



Choosing Texts – LTS 3012

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- ___ Wise Latinas: Writers on Higher Education, edited by Jennifer de Leon
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- ___ Hijas Americanas: Beauty, Body Image, and Growing Up Latina, Rosie Molinary





Afterlife

Antonia Vega, the immigrant writer at the center of *Afterlife*, has had the rug pulled out from under her. She has just retired from the college where she taught English when her beloved husband, Sam, suddenly dies. And then more jolts: her bighearted but unstable sister disappears, and Antonia returns home one evening to find a pregnant, undocumented teenager on her doorstep. Antonia has always sought direction in the literature she loves, but now she finds that the world demands more of her than words.

Dominicana

Fifteen-year-old Ana Cancion never dreamed of moving to America, the way the girls she grew up with in the Dominican countryside did. But when Juan Ruiz proposes and promises to take her to New York City, she has to say yes. So, on New Year's Day, 1965, Ana leaves behind everything she knows and becomes Ana Ruiz, a wife confined to a cold six-floor walk-up in Washington Heights. Lonely and miserable, Ana hatches a reckless plan to escape. But at the bus terminal, she is stopped by Cesar, Juan's free-spirited younger brother, who convinces her to stay. As the Dominican Republic slides into political turmoil, Juan returns to protect his family's assets, leaving Cesar to take care of Ana. Suddenly, Ana is free to take English lessons at a local church, lie on the beach at Coney Island, see a movie at Radio City Music Hall, go dancing with Cesar, and imagine the possibility of a different kind of life in America. When Juan returns, Ana must decide once again between her heart and her duty to her family.

America's Dream

América Gonzalez is a hotel housekeeper on Vieques, an island off the coast of Puerto Rico, cleaning up after wealthy foreigners who don't look her in the eye. Her alcoholic mother resents her; her married boyfriend, Correa, beats her; and their fourteen-year-old daughter thinks life would be better anywhere but with América. So when América is offered the chance to work as a live-in housekeeper and nanny for a family in Westchester, New York, she takes it as a sign to finally make the escape she's been longing for. Yet, even as América revels in the comparative luxury of her new life—daring to care about a man other than Correa—she is faced with the disquieting realization that no matter what she does, she can never really escape her past.

Clap When You Land

Camino Rios lives for the summers when her father visits her in the Dominican Republic. But this time, on the day when his plane is supposed to land, Camino arrives at the airport to see crowds of crying people...In New York City, Yahaira Rios is called to the principal's office, where her mother is waiting to tell her that her father, her hero, has died in a plane crash. Separated by distance—and Papi's secrets—the two girls are forced to face a new reality in which their father is dead and their lives are forever altered. And then, when it seems like they've lost everything of their father, they learn of each other.

Don't Ask Me Where I'm From

Liliana Cruz is hitting a wall – or rather, walls. There's the wall her mom has put up again ever since Liliana's dad took off – again. There's the wall that delineates Liliana's vibrant inner-city Boston neighborhood from Westburg, the wealthy – and white – suburban high school she's just been accepted into. And there's the wall Liliana creates within herself, because to survive at Westburg, she can't just lighten up, she has to *whiten* up. Then some hard truths are exposed: It



isn't that her father doesn't want to come home... He can't. Then simmering racial tensions at the school reach a fever pitch – and the walls that divide feel insurmountable. But a wall isn't always a barrier. It can be a foundation for something better. And Liliana must choose: use this foundation as a platform to speak her truth, or risk the wall crumbling on top of her.

We Set the Dark on Fire

At the Medio School for Girls, distinguished young women are trained for one of two roles in their polarized society. Depending on her specialization, a graduate will one day run a husband's household or raise his children. Daniela Vargas is the school's top student, but her bright future depends upon no one discovering her darkest secret—that her pedigree is a lie. Her parents sacrificed everything to obtain forged identification papers so Dani could rise above her station. On her graduation night, Dani seems to be in the clear, despite the surprises that unfold. But nothing prepares her for all the difficult choices she must make, especially when she is asked to spy for a resistance group desperately fighting to bring equality to Medio. Will Dani cling to the privilege her parents fought to win for her, or to give up everything she's strived for in pursuit of a free Medio—and a chance at a forbidden love?

