

The Idea of Hispanophone Caribbean Studies

On the Hispanophone Caribbean Question

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The hispanophone Caribbean is central to any serious study of the region. Without it there can be no Caribbean studies. This seems obvious in light of its geographic and demographic prominence, and its cultural richness and historical significance. Why, then, a provocation to consider the idea of a hispanophone Caribbean studies? The fragmentation of the Caribbean along linguistic and other lines, derived from the colonial past and present, has resulted in the emergence of different and sometimes conflicting intellectual traditions and cultural-political identities. The hispanophone Caribbean is linked to the imaginary of Latin America through shared language and cultural connections, while physically forming part of the geographic region of the Caribbean. It exists at the juncture of two competing cultural contexts, the non-hispanophone Caribbean on the one side and Latin America on the other, which exposes it to sidelining and misunderstanding from both.

This special section explores the hispanophone Caribbean as a space of investigation and facilitates approaches to some of the following questions: What are the geographical frameworks and analytical trends that have defined this field? What scholarly paradigms, social imaginaries, and conceptual maps frame its preoccupations? What is the place of diaspora and, more broadly, transnational movements in these concerns, in relating an “island” to a “world”? What ideas about race and citizenship, what assumptions about sex, sexuality, and gender, and what figurations of the popular, of music, and of the visual define its self-understandings? Moreover, how do we, and how should we, understand the study of the

hispanophone Caribbean in relation to the wider archipelago (including the relationship to the francophone and the anglophone Caribbean), the littoral Caribbean, Latin America, and the United States? Our vision is interdisciplinary and intertextual. Our hope is to contribute to a discussion of the Caribbean that will widen and deepen our critical frames of reference so that we might consider how to fruitfully remap the study of the region in such a way as to complicate and invigorate new creative and analytic discourses.

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The practice of ignoring the hispanophone Caribbean from an anglophone Caribbean perspective has a long history that dates back to M. G. Smith's *A Framework for Caribbean Studies*, which put forth a structuring that left out roughly more than 80 percent of the region's land mass.¹ In his essay "Caribbean Consciousness: What the Caribbean Is Not," Frank Moya Pons offers an early critique of the field of Caribbean studies, noting that the Caribbean as a living community does not exist and has meaning "only as a convenient term in geography classes in schools and universities"; with the lack of mutual knowledge, speaking of several Caribbeans coexisting alongside each other—sadly—has been all too common. Moya Pons notes that the Caribbean as an entity exists for only three groups of people who do not claim roots in the area: sales managers of multinational companies, Washington policymakers, and scholars and academics. He laments that none of these three groups has "been able to create among the peoples of the Caribbean the idea that, notwithstanding their racial and cultural diversities, they all share a partial common history with its roots in the colonial period, and also share similar economic problems inherited from a common pattern of exploitation from the different colonial metropolises."² He argues that it is the lack of mutual knowledge and the inexistence of a Caribbean consciousness that makes so difficult the integration of these island nations.

The decline of the Spanish empire and the shift in power in the region and the hemisphere led simultaneously to both the intense Americanization and Latin Americanization of the hispanophone Caribbean. While deep divisions exist between the hispanophone and other linguistic groups within the region, divisions also exist between Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and the Spanish-speaking circum-Caribbean such as Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, since each culture has its own particular set of historical imperatives. The hispanophone Caribbean was threatened by numerous invasions and occupations by the United States that the anglophone and francophone Caribbean did not experience because they remained under European domination.³ Latin Americanization of the

1 M. G. Smith, *A Framework for Caribbean Studies* (Kingston: University College of the West Indies, 1955).

2 Frank Moya Pons, "Caribbean Consciousness: What the Caribbean Is Not," *Caribbean Educational Bulletin* 5, no. 3 (1978): 43.

