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# Publishing against the tide *Isla Negra Editores*, an example of pan-Caribbean transL/National solidarity[1]

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**Abstract:**

This article will take as its primary focus the independent publisher Isla Negra Editores, based in San Juan, Puerto Rico. It will start by giving a brief presentation of the publisher's editorial line before taking a closer look at two of its collections, El canon secuestrado and Los nuevos caníbales, to interrogate processes of literary circulation within the Greater Caribbean and reveal attempts at bringing together emerging (or silenced) authors from across the region and beyond. The "new classics" under study, compiled in anthologies or presented in individual formats, will provide a unique context from which to study pan-Caribbean transL/National processes as a tidal movement which anchors the circulation of the region's literary production in specific time zones on the one hand, leading to the [re]formation and deformation of a given canon ; but also, on the other, in specific places often (although not solely) bounded by linguistic proximity, as the editorial connections between Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico testify. Eventually, the publisher's work will be presented as a literary model for transL/National solidarity through which new cartographies of the region's literary circulation emerge. Within this context, translation will be understood in its linguistic sense, entailing cultural, intra and inter-textual shifts and negotiations. But it will also be considered as a relational process that connects the Greater Caribbean with the tout-monde, whilst generating new forms of « minor transnationalisms » (Françoise Lionnet, Shu-mei Shih) in the hope to circumvent traditional routes of canonization.

**Keywords:** Pan-Caribbean publishing, solidarity, translation, transnationalism, literary canon.

**Publicar contra la corriente: *Isla Negra Editores*, un ejemplo de solidaridad transnacional (*transL/national solidarity)***

**Resumen:**

Este artículo se centra en la editorial independiente *Isla Negra Editores*, con sede en San Juan (Puerto Rico). Se empezará con una breve presentación de la línea editorial antes de profundizar en dos de sus colecciones: *El canon secuestrado* y *Los nuevos caníbales*. Esto con el objetivo de interrogar los

[1] This article arises from the research done for my ongoing thesis on Caribbean literature in translation, in the University of Warwick.

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procesos de circulación literaria en el Gran Caribe e ilustrar los intentos en reunir a los autores emergentes (o silenciados) de toda la región y más allá.

Los "nuevos clásicos" objeto de estudio, compilados en antologías o presentados en formatos individuales, proporcionarán un contexto único para estudiar los procesos transnacionales *(transL/nacional)* pan-caribeños como un movimiento de marea que, en primer lugar, fija la circulación de la producción literaria de la región en zonas horarias específicas y conduce a la [re]formación y deformación de un canon dado; pero, por otro lado, dicha circulación se da en lugares específicos a menudo (aunque no exclusivamente) limitados por la proximidad lingüística, como lo demuestran las conexiones editoriales entre Cuba, la República Dominicana y Puerto Rico. Finalmente, el trabajo de la editorial se presentará como un modelo literario para la solidaridad transnacional (*transL/national solidarity)* a través del cual surgen nuevas cartografías de la circulación literaria en la región. En este contexto, la traducción se entenderá en su sentido lingüístico que implica cambios culturales e intra e intertextuales, así como negociaciones. Pero también será considerado como un proceso relacional que conecta al Gran Caribe con el *tout-monde*, generando nuevas formas de "transnacionalismos menores" (Françoise Lionnet, Shu-mei Shih) con la esperanza de eludir las vías tradicionales de canonización.

**Palabras clave:** edición pancaribeña, solidaridad, traducción, transnacionalismo, canon literario.

**Publier contre vents et marées *Isla Negra Editores*, un exemple de solidarité transnationale (*transL/national solidarity)***

**Résumé :**

Cet article se penche sur la maison d'édition indépendante *Isla Negra Editores*, installée à San Juan, Porto Rico. Il s'agira dans un premier temps de faire une présentation générale de sa ligne éditoriale avant d'analyser plus en détail deux de ses collections, *El canon secuestrado* et *Los nuevos caníbales*, afin de montrer en quoi le travail de cette maison d'édition s'inscrit à contre-courant des pratiques éditoriales observées dans la région mais aussi à l'échelle mondiale.

Les « nouveaux classiques » qui émergeront de cette étude, rassemblés sous la forme d'anthologies ou de textes indépendants seront considérés comme des manifestations littéraires transnationales *(transL/national)* permettant d'envisager la re/dé-formation des canons littéraires préexistants. Le geste traduisant sera considéré à la fois comme transfert linguistique, mais également comme manifestation de pratiques textuelles et éditoriales relationnelles (au sens glissantien). Finalement, les stratégies de publication de l'éditeur seront envisagées telles que des gestes de solidarités transnationales (*transL/national solidarity)* (principalement entre le Cuba, la République Dominicaine et le Porto Rico, mais pas uniquement), susceptibles de proposer des nouvelles coordonnées géographiques pour la circulation littéraire de (et dans) la région. Ce nouveau maillage, envisagé de manière transversale et non plus verticale, à l'aune des « transnationalismes » en mode mineur proposés par Françoise Lionnet et Shu-mei Shih, permettra d'interroger la possibilité d'une circulation archipélique de la littérature des Grandes Antilles.

**Mots clés :** édition pan-caribéenne, solidarité, traduction, transnationalisme, canon littéraire.

*¡Antillas!*
*a los cuatro vientos, a los siete caminos,*
*a las treinta y seis ocasiones de amar la vida,*
*y ponte a amar esta encervezada, enrevesada, embelesada*
*vida de las islas, donde errar es el correcto.*

"¡ANTILLAS !" (García Cartagena, 2003, p. 125).

## 1. Introduction

When it comes to the circulation of literature, and more particularly of its own home-grown literary culture, the Caribbean presents a complex web of (neo)colonial heritage and relative publishing independence. This situation generally entails that Caribbean literature, even when locally produced, is often published or translated outside the region and has thus to travel to major literary centers before it ultimately reaches back its own shores. Pascale Casanova's seminal study of the forces at work in the circulation of books in the global literary marketplace, *The World Republic of Letters*, stresses the asymmetrical nature of cultural circulation and diffusion, and shows how entering the world literary space depends on phenomena such as consecration, recognition and assimilation where "minor" literatures—emanating from the peripheries—are concerned. If, as Casanova observes, "national literary space must not be confused with national territory" (Casanova, 2004, p. 206), in the case of the Caribbean, circuits of literary circulation, particularly where mainstream publishing is concerned, continue to be directed by the centripetal force of the "Greenwich meridian[s]" (*Ibid*, p.4) of culture which often correspond to sites of former or neo colonial imperialism.

