## Contents

1. **Introduction** ............................................................................................................... 9
   1.1 Women’s Fiction of the Caribbean Diaspora .......................................................... 10
   1.2 In Search of Itself: Caribbean History and Migration ....................................... 15
   1.3 Theorizing Diaspora ............................................................................................... 24
   1.4 Bodies Matter ......................................................................................................... 32
   1.5 Outline ...................................................................................................................... 35

2. **Roots and Routes of Development** ................................................................. 41
   2.1 A Contested Genre ............................................................................................... 41
   2.2 Coming of Age as Literary Option of Decoloniality ............................................... 50
   2.3 A Fraught Period: Socialization and the Subject .................................................. 56
   2.4 The Coming-of-Age Novel: Form and Features .................................................... 59
      2.4.1 Genre Bending and Remembrance .............................................................. 60
      2.4.2 Language Use and Subversion ..................................................................... 61
      2.4.3 Narrative Structure and Perspective ............................................................ 63
      2.4.4 The *Kumbla* and the Collective Novel ...................................................... 66
      2.4.5 Migrating Plots and the Diasporic ............................................................... 70
      2.4.6 Adolescence, Aging, and Bodily Transformation ........................................ 73

3. **The Making and Remaking of the Body: Embodiment, Subjectivity, and Lived Experience** ................................................................. 77
   3.1 Whose Body Is This? ........................................................................................... 77
   3.2 Skin-deep, Gaze-alert: Theoretical Explorations of the Body ............................... 82
      3.2.1 Situating and Regulating the Embodied Subject ........................................... 83
      3.2.2 The Captive Body and Lived Experience ..................................................... 89
      3.2.3 Racialized Body Politics and Respectability ............................................... 92
   3.3 Beyond the Body as Text ......................................................................................... 95

4. **Erotic Power and Motherly Bodies in Makeda Silvera’s *The Heart Does Not Bend*** ........................................................................................................ 103
   4.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................... 103
   4.1.1 Jamaican History of Post-/Colonialism and Migration .................................... 105
   4.1.2 Black Canadian Feminist Thought ................................................................. 110
   4.2 *The Heart Does Not Bend*: Adolescence and Non-normative Sexuality ............ 114
   4.3 The Missing Body: Absent Motherhood and *Breasted* Existence ..................... 119
   4.4 The Matriarchal Body and Black Women’s Strength ........................................... 123
   4.5 Erotic Bodies ......................................................................................................... 129
   4.6 Sexual Citizenship and Respectability .................................................................. 133
   4.7 (Imperfect) Masculinities and Embodied Badness ............................................. 139
   4.8 Genre Transgression and Diasporic Journeys ..................................................... 143
   4.9 Concluding Remarks ............................................................................................ 149

5. **Dirty Skirts and the Other Body: Ramabai Espinet’s *The Swinging Bridge*** .................................................................................................................. 151
   5.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................... 151
   5.1.1 Creolization and *Douglarization* in Trinidad ............................................. 154
   5.1.2 *Kala Pani* Continuum: Indo-Caribbean Women’s Writing ............................ 164

7
## Contents

5.2  *The Swinging Bridge*: Nomadic Bodies and Routed Existence               171  
5.3  Dirty Skirts: Adolescence, Female Honor, and Respectability               175  
5.4  The Dougla Body and Representations of Racialized Identities             187  
5.5  Estrangement and Becoming the ‘Other’ in Canada                          198  
5.6  Gay Politics, Bodily Decay, and the Patriarchal Order                    202  
5.7  Historiography and the Diasporic Coming-of-Age Narrative                207  
5.8  Concluding Remarks                                                      214  

6.  Bodies in Pain: Edwidge Danticat’s *Breath, Eyes, Memory*                217  
6.1  Introduction                                                            217  
6.1.1 Ayiti and the Tenth Department in the Diaspora                         219  
6.1.2 Haitian Literature of the Diaspora                                     227  
6.2  *Breath, Eyes, Memory*: Terrorizing and Terrorized Bodies               230  
6.2.1 Social Conditions of Rape: The Cane Field as Site of Exceptional Violence 232  
6.2.2 Trauma and the Transgenerational Transmission of Pain                  236  
6.3  Body Shame: The ‘Cult of the Virgin’ and Racist Inscriptions            248  
6.4  Scarlet Birds: Flying Bodies, Vodou, and Transgression                  257  
6.5  Bodily Autonomy: Liberated and Healing Bodies                            264  
6.5.1 Healing through Dying                                                   264  
6.5.2 Survival through Confrontation                                          267  
6.6  The Coming-of-Age Genre and the Intimacy of Narration                   270  
6.7  Concluding Remarks                                                      275  

7.  Incarcerated Bodies: Angie Cruz’ *Soledad*                                  279  
7.1  Introduction                                                             279  
7.1.1 The Dominican Republic and Diaspora Formation                          281  
7.1.2 Dominican Literature of the Diaspora and the Latino/a Label            288  
7.2  *Soledad*: Sex Work and the Recolonization of the Body                   293  
7.3  Sleeping Beauty: The Incarcerated Body and Embodied Resistance           300  
7.4  Que viva la Naturaleza: The Naked Body as Weapon                         310  
7.5  In Solitude? Between Assimilation and Ethnic ‘Dissociation’              314  
7.6  Muy Macho: Hegemonic Masculinities and Gender Trouble                   321  
7.6.1 Socialization in the Streets                                            322  
7.6.2 Provider and Sexual Prowess                                             325  
7.6.3 Disenfranchised Masculinity                                            330  
7.6.4 A Quest for Fatherhood?                                                 331  
7.7  Coming of Age and the Un-/becoming of the Subject                       335  
7.8  Concluding Remarks                                                      342  

8.  Conclusion: Body Politics and Political Writing                            345  
8.1  Unruly Bodies, Disobedient Subjects                                      345  
8.2  Writing is Political                                                     350  

Bibliography                                                                 357