Book Reviews


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*Transatlantic Topographies* weaves together three themes that have enjoyed increasing currency in recent scholarship: travel, colonialism, and space. Ileana Rodríguez surveys representations of American (specifically Caribbean and Central and South American) space from the colonial era to the present. She draws upon a range of sources, including the writings of the earliest European voyagers to the Americas, later travel narratives, contemporary fiction, and tourism literature. Her aim is to document successive transformations in the discursive rendering of American space, from visions of wilderness to pastoral landscapes to vistas of adventure and exploration to prospects of economic development. Her account foregrounds the role of incomprehension and misunderstanding – the confusion generated by the proliferation of unfamiliar geographies, peoples, and languages. The encounter with America, she argues, precipitated the breakdown and reinvention of existing European forms of knowledge and played an indispensable role in producing the contemporary configuration of academic disciplines, a development that she sees as inextricably linked to histories of violent conquest, economic exploitation, and the dispossession and genocide of native peoples.

Rodriguez focuses on three geographical sites – the Caribbean islands, the coast of mainland Central America, and the Amazon region – and spans the period from Columbus’s landfall in 1492 to the present. In doing so, she seeks to address what she takes to be two of the most conspicuous blindspots of previous scholarship. The first is the close relationship between aesthetic and scientific discourses on American “nature” on the one hand and the entrepreneurial appropriation of that same nature as a source of economic profit on the other. The second concerns the role played by native popula-
tions in the history of colonialism and its aftermath. She begins by examining the representation of the Caribbean islands via the trope of Paradise in the accounts of Columbus and his successors. She then goes on to consider its transformation into the contrasting figure of Inferno by the end of the nineteenth century, when descriptions of the region, alongside accounts of local customs, focus on such factors as soil erosion, agricultural production, land tenure and the organization of labor. These developments are linked both to the ending of slavery and to the emergence of a heterogeneous and multiethnic Creole society, with an identity distinct from that of the European colonizing power.

The second part of the book considers the encounter between the Spanish conquistadores and the Mayan civilization of highland Central America. Rodríguez considers the linguistic and hermeneutic confusion engendered by this confrontation and the ways in which the conquest itself entailed the forcible remaking of social space, including the attempt to gather hitherto scattered populations under new centers of political authority. She speculates too on the elusive presence in this history of the indigenous population itself, people who are glimpsed fleetingly in the documents produced by their Spanish conquerors as well as in the conjectural reconstructions of their languages and cultures produced by latter-day anthropologists. Colonial-era documents and later anthropological accounts are also juxtaposed with the descriptions of nineteenth-century geographers and naturalists, whose writings employ an objectifying rhetoric of quantification and measurement with the avowed aim of addressing the inaccuracies of earlier accounts. Here the principal economic considerations include transport and trade, while the indigenous and mestizo populations of the area are grouped together as potential impediments to economic progress.

The book’s final section takes as its geographical site the Amazon and is concerned with the imagination of jungle as it is seen to intertwine notions of wilderness, cultivation, and economic development. Jungle is understood as standing for an irreducible excess marking not only the limits of understanding and representation but also the frustration of entrepreneurial schemes by a landscape that remains stubbornly ungraspable in its seeming disorderliness and prodigality. The range of sources discussed here is particularly wide, stretching from the accounts of the first Europeans to visit the region, via colonial-era travelogues and natural histories to the twentieth-century fictions of Carpentier, Vargas Llosa, and Harris and the films of Herzog. Rodríguez argues that the confrontation between America’s peoples and landscapes on the one hand and European colonial powers on the other has permeated all aspects of cultural production in both Europe and America and that the interplay between resistance and appropriation that has marked that confrontation continues to manifest itself to the present.
Rodriguez’s central thesis is powerfully stated and abundantly documented. Less convincing is the sharp distinction she draws between the intellectual and political agendas of “colonial” and “postcolonial” scholarship, the former understood as preoccupied with continuities between Europe and America (and with a tacitly providentialist interpretation of the Conquest itself as a foundational moment in the history of modern science), the latter seen as challenging such a view by exposing the underlying rationale of the colonial enterprise as one of economic exploitation and the violent expropriation of native lands and labor. Not only does such a contrast oversimplify the concerns of scholars in both categories, it also risks reproducing a similarly teleological account of the transition from colonial to postcolonial modes of research and writing, whereby the postcolonial present is affirmed and celebrated for moving beyond and rectifying errors of the colonial past. Such an account seems insufficiently mindful, however, of the tenacity of colonial forms of knowledge and thus the possibility that postcolonial scholarship itself might manifest unwitting complicity with what it purports to criticize.

This aside, Transatlantic Topographies is an engaging and valuable contribution both to a now extensive body of scholarship on the European conquest of the Americas and its cultural ramifications and to a burgeoning cross-disciplinary literature on the intersections between histories of modernity, power, and space. Its arguments are likely to be of interest not only to literary scholars, but also to anthropologists, cultural geographers, and historians.


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In recent years, the field of “Atlantic history” has grown like Topsy. Indeed, to paraphrase Richard Nixon, we are (almost) all Atlanticists now – for better or worse. Although definitions of the field vary, Atlantic history, at a minimum, suggests that during the early modern period Western Europe, West Africa,
and the Americas were sufficiently integrated to be treated as a single unit of analysis. Accordingly, rather than studying phenomena in one or another of these geographical areas, or analyzing phenomena in one or another colonial system, the current generation of students and scholars increasingly looks for extensions and connections, and focuses its attention on imperial breaches and interstices. Older, narrower approaches, it seems, just won’t do.

With the above considerations in mind, it is not surprising – indeed, it is predictable – that this exciting new collection edited by Eligia Gould and Peter Onuf would be marketed as a work of Atlantic or, more precisely, “transatlantic” history. Marketing claims must always be taken with a grain of salt, of course, and today we are all media-savvy enough to realize this. Still, it should be pointed out for the record that only about a third of the fifteen essays included in Empire and Nation employ what might legitimately be styled an “Atlantic” or “transatlantic” approach. The others approach early modern history more conventionally, which in my view doesn’t hurt them a bit.

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Empire and Nation begins with a short, but valuable introduction by the editors, wherein the volume’s principal themes are laid out and its essays summarized and contextualized. This is followed by three parts: “Reconstituting the Empire,” “Society, Politics and Culture in the New Nation,” and “The American Revolution and the Atlantic World.”

The five essays in Part One deal largely with the types of political and constitutional questions one associates with the editors. Indeed, the first is by Gould himself, who offers a thoughtful reinterpretation of the manner in which post-1763 shifts in British imperial policy, particularly the need to enhance the center’s power throughout the empire, upset the existing political equilibrium in the American colonies, eventually leading thirteen of them into revolt. Two fine essays by David C. Hendrickson and Don Higginbotham demonstrate among other things that nationalism and a sense of nationhood came about only slowly after the break with Britain. Not until 1787 can it be said that the “united States” (as the new entity was often identified during the Revolution) began to turn into the United States. This section is rounded out by Richard Alan Ryerson’s thoughtful essay on the evolution of John Adams’s constitutional thought (in which Ryerson refers to Adams as a republican monarchist) and a piece by Ellen Holmes Pearson on the manner in which the English common law was adapted, modified, and republicanized in the United States during the early national period.

The six essays included in the society-politics-culture portmanteau that is Part Two are all interesting, even if there is little conceptual unity to the grouping. Mary M. Schweitzer explores why the inhabitants of the Great Valley of the Appalachians split on the Constitution (those in the north being anti-ratification, and those in the south pro-ratification), while Steve Sarson makes a compelling and empirically rich case that the “Tobacco South” (or at least Prince George’s County, Maryland) was characterized rather more by
continuity than discontinuity across the revolutionary divide. Sarson’s essay is followed by four valuable essays on politics, broadly conceived to include such topics as the development of civil society and the role of denominationalism in regime building, in the early national period by Maurice J. Bric, Melvin Yazawa, Marc Harris, and Robert M. Calhoon. Given my opening comments, it should be noted that Bric’s insightful essay on the ways in which “new immigrants” from Ireland opened up political life in postrevolutionary Philadelphia borders dangerously close to Atlantic history!

In Part Three the volume, at long last, really does move into the realm of Atlantic history per se. The section opens with Keith Mason’s fresh look at the Loyalist diaspora between 1774 and 1784, followed by an essay in which James Sidbury creatively employs early slave narratives to try to get a sense of how Black Anglophone writers thought about and articulated their place in the market culture of the Atlantic world. It concludes with Edward L. Cox’s brisk survey on the ways in which the American, French, and Haitian revolutions affected the British Caribbean, and a provocative essay in which Trevor Burnard argues, counterintuitively, that the American Revolution set back the cause of freedom in America, while advancing it in the British Empire.

Obviously, a review of this length can only begin to hint at the purview, much less the value of the essays included in Empire and Nation. Although most of them do not fit comfortably under the Atlantic or transatlantic history rubric, there is not a clunker in the bunch. At the end of the day, that matters a lot more than marketing hype.


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Michael A. Gomez has established himself as one of the premier scholars in the field of African Diaspora studies, not only as the author of such critically acclaimed books as Exchanging Our Country Marks and Black Crescent, but also as the founder and president of the Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora (ASWAD). As such, few people are as quali-
fied as Gomez to write a general history of the African diaspora. *Reversing Sail* is not the lengthy, in-depth study that some might expect. Rather, it is a 236-page interpretive overview of the African diaspora, aimed primarily at the undergraduate classroom.

The book is divided into two parts. In Part One, “‘Old’ World Dimensions,” Gomez highlights the contributions of Africans and their descendants in the ancient histories of Africa, Europe, and the Middle East, noting that Africans were “not always under the heel but were in fact at the forefront of human civilization” (p. 8). Chapter 1, “Antiquity,” is a discussion of Africans in Egypt, Nubia, Greece, and Rome. Chapter 2, “Africans and the Bible,” considers the historical role of Africans in the Bible, as well as the influence of the Bible on post-Biblical Africans in the diaspora. Chapter 3, “Africans and the Islamic World,” concentrates on the role of Africans in the formation and spread of Islam between roughly 600 and 1500 CE.

Much of Part One seems torn between a desire to note the various contributions of African-descended peoples and the desire to bring new interpretive perspectives to their histories. The “contributionist” aspects of these chapters make for difficult reading, and they sometimes devolve into little more than lists of individuals’ names. For example, Gomez highlights individual Egyptians and Nubians mentioned in the Bible (p. 20), pilgrims and scholars in the Islamic world (pp. 34-35), and African-descended people in the Prophet Mohammed’s immediate circle of influence (pp. 46-47). Here, Gomez seems more concerned with “proving” African contributions to history and “civilization” than with charting new interpretive ground.

When Gomez turns his attentions away from individuals toward groups, he can be brilliantly provocative. For example, after emphasizing the social and cultural connections between Hebrews and Egyptians during the Hebrews’ 400-year sojourn in Egypt, he describes the Exodus as “not unlike the human birthing process, the crossing of the Red Sea a movement through the amniotic fluids of an African mother” (p. 19). Here, using the Bible as his source, Gomez stakes a claim to an African heritage for all of Judeo-Christian civilization. Similarly, his discussion of Ethiopian Jews, or Beta Israel, raises intriguing questions about the interconnectedness of the Jewish and African pasts. Alienated from the Jewish homeland during the ancient period, the Beta Israel settled in the mountains of Ethiopia and were only repatriated to Israel in the 1980s. Though Gomez does not have the space to fully explore the implications of Jewish and African connections, implicit in his discussion is an awareness of overlapping diasporas, a topic that scholars have only scarcely begun to address.

Part Two of the book, “‘New’ World Realities,” consists of five chapters concentrating on the history of Afro-Atlantic peoples from 1500 CE to the present day. Chapter 4, “The Transatlantic Moment,” summarizes the contours of the transatlantic slave trade. Chapter 5, “Enslavement,” compares and
contrasts the various experiences under slavery in the Americas. The sixth chapter, “Asserting the Right to Be,” discusses the ways in which Africans and their descendants resisted their enslavement and attempted to claim their freedom in postemancipation societies. Chapter 7, “Reconnecting,” considers migration, Black labor movements, and the renewal of social and cultural connections to Africa in the first half of the twentieth century. Finally, Chapter 8, “Movement Peoples,” concentrates on anticolonial and civil rights movements, as well as the music, sports, and literature of the second half of the twentieth century.

Though tantalizingly brief, many of the insights in Part Two are even more provocative than those in Part One. For example, in his examination of runaway slave communities in the Americas, Gomez reminds us that because of the north/south divide in the United States, unlike any other place in the Americas, the enslaved in the United States had the opportunity to run to freedom, joining free Black communities in the north. This startlingly simple insight raises important questions about the meaning of “runaway community,” the comparative meanings of “freedom,” and so on. Gomez is also not afraid to challenge some of the sacrosanct assumptions of African American history. In his treatment of the Harlem Renaissance, Gomez asks, “How representative of the black masses was the cultural work of a small Black elite?” (p. 184). Though such an inquiry may seem divisive, Gomez is committed to revealing the impacts of diaspora history on precisely those “Black masses.” His rendering of the disputes between W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey, while rightly pointing out the personal animus between the two men, emphasizes that both placed similar value on diaspora concerns. Gomez concludes that “the tempestuous reality of Du Bois and Garvey as pan-Africanist pioneers was symbolically reconciled on African soil under Kwame Nkrumah [who] was directly inspired by both men” (p. 179). Here, the ideas and life’s work of Du Bois and Garvey are realized in Ghana through an independence movement that freed the masses from colonial rule.

Overall, *Reversing Sail* is full of suggestive interpretive avenues. Unfortunately, Gomez is rarely able to pursue them to their logical ends. Nowhere is this more evident than in the book’s conclusion, a three-sentence epilogue that does little justice to the many intriguing questions raised in the text. In the end, the fundamental tension of the book is Gomez’s desire to be inclusive (in the way most textbooks are) and to be interpretive (in the way most monographic histories are). The attempt to cover the breadth and depth of the African diaspora, from antiquity to the present day, in only 200 pages (excluding index and bibliography) is ultimately overly ambitious. To that end, I am not convinced that *Reversing Sail* is an ideal undergraduate text. To my knowledge, few undergraduate instructors actually teach the history of the African diaspora on such a massive scale during the course of a single semester, and even fewer have the broad expertise to push their students on
many of the fertile conceptual challenges that Gomez raises. Still, it is these conceptual challenges that make *Reversing Sail* so beautifully frustrating and a must-read for anyone who thinks or teaches about the African diaspora. Here’s hoping that Gomez will continue building on the insights in *Reversing Sail* and provide us with a more thoroughgoing interpretive history of the African diaspora.


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The period after 1865 in Jamaica has been largely ignored by historians. In some ways, this is understandable. The years following emancipation in 1838 witnessed the transformation from slavery to freedom. Because the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1865 was a dramatic response to the problems of the postemancipation period, many historians have used it as an important marker in their work on the aftermath of emancipation. On the other hand, the 1930s were characterized by a series of labor disturbances that fundamentally altered the landscape of Jamaican and British Caribbean history. There have been important exceptions to this historiographical vacuum: for example, Patrick Bryan’s *The Jamaican People, 1880–1902* (1991). But in *Neither Led nor Driven*, Brian L. Moore and Michele A. Johnson have done far more than fill a gap. They have provided a highly significant interpretation of this period, concentrating on the cultural world of Afro-Jamaicans.

Moore and Johnson argue persuasively that Afro-Jamaican culture was “mainstream.” Moreover, the Jamaican people not only resisted British attempts to Anglicize their creole culture but also had an impact on the culture of the Jamaican elites. One significant example, they suggest, concerned the practice of Obeah. Although the authorities characterized this belief system as “uncivilized,” for the mass of Jamaican people obeah provided an important means of dealing with problems that affected their daily lives. Moore and Johnson write, “The preservation of [the people’s] traditional Afro-creole belief system
Further served to confirm their intention to determine for themselves what was culturally apposite and what was not. It was a positive assertion of cultural self-determination in the face of hostile pressure from above” (p. 46).

This was also the case with folk religions, and Moore and Johnson deal with the significance of Revival movements, Myal, and the Native Baptists for the Jamaican people. Herbal folk medicine was also an important part of creole culture. But for the elite in Jamaica, this aspect of folk religion was problematical. At one level, middle- and upper-class Jamaicans sought to distance themselves from anything associated with “barbarism.” At the same time, since the elite themselves made use of herbs and folk medicine, they were ambivalent on this issue. For Moore and Johnson, this was not the only area of ambivalence on the part of middle- and upper-class Jamaicans.

The book is particularly acute in dealing with issues of sex, marriage, and the family. It was in this area that Victorian values clashed with local practice, since Afro-Jamaican men and women often lived together informally, marrying only later in life. This meant that their children were “illegitimate,” a serious problem for Victorian Christian morality. Yet as Moore and Johnson point out, relationships among the Afro-Jamaican population were often stronger than those of their middle- and upper-class counterparts. Moreover, the Jamaican middle and upper class also participated in aspects of the creole culture that they criticized so heavily. There was, for example, a common pattern of “elite concubinage” in Jamaica, consisting of White men having Black partners outside marriage. Again, the Jamaican people were demonstrating their own cultural self-determination, while the elites were at best ambivalent about creole culture.

