

L E F T

T U R N S



I SANDRA RUIZ N

B R O W N

S T U D Y

LEFT TURNS IN BROWN STUDY

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T U R N S

I S A N D R A R U I Z N

B R O W N

S T U D Y

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DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS DURHAM AND LONDON 2024

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Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞

Project Editor: Liz Smith

Designed by Matthew Tauch

Typeset in Archivo Expanded and Degular by Copperline Book Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Ruiz, Sandra, [date] author.

Title: Left turns in brown study / Sandra Ruiz.

Other titles: Writing matters! (Duke University Press)

Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2024. | Series: Writing matters! |

Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2023040667 (print)

LCCN 2023040668 (ebook)

ISBN 9781478030126 (paperback)

ISBN 9781478025863 (hardcover)

ISBN 9781478059110 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Grief—Poetry. | Grief in literature. | Minorities in literature. |

Postcolonialism in literature. | Literature and race—United States. | American

literature—Hispanic American authors—History and criticism. | BISAC: POETRY /

American / Hispanic & Latino | LITERARY CRITICISM / Poetry | LCGFT: Poetry.

Classification: LCC PS3618.U547 L44 2024 (print) | LCC PS3618.U547 (ebook) |

DDC 810.9/3529—dc23/eng/20240501

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2023040667>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2023040668>

Cover art: Photo by author.

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C O N T E N T S

THE RETURN (*WHERE WE WERE & WILL BE AGAIN*): AN ENTRY THE PRETURN
IF WE WERE DEAD *JUANGO* & ROLAND THE PAST OF AN IMAGE SPLITTING
AIR WHERE THE TIMID TAKE THEIR NOSES FOR A WALK MISCARRIED FOR
THE PEOPLE FROM THE STARS INNER-CITY JUICE BOXES BLEMISH (*TITLED
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A DESK SCORE FOR THE SAND I REMEMBER US TALKING ABOUT LACAN
THROUGH J ANYBODY'S ANYBODY THE EARLESS SHARK OR STILL A JANI-
TOR'S KID DECEMBER'S THIRD: THE ENDNOTE FLAWED I'M POSSIBLE TOO
OR FLAWED IMPOSSIBLE TO THE FUTURE OF THE FUTURE EPHEMERALITY'S
BREEZE EPILOGUES & CIRCLES ALTAR GIRLS *EN FAJARDO* END WITH BIRDS
(*ONCE WE ALL FLEW*) UNBODYING GRUNT BASQUIAT'S RIDE MOMENTUM'S
SECRET WITH WE TEN SCENES IN GARGOYLES PREMONITIONS: *UNTURNED*
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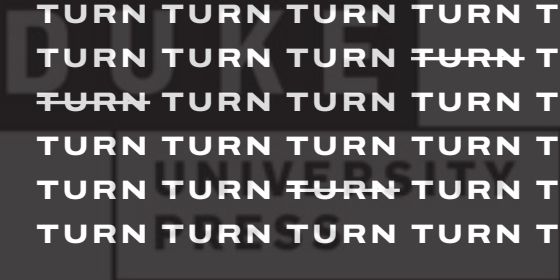
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THE RETURN (WHERE WE WERE & WILL BE AGAIN): AN ENTRY

Every day, year (any date)

During the early morning (some time)

I've been returning with the dead since I can remember listening.

Readings & writings that moved past any alphabetic entry into the sonic refrain—what kinds of sounds muster life across a chorus of energies, desires for returning? I've been returning since I sensed my father couldn't use paper & pen to weaponize against oppression, not because he wasn't "educated," but unschooled. Trained in the modifications of street verse & the will to return to that place & time & thought that might release him from being unread, unknown, unheard, he spoke with spirits & there was listening.

Left Turns in Brown Study was written aloud, for & with them, for & with listening.

I often read to him, turning the pages between languages, countries & dreams; you know, letters, notes, street signs, medical forms, unrequited hiring ambitions & memories of mothers, motherlands—there were always stories to be retold to one day be returned. That is to say that I learned that any type of study would require the embrace of spirits & ghosts (his & all of mine) for anything learned, written, shared, belonged only tangentially to me; mostly everything was his, theirs.

The colonial world has been calling them *the dead*, but the dead are always living powerfully within the confines of empires.

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Study, then, leaves one (*to be left, to be left*) in an ongoing Brown meditation, a nonlinear suffering that is also the kindness of liberation & life returned in citation. Unlike my ancestors, who were not granted the luxury to spend days dropped into gloomy intellectual embrace, I learned to use written words to mobilize worlds, mostly from sounds, mostly from them.

Just because ghosts & spirits refuse print does not mean they refuse syllables.

I heard everything. I heard everything I saw in aura. I heard everything I felt across bodies. We heard them. We wrote them. We listened. This book is written from the ear, from their sounds to all of mine, in the intricate intervals of conjoined scores.

