

7-1-2003

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Recommended Citation

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Women in Argentina: Early Travel Narratives by Mónica Szurmuk. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001, 145 pp., \$55.00 hardcover.

Women at Sea: Travel Writing and the Margins of Caribbean Discourse edited by Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert and Ivette Romero-Cesareo. New York: Palgrave, 2002, 301 pp., \$55.00 hardcover.

In Praise of New Travelers: Reading Caribbean Migrant Women's Writing by Isabel Hoving. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001, 374 pp., \$55.00 hardcover, \$22.95 paper.

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In recent years, travel writing, once considered a minor genre, has been the subject of increased critical attention. Critics have focused on the ways in which travel narratives serve both to construct and to destabilize notions of identity at the individual, regional, and national levels. As the books under consideration here show, travel narratives produced by Caribbean and Latin American women writers in particular, demonstrate the malleability of subject positions, as the women travelers interrogate their shifting roles vis-à-vis the metropolis as well as male-dominated writing traditions.

In *Women in Argentina: Early Travel Narratives*, Mónica Szurmuk uses women's travel narratives from 1837 to 1930 in order to "[include] the alternative narratives of subaltern groups" in the story of the nation (2). Her argument is that travel writers construct two distinct communities, the first a community of readers who share the author's world view, the second a community of Others who are to be described for those readers. She analyzes travelogues by European and North American women traveling to Argentina alongside narratives by Argentine women traveling within their country and abroad. Such narratives explore racial difference by examining both the space of the frontier, populated by what nineteenth-century Argentines perceived to be *savage* natives—who had

to be controlled at best, exterminated at worst—and the space of the city, namely Buenos Aires, and its rapidly growing immigrant population. Szurmuk asserts that the privileged white women she studies “create a sense of sisterhood between white and indigenous women” as well as with “male subalterns such as gauchos and Indian men” (10).

Women in Argentina is divided into three main sections. The first, “Frontier Identities, 1837–1880,” examines works by Mariquita Sánchez and the Alsatian writer Lina Beck-Bernard. Szurmuk argues that both texts construct modernity on the basis of white privilege at the same time that they implicitly or explicitly question the marginalization of Indians and gauchos who represent Argentina’s backward elements. Sánchez and Beck-Bernard also strive to acquire and wield authorial power, in Sánchez’s case by manipulating accepted notions of femininity and domesticity, in Beck-Bernard’s by insistently presenting herself as an observer in stark contrast to her husband, who was actively engaged in encouraging the modernizing project through immigration. In part two, “Shifting Frontiers, 1880–1900,” Szurmuk analyzes works by Eduarda Mansilla de García, British aristocrat Florence Dixie, and North American schoolteacher Jennie Howard. Mansilla and Dixie describe journeys among the Indians of Patagonia; but while Mansilla critiques the governmental policies of native genocide, Dixie does not place her travel narrative into a political context. This seems to me to be a moment where Szurmuk could explore the dynamics of travel narratives in the construction of national identity, but the contrast between Mansilla’s and Dixie’s texts is not exploited. Nor does Szurmuk take up Mansilla’s and Dixie’s prominent themes of Otherness in her exploration of Howard’s narrative, the concluding piece in this section. The final section, “Shifting Identities, 1900–1930,” analyzes a novel by Emma de la Barra and nonfictional works by Cecilia Grierson, Ada María Elflein, and Delfina Bunge de Gálvez. Szurmuk contrasts these works with the earlier texts, pointing out that they focus on opening public and professional spaces for women.

Despite Szurmuk’s initial emphasis on the ways in which travelogues create communities of readers, there is little consideration in *Women in Argentina* of how these travel narratives were received by the public. It would also be helpful to know if these writers read one another’s works, particularly if the Argentine writers had access to the European and North American texts about Argentina. Nonetheless, Szurmuk does give the overall intellectual context in which these Argentine works (although not the European or North American ones) were produced and explains the dominant ideologies to which the women travel writers were responding. *Women in Argentina* brings to the forefront a heretofore relatively unknown series of texts and demonstrates that, despite superficial differences, all explore questions of racial and national identity and of women’s roles.