As Moore and Johnson suggest, there were continuing attempts to “civlize” the Blacks and alter existing Afro-creole practices. The Church was part of this civilizing mission, but education also had an important role. Indeed, education and Christianity were meant to help create a new Jamaica “in the wake of the ‘barbarism’ of Morant Bay” (p. 205). But there were problems, especially regarding education. In Jamaica, there was no compulsory education system until 1912, which meant that the overwhelming majority of Afro-Jamaicans were not exposed to a colonial education. The situation was even worse at the secondary level, where the high costs of schooling meant that this education was for the middle and upper class rather than the working class. There were also attempts to proselytize the immigrants from India and China, but Indians and Chinese often reacted with indifference and occasionally with hostility.

Even the cult of monarchy and empire, so sedulously pursued by the imperial authorities, was not all that it appeared. Moore and Johnson do well in describing the celebrations for the Queen’s official birthday as well as the ceremonies marking the Queen’s Jubilee and the coronations of her successors. But even in this area, the mass of Jamaicans accepted Queen Victoria largely
because they believed she was responsible for their freedom, not because of the efforts of local officials to convince them that it was their duty.

This is an important argument. It emphasizes the British attempts to reform Afro-Jamaican culture and the resistance of the Jamaican people in the face of this onslaught. It is true that some Afro-Jamaicans sought to make accommodations to European ideals, but most Jamaicans either ignored them or refused to engage with the authorities. Moore and Johnson are to be congratulated for their assiduous research in both local and metropolitan archives. The result is a finely researched and persuasively argued book that adds a new dimension to the historiography on Jamaica.

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“Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living” (Marx 1978:595).

Marx’s sentiments, though uninvoked in Brodber’s text, nonetheless shadow her analysis of Jamaican men (mostly) born at the turn of the last century, certainly no later than 1912. Brodber is intent on showing how these men were able to fashion a “mode of living” in the aftermath of a nightmarish history of enslavement still actively inscribed in their imagination. Brodber goes after these individual histories by way of ninety interviews to
try to find out, in her words, “what along with the inherited had this second
generation of freemen to face?” (p. 19). In addition, she wants to examine the
cumulative or aggregative effect of economic challenges upon community
and aspects of Jamaica’s “culture” at large.

The narratives that Brodber stitches together suggest that history in both
the past and then its present configurations heavily weighted down its inheri-
tors in a way that stymied their creativity. But it wasn’t because the second
generation of freemen, the subject of this text, did not seek to escape it. For
the picture she portrays is of Black men and women struggling beneath the
legacies of the plantation and its accompanying ideological conceptualiza-
tions of their inferiority yet unable to generate the sorts of triumphs by which
they would have improved themselves and their communities and ultimately
Jamaican “culture.”

To escape the plantation’s legacy, at least economically, this second gen-
eration of freemen needed land, and employment generally, and both seemed
scarce, or rather, were made scarce. Land was still controlled by planters and
the colonial state, even though much was not in use, and neither one of these
groups desired the independence of Black people. They both wanted a labor-
ing class, nothing less and nothing more. So instead, they hoarded land, and
when hoarding became impossible, such as when debt demanded sales or
when “mob” violence threatened to encircle and destroy, they sold it, but in
minuscule portions – too small for the new owners to eke out an independent
existence.

This generation then were forced to straddle several different occupa-
tions, embracing various trades and other casual occupations to support their
families. Farming had to be supplemented with other forms of “making a
living” and other ways of eking out a farming existence. This was true not
only for men but for women as well. As Brodber asserts, “Occupational mul-
tiplicity, and the high level of mobility within a set of jobs and in space that
this required, presents itself as an early twentieth-century strategy for making
a living that the ambitious freeman fashioned and passed on to the second
generation” (p. 64).

Occupational multiplicity, the concept popularized in the earlier work
of Comitas (1964), highlighting the specificity of Caribbean “peasantry,”
receives much discussion in this text. Brodber’s grasp of it, however, goes
beyond its simple connotations of multiple livelihoods and encompasses
the rural-urban and overseas or migratory patterns as well. Movement was
intrinsic to the making of these effete creole cultures. Dwelling involved
moving. Or rather, in order to dwell one had to be constantly on the move.
So, for example, “a police constable migrated to Cuba, then returned shortly
after, but not to the police force,” “a soldier went to war and then migrated to
Cuba,” and “a cabinetmaker became a metalworker” (p. 72).
Thus, versatility was the optimal position for freemen. Though not new, this is an important point, and one where Brodber could have staked out the text’s originality by engaging some of the more recent literature on movement, migration, and sovereignty. Still, she provides the raw material with which others could build a case for a different approach to these issues of movement. Though it is generally recognized that the scarcity of gainful employment in the countryside forced Caribbeans to move intoincipient towns, thus contributing to the construction of urban spaces and their congestion as well, this internal dimension is generally ignored when analysts speak of movement. It is nearly always assumed that movement is defined by transnationalism. A transnational focus obscures this veritable remapping of territory, the deterritorialization that occurs as borders between the rural and the urban shift. Dwelling and movement ought not to be conceptualized as a set of binary alternatives.

As seen in the text, though not articulated as such, these shifts and movements transgress the neat categories used to differentiate certain rural and urban identities, so that national constructions of being Creole, Jamaican, even Caribbean, are also challenged by these internal movements and refashioned selectively by them. Although she does not theorize or even give them primacy in her broader arguments, Brodber richly describes these interconnections, and highlights the sorts of relationships that they spawned. She notes the importance they had for the repositioning of the individual back home. For these moves facilitated “accessing the pleasures” that were available only to a certain class, color, nationality (as in tourists), or even location.

Rich description is Brodber’s strength. Less successful are her attempts at generalizing about “man,” at defining the correct political weapon or the relationship among child-rearing practices, the ideological sway of Eurocentric education, authoritarianism, and “cultural instability” (something which presumably defines Jamaica’s sociocultural peoplescape). Moreover the text is laden with loaded vocabulary such as “unorganized mobs,” distinctions such as “brawn” characterizing those who migrated to Cuba, as opposed to “brains” for those who went to the United States, and a strange assortment of “blaming the victim” assertions. Who were these mobs who apparently “boldly challenged the establishment” (p. 120) and brought gains to the second generation? Were they of a separate generation? These statements disturb and contrast with Brodber’s details of the “mode of life” (see Beckford 2003:xxix) of the second generation of freemen who tried to refashion their futures and cultures, in spite of their rough working childhoods in the racist, color-conscious, and, one might add, patriarchal global colony which they inhabited, and called home.

This text could certainly have benefited from the guiding hand of an editor, and a rethinking of some of the more potent issues which it raises, in terms of the current debates on citizenship, migration, and freedom.
This is a fascinating, well-written book, soundly researched with excellent illustrations. It focuses on “the use of dress to create a space to conform, confront and contest” (p. xiv) in Jamaican colonial society from slavery to freedom, especially among African women and their descendants. Following a foreword by Rex Nettleford, the book’s four solid chapters are complemented by a preface, acknowledgments, and an introduction.

The preface and acknowledgments situate the author in relation to his study. Based in the United States (and at the University of the West Indies, Mona for research), Steeve Buckridge grew up in Jamaica influenced by strong women like his mother who, in a male-dominated society, illuminated “the importance of material culture and the function of dress as a historical artefact” (p. xiv).

The introduction sets out the book’s theoretical perspectives, structure, and argument. In this study of material culture, objects (instead of written records) are read “as a means of comprehending the people and the times that created the objects ... by exposing material evidence to historical analysis”
This is especially important for Jamaica, where there are no recorded slave narratives, as a means of giving a “voice to the voiceless” (p. 2). Buckridge sums up his study as “the first of its kind in British Caribbean historiography that focuses exclusively on the dress of colonized women, both slave and freed, and examines dress as a symbol of resistance and accommodation” (pp. 6-7). His time-frame is from 1760 (when sources start) to 1890 (enabling an exploration of the transformation from slavery to freedom), but he also discusses the impact of dress during this period on later patterns and relates his findings to the African cultures from which the slaves came.

Chapter 1, “The Crossing,” explores the complexity of dress, including headdress and hair style, in African societies. From these rich cultural backgrounds, enslaved Africans were thrust naked into slave ships and their bodies branded on arrival in the Americas, where Europeans discouraged African dress. The adornment of the body and African retentions in dress therefore became a mode of resistance and accommodation among the enslaved.

Chapter 2, “Dress as Resistance,” contextualizes this theme in Jamaican slave-plantation society. Particularly strong is the analysis of slave carnivals, including Jonkonnu and its ritual of the Set Girls. The classic Belisario picture of the Queen or Ma’am of the Set Girls adorns the cover of the book. While the costumes of the Set Girls were predominantly European with “the blues and reds ... based on an old rivalry between British [sic] admirals who wore red and Scottish admirals who wore blue” (p. 100), this appropriation of ritualized rivalry between the English and the Scots was combined with the use of West African traditions of masking and masquerade and women’s age set rituals to reclaim the identity of the self.

Chapter 3, “Dress as Accommodation,” analyzes the Europeanization of dress among freed women as a strategy of accommodation in the aftermath of emancipation, and illuminates the commercialization of dress in Jamaican colonial society and its links to developments in Britain. Buckridge also highlights the failure of the strategy of Europeanization as racism persisted. He therefore criticizes interpretations of creolization by Brathwaite and Glissant, asserting that “both their arguments fail to address the social contradictions and conflicts” implicit in this process (p. 155).

Chapter 4, “Conclusion,” includes a discussion of the continuity of African aesthetics in dress to the present, such as the head-wraps and turbans of the Revival religion and the subversive dress of male street style, Rastafarians, and dancehall culture in Jamaica, despite the ambiguous strategy of “browning” or bleaching the skin (p. 188). It would, however, have been helpful to include related illustrations in this chapter, and the section on the limitations of the study seems too brief and belated (p. 181).

The limitations of the study include points not raised by Buckridge. First, his use of the concept of accommodation is not consistent. Sometimes accommodation is equated with “acculturation” (p. 11), a usage that needs to
be interrogated especially as he draws on Mintz’s point that resistance may be based on accommodation and also states that slaves resisted deculturation (pp. 7, 26, 140). Buckridge could also have taken on board Burton’s (1997:6) distinction between “opposition” from inside a social system and “resistance” from outside it. Second, as the book is a study of creolization in Jamaica in slavery and freedom, Buckridge could have drawn on my own work on culture-building in the plantation heartlands and free villages of Jamaica (Besson 2002), for example, to reveal continuities between the slaves’ marketing system (which provided money for the purchase of dress) and the transnational cloth markets in Jamaica today. Third, it is superficial to conclude that dress provided an alternative to access to land among the slaves and ex-slaves (pp. 134, 139), for appropriation of land rights by enslaved persons of both genders and the creation and transmission of family land by ex-slaves and their descendants have been central strategies for the re-creation of identity, kinship, and community in Jamaica (Besson 2002). Fourth, Buckridge’s use of the concept of peasant as “including rural labourers, domestic servants and road-builders” (p. 157) and elsewhere “labourers and peasants” (p. 159) needs clarification, as does the statement that “the peasant class” was “steeped in a deep-structured world that was African” (p. 180). Finally, his review of studies of Caribbean marronage omits reference to the important works of Richard and Sally Price (p. 5), and there is no reference to the work of Kenneth Bilby or myself in the discussion of Jamaican Maroons at various points in the book.

Despite these reservations, Buckridge’s book is a valuable addition to the study of Caribbean creolization and to Jamaican cultural history.

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In one sense, “Blackness” as we have come to know it is all modern, brought about by an imposed system of classification the intent and effect of which has been to marginalize and dominate those classified as Black. This foundational sense ought not to be overlooked even though Blackness also came to have powerful liberatory salience within Black communities worldwide. In this latter sense, the one Deborah Thomas is most concerned with, the significance and particular register of Blackness, its affect, and its modes of expression vary over time and place. In this timely, provocative, and well-written book, Thomas looks at Jamaican self-fashioning and its transformation from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries, and the cultural contestations around Blackness that have been central to conceptions of Jamaican national belonging. “Modern Blackness” – the anthropologist’s term, not one used by Thomas’s informants – contrasts not with some imagined pre-modern Blackness but rather with other modes of Black cultural-political expression that have had greater prevalence in Jamaica in earlier decades: namely, the respectable, vindicationist, “folk Blackness” endorsed by the creole, multiracial, nationalist project, on one hand, and on the other, the “revolutionary Blackness” that has shadowed and critiqued that nationalist narrative. With her deployment of these terms Thomas seeks to understand striking shifts in ideology, ethos, and value, as related to the race/color/class divisions of Jamaican society, that have occurred since the 1980s, transformations precipitated in part by the uneven, contradictory nature of global capitalist expansion. The book provides valuable ethnographic support for the argument made by several other writers on Jamaica in recent years that creole multiracialism – the ideational framework that animated Jamaican nationalism in the second half of the twentieth century, encapsulated in the country’s motto “Out of Many, One People” – has been effectively eroded as a unifying social force. However, Thomas is more sanguine about the decline of this hegemonic order than these other observers are inclined to be.

Creole multiracial nationalism, while emphasizing an inclusiveness that legitimized Brown middle-class leadership, endorsed a “folk Blackness”
whose elements, “discipline, temperance ... thrift, industry, Christian living, community uplift, and respect for the leadership of the educated middle classes” (pp. 65-66), facilitated an anticolonial politics but failed to threaten other important aspects of the status quo. Shadowed constantly by more militant counternarratives, such as that of Rastafari, that emphasized continued Black subordination, creole multiracialism has now been eclipsed, Thomas argues, by a “modern Blackness,” new forms of subjectivity that are transnational in scope, present-oriented, consumerist, and transgressive of the moral conventions of respectability and patriarchy, and in which the role of Africa is subordinated and a romanticized folk past disregarded. This altered value orientation, she notes, represents a generational shift, hastened by processes of globalization that curtail the ability of the postcolonial Jamaican state to fulfill basic obligations to its citizens.

Thomas shows this process of social transformation playing out nationally as well as locally in the community of “Mango Mount,” just outside Kingston, where she did fieldwork. At the national level, Thomas’s analysis opens up the contested terrain of present-day Jamaican cultural politics through insightful readings of a series of cultural events, texts, and popular performances starting with a book of antiracist, protonationalist essays co-authored by five Black Jamaicans and published in 1888 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of British slave emancipation. Other “texts” around which she presents her argument include the statement on cultural policy that was published in Jamaica’s first five-year development plan and authored by then Minister of Development and Welfare, Edward Seaga, and the government’s reinstatement of Emancipation Day as a national public holiday in the 1990s on the recommendation of a special Committee on National Symbols and National Observances.

Mango Mount provides instructive ethnographic exemplification of the book’s larger argument. The community has long had a significant minority of middle-class professional residents (the “upper set”) who have provided leadership and served as intermediaries to national-level institutions and businesses for the area’s majority (the “lower set”). However, as state functions have contracted, the role this middle class formerly played as intermediaries to assist poorer residents gain access to jobs and state services has declined correspondingly. The poor, and particularly the younger generation, view these middle-class connections as largely irrelevant to getting ahead and instead seek out avenues for migration and other means of advancement on their own. Thomas’s rich ethnography includes accounts of the formation and ups and downs of the Mango Mount Community Council, established in the 1980s, political campaigning in the community, and the local observance of the revived Emancipation Day celebration. Modern Blackness also offers satisfying interpretations of the genre of popular theater known as “roots” plays, a comparison of the films The Harder They Come and Dancehall Queen, and
discussions of dancehall music – “the soundtrack for modern Blackness” (p. 242) and an important arena of cultural-political ferment.

What then is the political significance of the set of practices Thomas calls “modern Blackness”? What kind of future does this loose ideological configuration offer for Jamaica, and how should it be regarded? Thomas appropriately views modern Blackness as both oppositional and complicit. It is oppositional in that it challenges the idea that “the subordination of black people ... that was established during slavery, [has] persisted throughout the creole nationalist era, and has been reestablished ... by globalization, privatization, and structural adjustment policies” (pp. 269-70, emphasis in the original). However, modern Blackness also embodies and reproduces aspects of dominance such as consumerism, individualism, and “timeworn tropes about black vernacular culture” (p. 231). In terms of where it might lead, Thomas is also ambivalent, suggesting that “modern blackness does not present some kind of totalizing and coherent ideological framework for understanding why things are the way they are among poor, black Jamaicans. Nor does it necessarily provide a blueprint for (revolutionary) action” (p. 231). So, for example, while this new ethos enables and supports individuals taking advantage, through migration and other strategies, of opportunities opening up in the global economy, it drains the local community of its most talented young people.

In many ways it is the ambiguity and complexity of modern Blackness, and the pluralism it endorses, that Thomas finds appealing. Modern Blackness, she argues, is “rooted in the changing ways people define community” in this era when “the link between territory and nationalism throughout the Caribbean” has been profoundly restructured (pp. 259-60). The imaginative universe of modern Blackness allows for “surprising collaborations” and is “coproduced with urban and primarily working-class African Americans who live in Jamaicans’ social worlds – both real and imagined ... as well as in relation to middle- and upper-class Jamaicans in Jamaica and West Indians and Euro-Americans in the United States and elsewhere” (p. 260).

