Harris Feinsod, *The Poetry of the Americas: From Good Neighbors to Countercultures*.

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In 1856 the Colombian José María Torres Caicedo, part of a liberal émigré group based in Paris, responded to William Walker's filibustering adventure into Nicaragua by writing a poem called "Las dos Américas." For Torres Caicedo the division was racial—Latin and Saxon. For others it has been geographical—North and South. The phrase was most widely used in the early twentieth century, but has remained a popular shorthand despite its manifold descriptive inadequacies, not the least of which is that it usually ignores the existence of the Caribbean. A countervailing tendency has insisted on seeing the continent whole, on seeking connections rather than differences, on plotting historical narratives that go beyond present national boundaries. Here the Caribbean does find a place, as seen for example in the Cuban Gustavo Pérez Firmat's edited collection, *Do the Americas Have a Common Literature?* (1990) or in the essays in Stephen M. Park's *The Pan American Imagination* (2014, reviewed in *NWIG* 90–3&4). This is where Harris Feinsod's *The Poetry of the Americas* situates itself, arguing that the idea of a poetry of the Americas motivated many of the continent's twentieth-century poets.

The book's six chapters move from the Rooseveltian "good neighbor" policy of the 1930s through a variety of institutional contexts, notably the broad anticommunism of the 1960s, when the Cuban Revolution certainly focused attention on the Caribbean. At the same time each chapter examines a different formal tendency, such as the "meditations on ruins" or the contests over the role of translation. Three elements of the book's general approach might be highlighted. It is always alert to poets' movements across the continent: who traveled where; who paid them; which other poets they met. Its poetic interpretations are forensic and fearless, formally sophisticated and yet politically acute. And the book is sustained by extensive archival research into the collections of poets and translators and bureaucrats. The range of poetry considered is impressively wide, from Pablo Neruda and Martín Adán to Wallace Stevens and Langston Hughes, from Jorge Luis Borges and Octavio Paz to Allen Ginsberg and Leroi Jones; from Antonio Corretjer and Julia de Burgos to William Carlos Williams and José Lezama Lima. The two Caribbean names to feature most prominently are Heberto Padilla and Derek Walcott.

The so-called Padilla Affair, in which the Cuban poet was arrested, interrogated, and only released after writing an *autocrítica*, is often seen as the decisive moment when many previous supporters of the Revolution turned against it, outraged by this heavy-handed way of dealing with dissent expressed in some-

thing as supposedly innocent as a book of poems. As is his consistent practice, Feinsod looks for the larger explanatory context, finding it here in Padilla's liberal anticommunist intellectual formation in late 1950s New York. He doesn't offer this as an excuse for the behavior of the Cuban State, nor is he interested in glorifying Padilla as a martyr for free speech. Rather, he seeks to elucidate a trajectory expressed as much in Padilla's early poetry and journalism as in the book *Fuera del juego* (1968), which precipitated the controversy and which has too frequently been approached in isolation.

The context for Walcott's collection *The Gulf* (1970) is seen as the writing and outlook of two slightly older poets, Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell, read within the framework of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), the CIA-funded anticommunist organization. It was the CCF that funded Lowell's 1962 visit to Brazil, which incorporated the stopover in Trinidad where he first met Walcott. As with his discussion of Padilla, Feinsod elegantly refuses either to see the writers who benefited from CCF support as somehow tainted or to ignore such funding as totally irrelevant to their supposedly higher calling. Rather, he is interested in understanding how what he calls the pervasive yet undertheorized counterideology of anticommunism "shaped poetic agendas at formal and thematic levels" (p. 257). To that end, he offers careful readings of elements of "The Gulf" and "Guyana," showing how that central conceit of "the gulf" offered Walcott what Feinsod describes as "a flexible phenomenological, racial, and geographic figure" that allowed him to lyricize his increasingly vexed relationship to the hemispheric tours financed by the CCF (p. 26).

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