

## REVIEW ARTICLE

### RECENT WORK IN CARIBBEAN LITERATURE

Amanda Perry

New York University

- 208** DAVIES, CAROLE BOYCE. *Caribbean Spaces: Escapes from Twilight Zones*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2013.

FRYDMAN, JASON. *Sounding the Break: African American and Caribbean Routes of World Literature*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2014.

MARTINEZ-SAN MIGUEL, YOLANDA. *Coloniality of Diasporas: Rethinking Intra-colonial Migrations in a Pan-Caribbean Context*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

ORLANDO, VALERIE, AND SANDRA CYPRESS (EDS.). *Reimagining the Caribbean: Conversations among the Creole, English, French, and Spanish Caribbean*. Lexington Books, 2014.

Fifteen years ago, scholarship that addressed Caribbean literature in light of the region's linguistic diversity was relatively limited. The issue was not necessarily a preference for national genealogies, as the region's major works have long been studied in transnational contexts—variously divided into postcolonial, francophone, and Latin American frames of reference. Rather, the institutional divisions of language departments and the competencies of individual scholars made linguistic barriers more tenacious, such that Derek Walcott would be placed in conversation with Salman Rushdie or Wole Soyinka more often than fellow poet Nicolás Guillén. That tendency has shifted, however, and the four works reviewed here are symptomatic of those changes. Each of them brings together texts from the English, French, and Spanish-speaking Caribbean, stressing the broader interconnectedness of the region over and against what the editors of *Reimagining the Caribbean* call a “balkanizing” approach (xvii). Taken together, these works implicitly raise the question: what, pre-

cisely, are the grounds for comparison? What are the mechanisms that make such comparison plausible, convincing, and effective?

The historical processes that encourage treating the Caribbean as a coherent cultural space are by now well rehearsed. All territories have been subject to some form of radical external domination, at times by multiple colonial powers; most were deeply marked by slavery and plantation labour; intraregional migratory flows in the twentieth century continued the creolizing process; peoples from various parts of the Caribbean frequently live side by side in the diaspora. That said, there remain good reasons for treating literary traditions separately. While some writers like Jacques Stephen Alexis, Eric Walrond, Alejo Carpentier, and Maryse Condé demonstrate a robust sense of a pan-Caribbean literary and cultural formation, many others are monolingual and, given the comparative difficulties of regional travel, may not have first-hand experience of other parts of the region. In a context where translations are not always forthcoming, cross-linguistic intertextuality is frequently limited to a number of usual suspects, chief among them Aimé Césaire. It is thus telling that none of the studies here focus on documenting concrete intellectual exchanges between major authors, such as the Jacques Roumain, Nicolas Guillén, and Langston Hughes triad. Instead, they opt for thematic analyses that seek resonance between contexts that can be considered in some way parallel. In justifying this approach, Édouard Glissant and Antonio Benítez-Rojo emerge as clear theoretical favourites, as both push against nation-based frameworks to reach for more evocative imaginings of the region: for Glissant, it is an “archipelago” that enables non-hierarchical cultural exchange, while Benítez-Rojo famously uses the metaphor of the repeating island to capture the tension between fragmentation and resemblance.

209

Of the texts reviewed here, Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel’s excellent *Coloniality of Diasporas: Rethinking Intra-Colonial Migrations in a Pan-Caribbean Context* is the most explicitly concerned with disrupting nation-based interpretive models. She continually turns to moments when nationalism falters, whether they be in nineteenth century novels that are too ambivalent to serve as foundational fictions or twentieth century narratives of women forced into exile because of their transgressive sexual practices. Though she also deals with writers from the Anglophone Caribbean, her most important examples are from Puerto Rico and Martinique, islands whose continued attachment to imperial powers denaturalizes the ideal of the sovereign nation state. Martínez-San Miguel is furthermore interested in the formative role of “intra-colonial migration” in the region, or migration within the bounds of a former or actual empire, emphasizing that such movement reveals the contradictory status of many Caribbean subjects, who may be legal citizens and yet are excluded from the national imaginary. This focus on empire leads Martínez-San Miguel to extend her analysis as far as the colonial Philippines, stressing its links with colonial Latin America and, above all, Cuba and Puerto Rico. Interestingly, she is less willing to address the continental territories in the Caribbean basin, arguing that “there is a particular colonial political structure that seems to be unique in the case of overseas

insular possessions and that tends to circumvent the formation of sovereign national states more often” (10)—French Guiana being the obvious but unmentioned exception. Though she does not provide a full account of this “particular colonial political structure,” Martínez-San Miguel does effectively leverage the variety of political statuses held by Caribbean islands to challenge paradigms in Latin American studies that are tied to nation formation and query the applicability of postcolonial theory, given its predominant concern with countries that became independent in the mid-twentieth century.