How to Leave Hialeah

United in their fierce sense of place and infused with the fading echoes of a lost homeland, the stories in Jennine Capó Crucet's striking debut collection expand our ideas and our expectations of the city by exposing its tough but vulnerable underbelly. Crucet's writing has been shaped by the people and landscapes of South Florida and by the stories of Cuba told by her parents and abuelos. Her own stories are informed by her experiences as a Cuban American woman living within and without her community, ready to leave and ready to return, "ready to mourn everything." Coming to us from the predominantly Hispanic working-class neighborhoods of Hialeah, the voices of this steamy section of Miami shout out to us from rowdy all-night funerals and kitchens full of plátanos and croquetas and lechón ribs, from domino tables and cigar factories, glitter-purple Buicks and handed-down Mom Rides, private homes of santeras and fights on front lawns.

My Time among the Whites

In this sharp and candid collection of essays, first-generation American Jennine Capó Crucet explores the condition of finding herself a stranger in the country where she was born. Raised in Miami and the daughter of Cuban refugees, Crucet examines the political and personal contours of American identity and the physical places where those contours find themselves smashed: be it a rodeo town in Nebraska, a university campus in upstate New York, or Disney World in Florida. In prose that is both fearless and slyly humorous, *My Time Among the Whites* examines the sometimes hopeful, sometimes deeply flawed ways in which many Americans have learned to adapt, exist, and—in the face of all signals saying otherwise—perhaps even thrive in a country that never imagined them here.

Sabrina & Corina

Kali Fajardo-Anstine's magnetic story collection breathes life into her Latina characters of indigenous ancestry and the land they inhabit. Set against the remarkable backdrop of Denver, Colorado, these women navigate the land the way they navigate their lives: with caution, grace, and quiet force. In "Sugar Babies," ancestry and heritage are hidden inside the earth but tend to



rise during land disputes. “Any Further West” follows a sex worker and her daughter as they leave their ancestral home in southern Colorado only to find a foreign and hostile land in California. In “Tomi,” a woman leaves prison and finds herself in a gentrified city that is a shadow of the one she remembers from her childhood. And in the title story, “Sabrina & Corina,” a Denver family falls into a cycle of violence against women, coming together only through ritual. *Sabrina & Corina* is a moving narrative of unrelenting feminine power and an exploration of the universal experiences of abandonment, heritage, and an eternal sense of home.

Beautiful Señoritas

The focus of *Beautiful Señoritas* is on female gender roles and stereotypes, particularly as they pertain to Latin women. As Prida states, the play is "a modest one-act musical play that poke[s] fun at longstanding Latin women stereotypes—from Carmen Miranda to Cuchi Cuchi Charo to suffering black-shrouded women crying and praying over their tortillas to modern-day young Latinas trying to re-define their images." Like most of Prida's subsequent plays, *Beautiful Señoritas* is both comic and serious and has been staged many times. Prida is, indeed, a well-established American dramatist, and most large libraries hold volumes of at least some of her plays.

Botanica

This play explores cultural conflicts of three generations of Puerto Rican women in East Harlem (an older Puerto Rican woman, her daughter, and her granddaughter who has just graduated from an Ivy League university). The action takes place in a “botanica” (herbal, spiritual store) owned by the family, where progress and tradition encounter several conflicts.

Fade

When Lucia, a Mexican-born novelist, gets her first TV writing job, she feels a bit out of place on the white male-dominated set. Lucia quickly becomes friends with the only other Latino around, a janitor named Abel. As Abel shares his stories with Lucia, similar plots begin to find their way into the TV scripts that Lucia writes. *Fade* is a play about class and race within the Latinx community, as well as at large, and how status does not change who you are at your core.

America, Vol. 1: The Life and Times of America Chavez

Critically acclaimed young-adult novelist Gabby Rivera and all-star artist Joe Quinones unite to shine a solo spotlight on America's high-octane and hard-hitting adventures! She was a Young Avenger. She leads the Ultimates. And now she officially claims her place as the preeminent butt-kicker of the entire Marvel Universe! But what's a super-powered teenager to do when she's looking for a little personal fulfillment? She goes to college! America just has to stop an interdimensional monster or two first and shut down a pesky alien cult that's begun worshipping her exploits before work can begin. Then she can get on with her first assignment: a field trip to the front lines of World War II - with Captain America as her wingman!