While I applaud Thomas’s call to embrace the pluralism and indeterminacy central to Jamaica’s contemporary popular cultural ethos, her analysis suggests that there is nothing remiss in not having a hegemonic ideological framework to replace that of creole nationalism. She seems to take the view that a value system that legitimizes and accommodates pluralism cannot at the same time offer coherence and stability. This position leads her to be less concerned than other scholars have been in recent years about the collapse of the moral and ideological framework of creole nationalism in Jamaica, and to disagree that its downfall constitutes something of a social crisis. For Thomas, modern Blackness, and the new forms of citizenship it affords, “embodies not a crisis, but a public power previously unattained” (p. 261).

Thomas uses “Blackness” as the stabilizing trope that gives coherence to the Jamaican present her book describes. It allows her to be less con-
cerned about the instabilities and contradictions that others find worrisome, and less attentive to the question of how to reconstitute hegemonic order of a sort that might fully accommodate pluralism. Can Blackness any longer serve, though, as an appropriate symbolic vehicle either for the shifting and multivalent politics of the present, or for an analytical understanding of them? As Cathy Cohen’s *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics* (1999) compellingly illustrates for the United States, for example, the cross-cutting and contradictory political issues that have become ever more conspicuous within the so-called Black community now make that community an enfeebled political force. Thomas is acutely mindful in the book of the instabilities of modern Blackness, but her persistent use of this trope only serves to belie the thrust of her own findings. Despite my skepticism about Thomas’s uncritical use of Blackness to anchor her discussion of the unstable Jamaican present, this wonderfully insightful book is essential reading for Caribbeanists.

**Reference**


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*Sound Clash* documents the increasingly fiery debate surrounding the compositional character and social merit of popular culture in Jamaica. The social, sexual, and sonic clashes in question are linked with Jamaican verbal and musical traditions, past and present, celebrated and scorned. Carolyn Cooper’s articles, columns, editorials, lectures, and media appearances have provided fuel for these cultural and ideological debates and the powerful “border clash” metaphor she embraces. It is within these hostile border zones...
that “rival [Jamaican] politicians, area dons/community leaders, and their followers contend for the control of territory, both literal and symbolic” (p. 35). Indeed, *Sound Clash* demarcates many zones of conflict.

Cooper’s introduction offers an updated version of a viewpoint she formulated in *Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender and the “Vulgar” Body of Jamaican Popular Culture* (1995). She argues that “slackness” within Jamaican dancehall culture cannot be reduced to graphic sexual behavior. Dancehall is, unquestionably, “a dedicated space for the flamboyant performing of sexuality” (p. 3). However, its DJs and supporters also represent “a radical, underground confrontation with the patriarchal gender ideology and the duplicitous morality of fundamentalist Jamaican society” (p. 3). Rather than a devaluing idiom, “dancehall culture at home and in the diaspora is best understood as a potentially liberating space” (p. 17). Cooper mounts evidence to support this perspective throughout the book. However, documenting additional viewpoints/voices from dancehall supporters and detractors within the Jamaican public would have been useful.

In Chapter 1 (co-authored by Cecil Gutzmore) the multilayered lyrics of dancehall DJs are used to exemplify distinct clashes – (homo)sexual, religious, and sociopolitical – within Jamaica. Cooper provides alternative readings to the controversy stirred by Buju Banton’s now famous “Boom By By” and the *fia bun* (fire burn) rhetoric of Bobo Dreads like Anthony B. Chapter 2 sheds light on the ongoing “culture v. slackness” debate by comparing sexual and social themes in the lyrics of Bob Marley with those of Shabba Ranks. Close textual reading reveals that a number of parallels can be drawn between Marley’s lyrical protest and the sociosexual commentary of contemporary DJs like Shabba. Of course, Cooper acknowledges that there are limitations to such textual analogies as well.

Chapter 3 confronts the slackness/culture dialectic from the vantage point of dancehall DJ Lady Saw. Cooper argues that scholars, as well as many Jamaicans, fail to comprehend the dynamic range of Saw’s repertoire. From this perspective, Saw’s promotion of safe(r) sex in the lyrics of “Condom” deserve just as much attention as the sexually explicit “Stab Out Mi Meat.” Additional feminine perspectives are revealed in Cooper’s analysis of the films *Dancehall Queen* (1997) and *Babymother* (1998). The protagonists in each, Marcia and Anita, are empowered through their celebration of female sexuality and imaginative role-play in the dancehall arena. At the same time, the films portray the harsh reality of the women’s struggles with self-image, poverty, teenage pregnancy, and mothering.

Chapter 5 explores the tropes of the “lyrical gun” and the Jamaican “badman.” Here Cooper documents the interface between the violence portrayed in dancehall lyrics, Jamaican folklore, and films like *The Harder They Come* (1972). Yet she stresses that a direct correlation between the increasing gun violence in Jamaica and dancehall lyrics is tenuous. The discourse of the DJs
is often much more metaphorical than literal. Again, misinterpretations of “Boom By By” are cited as evidence. At the heart of Chapter 6 are two corrective reminders: “The first illusion is that there is no fire in Bob Marley’s metaphor; the second is that there is no metaphor in the DJs’ fire” (p. 193). Thus, the branding of Bobo Dread DJs like Sizzla and Capleton as literal arsonists reveals a lack of understanding about a long-standing history of “incendiary incantations” from Marley to the present.

The next three chapters present the latest lines of scholarly inquiry for Cooper. Chapter 7 is a stinging critique of the attacks projected against Jamaican dancehall performers in Barbados. Like Jamaican Creole, the “vile vocals” associated with dancehall are frequently misunderstood in foreign contexts. Chapter 8 celebrates the diasporic connections between reggae, dancehall, and rap/hip hop. Chapter 9 explores the perceptions of a dancehall subgenre, rafjamuffin, through the verbal artistry and identity politics of DJ Apache Indian. Finally, Chapter 10 portrays national identity in Jamaica from the historical perspective of Jamaican Creole. Cooper and co-author Hubert Devonish argue that the growing sociopolitical significance of “Jamaican” is due in part to the rise of popular culture and the technologies that allow such expressions to be disseminated more readily to local and global audiences.

One of the structural weaknesses of Sound Clash is the “recycled” nature of most of the essays in the book: “no good academic paper should be performed only once” (p. vii). Although the previously published or presented essays have been updated, and are unified under the border clash paradigm, sections of individual chapters come across as redundant. For example, definitions and controversies discussed in early chapters occasionally reappear as core components in subsequent chapters. The diverse origin(s) of each individual essay or chapter may also explain the minor inconsistencies in how Jamaican Creole passages are represented for those unfamiliar with the language. Moreover, Cooper spends too much energy defending her previously documented positions. She forgets that more than one generation of scholars has read her work (and the work of others) and already taken informed stances on many of the perspectives she has so vigorously promoted.

One of the strongest unifying lessons from Sound Clash may be gleaned from Cooper’s commitment to embrace an array of interdisciplinary perspectives. In other words, dubbed into “the mix” of Sound Clash are multiple critical horizons, including insights developed from collaborations with colleagues and students. To arrive at a deeper understanding of Jamaican dancehall culture, a culture that is vibrant, alive, and responsive, scholars, citizens, devotees, and detractors alike must be willing to expose themselves to new perspectives and voices. Sound Clash will undoubtedly stimulate new research and provoke ongoing discussion regarding the significance of genres of Jamaican popular culture for audiences at home and abroad.
REFERENCE


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The title, front matter, and introduction of this book suggest a thick historical description of Rastafari theology. In that regard, I initially found the book disappointing, since there are better works that describe and analyze the nuances and complexities of Rastafari belief and practice. Because Erskine does not give a formal account of his methodology, it is hard to locate what new view of Rastafari is being proposed. Born and raised in Jamaica, he also worked as a Christian pastor, so it is fitting that his book draws heavily on his memories of past encounters with Rastas. But his approach seems intended mainly to reconcile experience as a Jamaican Christian raised in an atmosphere unfriendly toward Rastas with his newfound appreciation for the theological questions they ask.

My disappointment, I realized, was because I was making a genre error. Despite its tone and presentation, this is not primarily a work of history, social science, or descriptive theology, but rather constructive theology. At its deepest level it asks not “how do Rastafari talk about God?” but rather “how can (Jamaican) Christians talk about God in the light of Rastafari?” Here the book succeeds.

The first four chapters outline the social and historical context of Rastafari, the start of the Rastafari movement in Jamaica, and the organization and ethos of Jamaican Rastafari. The fifth chapter explores how Rastafari takes as its starting point earlier streams of Afrocentric thought in Jamaica and uses them to press pointed questions about race and identity that remain salient to Jamaican theology today. In the sixth chapter Erskine looks at how reg-
gae has helped spread Rastafari beyond Jamaica. The conclusion reviews Rastafari’s contribution to Jamaican Christian theology, especially its call to rethink God in terms of Africa, and criticizes Rastafari theology for various shortcomings, such as excessive individualism and weakness in considering matters of salvation.

The major fault of this book is its lack of clarity on theological intentions and methods. A chapter outlining these intentions would have helped contextualize subsequent chapters, sharpen the book’s focus, and clarify Erskine’s methods. As it stands a historian might read the second chapter as a thin summary of the roots of African-derived religions in Jamaica. On the other hand, as constructive theology the chapter may not be meant as a full historical analysis, but instead as the story of Jamaican theology presented from within a particular theological historiography, that is, as a decolonization of Jamaican theology through the lens of Black religion. Similarly, in Chapters 3 and 4, Erskine’s decision to focus on certain strands of Rasta history (e.g., his focus on Jamaica and the movement’s linear growth from Leonard Howell and three other early leaders) and certain Rastafari beliefs (e.g., the belief in Haile Selassie as the *sine qua non* of the faith) would have made more sense if they had been presented in the light of a comparative theological methodology that explicitly sought to draw out and explore structural similarities with Christianity. Without a clear methodology, the focus on Howell uncritically privileges one strand of Rasta history over others. The focus on Haile Selassie flattens Rastafari doctrines of God and unintentionally furthers the theological cause of those Rastas who want belief in Selassie to be the *sine qua non* of the movement (in contrast to those who instead emphasize a dreadlocks, smoking ganja, ital way of life, knowledge of the I, harmonious relationship to nature, etc.). Erskine often makes broad assertions in the form of “all Rastas believe X.” Although these assertions are always problematic from a historical or anthropological perspective, they are more understandable if seen as an attempt to frame Rastafari so as to gain some purchase for comparison with Christianity.

As constructive theology the book succeeds in demonstrating the growth possible for Jamaican Christianity when it takes seriously the theological questions posed by Rastafari, e.g., a Rasta ontology that asks: Where do you stand with regard to Africa? Erskine writes forthrightly about the strengths of Rastafari as Black theology, placing other Christian thinkers, such as James Cone, in dialogue with Rastafari to try to probe the depths of Rasta talk about God. The book is at its best in the last three chapters, where it is most openly theological. Here Erskine engages Rastafari more critically, demonstrating, for example, how Rastafari might make us rethink the role of the body in Christianity, while at the same time showing how Christian thought on eschatology might be used to challenge Rasta views of salvation. But even here the question of comparison is thorny, for it is not clear that Rastas...
either have a doctrine of salvation (often preferring to speak of “redemption” instead) or that they need one.

One dimension of theological comparison on which Erskine could have elaborated is the Rasta concept of the “I” and the consequent identification of the individual Rasta with God. There seem to be obvious connections to Orthodox Christianity’s idea of “theosis” (or becoming God), but to date the published Christian approaches to Rastafari have been Protestant and have left the idea unexplored.

I would recommend this book as a Christian attempt to engage and find meaning in Rastafari, but not as a descriptive or analytical account of Rastafari theology as a whole. Erskine’s focus is too narrow for that latter task. His strengths are pointing out the degree to which Rastafari has given Jamaica a transformative religious practice, and bringing Christianity into contact with that practice.


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Hilary Beckles has published several books about the slavery period in Barbados and a general history (1990) that extends, briefly, beyond independence in 1966. Great House Rules, and its sequel, Chattel House Blues, trace aspects of Barbadian history since 1838. Great House Rules contains several parts that appeared, word for word, in the general history. It is a forcefully argued interpretation which, like Beckles’s studies of slavery, emphasizes the central dynamic of domination and resistance.

Beckles begins his account of what he calls “The Hundred Year War, 1838-1938” with an analysis of the status and predicament of free Blacks before emancipation. Most of them were poor and dependent on the White-dominated plantation economy, and this remained true after they achieved legal civil equality with Whites in 1831. It is sensible to begin the analysis of “free society” in this way, but Beckles does not follow up all the implications. While he criticizes the category of “freedmen” as “a conflation of the
ethnically differentiated social groups” of free Black and free Colored (p. 2), he does not maintain this distinction consistently, nor does he explore its implication for the development of the political culture after 1838. Instead, he emphasizes a simple Black/White dichotomy, although important nineteenth-century political leaders, like Samuel Jackman Prescod, were Colored, and most twentieth-century leaders, like Charles Duncan O’Neale and Grantley Adams, were middle-class professionals. Subtle social distinctions of color and class were often culturally and politically significant.

Chapter 2 examines the “landless freedom” that resulted from the carefully managed emancipation process between 1838 and 1863. The sugar planters’ land monopoly, creation of a tenantry system, and control of the legislature ensured an abundant supply of dependent and cheap laborers, and consequently resulted in a poor, unhealthy, and powerless population. Planters continued to perceive workers as servile persons, and colonial administrators and missionaries viewed the vast majority of Barbadians, not just the workers, as inferior natives. New “law and order” provisions, including vagrancy laws, the Masters and Servants Act, and the development of police, courts and prisons, along with an educational system that emphasized religious instruction and discipline, perpetuated an oppressive society. Despite having little room to manoeuver, however, workers resisted this oppression because they believed freedom should not mean their virtual re-enslavement in the labor market, and “freedom for them also meant time to reconstitute family life, social culture, and devise means to establish independent economic strategies to subsist and survive” (p. 74). The plantation sector limited the growth of an independent peasantry, so thousands of Barbadians migrated to seek work in British Guiana, Trinidad and, later, Panama. Some returned with sufficient savings to buy land or open shops, but the basic social structure remained unchanged.

Chapter 3, “The Struggle for Freedom,” covers the period up to 1897, although it ends, curiously, with a section on the consolidation of the planter-merchants’ economic domination between 1917 and 1934. Widespread famine and reduction of wages in 1863 resulted in arson, food rebellions, and wage riots, as well as more emigration. When the crisis in the sugar industry of the 1880s led to a social crisis the planters responded by slashing wages, merchants infiltrated the planter elite, and the oligarchy successfully defended its power and privilege. A Royal Commission recommended in 1897 the expansion of opportunities for “small peasant proprietors,” but “the planters dug in and prepared to resist reform efforts” (p. 175).

Chapter 4 turns back to consider the 1876 rebellion, which took advantage of temporary divisions within the ruling class and was inspired by the slave revolt of 1816. In the final chapter, “Democracy From Below,” Beckles examines resistance from 1876 to the eve of the 1937 labor rebellion, discussing evidence of widespread hardship, the emergence of such autono-
mous popular organizations as friendly societies, landships, and Revivalist churches, and early political mobilization by leaders such as Rawle Parkinson, a teacher, Clennell Wickham, a journalist, and O’Neale, a doctor who created the Democratic League in 1924. The extremely restricted franchise was narrower than the popular support for this middle-class party, so its candidates were defeated more often than they succeeded. Nevertheless, this party, with its labor arm, the Workingmen’s Association, along with the impact of Marcus Garvey’s movement, established a basis for the rapid growth of labor politics after the 1937 rebellion.

The absence of a straightforward chronology in this book may obscure the sequence of events in Barbadian history for some readers. The central arguments concerning the system of labor control, the politics of freedom after emancipation, and the origins of democratic politics are not new, and their origins should be acknowledged. I would like to have read a more thorough study of the history of political culture in Barbados, which parts of this book suggest. How, for example, did pervasive paternalism and individualism affect ideas of authority, and to what extent did the Anglican clergy, who were “social allies” of the planters (p. 126), succeed in shaping a subservient political culture? Beckles briefly discusses cricket and “cultural apartheid,” and it would be valuable to compare with this the ideas and rituals of hierarchy that pervade the uniquely Barbadian organizations called landships. We would have a more thorough understanding of popular resistance in Barbados if we also understood the sources and extent of accommodation to the colonial society, but these, and other important aspects of the history of Barbados, remain to be explored.

REFERENCE

In 1985-1986 I was conducting research in the Eastern Caribbean focused on recording the narratives of elder political figures, trade unionists, and rank-and-file supporters who had been active in the formative political period of the 1950s and 1960s. One of the aspects of that study was to be a collaborative effort by Pat Emmanuel in Barbados. Unfortunately, he became overburdened with other duties, and we were unable to accomplish the kind of joint effort we had envisioned. I continued with my work in the islands from St. Kitts-Nevis to Grenada, but I imagined that the Barbados mine was yet to be tapped. The publication of Woodville Marshall’s conversations with Wynter Crawford is thus an exceptionally important document for an understanding of the events that contribute to the formation of the Barbadian political economy of the period.

