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Queer Ricans: Cultures and Sexualities in the Diaspora

By Lawrence La Fountain-Strokes

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009

ISBN: 978-0-8166-4092-8

272 pages; \$22.50 [paper]

Reviewer: ENMANUEL MARTÍNEZ, RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

Queer Ricans: Cultures and Sexualities in the Diaspora represents a major contribution to the study of “Queer Rican culture” (p. xxii). A revision and expansion of La Fountain-Strokes’ Ph.D. dissertation, *Queer Ricans* explores the “sexile” (“sexual exile”) experience of first-generation queer Puerto Ricans living on the island, as compared to that of second- and third-generation Puerto Rican LGBTQ immigrants residing within the continental United States. Following a “historical (chronological), spatial, and generational model” of analysis (p. xxiv), La Fountain-Strokes begins with an assessment of the culture and politics of “island-born” (p. xxiv) and raised queer Puerto Ricans in the 1960s, continuing with a look at queer cultural production by second-generation Puerto Rican LGBTQ immigrants who escape to the continental U.S. in the 1970s and 1980s, and concludes with a look at third-generation queer Puerto Rican literature and performance art of the 1990s and early 2000s.

Chapter 1, “The Persecution of Difference,” develops a close reading of the island-born and raised Puerto Rican playwright, essayist, novelist, and short-story author, Luis Rafael Sánchez. Rather than focus on one of Sánchez’s more famous literary works, here La Fountain-Strokes examines the less critically reviewed short-story “¡Jum!” (1966)—which he describes as a “foundational fiction” embodying the grim, pre-Stonewall moment for Puerto Rico’s queer communities in the 1960s. Moreover, La Fountain-Strokes proposes a critical intervention by connecting the short story’s representation of the intersections of homophobia and racism on the island of Puerto Rico to mainland, African American critical race theory in general.

In Chapters 2, “Autobiographical Writing and Shifting Migrant Experience,” and 3, “Woman’s Bodies, Lesbian Passions,” we turn to the question of second-generation queer Puerto Rican diaspora. Here, La Fountain-Strokes reflects on Manuel Ramos Otero’s oeuvre as a queer exile living in New York City in the 1960s through the 1980s, paying particular attention to *Concierto de metal para un recuerdo y otras orgías de soledad* (Metal concert for a remembrance and other orgies of solitude, 1971), *El cuento de la mujer del mar* (The story of the woman of the sea, 1979), as well as two collections of poetry: *Página en blanco y staccato* (Blank Page and Staccato, 1987) and the posthumously published *Invitación al polvo* (Invitation to dust, 1991). Our

critic describes Ramos Otero as someone conducting “autobiography-by-critical-projection,” which is to suggest that he produces, “a writing about the self that occurs simultaneously with the act of writing about (an)other” (p. 21).

Chapter 3 highlights the lesbian, second-generation Puerto Rican immigrant experience. Showcased is the Puerto Rican lesbian poet and writer Luz María Umpierre and the “three stages of [her] migratory/lesbian experience” (p. 71), as reflected in the development of the poet’s literary work while living amongst the Puerto Rican community in Philadelphia in the 1970s and 80s. This chapter unpacks Umpierre’s queer subtexts, her extensive play with language (Spanish and English), and the poet’s thematic implementation of the image of the sea.

In Chapter 4, “Visual Happenings, Queer Imaginings,” we move from the second-generation Puerto Rican LGBTQ experience of the 1970s and 1980s to a trans-generational, multi-spatial, and interdisciplinary assessment of three queer Puerto Rican female artists who come of age in the 1980s and 1990s within the space of the continental United States. Addressed are Frances Negrón-Muntaner and Rose Troche’s work in film, video, and television in Philadelphia and Chicago, respectively, as well as Erika Lopéz’s cartoons, graphic novels, and performance art in such varied locales as Philadelphia, New York, Miami, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

This chapter underscores the fundamental differences that generally distinguish first-generation from second- and third-generation queer Puerto Rican immigrants and Puerto Rican immigrants in general. In the case of most first-generation (queer) Puerto Ricans such as Luis Rafael Sánchez, the Spanish language and local island politics prove central to one’s identity. Second-generation Puerto Rican (LGBTQ) immigrants like Ramos Otero, Umpierre, and Negrón-Muntaner appropriate the English language and develop new political allegiances after escaping to the mainland; all the same, they remain loyal and attentive to local issues on the island. Third-generation Puerto Rican immigrants such as Troche and Lopéz are likely to engage a broader spectrum of social issues, themes, and questions and, as such, less frequently use formal Spanish and are oftentimes more distant from local island politics than their first- and second-generation counterparts.

The fifth and final chapter of *Queer Ricans*, “Nuyorico and the Utopias of the Everyday,” continues the analysis of queer diasporic Puerto Rican performance art by turning to the innovative and collaborative work of the New York-born and Bronx-raised queer Puerto Rican duo Arthur Avilés and Elizabeth Marrero. An earlier version of this chapter first appeared in the 2002 anthology *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*. Avilés and Marrero have turned to performance art—fusing stylized choreography and improvisational acting, music and song, mainstream

American and regional Puerto Rican cultural references, cross-dressing and gender bending—in an effort to articulate a particularly queer (re)imagining of the Nuyorican experience, as embodied by the concept of Nuyorico, a performed “space of liberation, tolerance, and social justice, or at the very least, one marked by queer visibility and fulfillment; a [queer] ghetto utopia” (p. 133).

Several elements of La Fountain-Strokes’ book deserve serious praise. Most refreshing is the author’s commitment to addressing both the queer male *and* female experience of the Puerto Rican diaspora. Within the realm of LGBTQ studies and politics we often find a divide between gay men and lesbian women. La Fountain-Stroke’s emphasizes the dire need for cross-gender collaboration amongst the various members of the larger, North (and Latin) American queer community. In highlighting Avilés and Marrero’s collaborative performance art, La Fountain-Strokes provides readers with a legitimate example of how gender differences are being bridged today between queer male and female subjects—therefore enabling the formulation of certain queer imaginings that are as much universal as they are specifically Puerto Rican.

Queer Ricans also promotes a critical dialogue between generations. Queer artists, scholars, and activist have long since debated among each other over the question of how best to promote intergenerational bridges amongst the various members of the LGBTQ communities in North (and Latin) America—and beyond, for with the dissolution of intergenerational relationships inevitably comes the loss of history and political gains. There is much for today’s queer younger generations to learn from older generations of gays and lesbians and vice versa, and *Queer Ricans* represents an effort to counter such intergenerational disintegration and amnesia. In providing readers with a genealogy of queer, diasporic cultural production between Puerto Rico and the continental U.S., La Fountain-Strokes has successfully taken on the task of amassing the history of Puerto Rican political mobilization from a particularly queer and sociocultural (as opposed to economic) frame of reference. As such, *Queer Ricans* proves itself to be a text beneficial to a wide readership within—and beyond—academia.

