

Carlo A. Cubero, *Caribbean Island Movements: Culebra's Transinsularities*. Lanham MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 2017. 184 pp. (Paper US\$ 41.95)

A rule of thumb for book reviewers is to focus on the book, not the author. In the case of Carlo A. Cubero's *Caribbean Island Movements: Culebra's Transinsularities*, it's hard to separate the two. Largely built from field observations on the small and sparsely populated island of Culebra, a municipality of his native Puerto Rico, it fails to provide noteworthy insight into Caribbean social movements. Intertwining news reports, historical highlights, and scholarship gleaned from prominent theoreticians, Cubero attempts to assess the active role of "mestizaje" or "hybridization" within contemporary Caribbean social histories, utilizing Culebra as an illustration.

This book, consisting of five chapters and a conclusion, is organized in three sections that complement each other but are not intricately connected. The first describes local political history; the second and third deal with documentary films that Cubero made as a graduate student. Intensely personal, these film projects encapsulate his theoretical objectives. After filming along coastlines and interpreting the cultural production of two highly mobile musical bands, he posits that the musical identity of Culebra is "the product of fusions, creolisms, transculturations and hybridities" (p. 133). This mirrors his interpretation of Culebra's socioeconomic distinctiveness as both insular and outward leaning within a wider seascape of Caribbean islands. However, this apparent opposition could be shared within any social entity and is a central feature of Caribbean scholarship, underlying migratory patterns of interregional and international immigration.

While appropriating theoretical studies of Caribbean creolization, significantly those of Antonio Rojo Benítez, Cubero adds his newly coined term—transinsularities—to capture the internal and external movement of people that permeates Caribbean life. Helpful to understanding internal and external alliances that permeate Caribbean social movements is his retelling of the history of U.S. military bases in Puerto Rico that, perhaps inevitably, encroached on Culebra in 1941 by ordinance of Franklin D. Roosevelt at a time of expanded international warfare. Culebra became a practice range whose naval maneuvers spread environmental destruction, stunted the local fishing industry, and wrought havoc on a population increasingly dependent on policies developed on the U.S. mainland with the larger Puerto Rican island's development practices in mind. Cubero's narrative is, however, highly personal, and at times prejudiced. Framed by anecdotes gleaned while he resided temporarily on the island and fished off its reefs, the book focuses on popular lore and personality politics even as he offers valuable overviews of the naval campaigns that grew

in scope and included international players. There are significant instances in which Cubero downplays the vital role of Puerto Rican islanders and its diaspora in mobilizing against the U.S. naval occupation and bombardment of the island. For example, he fails to mention the important role of the late Rubén Berrios who, as President of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, was jailed along with scores of other Puerto Rican activists for aiding Culebra's popular civil disobedience movement (which I witnessed first-hand) during the 1971 antimilitary mobilization that ended naval exercises on Culebra and led to their relocation to Vieques where another broad-based protest movement would prove successful in subsequent years.

Cubero is focused on presenting local confrontations more than on preserving the environment, developing tourism, and sustaining a viable fishing economy. While describing Culebra's mobile population, he fails to present relevant data—census material, governmental reports, maritime or mercantile trending—to substantiate the validity of his claims that the Virgin Islands inform Culebra's "transinsular" identity. Even more worrisome is his apparently biased reference to Puerto Rico as a "putative continent" (p. 90). One might easily find it questionable that he omits concise internal citations and mention of salient studies on Culebra, particularly Guillermo Iranzo Berrocal's doctoral dissertation (1995) and the works of Puerto Rican scholars Carmelo Delgado Cintrón (1989) and Ramón Feliciano Encarnación (2009). These formidable studies, written in Spanish, reconstruct the struggle between a strong metropolitan power and its subjugated island colonies. Their absence in the index leads to difficulties in determining the actual depths of Cubero's observations. *Caribbean Island Movements* is, thus, a flawed attempt to create an account of an impressive island history. This experiential rendering of an island's relationship to the sea would have benefited from textual refinement and ample internal reorganization. The effects of natural disasters, immigration policies, and economic trends are endemic to studies of Puerto Rico and its municipalities, including Culebra and Vieques. I am hopeful that Cubero's book will inspire richer and more well organized research that will lead to a deeper understanding of the rich creative patterns of Caribbean life.

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