From 1934, when he assumed editorship of the Barbados Observer, to 1962, when he broke with the Democratic Labour Party and left active political life, Wynter Crawford was a significant player on the island’s scene. From his early involvement as a journalist whose writing frequently offered a critical view of the profoundly colonial atmosphere of Barbados, through his often contentious involvement with party politics and leader of the Barbados Labour Party, Grantley Adams, to his founding of the progressive West Indian Congress Party as a rival to the BLP, Crawford’s ideas and forceful personality were fixtures in the island’s political life. For one whose public persona was so present for an extended period it is curious that he has become a nearly forgotten figure. This has now been remedied, at least in part, by the publication of his memoirs.

Because, as Marshall points out in his introduction, the genesis of this volume was a series of interviews that produce a rather disjointed and occasionally repetitive account, I will focus on a few themes that emerge from a reading of I Speak for the People, themes that I believe have some broad relevance for the study of West Indian politics of Crawford’s era.

To begin, Crawford’s account of his early ventures, leading up to his editorship of the Observer in 1934 at age twenty-four, reveals a preco-
cious involvement in business and public affairs, not only in Barbados, but throughout the region. He traveled widely, worked on different islands, and embarked on ventures on behalf of others and on his own, rubbing shoulders with some of the most illustrious public figures of the time. During this early period family ties and class affiliations were important in easing his trajectory. Crawford was born into a comfortable family and received an excellent education, leaving school at the age of sixteen with an assured career as a civil servant. The names of relatives, friends, and other acquaintances iterated in the first chapters of the book suggest an individual whose connections would pave a course of little resistance and certain middle-class comfort in colonial Barbados. Although Crawford’s development took quite a different turn with his entry into politics, it remains that he and his contemporaries were destined for increasingly significant roles in the emerging modern Barbados.

Crawford’s departure from the promised comforts of the upper echelons of the civil service is particularly marked by his editorship of the *Observer*. Again, certain advantages of his class position made this transition possible. He had purchased a small press and, on return to Barbados, was able to launch the paper. Most of the writing, certainly all of the editorial content, was by his own hand, and the paper soon developed a reputation for taking on some of the more egregious aspects of colonial rule and class and race discrimination. Crawford repeatedly confronted the pillars of a society – planters, merchants, colonial officials – known, as Gordon Lewis has pointed out, for its reactionary attachment to tradition, albeit British tradition. The emergence of the paper as a progressive voice in such a social formation inevitably thrust him into more active politics.

Perhaps the signal event that triggered Crawford’s entry into the developing labor/party politics that came to characterize the era throughout the British colonial Caribbean was the 1937 riots. Crawford’s anecdotal description of the events as they played out in Bridgetown makes for some of the most interesting and revealing reading in the narrative. As in other instances during the turbulent period of the late 1930s, the response of authorities was heavy-handed and insured a greater degree of turmoil. The aftermath of the riots also brought the first of Crawford’s many interactions with Grantley Adams, and the beginnings of a relationship which would be alternately collaborative and combative. A good portion of the book is interlarded with instances of confrontations between the two, the opposition of the parties each one founded, and their ultimate political incompatibility. In these, Adams, admittedly through the accounts of his rival, frequently comes off as petty, disingenuous, and manipulative.

Whether delineating his personal struggles with political figures or his participation in legislation and other policy initiatives, Crawford rhetorically draws attention to himself as the primary actor in any number of political dramas, much like the trickster figure Anancy of West Indian folktales. This
“Anancyism,” a stylistic device foregrounding the heroic persona, is something that I have often heard in campaign speechmaking. It has a counterpart in the elevation of self in policymaking, in the conduct of the affairs of unions and parties, and in dealings with presumed comrades in these institutions – so-called one-manism. Wynter Crawford’s narrative includes numerous instances of this kind of style and behavior. His descriptions of projects and transactions elevate his role to such a degree that we cannot imagine the scheme succeeding without his agency. This seems to have been a critical flaw in his own limited success as a union organizer, manager, and party leader. The mere presence of his forceful personality and intellectual gifts could not overcome the schisms to which he contributed through his autocratic inclinations.

This slim book is a rich read, offering a vivid picture of an important period in the history of the region.


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Myths of the Plantation Society offers a comparative perspective of slave society in the New World with a focus on the “Spanish, English, and French possessions south of the Mason-Dixon Line [in the American South] and in the Caribbean” (p. 4). The first half of the book highlights the commonalities and differences of European “discovery” and settlement in terms of expansion, conquest, and trade. Dessens reveals that North America experienced less warfare (among Europeans and between Europeans and native Indians), had more land space, and changed hands less frequently than the Caribbean islands. These differences, for the most part, determined the nature of the political and social organization of North America and the Caribbean, which in turn accounted for variation in the slave societies of these regions. The Caribbean was controlled mainly by the Spanish, British, and French plus, to a lesser extent, the Dutch, Danish, and Swedish, while the American South
was under British influence as well as a weaker Spanish and French influence in Florida and Louisiana, respectively. The Spanish government was rigidly organized in the Caribbean, which explained the uniformity across different areas of the Spanish Caribbean. By contrast, the British and French model of political/colonial organization was patterned after three models: charter company, propriety colony, and crown colony. Demographically, the American South had more Europeans and fewer African slaves than the Caribbean mainly because more Europeans migrated to the American South to “settle” while in the Caribbean, Europeans migrated to “exploit.” The Caribbean experienced more absentee landlordism. Although the American South was, like the Caribbean colonies, a plantation economy, it relied mainly on cotton while the Caribbean depended more on sugar. The latter needed a larger labor supply to function effectively, and this explained the larger influx of Africans in the Caribbean through the slave trade.

The second part of the book examines the slavery systems and ideologies, as well as the abolition of slavery in the American South and the Caribbean. Dessens provides important statistical information on the forced migration of Africans through the transatlantic trade and argues that there were more native-born Africans in the American South than in the Caribbean. The reasons for this were harsher climatic conditions, a higher importation of slaves, and a higher mortality rate in the Caribbean. Out of the slave system emerged a two-tiered society in the American South and a three-tiered society in the Caribbean. The consequence was that “the three-tiered societies permitted relatively easier access to freedom, and there was much more social fluidity” (p. 70). Furthermore, she argues, slave codes were harsher in the American South than in the Caribbean but were counterbalanced by paternalism because Southern Whites displayed a residential attachment to the United States. This difference “produced a better form of slavery and meant more humanity and affability [in the American South]” (p. 92).

Dessens points out that the movement toward the abolition of slavery in the American South was based on home-grown sentiments while in the Caribbean, except for slave insurrections, it emanated from and revolved around European ideals such as the Enlightenment, Christianity, and Humanism. Another interesting difference was that the abolition of slavery was a protracted and peaceful process in the Caribbean (except in Haiti) while in the American South it took a four-year war and claimed over 600,000 lives. The aftermath of the abolition of slavery led to two different societies. Caribbean ex-slaves were subjected to the apprenticeship and the planters were compensated millions of dollars for the loss of slaves. The Caribbean colonies also experimented with indentured labor. Ex-slaves in the American South had some rights but were subjected to legally sanctioned segregation which led to a southern cultural distinctiveness. Much of this southern cultural distinctiveness was found in mythmaking and cultural exceptions. Free
Blacks approached and expressed their circumstances through literature and poetry more in the American South than in the Caribbean. But this literature was counteracted by those who glorified the pre-Civil War period, an idea that was guided by Manifest Destiny. Dessens concludes: “Fiction writers ... progressively built a literary, legendary antebellum South. The defeat of the South added a nostalgic dimension to legend, and the lost cause turned the legend into myth” (p. 171).

The first half of the book adds little to the existing literature on slavery in the New World. Dessens leans heavily on secondary data to compare and contrast the colonial American South and the Caribbean. Most of this information is found in Caribbean history books, and to a lesser degree, histories of the American South. The second half of the book highlights differences between the Caribbean and the American South in how slavery was practiced, how it was abolished, and how the postemancipation period evolved. This is a major contribution to the understanding of contemporary differences and, to some extent, similarities between Blacks in the American South and in the Caribbean. The book will be of interest to anyone who wants to advance their understanding of why two slave societies, in two parts of the hemisphere, and subjected by the same nations of Western Europe, evolved so differently.


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In addition to the well-publicized five hundredth anniversary of Columbus’s arrival in the New World, the year 1992 marked the pentacentennial of the Sephardic Jews’ exile from Spain by the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella. Forced from their communities, Spain’s Sephardic Jews emigrated to a variety of destinations, many eventually finding their way to European colonies in the Americas. The Jewish Community of Early Colonial Nevis is an account of one such enclave founded on the former British colony of Nevis. Combining
archaeological and archival evidence with fictional vignettes, Michelle Terrell pieces together the community’s one-hundred-year history from the late seventeenth century to its disappearance at the end of the eighteenth century. The result is an engaging account of the Jewish experience in the Caribbean that should appeal to both Jewish cultural scholars and Caribbeanists.

Terrell situates her research in the context of previous work that depicts the colonial Caribbean as “sanctuaries in the sand” where Jews enjoyed religious tolerance, economic opportunity, and prosperity – a good starting point, though she offers only brief mentions of the works she contrasts with her own. Given the relatively few texts on the Jewish experience in the Caribbean, a more in-depth discussion would have strengthened her argument. Terrell characterizes previous archaeological investigations as largely oriented toward recording the standing ruins of overgrown synagogues without consideration of the communities that built them (pp. 8-9). This is a valid criticism, and one that could be applied more generally to some early efforts of historical archaeologists in the region. In contrast to these works, Terrell effectively weaves the results of her archaeological and archival research into a chronological narrative of Nevis’s Jewish community, incorporating the “interplay of the religious and economic components” to show how the community “functioned within the larger social network of the overarching British colonial system” (pp. 9-10).

The first two chapters summarize the project’s background and goals. Chapters 3 and 4 describe the circumstances of the Sephardic Jews’ expulsion from Spain and their resettlement on Nevis. The rest of the book turns on an interplay of archival and archaeological records. Chapter 5 reconstructs the one-hundred-year history of the island’s Jewish community on the basis of archival research. Chapters 6 and 7 run through the same period on the basis of archaeological evidence. In Chapter 8, Terrell plunges back into the archival record, this time to explore ways in which the archaeological evidence contradicted long-held assumptions. By this archival/archaeological alternation, Terrell effectively illustrates how scholars using multiple kinds of resources can tease out the details of the past in a way that is not always possible on the basis of a single line of investigation. The final two chapters synthesize the evidence and relate it to the broader themes of community, island, region, and diaspora.

The book centers on two sites: a Jewish cemetery and a set of ruins suspected to be those of an early synagogue. Terrell writes clearly and succinctly, avoiding jargon and extended technical discussions that are better suited for excavation reports, and accompanies her text with site maps and artifact illustrations.

The investigation of the cemetery site consisted of a geophysical survey, a noninvasive technique that measures disturbances below the surface without excavation. This is a good example of its effective application for anyone
unfamiliar with geophysical surveys in archaeology, though for others it may lack sufficient technical discussion.

The investigation of the suspected synagogue began as a test of the site’s assumed history. Terrell determined that this history was incorrect, and that the ruins were those of “Merton Villa,” a residential complex dating from the late eighteenth century through the first decades of the twentieth century. The evidence, gathered through conventional excavation techniques, included the stratified deposits of household refuse attributed to the successive occupants. Unfortunately, Terrell does not take full advantage of the richness of her excavated data, using it only to refute the site’s assumed history and to establish the chronology of the property’s development, and offering only minimal discussion of what it might suggest about these families’ lives on Nevis.

A series of fictional vignettes, inserted as prefaces to Chapters 3 through 10, vividly reconstruct the voices and viewpoints of the Pinheiro and Pemberton families of Nevis, two of the families whose pasts Terrell encountered in both the archaeological and archival records. As she acknowledges, these vignettes were inspired by a series of recent attempts by historical archaeologists to give “flesh” to the excavation results (e.g., Deetz 1977, 1993; Noel Hume 1991; Spector 1993; Yentch 1994; Schrire 1995). She uses these first-person accounts effectively to contextualize her archival and archaeological evidence.

The Jewish Community of Early Colonial Nevis is a welcome contribution to studies of Caribbean history, and a well-executed example of how to write engagingly about the past on the basis of archaeological and archival evidence. Terrell’s candid reflections, which she inserts throughout the text, describe how she confronted local politics, conflicting memories, and inconsistent archival evidence in her effort to reconstruct the community’s history, illustrating how the processes of archaeological and archival research are linked to the present as much as they are to the past in the production of historical knowledge. The result is a highly recommended example of detailed scholarship on an under-studied aspect of Caribbean history.

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Using the case of Clifton, an early nineteenth-century plantation in the Bahamas, Laurie Wilkie and Paul Farnsworth explore how enslaved Africans and their descendants negotiated a cultural identity in this new environment. They argue that elements of everyday life were based on social concepts enslaved Africans remembered from their homelands and passed on to their descendants. The residents of Clifton’s slave quarters represented a population with varied life experiences in the Atlantic World. Some had come to the Bahamas in the 1780s with the plantation’s owner, William Wylly, amid the influx of Loyalists who left the American colonies in the wake of that revolution. Wylly also acquired African-born and Creole slaves in the Bahamas. Additionally, in 1811 four African men were apprenticed to William Wylly. They were among several hundred captives rescued from slavers smuggling Africans into Cuba and the United States after the British had abolished the transatlantic slave trade.

To establish a context for possible African-derived influences evident in the archaeological record, Wilkie and Farnsworth conducted extensive research on regions from which African captives were brought to the Bahamas and the Southern states. From the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century the greatest percentage was from regions between Senegambia and Sierra Leone. On the other hand, a majority of the Liberated Africans landed in the Bahamas after the slave trade was abolished in 1807 had been captured
in regions from the Bight of Biafra to Angola. Enslaved and apprenticed Africans at Clifton plantation represented this range of ethnicities.

Wilkie and Farnsworth argue that the social worlds constructed by enslaved Africans for themselves and their children were heavily influenced by memories of cultural life from their homelands. As archaeological evidence for this claim, they point to two cases in which a coin was deliberately buried in a backyard as a protective device (a practice also documented in Southern states) and suggest that this represents an African-derived practice possibly developed in the United States and transferred to the Bahamas.

Wilkie and Farnsworth tend to underrate the role and influence of the Liberated Africans at Clifton, describing them as being “trapped in the limbo between freedom and enslavement” (p. 76). For people whose lives had already been subjected to so much tumult, minute details could be monumental because, unlike slaves, apprentices could not be sold. The apprentices were part of the Clifton community at least until Wylly left the Bahamas in 1821, so it is likely that their material culture would also reflect strong cultural memory. A brass button embossed, “VI West India Regiment” was recovered at the house designated Locus L. West India Regiments were composed of free Black soldiers. Liberated African apprentices were the main source of recruits after the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, so one of the four Liberated African apprentices must have lived at Locus L during the plantation period. This locus also had the most beads. Wilkie and Farnsworth consider bead use an indicator of African cultural memory. The combination of these artifacts at Locus L seems to support their hypothesis.

The book examines the dynamics of social life at multiple levels to understand how these residents characterized social relations within the household, the plantation community, and in the wider, market-based island community. Wilkie and Farnsworth make a strong case in demonstrating the variance between Wylly’s perception of how the lives of his slaves should be organized and the reality of how the enslaved and apprenticed people actually structured their lives. Though the seven houses in the slave village were built of materials provided by Wylly, and in a general form specified by him, they all had slightly different floor plans. The communal kitchen at the driver’s house apparently functioned more as a distribution point for foods shared among village residents. Each house had its own food preparation area in the backyard. These yards also served as social spaces for each household.

Wylly allowed his slaves to sell extra produce from their gardens in the town market. Clifton’s enslaved workers’ participation in a cash economy is reflected in the material remains of their households. The types of buttons, pipes, and ceramics excavated within the slave village showed little overlap with similar categories from the planter’s house. Wilkie and Farnsworth point out that the objects purchased did not generally represent the cheapest categories of items available. For example, the relatively expensive transfer-
printed and annular wares were preferred to the cheaper plain and minimally decorated shell-edged wares. Therefore factors other than cost contributed to these consumption decisions.

Certain pipe designs might have been associated with specific individuals as multiple examples of some designs were recovered from just one household site. Similar assumptions based on ceramic patterns prove to be much trickier. Wilkie and Farnsworth assume that overlapping ceramic patterns between households represent evidence of meal exchanges between these households. This presumes that African peoples purchased matching sets of ceramics as Europeans did. While there appears to be a larger context of individual identity, other cultural factors affected consumer choice. Therefore the limited number of overlapping ceramic patterns between neighboring households could just as easily indicate preferences solidifying individual household identities.

This book illustrates the constant challenges archaeologists face in attempting to interpret the material archaeological context. Because Wilkie and Farnsworth are aware that interpretation can be imprecise, they incorporated their brainstorming into the narrative. Ideas for interpretations are presented and argued, ending with what seemed to them most feasible. They write, “As archaeologists, we may not always be able to understand or recognize the meanings associated with particular objects or materials in terms of identity construction, but we must acknowledge their potential existence” (p. 310).


