

Latin-driven music industry have consistently been an influence on music in post-revolutionary Cuba. The streets of Havana, which Baker refers to as a metaphor of the dialectics of hip-hop, “the moral authority and the hustle” (p. 350) have been sprinkled with the Cuban exile communities’ money seeking to finance anti-Castro lyrics in a post 9/11 era. To present the affects of foreign influences on Cuba’s musical scene, but leave out Miami, seems to leave Baker’s analysis incomplete. Perhaps this is where future scholars can complement his work.

Undoubtedly, *Buena Vista in the Club* goes far beyond Baker’s intention of throwing a “grain of sand, as the Cubans say, in the field of cultural politics” (p. 31). Few ethnographic accounts assess not only their local field subjects, but also the anthropologists and scholars that studied them. The dual research of rappers and scholars alike is precisely what makes this publication unique, reflexive, and indispensable.

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**Laura Lomas. 2008. *Translating Empire. José Martí, Migrant Latino Subjects, and American Modernities*. Durham and London: Duke University Press. 379 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8223-4325-7.**

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**T**he debate on immigration reform has recently come to the forefront in political debates, academic classrooms, conferences, seminars, and discussions. The Latino population has exponentially

grown in the past decade and within the next ten to twenty years it will become a majority in several states. However, the history of immigration, the politics of the revolving door, and the color lines that have divided the United States since the nineteenth century, have been masked by discourses that promote assimilation and that have falsely appropriated the contributions of the diverse immigrant groups that made their homes in these lands.

*In Translating Empire*, Laura Lomas proposes to reevaluate American literature and modernity through the lens of Latino writing. For that purpose, she studies the works of Cuban José Martí during the Gilded Age (1880-1895). In keeping with the book's title, Lomas focuses on Martí's translations of American political and cultural phenomena and invites the reader to acknowledge him as one of the first writers who founded an intellectual Latino tradition and who critically reflected on U.S. expansionism towards Latin America. For Lomas, Martí's work bears witness to the struggle not just of Latino migrant workers, but also that of Asian Americans and African Americans. Martí's contribution to the field of American studies relies on his undermining of class and racial hierarchies. His focus on labor exploitation, among other topics, aimed to prove how U.S. economy grew by relying on migrant workers who were underpaid and worked under harsh conditions.

Unlike other studies of Martí that have mainly focused on his writing as representative of modernism, as well as on his role in the fight for Cuban Independence from Spain, Lomas explores this author's writings from the point of view of "the deportee, the migrant and the prisoner as they cultivate the rage of the sea beneath the writer's quill and below the ship's keel" (53). What lies underneath Martí's poems, stories, and essays are seeds for a revolutionary movement in the Americas that trusts in the power of minorities working together as one. In spite of his light skin and educational level, Martí disengages from an individualistic bourgeois perspective and does not identify with white, educated elite. He reflects on the collective Latino and immigrant struggles that he has witnessed and experienced while traveling and living abroad.

Two of the most poignant reflections in the book have to do with: a) translation as a way to engage and connect the Americas and b) Martí's double consciousness as a postcolonial subject. Lomas uses the term "imperial modernity" to refer to the political and economic expansion of the US as a form of colonialism. Martí translates the political, economic and cultural implications of this expansion in order to educate possible readers. Translation in this sense becomes a form of resistance that undermines "imperial modernity" and proposes other modernities that break the homogeneity of the empire.

In addressing Martí's double consciousness, Lomas departs from

W.E.B. Dubois's well-known essay "The Souls of Black Folk", to explain how Martí's writing constitutes a process in which the author realizes the dangers of seeing oneself through the eyes of the colonizer. Martí's imagery speaks about the duality, violence, and destruction that affect Latino subjectivity and create tension and distance between the Americas. This idea questions whether leaving one's homeland in the name of liberty is thwarted when subjected to the colonizer's gaze in the country of adoption. In this sense, Martí anticipates discourses that promote assimilation but simultaneously exclude the foreign other by limiting his/her choices, exploiting them as cheap labor, and defining them by their race (and ethnicity although this term is not used in the book).

Martí chronicles his experiences and serves as a bridge between the two Americas. His translations give the texts new meanings that contextualize them within the frame of Latino subjectivity and make them accessible to Latin Americans living in other countries. He seeks to close the gap that separates fellow citizens by finding points in common that they can all identify with. At the same time, translation becomes a tool that resists imperialism by rescuing stories that were rendered invisible because they refer to people who have been marginalized

Other highlights of the book include Lomas' contextualization of Martí's work within the field of Cultural Studies, as well as her analysis of Martí's relationship with American writers such as Walt Whitman and Ralph Waldo Emerson. But whereas other studies have only scratched the surface and focused mainly on literary comparisons, Lomas goes beyond the text to compare ideological perspectives that differentiate Martí from these writers. In one such comparison Lomas explores unexpected parallels between Martí and the Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa. Lomas cites the latter's groundbreaking work on the US Mexico border and her focus on gender and immigration and explains how Martí, in spite of the fact that he does not address gender in his writings, has several points in common with Anzaldúa, such as their criticism of border violence, their view of translation as a way to counteract "an imposed imperial language" (223), and the idea of the border as a space that embodies the conflict of expansionism and imperialism.

*Translating Empire* is a necessary work that recontextualizes the writings of José Martí within American immigration history, thus establishing a connection between the two Americas in an effort to bridge the gap that still "bleeds," as Anzaldúa would say, and that even today has not been able to be bridged. The book locates Martí within a multidimensional perspective that compliments what has been done by Latin Americanists and that inserts Martí in a transnational context. The book is a valuable resource for faculty, researchers and graduate students in American Studies, Cultural Studies, Postcolonial Studies, and Latin American

Studies since it complicates the connections between immigrant populations and their homelands, contextualizes Martí and his writing in the light of recent cultural theory and revisits the works of important writers and critics (DuBois, Whitman, Anzaldúa), offering an acute perspective of immigration that links the past and present of immigrant subjects in the Americas.

**Neil Lazarus. 2011. *The Postcolonial Unconscious*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 310 pp. ISBN-1107006562.**

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The postcolonial condition seems to be a tragedy in the wings of colonialism. The post-colonies are unravelling at a rapid pace as human rights abuses, gender-based discrimination and regressive development policies, undemocratic governments and tyrannical dictators continue to eclipse the promise of true independence and moving beyond colonialism. Haiti, the country that fought for independence from France and is now framed as the poorest country in the hemisphere, stars in Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995). What Trouillot offers is the way the French Revolution summarily silences the existence of the Haitian Revolution, a marker of true post-colonialism where the colonised has thrown off the coloniser's yoke. However, as the reality in Haiti today shows, as much of the developing or post-colonial world would attest, the post-colonies are in as precarious a situation, perhaps even worse than when they were under direct colonialism. Neil Lazarus masterfully takes this reality to another level with *The Postcolonial Unconscious*. The master of Post-colonial/Marxist criticism gives a sweeping sojourn through post-colonial thought and thinkers.

Lazarus brings out the heavy artillery in postcolonial studies to illustrate how much the area has gotten stuck in its own theorising strictures. Lazarus calls on the major theorists from the inception of the struggle to free colonial states to those who are writing now. Fanon and Said feature prominently in the texts as foundational political movers and shakers in resistance to colonialism and exploitation. He also brings Brennen and Parry into debate with his own ideas and concerns about the development