Following a five-month research project in Puerto Rico, this article wishes to take as its primary focus the small, independent publisher *Isla Negra Editores*, based in San Juan, to present alternative, non-vertical modes of understanding literary circulation within the region but also outside its confines. It draws on theoretical frameworks that offer transnational models of conceptualization which have emerged both regionally (Glissant, 1990) and/or focus on (semi)peripheral spaces (Lionnet & Shih, 2005; Sánchez-Prado, 2006) to interrogate processes of circulation within the Greater Caribbean that wish to bypass national, bilateral and monolingual routes of access to literature/culture. Such forms of transnationalism will be understood as translational processes that entail both spatial and geographical movements (going from one Caribbean space to another, for example), as well as linguistic and cultural difference, including among spheres or islands commonly grouped together for an assumed sense of shared *lingua franca*.

Thus, although Isla Negra closely and mainly (but not solely) works with authors, partner editors and printers from the Dominican Republic and Cuba, each island's

contribution will be presented as a "specific[2]" site of Caribbean creative expression. An overview of the publisher's established presence on the Puerto Rican and Caribbean literary scenes for the past twenty-five years will allow us to first locate their impact on the circulation of local, regional, and, to a certain extent, "global" world literary market. Focusing primarily on two of their collections, *El canon secuestrado* and *Los nuevos caníbales* will help us, in turn, bring to the fore the publisher's attempts at bringing together emerging (or silenced) authors from the region, an endeavor which will be analyzed as a counterpoint to a set or (pre)defined canon in an attempt to offer, instead, new cartographies of Pan-Caribbean and transN/Lational literary circulation. Ultimately, the transversal routes of circulation observed from the model under study will question the extent to which new coordinates may be generated for minor spaces of literary production and diffusion within the existing tide of world literary systems[3].

## 2. Publishing Caribbean literature… *fuera y dentro del Caribe*

When browsing the shelves of the local bookstores from various locations of the metropolitan area of San Juan, the capital city of Puerto Rico, one can get a brief overview of the current modes of literary circulation on the island. Thus, whilst most local bookstores such as *AC Libros*, *La Tertulia* (both in Old San Juan and in the student, popular neighborhood of Rio Píedras), *Libreria Mágica* and the *Instituto de la Cultura Puertorriqueña* do offer a comprehensive range of locally-published literature, their selection remains somewhat limited when considering the larger presence of Caribbean literature published by international giants such as Penguin or Corregidor as the photographs below illustrate.

[2] The term, borrowed from Peter Hallward, is defined as follows: "The specific is relational, the singular in non-relational." (Hallward, 2001, p. xii)

[3] "World literary systems" alludes both to the original concept of Goethe's *Weltliteratur* and to the theory of polysystems developed by Itamar Evan-Zohar here. Following Franco Moretti's approach to world-literature in conjunction with the analysis of world-systems (Moretti, 2006, p. 55), our understanding of "world literary systems" wishes, in turn, to address the asymmetries in the global literary market.

**Figure 1**

English editions, including Junot Díaz's novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* and his debut collection of short-stories, *Drown*, published by Riverhead Books, a division the of Penguin Group (photograph taken in *AC Libros*, Santurce, Copyright [2016] by Laëtitia Saint-Loubert).

**Figure 2**

Spanish editions of local, regional and international publications, including Eduardo Lalo's *Simone*, winner of the Premio Rómulo Gallegos (Ediciones Corregidor, Buenos Aires) and *San Juan Gay: Conquista de un espacio urbano de 1948 a 1991*, by Javier E. Laureano, Editorial del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, San Juan (photograph taken in *Librería Mágica*, Rio Píedras, Copyright [2016] by Laëtitia Saint-Loubert).

To a certain extent, those photographs reveal the uneven power at play in the circulation of international (and local) literature within the Greater Caribbean, as the first illustration places, for example, European classics such as the *Big Book of Sherlock Holmes Stories* and *Madame Bovary* (in translation) right alongside books by Junot Díaz, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2008. In a similar fashion, figure 3 shows a bookstand from the *Feria del Libro* during the *Festival de la Palabra*, the annual book fair held in San Juan, advertised as a showcase of local literature, yet displaying global publications.

**Figure 3**
Three books by Esmeralda Santiago, which constitute her autobiographical triptych, all published by Vintage (or Vintage español). The first instalment of the series is actually put on display in its (self-) translated edition here (*Cuando era puertorriqueña*), and coincided with a local stage adaptation of the novel for local audiences the week prior to the Festival de la Palabra (Teatro Braulio Castillo, Bayamón, Copyright [2016] by Laëtitia Saint-Loubert).

If such examples illustrate the asymmetrical nature of literary recognition and publishing instances observed at the macro-level of literary world-systems, revealing the omnipresence of publishing centers within peripheral spaces ("un mundo literario desigual, compuesto de centros y periferias y de un sistema también desigual de relaciones de legitimación y de configuración estética", as Ignacio M. Sánchez-Prado argues in his introduction to *América Latina en la literatura mundial*, p. 9), they should however be qualified, particularly when comparing the Puerto Rican publishing sector with that of the French Antilles, where (inter)nationally recognized Martinican and Guadeloupean authors are mostly published in the *métropole*.

### 2.1. Presenting *Isla Negra Editores*: 25 years of alternative solidarities

2016 marked the 25th anniversary of *Isla Negra Editores*. As such, cultural activities such as book launches, presentations and panels on Caribbean literature both during the *Festival de la Palabra* in San Juan (October 20th-25th 2016) and during the 19th *Feria del Libro* held in Santo Domingo (September 19th- October 2nd 2016) were organized throughout the Hispanophone Caribbean and local newspapers as well as some social media paid various tributes to the publisher's long-term presence on the literary scene[4].

[4] *El Post Antillano*, a Puerto-Rican based digital news outlet that aims to inform its readers from across the Greater Caribbean, has underlined, for instance, the political, activist undercurrent of Isla Negra's editorial projects: "Isla Negra Editores es el principal proyecto político-cultural de más larga duración en el Caribe hispano. Contrario a otras editoriales, Isla Negra Editores no tiene un Editor Jefe, tiene un Embajador Cultural desde que tomara cuerpo el 16 de enero de 1991, contra todos los vientos huracanados que nos pretendieron negar en el preámbulo del fin de la historia de Puerto Rico como país caribeño."

In his "*mensaje del editor*" written for a catalogue he put together to present his editorial project back in 1994-1999, the founder and director of *Isla Negra Editores*, Carlos Roberto Goméz Beras thus formulates his publishing strategy:

> […] la misión de la Editorial Isla Negra es facilitar la publicación y difusión de la literatura hecha *en el Caribe, sobre el Caribe y por el Caribe* que tanto en su forma como en su contenido representa una alternativa "impredecible" a la, muchas veces, "predecible" literatura canónica. (Goméz Beras, 1999, p. 5)

If promoting Caribbean literature within the Caribbean and for a local audience has remained a top priority on the publisher's agenda, the scope of its readership has also evolved with the advent of social networks and their decision to have a presence on the web. Thanks to the promotion of its catalogue and an online marketplace on their webpage, the books published by *Isla Negra Editores* are now accessible throughout the world[5]. What has remained unchanged on the publisher's agenda, though, from the inception of *Isla Negra Editores* onwards, has been the promotion of an "alternative" literature that goes against the tide of traditional and expected forms of canonical works. In addition to this political stance, *Isla Negra Editores* also insists on the importance of adopting a collaborative approach to publishing and works closely with writers, editors, printers and translators from the Greater Caribbean (mainly from Cuba and the Dominican Republic) as well as the world over. Their uninterrupted participation in the Feria del Libro in Santo Domingo for over a decade further attests to their commitment to their long-time partners and collaborators from the Hispanophone Caribbean. Furthermore, two of the publisher's imprints, the aptly named *Los nuevos caníbales* and *El canon secuestrado* testify to their cultural and political stance on the Puerto-Rican literary scene, and a closer look at the texts and the authors published in those two series will help us identify the extent to which *Isla Negra Editores* offers a subversive model of pan-Caribbean publishing that disrupts vertical models of literary circulation.