3 The French islands were impervious to American influences as they were politically incorporated into the French Republic and oriented toward metropolitan France. By the end the century, Britain had accepted the Monroe Document and turned its attention to its colonies in Africa and India. The hispanophone Caribbean faced the cultural threat of dehispanicization posed by decades of armed intervention and US occupation.

hispanophone Caribbean strengthened a sense of cultural and economic solidarity against the encroaching power of the United States, but further deepened the colonial rifts between the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and the rest of the region. The severed relationship to Spain and Europe led to stronger ties with Spanish America in an effort to adopt a defiant stance toward the United States. The Spanish-Cuban-American war and the shift in power in the region marked the work of Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban intellectuals who remembered that José Martí, in his 1891 “Nuestra América,” had warned his islands to awaken, lest they be trampled by the giant with seven-league boots.⁴

The Americanization of the hispanophone Caribbean was met with a revival and new beginnings in the philosophy of *hispanismo*. Ideologies of Hispanism—a project of Hispanization through imposed language, customs, and beliefs beginning with a celebration of the imperial expansion into the so-called New World—operated as a political, representational, and epistemological paradigm throughout the development of Spanish America’s and Spain’s cultural histories, from the colonial period to the consolidation of nation-states and in the context of globalization.⁵ In *Sobre los principios: Los intelectuales caribeños y la tradición*, Arcadio Díaz Quiñones studies the role the intellectual played in the last Spanish colonies, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic in the emergence and proliferation of modern *hispanismo*.⁶

As the Spanish empire was in decline at the end of the nineteenth century, there emerged an unprecedented investment on the part of Spanish intellectuals in the legacy of a Hispanic tradition in the Americas.⁷ Spanish intellectual Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo’s *Historia de la poesía hispano-americano*, written from Spain at the end of the nineteenth century but revised and published in the early twentieth century, sought to restore the spiritual authority of the empire in decline as the wars of independence questioned Spain’s imperial dominance in the region.⁸ The old regime found unexpected allies in intellectuals such as Dominican Pedro Henriquez Ureña and Puerto Ricans Antonio Pedreira and Federico de Onís. The work of Menéndez Pelayo inspired important avenues of research and activities for decades after its publication, including the Junta para Ampliación de Estudios e Investigaciones Científicas, directed by Ramón Menéndez Pidal (1869–1968), whose work set out to “contrarrestar el sentimiento antiespañol que pudiera existir en las antiguas colonias y asegurar la lealtad de la élite al proyecto de construcción de una comunidad hispánica moderna en la que se reservara

4 See José Martí, “Our America,” in *José Martí: Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Esther Allen (New York: Penguin, 2002), 288–96.

5 See Mabel Moraña, ed., *Ideologies of Hispanism* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005).

6 Arcadio Díaz Quiñones, *Sobre los principios: Los intelectuales caribeños y la tradición* (Bernal, Argentina: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes Editorial, 2006).

7 For more on the development of Hispanism in the United States, see Richard L. Kagan, ed., *Spain in America: The Origins of Hispanism in the United States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002); Moraña, *Ideologies of Hispanism*; and Díaz Quiñones, *Sobre los principios*.

8 Díaz Quiñones, *Sobre los principios*, 28.

un papel central a España.”⁹ This Junta para Ampliación de Estudios expressed without reservation that Spaniards were in a better position than *americanos* to disseminate and direct *hispanismo* in the United States, since they had the proper pedigree and intellectual tools required to join the professoriate.¹⁰ This quick sketch of the rise of Hispanism as an ideology and epistemology in the region and the United States points to the successful canonization of Spanish literature in the United States and is inseparable from North American library collections and the creation of Hispanic studies and Spanish departments. One of the results has been the frequent subordination of hispanophone Caribbean literature that is studied in these departments as a subdivision of Latin American literature and the condemnation of a Caribbean Spanish and “Spanglish” used by transnational communities.¹¹