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Along with its homage to Franz Fanon, the title of this book refers to the central dilemma confronting Black Antilleans in France. On the one hand, they are French citizens, deeply familiar with French culture and society: the Caribbean islands they come from, Martinique and Guadeloupe, have been a part of France for more than three centuries, and, since 1946, they have been French departments, integrated in French political and administrative systems.
Since the early 1960s, Antilleans have been recruited in large numbers by the French government to work in metropolitan France in public sector jobs that are not open to noncitizens. They have for many years been there in significant numbers (close to a third of the people who consider themselves Antillean live in France), but they constitute a population that has remained largely invisible, dispersed throughout the Paris region, organizing little as a community and rarely engaging in political activism. On the other hand, these French citizens are marked by the color of their skin as a visible minority. They are more and more often mistaken for immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa, and are not protected by their citizen status from the growth of racism in France.

Rather than focusing on ordinary Antilleans living in metropolitan France, this ethnography provides snapshots of the lives and activities of particular activists in Paris, revealing the experiences that led them to become advocates by developing different strategies to assert ethnic difference in a French context.

David Beriss started his field research in Martinique in 1988. Chapter 1 tells about his initial search for creole identities and describes his discovery of a place in which culture itself had become the main stage for political action, in which educating the Martinican public about its culture has become a central objective across the local political spectrum, and in which French practices and institutions were increasingly present. Continuing his field research in metropolitan France, he found distinctions between the two French Caribbean islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe fade away, with “Martinicans,” like “Guadeloupeans,” becoming “Antilleans,” faced with the challenge of inventing an “Antillean” identity. In becoming “Antilleans,” they also become “Black”: instead of attending to the nuances of descent or shades of skin current in the Caribbean, French policymakers, along with employers, landlords, and police, lump Antilleans with Africans and other immigrants. Although French citizens for decades, they become part of the “immigrant problem” in French society.

Framed by two spectacular events, the bicentennial of the French Revolution in 1989 and the Soccer World Cup victory by a “multicultural” French team in 1998, and dealing with “the affair of the Muslim scarves,” the book’s second chapter examines “the price of Frenchness” and the “culture of French culture.” Historically, two versions of French cultural identity are in competition: the idea of a French people homogenized through education in the values of the republic and representative of a universal ideal and the idea of French national identity based on concepts of history, tradition, and religion. Both define the nation as one unified culture rather than a collection of subcultures. Inspired by one or by the other, the postwar French policies have promised assimilation to immigrants at the price of abandoning public attachment to their culture of origin. But color and colonial origin make acceptance in the French nation difficult. Beriss then raises questions about
the different uses of the word “race” in American and French – and Antillean – public discourses, and points that, although explicit racial ideologies lack legitimacy in France, color often serves as a marker of difference from a putative French ideal, and “culture” is often used as a substitute of “race.”

The next chapter examines the skepticism expressed by Antillean activists and intellectuals regarding the commemoration, in 1998, of the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the French colonies. They were concerned that the government would primarily celebrate the role French leaders, like Schoelcher, took in liberating the slaves, ignoring the actions the slaves took to liberate themselves. In Paris on May 23, this skepticism translated into a large street demonstration, organized by an alliance of more than three hundred associations demanding that the government recognize the enslavement of Africans as a crime against humanity.

Chapters 4-6 focus on the variety of strategies Antilleans in Paris have developed in their efforts to demand recognition. These include two groups that chose cultural performance to assert their cultural distinctiveness, either to recover “a lost Antillean authenticity,” or, alternatively, to show how Antillean culture is the cutting edge of creolization in France. We also meet a group of Antillean social workers, psychologists, and social scientists who use their research to try to shape public policies toward Antilleans in France. And there are lay Catholic groups that work to make the French Church more responsive to Antilleans by an explicit assertion of creole practices in the Church – this in sharp contrast to the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Paris, whose members, mainly Antilleans, have banished all visible Antillean practices from the church (if not from their lives, since they don’t drink rum, don’t listen to zouk music, and rarely speak creole), and are steadfast in their insistent demand to be Adventists first, Antilleans second.

In the concluding chapter, Beriss examines the concepts of creole, créolité, and creolization. Faced with the contradictions and failures of assimilation, Antilleans have long experimented with alternative ideologies with which they can build their claims for recognition. Among these, the development of créolité has proven especially popular among Antillean activists in France. It legitimizes their cultural difference but also asserts that their difference is unlike other differences, since Antilleans are at the same time both cultural insiders and outsiders. It also allows Antilleans to claim that their identity transcends France. Beriss himself appeals to the creolization of French society – and of social sciences.

At a time when “the Black question,” or the “postcolonial question,” is page-one news in France, and is gaining ground in the French political agenda, challenging the republican refusal of “communautarism,” this book will help its readers understand how the “Antillean question” fits into the “Black/postcolonial/immigrant” question, but also how these French citizens of the Caribbean vieilles colonies have a very special place in the debate.

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Many detractors of Haitian Vodou, both inside and outside the country, argue that the cost for the ceremonies it demands is a heavy burden for the peasants and is responsible for keeping them in poverty. Those with a more positive view of the cult, adopting a culturalist stance, point to its therapeutic and socially integrative dimension and see it as the expression of a fundamental Haitian identity. Both could be right, as this book shows, for economics and identitarian ideologies can sometimes reinforce one another in interesting ways. Attending to both aesthetics and politics, and combining global economics with local ethnography, Karen Richman manages to bring clarity to the double subject announced in her title. The system that she describes as the “production of people for export” (p. 39) and the ways religious systems respond to it are treated with insight and imagination. Richman portrays Vodou neither as a form of cultural resistance, nor as a conscious scam by scheming cult specialists on ignorant, backward followers. Rather, she presents it as a reasonable reaction to a situation of basic social oppression and economic exploitation. Citing Gerald Murray (1984), she points out that Vodou were once misrepresented in terms of “universalistic, nature spirits,” but that in fact, “Iwa are unique to each lineage” (p. 23). And she shows that “migrants do not escape the mobile Iwa’s orbit. Indeed migrants are prime ‘choices’ of avenging spirits” (pp. 23-24). From the Revolution through the predatory behavior of the merchant bourgeoisie and the brutal domination of trade by foreign interests, to the final rebellion of a *pwen* (her concluding chapter), she traces the story of a region that entered freedom under the sole auspices of forced migration and proletarization.

The originality of Richman’s work does not lie principally in areas that others such as Sidney Mintz (1953) or Eric Wolf (1969) had pioneered (see Labrecque 1982) – that is, an economic approach to peasant societies and the notion of “rural proletariat.” Nor does it stem from the fact, already explored by Alain Marie (1981:352), that agricultural societies incorporated within a capitalist sector are portrayed as formally traditional only in order to hide their structural morbidity. Rather, the special gift of this book is the way it brings together precise data on the history of land ownership with the religious activity of the lineages in the plain of Léogane. Within the context of
the currently lively field of “invention of tradition” studies, she demonstrates how fidelity to a ginen tradition as opposed to maji (magic) can reflect a certain social, and more specifically familial, organization involving overexploited workers kept at a distance both physically (by their status as migrants) and morally (through accusations of selfishness and greed).

Richman’s study is grounded in a long-term relationship with a variety of actors both “here” and “there” – including her involuntary tragic hero, Pierre Dioguy, nicknamed Ti Chini (“Little Caterpillar”), who spent his life working on Florida’s plantations, only to be rejected in the end by the lineage he supported and die of an illness he attributed to a familial spirit’s vengeance. But she has also done an excellent job presenting the confrontation of different points of view. Richman explores some issues so insightfully that they could easily have provided the stuff of separate studies in themselves. One is her analysis of the semantics of “feeding” in Haitian society, where “serving” means taking care of the spirits and the daily distribution of food among the familial community means ranking. Another is her treatment of the pwen (enriched by her reading of Michael Taussig’s 1980 study of “fetishism”), which takes off from Karen McCarthy Brown’s 1987 definition of the term as “anything that captures the essence or pith of a complex situation” (p. 15). She’s also particularly on-target in her discussion of the chante pwen, the sung version of a typically Afro-American form of social criticism, and its medium, the portable cassette-radio that “stands as an epitomizing symbol,” or “a model of and a model for’ their long-distance society (Geertz 1973:93)” (p. 4). Another strength of this book is its wider theorization of the “transnational performance space” (p. 11) that was formalized partly by former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide’s 1991 addition of a [diasporic] “Tenth Province” to Haiti’s nine internal provinces (p. 29).

With “little angels” (Vodou’s spiritual directors) like Karen McCarthy Brown, Alex Stepick, Sidney Mintz, Gerald Murray, and Ira Lowenthal, Karen Richman is able to take the baton from her predecessor in Léogane, Serge Larose (1975) and build usefully on Parry and Bloch’s Money and the Morality of Exchange (1989). Just as “Fijians ‘drink cash’ as a way of ‘ritually purifying tainted money’” (p. 20), Haitian “ritual pracises reformulate a displaced system of traditional peasant morality, carved out of the very disrupted, monetized processes it tries to conceal” (p. 22). Migration and Vodou offers a unique ethnographic enquiry into the rarely mentioned mating of economics and religion. Beginning and ending her book with a homage to Ti Chini, Richman’s sensitive treatment gives the ordinary heroes whose lives she relates a posthumous dignity.
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The Aluku/Boni, who are the subject of this book, were once probably the most famous of the Guianese Maroon peoples, thanks to the literary ambitions of British mercenary John Gabriel Stedman. His widely read Narrative
of a Five-Years’ Expedition, Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam, published in 1796 and soon after translated into several European languages, ensured the ancestors of the Aluku, and their early leader Boni, a prominent place in the European annals of antislavery struggles. It also became one of the main sources through which later generations would access the early history of this people.

Now, some two centuries later, the young Guyanais historian Jean Moomou comes with the promise of a fresh look at this history. What distinguishes this book from all previous writings on Aluku history is that its author is himself an Aluku (like other Francophone writers, he favors the appellation Boni), and though he is comfortable with conventional historiographical methods, he aims to (re)write history from the perspective of his own people. That a book departing from this promising premise should end up adding so little to our knowledge or understanding of Aluku history – or of Guianese Maroon history more broadly – is perplexing and disturbing.

Moomou maintains that the history of the Aluku “remains virgin territory” (p. 26). Unlike their European enemies, the Aluku kept no written records. However, these people do, according to the author, possess archives of their own – “the archives of orality” (p. 201). Consequently, we are told, “a great part of [this book] uses the oral tradition of the Aluku,” in which are preserved “the outlines of the past of this people” (p. 201). Moomou proposes to put into writing “this history that is sung, told through tales, in prayer formulas, during major council meetings, in art, and even during conflicts between lineages” (p. 27). In his view, this untapped body of oral information – transmitted through drumming, songs, and dances – “constitutes an essential source for knowing the Aluku past” (p. 33). So far so good.

Establishing and enumerating the forms of orality through which the Aluku preserve and pass on their history is one thing; actually gaining access to this historical knowledge is another. In practice, Moomou seems to have been much more successful at the former than the latter. For in the end, the book does not deliver on its promise to give Aluku oral tradition its due. From one chapter to the next, we wait in vain for the wealth of oral historical data that we have been led to expect. What we get instead is a rather meager smattering, a portion of which is lifted from previously published sources.

The book is divided into three sections. The first, consisting of three chapters, raises various methodological issues and provides an overview of the sources available to the author. In the final chapter of this section, Moomou compares some oral and written evidence and weighs correspondences and differences, using the well-known story of Boni’s death (according to written sources, at the hands of his Ndyuka Maroon enemies) as a sort of test case that might allow us to decide whether “the truth” resides in the written records or the oral traditions that contrast with them. The results appear to be inconclusive. The second and third parts of the book, each divided into three chap-
ters, recount in more or less chronological order the struggles of the Aluku ancestors during the late eighteenth century and their eventual emergence as a unified people over the course of the next hundred years—a major thesis of the book being that the Aluku did not exist in the sense that they do today, as a distinct, cohesive society, until the year 1860, when French and Dutch recognition of their status as a free and independent people removed the threat of domination by their Ndyuka neighbors and made possible a sedentary existence. Along the way to this conclusion, Moomou intersperses his account with a number of interesting, though sometimes convoluted, digressions.

What is surprising about this account of Aluku history, once again, is that it is based almost entirely on written sources. This over-reliance on written records is compounded by other problems. For instance, scant attention is given to sources written in English or Dutch, which are among the most important; at the same time few if any new French sources are used. Yet more worrisome is Moomou’s sometimes cavalier treatment of the existing literature. In this book, the scatter-shot observations of an odd assortment of non-Maroon writers whose acquaintance with Aluku or other Guianese Maroons is at best superficial seem to carry the same weight as the work of scholars such as Wim Hoogbergen (author of by far the most comprehensive historical study of the Aluku to date) and Richard Price, who receive only passing mention here. Similarly, Moomou’s occasional comparisons with Jamaican Maroons and their Kromanti religious tradition are made on the basis of a single two-page article in an EU publication on “national minorities,” by a writer who appears to have published nothing else on the subject.

But to return to the most glaring deficiency of this study: we do not hear Aluku voices (other than the author’s) nearly enough. Ironically, those whose observations dominate in this document are the same writers (most of them French, and involved in the project of colonization) through whom the past has been almost exclusively filtered in previous studies of Aluku and French Guianese history (Jacquemin, Sibour, Ronny, Vidal, Crevaux, Coudreau, Bouyer, Brunetti, to name a few). Why should this be the case? One explanation can be found in the list of “oral sources” at the back of the book. There it can be seen that of the twenty-one individuals consulted (presumably for their expertise in orally transmitted “local knowledge”), only half are actually Aluku (the rest being a curious mélange of Ndyuka acquaintances, Creole and metropolitan French culture brokers, and visiting African intellectuals, including a Senegalese historian and a Congolese legal scholar). Of the eleven Aluku contributors, six were “interviewed” for this study only once, and the other five twice.

After discovering this, I was better able to understand how Moomou could state, for instance, that the name of the eighteenth-century Aluku leader known to Europeans as Baron has been forgotten in Aluku oral tradition (p. 54, 78) or that, likewise, the important nineteenth-century Aluku settlement
of Pobiansi (known to Europeans as Providence) is no longer spoken of in Aluku oral tradition (p. 76). In contrast, in my own work as an ethnographer among the Aluku during the 1980s and 1990s, I found that a number of elders were well aware of Baron – whom they knew as Balon – and that knowledge of Pobiansi was quite alive, at least among men over a certain age, who often invoked the settlement’s name, as well as detailed oral traditions regarding its social composition, in contemporary debates about relations between Aluku matriclans and other local political issues.

At several points, Moomou mentions the difficulty of seeking insights into the past among the Aluku. He bemoans the loss of local historical knowledge caused by the neocolonial policy of *francisation* and other pressures facing the young (pp. 28, 37); he laments the recent deaths of some of the most revered Aluku elders and oral historians, before he could draw on their knowledge (p. 35); and he acknowledges the secrecy and the defensive barriers that any investigator among the Aluku must face (pp. 38-39). It would not be surprising if these factors were partly responsible for the unexpected ways in which this work is partial. Nevertheless, it is likely that a considerably richer and more nuanced picture of this past – one more reflective of an “inside” view – would have emerged had it been possible for the author to spend a much longer time working with a broader selection of Aluku elders.

I hasten to add that this study does contain fragments of orally transmitted historical knowledge that have yet to appear elsewhere in print; but these are few and far between, and most of them will be detectable (and meaningful) only to the reader with enough of a specialized background to place such minutiae in context.

Disappointing as this book is (and it displays other faults that I cannot detail here, ranging from linguistic naïveté in its discussions of language and etymology to errors in its depiction of traditional Aluku political structure), Moomou deserves credit for providing the Francophone world with a much-needed overview (partial though it is) of one of the great historical episodes of resistance to slavery in a part of the Americas colonized by both the Dutch and the French. One hopes that this promising young scholar will continue to build on these beginnings, and will go on to produce a series of more mature works that might better convey the distinctive consciousness of the past the Aluku have maintained to the present.
Wayana eitoponpë: (Une) histoire (orale) des Indiens Wayana. JEAN CHAPUIS & HERVÉ RIVIÈRE. Matoury, Guyane: Ibis Rouge, 2003. 1065 pp. (Paper € 70.00)

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Wayana eitoponpë will have a significant impact upon the history and ethnology of the Guianas, posing stimulating challenges in its more than one thousand pages.

The disheartening image of the transformations affecting Wayana culture and society, like those of other groups throughout the region, pervade this book, though one misses the perspective of the Wayana, who are represented solely through their “classical traditions.” Chapuis’s pessimism about the future of these traditions seems to be what gave him the courage to present and comment upon a collection of fifty-one narratives and twelve Kalau songs that were once sung during initiation rites – all provided by a single speaker, Kuliyaman. His aim was to rescue this rich material from oblivion, for Kuliyaman, described as the last specialist and the “model of Wayana tradition,” has died. The ethnomusicologist Hervé Rivière, who conducted the research and recorded the Kalau songs, also died in 2001.

Because the traditional context for the transmission of these narratives no longer exists, Chapuis asked Kuliyaman to narrate episodes of the genesis of humanity, the history of the wars between ancestral groups, etc. He then produced the translation with the help of two Wayana youths and a lexicon that he assembled himself without the collaboration of linguists. In selecting and ordering the narratives to identify “periods” in Wayana history, he builds on his own conception of this history, asserting that Wayana are not particularly demanding about chronology, and that their “historical” knowledge is not transmitted in ordered sections. Rather, as we know, their historical narratives reflect the contexts that inspire them, and incidents are thus reformulated each time they are told. Recent studies have been increasingly aware of this feature of native Amerindian traditions.