Moreover, while *Queer Ricans* speaks first and foremost to the history of queer Puerto Rican “sexile” from the island to the mainland from the 1960s through the start of the 21st century, La Fountain Stroke’s keen assessment of the intergenerational differences in cultural production and political priorities amid first-, second-, and third-generation Puerto Rican LGBTQ writers, artists, and performers grants us insight to the Puerto Rican immigrant experience in general.

My main critique to *Queer Ricans* is ironically based on what I find to be the book’s most effective element: the “historical (chronological), spatial, and generational model” of analysis (xxiv). The structure of *Queer Ricans* is particularly innovative in that it

facilitates an accessible yet thorough assessment of the history, culture, and politics of the queer Puerto Rican diaspora from the 1960s up through the contemporary moment in a fashion that is equally sensitive to the question of space as it is to that of time. All the same, the structure of La Fountain-Strokes' text unintentionally risks the promotion of a misleadingly teleological account of queer, diasporic Puerto Rican history and culture.

In moving both chronologically from the 1960s up to the beginning of the 21st century and spatially north from the space of the island of Puerto Rico to certain metropolitan sectors of the continental United States, *Queer Ricans* presents us with a particularly "unidirectional" understanding of the development of the (queer) Puerto Rican diaspora and its identity, culture, and politics post-1960s. The task at hand is now for future scholars to continue where La Fountain-Strokes' book ends by considering the growing community of queer Puerto Ricans who, despite being born on the mainland, have chosen to return to the island—be it temporarily or permanently; should we expect such individuals' queer subjectivities and political allegiances to resemble those of the second- and third-generation mainland Puerto Rican diaspora, or the first-generation island-born Puerto Ricans, or both or neither? Furthermore, as with all diasporic communities, the queer Puerto Rican diaspora moves in all directions; therefore, also it would be interesting to consider not only vertical, that is "south-to-north," immigration trends and patterns but also horizontal, which is to suggest "south-to-south," diasporic movements.

The past decade has marked the formal emergence of Queer Diaspora and Queer Globalization studies within North American academic issues, as well as the development of countless queer transnational, social and political movements the globe over. However, for artists, scholars, and activist alike to successfully map out a viable landscape for the promotion of global queer politics and culture, it behooves us to begin by doing the hard work that is uncovering and preserving our queer past. Luckily we have the work of such scholars as Lawrence La Fountain-Strokes and his book *Queer Ricans* to provide us with a working blueprint on how to critically engage the cultural history of LGBTQ culture and politics—specifically that of the queer Puerto Rican diaspora—so that we may then turn our attention to collectively (re)imaging and (re)constructing a more gay (read: joyous) future.

Beyond El Barrio: Everyday Life in Latina/o America

Edited by Gina Pérez, Frank A. Guridy, and Adrian Burgos, Jr.

New York: New York University Press, 2010

ISBN: 978-0-8147-9129-5

296 pages; \$24.00 [paper]

Reviewer: CARLOS SANABRIA, HOSTOS COMMUNITY COLLEGE—THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Since the mid-1960s, the Latino population in the United States has undergone dramatic changes in its size, diversity, and geographic dispersal. Today, Latinos in the U.S. number over fifty million. This is an increase of over forty-three million since 1960. In addition to over thirty-one million Mexicans and four and a half million Puerto Ricans, this population now includes nearly two million Cubans and about one and a half million Dominicans, as well as four million immigrants from various Central American nations and more than two and a half million from South America. No longer concentrated in major metropolitan centers in the northeast and southwest, Latinos can now be found in significant numbers in all fifty states, in mid-size and small cities and towns, and in numerous rural areas of the country.

The establishment of many university-based Latino Studies Centers and a growing volume of scholarly literature that traces the history and analyzes the social and economic conditions of Latino communities in the United States have accompanied the changes in the Latino population over the course of the last half-century. *Beyond El Barrio: Everyday Life in Latina/o America* is a welcome addition to this body of work. The editors evenly divide the twelve essays in the book into three parts that focus on issues of citizenship and belonging, gender and sexuality, and political activism in Latino communities. This is an enlightening and wide-ranging anthology of scholarly papers that are academically rigorous and highly readable. The value of this collection lies in the many topics covered and the eclectic variety of sources the authors employ as a basis for their analysis.

The essays in this anthology highlight Latino communities across the country, including little studied ones like that in Lorain, Ohio, and the Latino gay population in San Francisco. Among the many subjects the book addresses are the efforts of Latinos to create community, especially via the sharing of a common culture, and the attempts of more recent immigrants to maintain close ties to their countries of origin. Efforts to keep alive a historical memory and reconstruct community histories are other important themes taken up in this volume. In addition, community activism and struggles for social and economic justice and political rights are explored, as are the

efforts to be accepted on equal terms by U.S. society and to counter a marginalized status. The book emphasizes the importance of recognizing the diversity of the U.S. Latino population in regard to race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation.

Overall, this book seeks to take the reader *beyond el barrio* by offering an alternative vision to the contradictory mainstream images of Latinos in the U.S. as either a threat to American culture and society, or as embodying essential American values relating to hard work, family, and patriotism. Instead, it presents a more nuanced portrayal of Latino everyday life in America. This book also counteracts the concept of the barrio as an urban ghetto with all the negative characteristics this implies: social isolation, disorganization, and moral decay. As an alternative, these essays highlight Latino barrios as settings that inspire innovative cultural production, motivate progressive political activism, and foster a positive ethnic identity. In addition, the essays in this collection highlight the contributions of Latino Studies to American Studies and a better understanding of contemporary U.S. society in an increasingly globalized world.

Among the outstanding features of the essays in this collection is the use of a great variety of documentary sources. Radio, television, film, newspaper articles, magazine obituaries, oral history, poetry, the U.S. national anthem, the history of American baseball, ethnographic observation, and children's art are all employed as fundamental sources. The detailed depictions of the daily life of Latinos in the United States and the analysis of the transnational characteristics of Latino barrios in the country are some of the other significant features of the text.

In her contribution, "‘Puuurrrrooo México,’ Listening to Transnationalism on U.S. Spanish-Language Radio," Dolores Inés Casillas focuses on the mostly Mexican listeners of radio station Estéreo Sol in Los Angeles and San Francisco. She demonstrates how Spanish-language radio represents an appropriation of public space by an immigrant, working class audience. In the process they share a sense of membership and belonging to communities in both Mexico and the United States. Estéreo Sol provides Latino audiences with a transnational link to their home country by way of news and information and music from Mexico. At the same time, the announcers and public service messages encourage listeners to pursue dual-citizenship, register and vote in the United States and avail themselves of local resources to help resolve immediate social and political problems and issues in this country. Dolores Inés Casillas concludes that Spanish-language radio stations in other U.S. cities such as New York and Miami with large Latino populations serve similar purposes.

Deborah Paredes, on the other hand, employs a close reading and analysis of the film *Real Women Have Curves* and the television program *Ugly Betty* to argue that the absent mother in contemporary popular portrayals of young Latinas represent

anxieties among the Latino establishment and U.S. society at large about the possibility of Latinas' increased economic power. Meanwhile, Adrian Burgos, Jr. and Frank A. Guridy focus on the history of baseball in the United States. They too highlight the anxieties caused by a growing Latino presence. In "Becoming Suspect in Usual Places: Latinos, Baseball, and Belonging in El Barrio del Bronx," they argue that the controversy surrounding the little league Paulino All Stars and the age of their star pitcher Danny Almonte was a xenophobic reaction ignited by the perceived threat posed by the increased presence of a non-white population in the Bronx and the emergence of Latinos as outstanding players in major league baseball.

