Nancy I. Bird-Soto, *Dissident Spirits: The Post-Insular Imprint in Puerto Rican/Diasporic Literature*. New York: Peter Lang, 2018. vii + 117 pp. (Cloth US\$ 94.95)

The political, socioeconomic, and environmental crises that besiege Puerto Rico, exacerbated by austerity measures and Washington's atrocious response to Hurricane María in 2017, has propelled a massive migration of Puerto Ricans from the island to the continental United States and revived, with renewed vigor, cultural debates about the role and place of the diaspora within the Puerto Rican imaginary, as well as the forms and possibilities of activism and dissent in a fragmented, dispersed island-nation. Nancy I. Bird-Soto's *Dissident Spirits* provides a timely reminder that many of these debates are not new, and that the borders of Puerto Rican identity have long been patrolled, questioned, and challenged. The book contributes to a large body of scholarship that examines the role of literature in redefining national identities, and which understands migration, mobility and displacement not as exceptional, but as paradigmatic to the Puerto Rican and Caribbean experiences. Specifically, Bird-Soto argues for a Puerto Rican literary counter-tradition, which she calls "a post-insular imprint," that voices "dissidence" and challenges insular geographic and cultural constraints. Her readings of literary works that date from the nineteenth century to the present add to existing scholarship in helping us situate contemporary depictions of diasporic subjects within a longer literary tradition that represents "dissident," migratory figures and articulates more capacious national imaginaries.

One of *Dissident Spirit's* more suggestive moves is to assemble a corpus of literary works, both canonical and less well-known, that span a broad range of historical contexts, settings, and genres. The first chapter examines two novels by Alejandro Tapia y Rivera that chart a soul's transmigrations and earthly sojourns. Beginning with the works of a privileged male author, long hailed as "the father" of Puerto Rican letters, Bird-Soto both nods to the insular literary tradition and attempts to undo that tradition from within. Analyzing these foundational novels as tales of Spiritism-inspired transgressions that challenge gender subordination, Bird-Soto contends that a spirit of dissidence against gender-normative, paternalistic, Catholic, and insular-bound constraints prevails in them. Chapter 2 turns to theatrical works by early twentieth-century feminist labor leaders Luisa Capetillo and Franca de Artamiño, reading their respective protagonists as "whimsical women" whose willfulness and class consciousness allow them to advocate for personal liberation and global social justice. While Capetillo's oeuvre is relatively well known, Artamiño's work has been almost exclusively studied by Bird-Soto.

The book's historical progression shifts in the third chapter, analyzing a fictionalized account of the life of nineteenth-century Cuban activist Emilia Casanova, which was penned by the New York Puerto Rican historian Virginia Sánchez-Korrol in 2012. Bird-Soto explores how Casanova deploys her privileged background—she was raised in an elite, slave-holding family—to advance feminist, nationalist, and abolitionist causes, especially while exiled in New York. The turn to a Cuban historical figure as reimagined from the present vantage point by a New York-born Puerto Rican writer certainly implodes insular bounds and underlines transinsular connections, but the analysis sometimes blurs distinctions between fictional character and historical figure, and is perhaps less effective in advancing Bird-Soto's broader argument of the "post-insular" imprint in Puerto Rican letters. The final chapter analyzes the post-Nuyorican poetry of Victor Hernández Cruz. Informed by postcolonial and postmodern insights, it explores the significance of the plazas and ships in his work as poetic sites of convergence and mobility. The book closes with a Puerto Rican subject whose identity is clearly derived not from a stable location, but from movement across multiple geographical spaces. Managing this broad range of texts, Bird-Soto never loses sight of each of the text's particular contexts and specificity.

Dissident Spirits attests to the persistence and diversity of Puerto Rican literary efforts, within and beyond the island, to subvert sociocultural norms and trespass borders. While provocative, Bird-Soto's concept of the "post-insular" remains somewhat elusive; perhaps like the fluid experiences it tries to capture, it is never conceptually fixed. In her introduction, Bird-Soto suggests the "post-insular" both precedes and exceeds Antonio Pedreira's foundational geographic trope of "*insularismo*." Yet it not always clear what the temporal prefix "post-" refers to, or how the "post-insular" can be disentangled from concepts like diaspora and transnationalism, which are also central to Bird-Soto's wide-ranging analysis. Ultimately, this book makes a valuable contribution to Puerto Rican and diasporic Caribbean literary studies. It enriches our understanding of the role literature plays in redefining the cultural norms and bounds of a nation, which is, of course, as much a discursive construct as a political entity, always in need of defiant, dissident spirits like the ones Bird-Soto revives here.

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