In one of his first published poems, Derek Walcott wrote with a touch of pastoral irony about an impossible love: “You in the castle of your skin, I the swineherd” (2002-3). George Lamming appropriated the phrase and changed the pronoun to give the title of his searing first novel. Now, sixty years later, Roberto Márquez has borrowed another equally resonant phrase from a different part of Walcott’s poem for the title of his collection of essays. As the epigraph to the first part of the collection has it:

I know from here that I and distant others
Alien only by twang and dialect have unity / … /
I praise those who see a world among these islands. (p. 11)

“Seeing the Caribbean Whole” is the title Márquez gives to this first part, and no literary and cultural critic has done more in recent years to try to keep that wholeness in some kind of focus without losing sight of the detail of its constituent parts. His work has the range of such illustrious predecessors as Adolphe Roberts, Gordon Lewis, and Édouard Glissant, though the most appropriate comparison would perhaps be with his near-contemporary, Silvio Torres-Saillant, whose classic text, Caribbean Poetics, recently appeared in a revised edition.

A World among These Islands consists of essays written between 1975 and 2002. Perhaps sensibly, no attempt has been made to “update” them, so maintaining a sense of chronology is occasionally a challenge, but by no means an insuperable one. The essays are grouped into three sections: four appear under “Seeing the Caribbean Whole,” three focus on matters Puerto
Rican (“Notes of a ’Nother Rican”), and the remaining six, as the section title, “Occasions, Views, and Reviews,” suggests, are more heterogeneous. Seeing the book whole, the essays are united by Márquez’s formidably archipelagic knowledge of the region and by his elegantly sumptuous prose, whose long sentences break onto the reader’s inner ear with the rhythm of waves meeting the beach in the Bahía de Rincón. One example will stand for the whole:

A promontory of Asia, long subject to Asian depredations, and comparatively undeveloped tributary of that more sumptuous and self-sufficient scimitar of territory extending south beyond the Strait of Gibraltar and eastward through Alexandria, Arabia, Persia, India, and China, Europe first created a cohesive consciousness of itself as a defensive, aggressively oppositional negation of the more advanced and sophisticated civilizations on whose periphery it lay. (p. 28)

One highlight of the book is certainly the 1989 essay, “Nationalism, Nation, and Ideology: Trends in the Emergence of a Caribbean Literature,” which ranges masterfully across the centuries and across the islands, making the kinds of connections and discriminations that both enrich understanding and set the imagination racing: John Jacob Thomas compared with José Martí, Antonio Pedreira with Herbert de Lisser. Another highlight would be “One Boricua’s Baldwin,” a more personal – indeed moving – account of reading James Baldwin from a boricua perspective, an essay which contains both a poignant recollection of the impact of Notes of a Native Son on Spanish Harlem in 1959 and a careful analysis of what Márquez calls Baldwin’s “amaurotic provincialism” – his unwavering and ultimately debilitating belief in the exceptionality of the experience of blacks in the United States. If these two essays demonstrate Márquez’s strength as a cultural historian, then “The Stoic and Sisyphean: John Hearne and the Angel of History” shows that he has no superior when it comes to close literary analysis: his assessment of Hearne is detailed, sympathetic, historically informed, yet absolutely forensic. His entirely appropriate invocation here of Lampedusa’s The Leopard shows that his range of comparison is not limited to the Caribbean.

A World among These Islands is marked by a generosity of spirit, an openness to the myriad riches of the region whose literary output it takes as its subject. Only in the last section do – appropriately – negative notes creep in with a reminder in “Grenada: History, Neocolonialism, and Culture in the Contemporar…” of the United States’ dismal record of intervention, and in “El Señor Presidente” of the “shopworn and flatulent bromides” that marked the offensive and racist writing of the Dominican Republic’s erstwhile president, Joaquín Balaguer. Despite Márquez’s admirable insistence on unity, the original context of Walcott’s challenging words needs also to be remembered:
I praise those who see a world among these islands
Where we shall try to live in peace and fail,
The failure nothing. (Walcott 2002-3:34)

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Just over five centuries after Christopher Columbus stumbled upon the region that has come to be known as the Caribbean, the resurgence of Asia amidst the contraction of the North Atlantic world’s influence over the global political economy has opened an era of change for the Caribbean societies as they struggle to adapt to the arrival of this “New World.” The arrival of the Europeans had resulted in the disappearance and displacement of much of the Native American populations of these territories, and their replacement by “colonies of exploitation” constructed to meet the needs of the European colonial powers that imposed their rule over these territories and brought
populations from Africa and Asia to “develop” them through systems of coercive labor. The Caribbean was transformed into an appendage of the North Atlantic region and the lives of its inhabitants were defined by the politics of displacement, dispossession, and dependence.

This volume of essays explores the origins and evolution of the New World Movement that emerged during the process of decolonization and colonial reform that gained momentum in the 1950s and which resulted in the political independence of British Caribbean territories over the following decades. Essays by Norman Girvan, Kari Levitt, David DeCaires, and James Millette and an interview with Lloyd Best explore the emergence and evolution of a generation of intellectuals affiliated with the University of the West Indies, activists from the wider society, and colleagues in other parts of the Caribbean and North America. The movement sought to develop a vision of a “New World” in the Caribbean nationalist imaginary that focused upon the need for “epistemic sovereignty, a belief in the power of ideas to effect change, and a view of the Caribbean condition as a legacy of the pervasive effects of the plantation system” (Girvan p. 8). It reflected a search for indigenous paradigms that could provide a framework for the analysis of these societies – in effect, allowing the nationalists to see themselves through their own eyes rather than remain dependent upon the paradigms rooted in the colonial experience. The New World Movement was thus both a project of indigenization and an “insistence that the Caribbean should legitimately be at the centre, both as a subject of research in its own right and more widely, as a project for development” (Meeks p. xii).

