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In the Shadows of the Freeway: Growing Up Brown and Queer by
Lydia R. Otero (review)

W. James Burns

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Dukakis's efforts to sell himself as an effective technocrat who could responsibly take the country in a new direction fell flat against Bush's more emotionally resonant campaign.

The vice-presidential selection of Indiana senator Dan Quayle is also covered and described as a nagging liability for the Bush campaign, though this also provides more evidence for the research demonstrating that running mates make little difference to presidential election outcomes. The fundamentals, however, prevailed, in concert with a strong Bush campaign and ineffective messaging from Dukakis. The overall economy was strong, the nation was at peace, and tensions with the Soviet Union were declining. These variables worked to the incumbent party's advantage.

Most significantly, the author tells readers how the 1988 campaign left a legacy that remains relevant for us today. Bush's presidency exposed the vulnerabilities of Reagan conservatism and revealed cracks in the Republican coalition that seemed so solid in the 1980s. Exploitation of the William Horton case paid political dividends for Bush in 1988, but marred relations between Republicans and African Americans in future years. For their own part, the Democrats made major changes to their party after suffering from significant losses in four out of five presidential elections.

Readers who want a deep dive into the quantitative results will not find it here, but there are numerous political science publications that already do that. This book is a helpful and comprehensive account that provides readers with a glimpse of what presidential campaigns looked like a generation ago.

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In the Shadows of the Freeway: Growing Up Brown and Queer. By Lydia R. Otero. (Tucson: Planet Earth Press, 2019. Pp. 210. \$18.95 paperback)

Intersectionality defines the genre of *In the Shadows of the Freeway: Growing Up Brown and Queer* as much as it does the author's identity. Born in the wake of the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, on Valentine's/Statehood Day 1955, Lydia Otero knew they were queer from the moment they could understand difference.¹ Only later did they learn that

¹ Dr. Otero's preferred pronouns are they/them/their.

brownness was another form of difference that would shape their life. The constant awareness of otherness pervades this chronicle of one lived experience growing up in Tucson between 1955 and 1973.

Scholars in many fields, Chicana/Latina, ethnic, gender, queer, Southwest borderlands, and urban studies, as well as history and geography, will find themselves drawn to this memoir. A departure from Otero's prior, strictly academic writings, *In the Shadows of the Freeway* is equal parts autoethnography and history. Otero masterfully weaves together their own remembrances of Tucson during that time with primary sources such as newspaper accounts, manuscripts, dissertations, and some of their own earlier work. Assiduously researched, this work documents social, cultural, and physical dislocations in the context of personal narrative. The result is simultaneously irresistible, painful, humble, and unafraid.

Queerness, racism, classism, and urban renewal are the themes that draw the reader in as Otero unburdens themselves of emotions as fresh today as six decades ago. Indeed, the motifs could as easily be portraying Tucson between the turn of the twenty-first century and today. Though the city has grown exponentially, the issues remain similar, and the solutions elusive.

Otero probes inequities in systems, whether educational, economic, political, environmental, or social, based on race, class, gender, and queerness. They do not purport to have the answers to these acrimonious problems, but they do know the tragic effects on human life. Plagued with multiple deaths in the family attributable to the unfavorable conditions created by urban renewal and the disparities between isolated Kroege Lane barrio, where Otero grew up, and the increasingly wealthy and white areas in the northern and eastern parts of the city, the memories of loss are palpable.

Despite the adversity they faced, Otero is resilient, reconciling their love of place and family with the realities of the city they have long called home. Their remembrances are stark: "being brown and queer and from Farmington Road framed my perceptions of myself and how those from the outside world saw me. When I call up my earliest memories, I think of dirt" (p. 6). Hardships were plentiful: their house constantly flooded, they had no streetlights, sidewalks, or parks like white children in wealthier parts of town, and they were surrounded by environmental hazards. Flood abatement in wealthier parts of town resulted in the diversion of floodwaters through Otero's barrio. Water flowed through their home, which "had concrete floors . . . and other furniture sat on bricks that kept them raised above the floor . . . not based on my parents' design choices" (p. 46).