Xenophobia and the imagined threat of Latinos to U.S. society were also at the center of the vehement negative public reaction to "Nuestro Himno," a Spanish-language rendition of the Star-Spangled Banner. Recorded in the spring of 2006, at the time of the largest pro-immigrant protests across the United States in the nation's history, this is the subject of María Elena Cepeda's essay as she highlights the tensions rooted in the increasing transnational mobility of people, capital, and labor.

Marginalization and the struggle to belong and create community are themes central to many of the essays in this book. In "Hispanic Values: Gender, Culture, and the Militarization of Latina/o Youth," Gina M. Pérez considers how Latino high school students volunteer to participate in the military's Junior Officer Reserve Training Programs in order to gain respectability and social capital. Using ethnographic methods and media analysis, she demonstrates the ways in which Latino values are identified as similar to military cultural values. The author explores the long history of U.S. military recruitment of minorities as a vehicle for social and economic mobility and the ironies this often entails.

In "Hayándose: Zapotec Migrant Expressions of Membership and Belonging," Lourdes Gutiérrez Nájera also utilizes the techniques of ethnographic observation to analyze how Zapotec Indians, a marginalized people in Mexico, find emotional and financial support in Los Angeles, where ironically they are also marginalized as well as stigmatized as Mexican immigrants. In informal gatherings, *tandas* (migrant micro-credit associations), celebrations of rites of passage such as baptisms, birthdays, weddings, and funerals, as well as in informal gatherings, visits with friends and family, telephone conversations, and collective viewing of videos, they create a sense of belonging and community that helps them maintain and reproduce their indigenous ethnic identity and counteract feelings of marginality. Lourdes Gutiérrez Nájera draws on her research among Zapotec immigrants to alert Latino scholars of the need to reconsider the increased diversity among Latinos with regard to race, ethnicity, and class.

In “Going Public? Tampa Youth, Racial Schooling, and Public History in the Cuentos de mi Familia Project,” John McKiernan-González argues that growing diversity poses a challenge to existing histories of Latino communities in Tampa, Florida, where they include not just Cubans, but Nicaraguan, Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Guatemalan immigrants. This essay is also of interest because of the oral history techniques and art projects his students employ to produce biographies of their favorite family members. These biographies emphasize not just individuals, but the journeys that brought them to Tampa. Immigration to and often migration within this country are essential features of Latino life in the United States. These experiences figure prominently in many of the family histories that came out of the “Cuentos de mi Familia Project,” the basis of this essay.

Latinos are now the largest “minority” population in the United States and an integral part of American society. Businessmen, politicians, and the military target them as workers, consumers, voters, and soldiers. Latinos have a long presence in this country and have played a significant role in its history, yet ironically are marginalized populations that continue to be viewed as outsiders. *Beyond El Barrio, Everyday Life in Latina/o America* is an important set of academic articles by skillful scholars that makes innovative use of documentary sources as it explores the paradox of the Latino experience in the United States.

Mapping Latina/o Studies: An Interdisciplinary Reader

Edited by Angharad N. Valdivia and Matt Gracia

New York: Peter Lang, 2012

ISBN: 978-1-4331-1156-3

354 pages;\$99.95 [cloth]

Reviewer: EFRAÍN BARRADAS, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA—GAINESVILLE

Cada disciplina intenta crear su propia metodología y las ideas dominantes en el momento de su aparición marcan profundamente ese nuevo campo y la forma que estudia el aspecto de la realidad que observa. Por ejemplo, el estudio sistemático de la literatura como disciplina académica sólo apareció en el siglo XIX— la literatura existió desde siempre, pero sus estudios académicos son relativamente recientes —y, por ello y por mucho tiempo, casi hasta nuestros días, dominaron en este campo los acercamientos filológicos que entonces estaban de boga. Por ello, los primeros académicos que intentaron estudiar sistemáticamente las literaturas nacionales europeas pusieron su mirada en el pasado remoto, en los orígenes mismos de sus lenguas nacionales, y trataron de hallar en los textos de ese lejano periodo evidencia sobre el desarrollo de la lengua misma, el objetivo central de la filología. Así, por ejemplo, en los estudios literarios españoles del siglo XIX se les prestaba atención casi exclusiva a textos como el *Poema del Mío Cid* o los romances populares de la Edad Media y no a la novela de Cervantes u otras magníficas obras del Siglo de Oro. Sin duda los intereses intelectuales del momento en que se forma una disciplina académica marca su metodología.

Esta idea nos sirve para entender lo que en nuestros días ocurre con los llamados estudios latinos o latinoestadounidenses y, específicamente, nos ayuda a apreciar un texto como el de Angharad N. Valdivia y Matt Gracia, *Mapping Latina/o Studies: An interdisciplinary reader*, uno de tantos que intentar ofrecer una interpretación amplia de este nuevo campo de estudios que lucha por convertirse en una disciplina académica propia. Vivimos el nacimiento de los estudios latinoestadounidenses o latinos. (Prefiero, para no causar ninguna complicación, hablar de latinoestadounidenses ya que latinos puede confundirse con los estudios de los clásicos romanos o, más peligroso aun, con los estudios latinoamericanos.) Cada vez que en una universidad se imparte un curso sobre el tema—sea desde la perspectiva de la historia, de las letras, de la antropología, de la política o desde la disciplina que sea—en ese mismo momento se va creando la materia que se estudia porque los estudios latinoestadounidenses aun no existen como disciplina establecida, configurada en todas sus dimensiones. La vamos creando mientras la comentamos: ésta es una de las grandes aventuras intelectuales

del campo. Es obvio, pues, que las corrientes intelectuales del momento imprimen su sello sobre esa nueva disciplina que está en proceso de formación, de la misma forma que la filología lo hizo sobre el estudio de la literatura y el intento de organización enciclopedista del siglo XVIII marcó la biología de ese momento.

Es difícil decir con exactitud cuándo aparecen los estudios latinoestadounidenses. Aunque podemos buscar antecedentes remotos de la existencia de esa realidad histórica—recordemos los que algunos estudiosos han hecho con Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca (1500–1560) a quien se ha intentado convertir en el primer chicano y hasta, más tarde, en el primer latinoestadounidense, para así darle un sentido histórico a este campo de estudios—esta disciplina, como materia académica, verdaderamente aparece en la segunda mitad del siglo XX, especialmente tras la fundación de departamentos o centro de estudios de los distintos grupos étnicos de raíces latinoamericanas, especialmente los de estudios chicanos y puertorriqueños. La antropóloga Arlene Dávila, en su imprescindible *Latinos, Inc: the marketing and making of a people* (2001), llega a postular que el concepto es una fabricación de las agencias de publicidad en su intento de penetrar el mercado latinoestadounidense. (Pensemos en el fenómeno publicitario del “Cinco de Mayo” que tanto éxito ha tenido en los Estados Unidos y ha convertido una fiesta patria mexicana secundaria—No, no es el día de la independencia de México.—en una magnífica oportunidad para vender cervezas y comida mexicanas.)

