Anne W. Gulick, *Literature, Law, and Rhetorical Performance in the Anticolonial Atlantic*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2016. xi + 258 pp. (Cloth US\$ 99.95)

Literature, Law, and Rhetorical Performance in the Anticolonial Atlantic argues for new ways to read nineteenth- and twentieth-century anticolonial writing as rhetorical acts of declaration. The book locates the promise of anticolonial writing in its rhetorical performances, seeing them as bold, contextual reinventions of what law and literature can do in the world at a time when other studies have seen anticolonial declarations as a record of disappointments. Moving between African and Caribbean literary and politico-juridical texts, Anne Gulick presents a nuanced account of these moments as they occur in the complex temporality of decolonization, when ideas about law could be disrupted and reenvisioned to build toward a truly liberatory future. She shows anticolonial writing to be a rhetorical act that had to perform its own legitimacy even as it grappled with the ethical problems of political and aesthetic representation and maintained a complicated but productive relationship to the dominant mode of revolutionary romance.

Anticolonial declarations of independence, state constitutions, oaths, speeches, poems, novels, histories, essays—these rhetorical acts challenged a world whose epistemic frameworks made such acts of creativity unthinkable, as Michel-Rolph Trouillot says of the European inability to think the Haitian Revolution in *Silencing the Past* (1995). Gulick emphasizes the aspirational feat anticolonial writing accomplishes in the moment of its making and performing, but she also explores the tensions and contradictions of those rhetorical performances. Challenging David Scott's argument in *Conscripts of Modernity* (2004) that C.L.R. James narrates the Haitian Revolution as romance in the 1938 edition of *The Black Jacobins* but recasts it as tragedy in the revised 1963 edition, she observes that "romance pervades *all* of his accounts of black revolution," from his 1938 *A History of Negro Revolt* and *The Black Jacobins* to his 1977 *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution* (p. 50). She contends that James always had an ambivalent relationship to romance, as evident in his use of speaker-hero figures, which paradoxically embody the will of the people (revolution from below) and bring that collective will into fruition (revolution led by genius). She reads James's rhetorical acts as a struggle to resolve this tension, as when he declares a pattern of unknowable revolutionary reappearance in "From Toussaint L'Ouverture to Fidel Castro" (1963): "What took place in French San Domingo in 1792–1804 reappeared in Cuba in 1958" (quoted on p. 61).

Gulick makes original contributions to scholarship on anticolonial rhetorical engagements with what she terms First World Law. Extending Sibylle Fischer's reading of Haiti's 1804 Declaration and 1805 Constitution in relation to French revolutionary constitutions (in *Modernity Disavowed* [2004]), she notes how these documents also speak back to the 1776 U.S. Declaration of Independence and the 1787 U.S. Constitution. The declarative literary acts of Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* get elegantly reimaged through a reading of *cahier* as both the private act of keeping a "notebook" and the public performance of the prerevolutionary French *cahiers de doléances*, which collected local grievances of the people to present to the king. Close readings of the *Cahier's* 1939, 1947, and 1956 editions show Césaire's declarative poetics to be in conversation with Martinique's departmentalization and the rise of international human rights law. From this view, his poetics and politics no longer look contradictory but rather become part of the same complex anticolonial vision the *Cahier* conjures.

Gulick follows the anticolonial declaration as it moves between national and international ideas of law and across very different kinds of performances, arguing that doing so can teach us something about "the capaciousness and ambition of the anticolonial project writ large" (p. 145). This statement reflects Gulick's desire for a more expansive mapping of anticolonial rhetorical performance, moving between Haiti, Martinique, Trinidad, Ghana, South Africa, Kenya, and Algeria. For all its capaciousness in geography and genre, however, the book is somewhat constrained with regard to gender. Masculinist modes of performance dominate anticolonial history; and, while Gulick gives some consideration to politics within her readings of Toussaint, Dessalines, James, Césaire, Édouard Glissant, Frantz Fanon, Jomo Kenyatta, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Chris Abani, and others, it could be worthwhile to more fully conceptualize. Given the gendered forms and conditions that structure rhetorical performance in the anticolonial Atlantic.

Nonetheless, Gulick focuses admirably on what anticolonial writing achieves as a performative speech act "formed and performed in its own historical moment" (p. 123). In bringing together spectacular rhetorical performances that declare collective identities but also reflect on their possible impossibility, she has found a powerful way to reassess the anticolonial project as a performance *on* the imagination.

Angela Naimou

Department of English, Clemson University

anaimou@clemson.edu