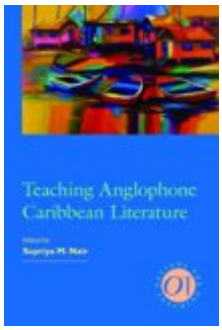
H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Supriya M. Nair, ed.. *Teaching Anglophone Caribbean Literature.* Options for Teaching Series. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2012. ix + 459 pp. $25.00, paper, ISBN 978-1-60329-107-1.



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Published on H-Caribbean (September, 2014)

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Supriya M. Nair's edited collection *Teaching Anglophone Caribbean Literature* is an invaluable new resource for instructors of undergraduate and graduate Caribbean literature courses. Bringing together a number of leading voices in the field, the volume engages with a wide variety of approaches and corpora, both established and emerging. The collection argues persuasively for the expansion of Caribbean literature syllabi on a number of fronts: geographically through an engagement with the transnational dimensions of Caribbean literary production, historically through greater attention to pre-twentieth-century writing, and disciplinarily through the incorporation of extra-literary media.

As Nair observes in her illuminating introduction to the volume, Caribbean literary studies is awkwardly positioned in relation to other fields and disciplines, often viewed as a subsidiary of Latin American or African (American) studies and as secondary to the social sciences. She writes that "Caribbean literature has traditionally struggled to find a room of its own in the US academy.... Although many Caribbean programs are subsumed under better-funded and more visible Latin American constituencies, the status of anglophone Caribbean in such an arrangement is contested and often marginalized. Caribbean studies in postcolonial, comparative literature and black studies programs in the United States also risk being pushed into the background.... Caribbean literary scholars who try to find their space in area studies are sometimes overwhelmed by the social science focus of these programs" (pp. 3-4). This institutional marginality makes *Teaching Anglophone Caribbean Literature* all the more vital as a volume that establishes the identity and internal dynamics of Caribbean literary studies as an independent field while at the same time drawing connections with larger literary and cultural geographies.

Nair's cogent introduction foregrounds the definitional instabilities that surround not only the Caribbean region but also the field of Caribbean literature. In this context, Nair emphasizes the extent to which "the Caribbean canon is a

moving target and is not as stable as it might seem" (p. 8). She notes that while George Lamming, V. S. Naipaul, and Wilson Harris may have been staples of Caribbean literature syllabi in past decades, this is no longer necessarily the case, particularly in the United States where the Windrush generation of Caribbean writers has been overtaken to some extent by Michelle Cliff, Jamaica Kincaid, Edwidge Danticat, and other younger women writers. Moreover, this generational shift has produced an "internal critique" within the field "of patterns of exclusion and inclusion, not just of writers but also of the taken-for-grantedness of its dominant themes, literary history, political stances, and critical paradigms" (p. 9). Indeed, Caribbean canonicity is highly unstable, as anyone who has attempted to set PhD comprehensive examination lists in Caribbean literature will be keenly aware. It is fitting, then, that Nair chooses not to structure the volume around a list of major texts or figures. Instead, her nonnormative, thematic approach underscores the dynamism and heterogeneity of the field, while at the same time maintaining a sense of its historicity. The volume's thematic organization conveys "the way in which Caribbean literature—especially given its relentless hybridity and unavoidably creolized nature—tends to resist essentializing and totalizing gestures," as contributor Timothy Chin puts it (p. 85).

Part 1, "Movements and Migrations," moves in a roughly chronological fashion from a consideration of the literary implications of indigeneity (Albert Braz) and slavery (Nicole N. Aljoe) to Indian and Chinese indentureship (Brinda Mehta and Chin). Part 1 also includes essays by Louis J. Parascondola, John C. Hawley, and April Shemak that explore the transnational dimensions of anglophone Caribbean literature with reference to the U.S. and British contexts. A noticeable gap here is Canada, which is addressed only briefly in the course of Shemak's hemispheric American discussion despite the prominence in the collection of Caribbean Canadian writers, such as Shani Mootoo and Marlene NourbeSe Philip.

