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Víctor Figueroa. *Prophetic Visions of the Past: Pan-Caribbean Representations of the Haitian Revolution.* Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2015. 336 pp. $69.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8142-1277-6.

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Shortly after enslaved men and women lit up the cane fields in northern Saint-Domingue, texts about what we today call the Haitian Revolution began appearing. Haiti's independence in 1804 only further catalyzed literary production across the Atlantic world. The revolution's challenges, promises, and fears prompted numerous publications in multiple languages from historians, poets, playwrights, pamphleteers, and novelists. Nevertheless, Víctor Figueroa, expounding on Michel-Rolph Trouillot, notes that many of these texts "framed" information about the revolution and "[fit] it into premade colonial narratives and models about black savagery and primitivism," thus making the revolution a nonevent (p. 17). Alternative narratives circulated among Caribbean intellectuals that made the revolution an event.[1] Their literary production spans two centuries, multiple genres, and national cannons, posing large obstacles to scholars who seek to explore these counternarratives. Scholarship on Caribbean representations frequently remains segregated by language and genre.

In his study of twentieth-century Caribbean representations of the revolution, Figueroa makes a dedicated effort to engage only with Caribbean works and to bridge language and space. He masterfully brings together Francophone, Anglophone, and Hispanophone Caribbean classics from multiple genres and offers the only monograph to date on twentieth-century Pan-Caribbean representations of the Haitian Revolution.[2] Although these authors were often caught up in the premade colonial models they sought to overturn, they strove to articulate new models and narratives. Figueroa refers to this intellectual dilemma as "the double bind of colonial difference" (p. 13). Though excluded by Eurocentric discourses of belonging, Figueroa's authors' narrations or "emplotments" of the revolution illuminate "alternative actions, knowledges, and relations that may heal and liberate the fracture map of coloniality" (p. 31).

Figueroa organizes his study around seven Caribbean authors who represent the region's three dominant literary languages and "are among the [region's] most fundamental, sometimes foundational literary voices": C. R. L. James, Alejo Carpentier, Luis Palés Matos, Aimé Césaire, Derek Walcott, Edouard Glissant, and Manuel Zapata Olivella (p. 2). He contends that these authors locate the Haitian Revolution as a focal point of Caribbean identity to which they ascribe various meanings. Their writings portray the revolution as "not one event, but rather a series of events" (p. 29). The selected revolutionary episodes become a lens through which the authors view their, and the Caribbean's, historic and contempo-

rary realities. Figueroa postulates that the revolution "is often synechdochally regarded as ***part*** of a larger ***whole***" that changes depending on the author. What remains constant, though, is a search for "ever more inclusive 'wholes'" that move beyond the region's legacies of colonialism and slavery (p. 7). For Figueroa's authors, the Haitian Revolution marks a potential rupture with colonialism and Eurocentric modernity and functions as a weapon in the intellectual battle against colonial logic. Nevertheless, the revolution failed to completely eradicate colonialism. The authors' representations expose how new manifestations of colonial logic continue to haunt Haiti as well as its Caribbean neighbors.

Figueroa devotes a chapter to each author and his principal representations of the revolution. The one exception is chapter 1, where he reviews Carpentier and James together as representatives of Caribbean philosopher Paget Henry's poeticist and historicist traditions, respectively. Reading the works in tandem, Figueroa is able to comment on a central historiographic question: the influence of African-derived spiritual traditions versus that of enlightened ideals. While Carpentier's magical realism offers a revolutionary representation infused with Vodou, James's narration focuses on political dimensions and the influence of Enlightenment thought. Figueroa contends the texts "do not simply come together as complementary halves" (p. 24). Instead, they reveal a tension between inspirational representations of the revolution as a disruption to colonial logic and admonitory portrayals of colonialism's pervasiveness in the historic and contemporary Caribbean (p. 63).