A recent study of US Spanish and Hispanic studies departments found an overwhelming representation of peninsular themes in Spanish-language cultural studies and overhiring of specialists in those fields, with approximately one-to-one hiring of Latin Americanist and peninsular specialists in the US academy, even though there are approximately ten times more Spanish speakers in Latin America.¹² This means that large departments often have multiple specialists in Peninsular literature and potentially no specialists in Caribbean or Mexican regions, for example. These hiring practices continue to subordinate Latin American and Caribbean topics in the classroom and interpolate speakers of Spanish in the United States in alienating and culturally inappropriate ways. The result is that more students chose Spain over Latin America for study abroad, and Latin American literatures and cultures continue to be neglected.¹³ Furthermore, hispanophone Caribbean literature and culture may be taught by a generalist whose research focus is the Southern Cone or the Andean region, if it is brought into the classroom at all. Moving away from the Spain/Latin America binary of contemporary academic structures will allow for new connections and reflections.

Within academic structures of knowledge, Latin America evokes the continent while Caribbean studies retains an anglophone, and to a lesser extent francophone, center of gravity, leaving hispanophone Caribbean studies, literature, culture, and way of life on the margins. One needs only to attend the gatherings of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), where panels on the hispanophone Caribbean are dimly represented (with the exception

9 “Counter the anti-Spanish sentiment that might exist in the former colonies and ensure the loyalty of the elite to the project of building a modern Hispanic community in which a central role was reserved for Spain”; José del Valle, “Menéndez Pidal, la regeneración nacional y la utopía lingüística,” in José del Valle and Luis Gabriel-Stheeman, eds., *La batalla del idioma: La intelectualidad hispánica ante la lengua* (Madrid: Iberoamericana y Vervuert, 2004), 11 (translation mine). For more on Menéndez Pelayo’s legacy, see Díaz Quiñones, *Sobre los principios*, 142–58.

10 See Díaz Quiñones, *Sobre los principios*, 150.

11 See Ricardo Otheguy and Nancy Stern, “On So-Called ‘Spanglish,’” *International Journal of Bilingualism* 15, no. 1 (2010): 85–100; Ricardo Otheguy and Ana Celia Zentella, *Spanish in New York: Language Contact, Dialect Leveling, and Structural Continuity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

12 Jeffrey Herlihy-Mera, “After Hispanic Studies: On the Democratization of Spanish-Language Cultural Study,” *Comparative American Studies* 13, no. 3 (2015): 177–93. Herlihy-Mera notes that this shift toward a one-to-one hiring began in the 1960s, when more Latin American specialists were hired.

13 *Ibid.*, 183. Herlihy-Mera notes that Spain receives approximately the same number of American study abroad students as all Latin American nations combined (Institute of International Education, 2007–9).

of Cuba, at nearly seven hundred members). This large organization of nearly seven thousand members operates in a section structure that allows for smaller groups within the larger organization. Sections exist to promote the common interest of association members, and broaden membership involvement. While the organization has no section on Puerto Rico, the Haiti/Dominican Republic section was created in 2003 and has maintained fifty to seventy-five members since. However, attendance at Haiti/Dominican Republic panels is low outside of section members, and many Caribbeanists have left the organization because of what they perceive to be a lack of interest in the region on the part of the organization's membership.¹⁴ The existence of institutes, such as the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College, the Dominican Institute at City College, and the newly formed Haitian Studies Institute at Brooklyn College, as well as organizations and journals, may help to explain the lack of hispanophone Caribbean representation at US professional organizations such as LASA and the Caribbean Studies Association (CSA).¹⁵ While individual institutes allow for the collection and preservation of materials, the building of libraries, programming, and a research agenda, to ensure that these societies are the focus of serious study, they operate as silos with little communication and exchange between them and the wider study of the Caribbean.