A pesar de que no podamos marcar con precisión el momento exacto cuanto nacieron los estudios latinoestadounidenses, no cabe duda de que éstos han sido profundamente marcados o, más aun, definidos por la boga de las corrientes teóricas que circulan hoy en la academia estadounidense, sobre todo por las corrientes del posmodernismo y el feminismo. Y así tenía que ser, porque, como ya hemos apuntado, ocurre siempre con toda nueva disciplina. Por ello, tras una primera etapa cuando el foco de atención estaba en inventariar o crear una historia de la presencia de los latinos en los Estados Unidos—entonces es cuando Cabeza de Vaca se convierte en chicano o en proto-chicano, al menos—pasamos a una segunda en la que los estudiosos que van creando la disciplina se valen de las teorías en boga para presentar un todo coherente de eso que se ha inventariado o inventado. Por ello cuando hojeamos una revista académica del campo, como ésta misma que usted tiene en las manos, vemos la proliferación de referencias eruditas a los teóricos que dominan el pensamiento de nuestros días. A veces nos parece que ese intento de teorización llegó demasiado pronto al campo y que no tuvimos tiempo para desarrollar plenamente esa primera fase de mera acumulación de datos, aunque en verdad las dos fases se dan al mismo momento. En nuestros días tratamos de aplicar las teorías de avanzada, pero a la vez buscamos al primer latino que vivió

en Manhattan y descubrimos que fue un mulato dominicano, Jan Rodrigues o Juan Rodríguez, y aplaudimos el pequeño dato que se convierte en información de gran importancia y base para mayor teorización. A pesar de esa convivencia de los dos acercamientos, la acumulación de datos y la aplicación de la teoría, no cabe duda de que en nuestro momento domina la segunda corriente. Esto se ve muy claramente en el libro de Valdivia y García que comentamos.

Mapping Latina/o Studies... recoge, tras una enjundiosa introducción, en tres secciones principales y en una primera y menor de homenaje a Gloria Anzaldúa, catorce trabajos de estudiosos del campo que intentan definir la nueva disciplina o hacer una contribución, desde un campo de estudios ya establecido, sobre algún aspecto de los estudios latinoestadounidenses o de uno de los campos que lo componen. Algunos de esos mismos trabajos atacan el concepto de la disciplina, lo que viene a probar que ésta está en pleno periodo de formación y que, por ende, no está completamente definida. Se recogen textos de prestigiosas estudiosas como Ruth Behar, pero, en general, los incluidos son obra de estudioso/as noveles. La razón de este hecho se puede explicar por el origen mismo del libro. Como los compiladores aclaran el la primera oración del volumen: "This book is the result of a research collective that began at the University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign (...) when we were both members of the faculty." (pág. vii) Los compiladores, García y Valdivia, establecieron un seminario donde muchos de los que ahora son capítulos del libro se presentaron originalmente. A esos textos se añadieron otros de estudioso/as que no estuvieron en esos seminarios y que sirven para redondear el conjunto y darle mayor amplitud y relevancia. A pesar de ello y a pesar de la importancia de algunos de los textos incluidos, el libro retrata demasiado marcadamente los gustos de los compiladores y, por ello, no se puede ver como una recopilación antológica de trabajos que definan el campo sino como el esfuerzo de un grupo de estudioso/as por presentar sus ideas y contribuciones al mismo.

En *Mapping Latina/o Studies...* se recogen estudios estructurados desde muy diferentes acercamientos, muchos de ellos, por desgracia, deformados por el empleo exclusivo de fuentes en inglés y por una ambigua delimitación de lo que es latinoestadounidense y lo que es latinoamericano. Se incluyen, por ejemplo, estudios de historia del arte (Guisela Latorre), de pedagogía (Rochelle Gutiérrez) y de historia (Gabriela Arredondo). También se incluyen trabajos que se enfocan en un grupo en particular, aunque abundan los que intentan dar una visión de lo latino como colectividad. Efectivamente, dado lo diverso de los acercamientos de estos textos—la palabra interdisciplinario es clave aquí, pues describe el carácter esencial de la teoría que sustenta estos estudios—, me centraré en la introducción de García y Valdivia que, creo, sintetiza muy bien el sentido y los logros del libro en general.

Los compiladores de esta colección se enfrentan de manera directa al problema de definir qué es lo latinoestadounidense y lo hacen desde una perspectiva crítica muy sabia, la negación de las categorías esencialistas de lo nacional: "...our argument is that Latinidad has been and is an exciting, dynamic, and somewhat unstable process of producing a widespread community that has economic, cultural, and political implications for the nation." (pág. 5) En otras palabras, lo latinoestadounidense no es una esencia dada sino un proceso aun inacabado—toda nacionalidad es eso mismo—que tiene unas claras motivaciones políticas y que apunta a un proyecto colectivo por hacerse. La llamada latinidad es un plan, una propuesta, un proceso. Por ello, el problema central de ésta es cómo caben los distintos grupos que la forman en esa definición mayor. Concretamente lo que se plantea es si los subgrupos que la forman tienen que dejar de ser quiénes son para convertirse en esa entidad mayor, en lo latinoestadounidense. En otras palabras y para ponerlo en el contexto boricua: ¿Tenemos que dejar de ser puertorriqueños en los Estados Unidos para convertirnos en latinos?

Este es el problema central de todo el libro y de la disciplina misma: como no existe una esencia de lo latinoestadounidense (Sabiamente se niega a Platón.) y como éste es un proceso (¡Que viva Aristóteles y Benedict Anderson también!), ¿cómo se producirá esa nueva definición? ¿En qué proporción se darán las contribuciones de cada subgrupo? Dado que la gran mayoría de los posibles latinoestadounidenses son chicano/as, ¿se definirá ese nueva "esencia", que no lo es, como mayoritariamente chicana? ¿Cómo se formará ese nuevo mestizaje cultural que producirá la latinidad? Uno de los problemas centrales, problema que se trata en el libro con el caso de los dominicanos en un estudio de Ramona Hernández, es qué se hace cuando un subgrupo mismo no quieren dejar de ser en términos nacionales y rehúsa convertirse en parte de esa nueva identidad colectiva.

En fin y paradójicamente, uno de los logros de esta recopilación de textos es que presenta la construcción de lo latinoestadounidense como lo que verdaderamente es: un proceso, un plan o un proyecto y no como una esencial dada de antemano. El libro de García y Valdivia no nos ofrece la selección ideal de texto sobre el tema, pero su acercamiento antiesencialista a la latinidad es acertado y, por ello y por la calidad misma de muchos los trabajos incluidos, ofrece un aporte a este nuevo campo intelectual que intenta construirse en una nueva disciplina académica. Por ello mismo también es una contribución al campo de los estudios de la cultura y la sociedad puertorriqueñas en los Estados Unidos.