Figueroa's subsequent chapters continue to address this representational duality and the meaning of the Haitian Revolution in Caribbean intellectual traditions. In chapter 2, Figueroa focuses on the ambivalent representations of Haiti and Africa in the poetry of Puerto Rican author Luis Palés Matos. Figueroa claims Palés Matos's imagery exposes the "conundrum of Caribbean and (post)colonial intellectuals," or the double bind of colonial difference (p. 90). Figueroa shifts to Aimé Césaire's more explicit critique of the revolution' symbolism in chapter 3. Césaire's representations demonstrate the importance of Haiti in the Caribbean but with a strong cautionary tone. Figueroa concludes that for Césaire, no amount of celebration can make up for the inability of Haitian revolutionary heroes "to fully articulate their freedom and humanity beyond the white masks offered by the logic of coloniality" (p. 125). Flawed heroes are also the subject of chapter 4, on Derek Walcott. Figueroa argues that Walcott's representations offer a dismissal of "a Caribbean ethics/aesthetics of heroism" that serves as a warning for members of all liberation movements "to remain vigilant of the manifold ways in which exclusion and oppression operate and justify themselves" (pp. 145, 165). In the final two chapters, Figueroa turns towards more optimistic narrations of the revolution in the work of Edouard Glissant and Manuel Zapata Olivella. Although Glissant maintains the caution of Walcott and Césaire, Figueroa argues that Glissant offers a reassurance to postcolonial subjects that "[they] are not absolutely overdetermined by the overwhelming logic of coloniality" (p. 194). There are "spaces of freedom," or as Zapata Olivella's novel suggests, "freedom to more fully participate" (pp. 192, 235). For Zapata Olivella, religion, in particular African-derived spiritual traditions, fosters this participation. Figueroa thus progresses through the many representations to arrive at the Glissantism in his title "prophetic visions of the past," in which narrating the revolution makes visible the spaces of freedom, the roads beyond overdetermination.

By its organization, Figueroa's own work becomes valuable both as a part and a whole. The individual chapters contribute to literature on each author and are useful for scholars who study the individual writers. As a whole, the monograph provides a new intervention in the study of the

representations and impacts of the Haitian Revolution. By reading foundational Caribbean authors together he demonstrates intellectual exchanges within the region and the emergence of similar and divergent narratives about the revolution. His study speaks to the growing interest in literary studies and history of the representations and impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Caribbean, the Americas, and beyond.

To join this conversation, however, Figueroa stakes specific geographic and temporal bounds—the twentieth-century Caribbean basin—and limits himself to male authors. First, although these authors challenge colonial taxonomies that privilege the white European, Figueroa admits they "rely on a masculinist rhetoric that echoes that of many of the revolution's leaders" (p. 14). All the writers he reviews are male, which raises the question of how female Caribbean intellectuals have represented the revolution. There are a handful of novels and plays from female Francophone authors that could expand Figueroa's study and allow us to examine gendered readings of the revolution, such as Marie Vieux Chauvet's *La Danse sur le volcan* (1957), Maryse Condé's *An Tan revolysion: Elle court, elle court la liberté* (1989), Ghislaine Charlier's *Mémoires d'une affranchie* (1989), and Fabienne Pasquet's *La Deuxième mort de Toussaint Louverture* (2003). In addition, though outside the chronological frame of 1789-1804, Évelyne Trouillot's *Rosalie l'infâme* (2003) is one of the few female-authored Caribbean fictional works on prerevolutionary Saint-Domingue. Most of these women are Haitian or of Haitian descent, which raises the importance of studying Haitian representations and placing these texts in conversation with publications from Haiti's Caribbean neighbors. Figueroa acknowledges that a study of "representations within Haiti itself … would require a separate book" (p. 22). Martin Munro and Elizabeth Walcott-Hacksaw's edited volumes, *Reinterpreting the Haitian Revolution and Its Cultural Aftershocks* (2006) and *Echoes of the Haitian Revolution* (2008), and, in particular, Marlene Daut's *Tropics of Haiti* (2015) initiate an examination of Haitian literary representations; however, more sustained analysis of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Haitian texts is needed.

The significance of Figueroa's work encompasses a project larger than reviewing representations of the revolution. What is of central importance to Figueroa is how the authors, through their accounts of the revolution, expose the "tensions that the logic of coloniality impose on those struggling against it" (p. 239). The Haitian Revolution and its diverse representations are critical to postcolonial studies and our understanding of the relationship between Western modernity and colonialism. Hopefully, the lacunae Figueroa acknowledges will lead to more discussions of the revolution's representations as well as Haiti's place in postcolonial studies.

Notes

[1]. Figueroa purposefully focuses on Caribbean (excluding Haitian writers) representations, even though this argument could extend to African American literature, as well as select texts by white American and European authors.

[2]. For example, the recent publications of Jeffrey Glick (*The Black Radical Tragic,* 2016) and Philip Kaisary (*The Haitian Revolution in the Literary Imagination,* 2014) include Caribbean authors, but their primary focus is not Pan-Caribbean representations.

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