The movement began to splinter in 1968 after a split between Lloyd Best and James Millette that presaged a growing gulf among members who saw access to power as the way forward, those committed to keeping the movement intellectually oriented toward reframing debates about the region, and others postulating a need for a more radical politics. The split was a reflection of the growing self-confidence among the region’s intellectuals that they represented a successor generation to the nationalist leaders who had led the struggle for decolonization. However, the banning of Walter Rodney from Jamaica in 1968 by the Jamaican government as a result of his political work among disadvantaged communities was a sign that the future would pose severe challenges. The Black Power revolt in Trinidad and Tobago in 1970, following the radicalization of the civil rights movement in the United States, also triggered a backlash against the politics of the streets that Rodney and the Black Power movement had embraced. Thereafter, in the minds of the governments of the region and university administrators the New World Movement was perceived as a source of oppositional politics that should be contained and frustrated. While Guyana under Forbes Burnham and Jamaica under Michael Manley were open to the ideas of the group, they sought to co-opt the movement for their own more limited partisan agendas. At the same
time, the flowering of radical politics in the region, and the conservative back-
lash that emerged, disrupted the focus upon the indigenization of Caribbean
scholarship and political life that the New World Movement had promoted.

The implosion of the group after 1968 opened the space for the polar-
ization of the region’s politics and the paralysis of the university over sub-
sequent decades. It was an era from which the region has yet to recover
and which facilitated the rise of underground economies built around narcot-
ics trafficking, the increasing corruption of the political systems by the rise
of criminal networks linked to the political parties, high levels of skilled
migration, and neoliberal policies inspired by American pressures for eco-
nomic orthodoxy – in effect, a reversal of the culture of sovereignty that
New World and the decolonization had promoted. However, as the essays
of Kirk Meighoo, Dennis Pantin, Vaughan Lewis, David Wong, Patricia
Northover and Micheline Crichlow, and Paget Henry remind readers, the
unfinished business of New World has left open spaces for the continued
effort to rethink the workings of Caribbean society and economy – in both
policy and scholarly terms.

The search for epistemic sovereignty in the Caribbean needs to continue
in an environment that is being reshaped by the resurgence of Asia and the
emergence of an Asia-Pacific centered world. That “New World” poses a fun-
damental challenge for the Caribbean, which has historically been shaped by
the Atlantic-dominated international system. The contemporary context will
require the systematic evaluation of Caribbean culture and political economy
that the New World Movement had initiated and which was interrupted by the
entrenchment of cold war conflicts in the region. These essays provide power-
ful reminders of the challenges that continue to inform Caribbean life and as
Lloyd Best, notwithstanding his optimism, recognized: “You can’t build any
civilization unless you have elites … You have to have a group of people in the
society who can see very far ahead” (p. 324). The challenge for the universities
of the region is to continue the work initiated by the New World Movement –
creating serious elites who can see the region through their own eyes.
In *Elusive Origins*, Paul B. Miller offers an important and thoughtful contribution to ongoing debates about the “Caribbean intervention in and critique of the discourse of the Enlightenment” (p. 13). As part of the impressive New World Studies series by the University of Virginia Press, Miller’s study creates an implicit dialogue with other works in the same series, including Luis Madureira’s *Cannibal Modernities: Post-coloniality and the Avant-garde in Caribbean and Brazilian Literature* (2005), which similarly explores counterdiscourses to modernity.

As Miller outlines, the enlightenment was founded on a structural relation between the “enlightened” center and peripheral “immaturity” and between leaders and masses. From a “peripheral” perspective, the contradictions of the enlightenment are clearly visible, as they were produced by the coexistence of the abstract goal of universal human emancipation and the institution of slavery, supported by the concrete language of colonial-racist discourse. Miller approaches this important topic through an admirably comparative, cross-Caribbean examination of literary approaches to the eighteenth century. Dividing the writers into two generations separated by the Cuban Revolution and thus re-inscribing the familiar modern-postmodern divide into regional history, he argues that the first generation of “pioneers” (Alejo Carpentier, C.L.R. James, and Marie Chauvet) formulate a strong critique of the Enlightenment without being able to extricate themselves completely from its logic. Building on their work, the writers of the next “postmodern” generation (Maryse Condé, Reinaldo Arenas, and Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá) call into question that structure itself.

In Part One of the book, Miller analyses the work of the two male “pioneers.” The first and perhaps strongest chapter focuses on Carpentier’s *Ecuvé-Yamba-O* and *The Kingdom of this World* and functions as a reference point throughout the book. Miller posits that the gap between the Afro-Cuban “insider” and the anthropological “outside” observer felt in the former continues to structure the latter, a novel that wavers between the incommensurability of European “retrospective” and Afro-Cuban “prospective” temporalities...
and a point of symbiosis. His sustained focus on music as a motif central to
the novel’s critical engagement with the Enlightenment legacy adds valuable
new insights to current research on an already well-studied text. An engage-
ment with *Cannibal Modernities* might have been useful, given that it covers
similar ground but arrives at a remarkably different understanding of the
ending of *The Kingdom of this World* by reading it alongside G.W.F Hegel’s
theories on history. In contrast to Miller, who sees Ti Noel’s disappearance in
a storm as a “regression” after a prior moment of dialectical transcendence,
Madureira (2005:183) reads it as the assumption of the Caribbean into world
history “whose absolute end is Africa” and thus as offering a radical reinter-
pretation of the slaves’ association with Nature that is able to transcend the
binaries structuring the Enlightenment.

