

BOOK REVIEW

Terza A. Silva Lima-Neves and Aminah N. Fernandes Pilgrim, eds. *Cabo Verdean Women Writing Remembrance, Resistance, and Revolution: Kriolas Poderozas*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021. 261 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$39.00 Paper. ISBN: 9781793634917.

Named after an international biennial conference founded in 2015, the edited book *Cabo Verdean Women Writing Remembrance, Resistance, and Revolution: Kriolas Poderozas* weaves together a tapestry from a wide range of disciplinary, creative, and subjective perspectives of Cabo Verdean women. I do not choose the verb “to weave” lightly. In this case, it entails interlacing long threads of lived experience, artistic expression, and scholarly research. All these threads, soaked in the migratory diasporic history of Cape Verde, pass in different directions at a right angle to each other to produce a complex shared story. The editors have achieved this with skill, grace, and sensitivity.

The volume forges a collective and critical path forward and upward. It breaks through silences, denouncing violence, oppression, and objectification, and makes policy and political recommendations. It bridges knowledge gaps, embracing complexity and contradictions, and celebrating individuality and diversity. And above all, the volume builds an inter-generational and inclusive community to document and acclaim the manifold contributions of Cabo Verdean women to the public sphere. These include the fields of literature, poetry, music, cooking, religious festivals, academia, the liberation struggle, politics, and the nurturing of family through and beyond blood ties. The contributors tell their stories in their own unapologetically revelatory and emancipatory voices, “lifting as we climb” (Jess Évora, 203), to heal and celebrate the past, anticipating their future endeavors like pollen in the wind.

The figures of the mother and particularly of the grandmother stand out for several contributors, as the harbinger of the Kriola feminist consciousness encapsulated in the empowering term *Kriolas Poderozas*. The contributors’ ties to their ancestral homeland are made through a myriad of threads. Vera Duarte and Candida Rose offer an encyclopedic documentation of writers, musicians, and vocalists, calling for their long overdue recognition. Gina Sánchez Gibau explores the nonverbal bodily absorption of empirical data (“a theory in the flesh,” quoted in Jess Évora, 237) in her fieldwork on the

festival of San Djon, revealing intimate insider awareness of the sacrifices women make for the collective good. Dawna Thomas discusses the silence around gender-based violence as both an oppressive tool and survival strategy (of a woman who “replaced her lost innocence with wisdom” [GungaTavares, xiv]) which also creates space to include men in the conversation.

Roselma Évora warns against the universal category of women through her recognition that gender parity in political participation cannot ignore issues of class. Clemente Furtado advocates for joint responsibility through the National Care System between state, civil society, families, and the private sector, while Aleida Borges examines Cape Verde’s international reputation for good governance in the light of the disconnect between the state and its citizens.

A thread by Shauna Barbosa highlights the importance of offering expression through poetry for women whose mother tongue was silence, or who, as Iva Brito states, carry the world on their backs and are powerful and beautiful because they choose their own paths: “é Ele ki ta desidi Se Kaminhu” (Rosilda James, Aminah Pilgrim, and Stephanie Andrade, 147). The Kriola Poderosa stands “firmly on all continents” (147) “grounded in her roots” (Iva Brito, 143). She weaves together the disconnects, discussed by Callie Liu, between ethnicity and racial categorizations. Kriola women also engage in broadening the scope of “womxnhood” (Idalina Pina, 203) through the creation of safe LGBTQI+ digital Kriola spaces. Anna Lima brings to light the significance of human connections from the past through a discussion of family history and genealogy. An extra thread is added here by Ayana Pilgrim-Brown in her discussion of occupational ancestry as a form of individual and collective self-discovery.

An equally important thread is the reclaiming of the private sphere of cooking (too easily devalued as women enter the public sphere) as a spiritually embodied practice. Elizabette Andrade considers how its power to heal is imbued with respectful memory of ancestral endurance of cyclical famines. A new angle on the concept of resilience, “the ability to create magic where none exists” (Stephanie Andrade, 209) weaves into Ivette Monteiro’s personal testimony of experiencing the power of the organization Student Ambassadors Bonded Under Recreation and Achievement (SABURA, which also signifies fun in Kriolo), to provide culturally tailored education programs for Cape Verdean students in Brockton.

Edna DaCosta’s reflections on her mother’s journey, as the author realizes her own personal dream of becoming a police officer, illustrates how these threads pass in different directions to broaden Kriola horizons. DaCosta discusses her experience in the light of the famous line by the Spanish poet António Machado, “Caminante no hay camino se hace el camino al andar (Traveller there is no road, one makes the road walking)” (216). This forging of a Kriola link with the human condition leads into the final threads of the volume. Terza Lima-Neves offers an oral history of the women’s activist Isaura Tavares Gomes which exudes wisdom on so many topics in joyful serenity despite and, perhaps through, the experience of

oppressive structures. The volume closes with a tender, confessional letter to Inez Santos Fernandes, the grandmother of Aminah Fernandes Pilgrim who lives on in her veins. As with all the other threads, it is impossible to treat the contents with due appreciation here. The letter, which is also critically and politically engaged, captures the spirit of this tapestry, which is not, in my opinion “too human for academia” (236). On the contrary, the letter paves a courageous path forward for a holistic integration of all the threads that make up the lives of Kriolas Poderosas.

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