The CSA, the premier professional organization for the field, was almost exclusively an anglophone organization until 2011, although it was not named as such. Browsing through the President's Archive of the organization from its inception in 1975 to the present, one notes that perhaps no more than three of its forty-one presidents have had a research focus on the hispanophone Caribbean. In terms of the location of the CSA annual conferences, the hispanophone Caribbean has fared slightly better, with thirteen of the past forty-one conferences located in a Spanish-speaking country, but still suggesting the anglophone bias of the organization and the field of Caribbean studies. The representation of the hispanophone Caribbean in the organization has steadily increased over the past five years through the efforts of the Committee for Translinguistic Exchange and Translation (CTET), cochaired by Nadia Celis Salgado and Maggie Shrimpton. The CTET was founded in 2011 by a group of CSA members committed to addressing in the organization the linguistic diversity of the region. CTET has pursued strategies for integration of nonanglophone scholars at conferences, in the membership, and in the governance of the organization. The committee notes as its principle aim: "The consolidation of an association that would not only be more inclusive and collegial, but also academically more robust and truly representative of the diversity of the

14 E-mail communication with Kiran Jayaram, 13 July 2016. Thank you to both Kiran Jayaram and April Mayes for taking the time to share with me their views and experiences as cochairs of the Haiti/Dominican Republic section of LASA for five years.

15 For more on the various Caribbean studies journals, libraries, and archives, see the Center for Puerto Rican Studies, centropu.r.hunter.cuny.edu, and the Puerto Rican Studies Association, arlenetorresprofessor.com/PRSA; the Dominican Studies Institute, www.ccny.cuny.edu/dsi; and the Haitian Studies Institute, www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/web/news/bcnews/bcnews_160516.php, and the Haitian Studies Association, www.umb.edu/haitianstudies.

Caribbean people, societies and cultures.”¹⁶ The initiative has been a great success and has transformed the organization in the time that I have been a member, since 2008. During plenaries and panel sessions at the annual conference, one can hear the chatter of simultaneous translation taking place, and all communication with members, such as calls for papers and e-mails regarding annual conferences, is multilingual. Members are also encouraged to submit bilingual or trilingual abstracts of their papers at conferences. This robust call to translation and a commitment to multilingualism has further integrated the organization and has fostered deeper knowledge of the region. The cultural shift of the organization over the past five years highlights the need for creating spaces of dialogue and communication, of translation and multilingualism, that are interdisciplinary and intertextual and that will widen and deepen our critical frames of reference.

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Journal platforms such as *Anales del Caribe* and *e-misférica* have created spaces for exchange and dialogue through a commitment to heterolingual publication and practices. In 1984, faculty and students in the English department at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras launched the English-language journal *Sargasso*, a journal of Caribbean literature, language, and culture, with a focus on anglophone Caribbean literature.¹⁷ The editor’s note published in the first issue, which has governed the journal over the past three decades, describes its interest in “intellectual interchange” and “in breaking through barriers that tend to separate” the hispanophone, francophone, and anglophone Caribbean. The message of “bridge building” and the focus on introducing “Puerto Rican and other Hispanic Caribbean writers to an English-reading public” created a space for dialogue among Caribbean writers.¹⁸ The interview became one of *Sargasso*’s ways of overcoming the isolation of the insular, with its inaugural issue publishing an interview with Puerto Rican writer Luis Rafael Sánchez by Susan Homar.¹⁹ The conversation focused largely on Caribbean writers’ struggle to gain access to literary history and a spot in the global marketplace of letters as writers who remain in the Caribbean experience the pervasive problems of where to publish and of finding editors and an audience, while regional authors who write in Spanish and French experience the added challenge of finding translators and publishing in English. Caribbean literature in Spanish, even though it is written in one of the major languages of the hemisphere, struggles to find an audience beyond the society in which it is published. Visual artists, while also facing challenges, have access to the Northern market in New York or Miami. This is less likely to be an option for those who write in Spanish.

16 See the CSA website, www.caribbeanstudiesassociation.org/csa-committees/committee-for-translinguistic-exchange-and-translation.

17 See Lowell Fiet, “Where Do Journals Come From? The Case of *Sargasso*,” *Small Axe*, no. 50 (July 2016): 92–97.

18 *Ibid.*, 93.