### 2.2. *Los nuevos caníbales* and *El canon secuestrado*: two of *Isla Negra*'s flagship imprints

To date, *Los nuevos caníbales* counts a total of three anthologies, the latter of which, devoted to microfiction, was presented during several events pertaining to the publisher's twenty-five years of existence during my research project. The imprint is presented as "antologías y otras compilaciones[6]" and consists in the compilation of Cuban,

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Román Samot, W. (2016, October 17). Celebrarán los 25 años de isla negra editores. *El Post Antillano*. Retrieved October 20 2016, from http://elpostantillano.net/cultura/18240-2016-10-17-18-42-47.html

[5] Back in 2005, at the time of their webpage launch, the daily Puerto-Rican newspaper *El nuevo día* welcomed the publisher's decision to opt for an online presence, which it regarded as a step into modernity: "Dice que es un salto a la modernidad" (Tatiana Pérez Rivera, "Estrena Isla Negra un puente virtual literario", *El nuevo día*, "Arte y cultura", Jueves 4 de Agosto de 2005, p. 9).

[6] *Isla Negra Editores*. Retrieved October 28 2016, from http://www.editorialislanegra.com/index.php?option=com_virtuemart&Itemid=7&vmcchk=1&Itemid=7

Dominican and Puerto-Rican literature divided into three distinct sections, each introduced by the anthologist in charge of their geographical area. However, the volumes of *Los nuevos caníbales* bring together the three Hispanophone islands of the Greater Caribbean to dialogue with each other around a specific genre. Thus, the first volume of the series is devoted to short stories, while the second one consists of contemporary poetry from the three islands and the third one brings together *microcuentos*. As the blurb on the back cover of the first *Nuevos caníbales* indicates, the imprint is guided by a mission statement which has been phrased as follows:

> Cuba, República Dominicana y Puerto Rico, parte de ese espacio antillano tan conflictivo y similar como distante y sencillo, participan con estos relatos de esa "anthropomancia", que consiste en buscar de entre sus vísceras comunicantes la adivinación de lo que son y lo que serán. De ahí su título: *Los nuevos caníbales*, porque comen de sí mismos, destruyéndose para re-crearse, y también, como nuevos hambrientos, van tras huellas de Carpentier, Alonso, Cardoso, Bosch, Díaz Grullón, Contreras, Sánchez y Vega, entre otros. (*Los nuevos caníbales*, 2004)

The metaphors of cannibalism and anthropomancy are key to understanding the publisher's editorial line, as their project partakes in the creation of a new canon aimed at and originating from the Greater Caribbean. If, initially, Gómez Beras's work aimed at bringing to the forefront of the Puerto-Rican literary scene marginalized authors from the generation of the 1980s, *Isla Negra Editores* has since then adopted a wider, pan-Caribbean publishing strategy, at least as far as the Hispanophone part of the region is concerned[7].

The second imprint this article wishes to focus on, *El canon secuestrado*, counts a total of twenty-three books to date and is presented by the publisher as "nuevas ediciones de nuevos clásicos"[8]. Two titles in particular have been selected from this imprint to highlight the process of revamping the Caribbean canon, focusing here more specifically on the Puerto Rican example: *La isla silente*, by now internationally acclaimed Puerto-Rican author Eduardo Lalo, and *Puerto Rican Obituary/Obituario puertorriqueño*, a bilingual edition of Pedro Pietri's collection of poems with a Spanish translation by

[7] On this particular point, see the introduction by Médar Serrata, "Algo de la historia de Isla Negra editores" that served as the publisher's presentation for their 25th anniversary during the 19th Feria del Libro in Santo Domingo and the 2nd Festival de la Palabra of San Juan (Programa Académico): "En una entrevista con la poeta puertorriqueña Ana María Fuster Lavín, Gómez Beras cuenta que años más tarde descubriría que el propio Neruda había creado una casa editorial llamada Ediciones Isla Negra, que solo llegó a publicar un título. Pero mientras el objetivo del poeta chileno era rescatar las obras de autores olvidados de la literatura de su país, la pequeña editorial creada por Gómez Beras y su amigo se proponía, originalmente, dar a conocer las obras de escritores puertorriqueños de la llamada Generación del 80, que no encontraban cabida en los sellos tradicionales. Desde entonces, Isla Negra Editores ha ampliado su red de acción para incluir autores de otras generaciones y otras latitudes, llegando a configurar un impresionante catálogo que se acerca a los 500 títulos, divididos en once colecciones, y entre los que se encuentran las obras de algunos de los autores más prominentes de literatura contemporánea de Puerto Rico, República Dominicana y Cuba". (Serrata, 2016, p. 3)

[8] *Isla Negra Editores*. Retrieved October 2016, from http://www.editorialislanegra.com/index.php?option=com_virtuemart&Itemid=7&vmcchk=1&Itemid=7

Alfredo Matilla Rivas. The latter title will briefly be compared with *Postcards of El Barrio* by Willie Perdomo, also published in a bilingual edition by *Isla Negra Editores*, but in a different series (*Filo de juego*). This selection of texts was made with the hope of reflecting the intricate processes of literary circulation and diffusion when it comes to Puerto Rico, taking into account the island's complex political status as *estado libre asociado*, and the (re)appropriation of its canon, particularly when considering emblematic Nuyorican poets such as Pietri and Perdomo, both published and recognized in the mainland United States. This analysis will then allow us to establish connections between the actual act of inter-linguistic translation and the role it plays in the passage from one literary space to another, highlighting for instance the relationships between literary circulation, linguistic difference and the ever present concept of betrayal in translation. As Franco Moretti has observed:

> La difusión generalmente conlleva una traducción: un movimiento, no solo de un espacio al otro, sino también de un lenguaje a otro. Ahora, la trama es fundamentalmente independiente del lenguaje, y se mantiene más o menos igual aún de un sistema de signos a otro (de la novela, digamos, a la ilustración, el cine, el ballet…). El estilo sin embargo no es sino lenguaje, y por tanto su traducción – *traduttore, traditore* – siempre es una traición potencial: de hecho, entre más complejo es un estilo, es "mejor", y mayor es la posibilidad de que sus características más significativas se pierdan en la traducción. (Moretti, 2006, p.55)

The link between form ("*trama*") and language ("*estilo*") established by Moretti will serve as a starting point to interrogate processes of back translation ("back" into Spanish, the mother tongue shared by Pietri and Perdomo), since both source texts were initially written and published in English, but move from a bilingual, hybrid space of expression to a monolingual framework in their crossing of the Caribbean sea to reach the shores of Puerto Rico, as the code-switching present in the original texts somehow disappears (or so it seems) in the Spanish translations (see 2.3.).