Bienvenido sea, pues, este libro ya que es un esfuerzo más por definir este campo de nos vamos inventando al mismo tiempo que lo estudiamos.

The Other Latin@: Writing Against a Singular Identity

Edited by Blas Falconer and Lorraine M. López

Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2011

ISBN: 978-0-8165-2867-7

184 pages; \$22.00 [paper]

Reviewer: IGNACIO RODEÑO, THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

This anthology, edited by Blas Falconer and Lorraine M. López, consists of a collection of twenty essays that center on the question of identity. The aim of the volume is to showcase the lack of an essential Latino identity and the presence of a plurality of experiences that undermines the idea that Latinos are a monolithic group. It is only fitting, then, that these pieces are written in the first person narrative. The volume opens with a foreword by William Luis, and ends with an afterword by the same critic, where he discusses the labels Latino and Hispanic in relation to culture and identity, as well as the use of one or another through history. Such labels are problematic, as Luis notes, since they try to fix a concept that is, in itself, multifaceted, fluid, subject to alteration by means of its diasporic nature.

By employing the first person narrative, *The Other Latin@* contributes to the body of work that strives for the creation of a collective memory through the personal. The autobiographical voice, where the self reflects on a significant moment or event in his or her life, has been widely used in the so-called ethnic literatures to present such experience as something that can be read as representative of the community precisely because of its significance and relation to it. In doing so, the particular experience becomes the voice of the community, a voice that has not been regularly acknowledged by the mainstream culture in the case of Latinos. It is through reading narratives of the self as collective memory that non-hegemonic communities seek to achieve a better understanding of their origins, their history—in sum their identity. One might argue that narratives in which the particular experience is recognized as communal would result in cementing identity as fixed, homogeneous, monolithic, and this is even more the case with an anthology, which inclines us to read them as a unit. However, because of this anthology's pursuit of the opposite, it is particularly valuable

In order to start dismantling the monolithic, stereotypical image of Latinos, the anthology starts with Lisa Chávez's account of the experience of a Latina growing up in an unexpected location: Alaska. In the same vein, Joy Castro and Teresa Dovalpage illustrate experiences of Cubans who immigrated to the U.S. at different times than the ones that dominate Cuban-American narratives. Other authors reflect the linguistic limitation of Latinos who have lost their Spanish and are left to wrestle with the notion

that being Latino means having a link to the Spanish language. Precisely by describing this experience of exclusion, U.S. Puerto Rican Judith Ortiz Cofer redefines Latino to include alternative identities. Taking issue with the notion that Latinos are fundamentally immigrants, Carla Trujillo and Lorraine López remind us that some Chicanos did not cross the border, but rather the border “crossed” them. Trujillo further illustrates the frictions between groups of Chicanos, stressing the erroneous idea that they share a homogeneous identity, contrary to common belief. Blas Falconer, Erasmo Guerra, and Steven Cordova link their Latino identity to sexual orientation, questioning the idea of machismo as an essential aspect of Latino masculinity. Urayoán Noel underscores the notion of identity as something fluid, in permanent construction, when he ends his narrative: “My own Latino awakening came late. Or rather, it’s still happening” (p. 90).

The majority of authors in this anthology are Chicana/o, with sixty percent of the contributions. While some may object that other groups are underrepresented, it bears noting that the Chicano population is the highest among Latinos in the U.S. Also, the literary corpus of Chicanos, is, as of now, the best established, followed by that of Puerto Ricans and others from the Caribbean. The exception is work from Dominican-American writers, even though the editors quote Julia Álvarez in the introduction and state that they solicited collaborations from this group. On the other hand, there are contributions by authors from less well-represented Latin American regions within Latino letters, namely the Andes and Venezuela.

While not as extensive as other anthologies that have tackled the issue of Latino identity, with its twenty brief texts, *The Other Latin@* includes the voices of contemporary authors who reflect on the crossroads of Latino identity at the present moment. In this sense, this anthology is a step forward from earlier compilations of canonic Latino texts, which while valuable, contribute to the idea of a fixed, homogeneous notion of identity. If we agree that identity is in flux, this new anthology illustrates how it is evolving among Latinos.

The anthology includes authors with a range of backgrounds. Some, like Lucha Corpi, a figure within the Chicano movement, are proven Latino activists, while others, such as the Puerto Rican Judith Ortiz Cofer, sit more comfortably within the mainstream writing establishment. Newer voices no less important have also been making ripples on the Latino cultural scene. Thus, Urayoán Noel reflects on what means to be a Puerto Rican Latino poet and scholar and how the evolution of this group’s identity (from subcultural, to multicultural, to transcultural, to use Noel’s terminology) has informed his self-reflection. Blas Falconer ponders the significance of being Puerto Rican while living outside a large Boricua community. He echoes Ortiz Cofer, whose musings include how the Puerto Rican experience has surpassed the

boundaries of the island, those of New York, and is now shared by other compatriots across the U.S., who Falconer dubs, “Other Rican.”

This anthology not only explores the evolution of Latino identity in the twenty-first century, but it also showcases the liminal voices of Latinos who resist incorporation under the homogeneous definition as understood by the hegemonic mainstream. In doing so, it underscores the constant state of flux that constitutes and defines identity, and raises the question of Latino identity to the next level. By appropriately ending the volume with the afterword by Luis, which in turn ends with a series of questions, the reader is left to ponder what it means to be Latino. Such considerations aim to problematize, not solve, the question of labels (hence, identity). The volume thus requires an active reader, who becomes engaged in the debate and is encouraged to render his or her own take on identity vis-à-vis the broader community.

Decolonization Models for America's Last Colony: Puerto Rico

By Ángel Collado-Schwarz

Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2012

ISBN: 978-0-8156-0963-6

256 pages; \$29.95 [paper]

Reviewer: ÁNGEL ISRAEL RIVERA, UNIVERSIDAD DE PUERTO RICO—RÍO PIEDRAS

This book is much more than just a translation to English of the original work in Spanish, *Soberanías Exitosas* (*Successful Sovereignties*). Ángel Collado Schwarz, a successful advertising agent for many years, is now a prestigious University Professor and historian who recently obtained a doctorate in History from Complutense University at Madrid, Spain. He currently teaches Puerto Rican History to doctoral candidates at San Juan's Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe (Center of Advanced Studies of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean). Collado also is a noted communicator. From various editions of his weekly radio program *La Voz del Centro*, broadcasted by Univision Puerto Rico, and some newspaper columns authored by himself or by the two distinguished economists Francisco Catalá Oliveras and Juan Lara, Collado constructed the first edition in Spanish. It basically consisted of transcriptions of radio interviews in which Collado and Catalá, or Collado and Juan Lara, discussed the current crisis and free fall of the Puerto Rican economy and contrasted such an unfortunate and distressful situation to the experiences of other small countries and their peoples, who did manage to construct growing, successful economies after ending colonial relations—or minority group subordinate status—and establishing their own sovereign states: Israel, Slovenia, Singapore, Estonia, New Zealand, and Ireland.

