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Book Reviews

Vanessa K. Valdés, editor. *Racialized Visions: Haiti and the Hispanic Caribbean*. SUNY, 2020, Pp. 275. US $95 (hardcover) / $24.95 (paper).

One of the most powerful elements of Vanessa K. Valdés' scholarship is the incisive comparative lens she deploys, one which reimagines the Black literary and cultural geographies of the Americas. Her monograph, *Oshun's Daughters: The Search for Womanhood in the Americas*, is a clear example of how this approach advances a greater understanding of the contributions of peoples of African descent in the imagination of the Americas. In the same vein, Valdés' recent edited collection, *Racialized Visions: Haiti and the Hispanic Caribbean*, uses this comparative perspective to rethink the place of Haiti in the Hispanic Caribbean space, with broad implications for resituating the historical meanings and cultural significance of Haiti in the Americas. The contributor Mariana Past articulates the main problem twelve diverse scholars engage with in the collection: "Haiti, independent since 1804—and whose original constitutions abolished slavery and guaranteed universal liberty to all citizens of Hispaniola, who were defined as free, equal, and Black—remains a perpetual outlier in the Caribbean context" (161). Thus, questioning the racialized othering of Haitians in the Caribbean imagination, the collection argues that, notwithstanding the disavowal of Haiti's Blackness, its revolutionary history and culture play a central role in the symbolic and material envisioning of decolonial struggle against multiple colonialities in the Americas.

In her preface to the collection, Myriam Chancy notes that, despite the linguistic differences among the Caribbean nations, their "makeup and realities have overlapped and cannot truly be understood fully without one another" (xiv). The quest to map out these overlapping realities and histories of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Puerto Rico is at the center of the collection's eleven chapters. Each chapter explores different but related dimensions of Haiti's fundamental yet denigrated influence on the Caribbean imagination through compelling critical analyses of fictional narratives, poems, short stories, historical texts, and films. Valdés' introduction situates the collection in the problematic of the field, posing the crucial question of how to reread Haiti and its complex relationship with other nations in the Hispanic Caribbean, whereas most studies have often concentrated on Haiti's representations in Anglophone Caribbean literature (15). Valdés contextualizes three key moments that the collection evocatively interrogates and that

signify the tragic consequences of anti-Haitian sentiments: the 1937 massacre of Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent in the Haitian-Dominican border under the dictatorship of Rafael Leónidas Trujillo (1930–1961); the 2010 earthquake that foregrounded the racialized perception of Haiti as a space of disaster; and the 2013 law instituted by the Dominican Republic Constitutional Tribunal that stripped many Dominicans of Haitian descent born between 1929 and 2007 of their citizenship.

Six chapters focus on the problematic relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic; they critique the colonial racialization of geography and Blackness/Africanness that produces the border tension within the island of Hispaniola. In "The Border of Hispaniola in Historical and Fictional Imaginations since 1791," Claudy Delné's sharp analysis of Jacques Stephen Alexis' *General Sun, My Brother*, René Philoctète's *Massacre River*, and Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* shows how Haitian writers articulate the experience of border crossing as simultaneously tragic and liberating. Ángela Castro's chapter focuses on the same Danticat novel through a symptomatic reading of time, trauma, and the repetition of historical violence on the Hispaniola border. Drawing attention to Junot Díaz's figuration of implicit "Haitianism" in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, Mohwanah Fetus' chapter reads the historical trauma and violence in the novel through the lens of the cane field racialized as "a 'Haitian space' in the Trujillo's nation-state" (211). Carrie Gibson's chapter, "The Dictator's Scapegoat," turns to conservative Dominican historians' ideological roles in propagating the anti-Haitian discourse that occurred during the Trujillo regime. By analyzing Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi's historical writing, Gibson demonstrates how the production of historical texts legitimizes anti-Haitian and anti-Black ideologies that reinforce the racist nationalist project of whitening the Dominican Republic. Ramón Antonio Victoriano-Martínez presents the literary dimension of Gibson's argument in an incisive critique of Roberto Marcallé Abreu's conservative fictions. In the last chapter on Haiti-Dominican tension, which is also the collection's last chapter, Cécile Accilien provides pedagogical approaches to teaching the complexity of the border question through "the history and culture of the two unfriendly neighbors of Hispaniola" (228). Accilien emphasizes that the border, though historically invented, is multiple, overlapping, and fluid; it is a dense space of tension and negotiation of identity, citizenship, culture, history, migration, and political economy.