The second chapter discusses the problematic nature of C.L.R. James’s
representation of the relation between the “ignorant masses” and Toussaint
Louverture. As Miller argues, the shortcomings of *The Black Jacobins*
stem from employing the framework of Greek tragedy to explain Toussaint
Louverture’s “flaw”: James reduces the masses to the role of the “chorus”
and implicitly represents the cultural tradition of the “center” as “uni-
versal.” James’s portrayal ultimately remains entangled within the contradic-
tions inherent in the European Enlightenment. With regards to the function
of this chapter in Miller’s book, one might note that while the inclusion of
*Black Jacobins* provides an interesting contrast to Carpentier’s novel, it also
seems to impose certain limitations on a study that focuses almost exclu-
sively on novels, since it arguably weakens its attention to the novel as form
and its specific relation to modernity, something that could have been further
explored in the book.

In Part Two, Miller moves on to discuss literary texts by Marie Chauvet
and Maryse Condé, both of whom add a gendered perspective to this tradition.
Miller proceeds to illustrate a generational divide between them: while
Chauvet in *Dance on the Volcano* prepares the ground for the disruption of
macro-narratives, the postmodern Condé mocks notions of authenticity, paro-
dies the Caribbean tradition of historical fiction, and displays a fundamental
distrust toward Enlightenment concepts such as progress. In his analysis of
Chauvet’s novel, Miller brings out the contradictions of the protagonist’s atti-
dute toward French civilization (which she aspires to), the institution of slavery
(which she despises), and the slaves (for whom she feels “compassion”). While
Afro-Caribbean cultural productions are referred to pejoratively in Chauvet’s
novel, the ideas and know-how of the seventeenth-century protagonist of
Condé’s *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* may be read as an Afro-Caribbean,
spiritual “Enlightenment” that precedes that of Europe, as Miller argues.

Part Three focuses on the radicalization of this skepticism toward his-
torical representation in novels by Arenas and Rodríguez Juliá. Adding to
the available research on Arena’s reworking of Carpentier’s legacy, Miller
argues that while both take the Cartesian cogito as a starting point, Carpentier arrives at an assertion of authorial sovereignty whereas Arenas arrives at radical doubt as the cogito for him does not ground but rather limits representation. Creating places and events in his novels that never existed in Puerto Rico, Rodríguez Juliá breaks out of this dialogue with Carpentier, creating a “negatively dialectic space unrestrained by the limitations of either cogito or Aufklärung” (p. 174).

One of the many achievements of Elusive Origins is to provide critical visibility to writers such as Chauvet and Rodríguez Juliá, who have not been given much international exposure. Miller’s crosslinguistic and pan-Caribbean study provides an important contribution to available scholarship and challenges the fragmentation of the region often replicated in academia.


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In Chapter 6 of Caribbean Perspectives on Modernity, Maria Cristina Fumagalli quotes from Derek Walcott’s epic poem Omeros, in which the figure of Homer instructs the poet to “Forget the gods ... and read the rest” (Walcott 1990:283). The reference is apt, for this is also what Fumagalli undertakes in her study: a comprehensive consideration of “the rest” which has been located and perpetuated, in its supposed backwardness, on the periphery of what she terms the North Atlantic modernity project – early modernity’s “way of thinking and framing the world” (p. 136). What is needed, she argues, is an entire reconceptualization of the way we understand that period – particularly the era from the sixteenth century onward – based on evidence of interaction and negotiation, permeability and mutual affect between the North Atlantic modernity project and its historically peripheral spaces.

In order to access an impressively diverse array of texts – extraordinary in its scope and genre, spanning several centuries and including paintings, poems, archetypes, fairy tales, engravings, and novels – Fumagalli uses the
myth of Medusa as allegorical conduit. The trope of Medusa and her petrifying (though ultimately vulnerable) gaze is “expedient for describing how modernity creates its ‘others’: in order to legitimize itself, it petrifies those who stand before it, freezing them into a state of ... non-modernity” (p. 1). Building on the contributions of C.L.R. James, Paul Gilroy, and others, and interrogating an oft-overlooked temporal moment in Caribbean Studies, Fumagalli locates instances of powerful hybridity and resistance to overarching narratives of oppression and abjection from within North Atlantic modernity and the Caribbean region.

The sheer scope of the project would seem unwieldy, yet Fumagalli manages it with clarity. Each chapter unfolds from a central image or story, and this structure becomes her own transcultural strategy towards an interrelationality of the Caribbean: to interrogate Guadeloupean Maryse Condé’s novel alongside the sacrifice ritual of a Cuban slave festival, or the Anglo-Guyanese poet Grace Nichols vis-à-vis a seventeenth-century engraving by Flemish artist Jan van der Straet (known to the world as Stradanus). Indeed, this is one of the central strengths of the study. Moving back and forth across history and intertext, Fumagalli is never satisfied with a singular story. Rather, she seeks the origins for that story in myriad other narratives. Her commitment to exhaustive archival research creates an exhilarating (though occasionally dizzying) history of mutual entanglement. For instance, John Dryden’s seventeenth-century translation of Ovid’s Metamorphoses echoes through Canadian-Tobagonian poet Marlene Nourbese Philip’s poem, though Ovid himself was influenced by Homer’s “Hymn to Demeter.” Behind every Persephone, Fumagalli reminds us, is an Osiris.

