

The BreakBeat Poets

New American Poetry in the Age of Hip-Hop

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Haymarket Books

Hood

In memory of smokestack lighting, red brick wall & wait, graffiti buzz scrawled high & wrong the misspelled misrepresented; in sweet run sour, endless slabs of cement, bath of street lamp, gutter litter, alley to alley end zone, BB gun aim, tree climb, bird's eye view, calls ignored for lunch, for supper (sorry, too busy in branches); in the wake of Uncle Buddy's fist & forearm through side door glass, ambulance on our would-be 50 yard line, suture map of fold & tuck, flesh envelope. *No need for meds*, he thinks, *I'm fine* (never mind the call to swallow); in contempt of stilted tongue, shuttle black alphabets like lost blood—L&N wind & lash, KY to TN—or skip prattle like hopscotch grids in lime, lemon, pink electric—asphalt body rock—until there is no curb between street & skin—warm, black, waved.

Kristiana Colón (1986)

a remix for remembrance *for my students*

This is for the boys whose bedrooms are in the basement,
who press creases into jeans, who carve their names in pavement,
the girls whose names are ancient, ancestry is sacred
The Aztec and the Mayan gods abuela used to pray with

This is for the dangerous words hiding in the pages
of composition notes, holy books and Sanskrit
This is for the patients who wait for medication
for the mothers microwaving beans and rice at day's end

This is for the marching bands and girls at quinceñeras
The skaters and the writers whose moms are eloteras,
laughing "Cops don't scare us, we sag so elders fear us"
We will rewrite our textbooks in our own language if you dare us"

This is for the Sarahs, the Angelicas, and Shawns,
the Beatrices, Paolas, Danielas, and the dawns
we scribble sunlight in the margins of horizons with our songs
for all the voices tangled with the silence on our tongues

Rivals in the parks, fireworks at dark,
tired shirts that sweat your scent on hangers in the closet
For the boys who fix the faucet while their sister fixes coffee
'cause mommy had to leave for work at 6 AM and laundry
isn't folded yet: you don't have to hold your breath

You don't have to behave. Stage your own rebellion
paint canvases with rage, and religion, and prayers for pilgrims
sleeping in the train cars at the border and their children
Filibust the Senate and bust markers on the Pink Line
Stain the prosecution's case and force the judge to resign,
force the crowd to rewind the lyrics you invented

Speak away the limits to heights of your existence
Be a witness, be a record, be a testament, a triumph
Set your poems flying in the glitter of the planets
Feed open mouths with truth, the truth is we are famished
The Universe is starving for the symphonies you play
Clarinets and thunder and the syllables you say
are the instruments: you are infinite. Stretch your hands to heaven
Let your throat throttle the rhythms of all your fallen brethren
Your legacy is present, your history is now
You are the tenth degree of sound
You are the nephews of the sky
You are the bass line and the hi hat and the snare drum and the cry
of red Septembers. You're the architects of winter
You are the builders of the roads that you're told you don't remember
 You are the builders of the roads that you're told you don't
 remember
 You are the builders of the roads that you're told you don't
 remember

Cast poems in the river and tell them you remember
Skate City Hall to splinters and tell them you remember
Send diamonds to your islands and tell them you remember
Find your God inside your mirror and tell Her you remember

PEDRO

S E L E C T E D P O E T R Y

PIETRI

Edited by Juan Flores and Pedro López Adorno



City Lights Books | San Francisco

INTERMISSION FROM MONDAY

have to leave the city
because sidewalks are sidewalks
parking meters are parking meters
and heavy traffic is very heavy
I know I will miss myself very much
every single second I am not around
but if I don't get out of town
blank walls might become blank walls
and that I cannot tolerate at all

have to leave the city
before my breakfast gets suspicious
and calls an ambulance to take me away
applauding a battle that was lost
because it made society safe for anxiety
O my lunch will be extremely lonely
and get cold and have to be discarded
when I am not around to stare at it
in the presence of gigantic noise makers

have to leave the city
when what you see is what you see
and what you don't see you don't see
and the imagination is classified
as excess luggage at the airport
where picture frames are picture frames
and the lines get longer and longer
for first class tickets on a bookshelf
where a poet has become a poet
to everyone except himself