19 See Susan Homar, “Luis Rafael Sánchez: Counterpoints,” trans. Aileene Álvarez, *Sargasso*, no. 1 (1984): 8–19.

It is only recently that US publishers have begun to release books in Spanish, and these tend to be reproductions of classics from Spain and South America for use in US classrooms.

Literary works are published and distributed in established cultural centers of prestige such as Buenos Aires, Mexico City, and Madrid. Luis Rafael Sánchez notes that these metropolitan centers in Spanish America and Spain “have also turned into colonizers of our culture, taste, and sensibility.”²⁰ Beyond the linguistic balkanization of Caribbean societies, the insular hispanophone Caribbean also remains deeply divided, never having successfully developed a shared sense of Caribbean or *antillano* identity among Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Cubans.²¹ “Our lack of communication,” says Sánchez, “is not limited to the French- or English-speaking Caribbean.”

Our ignorance about the Dominican Republic’s literature is astonishing unless the text comes via a Spanish publisher. . . . In the Caribbean, we are willingly colonized—and fatally fragmented—by the cultural points of view of our various metropolises. We have even accepted as glorious what has already been dubbed sacred in Mexico or Madrid or Buenos Aires. In this sense, I think that a Puerto Rican writer is more familiar with the depth and breadth of Mexican literature than with the Dominican Republic.²²

Part of the legacy of Hispanism, the perceived union between Latin America and Spain, benefits capitalist interventions from Spain, since they continue to dominate much of the publishing, telecommunications, and media industries in Latin America.²³ While literature published in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic rarely finds readers beyond the borders of these nations, scholars are making efforts to bridge the divide between studies of the insular hispanophone Caribbean in scholarship both in the region and abroad.²⁴

The twentieth-century anglophone dominance in the region that occurred with the shift in imperial powers at the end of the nineteenth century, and the rise of world English in the era of globalization, further marginalizes the hispanophone and relegates it to a Latin American framework. Sánchez likens his relationship with North American literary traditions to “that of a secret and enjoyable infidelity” because of the resistance to English: “The fear of English [has

20 Ibid., 12.

21 Attempts were made in the nineteenth century when there seemed to be greater unity of purpose among Puerto Ricans and Cubans in their fight for independence from Spain. After the shift in power in the region from Spain to the United States, the insular hispanophone Caribbean established divergent forms of government that made their integration into a shared sense of *antillano* identity seem unlikely. See Jossianna Arroyo, *Writing Secrecy in Caribbean Freemasonry* (New York: Palgrave, 2013). For more on the role of the intellectual and his or her relationship to power in the insular hispanophone Caribbean, see Pedro I. San Miguel, “Intelectuales, sociedad y poder en las Antillas hispanoparlantes,” *Revista Mexicana del Caribe* 6, no. 11 (2001): 243–49.

22 Homar, “Luis Rafael Sánchez: Counterpoints,” 11–12.

23 See Herlihy-Mera, “After Hispanic Studies,” 187–88.

24 Some examples include Conrad James and John Perivolaris, eds., *The Cultures of the Hispanic Caribbean* (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 2000); Díaz Quiñones, *Sobre los principios*; Juan Flores, *The Diaspora Strikes Back: Caribeño Tales of Learning and Turning* (New York: Routledge, 2009); William Luis, *Dance between Two Cultures: Latino Caribbean Literature Written in the United States* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1997); Jorge Duany, *Blurred Borders: Transnational Migration between the Hispanic Caribbean and the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel, *Caribe Two Ways: Cultura de la migración en el Caribe insular hispánico* (San Juan, PR: Callejón, 2003); and Vanessa Pérez-Rosario, *Hispanic Caribbean Literature of Migration: Narratives of Displacement* (New York: Palgrave, 2010).

made Puerto Ricans bad] readers of English literature because of our fear of contaminating the Spanish language, of losing it in the avalanche of North American influence.”²⁵ In a world dominated by languages of powerful economies and big populations, translation “condemns minority tongues to obsolescence, even as it fosters access to the cultural heritage of ‘small’ literatures or guarantees a wider sphere of reception to selected, representative authors of minoritarian traditions.”²⁶ We need more platforms that promote dialogues across the region; we need to create spaces for intellectual exchange and creative expression of ideas that are multilingual and heteroglossic, that undermine colonial legacies, and that emphasize cross-border, cross-linguistic, and interethnic relations.