### 2.3. A Caribbean literature disrupting the "World Republic of Letters"

Most of the writers published by *Isla Negra Editores* are from the Greater Caribbean and write in Spanish, although not exclusively. Gómez Beras has for instance published some of his own poetry both in English and Spanish (albeit with a stronger focus on the latter language) so that the texts dialogue with and echo each other[9]; by the same token, Yvonne Denis Rosario[10], who initially published her collection of short-stories *Capá Prieto* in Spanish with *Isla Negra Editores* also wanted the English translation of her book (by Marcy Valdivieso) to come out in the same series, so that both versions would be available for the Puerto Rican, and to a certain extent, Caribbean reader.

That being said, in his introduction to the Puerto Rican section of the first volume of *Los nuevos caníbales*, Gómez Beras unambiguously inscribes Puerto Rico within a Hispanophone Greater Caribbean and Latin American context, that is within a (semi)

[9] See *Mapa al corazón del hombre: poesía 2008-2012* (Gómez Beras, 2014, p. 125-133).
[10] *Capá Prieto* (Denis Rosario, 2009).

peripheral literary space[11], rather than within the "World Republic of Letters", in other words the major (global) cultural centers through which international literature circulates, traditionally represented by cities such as New York, London, Paris or Barcelona:

> A más de cien años de iniciarse nuestra particular relación con los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica, creemos pertinente destacar la narrativa más joven, la cual, a través del español, y de ciertos temas y recursos literarios, continúa hermanando a Puerto Rico con el Caribe y el resto de Hispanoamérica. La actualidad de estos relatos le ofrecerá al lector la oportunidad única de atisbar al paradójico Puerto Rico que estos cuentistas heredaron: el moderno y posmoderno, el industrial y tecnológico, el contaminado y ecológico, el migratorio y isleño, el real y cibernético, el colonial y plebiscitario, el metropolitano y caribeño, y el agónico y esperanzador de las últimas dos décadas. (Gómez Beras, 2004, p. 191)

Furthermore, it could be argued that *Isla Negra Editores* attempts to re-inscribe authors from the Greater Caribbean within a literary narrative that goes beyond national borders, in the hope of creating a pan-Caribbean canon in which literary spaces would no longer be defined along linguistic and/or (neo) colonial lines. The publisher's work could in fact be said to go against the grain of what Pascale Casanova refers to as "assimilation" or "assimilated" writers in *The World Republic of Letters*, taking the example of V.S. Naipaul for the Caribbean context. She shows, for instance, how some writers from minor, (post) colonial spaces, opt for a process of assimilation into a Western model so as to gain literary recognition (both in their homeland and in the former colonial center) and thus enter the realm of canonical authors[12], whilst highlighting that such a position places assimilated writers in an uncomfortable position. Casanova argues, for instance, that "assimilation arouses […] deep ambivalence in emerging literary spaces: it is at once the primary means of access to literature for writers who lack national resources of their own and the characteristic form of betrayal in such spaces". She adds: "[a]rtists who seek assimilation in the center, and so betray the national literary cause, in a sense cease to belong to their native land." (Casanova, 2004, p. 209) Gómez Beras's introduction to the Puerto Rican section of the first volume of *Los nuevos caníbales* may very well be interpreted as an expression of resistance to the centripetal pull of a certain type of canonization that entails processes of assimilation close to those portrayed by Casanova. As the publisher notes in his introduction, "[u]na de las aportaciones más significativas de este trabajo antológico fue llamar la atención sobre la existencia de una rica realidad literaria paralela y marginal, pero desconocida en los espacios públicos de la literatura

[11] On the use of the term (semi) peripheral here, see Sánchez Prado's brief analysis of the Latin American publishing sector in his introduction to *América Latina en la "literatura mundial"*: "[…] la caída de las industriales editoriales regionales y el ingreso de transnacionales del libro al mercado literario latinoamericano sujetan a la escritura latinoamericana a una serie de procesos transformativos que se asujetan más a criterios de ventas que a preocupaciones literarias específicas." (Sánchez Prado, 2006, p. 8-9)

[12] In a similar vein, Francophone Caribbean writers published in mainland France, particularly the proponents of Créolité, among whom Patrick Chamoiseau or Raphaël Confiant, have at times been criticized for their exaggerated "exoticization" of the Caribbean. See Celia Britton's "Problems of Cultural Self-Representation: René Ménil, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant" on that particular point. (Britton, 2014, pp. 27-47)

institucional o canónica." (Gómez Beras, 2004, p. 192). In that light, both *Los nuevos caníbales* and *El canon secuestrado*, although they do acknowledge asymmetry in the circulation of literary material on a macro, as well as on a micro level, offer, as will be argued, new definitions of what a Caribbean literary canon should be constituted of.

## 3. Crossings of the Caribbean Sea: revamping the canon

Following a Glissantian model of relational thinking, Françoise Lionnet and Shuh-Mei Shih offer a framework of "minor transnationalism" that, whilst acknowledging the logic of cultural and literary globalization, encourages transversal movements that circumvent traditional exchanges based on centripetal and centrifugal forces: "The transnational, on the contrary, can be conceived as a space of exchange and participation wherever processes of hybridization occur and where it is still possible for cultures to be produced and performed without necessary mediation by the center." (Lionnet & Shih, 2005, p. 5). Similarly, it will be argued that *Isla Negra Editores* proposes to revamp the Caribbean canon by re-appropriating some of its emblematic figures, but also by lending visibility to authors from younger generations, so that new voices and new cannibals may emerge from the Greater Caribbean.