210 Central to this project is the concept of “coloniality.” Derived from Aníbal Quijano’s notion of the colonality of power, the term is most often used in Latin American studies to indicate the continuance of colonial power structures by the Creole elite following political independence. For Martínez-San Miguel, the concept is useful for discussing the non-sovereign Caribbean because it circumvents conventional dichotomies that posit colonialism and nationalism as mutually exclusive, allowing her to discuss oppressive structures without necessarily positioning sovereignty as their solution. The approach is a productive one that travels well across historical periods. She displays impressive range, challenging the habitual predominance of twentieth century literature in Caribbean studies by including texts from as far back as the early seventeenth century. Remarkably, she even manages to include a section on pirates—that pop culture fixation that so often crops up in the first week of undergraduate courses—that feels appropriate in a monograph that also addresses Franz Fanon and Césaire. Martínez-San Miguel reads Alonso Ramírez and Père Labat as “crypto-pirates” whose narratives continually defect from an imperial script to explore their own desires; their ambivalent texts “question vassalage and protonationalism, while they privilege dislocation” (37). These accounts allow her to position dislocation as a central feature of some of the region’s earliest narratives, providing a refreshing long durée perspective on a commonplace of Caribbean criticism.

Other chapters deal with more canonical writers paired in innovative ways. Martínez-San Miguel reads Cuban Cirilio Verde’s *Cecilia Valdés* with Filipino José Rizal’s *El filibusterismo* to argue that both novels refuse to provide convincing proto-national protagonists, while Césaire’s poetry joins that of Puerto Rican Luis Muñoz Marín as examples of poetic projects more concerned with establishing human dignity than agitating for state sovereignty. Franz Fanon’s *Black Skin White Masks* finds its parallel in Piri Thomas’s *Down These Mean Streets*, as both stage the affirmation of a black identity as a reaction to metropolitan racism, while Caribbeaness is relegated to “excess.” Throughout, Martínez-San Miguel’s readings are nuanced and theoretically informed, and her focus on the failure of sovereignty to appear as a solution to social ills lends the monograph coherence.

Her last section is less strictly linked to questions of national sovereignty and brings gender, already integral to her critique of Fanon and Thomas, more clearly to the forefront of her analysis. She reads debates over creoles—Kamau Brathwaite’s

*History of the Voice*, the *Éloge de la Créolité* manifesto, and, more surprisingly, Ana Celia Zentella's sociological work on Spanglish—in relation to the work of women writers who problematize the connection between language and identity, between motherhood and mother tongue. The chapter is uneven, as her section on Brathwaite, the créolistes, and Zentella risks privileging contextualization over critique, doing little to establish a dialogue between the three. That said, her readings of texts by Ana Lydia Vega, Michelle Cliff, and Gisèle Pineau that feature “strategic mulatas” who are “far from representing simplistic narratives of nationalist pride or complete metropolitan assimilation” (161) are much more compelling. There is a not quite articulated anxiety here that, despite their historical stigmatization, creoles and Spanglish might also be positioned as repositories of national authenticity. If so, the “strategic mulata” resists such a move. The final chapter on “sexile” grapples with the displacement of queer subjects by heteronormative discourses and structures. Despite the invocation of queer studies, most of her examples deal with the policing of heterosexual female erotics that are interfamilial or interracial. Her analysis of Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* is thus something of a relief, as it explicitly deals with non-heterosexual desire and ties the chapter back to her concern with the shortcomings of national models. She reads the novel's ambiguous conclusion as a sign of disenchantment with revolutionary narratives and indeed with the nation state; had David Scott's *Omens of Adversity* been published earlier, one would have expected her to tackle his argument that the failure of the Grenada Revolution is central to this shift.