The narratives of oppression unfold as the pages turn, intertwining Otero's cultural heritage with their queerness, embodied by their nickname, La Butch. Otero recalls: "My queerness never faded into the background, and it stood at the core of almost every dialogue that took place in my head and every decision I made" (p. 4). The reader is left wanting to hear more about the constant tug of war between identity and a desire to forge a better life, and how that shaped Otero's path.

Misplaced in a program called IC, Otero's earliest educational experience did not bode well for the future. English-dominant, like their parents, Otero spoke but a few words of Spanish, yet school administrators made assumptions based on skin color that Otero "and those like me needed remedial English and Americanization because we lived on the wrong side of town and were therefore inherently deficient in language and culture. The school district endorsed the segregation of brown students into the IC program on the pretext that we would hold back the English speakers" (p. 97).

Faced with the stark reality of how the outside world saw Otero, they could have retreated inside and chosen to hide their gender non-conformity to escape further social disapproval. Instead, they subverted traditional gender roles, quickly learning how to survive in a system built to disadvantage both brown and queer individuals. Otero did not give the system the power to define their life or limit their opportunities.

Resiliency does not mean that Otero's experiences did not leave scars. They recall: "I have had many decades to reflect upon the enduring, damaging effects that IC had on my self-esteem, influencing the innermost thoughts about myself. I also realize now that institutions work to foster the belief in nonwhite children that the colonizer's culture is superior to their own. My experience of IC caused more than embarrassment. It was a physical and psychological assault that evoked shame" (pp. 118–19). Despite systemic oppression, Otero beat the odds, leaving Tucson to attend college, an achievement they understood as significant. Lest the reader be tempted to view this as a "they pulled themselves up by their bootstraps" narrative, Otero makes clear that inequities still exist.

Referencing their earlier work, *La Calle: Spatial Conflict and Urban Renewal in a Southwest City*, Otero foregrounds the raw emotions still present in Tucson surrounding the destruction of Barrio Libre, where her parents grew up, to build the Tucson Convention Center. Examples of unbridled gentrification of the remaining portions of the barrio are interspersed with remembrances of Otero's mother (Chita) cursing in Spanish as they drove by the convention center. One can almost hear Chita's likely commentary about today's relentless push to gentrify

Menlo Park, just to the west of downtown Tucson, and north of Kroeger Lane Barrio, to shore up the ever-struggling central business district.

Validating and empowering, *In the Shadows of the Freeway* offers a respite for anyone contending with a world hostile to perceived otherness, whether based on race, gender, or another identity characteristic. Otero promises us more works about their life and the ever-present struggle for equity.

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Reel Latinxs: Representation in U.S. Film and TV. By Frederick Luis Aldama and Christopher González. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2019. Pp. 192. \$22.95 paperback; \$22.95 ebook)

When rumors about the possible cancellation of Netflix's *One Day at a Time* started to circulate in 2019, a social media movement calling for its renewal emerged almost immediately. Latinx activist groups, celebrities, and the show's general audience gathered around #RenewODAAT to ask for a new season of the critically acclaimed sitcom about the Alvarizes, a Cuban-American family in Los Angeles. The show was not about drug lords, maids, petty criminals, and sexed-up lovers embedded in lazy storytelling. In contrast, it was about a complexly layered Latinx family that turned stereotypes upside down. This was possible, in many ways, because of work like *Reel Latinxs: Representation in U.S. Film and TV* and the "continued need for consciousness-raising through our scholarship, teaching, and boots-on-the-ground activism" (p. 7).

This book offers a comprehensive yet provocative point of departure to explore further the cultural history of Latinxs in the media. By analyzing representations in both TV and film, authors Frederick Luis Aldama and Christopher González remind us that Latinx stereotypes still circulate on the big and small screens. The volume also uncovers moments of challenge and disruption in response to a repertoire of misrepresentations throughout history. Examples of the latter, often unexplored by scholars, result in more complex and nuanced representations of Latinx community subjectivities, experiences, and narratives. In this project, the authors produce an overview of texts (including their