The Low, Low Woods

When your memories are stolen, what would you give to remember? Follow El and Vee as they search for answers to the questions everyone else forgot. Shudder-to-Think, Pennsylvania, is plagued by a mysterious illness that eats away at the memories of those affected by it. El and Octavia are two best friends who find themselves the newest victims of this disease after waking



up in a movie theater with no memory of the past few hours. As El and Vee dive deeper into the mystery behind their lost memories, they realize the stories of their town hold more dark truth than they could've imagined. It's up to El and Vee to keep their town from falling apart...to keep the world safe from Shudder-to-Think's monsters.

RicanStruction

A comic anthology featuring contributions from writers and artists from the comic book industry to Puerto Rican and Latinx celebrities. Produced and featuring stories written by Edgardo Miranda-Rodriguez, this anthology teams up his original character, La Borinqueña with some of the most iconic comic book heroes of all time from DC: Wonder Woman, Batman, Superman, Aquaman, The Flash and many others. Original stories also take us to the past to explore the beautiful history of Puerto Rico as well as tales that envision a stronger and rebuilt island. These short stories remind us all that the true power of being a hero is inside each of us. When we come together as a united people, we will never be defeated!

Postcolonial Love Poem

Postcolonial Love Poem is an anthem of desire against erasure. Natalie Diaz's brilliant second collection demands that everybody carried in its pages—bodies of language, land, rivers, suffering brothers, enemies, and lovers—be touched and held as beloveds. Through these poems, the wounds inflicted by America onto an indigenous people are allowed to bloom pleasure and tenderness: "Let me call my anxiety, *desire*, then. / Let me call it, *a garden*." In this new lyrical landscape, the bodies of indigenous, Latinx, black, and brown women are simultaneously the body politic and the body ecstatic. In claiming this autonomy of desire, language is pushed to its dark edges, the astonishing dunefields and forests where pleasure and love are both grief and joy, violence, and sensuality. *Postcolonial Love Poem* unravels notions of American goodness and creates something more powerful than hope—a future is built, future being a matrix of the choices we make now, and in these poems, Diaz chooses love.

Island of Dreams

Always feeling like a foreigner in both lands because people want to know "where you from," and "how do you know Spanish?" In *Island of Dreams*, author Jasminne Mendez, addresses these questions and their complicated answers in a multi-genre memoir that effortlessly blends poems and short stories to offer a glimpse into the challenges, joys, hopes, fears and disappointments she and her family faced being Dominican in America. Her work explores everything from the love/hate relationship she had with her hair and her mother, to the many memorable but sometimes unpleasant family vacations and holidays she shared with her parents, siblings, primos, tios, y tias. These captivating stories and poems are about family, food, love, culture, self-discovery, assimilation, and the American dream. They are about a young girl who respects the richness and abundance of her cultural history, but who struggles to form her own identity because her Dominican values conflict with her American self.

We Are Owed

We Are Owed. is the debut poetry collection of Ariana Brown, exploring Black relationality in Mexican and Mexican American spaces. Through poems about the author's childhood in Texas and a trip to Mexico as an adult, Brown interrogates the accepted origin stories of Mexican identity. *We Are Owed* asks the reader to develop a Black consciousness by rejecting U.S.,



Chicano, and Mexican nationalism and confronting anti-Black erasure and empire-building. As Brown searches for other Black kin in the same spaces through which she moves, her experiences of Blackness are placed in conversation with the histories of formerly enslaved Africans in Texas and Mexico. Esteban Dorantes, Gaspar Yanga, and the author's Black family members and friends populate the book as a protective and guiding force, building the "we" evoked in the title and linking Brown to all other African-descended peoples living in what Saidiya Hartman calls "the afterlife of slavery."

Bird of Paradise

Digging through memories long buried, she embarks upon a journey not only into her ancestry but also into her own history. Born in Harlem to Dominican parents, she was sent to live with her maternal grandparents in the Paraíso (Paradise) district in Santo Domingo while still a baby. It proved to be an idyllic reprieve in her otherwise fraught childhood. Paraíso came to mean family, home, belonging. When Cepeda returned to the US, she discovered her family constellation had changed. Her mother had a new, abusive boyfriend, who relocated the family to San Francisco. When that relationship fell apart, Cepeda found herself back in New York City with her father and European stepmother: attending tennis lessons and Catholic schools; fighting vicious battles with her father, who discouraged her from expressing the Dominican part of her hyphenated identity; and immersed in the '80s hip-hop culture of uptown Manhattan. It was in these streets, through the prism of hip-hop and the sometimes loving embrace of her community, that Cepeda constructed her own identity. Years later, when Cepeda had become a successful journalist and documentary filmmaker, the strands of her DNA would take her further, across the globe and into history. Who were her ancestors? How did they—and she—become Latina? Her journey, as the most unforgettable ones often do, would lead her to places she hadn't expected to go.