Caribbean Perspectives on Modernity begins with what Fumagalli calls “the point of entanglement par excellence, the encounter between the Old and the New Worlds” (p. 11). She draws upon Grace Nichols’s female subjectivities in the collections i is a long memoried woman (1983) and The Fat Black Woman’s Poems (1985) to analyze varying interpretations of a 1683 early modern engraving by Stradanus depicting America’s encounter with Amerigo Vespucci. She pushes beyond conventional readings of the image as reflecting mere abjection and eroticism and proposes instead that we see America, with hand outstretched towards Amerigo, as an empowered female body. Informed by extensive research, she offers alternative and nuanced approaches to the image while interrogating the discourses of primitivism that have historically been yoked with America and the New World.

Elsewhere in her study, mythology is employed as an interpretative strategy. Fumagalli notably asserts that in “reiterating the simultaneity of the New World with the Old,” myth “explodes the notion of progress, one of the central tenets of North Atlantic modernity” (p. 74). The myth of Proserpina/Persephone becomes a useful lens through which to analyze Marlene NourbeSe Philip’s collection She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks
(1988) alongside a 1972 short story by Gabriel García Márquez. Both texts use the narrative of Proserpina’s rape as metaphor for figurations of exploitation – the sexual, socio-cultural, economic or otherwise linguistic oppression Fumagalli cites as indicative of North Atlantic modernity’s petrification of the Caribbean – while nonetheless gesturing toward spaces of emancipation and self-actualization.

Other chapters in Caribbean Perspectives on Modernity examine literary genre. Fumagalli innovatively pairs the seventeenth-century early modern writer Lady Mary Wroth and her novel The Countesse of Montgomerie Urania (1621) with contemporary Jamaican sociologist and poet Erna Brodber’s Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home (1980) to demonstrate how both are invested in “alterations of romance templates” (p. 96). A consideration of the science fiction novel The Purple Cloud (1902) by overlooked West Indian author M.P. Shiel complicates racial discourse and performance in the Caribbean and London in the early twentieth century. The most poignant chapter of the study is the final one, which traces the influence of sixteenth- and eighteenth-century Venetian painters on Derek Walcott’s poem Tiepolo’s Hound (2001). The poem takes as its inspiration the subordinated figure of the dog from Veronese’s painting Feast in the House of Levi (1573). From there, Fumagalli follows the figure of the painter Camille Pissarro (a central muse in the Walcott poem) who, before being appropriated by the French as theirs, and before influencing countless pillars of Impressionism and Post-Impression – among these, Cézanne, Gauguin, Manet, Van Gogh, and Seurat – belonged to the Caribbean. Born of a Creole mother and raised in what was then the Danish Antilles, Pissarro attributed his sense of artistry to those seemingly marginal beginnings. Pissarro is a crossover figure, like so many of the authors, artists, poets, and thinkers Fumagalli reclaims in this study. Her work demands that we reconsider Medusa’s pervasive, debilitating, and fallible gaze, and with it, homogeneous definitions of center and periphery in the early modern era.

REFERENCE


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Although decisively ranged against postcolonialist historiography, the two books in this review truly reflect the rich diversity in the scholarship of revisionism, reaction, and reconcilement that continues to draw sustenance from the momentous conjuncture of bicentennial commemorations between 2003 and 2008: the Haitian Revolution and Danish, American, and British abolitions. Launched in earnest in the 1970s, the debate on antislavery and slave-trade abolition intensified with the commemoration of epochal milestones in enslaved Africans’ struggle for freedom in the Caribbean, beginning with the hundred fiftieth anniversary of Britain’s Emancipation Act and its fortuitous combination with the fiftieth anniversary of Eric Williams’s Capitalism and Slavery in 1984; the hundred fiftieth anniversary of the actual end of British slavery (1988); and the bicentennial of the launch of the Haitian Revolution (1991). These commemorations resuscitated a moribund moralist historiography paralleled by an increasingly strident call for reparations supported by historians of subaltern agency.

Who Abolished Slavery? is divided into three sections. The first is Richard Wall’s translation of Marques’s extended essay, “Slave Revolts and the Abolition of Slavery: An Oversimplification.” The second comprises short commentaries by seminal scholars of Atlantic slavery and abolitionism, namely John Thornton, Pieter C. Emmer, David Geggus, Seymour Drescher, Peter Blanchard, David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman jointly, David Brion Davis, Olivier Pétrit-Grenouilleau, Robin Blackburn, and Hilary Beckles. The final section is Marques’s clinical rebuttal. Beckles’s terse response is symptomatic of a potential Caribbean reaction to Marques’s most provocative contentions. Nevertheless, the book successfully presents a valid landscape of the historiography of abolitionism and the beginnings of British imperialism in Africa.
Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa, and the Atlantic comprises an extended introduction by Derek Peterson and seven essays by John Thornton, Boyd Hilton, Christopher Leslie Brown, Philip D. Morgan, Seymour Drescher, Robin Law, and Jonathon Glassman. The co-opting of Thornton and Drescher, two of the most eminent scholars in Atlantic history, helps to cement the links between the two volumes. In light of the explicitly stated objective by the series editors to highlight the University of Cambridge’s “young promising African scholars,” in addition to featuring the work of “European or American Africanists,” one is left to wonder why not a single African scholar was among the volume’s contributors.

Collectively the two volumes engage three of the most controversial themes in Atlantic history: responsibility for the horrors of the Atlantic slave trade and the slavery system it sustained, credit for the abolition of both evils, and the nexus between abolitionism and colonialism in Africa. Both books also give friendly testimony for the defense of moral imperium, while patently delegitimizing the case for reparations. Both ostensibly subscribe to the project outlined by Marques: the recovery of moral ground lost to subaltern agency since Capitalism and Slavery.