211

If Martínez-San Miguel risks overstretching her argument, it is by blurring the distinction between islands that are and are not sovereign. As she writes, “even in the case of strong states...the prevalence of colonial, Eurocentric imaginaries clearly questions the applicability of the postcolonial paradigm to study the Caribbean” (195). Such a comment needs substantially more qualification: after all, one could argue that Eurocentric imaginaries remain prevalent in any number of countries that experienced decolonization in the 1960s, and that postcolonial paradigms, rather than insisting on radical ruptures, are well-attuned to tracing these continuities. Indeed, despite the back cover claiming her work “redefines the Caribbean beyond the postcolonial debate,” Martínez-San Miguel's most common target is not postcolonial theory but nationalism. In that regard, she could give more consideration to the comparative amenability of certain literary traditions to nationalist framings: Cuba and Haiti come to mind. Overall, however, Martínez-San Miguel's work is an excellent contribution to the field, and her concluding invitation to consider “a national identity that is polymorphous and perverse” (193) is deeply compelling. The unusual political status of many Caribbean islands is too often treated as a contradiction that must be minimized in order to fit them into other theoretical paradigms. By repositioning those statuses as cause for incisive analysis, Martínez-San Miguel provides an invaluable model of insightful scholarship that both attends to the region's specificity and links it to conversations in adjacent fields.

Jason Frydman's *Sounding the Break: African American and Caribbean Routes of*

*World Literature* takes a very different approach, framing Caribbean and African American literature through contemporary debates on the viability of world literature as a scholarly and pedagogical framework. His monograph is part of the New World Studies series at University of Virginia Press, which consistently publishes work on the Caribbean that moves across English, French, and Spanish literary traditions. Of course, Frydman is not concerned exclusively with the Caribbean. He tackles three African American authors—W.E.B. DuBois, Zora Neale Hurston, and Toni Morrison—while the Anglophone, Francophone, and Hispanophone Caribbean have banner representatives in the forms of Derek Walcott, Maryse Condé, and Alejo Carpentier. Using as a framing device the intriguing story of Edward Wilmot Blyden, who moved from the Danish West Indies to Liberia in the 1850s and established ties to the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut, Frydman seeks to uncover “a deep history of worldly narrative and generic traffic from the Indian Ocean up the Red Sea, around the Mediterranean and across the Atlantic” (7) in his chosen texts. He thus reads them as “an archive of...palimpsests, excavations of ‘historical traces’ attesting to the longue durée of a world literature extending from before Goethe’s now to a twentieth-century Atlantic and Caribbean” (6).

212

As the writers he focuses on could easily be interpolated into other transnational paradigms, such as Glissant’s “plantation America” or Paul Gilroy’s *Black Atlantic*, one may wonder what Frydman’s specifically “world literature” approach has to offer. He works through the mainstays of world literary criticism, beginning with the almost obligatory citations of Johann Goethe and the *Communist Manifesto*. Throughout, he draws on the work of David Damrosch, Franco Moretti, and Pascale Casanova in order to, respectively, emphasize the movement of tropes and texts across imperial and national boundaries, frame literary production as part of a world system, and conceptualize a transnational publishing market with centers of literary consecration. Lost here is where these scholars disagree, as Frydman steers clear of their more controversial stances, such as Moretti’s “distant reading” and embrace of quantitative methods. In emphasizing the “worldliness” of the works at hand, Frydman privileges those intertexts that fall outside national or regional traditions: Ancient Greek literature and the Arabic *A Thousand and One Nights* recur the most frequently. This focus is most illuminating in Frydman’s reading of DuBois, who he sees as not simply asserting the indebtedness of Ancient Greece to Nubian customs and knowledge systems but as reframing it as part of a network of exchange that includes Africa as a crucial component. In this way, he interrupts any positioning of Ancient Greece as the source of a pure Occidental tradition, instead framing it as a Glissantian space of relation. Frydman further argues that, given the value placed on oral traditions in the classical world, DuBois’s deep engagement with Greek sources allows him to disrupt the association of orality with folk culture and literacy with elite forms, a theme to which Frydman returns throughout the monograph. This careful and persuasive reading both brings DuBois into conversation with the modernist obsession with antiquity while highlighting the distinct political stakes of his

allusions.