III

Diasporic and transnational hispanophone Caribbean cultural production has, at times, an uneasy relationship with the growing field of Latino studies. One of the challenges in theorizing in Latino literary and cultural studies is that the umbrella term *Latino*, which came into circulation in the 1990s, has a tendency to erase differences in citizenship status, time of arrival, national origin, race, sex, and class among those who loosely “fit” into this category. While a homogenizing term is perhaps inevitable in the search for legal rights, recognition, and social justice, the coherence of *Latino* is questionable on theoretical and historical grounds.²⁷ One example of this is the critical concept of the border/borderlands first articulated by Chicana poet and theorist Gloria Anzaldúa in her field-defining *Borderlands/La frontera*.²⁸ Critic Frances Aparicio has noted that the “border subject” has “been the most important concept that Latino studies has contributed to cultural studies in the United States, Europe, and Latin America.”²⁹ The concept of borderlands, however, most often evokes the US-Mexico border, the desert, and the surrounding geographic region. “[The border is a] 1,950 mile-long wound / dividing a *pueblo*, a culture, / running down the length of my body,” notes Anzaldúa.³⁰ The Caribbean as an imperial frontier is present in canonical works such as Puerto Rican Antonio S. Pedreira’s *Insularismo*, Dominican Juan Bosch’s *De Cristóbal Colón a Fidel Castro: El Caribe como frontera imperial*, and Cuban Jorge Mañach’s *Teoría de la frontera* (1970).³¹ Anzaldúa’s concept of the border does not fit neatly into thinking through literary and cultural production of the

25 Homar, “Luis Rafael Sánchez: Counterpoints,” 14–15.

26 Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

27 See Candace Nelson and Marta Tienda, “The Structuring of Hispanic Identity: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 8, no.1 (1985): 49–74; and Suzanne Oboler, *Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives: Identity and the Politics of (Re)Presentation in the United States* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

28 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987).

29 Frances Aparicio, “Latino Cultural Studies,” in Juan Poblete, ed., *Critical Latin American and Latino Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 13.

30 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La frontera*, 24 (italics in original).

31 Antonio S. Pedreira, *Insularismo: Ensayos de interpretación puertorriqueña* (San Juan: Biblioteca de Autores Puertorriqueños, 1934); Juan Bosch, *De Cristóbal Colón a Fidel Castro: El Caribe como frontera imperial* (Madrid: Alfaguera, 1969); Jorge Mañach, *Teoría de la frontera* (San Juan: Universitaria, 1970).

Caribbean and its Latino diaspora.³² Thinking the Caribbean Latino border requires imagining and exploring other articulations of borders and borderlands that include the Caribbean Sea as a border. The sea is a persistent metaphor in Caribbean Latino literary and cultural production. It is what isolates Puerto Rico in Pedreira's *Insularismo* and what binds the island to others beyond its borders in the poetry of Julia de Burgos.³³ Foregrounding the sea decenters cities such as Miami and New York and resituates them as extensions of the Caribbean archipelago. Contemporary Latino writers and artists use the image of the sea to illustrate the fragility and fluidity of identity constructs in transnational relations. For example, the sea becomes a liquid highway in the work of Scherezade García, a New York-based visual artist who was born in the Dominican Republic, and a liquid border in Ana-Maurine Lara's novel *Erzulie's Skirt*.³⁴ Refocusing on Caribbean and Latino literary and visual representations of the sea as border and frontier will expand the conversation between Caribbean and Latina/o traditions.

