

film and queer studies and an important resource for scholars and students.

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IRAIDA H. LÓPEZ. *Impossible Returns: Narratives of the Cuban Diaspora*.
Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015. xiv + 294 pp.

While return to the home country by several groups of émigrés has often been the subject of inquiry in post-colonial literatures and migration studies, it has only recently begun to be addressed in American literary studies. Social mobility, economic opportunity and favorable post-Cold War geopolitics have turned immigrant artists and writers into potential “returnees” and homecoming has become a salient issue in the art and writing of recent decades. Iraida H. López’s timely volume addresses the understudied issue of return and the politics and poetics of homecoming in several recent Cuban-American works of the “one-and-a-half generation” by adeptly inserting them in the post-Revolutionary history of the Cuban diaspora. While in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution, Cuban-American authors like Reinaldo Arenas and Magali Alabau approached the desired return as a dystopian experience, changes in the diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba in the 1990s and the subsequent viability of brief visits to the island have brought the possibility of returning to the foreground. The progressive coming to terms of writers and artists with their exile predicament and their willingness to re-connect with family and friends in Cuba accounts for the proliferation of fictional and autobiographical works dealing with real or imagined returns.

The volume is a well-researched contribution to Cuban and Cuban-American studies that inquires into the “roots and routes” of Cuban diaspora in a style that is at once personal and carefully sensitive to the nuances of each author’s relationship to the homeland. López untangles the complexities of the ethos and pathos of Cuban exile by addressing the emotional underpinnings of the changing, discontinuous relationship between the Castro government and the various U.S. administrations in the last five decades, all of which are necessary to understand the diversity of the politics and poetics of return. Homecoming in Cuban-American writing and art is framed within theories of diaspora and transnationalism, two slippery terms that are frequently conflated in the critical idiom of post-colonial, migration and American ethnic studies. The author expresses appropriate concern regarding the ease with which these theories become

blended as part of the same approach to mobility and displacement. This conflation of theories is of special concern with respect to Cuban-American relations and the multiple positions towards the homeland of Cuban exiled authors. The condition of Cuban exiles, for whom it has been difficult to establish cross-border economic, cultural and personal relations, may not fit within the mobility implied by the term “transnational,” while the diverse social, racial and generational profile of Cuban émigrés and their geographical dispersion may not adequately adjust to some notions of “diasporic community.”

The view of return as a “discourse” and not as a defining feature of a particular genre enables López to bring together disparate literary and artistic works and to analyze this topic in multiple cultural domains such as fiction, poetry, memoir and autobiography, and song. *Impossible Returns* underscores the creative potential of “impossible returns” or “full” definitive returns and looks at the real or vicarious returns represented and narrated in the works as forms of in-betweenness. Writers and artists such as Gustavo Pérez Firmat, Ruth Behar, Cristina García, Ana Mendieta and Ana Menéndez suffer a Joycean imperative to write about the homeland while not being there. The author contends that writing is their way of returning. Some works stress that the geopolitical tensions between the island and the United States make it difficult to travel back to Cuba, while others continue to look toward present-day Cuba as “home.” Writers like Carlos Pujol, María Brito and Gustavo Pérez Firmat have shunned going back for political reasons and can only return through memories of their childhood. In contrast, Lourdes Casal, Ana Mendieta, Ruth Behar, Tony Mendoza, Román de la Campa, and Cristina García use short return visits to explore their Cuban identity, and to probe the gaps between memory and the experience of the island. The study also contends that the particular aesthetics of renowned artists, like Ana Mendieta in the 1980s and Raúl Paz, who have returned to Cuba on short visits, looped back home and had an influence on Cuban audiences in spite of the artists’ exile, and are changing the ways the returnees and Cuban identity itself are perceived by those who stayed behind. Chapters three and six deal with the most “transnational” artists in the volume, at least as far as reception and circulation is concerned, thus reinforcing the notion that Cubanness or “lo cubano” is a global phenomenon that straddles borders. In line with one of the meanings of the Spanish word *volver* underscored in the introduction, return has repercussions on the shifts or “turns” in the meaning of Cubanness, which becomes (*se vuelve*) different under the influence of the returnees’ work. The influence of Ana Mendieta upon the artists of the Volume I collective is an example of cross-cultural exchange, later ironically affected by the restrictive policies of the Cuban

government leading to the geographical dispersion of the group's members.

Stressed throughout the volume is what Gloria Anzaldúa in *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) has termed "emotional residue" of exile and an approach to return as "identity personified" in the works, that is, as return enacted in each narrative (27). López insists on the role of memory in the constitution of a diasporic consciousness by perceiving it as a "usable past," a "post-memory" or as "deuteragony." For her, memory points towards the future to establish a distinction between the poetics of the one-and-a-half generation and later generations of émigrés for whom exile or migration remains less politically charged than for earlier exiles. Ultimately López's volume insists that there are endless ways of returning and that, however partial and not altogether fulfilling, the impossible returns in recent Cuban-American works create and re-create a notion of "lo cubano" as multifaceted and always dependent on the manifold socio-cultural, geopolitical contingencies of exiled writers and artists.

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YOLANDA MARTÍNEZ-SAN MIGUEL, BEN SIFUENTES-JÁUREGUI Y MARISA BALAUSTEIGUITIA, EDS. *Critical Terms in Caribbean and Latin American Thought: Historical and Institutional Trajectories*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016. xii+ 299 pp.

Critical Terms in Caribbean and Latin American Thought es un estudio oportuno y preciso que parte de la necesidad de cuestionar y problematizar la manera en la que se han traducido, del inglés al español, términos que son o han sido claves en los debates críticos dentro de la esfera académica. Conscientes del riesgo que supone la trasposición – de un contexto a otro – de determinados postulados teóricos, los editores de este volumen invitan a cada uno de los participantes a reflexionar sobre los ajustes que se tornan necesarios cuando un concepto teórico o crítico, surgido de un campo semántico específico, intenta ser aplicado a uno diferente.

Cabe señalar, como bien apuntan los editores en la introducción, que esta antología no surge de un vacío sino que emerge del "Latin American Keywords Project," una iniciativa que tuvo lugar entre los años 2005 y 2014 en conexión con el trabajo elaborado por Antonio Cornejo Polar quien, en "Mestizaje e hibridez: los riesgos de las metáforas. Apuntes" (1998), expone su preocupación ante la gran producción de trabajos críticos escritos en