Gladys M. Francis (ed.)

Amour, sexe, genre et trauma dans la Caraïbe francophone. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2016. 294 pp. (Paper €29.00)

Amour, sexe, genre et trauma dans la Caraïbe francophone examines the question of trauma in Caribbean literature and art using historical and theoretical (gender or cultural) frameworks as well as the perspective of artistic production (music, painting, and sculpture). This polyphonic approach to trauma in Franco-Caribbean novels, plays, poetry, and art allows for an impressively diverse group of scholars to address the link between the legacy of colonial violence and sexual taboo—in particular, the manner in which they are mapped onto the female body. While questions of trauma and sexual violence have been the object of recent works in Francophone studies (see, for example, R.M. Jean-Charles, *Conflict bodies: The Politics of Rape Representation in the Francophone Imaginary* [2014]), Gladys Francis's book distinguishes itself in three significant ways: first, by focusing on mostly contemporary women writers and artists; second, by providing a fresh perspective on canonical authors; and finally by curating a stunning array of twentieth- and twenty-first-century art, in particular, that of Béatrice Melina.

The decision to focus largely on contemporary women artists and authors of the French Caribbean makes this collection a welcome contribution to the field of Francophone studies. Francis not only devotes space to authors of the Francophone canon, but also shines a light on such emerging authors as Fabienne Kanor and Gerty Dambury. Amanda E. Breland's essay aptly captures the manner in which the "*malaise d'une civilisation*," put forth by Suzanne Césaire¹ in 1942, is unfortunately still alive in Kanor's *D'eaux douces* (2004). And although the three essays on Gerty Dambury's *Trame* (2012) tend to revisit the same territory, Pénélope Dechafour's essay stands out for linking the *corps-texte* of the play with the *corps-mémoire*—a central tenet of this collection.

The book features such canonical authors as Maryse Condé and Simone Schwarz-Bart, but it sets itself apart by providing new perspectives on them. Francis's very candid interview with Schwarz-Bart gives a privileged insight into her view on contemporary Guadeloupe as well as offering a retrospective on an author who, although now widely accepted as canonical, was lacking in dithyrambic praise when she first appeared on the literary scene. There is also a welcome assessment of Condé's theatrical output, an often-neglected aspect of

1 Suzanne Césaire, 1942, in *Tropiques No. 5* (3):43–49, reprinted in *Tropiques 1941–1945: Collection complète* (Paris: Éd. Jean-Michel Place, 1978).

her *œuvre*. Emily Sahakian's in-depth traversal of Condé's dramaturgy, and the influences on her work, is a particular standout in this collection: novices and Condé scholars alike will be well served by her five-part essay, which deftly ties the trauma of slavery and colonization in the French Caribbean to such plays as *Pensions Les Alizés* (1988), *An tan Revolisyon* (1989), and the lesser-known, but equally important, *Comme deux frères* (2007).

Carefully curated works of art are placed throughout the essays. The paintings by Béatrice Mélina are a special revelation, as they introduce readers to Guadeloupean art, an oft-ignored aspect of artistic production in the French Caribbean. In such paintings as *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs* (the cover of the book, and an obvious reference to Frantz Fanon), *Case-Les Champs* (incongruously featuring *cases* [small shacks] on the Champs Elysees), and *Marianne* (reimagining this symbol of France as a young black woman—head adorned with the revolutionary Phrygian ribbon), Mélina is able to visually transcribe the spirit of *Amour, sexe, genre et trauma dans la Caraïbe francophone*. In “*L’ARThralagie Créole de Béatrice Mélina: Peindre arythmies et articulations identitaires*,” Mélina and Francis question the wounds of the past and translate them into the present by reaching for the works of Aimé Césaire, Condé, Léon-Gontran Damas, Fanon, and Daniel Maximin, with the hope of transmitting the legacy of her nameless and voiceless Guadeloupean ancestors. Furthermore, the creolization of such canonical French images serves as a symbolic counter colonization.

The book achieves Francis's objective of showing the repercussions of trauma on postcolonial subjects, and the way these traumas reappear as artistic expressions. The essays draw readers to the locus of the trauma in order to better understand novels, plays, poetry, and art by French Caribbean authors. But the singular triumph of Francis's work is her stated desire to include the visual arts in parallel with literary works. It is by the inclusion of the visual arts that she is able to fully realize the objective of explaining the ever-present trauma in French Caribbean literary and artistic production.

Felisa Vergara Reynolds

Department of French and Italian, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
felisavr@illinois.edu