### 3.1. Destabilizing Caribbean (af)filiations: creating (anti) anthologies

Putting together an anthology necessarily entails a screening process, as each of the introductory sections to the volumes constituting *Los nuevos caníbales* reminds us of. For the first anthology, which comprises a selection of fifteen writers of short fiction, all born after 1950 and with at least one published work (or pending publication), the selection criteria entail relative arbitrariness as the anthologist/publisher Gómez Beras acknowledges in his presentation of the Puerto Rican context[13]. In the third volume of *Los nuevos caníbales* dedicated to microfiction, a similar emphasis is laid on the selective nature of the anthology which both includes and at the time leaves out authors and their literary production, or as the author/anthologist of the Dominican section argues:

> Esta participación dominicana en *Los nuevos caníbales* de microcuento muestra una cara, no la única posible, de la minificción en nuestro país. Como toda antología, es cruel: no muertos, no nacidos después de 1950, no más de doce y que hayan publicado libros. (Valdez, 2015, p. 61)

In a sense then, creating a new canon calls for constant emendations and revisions, as the very nature of an anthology entails a limited scope, focusing generally on a representative sample of a given genre or period of study. Furthermore, opting for contemporary authors also places the publisher's work at the vanguard of a new canon that does away with a traditional understanding of the term and often implies historical

[13] "La selección de los quince cuentistas que conforman nuestra presencia en esta Antología es el resultado de un proceso que puede (y suele) ser de naturaleza injusta y exclusiva; creemos pertinente presentar algunos de los "criterios objetivos" que intentaron contrapesar los "otros e innegables criterios subjetivos" de aquéllos que hemos seleccionado, así como las "excepciones" que, casualmente, parecen balancear la impersonalidad de los primeros […]" (Gómez Beras, 2004, p. 194)

as well as temporal distance[14]. Similarly, the genres chosen for each volume, short fiction, poetry and microfiction, escape, to a certain extent, the norms of a canon inherited from Western or Eurocentric literary practices which would traditionally take the form of the novel[15]. The choice of the genres selected for *Los nuevos caníbales* may therefore be read as an attempt to bring to the fore literary forms that have long existed within the region but somehow, due to the asymmetrical processes of world-literature circulation, have been erased or marginalized due to the centripetal pull of the Greenwich meridian[16]. In that sense, the re-appropriation of Caribbean specificities becomes a matter of recovering a long-lost (or silenced) local canon as well as of a rewriting of History as Pedro Antonio Valdez observes in "Microcaníbales en Santo Domingo":

> Como en todas partes, el microcuento existe en República Dominicana mucho antes de que el género existiera. Porque a esta expresión literaria le pasó lo que a América: que "sólo empezó a existir" luego de que, ya vieja y poblada por civilizaciones centenarias, Cristóbal Colón junto a un puñado de ex presidiarios la "descubriera". (Valdez, 2015, p. 57)

It could be argued, then, that with such an initiative, the publisher embarks on the dismantling of some of the stereotypes traditionally associated with forms of authorization and canonization, phenomena that become all the more blatant when looking at Caribbean literature published on the international literary scene. In most cases, writers from the Greater Caribbean who access the global market, especially in translation, have for instance generally gained some form of visibility, often symbolized by a prestigious prize that grants them a newly acquired literary status and places them within a certain discourse and lineage. By authorizing the heretofore unauthorized writers and placing them alongside previously "salvaged" authors, *Los nuevos caníbales* in turn acknowledges former publishing enterprises that sought, in a vein similar to their own undertaking, to un-silence generations of non-affiliated, marginal voices[17]. In so

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[14] In his introduction to the Cuban section of the third *Nuevos caníbales*, Rafael Grillo comments on this particular point: "En el contexto literario general (y no solo del minicuento), esta proporción es atinada porque son los nacidos en esas épocas quienes se van consolidando hoy en el núcleo de mayor madurez y visibilidad dentro de lo que pudiera considerarse como la hornada de esa "literatura cubana contemporánea" o "actual" que no llega aún al estamento de "lo canonizado". (Grillo, 2015, p. 15)

[15] In his essay "Dos textos en torno a la teoría del sistema-mundo", Franco Moretti takes the example of the naturalist novel and its diffusion across Latin America, highlighting the transformations the genre underwent when translated for a non European market: "Hace años, uno de los grandes críticos de nuestro tiempo, Antonio Candido, escribío un tríptico de ensayos […], en los cuales sigue la difusión de la novela naturalista del centro (Francia), a través de la semiperiferia (Italia), y a la periferia (Brasil) del sistema mundo literario. Y descubrió, entre otras cosas, una extraña separación en el proceso de difusión: mientras el modelo de trama de Zolá fue en gran parte conservado por Verga y Azevego, su estilo fue profundamente transformado […]" (Moretti, 2006, p. 53)

[16] The expression "Greenwich meridian" in the context of world-literature circulation is borrowed from Pascale Casanova: "Rival languages compete for dominance; revolutions are always at once literary and political. The history of these events can be fathomed only by recognizing the existence of a literary measure of time, of a "tempo" peculiar to literature; and by recognizing that this world has its own present – the literary Greenwich meridian." (Casanova, 2004, p. 4)

[17] "En su revelador Prólogo introductorio, el antólogo José Ángel Rosado destaca las particularidades editoriales de realizar esta primera anti-antología de lo escondido y marginal, así como algunas de las

doing they partake, at their own level, in the creation of new filiations for Caribbean literature.

### 3.2. Restoring silenced voices and muted echoes

*El canon secuestrado* is the publisher's second imprint that perhaps best illustrates this attempt at rehabilitating previously silenced or misheard voices. *La isla silente*, by Eduardo Lalo, epitomizes the hardships undergone by the then fairly unknown writer attempting to get his work published in Puerto Rico, as the blurb on the back cover of the book highlights:

> Los tres primeros libros de Eduardo Lalo han recorrido el laberinto de pequeñas y grandes editoriales, el olvido de la burocracia gubernamental y el azar de distribuciones accidentadas para volver a encontrarse en este volumen de *La isla silente*. La colección El canon secuestrado pocas veces ha encontrado una obra literaria que por su oficio, diversidad y calidad, represente mejor la urgencia de una palabra liberada. (La isla silente, 2002)

The publisher's agenda is made explicit in the paratextual apparatus that surrounds Lalo's publication, a feature that can be observed in the majority of books published in the imprint. The design on the book cover of *La isla silente* represents, for example, the details of a work of art made by the author himself ("*Patría I*, medio mixto y pigmento sobre madera, 2001") that reproduces a series of embossed letters and figures, that could be found on stamped or official documents and could therefore stand for the maze of governmental red tape, as suggested by the blurb on the back cover. The prologue by Yolanda Izquierdo could also be read as a statement of purpose for the imprint, stressing the need to rehabilitate a formerly silenced voice and to reintegrate a heretofore estranged author in his own "home" country:

> Insisto en que acaso no sea fortuito el hecho de que estos textos hayan permanecido "secuestrados" de alguna manera hasta hoy, y celebro que mediante esta iniciativa de rescate de Isla Negra se incorporen a nuestro cannon, "al final del camino de luz", tras "la peor extranjería, la que se cifra en el propio país". (Izquierdo, 2002, p. xvii)

In the case of Eduardo Lalo, however, it is interesting to note that his most recent books have been published with several local publishers, among which *Editorial Tal Cual* or *Ediciones Callejón*, and that *La isla silente* is in fact a re-edition of three of his earlier books compiled together around the *leitmotiv* of the city (*Ciudades e islas*, *Libro de textos* and *En el Burger King de la Calle San Francisco*). Similarly, an anthology of poems by María

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características definitorias de la a veces llamada "generación soterrada" de los ochenta […]. Una de las aportaciones más significativas de este trabajo antológico fue llamar la atención sobre la existencia de una rica realidad literaria paralela y marginal, pero desconocida en los espacios públicos de la literatura institucional o canónica. Los textos de esta antología sólo existían esparcidos en los medios alternativos de difusión: revistas artesanales, pequeños grupos literarios, suplementos culturales y esporádicas editoriales accidentadas; pero por consiguiente, estaban ausentes del estudio y la reflexión teórica de la opinión de la crítica "autorizada"." (Gómez Beras, 2004, p. 192)

Arrillaga, *Ciudades como mares*, was published in *El canon secuestrado* and connects local Caribbean topographies with global geographies, often taking the form of cities or animated, vibrant spaces – in *Ciudades e islas*, Lalo pays tribute to Baudelaire's Paris, for example, whilst Arrillaga navigates between the shores of her native island, Puerto Rico, and the city of New York.