Once I Was You

In *Once I Was You*, Maria Hinojosa shares her intimate experience growing up Mexican American on the south side of Chicago and documenting the existential wasteland of immigration detention camps for news outlets that often challenged her work. In these pages, she offers a personal and eye-opening account of how the rhetoric around immigration has not only long informed American attitudes toward outsiders, but also enabled willful negligence and profiteering at the expense of our country's most vulnerable populations—charging us with the broken system we have today. This honest and heartrending memoir paints a vivid portrait of how we got here and what it means to be a survivor, a feminist, a citizen, and a journalist who owns her voice while striving for the truth. *Once I Was You* is an urgent call to fellow Americans to open their eyes to the immigration crisis and understand that it affects us all.

My Broken Language: A Memoir

Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Quiara Alegría Hudes tells her lyrical story of coming of age against the backdrop of an ailing Philadelphia barrio, with her sprawling idiosyncratic, love-and-trouble-filled Puerto Rican family as a collective muse. Hudes was the sharp-eyed girl on the stairs while her family danced in her grandmother's tight North Philly kitchen. She was awed by her aunts and uncles and cousins but haunted by the secrets of the family and the unspoken, untold stories of the barrio—even as she tried to find her own voice in the sea of language around her, written and spoken, English and Spanish, bodies and books, Western art and sacred altars. Her family became her private pantheon, a gathering circle of powerful orisha-like women with



tragic real-world wounds, and she vowed to tell their stories--but first she'd have to get off the stairs and join the dance. She'd have to find her language. Weaving together Hudes's love of books with the stories of her family, the lessons of North Philly with those of Yale, this is an inspired exploration of home, memory, and belonging--narrated by an obsessed girl who fought to become an artist so she could capture the world she loved in all its wild and delicate beauty.

Hijas Americanas

In *Hijas Americanas*, author Rosie Molinary sheds new light on what it means to grow up Latina. Drawing upon her own experiences, as well as interviews and surveys collected from more than 500 Latina women, Molinary provides a powerful understanding of the inner conflicts and powerful triumphs of Latinas. The women profiled in this book are Caribbean, Mexican, Central American, and South American. These first-, second-, and third-generation Latinas have all grappled with the experience of coming of age within not one but two cultures — that of the United States, and that of their familial homelands. *Hijas Americanas* addresses experiences that are uniquely female and Latin, focusing on themes of body image, standards of beauty, ethnic identity, and sexuality. In doing so, Molinary gives voice to the struggles and successes of Latinas across racial, sexual, and cultural identities, emphasizing that the challenges inherent in growing up between two cultures can positively shape Latinas' lives.

For Brown Girls with Sharp Edges and Tender Hearts

The founder of Latina Rebels' "electrifying debut" (*LA Times*) arms women of color with the tools and knowledge they need to find success on their own terms. For generations, Brown girls have had to push against powerful forces of sexism, racism, and classism, often feeling alone in the struggle. By founding Latina Rebels, Prisca Dorcas Mojica Rodríguez has created a community to help women fight together. In *For Brown Girls with Sharp Edges and Tender Hearts*, she offers wisdom and a liberating path forward for all women of color. She crafts powerful ways to address the challenges Brown girls face, from imposter syndrome to colorism. She empowers women to decolonize their worldview, and defy "universal" white narratives, by telling their own stories. Her book guides women of color toward a sense of pride and sisterhood and offers essential tools to energize a movement.

Wise Latinas

College can be a complex time for Latinas, who are traditionally expected to leave home when they get married. *Wise Latinas* is a collection of personal essays addressing the varied landscape of the Latina experience in higher education. For some Latinas, college, where they are vastly underrepresented, is the first time they are immersed in American culture outside their homes—and where the values of two cultures often clash. *Wise Latinas* is in part a response to this widening gap. Featuring acclaimed writers such as Sandra Cisneros, Norma Cantú, and Julia Alvarez, to name a few, *Wise Latinas* shows that there is no one Latina college experience. With thoughtful and engaging pieces, *Wise Latinas* provides a platform for Latina writers to share their experiences in higher education and gives a voice to the many Latina women who have taken risks; embraced the new, confronted change; and maintained (and in some cases found) their roots.