With a deep understanding of the imperialism of language, Jean-Paul Sartre (1963:7) contended that “Not so long ago,” one quarter of the world’s population “had the Word; the others had the use of it.” In the half-century following the publication of Capitalism and Slavery economic historians and their allies of subaltern agency successfully demolished this imperialist paradigm. The tables are again turning in a neo-imperialist assault on the Word. A positive trend in the methodology of “the new Atlantic history” is the comparative of integration” (Brown, p. 84) to which both volumes under review certainly subscribe. However, a disturbing trend embedded subliminally in both works is the inclination to subvert established definitions of pivotal concepts in the narrative of slavery and freedom. The new definitions are dogmatic, disdain “conceptual sophistication” (Beckles, p. 179), and may even glorify “vagueness” (Blackburn, p. 174). For example, Pétrié-Grenouilleau unrealistically conceptualizes abolition as “the will to put an end to slavery as a system, wherever it may exist” and wrongly claims this objective for British abolitionists during the eighteenth century (p. 161). Likewise, Emmer impugns maroons for having “no objection to slavery” but offers only circumstantial evidence from the terms of treaties composed entirely by the whites (p. 105). Blackburn quite correctly links these and similar semantics to a compulsion for portraying abolitionism as “a white phenomenon” (p. 169). The brevity of Beckles’s contribution as well as his position as last commentator and flag-bearer of anti-colonialist historiography underscore the editors’ triumphal reclamation of the Word. In confirming their personal orientation in the debate, Emmer and Drescher leave no room for compromise: “We now know that African, not European, slave traders dominated
the supply of slaves in Africa and that the staggeringly high mortality during the voyage was mainly related to the physical condition in which the slaves embarked” (p. vi). The only case study in support of this claim is presented by Thornton in Peterson’s volume, thus underscoring the fragile borders in the two volumes.

Despite hard-hitting criticisms that expose serious flaws in Marques’s essay, many contributors to the debate endorse his contentious claim that enslaved Africans “rarely objected to the practice of slavery” and certainly never contemplated ending “the system”; that rather, they were only “against the position they occupied within that system”; and that they had no direct impact on statutory abolition (pp. 14-15). Even so, a satisfying element in Who Abolished Slavery? is the demonstration of independent scholarship whenever Marques’s conclusions clash with debaters’ signature ideas. For example, Drescher extols Marques’s “new master narrative” as “logically and empirically argued,” except in trumpeting the subaltern view that the Haitian Revolution “had a positive impact in the acceleration of the abolition of the slave trade” (pp. 121-22). For Marques’s subversive crossing of the floor, Drescher summarily rejects his claim as “an overstatement” and presents his own case for excising the “fear factor” from every aspect of abolitionism. Interestingly, Davis throws his immense scholarly weight unreservedly on Marques’s side of the debate, declaring almost regally that without the “antislavery ideas” of Europeans “there would have been no end to the New World slave systems in the nineteenth century” (p. 167). Although Eltis and Engerman admit that shipboard revolts would not have led directly to abolition of the trade, they express cautious confidence that shipboard resistance had “a major effect on the timing of abolition of the slave trade” as well as the timing of emancipation in the British Caribbean (p. 152).

Peterson’s wide-ranging introduction in Abolitionism and Imperialism delves into his own specialized research. Although thought provoking, it is at times conceptually problematic. Perception is epistemological; when subject to academic research, it requires a proper interrogation of mentalities within their own historical and sociological frameworks. The conclusion that it was simply “good politics” for detainees of prison camps and other anticolonial activists in East Africa to accuse the British of enslaving them (p. 2) might be more revealing of the historian’s bias than the perceived status of oppressed activists. A similarly problematic rationale emerges in Hilton’s demeaning the struggle for freedom by enslaved Africans as merely “ventriloquizing abolitionists’ voices” (p. 24) and engaging in ideological piracy, a charge also leveled against English working-class activists in their fight against inhumane industrial exploitation (pp. 15, 18).

Hilton gives an interesting review of the first and second centenaries of abolition of the British Atlantic slave trade – from the low-keyed remembrance and political blasphemy of William Wilberforce in 1907 to the
megalomaniac hype of 2007 to restore Wilberforce’s sainthood and wash away Britain’s national guilt for her “Atlantic triangle.” Britain’s neatly laid bicentennial commemorative plans for “pretifying” the slave trade were passionately shattered by advocates of subaltern agency. However, Hilton unexpectedly condemns the “descendants of the slave-owning race” for daring to share the “jaundiced view” of “descendants of the victims of slavery” (p. 64).

In refreshingly informative essays, Thornton, Drescher, Brown, and Law all address Britain’s rationale for intervention in Africa from its creeping phase to the eve of the scramble for colonies. Thornton’s engagement with the Kingdom of Kongo is particularly significant because of the relatively early period of the Portuguese slave trade and the extensive documents generated by contemporary Kongolesese scribes. Nevertheless, one should not forget that the Atlantic slave trade was already seventy years old; Thornton treats with Dahomey after two hundred years of Portuguese and other European slave-trading in the Atlantic. His findings call to mind C.L.R. James’s caution to guard against the tendency to personify “the social forces of history.” Although the Portuguese had long changed their strategy from direct raiding to trading, amoral capitalism and Europe’s insatiable demands for African labor had created “an intolerable pressure on the African peoples, which became fiercer through the centuries as the demands of industry increased and the methods of coercion were perfected” (James 1963:7).

