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Displacements and Transformations in Caribbean Cultures. LIZABETH PARAVISINI-GEBERT & IVETTE ROMERO-CESAREO (eds.). Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008. xii + 252 pp. (Cloth US\$ 59.95)

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The main themes of this marvelous edited collection run through each contribution. Geography, narrative, and displacement define a “global Caribbean” (p. 3) characterized by historical and spatial disjunctures, fissures, and dislocations. Treating topics ranging from historical and natural landscapes, memories of trauma, environmental degradation, slavery, and violence, the authors consider the Caribbean as a problematic more than a region, a set of questions about the ever-shifting qualities of place, perspective, and transformation that have dogged Caribbean peoples and those who study them ever since Columbus’s fateful “discovery.”

Most of the authors adopt a literary or historical approach to their topics, and the chapters follow one another roughly in historical sequence based on the texts and themes under investigation. Elizabeth Paravisini-Gebert’s chapter on Caribbean ecologies and nationalisms, “Endangered Species: Caribbean Ecology and the Discourse of the Nation,” is perhaps the exception to this rule, though in tracking discourses of natural history alongside environmental destruction, it offers a metahistorical account of the Caribbean’s endangered spaces and species. She provides examples from Puerto Rico, St. Lucia, and Haiti and thus does what Caribbeanists always talk about but few ever achieve: attending to insular linguistic and national distinctiveness without losing sight of archipelagic commonalities. (Indeed, the collection as a whole succeeds admirably on this score.) Particularly noteworthy is her discussion of the Hilton Corporation’s failed Jalousie Plantation Resort in the Pitons of St. Lucia, and her analysis of Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott’s poignant challenges to the “blasphemy” (p. 17) of this development. The “endangered species” of Paravisini-Gebert’s title may turn out to be West Indian peoples themselves, though Walcott’s “Adamic” idea, which holds open the possibility of a rechristening, resacralization, of “grass that emerges from the ruins” (p. 18), offers a glimmer of hope, about which, more below.

Jalil Sued-Badillo’s chapter literalizes the endangered species metaphor, discussing the enslavement of indigenous populations during the Columbian expeditions. He chronicles Columbus’s four shipments of Amerindian slaves

to Spain, two thousand in all, where they were regarded as prisoners of war. The “conquest-subjection-enslavement” model (p. 37) is found to have been inaugurated by Columbus himself. Sued-Badillo’s chapter forms a pair with Peter Hulme’s analysis of the surprising presence of a fictional Cuban indigenous community in a popular 1897 American novel. Hulme places this presence in the context of the United States’ nineteenth-century wars with its own indigenous population and Teddy Roosevelt’s imperial ambitions. The novel’s indigenous community, avenged by U.S. forces, displaces American culpability for the massacre at Wounded Knee (p. 60). Hulme’s chapter also contains a fascinating postscript on the relationship between the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski and Fernando Ortiz in the latter’s development of the concept of transculturation, which Hulme sees as the antecedent of various strands of postcolonial criticism and which points to a more complex understanding of cultural “survival” and its modalities for indigenous communities and identities today.

Moving into the twentieth century, yet carrying forward the preceding chapter’s concern with methods of historical understanding and cultural assertion, Kevin Meehan’s essay documents C.L.R. James’s peregrinations through the United States in the 1930s and 1940s, from Harlem to the West Coast and, importantly for Meehan’s analysis, to Missouri, where James was involved in labor organizing. Treating this as a period of “radical fieldwork,” Meehan argues that it provided James a sense of the “existential destiny” (p. 80) of the African-American struggle for freedom. Meehan also finds here a “political and philosophical optimism” (p. 94) necessary to “the practical challenges posed by globalization” (p. 95). This reader heard resonances with the political and philosophical pragmatism of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century American figures like Peirce, James, and Dewey, as well as the rhetoric of the United States’ first African-American president, leading me to think about the connections between radical fieldwork and pragmatism as a politically hopeful project.

The next two chapters focus on the artistic expression of trauma. Ivette Romero-Cesareo explores literary and visual representations of AIDS, lingering over the repeating image of the occupied and then emptied bed. Paravisini-Gebert and Martha Daisy Kelehan look at representations of Haitian *botpippel*, undocumented migrants making dangerous passage through rough seas to uncertain shores. In these two richly illustrated chapters, the authors present a Caribbean art criticism that stresses the themes of displacement and transformation that give this collection its title. Readers find here the (often forgotten) history of Guantanamo, which in the 1980s served as a detention center for Haitian refugees, many of whom were HIV-positive and thus barred from entry into the United States. Artists’ representations of stigma, detention, disease, and despair evoke the Middle Passage and the chains of slavery, yet also, that same sense of ambiguous and uncer-

tain hope that Meehan found in James's radical fieldwork. In the artist Rejin Leys's "Wherever there's someone fighting" (Fig. 6.11, p. 157), a boat with human feet takes wing and is framed by the iconography of the U.S. dollar bill. Flight, solidarity, and hope come together to rehumanize boat people as taking wing over the backgrounded barbed wire that fences them in, even as they are enframed – imprisoned anew? – by the U.S. dollar.

Michael Aronna's chapter explores the testimonial genre in two books by Miguel Barnet. Like the owners of the feet in Leys's painting, the informants of these two testimonials are "complex social figures who contradict themselves and frustrate those who seek redemption through a pure subaltern subject" (p. 165). Aronna significantly complicates some postcolonial critics' assertion that the testimonial genre upends old relations of power and presumably creates solidarity. Instead of seeing testimonial as providing a window into a reality and thereby raising consciousness, Aronna quotes Barnet on the genre's ability to "unravel reality" (p. 165), throwing into question the documentary impulse of narrative nonfiction.

Yolanda Martinez San Miguel's essay explores the expression of displacement and migration in Hispanic Caribbean music. If Caribbean peoples are distinguished by their own journeys and migrations, music as a form travels, and often makes travel – geographic, metaphysical, interpersonal – a core theme. Yet this chapter also insists on local and rooted interpretations of these traveling themes and the multiple significations of music even by those sharing a social space of displacement.

The volume is accompanied by a posthumous afterword by Antonio Benitez Rojo, entitled "The New Atlantis: The Ultimate Caribbean Archipelago." A manifesto for a new meta-archipelagic collaboration, it imagines an expansive and nonterritorially bound "ocean territory." It also outlines what a history book of this New Atlantis might comprise. Benitez Rojo's intellectual legacy is clear in this volume, an elegant contribution to Caribbean discourse. Like Benitez Rojo's corpus, this fine book strives toward a remapping of disciplinary, linguistic, and historical resources that may ultimately make his "ultimate archipelago" a space of continual transformation. It is a space in which, "in order not to exile ourselves" despite our displacements, we hold onto the towline that affirms that "we are not sailing alone" (p. 224).