Because ethnography hinges on interpretation, and not just documentation, some comments about the concepts behind Chapuis’s work are in order. The notions of “clan” and “social evolution” that he draws on are at variance with standard analyses of the social organization and cosmology of Amerindian societies in the Guianas. Chapuis takes “evolution” mainly to
consist of the disappearance of Wayana clans, which has opened up space for exogamy and increased exchange. Categories of identity and alterity and of the relationships they produce are of course fundamental to Amazonian societies and cosmologies, and this is an area that recent literature has addressed amply, but Chapuis provides little if any significant dialogue with these studies and regional comparisons. And one can only be surprised at his suggestion that while clans (territorialized, with eponymous clans, etc.) existed in the past, they have now disappeared or are in the process of disappearing. Other studies of the Wayana – e.g., Eliane Camargo (forthcoming), Lúcia Hussak van Velthem (2003), and Paula Morgado (2004) – show the continued use of identifiers of origin to mark differences between groups in the playing out of relationships and political tensions between different Wayana groups. Furthermore, recent research in the region has taught us that the concept of clans – inherited from Africanist anthropology, and still in vogue when the first ethnographies of Wayana culture were being carried out (Hurault 1968, 1972) – is actually inappropriate to analyze these social dynamics, in terms of both the formation (supposedly endogamous) of Amerindian groups and subgroups, and relations of alliance and exchange between them, be they Wayana, Wajãpi, Tiriyó, or others. The work of Denise Fajardo Grupioni on the Tiriyó (2002) shows how the calculation of descent depends on exchange and exogamy. Chapuis’s vision of traditional Wayana clans as territorialized and endogamous groups fails to acknowledge the dominant elements of political and social organization in the region, which hinge on the relationship between groups in terms of descent and the matrimonial exchange.

Comparative studies point to the openness of this regional socio-cosmology. The notion of “mixture,” which is not the result of a historical evolution, but a condition of social life, is absolutely fundamental. For example, members of Tarëno/Tiriyó subgroups are supposed to take spouses from groups that speak different dialects. Chapuis’s view of exchange as a phenomenon of the recent past may be due to an overly narrow reliance on Wayana data – a neglect of the long-standing universe of relations between the Wayana and other groups.

Chapuis also treats Wayana narratives as if they were accounts of a transformation of “the” Wayana cultural and social order. But each kin group, each local group, and each actor has a special position within the network of conflicts and alliances depicted in the narratives, so that each presents a unique vision of who “the true Wayana” or “the cruelest enemies” are. It would not be possible to squeeze these multiple narratives into one “neutral” version. Chapuis attempts, ambitiously, to demonstrate that the logic of relationships with alterity is political. The problem is that there cannot be a single Wayana politics, let alone one for the “true” Wayana. This is why the structures of Wayana narratives, whether from French Guiana or Brazil, are as similar as they are to those of the Wajãpi, Tiriyó, or Karipuna from Amapá.
Chapuis’s book challenges readers to decide whether they feel that the “traditional” mytho-historical narratives, as told by Kuliyaman, provide the basis for a legitimate “ethnic history.” The principal value of the narratives in this book may well reside in their relevance to a wide range of Amerindian groups of the Guianas. For me, Kuliyaman does not represent “the end of the Wayana world,” and the themes he brings to light are not those of any particular group. Rather, I see them as reflections of a regional Amerindian knowledge. Ultimately, ethnic processes that close off what oral traditions have always spread, in both time and space, could result in the “end” of relations between Wayanas and other groups.

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This book’s main purpose is to demonstrate that the vast majority of words in the ritual language of a well-known Afro-Cuban cult, Palo Monte, or Regla Congo, can be traced lexically to Kikongo. This “lingua sacra” consists of salutations to deities, their names, liturgical songs, and invocations of gods and supernatural powers.

Jesús Fuentes Guerra and Armin Schwegler conducted their research in Cuba’s central province where Palo Monte is well represented. The Paleros do not form a group in any strict sense, but are recruited as individuals, and they are predominantly men. They come from diverse social backgrounds, often do not know each other, and are highly mixed ethnically. The loose structure of membership is not a product of recent developments but has been characteristic of cult life since the nineteenth century or perhaps earlier. The relations between practitioners are dyadic, as are the “pacts” between the believers and the powers worshiped. The book is based on recorded spoken text, interviews, and observations of rites.

The term “lingua sacra” rightly suggests that this is a rather restricted linguistic code, in some ways comparable to church Latin in contemporary Christianity. The degrees of competence in this sacred code vary greatly. Some ritual experts can recite long prayers in “African speech” without difficulty, while others have to restrict themselves to popular Spanish, punctuated by some “Congolese” expressions or interspersed with “bozal,” the parlance that used to be current among slaves. Fuentes Guerra and Schwegler noticed catchwords derived from Portuguese and Amerindian languages, and even phrases from Muslim perorations. In fact, they point out in a footnote, the term “glosolalia” characterizes many ritual utterances. They add that most speakers switch codes readily. Nevertheless, they suggest that the command of Kikongo among Paleros is considerably greater than scholars have allowed thus far. Some informants, they claim, can keep up conversations or monologues that are shot through with “Africanisms.” It is not clear, however, whether these monologues are any different from the inspired utterances in the “gift of tongues.”
Fuentes Guerra and Schwegler have a highly specific cradle of culture in mind, demarcating a strip some 50 kilometers wide, known as “Mayombe,” as the African home ground of the cult. They first stress that the geographical isolation of the area promoted its cultural singularity. Then go on to suggest that large numbers of slaves imported in Cuba in earlier centuries originated from this area. According to them, the roots of the “Palo Monte Mayombe,” a branch of the Regla Congo, can thus be found in this relatively small area. A model as simple as this can hardly account for the turbulent cultural and demographic history of the area. Slave traders and their agents foraged deeply into the interior to get hold of the desired quantity of human merchandise. It seems improbable that Mayombe would have remained exempt from these tribulations; the region’s isolation should not be taken for granted. Anthropologists who conducted research in the lower Congo and neighboring Angola tend to stress the cultural unity of the Bantu-speaking world, and most scholars are wary of studies that focus on small, bounded units without reference to the larger region and to the historical processes that have helped to shape it.

The book is more successful in explaining in what ways the sacred language has been preserved over an impressively long period. Although communal rituals that might familiarize a public with this “lingua sacra” appear to be absent in Palo Monte, divinatory sessions are held almost daily. The names of the deities and sacred objects and the recurrent phrases of invocation are made common knowledge through songs that resound through the three wards in the town where most adepts live. The obligation incumbent on the adepts to stage ceremonies for the powers they call upon creates opportunities to make the speech repertoire more readily available. The competence may vary, and the words spoken may often be indistinct, glossed over, or unduly accelerated, but a command of the sacred idiom is nevertheless a way of gaining prestige and a sign of belonging to this network of male devotees. Verbal contests are popular as forms of recreation.

One of our concerns with this book is that the authors prefer to zoom in on the language spoken by the Palo Monte devotees as if it were a linguistic isolate. Yet their own data demonstrate that contacts between Palo Monte adepts and devotees of other Afro-Cuban cults such as Santería are frequent, and that these groups of believers share a worldview. Ritual experts of Santería may refer a client to a Palo Monte specialist for treatment. On the other hand, Fuentes Guerra and Schwegler stress that Paleros are not familiar with “santero” ritual practice and the worship of Christian saints linked to Santería.

In their presentation of the sacred texts, Fuentes Guerra and Schwegler employ elaborate grammatical schemata to gain a better semantic understanding. Such efforts raise problems other than the purely linguistic ones. When emotionally charged notions are concerned, as is the case with the names of ambiguous and dangerous powers, people of the Lower Congo may
use all sorts of verbal associations, puns, and wordplay to shield the numinous from the commonplace (MacGaffey 1986:13-14). May we not assume that Paleros have often operated in the same way, disclosing and obscuring interpretations?

On the relationship with evil, the authors are quick to point out similarities between the Palo Monte and the Bakongo, though Cuba’s Palo Monte practice and thought seem to have developed in a specific direction. They refer to old and new sources on the Lower Kongo, and to anthropological studies on Cuba by contemporaries. Comparing the data from the African sources with the information supplied by practitioners of Palo Monte, the differences are obvious. Paleros identify with devils (p. 175) and present their activities as maleficent (p. 47): in order to help, treat, or heal a client, the ritual expert has to kill a third person in an “exchange of lives.” This pact with an evil power cannot be regarded as a mere continuity with Bakongo ways of relating to the supernatural. From MacGaffey’s work, to name but one anthropologist, one gets the notion that religious specialists strive for a much more two-sided, balanced relationship.

Illness and misfortune draw clients towards the cult, so restorative rites have to be performed. Unfortunately, the rites announced in the book’s title are not discussed, nor do we hear about concrete cases dealt with by the cheerful-looking Paleros photographed by Schwegler and Fuentes Guerra. Although understandably, black magic is mostly kept secret, rites to defend or protect clients are not necessarily kept occult to the same extent. More information about both language use and forms of ritual contact would have been welcome.

**Reference**

Scholars of Afro-Atlantic religions have long noted that in traditions such as Haitian Vodou and Brazilian Candomblé, gender roles do not conform to conventional secular models. Devotees often identify most highly with divine patrons of the opposite sex; fluidity in gender roles is demanded in a variety of ceremonial contexts and in possession, arguably the most sacred of ritual acts; female deities are as powerful as their male counterparts; and women and gay men routinely achieve prominence within religious hierarchies. Mary Ann Clark deserves praise for being the first to address the issue of gender in Cuban Santería at length, and for analyzing the ways in which Santería constructs its ideal religious subjects. Although this is not the consistently rigorous study that an historian of religions would desire, Clark takes important steps toward “formulating the beginnings of a theology of the contemporary Orisha traditions using the Western philosophical and theological categories while approaching them from a different perspective” (pp. 3-4). As an initiate conversant with major debates in cultural and religious studies, she conveys a valuable insider point of view in an accessible writing style that will ensure exposure for her ideas beyond strictly academic circles.

Clark contends that Santería is a female-normative religion in which women’s roles and attributes, as construed according to West African Yoruba precedents, are not only privileged but necessarily assumed by all initiates regardless of sex or sexual orientation. She does not fail to consider possible critiques of the binarisms inherent in the theological anthropology of Santería, conceding that “priestly initiation both valorizes and overturns essentialist views of gender” (p. 84). Clark shines in fleshing out the contours of her main argument and forging connections between ceremonial and linguistic practices, as in her masterful, nuanced elaboration of the ways in which the term iyawo (“wife”) is used with reference to Santería priests. Her apologia – in the technical sense of a formal defense – is conscientiously crafted with impressive insight into the rationales for ritual protocols from an emic perspective, for instance, when demonstrating that animal sacrifice does not operate in order to undergird patriarchal control. She also joins scholars David H. Brown and Miguel “Willie”
Ramos in vigorously contesting claims made by the male order of priests called babalawos to preeminence and ultimate authority within the religion.

Unfortunately, scattered throughout the text are the same casual allusions to archetypes and anima/animus that have tended to obscure, rather than illuminate, the popular understanding of Santería, especially in the absence of any substantial engagement with (or, indeed, citation of) the primary texts of the Jungian corpus. But this is a mere quibble in the face of deeper problems in Clark’s comparison of Santería to other traditions. There are sweeping generalizations phrased, for example, in terms of “the Western mind” (p. 97) and a regrettable inattention to the challenges of the comparative project – for instance, in a number of ill-considered parallels between possession in Santería and the ecstasies of Christian mystics. Despite the occasional misreading of texts that touch on gender in Afro-Atlantic religions, no one can come away from this book thinking that Clark is unknowledgeable about historical and contemporary Yoruba traditions, yet this erudition sometimes works against readers’ interests. Clark indulges in a fundamentally dishonest form of comparativism often encountered in the literature on Santería: when documentation on certain concepts and practices among initiates is wanting, information on the Yoruba is pressed into service, without any recognition that the similarities between geographically, socioculturally, and temporally distant practitioners may not suffice to justify the introduction of one data set for another. Such moments represent a lost opportunity to determine the grounds for felicitous comparison between West African traditions and Afro-Atlantic religions, as well as to evaluate the type of research that remains to be conducted into such phenomena as volt-sorcery and sacrificial substitution.

A greater limitation of Where Men are Wives and Women Rule is that, while focusing on a religion that crystallized into its current form in the African diaspora, it never broaches the question of race. The racial dynamics of religious practice are not bracketed due to theoretical or practical considerations, but instead, are completely elided; one can only speculate about whether Clark felt that attending to such matters would offend practitioners, prove superfluous (if ritual performance transcends race), or require lengthy digressions uncoupling the concepts of “Africanity” and “Blackness.” Particularly within the Afro-Atlantic world, however, gender is deeply imbricated within discourses and structures of domination that derive their effects from an intimate articulation with race and class in everyday life. The erasure of race from both quotidian experience and ritual process – the way race is gendered, and gender racialized – seems symptomatic of Clark’s reluctance to consider how the configuration of gender in Santería affects practitioners outside their initiatory communities. What do Santería’s gendered ritual practices imply about the social mechanisms through which the religion is reproduced? Does Santería present a model of “women’s rule” that other religions would do well to adopt, or does the celebration of “wifeliness” serve to perpetuate
inequalities within a religious idiom? For example, much of the household labor that facilitates ritual practice, such as cooking and childcare, still falls to women in most communities; this fact should not be a throwaway line but the start of a frank discussion. Clark does grant that the pressure to expand ritual prerogatives for women has come from some African-American and Afro-Cuban initiates, yet she does not explore why women of color, among others, might be motivated to push beyond traditional restrictions on “male” forms of drumming and divination. Her silence on race also needlessly impedes dialogue with feminist and womanist theologians such as Delores S. Williams or JoAnne Marie Terrell, whose analyses of the symbolic Blackness of god are central to their constructive projects. It is a measure of Clark’s analytical skill and commitment to her chosen subject that, despite its shortcomings, her book succeeds in breaking a path to greater awareness of what Santería’s complexly gendered ritual system can offer both researchers and coreligionists.


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The dictator Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina, who ruled the Dominican Republic with an iron first for over three decades, has fascinated writers since the “Boom” novelists took up the figure of the dictator in the 1970s. In Reasons of State, Alejo Carpentier modeled his decrepit dictator in large part after him. Indeed, the scholarship on the Trujillo period is now richer in literature than in history perhaps because aspects of the regime were so very excessive, with its notorious corruption, operatic theatricality, and audacious repression, that they seem more readily explicable in the language of magical realism than social science. From his signature ostrich-plumed Napoleonic bicorn hat to his unquenchable hunger for young women, Trujillo cut a larger-than-life profile. Indeed, Dominicans remember him as almost preternatural, reflected in rumors that he did not sweat and that he ruled in part through sorcery. Even if his dynastic efforts to seat his son in the presidency
might conjure up comparisons with Anastasio Somoza García (the grossly corrupt depression dictator of Nicaragua who also rose up through the ranks of the U.S.-trained National Guard during the U.S. Occupation), Trujillo, a consummate player, was patently not a stooge of the United States. In typical wily fashion, when faced with State Department opprobrium he courted allies within the U.S. military, and then used the protection afforded him by the postwar Good Neighbor policy to greatly expand his armed forces and thus further entrench himself in office (see Roorda 1998).

Theatricality was one of the regime’s distinguishing features. While Trujillo created a police state with extensive surveillance networks, banned opposition parties, and required all Dominicans to join the national party, he sought to create the appearance of democracy. He paid off U.S. congressmen such as Hamilton Fish, who lauded Trujillo for his order and progress. Then he used Fish’s supportive speeches and missives as political capital at home since they cast the Dominican Republic as a U.S. ally and thus a virtual democracy. He created a simulacrum of citizenship by staging elections replete with rallies and publicity, yet without alternative candidates. Trujillo bought up the commanding heights of the economy, disbursing major industries to his family and allies, while posturing as a great nationalist. He was so proud of his fourteen-year-old paramour in 1937 that she was made Carnival queen, her full-page photo covering the entire front page of the national newspaper (which nearly cost him his marriage). His repression knew no bounds. He had a Columbia University graduate student abducted and killed in a New York subway for having written a dissertation criticizing his regime. And he had upwards of 30,000 Haitian migrants brutally slaughtered by machete in 1937 with no provocation. Indeed, Trujillo’s “flair for the baroque” was so extreme that López-Calvo’s historicist project of untangling fact from fiction becomes especially important.