The collection explores the relationship between Haiti and Cuba in three chapters. Natalie Marie Léger's chapter provides a critical perspective on the question of Black freedom for Haitian subjects using Alejo Carpentier's *The Kingdom of This World*, which depicts "the Haitian Revolution from below"

(92). While Philip Kaisary's chapter analyzes the echoes of the Haitian Revolution in Tomás Gutiérrez's cinematic portrayal of the rebellious spirit within 19th-century Cuban slave society, Erika Serrato's offers an account of Haitian presence in the Afro-Cuban poetic imagination through a comparative reading of Jesús Cos Causse's translational engagement with Jacques Roumain's poetry.

Two chapters put Haiti in conversation with Puerto Rico. Valdés' contribution offers a reading of the four lectures that Haitian diplomat and intellectual Dantès Bellegarde delivered at the University of Puerto Rico in 1936. She explicates how the lectures, which appear apolitical, offer "an implicit critique of the United States' colonizing presence in its Spanish-speaking colonial possession" (55). The other chapter, by Past, examines the short story of the Puerto Rican writer Ana Lydia Vega to spotlight how literary productions contribute to the racist essentialization of Haiti. By placing migrant Caribbean subjects in the same boat, this chapter investigates the discursive suppression of Haiti while openly debunking global and local anti-Black violence.

The collection makes three major interventions in the field of Caribbean studies. First, it pushes the boundaries of Blackness/Africanness beyond the colonial myths that produce and sustain the negative fantasies of the Black subject as primitive, poor, diseased, infectious, disastrous, destructive, and dangerous. By legitimizing anti-Haitianism, these myths continue to orient Haitians as Black/African subjects in the Hispanic Caribbean nation-states. Second, it confronts the discursive processes that conservative nationalist ideologies use to instrumentalize the anti-Black racialization of Haiti, which in turn performs actual violence on peoples of African descent. The ideological production of history and literature forms the core of these processes. Third, it illuminates radical visions of solidarity, peace, and hope in the activist work of writers who resist anti-Haitian narratives despite the problems of historical violence and the borderization of identity and culture. These radical visions problematize the Manichean imagination of border, identity, and culture to demonstrate how the shared history of colonial violence and cultural exchange can reconfigure our understanding of the Americas.

Taken together, all the chapters launch a profound critique of anti-Haitian discourse that emerges within the colonial production of global anti-Black racism. Valdés structures the collection in a way that opens with the broad problem of Haitian exclusion and ends with pedagogical insights on the border. To echo Harry Garuba, this structure accentuates the "teacherly" dimension of the collection. Indeed, the collection's timeline of significant historical events in Caribbean geographies attests to the overall pedagogical

significance of Valdés' editorial vision. Her concluding remarks call for the urgent need to relearn Caribbean "shared histories and cultures" (248) by "reconsidering Haiti in relation to the Hispanic Caribbean from the perspective of the humanities" (251). This form of relearning challenges "the categoric simplification imposed by the academy" (248), bringing critical attention to the complex entanglement of cultural and linguistic borders.

Gabriel Bámgbóṣé

Works Cited

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Arundhati Roy. *Azadi: Freedom. Fascism. Fiction*. Penguin Random House, 2020. Pp. 256. CAD $26.95 (hardcover).

Arundhati Roy's *Azadi: Freedom. Fascism. Fiction* is a timely critical collection that scrutinises the rise of Hindu nationalism and the injustices enacted by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his regime. Embodying resistance and the rhythms of the chant for *azadi*—or freedom—the text consists of nine essays, originally delivered as separate articles and lectures, that tackle a wide range of topics including the Kashmir occupation, the politics of translation and multilingualism, the dangers of being an outspoken artist, and the rise of the rape and lynching of Muslims, Dalits, and members of other religious, low-caste, and Indigenous communities in India. In an approach similar to that taken in her previous collection, *My Seditious Heart* (2019), Roy asserts a confident examination of contemporary India, one in which India's Nazi-and-Mussolini-inspired Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)—or what she terms the mothership of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government—remains ubiquitously in view. If anything, *Azadi* is a continuation of *My Seditious Heart*: it catalogues violence to the point of seemingly abject melancholy in the face of pervasive authoritarianism exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Roy's work exemplifies, through its discourse and materiality, the importance of language and writing as a means of taking a position in the face of social injustices and deconstructing a nation's imagination of itself.

Though Hindu nationalism and the façade of Indian democracy are not new subjects, Roy retreads important ground with a sense of urgency by