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Book Reviews: Place, Language, and Identity in Afro-Costa Rican Literature, by Dorothy E. Mosby, and *The Fugitive Race: Minority Writers Resisting Whiteness*, by Stephen P. Knadler

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postmodernism offered by Fredric Jameson and Jean Baudrillard. In other words, Nel's postmodernism is capable of maintaining the oppositional power of modernism itself, while his focus on specifically avant-garde practices, even when appropriated by apparently mainstream artists, "allows us to see the contingent arguments within American literature and culture by recognizing spaces for critique that Baudrillard's and Jameson's theories of postmodernity disallow" (xvii). By stressing the stylistic continuities between modernism and postmodernism, Nel, like Cutler and Wegner, not only undermines any reified notions of periodicity but reminds us that modernism, in its specifically avant-garde formulations, is still very much with us. That the homogeneity of our postmodern simulacrum is challenged by *The Cat in the Hat* and *Two Bad Ants* as well as *Snow White* or *Underworld* is good news indeed.

Norman Finkelstein, Xavier University

***Place, Language, and Identity in Afro-Costa Rican Literature.* By Dorothy E. Mosby. Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press. 2003. xiii, 248 pp. \$34.95.**

***The Fugitive Race: Minority Writers Resisting Whiteness.* By Stephen P. Knadler. Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi. 2002. xxviii, 249 pp. \$40.00.**

In *Place, Language, and Identity*, Dorothy Mosby examines the neglected literary tradition of Costa Rican authors of African descent. These writers trace their ancestral movement to Latin America from Jamaica, which serves, instead of Africa, as a fading, idealized homeland. Mosby's first two chapters helpfully contextualize this subgenre of Costa Rican literature and establish an interpretive framework of cultural identity, postcolonial, and whiteness studies. Unlike Knadler's theoretically engaging *The Fugitive Race*, Mosby's remaining chapters rarely intervene in current academic discussions of minority and majority interaction. Instead, her study serves as a solid introduction to a distinct and intriguing literary tradition and an appealing invitation to other researchers to a treasure trove of forsaken material.

As Mosby explains, people of African descent first entered Costa Rica from the West Indies in 1872 and then came in subsequent waves, but their descendants were not granted citizenship until 1948. Costa Rican national identity and consciousness have long been cast in Eurocentric terms, as white Hispanic and Afro-Costa Ricans remain an underacknowledged minority community. In the work of early-twentieth-century writers Alderman Johnson Roden and Delores Joseph Montout, Mosby finds counterhegemonic strategies, including the incorporation of firmly retained remnants of West African oral and West Indian calypso traditions and the decision to write in various forms of early Afro-Costa Rican English. Mosby focuses on contemporary writers—especially poets Shirley Campbell and Delia McDonald—who continue to pay homage to a collective past, now based in Limón province rather

than Jamaica. Racism remains a vexing presence in their work. Like many contemporary Afro-Costa Ricans, these writers were raised in the capital city of San José, and their fuller cultural integration is expressed perhaps most fully by their use of a standardized Spanish. Mosby demonstrates convincingly, if unsurprisingly, that these shifts in place and language have fundamentally shaped literary expressions of cultural identity.

In addition to successfully delineating a discrete literary tradition that deserves broader recognition in West Indian canon formations, Mosby demonstrates that a larger audience would find scholarly and pedagogical value in many of these works, including English translations of those in Spanish. However, I often wished for more thorough engagement with the vigorous discussions that have arisen around Mosby's ostensible points of contact with this literature—place, language, and identity. Mosby's study might have been enhanced by a more solid involvement in the kinds of discussions Knadler's study offers, but her work nonetheless succeeds on its own introductory and groundbreaking terms.