Like Thornton, Brown explores new vistas in Britain’s incipient projects in Africa. He contends that the early dreams of agricultural settlements in Africa “contributed one major impulse leading to British abolitionism” (p. 95), thus rejecting the traditional scholarship that claims British anti-slavery sentiment was the major stimulus for colonial experiments in Africa in the immediate aftermath of the Seven Years War. Law wrestles with the ethics of international law in Britain’s suppression campaign in Africa, which became the ultimate pretext for violating the sovereignty of African polities. The issues raised resonate in today’s continuing assumption of Western powers as superior moralists with the right of military options to change regimes that do not serve their strategic and economic interests.

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Over the past forty years, the history of black people in Britain has been transformed. In the early 1970s it seemed a marginal matter: an interesting but largely insignificant story which threw occasional shafts of light on the broader experience of Africans in other corners of the enslaved Atlantic. In large part this was because we simply did not know very much about it. When in the early 1970s I began my own work in the field, it was like setting out on a journey with no map. There were very few markers or signposts to the way forward: very few written guides and little in the way of obvious areas to be researched. But an initial trawl through county and parochial archives yielded a host of fragments (the occasional mention in parish registers, headstone inscriptions, and the like). And a closer investigation of the legal arguments about slavery began to yield more substantive and more varied sources and problems. Since then, a host of scholars have fleshed out a remarkable range of evidence available to scholars, and have, in the process, established a lively setting for historical and social argument (notably on the question of the legality of slavery). Yet there remain district areas of confusion and uncertainty.

Most significant perhaps is the question of the origins of this black presence, and especially the origins of black slavery in England. It seems clear enough that enslaved Africans were initially brought to England (and Scotland) by early merchant adventurers. Most conventional accounts tend to focus on the African and American voyages of Elizabethan voyagers and explorers, and some have personified the narrative through the life of Sir John Hawkins. But this is to locate the start of the story essentially in the early days of trans-Atlantic trade and exploration. What about that earlier period – the years before the English launched themselves across the Atlantic, and concentrated their southern seaborne trade with the Iberian Peninsula and the Mediterranean? It is clear enough that Africans from sub-Saharan Africa had for centuries found their way to Europe, often via the overland-trade routes of the Sahara. Many of course had been bought and sold at various Mediterranean ports (and hence north) as slaves.

This is the area that Gustav Ungerer has pursued in what were, initially, his literary researches. In working on Anglo-Spanish materials he realized...
that scholars needed to rethink the broader question of the origins of British slavery. In the process, he has trawled through a range of Spanish archives, and the outcome is this small but important volume which presents us with a discerning commentary from the author, alongside some of the materials he has unearthed in the archives.

It is a book that contains some wonderful nuggets of historical evidence outlining the ease with which British merchants followed their Iberian and Mediterranean partners in trading in Africans. There was money to be made from the bartering and exchanging of Africans for goods and money, and the British seemed to have had few moral or religious qualms about trading with other Europeans for African slaves. It was, of course, all very small scale and individual. But it established a commercial pattern, in the Mediterranean and in the Iberian Peninsula, which was to have enormous consequences following the development of the Americas and the discovery of precious metals, and later the development of sugar plantations.

If we stand back from the revealing details outlined by Ungerer, it is clear that there is an important broader issue at play here, namely the apparent ease with which British (initially English) traders and statesmen were seduced into trading for African humanity. It seemed, at first, a small almost insignificant matter. In time however, with the European encroachments into the Americas, it became an apparently unstoppable force which transformed the face of three continents.


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Ten years ago, there were few historical monographs on children in slavery. This book, which the editors promise is the first of two on the same theme, inaugurates more than one shift. It begins to reflect on the specificities of “childhood” in the context of trade. And it adopts a global vision in attempting to define “slavery,” the only framework adequate to understanding lives
plucked out of context, lived across many different cultural and geographical borders, and glimpsed only in the records of their masters and owners. It pools together the linguistic and archival skills of a range of regional specialists in an excavation that stretches across nine centuries and a corresponding geographical spread. These features make the volume simultaneously a useful teaching tool for undergraduate courses on world and comparative slavery and a significant guide to future research.

The essays are organized in three somewhat conventional clusters. The first is devoted to trades. Antonio Mendes offers a glimpse of the Portuguese-controlled trade in about 300-350,000 Muslims from northern and western Africa supplied to owners in the Iberian Peninsula and from there shipped to societies from the Rio Grande to Patagonia between the end of the thirteenth to the seventeenth century. The Portuguese traded slaves against carpets and rugs, textiles and stirrups; Arabs and Berber intermediaries supplied African slaves to Portuguese merchants. Although precise ages could not be established, babes at the breast, pubescent youth, and adult women constituted more than 70 percent of those imported in the sixteenth century. Richard Allen begins with the Portuguese trade in the Indian Ocean from the end of the fifteenth century and includes the Dutch, French, and eventually British traders across various depots (e.g., Mauritius, Seychelles) of the Indian Ocean by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Once more, Arab Muslims and Indian merchants participate in a criss-crossing series of trade-connections. Fred Morton provides vivid biographies of children culled from the Church Missionary Society’s records of the nineteenth-century East African slaves. George M. La Rue uses the description of the purchase of a single orphan called Ali to expand upon the Egyptian trade in slaves from Sudan prior to 1835. Susan E. O’Donovan traces the children among the four million slaves traded in antebellum North America.

