Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel & Santa Arias (eds.), *The Routledge Hispanic Studies Companion to Colonial Latin America and the Caribbean (1492–1898)*. New York: Routledge, 2020. xviii + 442 pp. (Cloth US\$ 250.00)

Routledge explains the purpose of its *Companions* as state-of-the-art surveys “providing accessible yet thorough assessments of key problems, themes, and recent developments in research.” However, this particular Companion, which focuses on colonial Latin America and the Caribbean, does not live up to these ambitions. The volume offers a rich array of contributions on a variety of topics related to the debate on colonialism and colonality, but the book does little to identify key problems or bring the 25 chapters together under a clear theoretical or methodological umbrella.

The lack of focus may be the result of a disciplinary tension. The editors and most of the authors work in the field of literary studies (I counted only two historians), but the majority of the essays engage with history and historical interpretations. This would not have been a problem if this tension had been addressed explicitly, maybe even taken as a point of departure. But here it remains the elephant in the room, never clearly discussed.

This may be most visible in the introduction by the two editors, who offer a discussion of colonality and decoloniality that is firmly inspired by and situated in literary studies. It presents a solid state of the art on these debates (including a 12-page bibliography), but I must confess that as a historian it left me a bit puzzled. It starts with an “apparently uncontroversial affirmation” that for me raises all kinds of questions, doubts, and objections. The editors write that “the colonial period was a colonizing invention and a modern project advanced by cultural agents ... to provide Latin American literary history with a parallel structure to European literary histories” (p. 3). Colonialism was certainly an invention and a construction, but it was also the product of very real persons and events with very concrete historical implications. The puzzling issue is that most of the contributions also seem to focus on these concrete forms taken by colonialism. Although mostly coming from a literary background, they venture in this way into an interesting discussion with historians and historical debates.

The book is divided into four parts. The first and largest one, on colonialism and colonality, discusses the construction of race and racial categories under Spanish colonialism. The second focuses on knowledge production, and discusses the ways the Iberian colonial project has been viewed and interpreted, both during and after the colonial period. The third part, on the material elements of Spanish colonialism, discusses both the documentary and geographic materiality of colonialism as a project, and the ways the colonial heritage is

deposited in archives. The final part (the most coherent but arguably the least innovative) concerns the issue of language and translation.

In spite of the title, the Caribbean plays only a minor part in this Companion. The Spanish colonies in the region are sometimes mentioned in debates on Spanish colonialism, but there are only two chapters with a clear Caribbean focus. Chapter 6, by Nelson Maldonado-Torres, comes closest to providing a perspective in which the continental and Caribbean experiences are connected. He uses the work of Anibal Quijano and Sylvia Wynter to analyze how the Caribbean experience of European colonialism and slavery could be integrated in a more continental perspective on colonialism and coloniality. He concludes that a decolonial perspective may lead us to consider the colonial periods in the Caribbean and Latin America “as intense laboratories where various forms of coloniality are produced” (p. 127). In Chapter 13, Eyda Meredith analyzes the ideas of the Cuban intellectual José Antonio Saco (1797–1879), showing his intellectual struggle to formulate an emerging decolonial narrative. He did not succeed in overcoming the colonial and racist Hispanic archive, but he became a mediator for more contemporary intellectuals like Fernando Ortiz and Benítez Rojo “who looked into the colonial past and the Lascasian legacy for articulating the basis for a Cuban national imaginary and a Caribbean ethos” (p. 241). These and other essays will certainly be of interest to many readers, but they will, I am afraid, remain somewhat hidden in this heterogeneous (and very expensive) volume.

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