Walcott, Carpentier, and Condé are all obvious candidates for a thesis concerning the worldliness of Caribbean literature, given their personal transnational trajectories and the heavily allusive nature of their texts. Frydman concentrates on Walcott's relationship to ancient Greece and to Irish writers J.M. Synge and James Joyce, whereas in Condé's case he links *Ségou* somewhat tenuously to *A Thousand and One Nights* while rightly insisting that her rewrite of *Wuthering Heights* in *La migration des coeurs* has a more ambiguous relation to its source text than a postcolonial "reversal" or revision. The chapter on Carpentier, the only white author who receives in-depth attention, compares his early appropriation of black cultural forms in fashioning a pan-American aesthetic to his later, more nuanced reflections on cross-cultural, cross-racial, and cross-class exchanges, especially in *Los pasos perdidos*. Convincingly, Frydman argues that this nuance is undermined within the American literary market by Carpentier's positioning as an exoticized and, ironically, racialized Latin American writer during the Boom. This is one of the book's strongest chapters, as Frydman balances careful close readings with a demonstration of what is lost in the move between the Latin American literary scene and the U.S. market.

213

Frydman's inclusion of Zora Neale Hurston and Toni Morrison is more surprising, meanwhile, given the common identification of both with African American vernacular culture and, in Morrison's case, even with a certain cultural nationalism. Frydman reads Hurston against her usual positioning as "familiar, intimate, vernacular" (13), to emphasize aspects of her work that trouble the boundary between literary and oral forms and to stress her embeddedness in a cosmopolitan New York literary scene. Morrison receives a similar treatment, with Frydman pushing back against readings of *Song of Solomon* that see it privileging a southern folk aesthetic by emphasizing its Greek allusions, vaguely "Eastern" descriptive passages, and the simultaneous Hebraic and Nigerian sources of the eponymous song. Among contemporary African American writers, there are far more obvious candidates than Morrison for a world literature argument; Charles Johnson comes to mind as a writer whose aggressively cosmopolitan aesthetic establishes dialogue between literary traditions normally considered to be discreet. In making a similar case for Morrison, Frydman risks overvaluing glancing allusions to texts like *The Odyssey* that, while otherwise highly conventional, can be used to show her engagement with non-national literary currents. His interpretations of Hurston and Morrison ultimately raise the question: can anything and everything be reframed as world literature? If so, how useful is this paradigm? It may be worthwhile to insist that such work *can* be approached through this frame, especially if it becomes hegemonic. Frydman's approach is certainly welcome in that it resists inscriptions of African American and Caribbean literature as irremediably local, particularist, or vernacular in their concerns, and his querying of the interplay between textual and oral forms is consistently insightful. That said, while his close readings are invariably strong, they rarely depend on the framework of world literature itself, and his book may not convince

skeptics of this academic trend's incisiveness.

Carole Boyce Davies's *Caribbean Spaces* has the most expansive approach to the Caribbean of the texts under consideration here. She commits herself to an imaginative mapping of the region that is flexible and broad, insisting that "if one remains with that conception of the Caribbean as located somewhere between the North and South America, then one operates from a logic of positioning that seeks only to contain, delimit, circumscribe meaning, and erase a variety of possibilities" (37). In her effort to instead enumerate those possibilities, she pays close attention to "Caribbean diaspora spaces," including descriptions and photographs of Caribbean communities in North America and Europe with gestures as far afield as Australia. While a focus on diaspora is far from new, Boyce Davies also usefully interrupts understandings of such movements as unidirectional "escapes to the north." She combines reflections on Harriet Tubman leading runaway slaves to Canada with the recognition that Florida's late integration into the United States made moving south another means of escaping slavery, and she frames many of her own travels as southward escapes. Furthermore, Boyce Davies insists on the inclusion of Brazil within a Caribbean orbit, highlighting *candomblé* and *quilombismo* as potential connecting mechanisms to Afro-Caribbean religions and to maroon practices.

214

*Caribbean Spaces* is far from a conventional academic text, with enough forays into the autobiographical that it should be considered at least half memoir. This is not entirely surprising, given that her celebrated 1994 work *Black Women, Writing, and Identity: Migrations of the Subject* includes first-person anecdotes that effectively and evocatively intersect with her argument. Her current work goes much further, however, in what she calls "a move between the autobiographical and the conceptual, the experiential and the theoretical, in order to disrupt the logic of exclusionary academic discourse that denies the personal" (6). Alternating chapters detail her personal experiences, while those that have a more academic focus maintain a relatively conversational tone. For Boyce Davies, this is a strategic move, as she writes that "this book is written so that my friends who never made it to university or graduate school, or those who are professionals but rarely read academic books but are also intelligent readers, can read with ease" (7). The autobiographical segments are thoroughly engaging, and not only because of Boyce Davies's willingness to provide us with juicy details about her romantic life. She has traversed several key black intellectual milieus: as a youth growing up in newly independent Trinidad, a student at Howard supervised by négritude cofounder Léon Damas, and a PhD student in Nigeria at the University of Ibadan. Her reflections on her isolation as an "activist scholar" at SUNY-Binghamton will likely resonate with many, as will her characterization of their English department as a "heart of whiteness" (24) and her concerns about the marginalization of African American studies.