While Anzaldúa's work from the 1980s was critical in defining the women-of-color movement, her early works are US centered. Even though *This Bridge Called My Back* includes contributions by women of Caribbean birth and ancestry, the region remains largely absent from the anthology. Coeditor Cherríe Moraga's "Catching Fire," the preface to the fourth edition, notes, "*Bridge's* original political conception of 'U.S. women of color' as primarily including Chinese, Japanese, and Filipina American, Chicana/Latina, Native and African American has now evolved into a transnational and increasingly complex movement of women today, whose origins reside in Asia, throughout the global south and in Indigenous North America."³⁵ Literary works by contemporary Caribbean Latino authors explore transnational family relationships, and characters are often children of migrants who return to the Caribbean homeland, raising the question of the possibility of return and highlighting the circular migration that animates Caribbean life, with large sections—and at times the majority—of the plot set in the region.

Two examples include the novels of Dominican Americans Angie Cruz and Nelly Rosario, both raised in New York City. They write about sexuality, sexual violence, and sex work in the Dominican Republic. Cruz's *Soledad*, about a young Dominican woman who was born and raised in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan, alternates between the daughter's life in New York City and the mother's life as a sex worker in the Dominican Republic.³⁶ When Soledad returns to Washington Heights to take care of her mother, she is forced to confront family secrets and the world that she is so determined to leave behind. She learns that her mother's depression is fueled in part by her early life as a sex worker at the age of fifteen in Puerto Plata. The novel offers a critique of sex tourism that plagues the island, a

32 See Frances Negrón-Muntaner, "Bridging Islands: Gloria Anzaldúa and the Caribbean," *PMLA* 121, no. 1 (2006): 272–78.

33 I see Burgos as a writer through whom we can expand the conversation between Caribbean and Latino traditions. See Vanessa Pérez-Rosario, *Becoming Julia de Burgos: The Making of a Puerto Rican Icon* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014).

34 See www.scherezade.net; Ana-Maurine Lara, *Erzulie's Skirt* (Washington, DC: RedBone, 2006).

35 Cherríe Moraga, "Catching Fire: Preface to the Fourth Edition," in Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), xv–xxvi.

36 Angie Cruz, *Soledad* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001).

place that coerces young women into sex work through deception and false promises. Cruz highlights the exploitation of women and girls on the island (and in New York) by Dominican men who serve as liaisons for numerous European and US male tourists who visit the island to fulfill their sexual fantasies.

In *Song of the Water Saints*, Nelly Rosario—born in the Dominican Republic and raised in Brooklyn—explores the Dominican Republic under US military occupation from 1916 to 1924. Under Woodrow Wilson, the US military easily subdued any Dominican resistance and demanded the country pay its debts to the United States and foreign countries. The novel is told through the lives of three generations of Dominican women. Graciela, the protagonist, is born at the turn of the twentieth century and comes of age during the US occupation. Her daughter, Mercedes, survives the Trujillo dictatorship and later emigrates to New York with her husband and her granddaughter, Leila. *Song of the Water Saints* offers a critique of masculinity and machismo in the region, including the US imperial power that tried to suppress the archive on its military occupation of the island.³⁷ Throughout the novel, there is an emphasis on the stories of the US men who inhabited the city during the eight-year occupation. They were there to establish order, yet many stories circulated of their own debauchery, ruthless killings, rapes, theft, and drinking, as well as stories of what the *yanqui* soldiers did to Dominican girls.³⁸ Rosario links sexual assault to the US military occupation, drawing a parallel between military occupation and sexual exploitation. Graciela's restricted movement contrasts with the unrestricted movement of men and particularly of US troops on the island. Generations later, it is her great-granddaughter, Leila, now living in New York City, who inherits her indomitable spirit. Leila's sexual explorations, much like Graciela's, bring her pain. In the final scene of the novel, Graciela's spirit visits Leila. She does not chastise her for her choices, but instead "tries to demonstrate that they are both seeking room to maneuver within an inherently limiting heteropatriarchal system, whether it is in the Dominican Republic or in the United States."³⁹ These are only two examples of the Caribbean Latino literature written in English that explores transnational family relationships, and political and historical reality in the region and abroad, encouraging greater dialogue between Caribbean and Latino literature. These examples by Cruz and Rosario can be read within a transnational feminist framework.