The essays in part 2, "Ritual, Performance, and Popular Culture," advocate decentering the fictional text by exploring the relationship of literature to orature (Carolyn Cooper), J'ouvert (Paula Morgan), film (Giselle Liza Anatol), spirituality (Joshua Albert Brewer), and theatrical performance (Karina Smith). Parts 3 and 4, "Interpretive Approaches" and "Course Contexts," then examine a series of critical frameworks, including race (Rhonda Frederick), material culture (Jennifer P. Nesbitt), trauma (Grant Farred), intertextuality (Alisa K. Braithwaite, Shane Graham, and Mimi Pipino), and creolization and Carnival (Elaine Savory), as well as genres including autobiography (Sandra Pouchet Paquet) and pastoral (Denise deCaires Narain). Other essays in parts 3 and 4 draw crucial attention to understudied earlier periods of Caribbean literary production (Faith Smith and Elizabeth Way). Finally, the volume closes with Nair's excellent bibliographic essay, which complements the lists of sources for further reading that accompany many of the chapters.

One of *Teaching Anglophone Caribbean Literature*'s strengths is its attention to on-the-ground pedagogical strategies. Many of the contributors offer the reader a welcome opportunity to be a fly on the wall of their classrooms. Braithwaite, for example, details in a fine essay on intertextuality and recitation how she encourages her students to become more active readers by highlighting a scene of reading in Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987) in which Cliff's heroine ponders *Jane Eyre* (1847). While the majority of the essays focus on U.S. classroom settings, the volume also registers the diversity of the classroom environments in which Caribbean literature is taught by including Karina Smith's account of her Australian students' response to Sistren Theatre Collective's *Bellywoman Bangarang* (1978) and Morgan's discussion of her graduate seminar on

J'ouvert at the University of West Indies at Saint Augustine.

Teaching Anglophone Caribbean Literature argues eloquently and convincingly for the geographical, temporal, and disciplinary extension of Caribbean literature curricula. Its position on the linguistic enlargement of the field is, however, somewhat more ambivalent. Nair addresses this issue in her introduction by signalling "that the 'Anglo' in the Caribbean can be framed flexibly" (p. 19). A number of the chapters helpfully model how anglophone Caribbean literary studies can be comparative from within by theorizing translation and by illustrating how multilingual contexts can be incorporated in the classroom. In particular, Shemak demonstrates how the study of anglophone Caribbean literature can be opened up through the inclusion of texts by writers from francophone and hispanophone backgrounds who write in English, such as Edwidge Danticat, Cristina García, and Julia Alvarez. Cooper offers an alternative framing of questions of multilingualism and translation by arguing that the dialogue of European and African-derived languages within Caribbean literature renders it "creole-anglophone."

In her engaging chapter on nineteenth-century Caribbean writing, Faith Smith rightly warns of the risks of such comparative projects as hemispheric studies, which threaten to subsume other parts of the Americas in the service of rehabilitating U.S. American studies. Nonetheless, the translingual gestures made by many of the contributors suggest that the field may be moving closer to the comparative model promoted most recently in Valérie K. Orlando and Sandra Messinger Cypess's ***Reimagining the Caribbean: Conversations among the Creole, English, French, and Spanish Caribbean*** (2014). Indeed, a number of the essays in Nair's volume exert a certain pressure on the category of "anglophone Caribbean literature." Mehta's essay on Indo-Caribbean writing, for example, ends with a call to include francophone writers in future discussions in order "to celebrate this literature's transnational and multilingual potential" (p. 76). Comparative methods are adopted by Braz, Frederick, and especially Vivian Nun Halloran, whose chapter demonstrates how a pan-Caribbean approach reveals a "shared sense of a tradition and dialogues across islands and languages" (p. 335).

Ultimately, such fissures between diverging linguistic and national frameworks productively underscore Nair's opening remarks about the uncertain canonicity of a field that is continually reshaping itself and suggest that this instability will necessarily be reflected in a diversity of pedagogical approaches. Reading across the volume, with its rich array of perspectives and theoretical investments, will enable instructors of Caribbean literature to reflect more deeply on the choices that we make with regard to period focus, language, and "high" and "low" genres and media. In turn, the volume will help us to encourage such reflection on the part of our students—to urge them to become more conscious of the extent to which, as Faith Smith puts it in her chapter, "we are ***reading from here***, wherever that may be, with particular priorities, politics, and institutions that are placing and framing us" (p. 238, emphasis in original).

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Citation: Sarah Phillips Casteel. Review of Nair, Supriya M., ed. *Teaching Anglophone Caribbean Literature.* H-Caribbean, H-Net Reviews. September, 2014.

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