*Clap For Me That's Not Me,* by Paola Capó-Garcia rev. by Carina Baca

Rescue Press, 2018

Paola Capó-Garcia is the author of the poetry collection *Clap For Me That's Not Me.* Capó-Garcia is a Puerto Rican poet, educator, translator, and the co-founder/editor of *littletell.* In *Clap For Me That's Not Me,* Capó-Garcia’s poems serve as a reflection of her Latinidad and Spanish voice through her lived experiences from childhood to adulthood. When it comes to identities, especially ethnic identities, one may find themselves in a struggle between honoring one's ancestor language and culture while trying to assimilate to the culture they find themselves in growing up. Capó-Garcia touches on this topic throughout her whole collection of poems, expressing her loss of her Spanish voice in writing and how some things she can only express in Spanish. This raw collection of poems captures this writer’s journey in a common struggle of bilingual identity and self, femininity, and decolonial desires.

Capó-Garcia’s style of writing is simple and yet so complex in its content. There are many poetic aspects that make *Clap For Me That's Not Me* so captivating from beginning to end. The use of various depths of sensory detail, form, sound, and tone take the reader on a rollercoaster of emotions from longing, to laughing, to anger, to passion, and love. Capó-Garcia’s combat- boot- wearing bright lipstick and skater dress energy lures the reader into her mind as she takes us through gut wrenching, tender, perverse, yet satisfying pieces of writing.

The first section of the collection of poems is untitled like the rest of the sections. Although based on the titles of the poems in that section, such as “Series,” “Boyness,” “Maricón,” and “Best Self,” allows the reader to acknowledge the focus of self-reflection in a multitude of identities. Capó-Garcia starts “Series” with:

“I’d love to be a series of “waking up” montages but I like Gloria’s idea that dreaming is like playing with one’s Self the Self that wants to say things but can’t because it has so much stuff in its mouth and it’s choking and in the dream it can swallow”

The imagery and imagination of this stanza brings to life the complexity of what one wants to say, do, believe, and be but cannot freely do so. It depicts an internal battle between the self and what one’s soul yearns for. In a sense, stating that sometimes one can only be free in their dreams. From this message one can gather the energy that is produced throughout the rest of the poems, a reflection of something so raw, thoughtful, and beautiful.

Further on in this section, there is a stanza in a poem called “Mobility” that goes as follows:

“I keep finding people living in my house mouths I’ve never see expressions through paint chips and light fixtures I keep coming back to this place I label “house” because my plane tickets are designed to get me here and the bed has been made in the shape of an invitation”

This poem particularly stood out to me because the author’s use of caesura forces the reader to take a pause as the diction flows and takes you to an image of a multitude of personas in one. The author’s use of imagery always captures the reader’s attention, and it conveys a feeling of overwhelm and sense of belonging. The use of variance in tone and emotion allows the reader to feel the emotional connection between the carefully gasping lines Capó-Garcia writes.

Lastly, a section that needs to be addressed is the second section where the poems are not titled, yet still make the greatest portion of this book. Like I mentioned before, the narrator’s identity as a Latina and her Spanish tongue is one of the main focuses in her series of poems. Throughout the entirety of this creative piece, she mentions the colonization of culture, language, and self as she throws in Spanish words and phrases in her lines. One of my favorite poems in this section says:

“I do some things better in Spanish:

cheering for sports teams

road rage

pillow talk

sheer indignation

talking to my mother (50%)

talking to my sister (40%)

Talking to God or higher entity or “something” (25%)

shock and awe”

This section is like a tongue that cannot be tamed, it is the author’s acceptance and pride of herself, despite the internal and external battles. The use of enjambment and lack of punctuation allows so much flow from the author’s deepest thoughts to the reader's tongue as emotions are allowed to flow freely, no barriers, no boundaries.

This poetry collection was like anything I have ever read before. *Clap For Me That's Not Me* is a raw self-reflection piece that depicts the battle of self and identities and the world surrounding us. It is a collection for those who like to feel, laugh, reflect, enjoy, and ponder the existence of self and life.