Caribbean Latinos are often distinguished within the Latino panethnicity because of their relationship to blackness and the Afro-Atlantic world. Afro-Latinos embody the compatibility of blackness with the idea of a Latino identity, while in its dominant and consumer version *Latinidad* and blackness are two mutually exclusive categories.⁴⁰ Caribbean Latinos form part

37 Nelly Rosario, *Song of the Water Saints* (New York: Vintage, 2002). See Donette Francis, *Fictions of Feminine Citizenship: Sexuality and the Nation in Contemporary Caribbean Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 49–76.

38 Rosario, *Song of the Water Saints*, 13–18.

39 Francis, *Fictions of Feminine Citizenship*, 74.

40 See Flores, *Diaspora Strikes Back*; Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores, eds., *The Afro-Latin@ Reader: History and Culture in the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Juan Flores, "Nueva York—Diaspora City: US Latinos between and Beyond," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 35, no. 6 (2002): 46–49.

of overlapping diasporas, the African, Caribbean, and Latino, as exemplified in the poetry of Tato Laviera and María Teresa “Mariposa” Fernández and in the foundational Nuyorican novel *Down These Mean Streets* by Piri Thomas.⁴¹ The relationships forged between Caribbean Latinos and African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans in US cities have long histories and are multiple and varied, from Arturo Alfonso Schomburg and Langston Hughes’s friendship in the early twentieth century to the role of Puerto Ricans in the development of hip-hop in the South Bronx in the later part of that century.⁴² More attention might be placed on the intersections, the dialogues, and the potential to build bridges that Caribbean Latino cultural production encourages between Caribbean, African American, and Latino diasporas and transnational movements.

I began a conversation about the hispanophone Caribbean and *Small Axe* with the journal’s editor, David Scott, in spring 2011. At that time, the journal was making an effort to integrate the francophone Caribbean into what had until recently been a primarily anglophone publication. As members of the editorial team sat around the table and discussed questions of translation, language of publication, copyeditors who work in Spanish, and where to begin, we moved forward with this section without all of the answers to those questions. With the framework now in place to publish in Spanish, we look forward to more contributions from scholars who live and work in the region, even though we missed the opportunity to invite them to participate in this discussion. The section does, however, include contributions by scholars of the hispanophone Caribbean, some of whose early intellectual formations took place in the region and who publish regularly in both Spanish and English. The essays range across the fields of history, literature, art history, sociology, and women’s studies. They suggest new avenues for research, paradigms through which to understand the Caribbean while questioning existing frameworks. They bring the hispanophone Caribbean into focus and into relation with the anglophone and francophone Caribbean, Latin America, and the United States. I would like to thank the contributors to this special section for their generous cooperation. And a special thanks to Scott for his warm encouragement of this project and for creating the space to open up new and constructive debates in our field.

41 Piri Thomas, *Down These Mean Streets* (1967; repr., New York: Vintage, 1997).

42 See Arlene Dávila, *Latino Spin: Public Image and the Whitewashing of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2008); Raquel Rivera, *New York Ricans from the Hip Hop Zone* (New York: Palgrave, 2003); Juan Flores, *From Bomba to Hip Hop: Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Cesar Salgado, “The Archive and Afro-Latin@ Field-Formation: Arturo Alfonso Schomburg at the Intersection of Puerto Rican and African-American Literatures,” in John González and Laura Lomas, eds., *Cambridge History of Latina/o Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).