The re-edition of Pedro Pietri's *Puerto Rican obituary* in a bilingual volume by *Isla Negra Editores* further invites us to a reconfiguration of a Caribbean canon thought beyond national lines and across linguistic divides. In that instance, the bilingual presentation of Pietri's work on the publisher's webpage is particularly telling:

> Pedro Pietri is the author of many poetry collections and plays. His work has been translated into several languages, and has been hailed as one of the most original voices in the literature of the 20th century. His admonitory tone, spiced with a corrosive sense of humor and a taste for the grotesque, is above all a poetic chant to freedom.
>
> Pedro Pietri es el escritor emblemático de la diáspora puertorriqueña y uno de los autores más importantes de las letras contemporáneas. Ha sido traducido a varias lenguas, entre ellas el holandés y el indostaní, habiendo trascendido su obra y su nombre no sólo las barreras exclusivistas del canon literario estadounidense, sino del boricua por igual[18].

The role of translation is acknowledged here as an instrument of transnational reading that not only transcends the borders of national visibility for a writer (whether they are located in the United States or in Puerto Rico), but also invites a perpetual redistribution of the circuits through which Caribbean literature should circulate – it is interesting to note that Pietri's work is presented as having been translated into Dutch or Hindustani, for instance. It seems, furthermore, that, as Mayra Santos-Febres notes in her introduction to Willie Perdomo's poems: "Cada poema se cuela en el canon de la literatura Nuyorican para impartirle una nueva vida." (Santos-Febres, 2002, p. 59). Thus, both Nuyorican poets Pietri and Perdomo are linked back to the Caribbean and the island of Puerto Rico in the two bilingual editions published by *Isla Negra Editores*, that, by highlighting transN/Lational echoes with other geographic and linguistic spaces, also stress the writers' reach beyond their original (somehow muted) scope of expression.

### 3.3. *Isla Negra*'s thresholds of transversal readings

In its enterprise of revamping the Caribbean canon, *Isla Negra Editores* gives pride of place to the "thresholds[19]" of *Los nuevos caníbales* and *El canon secuestrado* to highlight their publishing strategy. As has already been noted in the case of *La isla silente* and the

[18] *Isla Negra Editores*. Retrieved October 19 2016, from http://www.editorialislanegra.com/index.php?page=shop.product_details&flypage=flypage.tpl&product_id=35&category_id=7&option=com_virtuemart&Itemid=7&vmcchk=1&Itemid=7

[19] The term is borrowed from Gérard Genette (*Seuils*) and describes all the information that can be found in a book but is not part of the text *per se*. It corresponds to paratextual elements that take the form of prologues, afterwords, blurbs, illustrations, footnotes, added either by a third party (often the publisher or the editor) or by the author themselves.

anthologies from *Los nuevos caníbales*, paratextual information ranging from book covers to prologues and introductory sections, as well as "epitextual[20]" elements (found outside the bound book) become highly visible sites of destabilization, whereby traditional readings of canonization are deconstructed. This section of the article would like to take the examples of *Puerto Rican Obituary* and *Postcards of el barrio* to show how a pan-Caribbean "canon" may be redefined along transversal circuits of circulation to complexify otherwise local or bilateral understandings of the region's literary production (mostly in relation to a former or neo colonial center).

In both editions, which are bilingual, the original text by the author is introduced by the translator, and both versions can be read completely independently from each other, as the publisher did not opt for a parallel presentation of the poems, whereby one text would find its echo on the facing page. Furthermore, as has already been alluded to, both translations somehow erase the code-switching present in the initial texts, where Spanish words or phrases peppered the English. To a certain extent, Mayra Santos-Febres's Spanish version bears some traces of the original hybrid setting, as she decided, from time to time, to mirror some instances of code-switching in her translation:

| | |
|---|---|
| "Coño, qué flaco", I say. "Look how skinny he is." | "Damn, how skinny", digo. "Mira lo flaco que está." |
| "Como tú, mantecoso", Mami says. "Just like you. You know why he's like that, right? You know, right?" (Perdomo, 2002, p. 51) | "Como tú, mantecoso", Mami responde. "Igualito que tú. Tú sabes por qué estaba así, ¿verdá? You know, right?" (Santos-Febres, 2002, p. 100) |

The absence of italics in both versions and the re-inscription of hybridity, even if only sporadically, through a mirror use of code-switching in the Spanish translation seem to corroborate here a point that the translator made in her prologue to the text on the author distanced himself from an earlier Nuyorican paradigm that consisted in dissociating an experience of Puertoricanness that would differ depending on where one lived (mainland US as opposed to on the island). Instead, Perdomo's text and its translation are presented as two creations that dialogue with other aesthetics of interconnected rhythms and universal experiences:

> Willie Perdomo's is not a poetry that dwells on the Nuyorican experience in confrontation neither with Island Puerto Rico nor with mainstream US. It is not about being Nuyorican, but written from the Nuyorican standpoint.

[20] Genette distinguishes "peritext" (paratext found inside the object book) from "epitext" (material from Isla Negra's website, not present in the bound volume would belong to the latter category, for example). (Genette, 1990)

> Willie Perdomo fuses the Nuyorican aesthetics with other poetics – in particular with Langston Hughes. This enables him to work rhythms that combine the prose poem with variations of the blues. (Santos-Febres, 2002, p. 11)

Similarly, the bilingual re-edition of Pietri's *Obituario* attempts to revise former readings of the text. It is particularly interesting, in that regard, to note that Alfredo Matilla Rivas's introduction to the English text is presented as a "foreword", whilst his preliminary remarks to the Spanish, much more developed in terms of length and analysis, are introduced as a "*nota del traductor*". His work comes in fact closer to that of an editor ("se corrigen las erratas y se ponen al día las versiones al castellano[21]"), whilst offering a metatextual commentary on the act and role of translation as an instrument of perpetual re-writing and re-reading of a literary work:

> Con respecto a establecer un texto definitivo del *Obituario*, me parece tarea fútil, pues cada versión de una obra de Pietri es un texto avalado de una manera u otra por el propio autor. Por ejemplo: el texto utilizado por Mario Maffi para su traducción al italiano del "Suicide Note from a Cockroach in a Low Income Housing Project" (en *Scarafaggi metropolitani e altre poesie* (Milano: Baldini & Castoldi, 1993), proporcionado por Pietri, muestra diferencias con la edición de Monthly Review Press, y con la del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña: cada uno de estos textos es un cuerpo cambiante, y el mismo cuerpo. Es decir, una sola obra en continua evolución. (Matilla Rivas, 2006, p.80)

The *Puerto Rican Obituary* then turns into an ode to archipelagic modes of publishing that comprise writers from the islands of the Greater Caribbean, authors from the region living in diaspora, but also from the world over who, when brought into dialogue with each other, offer a polyphony of transversal voices that can be heard in counterpoint to the set melody of any fixed literary canon.