This English enlarged and updated edition of the original work is aimed at the American public, and mainly, at Washington legislators and policymakers. The book is presided by quite impressive praise and laudatory comments by James Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank 1995–2005; Thomas E. Hughes, former US Assistant Secretary of State and former President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Ambassador Peter R. Rosenblatt, President Carter's personal representative in negotiations toward terminating the US Trusteeship of the Pacific and for establishing sovereign free association for Micronesia, the Marshall Islands and Palau; and Moisés Naim, former editor-in-chief of *Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.) and columnist of *El País* newspaper of Madrid.

The basic main and reiterated argument of this volume is that, under the new globalized capitalist economy, small countries are much better off when they

possess the powers and competences of full sovereignty and, at the same time, enjoy interesting, constructive, and interdependent relations with their respective former metropolis, as well as with other key advanced countries. In order for this to happen, of course, the powers of sovereignty must be effectively and efficiently managed by the power elites in those small countries. This meant that such elites had to be really committed at aiming to attain sustained development, more beneficial economic interrelations with advanced countries, and improved income and social benefits distribution—such as education and health—for the benefit of all population sectors of their countries and not just for a privileged egotistic elite—as currently is the case in colonial Puerto Rico. In other words, sovereignty is not by itself a panacea for all economic and social problems of formerly colonial societies, but rather a set of tools to be correctly managed by political elites that were not egotistic or committed only to seeking benefits for their own privileged class. This is why, Collado, Catalá and Lara did not focus in small independent countries in Latin America and the Caribbean but rather in countries located in Europe, the Middle East, Asia or Oceania. For example, by 2012, both Trinidad-Tobago and Panama already have rapidly growing economies, while the Puerto Rican economy still is stagnated. However, Collado would never think about including such experiences as “models” for a sovereign Puerto Rico because such countries continue to be affected by high levels of social inequality, high crime rates and social violence, problems also present in territorial Puerto Rico under the sovereignty of the United States. The same thing happens with larger Latin American nations such as Mexico, Colombia, or Brazil where secular social inequalities, other social ills and political violence have not yet been eliminated or drastically reduced.

Therefore, the book emphasizes the fact that, in all countries reviewed as successful economic models, their power elites not only had a real commitment to the development of their countries as a whole but also to improving the quality of life of all inhabitants. Besides, they were intelligent and flexible enough as to maintain significant economic interdependence with important economic powers: for example, Israel with both, Great Britain and the United States. New Zealand and Singapore, as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations maintained important economic and political ties with the United Kingdom and with other Commonwealth nations as well. In a similar fashion, Ireland, Estonia and Slovenia had developed important linkages with European advanced economies through the European Union.

A second important argument advanced by Collado's book is that sovereignty is available for Puerto Rico in two main non-colonial, non-territorial political status formulations accepted by the United Nations and international law: sovereign free association and outright independence. However, as is easily inferred from the different

chapters on selected countries, even under independence the author envisions that Puerto Rico would have to develop new significant interrelations not only with the US economy, but also with growing economies in the European Union and in countries such as Japan, China, and India. Statehood as the 51st state of the American Union is discarded. On the one hand, because such a status would not concede Puerto Rico the international sovereign powers that may be obtained either through free association or independence. On the other hand, because it would clash with the interests of mainstream white Americans of north-European descent in maintaining political and cultural hegemony in US society in spite of the menace of a growing Latino population. Collado insists very clearly that the history of US-Puerto Rico relations shows that statehood may be individually attained by Puerto Ricans as American citizens if they decide to move to any of the 50 states of the union, but it has never been considered as desirable for Puerto Rico as a country, as a Hispanic Caribbean nation.

Finally, a third paramount argument of the book is that there are six (6) main sovereign powers that Puerto Rico's government is unable to fully exercise under territorial, subordinate Commonwealth status. Such powers have been precisely those that have been key elements in explaining why small sovereign countries such as the ones covered by the chapters of the book have attained successful economies. These powers are: (1) Power over the financial sector of the economy; (2) Over imports and exports (trade); (3) Over the taxation system; (4) Over natural resources; (5) Over transportation and communications and (6) the Power to enter into international treaties.

It was mentioned earlier that the book is not a mere translation of the original Spanish publication. This is so because Collado and the two collaborating economists include in the English version direct references and statistics regarding exactly how the 2008-2010 world economic crisis did affect each of the six small countries studied. In this aspect, an argument is advanced in the sense that all these countries slowed their growth rates—or even began to have negative economic growth for a few years—but their political elites have been able in most cases to regain at least modest economic growth by making adjustments that become possible only by exercising the powers of sovereignty. Collado contends that, for example in Ireland, the elites committed several errors that help explain its economic slump. Decreasing growth rates and other problems, claims the author, were not the result of sovereign powers but were rather caused by wrongful decisions made by Ireland's governmental elite. However, when political leadership became aware of the causes of recession, they initiated adjustments and changed policies in such a way that Ireland soon became the fastest European country in attaining economic recuperation. At any rate, all these countries, though affected by the worldwide crisis, are much better off than Puerto

Rico, which remains dependent on US federal subsidies in order to return to growth because our government lacks the powers that still reside in Washington.

Besides, the book includes three new elements not included originally: Part 3, Comparative Tables, includes 2010 data from all the countries studied as compared to data on Puerto Rico; Part 4, is a selection of newspaper articles and columns published in *El Nuevo Día* by Collado himself from November 2007 to September 2011. These cover different topics related to Puerto Rico's economy and political status problem, to US-Puerto Rico relations, or to successful evolutions in the countries included as models for a sovereign Puerto Rico. Finally, at the very end, a list of suggested readings published in English was added.

The importance of this updated English version has to do with the author's purpose. If *Successful Sovereignties* was aimed at Puerto Rican readers, *Decolonization Models for America's Last Colony: Puerto Rico* has been aimed, as mentioned earlier, to the American public and to American policymakers. Moreover, much in the same fashion as the author followed-up its original Spanish publication in Puerto Rico by a series of public presentations entitled "Soberanías en PowerPoint," attended by hundreds of citizens of all ages and walks of life, Ángel Collado Schwarz has also conducted a personal follow-up of this English language publication with presentations in several prestigious US universities and think tanks, besides, of course, sending personal copies to each member of the US Congress. Only time will demonstrate its real impact among US readers.

El caldero quema'o: El contexto social-militar de los estadounidenses en Puerto Rico y otros lugares del Caribe durante el período entre-guerras, 1919–1938.

By Héctor R. Marín Román

San Juan: Publicaciones Gaviota (La Academia Puertorriqueña de la Historia), 2012

847 pages; \$25.99 [paper]

Reviewer: YVONNE M. NARGANES STORDE, UNIVERSIDAD DE PUERTO RICO — RÍO PIEDRAS

In her review of Marín Román's previous volume, Sandra Ramírez (2010: XX) quoted Roger Spiller (2006), "the global approach in historiography has opened the way to uncharted research territories, and to yet another revision of the simplistic postulates and all-encompassing theories concerning our recent past." Spiller (2010: XX) further states that "When the historian studies a question, the first step entails mastering its larger context, the unique circumstances that brought it to life. At first these circumstances may appear as little more than a bewildering array of isolated incidents, with no evident relation among them. The pieces don't seem to fit together at all. At this point the historian's skill and training come into play, showing how those pieces interact to create results that no model or formula could predict or explain."