The sections that are academically oriented, however, may be frustrating at times for readers seeking a rigorous theoretical engagement. This is especially true of the introduction, where Boyce Davies's meditation on space too frequently veers toward



two-sentence summaries of the work of various theorists. Her range is capacious, extending from Glissant to David Harvey to “recent scientific discoveries” (6), but she neglects to establish dialogue between such thinkers that would clarify her own position. Other chapters provide some promising insights, most notably her introduction of the concept of “black-male-ing” in the section on racialization. Boyce Davies uses the term most cuttingly to describe the erasure of black women in a conceptual triad that focuses on white men, white women, and black men. The resonance with “blackmail” is intentional, as this formulation involves “the constructing of the black male experience as central and oppositional, necessitating that black women be blackmailed into either defending black male behaviours, subordinating themselves, erasing themselves, or occupying the service role” (194). Illustrating this idea in relation to the sexual harassment scandal around the appointment of Supreme Court judge Clarence Thomas, Boyce Davies also emphasizes its reductive and destructive insistence on a narrowly defined black male (hyper)sexuality. Overall, however, scholars may find themselves enjoying most those academic sections in which they have the least background. Thus, I found her exposition of Ashé and its connections to Afro-Brazilian women’s writing evocative, while I was aware that her chapter on Haiti was largely going over well-worn territory, despite the inclusion of fascinating primary materials. Treating the Caribbean expansively necessarily raises the question of breadth versus depth. In this case, the range of examples Boyce Davies employs is remarkable, but the level of analysis may be found wanting by specialists. Then again, as they are not her intended audience, it may be up to others to determine the final success of her project.

215

Another possible response to the issue of breadth and depth is to encourage collaboration, moving away from the model of the single author manuscript and, indeed, the single-instructor course to foster dialogue between scholars with various competencies. This approach is both promoted and practiced in the volume *Reimagining the Caribbean: Conversations Among the Creole, English, French, and Spanish Caribbean*, edited by Valerie Orlando and Sandra Cypress. This collection of essays originated at the 2013 conference of the Modern Languages Association as a panel on teaching Caribbean literature, and the pedagogical focus is strongly felt in several of the contributions. The volume opens with the editors’ description of their experience team-teaching a course on women and madness that combined Anglophone, Hispanophone, and Francophone texts, while other chapters include suggestions on author pairings and ways to structure syllabi. As a result, the volume tends to strike an informal tone, with concerns that are more pragmatic than theoretical. The editors make the explicit choice not to divide the region by language or island, and most of the essays grapple with at least two linguistic traditions. Unsurprisingly, Glissant and Benítez-Rojo are the most popular recurring touchstones in announcing the theoretical stakes of a comparative approach.

Among the essays, Camille Stevens’s “Caribbean Drama: A Stage for Cross-Cultural Poetics” stands out as especially satisfying in its capacity to make concise



and compelling connections. She draws thematic links between three plays: Puerto Rican Francisco Arrivi's *Masquerade*, Martinican Ina Césaire's *Island Memories*, and the theatrical version of *The Dragon Can't Dance* by Trinidadian Earl Lovelace. Her analysis focuses on the racial dynamics of whitening and on carnival as a performative moment par excellence that is nevertheless threatened by commodification. Stevens helpfully points away from an emphasis on Caribbean "revisions" of Western tropes to explore the alternative strategy of placing plays in relation with one another—a move that might be considered, though it is not articulated as such here, as a shift from a transatlantic postcolonial framework to a pan-Caribbean one. Her theoretical framework is likewise regionally specific, as she draws not only on Glissant and Benítez-Rojo but also the elaboration of a multilingual Caribbean theatrical aesthetic in the work of Errol Hill and Derek Walcott.