## 4. From "minor transnationalisms" to transN/Lational solidarities

In their co-editored volume on *Minor Transnationalism*, Lionnet and Shih explain that the "transnational, therefore, is not bound by the binary of the local and the global and can occur in national, local, or global spaces, different and multiple spatialities and temporalities." (Lionnet, Shih, 2005, p. 6) Although this statement may be nuanced when it comes to the content of some of the texts published by *Isla Negra Editores*, in which the binary opposition between center and periphery remains present, it will serve as a starting point from which to interrogate literary circulation within the Greater Caribbean. Can we observe, for instance, phenomena of transnational and translational (interlinguistic) movements of literary circulation within the region that do not entail transiting through "global spaces"? To what extent does *Isla Negra Editores*'s work fit within those tendencies or, somehow, attempt (and potentially manage) to circumvent them? Ultimately, could a relational[22] model of literary circulation originating from the

[21] Matilla Rivas, 2006, p. 79.
[22] Based on Glissant's *Poétique de la Relation*.

Greater Caribbean offer a constellation of multinodal re-configurations for alternative cultural production as well as diffusion?

### 4.1. From "dependent independences" …

The title of this section is borrowed from a poem by Guillermo Rebollo Gil, "Proclamación de una dependencia independiente", published in the second volume of *Los nuevos caníbales*. The text denounces Puerto Rico's apathy towards its colonial situation and its ready acceptance of a capitalist model based on ostentatious mass consumerism:

> puerto rico:
>
> no queremos más sobras
> de pensamientos recalentados
> en el clima templado
> de tu conciencia amorfa.
> […]
> tú eres sólo un frente,
> un cajón de ropa usada
> de turtlenecks y de sweaters
> porque siempre estás preparada
> para las estaciones que nunca vienen,
> para los comerciantes
> de cerveza extranjera
> con billboards flasheando riquezas.
>
> por eso llevamos patria
> en el tag del mahón
> celebrando a levis, wrangler,
> agüeybaná y betances,
> a calvin klein y a colón.
> porque nuestra cultura está a la venta
> en plaza las américas
> y j.c. penney tiene un 15 por ciento
> de descuento en sábanas
> para los clientes que perdieron su casa
> con el paso de george,
> toda esta semana. (Rebollo Gil, 2003, p. 250)

As has been shown, the literary market in the region features, in a similar fashion, a large percentage of international publishers in the Greater Caribbean, particularly when it comes to the circulation of works in translation. Taking the example of Jamaica, Alicia Roache, a reporter for the *Jamaica Observer*, wrote an article on self-publishing to reveal how local authors attempt to circumvent traditional modes of literary circulation. She noted: "One of the challenges facing writers of fiction in Jamaica is that the majority of the publishers, approximately 95 per cent, are publishers of academic material. That means, if you are a fiction writer, your chances of being published via the traditional route are very limited. Tanya Batson-Savage, author of a collection of Jamaican

children's stories, *Pumpkin Belly and Other Stories*, chose to self-publish in 2005, after realising just that. Not only were there few publishers of fiction locally, there were even fewer such publishers who were willing to take on a collection of children's stories.[23]" In the same way, some authors prefer to opt for self-publishing so that they can have more control over the creative and financial process, but can also gain higher visibility, particular when they wish to reach audiences outside the region, as short-run printing is usually favored by independent publishers[24]. Be that as it may, if the logic of globalization continues to hold sway in mainstream literary circulation in the Greater Caribbean as in most regions of the world, examples of transnational or "minor" publishing, that is mostly represented by small presses, do offer alternative models to mass channels of cultural transfer.

### 4.2. … to unpredictable solidarities

As has been argued throughout this article, *Isla Negra Editores* fosters a collaborative approach to give access and visibility to new, emerging voices as well as to forgotten or denigrated texts. To do so, the publisher has not only maintained close relationships with local or regional partners, such as *Editora Buho*, based in Santo Domingo, or *Ediciones Unión*, based in La Habana, they also have established and developed rather unexpected partnerships throughout the world. To a certain extent, *Isla Negra Editores* has acted as a focal point for transN/Lational publishing in and for the Greater Caribbean. As a matter of fact, Gómez Beras sold translation rights[25] for two books by a Puerto Rican writer to a Croatian publisher during his participation in the Frankfurt book fair in 2011 and 2014, and decided to incorporate non Caribbean literature into his catalogue. A collection of poems by László Deák, translated into Spanish as *A media voz, poesías escogidas* by María Teresa Reyes and Georges Ferdinandy, thus offers to the Hispanophone Caribbean reader a bilingual volume through which they can familiarize themselves with the work of the Hungarian poet. One poem in particular, *Homenaje a Mark Twain/Hommage à Mark Twain*, illustrates how canonical texts by an author such

[23] Roache, A. (2016, October 30). Local writers self-publish to crack industry barrier. *The Jamaica Observer*. Retrieved October 30 2016, from http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/business/Local-writers-self-publish-to-crack-industry-barrier_7592263

[24] Stefan Antonmattei (*Temporadas: una novela en tweets*, *Seasons: a Life in Tweets*, 2013), with whom I conducted an interview on September 16th 2016, chose self-publishing so that he could address both Anglophone and Hispanophone audiences, in the region as well as overseas. Similarly, Pedro Antonio Valdez notes that the publishing process in the Dominican Republic generally entails for an aspiring author to possess skills often required for a self-publishing author: "El autor dominicano suele ser además corrector de estilo, vendedor, distribuidor "A consignación" entre las librerías, mercadólogo y relacionista público de sí mismo. Es cierto que esto le permite tener un poder especial sobre el destino de sus obras. Pero se trata de un poder extraño, atípico, usurpado por necesidad." (Valdez, 2004, pp. 107-108)

[25] "A raíz de su participación en la Feria del Libro de Frankfurt, Isla Negra logra la venta de los derechos de autor al croata de dos libros de su catálogo, ambos por el fenecido académico y escritor puertorriqueño Juan Antonio Rodríguez Pagán, *El otro lado de El público de Lorca* y *Así que pasen 5 años: una propuesta surrealista de Lorca*, con los ánimos de la colega editora Sanja Janusic." (Serrata, 2016, p. 5)

as Twain may circulate in minor spaces of literary circulation without mediation by a cultural center:

Homenaje a Mark Twain

Todos quedamos perplejos

si se trata de ellos: Tom, Huck,

Y Becky Thatcher.

