muñoz dismantles what he calls the Latin or "failed" affect. For Muñoz, the dominant sphere (conditioned by the white gaze) seeks to reduce Latinx affect as mere "excess." In turn, Muñoz proposes to reorient the stereotype of what we term "excessive" towards a politics of liberation that renders white affect as a minimalist failure or as emotionally impoverished. Special attention should be paid to Chapter 5, "Chico, What Does It Feel Like to Be a Problem?", within which Muñoz challenges the representation of the Chicano as an impoverished people rife with drug addiction problems, personified in the actor Freddie Prinze. Muñoz's insights provide the reader with a greater understanding of the cost of essentializing Brownness into a series of negative signifiers. The mythologizing of being Brown as "feeling like a problem" deters people from identifying with their community.

Regardless of the fact that Rodríguez's literary analysis seeks to unbound Latinx literature toward potential dialogues with non-Latinx authors that conform to white affect – the same public sphere Muñoz condemns – it is precisely Muñoz's turn to affective particularity and belonging of Brownness as a lived experience that binds these two volumes together and points to an exciting new direction within the field. Both *Latinx Literature Unbound* and *The Sense of Brown* will provoke a significant amount of discussion in courses on Latinx literature, ethnic studies, and culture

production at the undergraduate and the graduate level. These volumes are well written and clearly organized, and provide an exhaustive analysis of new directions in the landscape of contemporary Latinx literature and criticism while addressing challenging questions that interlace American literature, Latinx literature, and cultural Studies.

The Graduate Center, CUNY

RICARDO M. COLOMA

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Manan Desai, *The United States of India: Anticolonial Literature and Transnational Refraction* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2020, \$34.33/£30.00). Pp. 264. ISBN 978 1 4399 1890 6.

Manan Desai's *The United States of India* provides an insightful investigation into the relationship between Indian and American intellectual discourses during the early decades of the twentieth century. This book, published in 2020 by Temple University Press, extends beyond mere historical analysis and delves into the ideological convergence and divergence that these two nations experienced, particularly in the realm of anticolonial thought after World War I. In examining the period between the late 1910s and the 1920s in the United States, Desai posits it as a uniquely active time focussed on the issue of Indian independence, stating that it "marked a unique and intensive period of activity surrounding the question of Indian independence" (195). This era is characterized not only by political upheaval but also by a surge in advocacy and discourse concerning India's fight for sovereignty.

The book is divided into five chapters, and each chapter is formed by a community of Indian and American writers, focussing on a specific theme but also contributing to a holistic understanding of the subject matter. "Race across Empires" delves into shared racial struggles between India and America, offering an intersectional perspective that enhances our comprehension of race as a global construct. "The India Plot" elaborates on the ways Indian independence was received, critiqued, and even romanticized within American intellectual circles. "Killing Kipling" serves as a deconstructive force against colonial romanticism perpetuated by authors like Rudyard Kipling, thereby challenging colonial narratives that have been immortalized in literature. "The Dark Alliance" explores the strategic associations formed to fight against the twinned foes of racism and colonialism, adding layers of complexity to the anticolonial discourse. Finally, "Uncle Sham" offers a damning critique of the contradictions and hypocrisies inherent within American policies and ideologies, especially in their international representations and aspirations.

The intriguing part of Manan Desai's piece is the title of its introduction and afterword, which take the readers on a journey from present to past while aiming to cooperate with colonial systems within racist governments or perhaps to recognize the intersections across gender, class, and racial opposition. Central to Desai's discourse is the term "transnational refraction," a concept which serves as an analytical lens through which to study the cross-cultural interactions that influenced India's independence movement and America's own evolving sense of identity. Transnational refraction serves as a metaphorical tool in the book, illuminating how struggles within one sociopolitical landscape can be perceived, misinterpreted, or adopted within another. A seminal event that sought to draw parallels between the Indian