

Book Reviews

Juanamaría Cordones-Cook and María Mercedes Jaramillo. Eds. *Del palenque a la escena: Antología crítica de teatro afro-latinoamericano*. U Nacional de Colombia: 2012. 782 pp.

Are you tired of assembled course packets for Afro-Hispanic Literature classes? Weary of colleagues who think that African Diaspora Studies is opposed to canonical literary forms like drama? Looking for works that necessitate inter-disciplinary approaches? Then this critical anthology is for you.

Cordones-Cook and Jaramillo bring together fifteen dramaturges from eleven countries along with the critical insights of seventeen scholars from the United States and Latin America. Even the briefest glance at the plays shows the volumes merit, range, and diversity. Argentine Cristina Escofet's sainete depicts the marginalized, multiethnic neighborhoods that gave birth to the tango. Brazilian Abdías do Nascimento's protagonist, Emanuel, seeks to assimilate to white bourgeois norms but returns to his black roots in the Orixás. Colombian Ahumada Surbarán depicts Chambacú, a *palenque* of escaped slaves that is today treated as a blight on Cartagena de Indias by elites but shown to be rich in drama and intrigue as women gossip about the happenings around the barrio. Her compatriot Juan Guillermo Rúa documents the funeral rites of the mostly black Colombian Pacific. Cuban Abelardo Estorino López reinterprets the novel *Cecilia Valdés*, which becomes a Shakespearian play-within-a-play. His *paisano* Eugenio Hernández Espinosa describes the myth of the Yoruban hunter Odebí, and Tomás González Pérez conveys of the love triangle between the spirits Changó, Oshún Yeyé Moro, and Oyá. Gerardo Fullea León tells the story of a little boy who lives as a slave in Matanzas. Nelson Estupiñán Bass tells the story of a black woman who must choose between black and white lovers and black and white identities. Mexican Luisa Josefina Hernández tells of a mulatto who strikes gold in 1799 at a Guanajuato mine he owns with two Spaniards and proudly hosts an opulent feast. Rosa María Britton tells of the workers on the Panama Canal, where blacks were paid less than whites and faced numerous forms of segregation and discrimination. Carlos López Schmidt's tragicomedy dynamically chronicles the struggles of working-class Afro-Peruvians. Alida Subirá sets the classic tale of the quick-witted campesino who outsmarts the devil in the historically black town of Loíza Aldea in Puerto Rico. Giovanni Cruz's protagonist, Amanda, is forced to choose between her husband in the Dominican Republic and her lover Antonio in Haiti, and also whether maintain her Vodoun traditions or not. Adriana Genta's monologue adopts the point of view of an enslaved woman in 1811

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Uruguay. Common themes are love, death, music, maternity, religious syncretism, slavery, assimilation, orality, popular speech, gender roles, and discrimination. The inclusion of spaces beyond Afro-Hispanic cultural centers in Brazil and the Caribbean is a valuable contribution.

Ample, high-quality scholarly work supplements the primary texts. Each play is preceded by a critical essay that contextualizes and analyzes it. Many have helpful footnotes, glossaries, and bibliography for further exploration. The introduction presents the project as revisionist, showing that official histories silenced black voices until recently (23, 38). "Drama," a Greek term and form, is shown to be altered by influences that can be loosely called "African," which the authors align with the controversial study *Black Athena*. It shows that Africans and Semitic people influenced even the Ancients that have been most associated with the literary "whitening" projects this study seeks to dismantle, altering how both today's and yesterday's drama are understood. The diversity in scholarly approaches that the critical essays show is striking. For example, Escofet introduces her own work through autobiographical vignettes. Nascimento's widow and standard-bearer traces a history of the Teatro Experimental do Negro. Ortiz contextualizes "Chambacú" with history, autobiography, and thematic criticism of the *palenque*. Music marks Jaramillo's reading of Rúa. She and Osorio trace the textual multiplications of Cirilo Villaverde's masterpiece(s). Brugal draws from the archive of *pataki* narratives. Martiatu shows how Fullea gives life to an enslaved boy who died trampled by oxen and even adds an additional scene to the work. Gómez traces González's trajectory of "ritual Cuban theater" performance based on Afro-Catholic faiths. Abudu shows Estupiñán to be an engagé novelist and, his less studied side, playwright. For Feliciano, Hernández's work is a counter-narrative to Vasconcelos's harmonious *raza cósmica*, which has not yet arrived. Jaeger provides autobiography and historical context on Panamá and a bibliography for Britton. Eidelberg touches on Afro-Peruvian argot and López's work online. Perales traces a genealogy of Subirá's classic tale and highlights the uniqueness of the setting of Loíza. Deive helps the reader imagine a moving *mise en scène*. Proano-Gómez treats Genta's representation of femininity and utopia. Post-colonial, gender, and archetypal criticism compliment the texts.

This is an important anthology of contemporary theater. But one must not forget the nineteenth century plays of Cuban Juan Francisco Manzano, Puerto Rican Eleuterio Darkes, Brazilians Domingos Caldas Barbosa, Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis, or Colombian Candelario Obeso. The already extensive collection need not include works from this tradition, but it could have been

mentioned in the introduction. Today's Afro-Latin American playwrights often display what Eduardo de Assis Duarte calls a "diaspora consciousness," a sense of shared experience with other Afrodescendants that did not exist in the same form in the nineteenth century, but an evolving notion of "blackness" in drama would help to place the collection in a literary tradition. Colombian Renaissance man Manuel Zapata Olivella should have been included. He is referenced repeatedly in the work as a scholar, reaffirming his importance, but he also wrote numerous plays. Like Estupiñán Bass, he is best known for prose, but this could have drawn more attention to an underexplored facet of his work. Vanderbilt's Zapata Olivella Archives offer unpublished editions of his plays that could have been included, while others are published but scattered in various anthologies. His brother Juan Zapata Olivella was less prolific, but his work deserves more attention as well. Readers must not forget Afro-Latino playwrights, either, so Cordones-Cook and Jaramillo's anthology can serve as a model for a collection that might include Tato Laviera, Crystal Román, and Cándido Tirado. Other resources that compliment this text are Maglia and Schwengler's *Palenque Colombia* (2012), Jiménez and Flores's *The Afro-Latino Reader* (2012), Duarte and Soares's *Literatura e afrodescendencia* (2011), and, for the Zapata brothers, González Cajiao's *Teatro colombiano contemporáneo* (1990). *Del palenque* is also a model of how scholars can contribute a valuable teaching tool while creating valuable scholarship: the anthology doubles as a bound volume for the literary critics, and their essays enrich the works by taking the reader to a deeper level of reception and interpretation.

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Kaisary, Philip. *The Haitian Revolution in the Literary Imagination: Radical Horizons, Conservative Constraints*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2014.

The title of Philip Kaisary's recent work exploring the Haitian Revolution in the "literary imagination" misleads the reader as *The Haitian Revolution in the Literary Imagination* not only considers the historic event in literature, but also in visual arts. There is an entire chapter dedicated to the imagery of the Haitian Revolution. The work's expansive introduction also mentions various representations of the Revolution in music and film, specifically noting the presence of the Revolution in jazz music, as well as in various films. Clear from the introduction alone—an exploration of the Haitian Revolution in its various forms—Kaisary's goal is to highlight the broad and intricate cultural impact of