Estamos confusos sin excepción.

Reaparece el Río, las aventuras,

pero no recuerdo

¿cómo fue exactamente?

Tú quedaste me fui yo

¿o fue al revés?

¿Dónde escondimos las canicas?

Entonces, sí, hicimos promesas,

ya las hemos olvidado completamente.

Quedó el fino hilo de un sonido

entre la risa y el llanto,

el arrullo del Sur, polvoriento, adormecedor

y la incertidumbre dolorosa

en el horizonte sin fronteras, al viento.

(Reyes and Ferdinandy, 2004, p. 12)

Hommage à Mark Twain

Mind szemlesütve állunk,

ha szóbakerülnek: Tom, Huck,

és Becky Thatcher.

Zavarba jövünk mindannyian

Felrémlik a Folyó, a kalandok,

de nem emlékszem,

hogy is volt pontasan?

Te maradtál, én jöttem el,

vagy éppen fordítva?

Hová rejtettak az üveggolyókat?

Akkor, igen, megfogadtuk –

elfeledtük azóta egészen.

Megmaradt a vékonyka hang

Sirás-nevetés határán,

az álmos, poros dél ringatása,

és a szívrepesztö bizonytalansäg

a lezáratlan, levegös horizonton.

(Deák, 2004, p. 13)

The role of the translators is acknowledged on the back cover of the book as that of facilitating agents who bring Eastern European literature to Caribbean readers[26]; it could even be argued that they are given pride of place in this bilingual edition, since the Spanish version is placed on the left hand side of the original, as if suggesting new modes of reading, in which the translation would not necessarily be considered as a derivative of the source text. All the same, others could interpret this type of reversed chronology

[26] "A través de esta excelente traducción de María Teresa Reyes y Georges Ferdinandy – este último, uno de los narradores húngaros más celebrados – accedemos a unas de las tradiciones literarias más ricas e interesantes de la Europa Oriental." (Martínez-Márquez, in Deák, 2004)

between source and target texts as purely pragmatic, concerned as the publisher might be to ensure the reader's immediate access to the Spanish version. Be that as it may, the poem still highlights a logic of literary circulation that takes up canonical texts and offers a hybrid reading of its reception in spaces considered as minor literary markets, illustrating what Lionnet and Shih define as "[t]he transnational, [which] can be conceived as a space of exchange and participation wherever processes of hybridization occur and where it is still possible for cultures to be produced and performed without necessary mediation by the center." (Lionnet and Shih, 2005, p. 5). Those examples of unpredicted and unmediated expressions of solidarity between the Caribbean and peripheral spaces of cultural diffusion from Europe attest to forms of possible cultural transversalism in international literary circulation.

### 4.3. Towards new coordinates for archipelagic modes of literary circulation?

In his *Poétique de la Relation*, Edouard Glissant notes the baroque nature of Caribbean identity, highlighting its erratic, non-linear movements: "[l']art baroque fait appel au contournement, à la prolifération, à la redondance d'espace, à ce qui bafoue l'unicité prétendue d'un connu et d'un connaissant, à ce qui exalte la quantité reprise infiniment, la totalité à l'infini recommencée." (Glissant, 1990, p. 92). In a similar vein, the epigraph opening this article attempted to introduce a space of reflection that foregrounds erring and *errance*[27], understood here as the refusal of a set norm of literary circulation or standard forms of canonization, to potentially generate new cartographies of literary circuits within the Greater Caribbean as well as without.

Eduardo Lalo's collection of texts compiled in *La isla silente* refer, for many of them, to "specific[28]" locations that yet blur exact geographical coordinates, whilst referring to known or easily identifiable spots on the map of the world. Such is the case of "La Rochelle", from *Libro de textos*, in which the author redefines topographical realities, resituating them in space and time, beyond their historical and linguistic heritage to (re)connect them, instead, with other cities (or perhaps constellations) that celebrate life and the immediacy of the "verbal" rather than the temporality of the "written down" or the "inscribed":

> Un primer significado: un puertorriqueño en La Rochelle es ubicarse lejos de lo conocido. Es no estar en ningún sitio, por estar en un punto que podría ser cualquier otro del mapa. […]
>
> Miro las luces de San Juan, una a una, simultáneamente. La ciudad no tiene historia, está viva. San Juan, un nombre, un punto en el mapa, podría llamarse así, quedar aquí o no. Es ésta la guerra entre historia y vida, porque todo el universo podría expresarse con decir La Rochelle. (Lalo, 2002, p. 111-112)

[27] "*Le langage tel que le conçoit Glissant offre la possibilité de cette errance qui, au terme du parcours, permet le retour vers une langue réappropriée, langue redevenue celle du fils par le détour vers son irréductible étrangeté. Cette langue dépossédée du poids de ses terreurs ataviques, riche de toutes les ruses assimilées, est seule capable de porter l'immense chant du monde*." (Gauvin, 1999, p. 280)

[28] Once again, the term is thought of in terms of Relation here, as defined by Peter Hallward (Hallward, 2001, p. xii).

Similarly, Gómez Beras disrupts a traditional use of paratextual elements in his own poetry by privileging a relational understanding of writing and publishing Caribbean literature. On the inside flap of the dust jacket to *Errata de fe*, the poet is thus presented as being both born in the Dominican Republic and (re)born in Puerto Rico[29], whilst both this collection of poems and his former one, *Mapa al corazón del hombre*, initiate new methods of reading conventional glossaries. Gómez Beras offers in fact "glosario[s] de afectos" at the end of both collections, where he dedicates some of his poems to various persons, all addressed on a first-name basis, as if suggesting new coordinates of intimacy far removed from the usual impersonal list of terms expected in a glossary.

## 5. By means of an "erring" conclusion…

Some may read in such a remapping of publishing practices a desire to express one's gratitude to esteemed collaborators and a certain sense of comradeship, whilst others may see it as poetic vision, a space of enunciation where both the otherworldliness of literary creations and the mundanity of publishing realities converge to ultimately create new cartographies of cultural exchanges. Regardless of how the reader chooses to interpret such practices, *Isla Negra Editores* remains a unique case study in the vast panorama of literary circulation in and for the Greater Caribbean. The publisher's catalogue testifies to a long-term commitment to lending visibility and voice to previously silenced or unseen authors, as well as to reaching pan-Caribbean readers (although, one could contend, mostly of a Hispanophone background). New canons therefore emerge against the tide of mainstream literary circuits, whilst new and ancient cannibals alike return from their wayward, erring journeys to continue disrupting the winds of westward meridians.

[29] "Carlos Roberto Gómez Beras nació en República Dominica (1959) y (re)nació en Puerto Rico (1964)." (Gómez Beras, 2016)

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