In keeping with these tendencies, Héctor Marín Román's *El caldero quema'o: El contexto social-militar de los estadounidenses en Puerto Rico y otros lugares del Caribe durante el periodo entre-guerras, 1919–1938* affords a refreshing and full-length account of the initial diminution of United States Army and Navy support of imperialism in the Caribbean from the end of the First World War through the initial emergency preparations for the Second World War, as well as a new look—based on U.S. Army Intelligence records—of the expected uprising of the "Army of Liberation" under the leadership of attorney Pedro Albizu Campos, and a possible link between some of his followers and Nazi agents (p. 576). The book's title refers to the platonic myth of the "melting pot," which in reality is only a burnt cauldron in which all ethnic groups boil together, but do not mix (pp. 1–2).

The book's scope goes beyond the canonic fringes typical of such studies. The work spans the geographical boundaries of the Caribbean Basin, and covers the chronological period from 1919 to 1938. The account manages to merge aspects of the cultural and social diversity encountered by the U.S. in the implementation of standing war plans, the "small wars" experience by the Marine Corps, and the return of the German Navy to Caribbean waters upon Hitler's take-over of Berlin's Chancellory and his application to the Americas of Mussolini's "living space" postulates. Also

treated are the U.S. Army in Puerto Rico and the Panama Canal Zone, the Puerto Rican National Guard, operations of German Intelligence agents in the Basin, and the participation of Puerto Ricans in the Spanish Civil War.

Marín Román integrates data from works well supported by evidence, with unwonted, difficult-to-obtain military documentary sources. He does it with relative ease because, despite the almost total absence of finding aids, he knows what records to look for, and where and how they are stored. Thus, *El caldero quema'o* offers the reader a different perspective that questions the “irrefutable” conceptual framework of military and naval policies in the Caribbean. The author’s singular approach is due in part to his professional training and experience as a military historian, and in part to his service as a Field Grade Officer in the U.S. Army Reserve. His firm understanding of military arts and science forms the core of his research methodology. In fact, Marín Román regularly contradicts the standing views on the subject of military history. His incisive historiographical critique (pp. 729–89) serves as a healthy epigrammatic for works on the U.S. military establishment. Of particular usefulness to scholars and students is the epilogue (p. 891), which provides unexplored or scantily treated research themes.

Marín Román’s argument also stands as a healthy, unprecedented proposition in the study of the “Revolution in Military Affairs” that took place in the U.S. during the period between the wars, although Puerto Rico experienced very little of it. Thus, the author’s levelheaded contention that the U.S. Army and Navy totally neglected their forces in the Caribbean sets free the theoretical restrictions imposed by some writers who endorse the biased idea of the island being a “military bastion” that guarded U.S. economic interests on the Caribbean side of the Panama Canal. According to documentary evidence available to the author, Puerto Rico’s importance depended on Germany’s ability to attack the U.S. mainland by establishing advance bases in the Caribbean, and the interest of the U.S. in keeping Puerto Rico. In other words, the U.S. government could elect to surrender the island to Germany without a fight, as long as it agreed with the international policies of the moment (p. 76). Thus, the author upends the traditional imperialist paradigm, since there were neither naval bases nor sizeable ground forces that would have constituted sufficient strength to protect the island against a yet-undetermined foe. In other words, if there were no defenses, Puerto Rico was not important; and if it was not important, it could not be a strategic enclave.

Local, regional, and global events are interwoven in the story, contributing to its complexity and providing a means through which these events can be analyzed. Hence, the treatment assists the reader in tracing the shape of the social landscape as impacted by U.S. military presence. The author’s well-rounded perspective stresses the international state of affairs in the development of U.S. military and naval planning against a variety of

enemies, with code names for war plans such as “Red” (war with Great Britain), “Orange” (war with Japan), “Red-Orange” (war with a British-Japanese coalition), and “White,” the latter addressing a feared communist uprising within U.S. territory (pp. 97–110). He also covers the rise of Fascism in the U.S. and the Caribbean Basin (p. 53).

Marín Román is conspicuously a revisionist who debunks various mythical “truths” commonly invoked by historians, and introduces little-known facts. He mentions, for example: that the Teapot Dome scandal involved Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., future governor of Puerto Rico (p. 86); that, except for Governor Winship’s tenure, the playing of “La Borinqueña” was never barred by the U.S. government, since it was the marching music of the all-Puerto Rican 65th Regiment of Infantry, in the the same way that the flag of Puerto Rico was the Regiment’s flag (p. 179); that Panama’s 42nd Regiment of Infantry was made up of half of the 65th Infantry, and that it was used as an intervention force during the racial riots of 1925 (pp. 223–4, 246–7); that the German airship Hindenburg may have been sabotaged by Jews or Spanish Republicans; that Amelia Earhart may have been conducting a mission for U.S. Naval Intelligence when she disappeared in the Pacific Ocean (pp. 318–9); that the “Fascist” salute was used in the U.S. to honor the National Flag (p. 401); and that use of the swastika was common on U.S. Army and Navy aircraft, and that until 1942 it was the shoulder insignia of the Oklahoma and Arizona National Guard (pp. 404–5).

The author’s keen sense of humor permeates the book, particularly his comments on accounts provided by Colonel Luis Raul Esteves (1951) regarding the early years of the Puerto Rican National Guard. These include the adventures of Private “Goyito” and Corporal “Varilla” calling out the guard to confront a possible “enemy” who turned out to be a cow and Mess Sergeant “maldita sea el queso” attempting to roast a bull but whose efforts were eventually spoiled by the rains. Such accounts are not only humorous, but also demonstrate the Guardsmen’s commitment to their units (pp. 364–9).

This book is the second in a series of six spanning the Spanish-American War to the end of the Second World War. In this volume, the author prepares the reader for the third volume, which leads up to the Second World War and which traverses the various military scenarios of interest in the Caribbean, Spain, and elsewhere.

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Battleship Vieques: Puerto Rico from World War II to the Korean War

By César J. Ayala and José L. Bolívar

By César J. Ayala and José L. Bolívar

Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2011

ISBN: 978-1-5587-6538-2

220 pages; \$24.95 [paper]

Reviewer: DÉBORAH BERMAN SANTANA, MILLS COLLEGE

Battleship Vieques: Puerto Rico from World War II to the Korean War is a detailed history of the U.S. Navy's establishment of its Caribbean training "crown jewel" on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques within the context of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War. It offers a regional context and documents the profound impact of military occupation upon the social, economic, and cultural life of the people of Vieques. That occupation, while devastating in multiple ways, also provided the seeds of resistance that culminated in a massive non-violent civil disobedience movement that captured global attention and forced the Navy to leave in 2003.

