Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, *Racial Migrations: New York City and the Revolutionary Politics of the Spanish Caribbean*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019. xxxi + 369 pp. (Cloth US\$35.00)

What is now *The Half Pint* saloon, on the corner of West 3rd and Thompson Streets in Manhattan, was the home 130 years ago of La Liga, an association of black Cubans and Puerto Ricans whose activities are the subject of Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof's captivating study. Tracing the life-trajectories of these men and women, prominent among them Rafael Serra, Sotero Figueroa, and Juan Bonilla, *Racial Migrations* reshapes various conventional stories, not least the one about José Martí's New York years. Based on extensive and imaginative research, and written with a wonderful touch, the book offers, as one of its back-cover tributes puts it, a model for how to produce a transnational history of migration and race.

Through his reading of Serra's essays and the New York Cuban press, supplemented by scrupulous speculation, Hoffnung-Garskof offers a deep immersion in the world-view of these migrants. Through masterful narrative organization, he keeps careful control of a large cast of characters, giving readers a visual sense of their New York lives through the fine series of maps produced by Adrian Kitzinger that plots their living and working places over the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Of particular interest here are the contacts between these black Caribbean migrants—printers, cigar-makers, midwives—and the African American activists and journalists in their adopted city, contacts facilitated by shared lodging houses initially in Greenwich Village and later in the Tenderloin district.

Having moved to New York in the 1870s and 1880s, Serra and his colleagues trod a difficult path with great finesse. La Liga was founded as a mutual aid club for ambitious artisans like themselves who were eager to become writers or politicians. They gathered several nights a week for classes in Spanish grammar, English, and history. On Thursdays José Martí helped the men polish their writing and engaged them in discussions of his evolving political ideology. In turn they invested heavily in Martí as the leader of their struggle for racial equality, Hoffnung-Garskof suggesting that they had considerable success in edging Martí toward his commitment to a nation "for all and with all." Indeed, as he puts it, "Men and women in this social world did not just support Martí; they helped to create him" (p. 134).

One moment of particular importance is the speech that Martí invited Serra to give at an event commemorating the beginning of the first war of independence, held on October 10, 1888. Serra's prestige had been enhanced by his involvement with Antonio Maceo in the failed 1885–86 expedition to Cuba,

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which stalled in Jamaica. This was a badge of honor for Serra, although his most valuable work for the cause was in practical matters such as correspondence and record-keeping, as well as writing poems and essays. The speech he gave on this occasion, Hoffnung-Garskop suggests, “set in motion a remarkable political alliance through which Martí would reframe his vision of nationalist struggle as an attempt to find equilibrium among various elements that was inseparable from a basic project of class and racial justice, and would use this message to sidestep political opponents by appealing directly to working-class exiles” (p. 157).

The book makes particular use of *Doctrina de Martí*, the newspaper started by Serra, Figueroa, and others in 1896 to defend the teachings of Martí against what they saw as the rowing back on the true principles of democracy being perpetrated by Enrique José Varona, brought by Tomás Estrada Palma to New York after Martí’s death to edit *La Patria*, the mouthpiece of the Partido Revolucionario Cubano. Far from setting itself up in opposition to Estrada Palma, however, *Doctrina de Martí* skillfully—and successfully—sought his support and patronage at the same time as it spread its own message of racial equality to the *sociedades de color* in Key West, Tampa, Kingston, and Veracruz.

There can be no tidy ending to such a complex story. In one sense the last act is the return to Cuba, with Serra, Figueroa, and Bonilla forming part of Estrada Palma’s retinue on its triumphal journey in 1902 from Santiago to Havana. More fitting, Hoffnung-Garskof suggests, might be the 1905 meeting between Arturo Schomburg and the aging African-American journalist, John Edward Bruce, the start of another phase of political and intellectual cooperation in what was still many years away from being called the Afro-Latino community, and one of whose lasting achievements is the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, 132 blocks north of where La Liga used to meet.

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