“God and Trujillo” takes its name from one of the more ludicrous acts of encomia put forth by a Trujillista minion who had this slogan fashioned into a sign in his home to curry favor with the dictator. The book offers a study of what López-Calvo describes as “The Trujillo Cycle,” books in which the Trujillo regime is named and takes center stage. It covers texts that have garnered international acclaim, such as Julia Álvarez, In the Time of the Butterflies, which was made into a major motion picture, Vargas Llosa’s international bestseller The Feast of the Goat, and Vásquez Montalbán’s Galíndez, which sold over 100,000 copies. Yet to its credit this study also widens its reach to include Dominican literature on the Era of Trujillo, authors such as Marcio Veloz Maggiolo, Viriato Sención, Miguel Aquino García, Diógenes Valdez, and Bernardo Vega, who have not been as successful at garnering an audience outside the island yet whose work offers a fascinating vantage point into the experience of life under the regime. Even though Veloz Maggiolo is a major writer, who has written more than twenty-four books and won a national book award, his work is not well known overseas.
López-Calvo does a masterful job of situating the international bestsellers in relation to the Dominican novels of the Trujillato, as well as elucidating how these fictional narratives relate to the real history of the regime. Chapter 1 commences with the theme of dictatorship in Latin American literature. It’s followed by a chapter on the historical background of the Trujillato and the key sources of international support for the regime – the Catholic Church, the U.S. and Cold War anticommunism – and another that offers a comparison of narrative devices such as parody and continuismo in The Feast of the Goat and Gabriel García Marquez’s The Autumn of the Patriarch. The remaining three chapters treat the politics of revenge, the role of women as figures of resistance and seduction, the treatment of the militant left in testimonial accounts, and the ethics of complicity.

For a literary study, this is a very historical account which offers a deeply contextualized reading of the Trujillo novels. Crisply written and jargon free, it presents an excellent summary of twentieth-century Dominican political history, and as a class assignment would make a fine accompaniment to some of the many novels it treats. The analysis of the relationship between the history and fiction of the Era of Trujillo is necessary given the curious fact that most of these novels have a neorealist form, narrating the Trujillo period using real people or thinly disguised pseudonyms. The fact that these novels emplot historical personae in fictional accounts explains why Dominicans have been sharply critical of texts such as Álvarez’s, since it appears that Dominicans are not yet ready to expose the foibles of national heroines such as the Mirabal sisters, who were tortured and killed for their participation in an assassination attempt on Trujillo. It is also slightly strange to hear about real historical figures such as historian Jose Israel Cuello or Arturo R. Espaillat, head of military intelligence, referred to as “characters” (pp. 64-65) even though they do adopt this role in the fictionalized accounts.

Somewhat ironically, the two novels that have brought most international acclaim, those by Vargas Llosa and Álvarez, have been resoundingly rejected by many Dominicans on the island as evidenced by the debates in Dominican journals such as Vetas. Given the fact that López-Calvo brings Dominicans into the global conversation over the Trujillo regime by including their literary renditions, it would have been interesting to engage this debate as well. While López-Calvo’s evaluation of these narratives in terms of the real history they narrate provides crucial contextualization, he has overlooked more recent analyses of the regime that have sharpened our understanding of the contradictory logics of Trujillo’s politics such as Turits (2003), Roorda (1998), and Peguero (2004). These works stress that he did not rule through repression alone but also through populist tactics such as peasant land grants and a dramatic expansion and elevation of the military, which served as a means of upward mobility for the underclasses, and that he was not a sinister oaf but rather a clever strategist who used U.S. support to his great advantage.
Clearly argued with no extraneous theory, by locating the literary treatments within the historiography of the regime this succinct and highly readable account deepens our understanding of how and why Rafael Trujillo became the Latin American dictator par excellence, and how his mythic profile accords with the real history of the regime. Finally, it serves as an important reminder that literature can sometimes reveal imaginative truths that history cannot.

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Kirwin Shaffer’s Anarchism and Countercultural Politics and Lillian Guerra’s The Myth of José Martí are both welcome contributions to Cuban prerevolutionary history. I had the peculiar privilege of reading them in Cuba during the summer of 2005. As I followed these attempts to conceptualize specific Cuban sociohistorical processes, classifying them into either three variants of anarchism or three types of nationalism, I was reminded daily
of how Cuba and Cubans have always defied conceptualization. What, one could ask, does a social scientist do with the useful yet ambiguous popular concept of *jineterismo*? How does our theoretical tool kit for understanding race relations work when a person of African descent complains about having “all the Blacks of Marianao” in her house? In many ways social reality is always difficult to put into concepts, yet scholars persist in their efforts. Both of the books under review here are examples of this.

Kirwin Shaffer’s *Anarchism and Countercultural Politics* is a brilliantly written and carefully organized study of anarchism in Cuba during the first decades after the country’s independence in 1902. Shaffer is knowledgeable about the scholarship on anarchism in Spain and Latin America and it is clearly a subtext in his study. But he departs from it in that he takes a “socio-cultural approach” to examine anarchism beyond the arena of labor and working-class history that has been the focus of most studies of anarchism. While not neglecting this latter area, Shaffer attempts to amend the “ideologically driven results” of the post-1959 Cuban historiography of anarchism by moving to the arena of culture where, he argues, anarchists challenged those in power in a variety of ways (p. 8).

The book begins by discussing *cubanía*, culture, and power, providing a glimpse of the social scientist in Shaffer the historian. Shaffer clarifies that his use of the term *anarchist* reflects the period under study and he defines three variants of anarchism in the island: anarcho-communism, anarcho-syndicalism, and anarcho-naturism. While these variants are useful for analytical purposes, he recognizes that at times the way they are defined “cloud[s] the truth” and that “people’s ideas tended to be more fluid,” moving from one variant of anarchism to the other (p. 4). Shaffer thus acknowledges, from the start, how the social reality that academic historians attempt to decipher is often too complex for the labels they devise.

The book’s first part looks at the position of anarchists in key political and cultural debates of the Republican years of national formation: labor, migration, and race. In Parts Two and Three the book moves to areas that are less dominant in the scholarship of Republican Cuba with chapters examining the cultural politics of health, gender, medicine, and education. Throughout, Shaffer analyzes the cultural productions (novels, plays, and other writings) of leading anarchists Antonio Penichet and Adrian del Valle to capture the ways in which their alternative ideas and political positions were expressed in the social landscape of early twentieth-century Cuba.

*Anarchism and Countercultural Politics* is an engaging book. While it does not pretend to do, say, gender or subaltern studies and has no intellectual pretentiousness about combining literature and history or even doing cultural history, it provides something in all of these areas and more. Students of nationalism will be interested in Shaffer’s discussion of anarchists’ appropriation of Cuban national symbols, and those studying Cuban racial politics
will be stimulated by his discussion of literary works dealing with inter-racial romantic relations.

I do have one question regarding Shaffer’s book. While it is evident that he immersed himself in the printed sources at the Institute of Literature and Linguistics and the José Martí National Library in Havana, he cites not a single reference to any documentary holdings in the national, provincial, or local archives of Cuba. There is no explanation for the limited amount of nonanarchist press he used or the lack of archival primary sources. To be sure, the most important available catalogues for the early twentieth century in the Cuban National Archive contain almost no entries under anarchism, and that may explain Shaffer’s research focus on the anarchists’ periodicals. Yet, I cannot help but wonder about this “silence” at the levels of fact creation, assembly, and retrieval in both Shaffer’s work and the archives (see Trouillot 1995:26). While being aware of “archival power” and “silences” (also noted specifically for Cuba by Moreno Fraginals 1983:14-16), I am forced to ask: if the anarchists were influential and challenged those holding political and ideological power, where are the reactions of the latter among the archival collections that record their concerns and histories? Even if the catalogue entries do not show them, I believe that they must be “out there” somewhere to be found. While I do not think this lack of archival sources invalidates any of Shaffer’s conclusions, I wonder what the archives would add to what is already a rich historical narrative. The positive side of this “shortcoming” is that Shaffer’s book opens an avenue of further research on the topic of anarchism for those venturing into the Cuban archives.

If one can raise questions around the potential of archival sources in Shaffer’s work, there can be no doubt about the wealth of data and the thorough archival research in Lillian Guerra’s *The Myth of José Martí*. Based on a wide range of documents from archives in Cuba and the United States, Guerra provides a detailed analysis of political events and ideas of the nation in early twentieth-century Cuba. The argument of the book, nonetheless, is a rather self-evident one for anyone informed about the operational logic of nationalism and national symbols: that the various “competing interpretations of José Martí represented different, conflicting interpretations of nation” (p. 3). Guerra shows us a history that resembles Raúl Martínez’s *15 repeticiones de Martí* (1966), a painting that shows fifteen colorful portraits of the Cuban national martyr, each slightly different, with changes in the hair, the mustache, or the colors used. They are all different, yet all the same.

So dominant are the sources in Guerra’s study that she “conceived of the nation much as [her] archival sources indicated they had conceived it,” apparently endowing the very sources with a life of their own. This archival conception of the nation, “constantly under construction,” “subject to revision and interpretation,” and “historically contingent,” is divided into three dominant visions (pp. 14-15): pro-imperialist, revolutionary, and pop-
ular nationalisms. For Guerra, pro-imperialist nationalism was advocated by white middle and upper classes promoting Western notions of “civilization.” Revolutionary nationalism was represented by military leaders whose authority was grounded in their participation in the nineteenth-century independence struggles. They could, in the name of Martí, advocate a top-down nation-building process with equality for all “as long as the Cuban masses, those who had been ‘unequal’ in the past, promised to respect their leaders’ authority.” Popular nationalism, in Guerra’s words, would be rooted in an “ideological amalgam of social desires and models of democracy derived from various historical experiences of marginalization.” Advocates of this “horizontal vision of the nation” included working-class and lower-middle-class emigrés from Florida, labor activists and Black lower-rank veterans of the independence wars who aimed for a more racially and socially equal society inspired by Martí (pp. 17-18).

Throughout the book Guerra applies her categories to a variety of socio-historical processes. Chapter 1 looks at Martí’s thought with emphasis on his harmonizing national discourse that concealed divisions. Chapter 2 examines how pro-imperialist nationalism and its exponents emerged as dominant after the final independence war. Chapter 3 looks at the consolidation of U.S. hegemony, with particular emphasis on the educational policies of the U.S. military government administration from 1898 to 1902. Issues of race and class are examined in Chapter 4 as Guerra also shows how the newly independent Cuba moved from “revolution” to “involution,” idealizing things Spanish at the cultural level and through migration policies. The Liberal revolt of 1906 is covered in Chapter 5, while its consequence, the second U.S. intervention and provisional government until 1909, is carefully analyzed in Chapter 6 with an insightful examination of Charles Magoon’s “populism” during his administration. Chapter 7 focuses on the rise of revolutionary nationalism during the presidencies of two military caudillos from the wars of independence, José Miguel Gómez (1909-1912) and Mario García Menocal (1913-1921). Popular nationalists find their place in each of these chapters through their multiple struggles in the arena of race and labor.

Those interested in the social, cultural, and political history of Cuba in its transition to independence and national sovereignty under U.S. tutelage will find The Myth of José Martí to be an in-depth study that shows the abilities of Guerra as a researcher. But the wealth of historical sources makes her narrative a rather dense one. In addition, the book, presented as covering the period 1895-1921, devotes six chapters, or 222 pages, to the period 1895-1909, and then flies over the next twelve years (1909-1921) in only one chapter, or 32 pages. For those interested in the first period, Guerra’s book will be compulsory reading. However, the coverage for the next twelve years is rather limited for a time that saw two presidents (one Liberal, one Conservative), two sociopolitical revolts, U.S. military and political interventionism, and
dramatic social, economic, and demographic transformations, all processes that may have had a significant impact on the development of nationalisms.

Guerra’s triad of national visions and the groups representing them can be useful in illustrating three dominant tendencies in Republican Cuba. Yet I find them problematic in that they may hide alternative visions of the nation present in the sociopolitical landscape, like, for example, those portrayed by anarchists in Shaffer’s study. While one can identify Guerra’s three competing national visions, each using its proponents’ own idea of Martí, I can also imagine fifteen ideas of the nation (as in Martínez’s painting), or more, at the wider societal level in the turbulent years covered by the study. In addition, even with regard to a dominant political actor such as García Menocal, I wonder whether he was a pro-imperialist or revolutionary nationalist. As a White Cornell-educated engineer closely associated with U.S. economic interests, yet someone who used his military credentials and authority to make his way into the presidency twice in the 1910s, where does he fit within Guerra’s scheme?

Despite the questions raised here, both of these books are commendable examples of good historical research by committed scholars. Both reflect an attempt to use their conclusions to connect their early twentieth-century analysis with either the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 or the revolutionary period itself, somehow forcing the dictum of history’s relevance to the present. In a strange way, it was the histories themselves, not the conclusions, that linked the past and the present as I read the books while living in contemporary Cuba. Of course, Martí is omnipresent in the country, but passages such as Guerra’s account of the “Currency Strike” of 1907 (p. 208) or Shaffer’s description of Havana’s hygienic conditions in which “the subsoil of the city is topped off with a layer of excrement” (p. 114) gave me a sense of déjà vu as I saw people operating in two (or three) currencies or as I dealt with the appalling hygienic conditions of Old Havana (including the surroundings of the National Archives!). Two signs of hope struck me in my last week in Havana. One day, as I was leaving the José Martí National Library I saw a child walking around and around the full-body statue of Martí located in the lobby. As I watched, he took hold of one of Martí’s hands and said, “Thank you Martí.” On my last day, I crossed the central park where the one-hundred-year-old statue of José Martí mentioned by Guerra is still in its place. However, it was surrounded by scaffolding for refurbishing. It would be nice to think that this meant that Martí’s ideals of equality, though like the statue deteriorated with time, have not been forgotten and are in the process of being renovated so that future children can still say, “Thank you.”
There can be no debating the ironic fact that despite political ties, Puerto Rican literature is not as well known in the United States as are the literatures of other Latin American nations. In *Humor and the Eccentric Text in Puerto Rican Literature*, Israel Reyes sets out to correct this imbalance, attempting to map out the use of humor in various texts and engage with the critical thrust of each. Unfortunately, as Reyes himself points out from the start, “humor allows one to laugh through pain, and a sense of humor assigns that capacity more to a psychical process” (p. 26). The result is that each writer dealt with in the study reflects a unique vision of humor, for example, humor as release, or humor as self-reflection, and this tends to unbalance the study somewhat.

Chapter 1 centers on the work of Nemesio Canales. For the most part, Reyes presents an excellent analysis of Canales’s focus on the ironic nature of death as a humorous social critique of the Puerto Rican condition and the quest for social change.

Chapter 2, “Humor and *Jaiberia* in the Novels of Luis Rafael Sánchez,” engages the question of national identity in Puerto Rico and may well be the

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best in the book. Reyes suggests that masking is evident in all of Sánchez’s writing and represents a natural part of the Puerto Rican condition. Pointing out that Sánchez’s aim is to parody the social conventions of Puerto Ricans, Reyes shows how skillfully he explores the inconsistencies that surface between the insularity of vision among some Puerto Rican communities and the eccentricity of hybridity which blurs linguistic purity and confounds the question of authority in the discourse of identity. He concludes that narrative humor is the way in which Sánchez continues a tradition of simultaneously destabilizing selfhood and re-affirming Puerto Rican identity.

No study of Puerto Rican literature would be complete without consideration of the iconographic works of Ana Lydia Vega and her writing on the marginalized other in Puerto Rico. Reyes points the reader to the many risks that Vega takes in her writing on women and Blacks. His theoretical analysis of the notion of bilingual identity in Vega’s texts is particularly successful. This is a difficult negotiation by any stretch of the imagination and it is impressive that Reyes (as a male critic) is able to interpret so subtly Vega’s portrayals of the contradictions inherent in protagonists such as Suzie Bermúdez (in “Pollito chicken”) and Carola Vidal (in “Pasión de historia”) who simultaneously accept and resist the paternalistic order of Puerto Rican society.

One of the best features of this book is its treatment of authors who live both on the island and state-side. In this context too, Reyes’s analysis of a variety of genres of writing is to be noted. The final chapter grapples with the writings of the playwright Pedro Pietri, whose Nuyorican textual presentations were in vogue during the 1970s in Puerto Rico. Reyes explores Pietri’s satirization of the Puerto Rican diaspora, treating it as representative of black humor. Through Pietri’s descriptions of mundane realities, Reyes introduces readers to the discourse on identity and thereby helps them understand the instability on which Puerto Rican national identity is built.

*Humor and the Eccentric Text in Puerto Rican Literature* is not easy reading. Nevertheless, it is an important contribution to studies that seek to interrogate colonialism, race, and gender in the Caribbean (especially Puerto Rico), as well as ongoing debates about the cultural authenticity of Puertoricanness. Reyes has sought in this study to encompass many aspects of Puerto Rican identity and at the same time to valorize Puerto Rican culture. His assumption of such a mammoth task may in the end have led to one of the book’s shortcomings. The ground covered is vast and serves to point out the enormous potential for further work in the area of the multiplicity and the use of humor in the text as well as the fragmented nature of Puerto Rican identity.

Rodrigo Lazo’s *Writing to Cuba* concerns the history of Latin Americans mainly in the United States but also in Cuba. It is a study of how and why filibustering both failed in what it set out to do (raise identity awareness in the mid-nineteenth century) and succeeded in developing a Cuban print culture in exile. Each of the five chapters is a dense study mapping out complex
considerations for understanding notions of exile. The emphasis is squarely historical, which makes for difficult going for readers not familiar with the historical debates. Nevertheless, Lazo is careful to define certain key terms in the study, such as filibuster, abolition, annexation, and exile.