A second set of essays is devoted to the occupational niches filled by slaves who began young and grew into skilled artists, generals, literati bureaucrats, and ordinary domestic servants all over the Asian land mass from the eighth to the early twentieth century. Kristina Richardson studies singing girls (qiyan) brought from Ethiopian and Indian societies and trained as performers in ‘Abbasid (eighth- to thirteenth-century) society. Like powerful eunuchs studied for the Qing by Bok-Rae Qim, these skilled performers traveled between the secluded women’s world and the world of male bellettrists – and were simultaneously admired and suspected by the inhabitants of both. Gulay Yilmaz retraces the intricate social and political links developed between military administrators (devşirme) and ruling Ottoman Sultans between the fifteenth and twentieth century.

The third and final cluster of essays returns to the well-documented commercial slave-deployments of the Atlantic world from the late eighteenth century, but this time tracing records that bear the imprint of buyers’ anxiet-
ies and regrets. Thus Pierre H. Boulle traces anxieties regarding the descent of slave-children in late eighteenth-century France, Kenneth Morgan studies infant mortality among slaves in the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British Caribbean and Calvin Schermerhorn recovers the story of slave orphans in the Chesapeake Bay.

Cumulatively, these essays throw up larger questions for the social histories of childhood. It appears from this volume that childhood, like beauty, lay in the eyes of the beholder. Many of the chapters suggest that Europeans studied childhood as a temporal order that ended with the physical appearance of secondary sexual characteristics such as facial hair and breasts. Were there plural cultural, social, or work-based criteria among non-European social groups that qualified those sold not as children but as young adults? Is it possible to compare “slave” and “non-slave” children in the same social group in one period? Such comparisons might sharpen the picture of what a childhood in slavery might have meant to the non-slave child in the same society. Did the latter kind of child in an ‘Abbasid or Ottoman regime aspire to the life of the qayan or devsirme?

Obviously, each essay contains references to other themes. Those on trade touch on occupations and services of those traded, and on issues of mortality and health not otherwise studied. Mendes points out that many of the African women and children worked as washerwomen, porters, or street vendors everywhere in the city of Lisbon. Allen touches on survival statistics in eighteenth-century Mauritius. I wish that each author had highlighted the places in their own essay where their findings explicitly engaged others in the volume.

Finally, as Allen points out, the Indian Ocean trades, along with those across the Sahara, were of far greater antiquity than those across the Atlantic, and the total number of African slaves transported across the Indian Ocean and Sahara probably exceeded that carried across the Atlantic during the last fourteen hundred years (pp. 36-37). Therefore a chronological arrangement might have enabled the undergraduate readers (to whom I recommend this book) to grasp the continuities and changes in both hemispheres as commercial competition picked up in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the Atlantic world. The questions might then be reversed: if the Portuguese were only following upon the ‘Abbasid, why didn’t they develop qayan and devsirme institutions? Why did the Atlantic societies have so little room for specialized deployment for such slaves? Was it because Europeans lacked the resources to invest in “skilling” slaves? Was the brutalization of slave-imports a reflection of the poverty of their buyers, and less the poverty of their sellers as has long been presumed?

Such questions are no longer asked by jaded scholars alone. American undergraduates who enroll in my course on South Asian slavery during the same years as covered by this volume often ask me this question: if the older systems of slave use did not disappear entirely in the face of Atlantic trades,
how were they affected by them? I answer that as long as historians remain divided by oceans, archives, nationalistic blinkers, and ideologies of various sorts, we will not be able to answer that question conclusively. This volume is especially welcome as a sign that the old divisions might indeed be given up. It is in this vein that I would urge that in the future volumes, scholars engage non-Western historiographies more directly. I especially recommend such engagement to the talented scholars studying Asian societies in this volume. In an ideal world, scholars of ‘Abbasid singing girls might then compare them to the singing girls of the Mughal records studied by Katharine Butler Schofield and Ramya Sreenivasan. They might also ask questions such as what such use of singing girls meant for the orthodox ruling on music in the same societies. In an ideal world, the historiography of both slaves and children would become mutually illuminating studies. This volume, a good start in that direction, suggests that my students are likely to get some answers to their questions, even if they are partial ones right now.


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Since Defoe, historians have failed to explain piracy, and more particularly that tsunami of seaborne raiding known as the Golden Age of Piracy that lapped Atlantic shores and more in Defoe’s lifetime (c. 1660-1731). French, Dutch, and English patriots blamed the Spanish for hogging the treasure they had stolen from the Indians. (Big deal to steal from them.) More dispassionate analysts spotted hypocrisy among northern European merchant companies, which encouraged and engaged in piracy – only to deny it or call it “privateering” – all to fund slave-based export enclaves in the Luso-Hispanic mold. Apparently inspired by twentieth-century socialism and other failed ideologies, radical historians argued that piracy emerged as an outgrowth of merchant marine solidarity after much rum drinking, sodomizing, and lashing. The pirates of the Golden Age, they said, were a new class of hard-
working if not honest men, accompanied by a few women who shared their taste in clothes. More recent historians, taking a page from the tabloids, have labeled these same pirates terrorists who had to be exterminated like so many vermin, a mission accomplished with steely efficiency by the British Royal Navy. But none of this explained piracy.