216 Other chapters share concerns regarding the Caribbean's institutional positioning and the challenge of presenting the region in a way that is simultaneously coherent and non-reductive. Sandra Cypress discusses the Caribbean's relation to Latin American studies, though she risks focusing too much on whether "Caribbean" appears in the title of various programs and research centers. The underlying anxiety regarding Caribbean literature's institutional home is an important one, however, and the threat that the region may fall in a neglected space between disciplines is felt in other pieces as well. Cécile Accilien and Anne François thus insist on the urgency of forging interdisciplinary connections to facilitate teaching Francophone Caribbean literature in a context where French departments are closing. At the same time, this administrative pressure must be weighed against respect for the specificity of various islands' and territories' histories and the ethical demand to resist an easy packaging of the region for consumption by undergraduates. Véronique Maisier suggests that one responsible teaching strategy would be to draw on the metaphor of the web, with its connections to Anansi folktales that, from their Asante origins, re-emerge in creolized forms across the Caribbean basin. Elizabeth Russ puts forward another strategy by analyzing the public personas of Edwidge Danticat and Junot Díaz as performances of diasporic identities that must be read both politically and with a critical understanding of the publishing industry. Like Accilien and François, Russ is wary of making the Caribbean appear too transparent to undergraduates, insisting that Danticat and Díaz are best paired with other Haitian and Dominican writers lest the U.S. immigrant experience, as recorded in English, displace less familiar articulations.

Though the collected essays are generally strong, one could fault some contributors for neglecting other secondary literature. For example, Aude Dieudé's analysis of the presentation of Toussaint Louverture by Anténor Firmin, Aimé Césaire, and Édouard Glissant is based on solid close readings, but it is also striking in its lack of reference to other work on the subject, as she only briefly mentions Nick Nesbitt's article "Troping Toussaint." The same complaint could be made of Krista Slagle's work on the English translation of Maryse Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove*. Her

framing of the novel as already a literary translation of oral networks of community gossip is convincing, but while she mentions that the novel is considered Condé's most "Caribbean" work, she does not engage any other specific readings. The understanding of interdisciplinarity at play in the volume is also somewhat truncated, often referring to working between literature departments rather than integrating different media or methods; Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert's essay is the exception, as she advocates bringing visual art into the classroom through an eco-critical lens. Overall, the volume is most useful as a source of strategies for organizing courses, as opposed to insight into theoretically adept or deeply historicized ways of bringing parts of the Caribbean together. Of course, that is largely the volume's goal, and conversations about pedagogy are too commonly neglected. In this regard, it can be seen as a much needed multilingual companion piece to works like the 2012 MLA volume *Teaching Anglophone Caribbean Literature*.

Taken as a whole, these four works testify to the prevalence and potential of treating the Caribbean as a multilingual space. The most encouraging sign for the vitality of this approach is the sheer variety of authors and works that they address. Rather than a privileged border-crossing canon, one has the sense of a robust group of writers that stand to benefit from being read with and against each other. In the case of Martínez-San Miguel and Frydman, that group extends to well before the twentieth century emergence of *négritude* or the explosion of the West Indian novel in the 1950s. There remain notable, and rather typical, lacunae in these texts' coverage of the region: none of them deal with work in Dutch; the continental Caribbean, including Guyana, French Guiana, and Suriname, is rarely mentioned; and engagement with creoles is generally limited to creole inflections in works predominantly in European languages. Meanwhile, in the search for common threads that bind the Caribbean together as a region, race and the experience of racialization by subjects of African descent figure prominently, as does the legacy of slavery. This emphasis is more than justified, but it carries its own dangers. On the one hand, there is the threat of neglecting writers of Asian, and especially Indian descent, in part because of the difficulty of finding parallels in French and Spanish contexts to their stature in the Anglophone Caribbean. On the other, authors of European or mixed descent who are not predominantly concerned with racial issues, including many of the great Cuban experimentalists, likewise fall out of the frame. Martínez-San Miguel's focus on attenuated sovereignty is telling in this regard, for though she deals with racial issues in depth, they are not the only unifying principles of her work, and she is thus better equipped to integrate a heterogeneous group of writers from the Spanish Caribbean in particular. Her work is evidence that greater attention to the Caribbean's linguistic diversity need not come at the expense of recognizing its racial and cultural diversity, even as the black experience remains necessarily central.