In *The Fugitive Race*, Knadler joins a growing number who have taken up Toni Morrison's call in *Playing in the Dark* (1992) to examine the ramifications of racial whiteness in American literature. Morrison delineated a range of typical white authorial uses of an "Africanist" other. In *The Fugitive Race*, Knadler takes something of an opposite approach, examining the handling of white characters in works by an eclectic range of ten minority writers (including Harriet Wilson, Abraham Cahan, Younghill Kang, Richard Wright, and Arturo Islas) in order to "better understand the ways that the reciprocated gaze of the other has acted upon the various articulations of whiteness from the very beginning" (xiv). Knadler's arguments draw effectively from a wide range of recent theoretical work, especially in performance and queer studies, critical race theory, and the new whiteness studies.

Firmly in line with a primary impetus in recent ethnic studies toward recognizing assertive (rather than simply victimized) minority subjectivity, Knadler consistently finds in these authors and their characters aggressive enactments of "interventionist agency" (xiii). His general finding is that American whiteness has been a "fugitive race" that hides from awareness of its ontological, epistemological, and teleological dependence on those it has categorized as minorities. While minority texts tend to be read in search of insight into minority experience, Knadler usefully corrects the consequent neglect of, and resistance to, minority insight into white experience. In some of the study's strongest moments, he finds examples of an authorial awareness, well before Toni Morrison, that white subjectivity needs recognition from and is informed by the gaze of minority others. Knadler finds in literary stagings of this phenomenon a white "panic" that arises when whites recognize at some level how porous the borders of supposedly separate racial spaces have been (7).

Knadler spends a large portion of most chapters setting up theoretical stances and sociohistorical contexts. I found much of this material fascinat-

ing, including aptly chosen period documents and deftly summarized and answered claims by de Certeau, Moraga, Butler, Bhabha, and others. However, while in most chapters Knadler weaves these materials together into compelling arguments of his own, by the time he gets around to close observation of the literary texts in question, the plausibility of his readings is sometimes strained by a lack of exemplary support. His assertions of the unexamined whiteness of queer studies, by way of interpreting Hurston's and Wright's "white life" novels, particularly suffer from this lack. In the introductory spelling out of his theoretical presumptions, Knadler also positions his study too pointedly in opposition to the new whiteness studies by collapsing the latter's multiple perspectives into a reductive version of the "new abolitionist" sect. The insights into the ways of whiteness that Knadler finds in these writers often parallel the insights of whiteness-studies scholars in other disciplines more closely than he allows, and his study as a whole is a solid contribution to a field he nearly dismisses.

Overall, Knadler's pursuit of interventionist minority subjectivity repeatedly results in provocative, convincing readings. Indeed, his offerings are much too rich and various to summarize here. His most valuable demonstration is that minority writers have not simply resisted and chafed under the yoke of oppression or assimilationist pressures, as Mosby repeatedly asserts in her study, but have also offered highly discerning insights into white identity formation, insights that most white scholars and readers have yet to hear.

Tim Engles, Eastern Illinois University

Extinct Lands, Temporal Geographies: Chicana Literature and the Urgency of Space.
By Mary Pat Brady. Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press. 2002. xiii, 274 pp. Cloth, \$54.95; paper, \$18.95.

Gang Nation: Delinquent Citizens in Puerto Rican, Chicano, and Chicana Narratives.
By Monica Brown. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press. 2002. xxxv, 212 pp. Cloth, \$52.95; paper, \$18.95.

The vexed nature of ethnic and gender representation provides the basis for these two admirable and exciting books. Mary Pat Brady's *Extinct Lands, Temporal Geographies* offers new, provocative readings of the ways that space renders identity in conjunction with numerous social conditions: gender construction, globalization, the political economy of empire. Brady's approach to Chicana literature proposes that space is central to understanding how Chicanas and Chicanos are affected by spatial change (such as the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border) and are, also, the laborers of that change. Brady focuses on how Chicanas have done extensive cultural work to reshape the significance of space within a literary sphere.

Brady's study stands out among a new crop of exceptional texts address-

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