Following the introduction, the book is divided into seven chapters. Chapters One and Two set the regional and local contexts for the militarization of Vieques during World War II. Chapter One provides a regional overview of the German navy's activities in the Caribbean during World War II, including a blockade and attacks on oil refineries. Among other problems, the war severely disrupted shipments of foods, fuel, and other materials between Puerto Rico and the U.S. The authors discuss the importance of war-related shortages as part of the ruling Popular Democratic Party's (PPD) strategies to consolidate power through land reform (especially the breakup of large farms with absentee owners), and targeted, state-sponsored industrialization. Faced with the dire scenario of possible starvation of an "essentially rural population" where overspecialization in sugar cane production forced it "to rely on food imports" (p. 19), wartime militarization through construction and expansion of U.S. military bases provided some economic relief. This chapter also discusses base construction during the 1930s in San Juan, where the Navy's propensity for excluding local contractors and dislodging residents foreshadowed its much larger construction projects during World War II in Puerto Rico, including Vieques. The authors note that while many historians "have emphasized the role of the insular government" in the transformation of Puerto Rico's economy during the 1940s from plantation agriculture to rapid industrialization, federal government expenditures during the same period—particularly related to the military—"had a profound transformative effect" (p. 25).

Chapter Two offers a brief summary of Vieques' history, from colonial "frontier"—with Spain struggling to maintain control despite constant attacks and settlement attempts by its European rivals—to "plantation society." The latter began with sustained nineteenth-century development of a mainly sugar cane and cattle-based economy, encouraged by land grants to Europeans and dependent on formerly enslaved labor from eastern Puerto Rico and the eastern Caribbean. The authors emphasize that the extreme concentration of land ownership in few hands— unlike most of Puerto Rico (p.45), but typical of the sugar cane regions (Berman Santana 1996)—greatly facilitated expropriation by the U.S. Navy.

Chapter Three provides considerable detail regarding the evictions and expropriations of land in most of the western and eastern sections of Vieques, as part of the Navy's plan to convert the island (along with nearly all of Ceiba's coast across the Vieques Sound and Culebra Island) into a giant military fortress during World War II. In this chapter, the authors are careful to distinguish between the formal expropriations (which affected relatively few because of the extreme land concentration) and the actual evictions. Nearly overnight, the latter drove thousands of small property owners and workers with long-held land use rights out of their homes, dumping them onto barren lands also taken by the military. Besides lacking amenities or sources of sustenance, the newly homeless families lived constantly under threat of possible new evictions, should the Navy decide to expand again. The Navy's account focuses on what they called "fair value" of the price paid to the major landowners, and those transactions are well documented in this chapter. However, numerous testimonies (recorded in books and studies referenced here) tell of the most devastating tragedy to befall the people of Vieques—the overnight disappearance of entire communities coupled with the realization that no one could or would help them to resist such injustice. In fact, this defining moment of being "cast out of paradise" and isolation from the rest of Puerto Rico continues to mark Viequenses in many aspects of lives. While the initial employment created by base construction did help to replace jobs and income from the loss of so much land, its effects were merely temporary until the Navy halted construction in 1943.

Chapter Four—appropriately named "Interlude"—briefly describes efforts by the Puerto Rican government to address the serious economic crisis in Vieques, which was caused first by expropriations and then by the drying up of Navy construction jobs. In great part, the administrative transfer of unused Navy property to the Department of the Interior (and then to the Puerto Rican government) allowed it to be leased to the Puerto Rico Agricultural Company (PRACO) for a variety of agricultural projects, which "restored some jobs and alleviated some of the extreme poverty of 1943-1946" (p. 86).

However, such progress was short-lived, for as Chapter Five recounts, the Navy used the Cold War to justify its return to Vieques with a vengeance. This time it retook all of the lands previously “transferred,” expropriated even more land and imposed military occupation upon the island through ever-intensifying war games, weapons experiments, and the virtual destruction of economic activities not directly associated with satisfying the needs of thousands of soldiers in training. The imposition of and resistance to U.S.-style racial segregation in Vieques and Puerto Rico as part of renewed militarization is described in Chapter Six, while Chapter Seven recounts the destruction during the 1950s of what remained of Vieques’ pre-Navy economy—but also, of the social powder keg thus created that would fuel resistance to military occupation. Indeed, the situation in Vieques—effectively a society under direct and callous military occupation—called into question the true nature of “so-called ‘decolonization’ brought about by the creation of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico” (p. 147).

Chapter 8 is an epilogue entitled “Long-Term Effects.” While acknowledging that an account of the long-term effects of Navy occupation until the base finally closed in 2003 is beyond the scope of the book, the authors touch on issues such as population loss, economic development, and health. The latter in particular deserves much more attention than is devoted in this final chapter, since the negative ecological and social effects of military toxins will continue to multiply for generations to come. References for further research in this last chapter are sketchy, and would have been enhanced by including more fieldwork-based publications (see, for example, Berman Santana 2006).

Throughout the book, the authors emphasize the Navy’s interest in Vieques as taking shape during World War II, and continuing throughout the Cold War. As such, there is a tendency to minimize U.S. military designs beforehand. For example, they argue “no new major base construction had been undertaken in Puerto Rico since 1898...the only new major naval presence was...in Culebra that was acquired in 1899...but had not been developed or fortified” (p. 21). Some readers may interpret this as an argument that the social and economic impact of U.S. military presence from the 1898 invasion of Puerto Rico until World War II was fairly minimal. However, such an impression would contradict both the historical record and the well-documented perceptions of the local population. For example, the Navy arrived on Culebra in 1901 and forcibly removed the population from most of the island, in order to develop their base and practice ranges; this event is still referred to by Culebrenses as a collective trauma (Pérez Vega 2005). President Theodore Roosevelt declared the Culebra Naval Reservation in 1903; although military exercises varied in intensity during the next thirty years, there is little doubt that by 1939, bombing practice was a regular feature of life on Culebra. As for Vieques, Navy Secretary Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1919 conceived the idea of a huge

naval complex in eastern Puerto Rico, including Vieques and Culebra (Global Security 2005). As president, he personally supervised naval exercises in 1938 and 1939, which included temporarily removing Vieques residents from the eastern lands for bombing practice. The death in 1940 of two eastern Vieques residents from an explosive left over from military exercises offers graphic evidence that the island was indeed used by the Navy for military maneuvers before World War II (Giusti 2000). In 1939, Roosevelt appointed Admiral Leahy as Governor of Puerto Rico with orders to design the new complex and prepare Puerto Rican and federal legislation to expropriate the lands. While one might agree with Ayala and Bolívar that FDR was preparing the way for his “Caribbean Gibraltar” with a view toward eventual entry into World War II, it is clear that such plans predated the war by several decades. One might alternatively argue that the militarization of Vieques, Culebra, and much of Puerto Rico’s eastern coastline was a logical extension of Alfred Thayer Mahan’s nineteenth-century plan to make the United States a global naval power (1890). Indeed, by 1926, Puerto Rican newspapers were already reporting on Navy plans to establish a base in Vieques (Meléndez 1982).

Nonetheless, these are relatively minor issues when considering the value of this study. In *Battleship Vieques*, Ayala and Bolívar have produced a study rich in detail and nuanced with all the complexities of colonialism, militarism, and social change, and it deserves careful reading and analysis.

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