In *Women at Sea: Travel Writing and the Margins of Caribbean Discourse*, editors Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert and Ivette Romero-Cesareo gather a collection of essays about women travelers in the Caribbean from colonial times to the present. The editor's stated purpose is to present the narratives of "those traveling the social and economic periphery, the margins of colonial societies," since, as they claim, most scholarship on travel literature "has imposed a double silence on that 'Other' who can either not write about her travels . . . or [who] writes with a purpose other than that of chronicling displacement as a means in itself" (1–2). The essays in *Women at Sea* have in common their treatment of these marginalized figures—pirates, slaves, and madwomen, to name but a few.

"Itinerant Prophetesses of Transatlantic Discourse," by José Piedra, focuses on the Afro-Hispanic and indigenous women of Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's *Naufragios* (*Castaways*), tying the white Spanish author's ability to negotiate both his own survival among the "savage" Indians of the Americas and his authorial identity to the appearance of these women in his text. Cabeza de Vaca's survival, Piedra suggests, depends upon his resistance to the "homogenizing Otherness" practiced by other Spaniards (38). Richard Frohock's "Violence and Awe: The Foundations of Government in Aphra Behn's New World Settings" argues that Behn's *Oroonoko* undermines its efforts to "aestheticize British imperialism" through its representations of colonial coercion (55). Paravisini-Gebert's lively essay "Cross-Dressing on the Margins of Empire: Women Pirates and the Narrative of the Caribbean" examines a variety of narratives from 1721 to the present day about the British pirates Mary Read and Anne Bonny. Despite the diverse nature of the stories about Read and Bonny, Paravisini-Gebert avers, all address the ways in which the women pirate's transgressive, transvestite behavior empowered them to exist in a space—the Caribbean—that was just as marginalized as they were.

The next six essays deal with nineteenth-century texts. Mario Cesareo calls into question some recent critical precepts about travel literature and the nature of the Other in his perceptive "When the Subaltern Travels: Slave Narrative and Testimonial Erasure in the Contact Zone." Ivette Romero-Cesareo contrasts the narratives of the white Adèle Hugo and the mulatto Mary Seacole and concludes that Seacole's writings are more subversive and ultimately more successful in creating a space for self-representation. Luisa Campuzano examines works by Cuban women travelers in the United States; her choice of a poem by Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, however, does not fit well with the other texts she analyzes. Claire Emilie Martin focuses on one of the authors treated by Campuzano, the Countess of Merlin, and points out the unresolved contradictions between Merlin's stance as a Cuban, subject to imperial ideology, and her position as a Frenchwoman, a subject of imperial ideology. Aileen Schmidt compares works by Cuban and Puerto Rican women and claims that for

them, "the travel chronicle [is] a liberating discourse" (222). Cheryl Fish takes up the freeborn African American Nancy Prince's travelogues as a counterpoint to slave narratives. Fish's analysis of the ways that Prince negotiated her identity as a free, African American Baptist in Jamaica is deft and illuminating.

The collection concludes with two pieces on anthropological works. In "Decolonizing Ethnography: Zora Neale Hurston in the Caribbean," Kevin Meehan makes a strong case for Hurston's seminal ethnography, *Tell My Horse*, as a forceful yet subtle critique of the limits of decolonization, especially as it pertains to women. Joan Dayan's "Haiti's Unquiet Past: Katherine Dunham, Modern Dancer, and Her Enchanted Island" discusses the African American Dunham's narrative of her life in Haiti. *Women at Sea* is a thematically coherent collection; all essays focus on the destabilizing nature of travel and on the insistently marginalized figures whose stories they reclaim here. At the same time, the range of pieces included is such that the collection remains capable of holding the reader's interest as well as drawing connections among what might otherwise seem disparate narratives and experiences.

