embarrassment of riches is just that broad. I can only say to those in the publishing world who continue to think of the Caribbean as little more than a tourist playground and queer life as too fringe to be of interest to readers, "Shame on you." In myriad and multiple forms, Our Caribbean's thirty-seven contributors (representing the Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Panama, Puerto Rico, St. Vincent, St. Kitts, Suriname, and Trinidad) give resounding voice to the often-invisible Caribbean experience and the often silenced queer experience within it, giving purchase to William Carlos Williams's assertion that the local is universal.

Many of the authors in this volume are actually writing from outside the Caribbean, whether from the vantage point of migration or exile. A common theme among their pieces is a longing for home. In her essay "We Came All the Way from Cuba So You Could Dress Like This?", Achy Obejas writes with complexity and humor about her opportunistic father's refusal to let her return to their homeland. The narrator of R. Erica Doyle's charming Brooklyn-based story, "Taste Merle," is connected to Trinidad through language and food. Anton Nimblett's, "Time and Tide," concerns the quest for "home" (also Trinidad) as a center for the narrator to make sense of his messy life after a car accident in New York frightens him into questioning his choices. "[H]ome was a far way off, a place I had never seen but knew well out of my mother's mouth," laments Audre Lorde for Grenada in an excerpt from her famous biomythography, Zami: A New Spelling of My Name (1982). These are among the collection's most poignant offerings in their acute expression of displacement and yearning.

Shani Mootoo, of East Indian descent, richly describes Trinidad's multiculturalism in her colorful story, "Out on Main Street." Frustrated with the clerk at the Indian sweetshop who has snubbed her for not knowing the right name for kooma, the narrator says to her girlfriend,

"Cultural bastards, Janet, cultural bastards. Dat is what we is. Yuh know, one time a fella from India who living up here call me a bastardized Indian because I didn't know Hindi. And now look at dis, nah! De thing is: all a we in Trinidad is cultural bastards, Janet, all a we. Toutes bagailes! Chinese people, Black people, White people, Syrian, Lebanese. I looking forward to de day I find out dat place inside me where I am nothing else but Trinidadian, whatever dat could turn out to be."

Mootoo's story is not the only one in Our Caribbean to use "nonstandard" English to beautiful effect. The many patois, pidgin, creole, and dialect forms of English throughout the book are a big part of what
makes it special. Other selections are translated into English from Spanish, Dutch, or creole languages for the first time.

Another highlight is Reinaldo Arenas's rapturously erotic recounting of homosexual life in 1960s Cuba. His memoir, taken from Before Night Falls (1992), is no less earnestly political than many of the others in the anthology, but it somehow manages to be the most fun. Arenas's writing has a refreshing sense of play. Even as he testifies to the persecutions, concentration camps, punitive laws, and pathologizing forces meant to snuff gays from the country, he celebrates the pleasure of being taboo:

Many of the young men who marched in Revolutionary Square applauding Fidel Castro, and many of the soldiers who marched, rifle in hand and with martial expressions, came to our rooms after the parades to cuddle up naked and show their real selves, sometimes revealing a tenderness and true enjoyment such as I have not been able to find again anywhere else in the world. Perhaps deep down they realized they were breaking into the realm of the forbidden, the dangerous, and the damned. Perhaps that is the reason why, when that moment came, they showed such fullness, such radiance, and enjoyed every instant in the awareness that it might be their last, that it could cost them many years in jail.

Other contributions to the book dream of a time when same-gender loving couples may walk hand in hand in public without fear of violence, exile, imprisonment, or death. In "Independence Day Letter," perhaps the book's most effectively heartbreaking piece, Helen Klonaris appeals for acceptance and love. "I am angry because I live in exile in this, my own country." The letter was originally published in the Nassau Daily Tribune as an open letter to the Bahamian community. Several of the female authors here make similar appeals for recognition and visibility in communities that insist lesbians do not exist. Mabel Cuesta's hopeful essay, on the other hand, depicts what she perceives to be a more relaxed attitude toward homosexuality in today's Cuba after chronicling the witch hunts of the 1980s. Cuesta sees promise in the local effort to help her and her partner build their home. Wesley E. A. Crichlow modeled his essay, "History, (Re) Memory, Testimony, and Biomythography: Charting a Buller Man's Trinidadian Past," on the genre of biomythography invented by Audre Lorde in order to chart the repression and oppression of his closeted youth. He positions his writing as an engine of social change, urging readers to consider the ways in which they might be complicit with his story and to take an ethical stance on heterosexism.

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Glave rightly describes the inequalities suffered by gays and lesbians in the Caribbean as basic human rights issues. His activist leanings as cofounder of J-FLAG (Jamaican Forum for Lesbians All-Sexuals and Gays) are on display in his urgent address, as are Lawson Williams's in the essay, "On Homophobia and Gay Rights Activism in Jamaica," which concludes the book. Both men describe the entrenched vitriolic homophobia that brought them to court in order to challenge the Offences Against the Person Act, a Jamaican law part of which prohibits the "abominable crime of buggery" (anal intercourse), an act punishable by imprisonment and hard labor. "Boom-bye-by in a battybwoy head, rudebwoy nah promote de nasty man, dem haffi dead," Buju Banton sang in his hit 1990s dancehall song, essentially expressing that "faggots should be killed." As a reflection of just how dangerous it is to be openly gay in Jamaica, it's of note that Lawson Williams's name is a pseudonym and that J-FLAG's Kingston headquarters address remains unlisted.

You don't have to be gay, lesbian, or Caribbean (this reviewer fits none of those categories) to appreciate this anthology, though it is certainly a seminal contribution to the fields of Caribbean literature and gay and lesbian studies. Most of its contents are worth reading for the drama, sensitivity, and complexity required of such identities. The conversation has begun. I hope this broadminded anthology has set a precedent for even more finely tuned approaches to the queer Caribbean theme, and I applaud Thomas Glave for his dream: "If it is impossible to know how many people might steer clear of this collection because of its subject matter, we know that it is simultaneously possible to dream, in the most lustrous colors imaginable, of all those who will be drawn to these pages precisely because of their contents."

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