Left Turns in Brown Study mourns the dead as study & understands study as an ongoing death that prospers in citational turns. The collection oscillates between poetry & theory into the worlding/wordings of Brownness, synchronic shifts in feeling, thinking, being, grieving, acting, doing, reading, writing, sensing, listening that suggest, in returning, one uncovers the promise of studying together.

Always alive, always awaiting the moment to be enacted, returns are visceral responses, sometimes rejections for reconsideration, investment & always intentional movements in reciprocity that go back to give back to get back, disappear to reappear, implying *where we were and will be again*. An entry re(turned).

Left Turns in Brown Study, written for & with a chosen symphony of ghosts & spirits, follows the call & response of all sorts of death that lead one through litanies of loss, mourning rituals & the spiraling cages of modes of difference. Working from within theory & activism by mostly Black & Brown thinkers, the text attempts to link several concepts as an entangled operation: brown study as connected to Brownness, Brownness as always a type of liberatory mourning, the turn as an ideological, political & intellectual heuristic, learning as ongoing grief & grievance, writing as citational death/life & the typographical-turn-page as a new methodology for signaling emancipatory directives in study.

The poems, theory fragments, endnotes, lyrical essays, entries, letters & typographical-turn-pages across this collection bridge brown study & Brownness by presenting the theoretical apparatus of the turn—turns we make in thinking, reading, writing & study—including, but not limited to, a Brown type of study that turns to citation to call forward a series of minoritarian energies that reframe archival repositories. In doing so, each turn left offers Brownness as a practice of engagement, for harboring loss & its possibility for more abundant ways of living together more queerly. *Left Turns* is invested in utopia, queer possibility, poetics & the fluid communities these forms hail.

From belated mentors to illiterate ancestors to victims of colonial violence across institutional sites, including instructional spaces, to following the politics of spiritual logic, *Left Turns* grapples with all types of institutional grief, grievance & giving(s), or the ways we learn to carry these legacies as minoritarian subjects of/with the dead in constant acts of mourning.

The poems, divided into sections by typographical-turn-pages, directly engage one another to reorder, reject, revitalize, reconsider, recognize (in style & content) the colonial mandates of gender, sexuality, race, nation, family, territory, class, literacy & learning by traveling across time in form & formatting. Sections of poems, marked by typographical-turn-pages, hold the reader's hand, asking them to turn left to turn into a sound, phrase, idea, to connect the syllables into meanings for anticolonial ways of reading, writing, listening, mourning.

These left turns move in counterclockwise fashion to reorient the dominant circular motions of time & space. But these left turns can also be perilous, requiring the reader to intentionally move with & through blind spots, a way of reading that doesn't privilege sight, but reorders it. Repeated lines, words, sounds, phrases, verses, throughout the volume, redirect the reader to fundamental rhythms of listening again in doing study.

As the reader turns, *their left turns* work to also suggest that all modes of difference are categories of & vessels for mourning.

Everything foundationally presented as indexically stable, for example race, contains the vestiges of loss, an ongoing return to returning through citational practice & politic. The category's inherent instability rattles the human condition & the poems attempt to resuscitate breath. For in every passing breath we gather for one another in choreographed repetition—a respired turn in returning.

Perhaps our intentional desire to be together exceeds the demise of death as the aftermath of living. Perhaps we can find one another in the turn to return, in the citational politics that render forgotten Brown lives beautiful and meaningful. Brownness, for instance, operates as an ongoing homage that does not merely exist in negation, excess & lack, but across immaterial lingerings that manifest energies always already energizing. Brownness is not only a relational or comparative construction, but an entangled orchestration, joined to other floating & changing modes of difference, which include layers of loss imposed by & built from institutional & educational infrastructure.

So, what can the turn to, not the turn away, provide us as readers, thinkers, studiers & inevitably always already mourners? What if Brownness is just a turn? A return to study?¹ What would it mean to return, not as an injured attachment, but an act of deliberate study? A return to the loss that turns again? What does turning left manifest, uphold in reality & fantasy, warrant in social politics & how do these left turns leave us with what's left to handle & maybe burn?

Even ashes remain in plentiful reminder to remind us of what is to return. So, if we must perpetually mourn, let's not do it alone. If we must write of mourning, let's not elaborate singularly. If we must turn into something, some thought, let us turn left together, not away from one another. If we must return to Brown study, let's turn to the sounding crevasses of Brownness as precision, an iterative listening across ensembles of genre like poetic form, theory & criticism. For no matter how it is reproduced, Brownness is always citation.²

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- 1 Turn to "The Pretturn" for how this kind of study is enacted in a lyrical essay marking ghosts, spirits, ideas, schools of thought & dialogues between thinkers.
 - 2 The repetition of certain words is called upon by the spirits. When we write, think & cite, we participate in a form of death making that is essentially life affirming. We recall that energies, entities, ideas exist infinitely in citation. The spirits share the following (in paraphrase): repetition is a preplanned ritual, a refrain resung; in saying/citing one is incapable of not returning to one another. (What if we can't?) Put out your hands, palms up & receive the turn.

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IN BROWN STUDY