The Caribbean experience is also the subject of *In Praise of New Travelers: Reading Caribbean Migrant Women's Writing*, by Isabel Hoving. Hoving affirms, "Caribbean women's writing is irreducibly *different*" and thus requires a fresh critical approach (2). Her solution is to meld what she calls "cultural analysis," or cultural studies, with postcolonial theory. She claims, "reading closely and attentively and entering into a real dialogue with the text might be a way to revitalize the very necessary debate about the postcolonial condition" (10). While this is a praiseworthy approach, Hoving seems to overstate the case for the uniqueness of Caribbean women's writing in her efforts to persuade us that the texts she studies merit critical attention, even referring to their "miraculously multiple writing" (12). I do not mean to suggest that Hoving is incorrect in her assertions that Caribbean women's writing provides a useful counterpoint to the often totalizing overstatements of postcolonial theory, simply that at times she tends to imply that no other kind of writing can serve this same purpose.

Hoving selects three elements around which to organize her analysis: place, voice, and silence. "Tropes of Women's Exile: Violent Journeys and the Body's Geography" and "Homemaking, Woman-Talk, Time-Waste: Beryl Gilroy's *Frangipani House*" explore the dynamics of place and displacement. "Tropes of Women's Exile" begins by reviewing postcolonial feminist critiques of travel literature. Hoving notes cogently that black women's writings "are not merely critiques" and do more than respond to or contest "dominant Western discourses," they also "refer to or create some specific *inside* space as well" (48). She continues by analyzing two collections of black British women's writing, looking at the editor's intro-

ductions and the ways in which they advance particular notions of race and gender as well as the collected texts themselves. Despite the different approaches of the two anthologies, both play with the tropes of the journey and the home, connecting these works to Hoving's stated purpose of examining the role of place. This chapter also briefly addresses novels by the Jamaican writer Joan Riley and Trinidadian Amryl Johnson. The linking thread for all these works is the fact that they address questions of sexuality and violence through the theme of the journey. "Homemaking, Woman-Talk, Time-Waste," in contrast to the somewhat scattered focus of the previous chapter, analyzes just one novel. In keeping with her claims in the introduction, that Caribbean women's writing produces new ways of thinking about the postcolonial situation, Hoving reads Gilroy's novel as proposing possible new definitions for space, place, and time.

The next three chapters take up the question of voice. "Writing for Listeners: Merle Collins's *Angel*" and "The Pleasures of Address: Grace Nichols's *Whole of a Mourning Sky*" examine the dichotomy between orality and literacy, concluding that the two novels effectively question colonial discourse through their construction of communities of speakers and listeners. In "Jamaica Kincaid Is Getting Angry," Hoving further explores her earlier assertion that standard theories of feminism and post-colonialism are inadequate for reading Caribbean women writers.

Lastly, chapters seven and eight turn to the issue of silence. Initially, Hoving argues that novelist Michelle Cliff both uses and represents silence strategically, saying that Cliff establishes a "general aesthetics of reluctance" (253). In the next chapter, "The Castration of Livingstone: Marlene Nourbese Philip's Successful Seduction of the Father of Silence," avers that Philip's works serve as critiques of Western psychoanalytical discourse as they explore knowledge, the self, and the notion of the interior. Throughout *In Praise of New Travelers*, Hoving makes effective use of a wide variety of theories in her textual analysis, but as is her stated goal, ultimately she shows that these texts are not reducible to one particular theory. Her study provides provocative readings of Caribbean women's writing.

As the books considered here demonstrate, travel writing is a powerful tool for examining questions of identity, be it gendered, national, or racial. At the same time that travel narratives construct communities of Others, they can, and do, serve to break down the barriers between the self and the Other. *Women in Argentina*, *Women at Sea*, and *In Praise of New Travelers* illuminate our understanding of those processes.

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