The introduction sets out the basic focus of the text, which concerns several writers from Cuba who settled in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. There they established and wrote for various newspapers, either in bilingual editions or monolingual Spanish and/or English editions. Chapter 1, “El Filibustero: Symbol of the Battle for Cuba,” draws on rare archival material in the United States and presents the notion of transnationalism based on the cultural and economic flow between Cuba and the United States. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the growth of newspaper publishing as well as the production of published pamphlets by Cubans in the United States, who while adapting to conditions in the United States were essentially marking Cuban cultural contexts. Lazo explores the political promises made by the government of the United States and the manner in which particular newspapers echoed these democratic sentiments, which were critical of Spain and eventually shifted to the notion of annexation as the only apparent solution to the Cuban crisis.

In Chapter 3, Lazo points out that the revolutionary nature of the filibustero was essentially male in gender. Much of the chapter is dedicated to exploring the masculine nature of the ultimate revolutionary fighter. Lazo goes on to signal the voicelessness of women writers on the island. Of those in the United States, he suggests that there were varying poetic approaches to figuring Cuba. The chapter ends with a lengthy consideration of Emilia Casanova de Villaverde as a dedicated revolutionary supporter of a free Cuba and one of the more radical Cuban exiles living in the United States. Chapter 4, “El Mulato: Race, Land and Labor in the Americas,” then engages debate on one of the more strident issues of the day, the abolition of slavery, and points to slavery and race as being central to the debates among Cuban exiles in the United States in the 1850s. “El Mulato” was in effect one of the most radical newspapers, and Lazo explores its importance to Cuban literary culture. Chapter 5 is mainly literary in focus. It reflects on the transnational dimension of one of Cuba’s greatest novels, Cecelia Valdés, a product of the filibustero work of the writer Cirilio Villaverde and a result of the transnational print culture which he developed while living as a writer in exile.

Copious notes accompany the chapters and there is an extensive bibliography. Both will prove extremely useful to students as an introduction to further study in the field as well as studies on present-day Cuban exiles. The bibliography, which lists newspapers and published pamphlets, also provides scholars with invaluable chronological notes, as well as information on the present state of criticism on transnational writing from the mid-nineteenth century. Despite its somewhat awkward title, the text is very well written.
Given its groundbreaking nature, it should provide informative and rewarding reading for scholars in both historical and literary fields.

Lazo’s *Writing to Cuba* and Reyes’s *Humor and the Eccentric Text in Puerto Rican Literature* differ greatly in style and even more in content. Lazo’s, entirely grounded in an historical setting, is a much more precise study because of the historical exactitude of the incidents, newspapers, and texts discussed. On the other hand, Reyes’s study is more critical and analytical in style. Humor and eccentricity go hand in hand, but throughout this book, we are never left laughing. In fact, the humor reflected in it is often dark and, as Reyes points out, serves mainly to reveal the constant negotiation of identity, which is necessary for coping with Caribbean life, entrenched as it is in excesses. However, both books are grounded in Caribbean realities and that makes them especially valuable to any scholar of Latin American and Caribbean history, literature, or cultural studies.


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Lowell Fiet stands among the most committed and consistent chroniclers of Puerto Rican theater and performance today. Through his journalistic practice as a theater critic and scholar, Fiet has maintained a two-decades-long public conversation on contemporary Puerto Rican theater. Much of this enterprise is anthologized and developed in the groundbreaking volume under review, in which he seeks to analyze performance practice in relation to identity politics in Puerto Rican culture. The result is an eclectic, politically informed and passionately argued collection of essays that looks at theater and performance from new and refreshing perspectives, ranging from the redefinition of performance genealogies and the re-reading of canonical Puerto Rican drama to the identification and advocacy of current trends in experimental and popular performance.
Chapter 1 covers broad theoretical considerations of the phenomenon of performance in contemporary global culture. Chapter 2 deals with an incorporation of alternative performance traditions (i.e. indigenous and Afro-diasporic performance) within the genealogies of Puerto Rican performance. Chapters 3 and 4 provide a recontextualization of the foundational theater on the Island in relation to nationalism, colonialism, canon formation, and political intervention. Chapters 5 and 6 offer critical readings of theatrical experimentation from the 1960s to the 1980s. And in Chapter 7 and the Conclusion we are given a panoramic view of contemporary innovations in Puerto Rican performance. As is evident from this sweeping historical coverage, Fiet opts for a survey format that catalogues multiple theatrical traditions in Puerto Rico in relation to notions of neo- or postcolonialism rather than engaging in an in-depth study of specific practices or contexts. As such, the project directs the reader through a series of examples and counterexamples of what Fiet assumes to be politically efficacious theatrical practice that addresses the political, social, and cultural conditions of the Island.

In the book’s opening “invitation into a theatrical inquiry,” Fiet examines the metropolitan theater as the ideological antithesis to the Puerto Rican theater projects he advocates. Among the theatrical events he explores we find commercial successes such as Stomp and Riverdance. While acknowledging the formal influences these productions have had worldwide, he argues that “despite their aesthetic value and box office successes these productions remain trapped within their synthetic metropolitan and technological spaces, failing to reflect a base of ethnological, geopolitical and social context” (p. 28). The assertion – somewhat dismissive of new approaches to audiencing that might recast arguments about the content and reception of performance – serves as a point of departure for an exploration of the engagement of local theater with the particularities of Puerto Rican experience.

This search for the local brings Fiet to call for the expansion of the official Puerto Rican performance genealogy. He develops a strong argument against the simple European origin accounts of theatrical practice and proposes alternative influences that include Afro-diasporic performance traditions such as the festivities of Santiago Apóstol in Loíza. The inclusion of these foundational elements in the cultural history of Puerto Rican performance results in a convincing and important exhortation for the acknowledgment of other important contemporary cultural works he documents in later chapters. This intervention also serves as a critical expansion to the literature-based approach to theater history in Puerto Rican academia.

Next Fiet offers a critical view of the foundational theatrical canon from the 1930s to the 1950s. His contextualization of the political milieu of dramatic activity and his critical discussions of theater and its status as a sign of national exceptionality – ambivalently balancing the aspirations to cultural singularity and the desire for artistic success (often in metropolitan terms)
– offer important reconsiderations of national theater historiography (presenting alternative practices such as the workers’ theater of the 1930s) and important re-readings of classic texts. Likewise, his later focus on theatrical innovation extends our view of what constitutes Puerto Rican performance and how these “new forms” might offer important sites of identitarian (en)visioning for discrete communities throughout the Island.

While Fiet’s attempt to introduce theoretical notions and material examples of performance practices outside the realm of official theater and its traditional scholarship is commendable, his analytical journey does not seem to follow suit. The analysis follows a rather conventional literary studies strategy that privileges textual analysis and thematic and character study and pays little attention to performance itself as a material phenomenon. That is, while this study contains ample mention of corporality and scenic strategies, these elements of performance receive only passing attention, even when advocated as the primary elements of the performances featured in the latter part of the book. For example, when describing the dance performances of Javier Cardona, Fiet asserts that despite the innovative dramaturgical approach of the script “what makes You don’t look like me ... so extraordinary is not to be found on the page, but rather on the negotiation between the spoken text and the danced text” (p. 342). Unfortunately, we are not brought into an exploration of this, or many of the other performances discussed in this book, with enough depth to support such an argument on the centrality of embodiment.

This book will be a significant guide to researchers interested in an introduction to the most pressing political and historical questions for Puerto Rican performing arts today, as well as a helpful tool for undergraduate teaching on Puerto Rican and Caribbean performance. Most importantly, it offers ample documentation of Puerto Rican performance practices that have been little addressed in recent scholarship and thus functions as a significant archive to a wealth of activity in need of further and deeper study.
Curdella Forbes has set herself the ambitious goal of “advancing a comprehensive episteme” (p. 3) that will provide an “alternative trope and vocabulary for speaking about West Indian gender, both descriptively and in ideological terms that might suggest an activist praxis for addressing West Indian problems of gender” (p. 24). Her trope is the hermaphrodite, although she gestures toward its limits as a new narrative that might enable the cultural work of addressing those problems, and tentatively proposes androgyny as a model for describing “the modern West Indian woman” (p. 221). She develops her rich and admirably provocative reading of West Indian culture primarily through a historically contextualized, lively analysis of selected fiction by Samuel Selvon and George Lamming.

Forbes focuses her study of Selvon and Lamming around dominant formative influences on West Indian cultures in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: nationalism and diaspora. Her choice of Selvon and Lamming is based on their place in a West Indian canon, her sense that gender is under-read in previous studies of their work, and the ways their fiction opens out “issues within the discourses of diaspora and postmodernism, the major paradigms that … have begun to shift nationalism from its central place as the shaping force by which West Indianness is imagined” (p. 1).

Forbes’s reading of Lamming’s novels Of Age and Innocence, Season of Adventure, Natives of My Person, and The Emigrants is particularly astute, always alert to his articulations of gender “within a wider theorization of language and the relation of the human and colonial subject to language” (p. 145) and within complex narrative structures and innovative, shifting stylistic registers. Her accounts of Selvon’s fiction are less consistently assured and convincing at a close interpretative level. She asserts, for instance, that the term “boys” in The Lonely Londoners evokes a “pre-gender category” (p. 78). The term circulates as a sign of homosocial bonding through the cultivation of sharpness or cool as a style of masculinity and a highly gendered means of restoring the male subject injured by the negating scopic drive of White English people (Thomas 2001:25-28). Not recognizing sharpness as a self-
fashioning masculinity, Forbes moralizes “the boys” as exhibiting a “dissolution” of “gender responsibilities” in which sex with White women “becomes a kind of perverse aesthetic of self-unravelling” (p. 85). She measures them against a model of healthy, authentic, community-oriented masculinity established through “economic responsibility for woman or family” (p. 85), and recognition of Black women’s resourcefulness, humanity, and equality.

Forbes’s overarching narrative of hermaphroditic gender is grounded in understandings of Caribbean society as “essentially carnivalesque” (p. 73) and shaped by histories of migration, labor, and racialized class politics that have placed a premium on the expediency and utility of “self-fashioning” performances of gender (p. 70). Her contextualizing account of “doing” gender (p. 71) in Caribbean cultural history, while informed by impressively wide reading, is sweeping. The trope of hermaphroditism is, she argues, applicable to doing gender in cultures living through the legacies of plantation slavery:

Equal involvement in resistance, the public performance of dual gender in mutual cross-dressing, the rhetorical lack of differentiation between men and women in the cause of freedom, and a hidden, private life that frustrates outsider attempts to allocate gender – these are the grounds on which we may extrapolate a connection between the hermaphrodite’s and the slave’s physical presentation and place in society. The biological hermaphrodite becomes an arcane presence through a sexual identity that is not only ambiguous but also hidden, since often only one set of the contradictory genitive organs is exposed. It is therefore possible to speak of hermaphroditism as a condition of mystery and recalcitrance (since only what comes to conscious light can be contained). This means it is potentially transgressive and subversive. Indeed, it is already transgressive by virtue of being outside what is sanctioned and known. Its basis in duality, the fusion of “natural” separates, allows it to describe, in a way more traditional constructs cannot, the slaves’ public gender (re)presentation, which was essentially syncretic, transgressive, and subversive. (p. 37)

This thesis is the major strand of Forbes’s attempt to trace a “primary genealogy” of hermaphroditism “within West Indian historical experience itself” (p. 25). She also justifies her historical reading of hermaphroditic gender with reference to the existence of a few dual-gendered mythological figures in West African, Hindu, Moslim, and Greco-Roman cultures, and cursory discussion of gender dynamics in Indian and Chinese communities.

Forbes’s analogy between primal gender categories in West Indian culture and the hermaphrodite is often problematic. As Benita Parry points out, “because interactive metaphors shape our perceptions and actions while neglecting or suppressing information that does not fit the similarity, ‘they tend to lose their metaphoric nature and be taken literally’” (Parry 2004:110, quoting Nancy Stepan 1990:52). What kind of purchase Forbes’s analogy has
on the everyday realities of doing gender for the biological hermaphrodite is examined too scantily. Forbes tends at times to work with an ahistorical category of orthodox gender against which deviation or the carnivalesque is read. At others she produces engaging vignettes of historical gender performances, for example, her linking of the “iconic, messianic status of political leaders” in a nationalist phase of regional identity (p. 41) with “man-of-speech performance” (p. 46) grounded in the cultural valency of “linguistic theatricality” (p. 42).

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The two editors of Caribbean Creolization (1998) are back together, this time not to discuss cultural dynamics but rather, as the title of the volume announces, to focus on Haiti’s plight. Siege, terror, and exile are indeed the appropriate headings of the three sections which document through literature the state of a nation “turned into a prison, occulted from the rest of the world” (p. 25).

None of the periods covered appear to have been quiet, all were turbulent, so it is a miracle of the imagination that Haiti has produced and continues to
produce so many writers of the caliber of Jacques Roumain, René Depestre, Jean Métellus, Frank Étienne, Emile Ollivier, and J.J. Dominique. All are discussed here in essays written in French or English, the two languages that have most characterized the recent production of Haitians and on Haitians.

Between fraudulent elections, illegal laws, institutionalized murder, exploitation of the color hierarchy, exile, and migration, Haitian writers tell their tales of joy and fear, of hope and disavowal. Some of them were direct witnesses to physical and moral torture, others were taken away from the country before they could witness such practices.

It is difficult to do justice to all the contributors of this rich and stimulating collection, which presents writers from Jacques Roumain to Edwidge Danticat. A large part of the book is devoted to criticism of works produced during the twenty-nine-year Duvalier family dictatorship. Poignant personal recollections are juxtaposed with everyday acts of resistance to document the struggle of Haiti and its writers after two centuries of oppression, mostly by its own dictators, emperors, “satrapes,” generals, and former clergy who have succeeded each other in the country’s independent life, and none of whom have been capable or willing to lift the country from its despairing economic and political fate. The same can be said of the international community, indicted here for leaving the country “to die of hunger and neglect” (p. 25).

Throughout the volume the past enters the present, both in the writers’ memories and in the critics’ judgments, creating a web of connections between the war of liberation from French rule and contemporary acts of resistance. The opening chapter (an account of the Haitian pavilion at the 1893 world’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago) and the final one (reflections on stereotyping and the transformation of memory and language) provide a fitting frame for the rest of the essays. In between are discussions of all the writers mentioned above, and more. Max Dorsinville draws attention to the vast and perhaps not sufficiently recognized production of Roger Dorsinville, writer, journalist, ambassador to several African countries. Joëlle Vitiello encapsulates the writing of Yanick Lahens in an aesthetics of refusal. And Dennis F. Essar analyzes the link between Dany Laferrière’s texts and the style and primary colors of Haitian painting.

As the volume shows, there is no dearth of work on Haitian literature, and new perspectives are coming into play. It is surprising to discover that contemporary readings of Roumain’s Gouverneurs de la rosée (Masters of the Dew) have moved away from ideology and do justice to his craft, pointing to love, dialogue, and solidarity as forces of change in the novel (p. 104). It is similarly fascinating to see that Depestre was inspired to write by Rimbaud and Lautréamont rather than Marx, and that he knew Roumain and Aléxis, but also Carpentier, Senghor, and Césaire. Clearly emerging in the volume is the Caribbean vision of this generation of writers along with their links to large sectors of the African diaspora.
Women are well represented, even if they made their appearance on the literary scene later than their male counterparts. Irline François provides an insightful reading of J.J. Dominique’s *Mémoire d’une amnésique*, exploring specifically female strategies of resistance. Myriam Chancy discusses women revolutionary writers and Marie Chauvet is evoked to denounce patriarchy and the military. Mimi Barthélémy reveals in the heartfelt style of her *contes* (which readers can glimpse in Christianne Mawkward’s essay) how storytelling becomes a tool of survival just like religion, proverbs, and games, the endless resources of the beleaguered country’s inhabitants. This is also captured by Caroll Oates when he writes of Jacques Stephen Aléxis.

Three long, comprehensive interviews are also included in the collection, shedding light on the writing process and on the rootedness of Haitian writers despite their displacement. Frantz-Antoine Leconte talks to René Depestre, who explains how in the course of a life spent in many different countries, his native land has always been part of his nomadism (p.148). There is an interview by Ginette Adamson with Jean Météllus, linguist, physician, and writer who, after explaining the ostracism the country suffered from its inception, ends on an optimistic note, a rarity among the far less cheerful voices in the volume. In his dialogue with Frank Étienne, Jean Jonassaint does not hesitate in declaring him “the most important Haitian writer” (p. 283). Frankétienne, for his part, reveals the difficulty of finding “an inward space to create” in a dictatorial and censorial regime. As an addendum, the spiralist movement of which Frankétienne is the major exponent is explained by Kaima Glover, who is currently writing a book on the subject.

One of the important questions that lurk in the background to these essays is posed directly by Marie-José N’Zengou-Tayo in her discussion of Lyonel Trouillot’s fiction. Must intellectuals be politically committed? Can they be agents of change? From N’Zengou’s viewpoint, Haitian writers would have answered yes to these questions before the 1980s. But the late 1980s marked “the end of the leading role usually assigned to the politically committed intellectual in Haitian literature” (p. 332) – a bold affirmation which cannot be so readily applied to the literature of the turn of the century. The political and socioeconomic reality of Haiti remains an open wound for both those who have stayed in the country and those who have, only physically, left it.

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