Anke Birkenmaier, *The Specter of Races: Latin American Anthropology and Literature Between the Wars*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016. 211 pp. (Paper US\$ 29.50)

Anke Birkenmaier's sweeping critical panorama is an engaging chronicle of national dramas, local re-articulations, and transnational networks of scholars, writers, and artists that made the inter-War era a paradigm-shifting point in debates about theoretical constructs of "race" and "culture." Impressively wide-ranging, it is an homage to the historical moment that saw the final dislodging of a racist positivism's "*razas de librería*" (invented, "bookshelf races," in José Martí's late nineteenth-century formulation) and a definitive intellectual dethroning of eugenics' conventional pseudoscience. Emphasizing the novel synergies, the less strictly racial-pecking-order-inclined visions of acculturation, the transculturation, and the greater cross-fertilization and revitalizing expansion of scholarly fields (history, archeology, sociology, linguistics, literature, and the arts) these all produced, it similarly highlights the more amply humanistic anthropology and holistic fresh perceptions of Latin American national cultures, their transnational connections, and the wider cohesiveness these new articulations, fusions, and convergences give rise to. It is precisely its contestatory disposition, the synergetic features, and the methodological innovations then introduced, Birkenmaier argues, that make this period a genuine precursor of our own era's "canon wars," as well as contemporary postcolonial, cultural, Global South, and interdisciplinary studies.

Her lens takes in areas of the Caribbean, Europe, and South America, stretching across at least four languages. Against each setting's sociohistorical particularities and, more often than not, highly charged political landscape, her larger survey pivots around the intellectual trajectory, evolving scholarly activity, and impact (as thinkers, promoters of new ideas, scholarly journals, and institutional structures, as well as nodal points in growing transnational networks of dialogic connection) of some of her chosen moment's most signally representative figures: Cuban philologist, anthropologist, and pioneering dean of modern Afro-Cuban studies Fernando Ortiz; French ethnologist and museum director Paul Rivet; Haitian scholar, poet, and novelist Jacques Roumain; and Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre. It is from Ortiz's insistence, beginning in the teens and through the 1940s, that "the bad spirit that is the racial specter has to be exorcised" as both "the wrong term for what should be *culture*" and "a dangerous idea that had to be attacked vigorously" (p. 33) that the book as a whole takes its title and overarching temper. Moving deliberately away from discussions

of race *per se*, Ortiz's introduction of the still frequently invoked concept of *transculturation* gave pride of place, instead, to the steady process of reciprocal transmission and mutually transformative—material, cultural, economic—effects and adaptations resulting from the vital, productive dynamic of sustained cross-cultural contact, historical interaction, and unfolding. He would go on finally to deny, in *El engaño de las razas* (1946), all scientific legitimacy to the term *race* and, indeed, to propose its banishment, as toxic and obsolete, from the discourse of contemporary Latin American intellectuals. Exemplars of analogous developments in their own spheres and contexts, Birkenmeier's densely compact, nuanced portraits of Rivet and Roumain are noteworthy as much for the contrasts in their situational national specifics as for the echoing similarities and broadly embracing cosmopolitanism of their respective work, particularity of outlook, and differentially Francophone inflection. Her analysis of Roumain's lesser-known anthropological writings and turn from anthropology's strictly classificatory framework to the dramatizations of fiction in *Masters of the Dew*, his recognition and effective coupling there of Haiti's unique character and customs with the defense of "a universalizing argument about human suffering and solidarity" (p. 110), brings a fresh, critically apt dimension to that scrutiny.

By contrast, the charting of the vicissitudes, contradictions, and ideological consequences of the Luso-Tropicalist dissections of daily interactions that Freyre laid out in *The Masters and the Slaves*, penetrating and insightful as it is, can on occasion have an air too generously indulgent of its paradoxes and incongruities. In any event, all Birkenmaier's protagonists shared a will and managed successfully to contest or supplant perceptions and anthropological practices dependent both on biologically deterministic definitions of race and national culture and on the racism, scientific or not, they encouraged, concealed, and sustained. Admirably comprehensive and reflecting a finely textured, all-embracing knowledge of the most diverse historical and intellectual landscapes, the analytical précis of their individual and collective accomplishment is persuasive. Delivered in a gracefully accessible prose, its lapses are few and minor. There are those who may, for example, consider its passing acknowledgment of Paul Rivet's ambiguous association, as general secretary of the Institut d'ethnologie, with the French Ministry of Colonies, tantalizingly insufficient. Particularly in view of the ire Rivet's enduring preferential focus on the remote indigenous past earned him in some *indigenista* quarters, and his own socialist credentials and affiliations, one also misses any mention of Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui's mobilization of the Inca past in the service of sociopolitical transformations in the present and what, if any, Rivet's response

to it might have been. Such trifles, however, detract nothing from the book's otherwise excellent essays.

Roberto Márquez

Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Mount Holyoke College

rmarquez@mtholyoke.edu