So, after three centuries of drawing from the same tiny cesspool of evidence, historians could not answer the most basic question: what impulse drove several thousand otherwise reasonable individuals to risk their lives to commit armed robbery at sea in the age of sail and gunpowder? With jaw-dropping simplicity, economist Peter Leeson explains (in his first book!) that the answer has been staring us in the face all along, and it is greed – the good kind. The Golden Age pirates, Leeson explains, were not the swaying, sadistic, sex-obsessed drunks they cleverly wanted us to mistake them for, but rather rational, self-interested “economic actors” who knew how to brand products, cut costs, and maximize profits. It followed naturally that they were also team players committed to excellence; knowing that none could go it alone they abandoned their solitary canoes and barbecues and organized themselves into bands, or crews. Once in possession of a vessel, they were ready to swim with the sharks and deal with the devil, all the while adhering, like good, self-interested associates, to the incentive-laced Pirate Code. When the work of pillaging was done, the raiders divided booty among themselves, compensating the injured with an extra slave or sack of coins. The key again? Incentives. Forget small fry like Fermat’s Last Theorem; here is a proof for piracy.

How did Leeson do it? In short, by bringing the unquestionable genius of today’s most popular economic theories to bear on the problem. To cut through the thicket of details that has for so long distracted and ultimately frustrated historians, Leeson uses what he calls a filter, which allows him to cut the crap, as it were, and collect only salient facts. With these in hand, Leeson proceeds to sort, distill, and “model” pirate behavior, and here he discovers – to the chagrin of pirate-doubting historians, “haters,” if you will – that it was rational, calculated, sensible, and forward-looking, indeed, way ahead of its time. Stealing other peoples’ things was good business, especially when one knew other people who were willing to buy those stolen things, or at least trade sex, alcohol, and firearms for them. And what about the complex “skill sets” needed to run such a risky business? Well, by fortunate coincidence the pirates already knew how to sail ships, which allowed them to efficiently transport treasure before liquidating it and going back for more.

Where Leeson diverges most from the cranky moralists who condemned piracy from the pulpit, as well as from the weepy, rum-soaked Marxists who hailed it as class revenge, is by reminding us that piracy was neither sinful nor romantic. It was simply practical. As any corporate executive or butcher knows, one must use others in order to look out for number one. Why die
swabbing decks when after a quick bit of cost-benefit analysis you could persuade fellow swabs to close ranks, kill the captain, and sail off with everything? Pirates, we now know, saw through the tangle of rules and regulations that jammed the wheels of early modern commerce, and they knew in their hardened hearts that monopolies, governments, the Church, and institutions in general, blocked or rerouted the natural flow of goods (which should have been towards them). Leeson’s lessons do not end here: pirate self-interest was – albeit unintentionally – socially progressive. Why were pirates race-blind and democratic? Because it made good business sense. Why discriminate against a black man when he could eviscerate a prisoner as well as any white man? And why discriminate against gays and lesbians if they could lock, load, and stand bold in their breeches? Why, indeed!

In wrapping up, Leeson wisely cautions against drawing anachronistic comparisons between the pirates of the Golden Age and the Somali pirates of today. Why? As Leeson puts it, the Somali pirates are “not as interesting” as their Atlantic predecessors (p. 205). Of course, he’s right again. The rag-tag Somalis plaguing the Gulf of Aden today clearly lack the committed work ethic, team spirit, and colorful “brand-name” flags of the Golden Age pirates, plus their dependence on motorboats, mobile phones, and automatic weapons, while arguably rational and self-interested, only make them seem like petty gangsters who barely get their feet wet. Better to stick with the real pirates of the seventeenth-century Caribbean, whose actions we can now see were guided not by queen, company, or brotherly love – but by the unseen hook. Let us hope Dr. Leeson applies his economist’s scalpel to other historical cadavers.

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Theorizing a Colonial Caribbean-Atlantic Imaginary: Sugar and Obeah. KEITH SANDIFORD. New York: Routledge, 2011. ix + 194 pp. (Cloth US$ 125.00)

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This book follows Keith Sandiford’s The Cultural Politics of Sugar: Caribbean Slavery and the Narratives of Colonialism (2000). Although it at times covers some similar ground, it is centered in a rigorous attempt to
understand a “Caribbean-Atlantic imaginary” over a long period of time, from the pre-Columbian era to the ending of slavery. It is truly a challenge to do justice to this rich text in a short review.

Two men with transatlantic histories are key: Richard Ligon (born in England in the mid-1580s) and Matthew “Monk” Lewis (born in Jamaica in 1775). Ligon left England in 1647 because of the upheavals there, and spent about two years in Barbados. Back in England in 1650, he was imprisoned when he wrote *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados* (which first appeared in 1657). He also drew a detailed map of the island. Matthew Lewis, whose father was born in Jamaica and whose mother also had Jamaican connections, was born and educated in England, where he began a career as a diplomat but ultimately became a writer. He inherited plantations in Jamaica from his father and visited those, already famous for his novel, *The Monk* (1795). Lewis’s *Journal of a West India Proprietor* (1834), contains his long poem, *The Isle of Devils* (originally published in Jamaica in 1827).

Mindful that Ligon and Lewis knew two very different Caribbean territories, Barbados and Jamaica, Sandiford points out that they were both settled first by the same people, who spoke Arawak (p. 6), and both practiced comparable systems of slavery, which saw parallel growth after slaves were transported from Barbados to Jamaica (p. 7). Moreover, certain aspects of the colonial culture that Ligon and Lewis observed at different times and in different places had common imaginary elements, which Sandiford codifies as obeah, sugar, slaves, and the ocean (p. 8).

Sandiford’s convincing definition of a cross-cultural imaginary in his second chapter is of critical importance to his theoretical framework. He solidly grounds his argument by reference to Caribbean writers and scholars such as Édouard Glissant, Kamau Brathwaite, Wilson Harris, Derek Walcott, Sylvia Wynter, Paget Henry, and Paul Gilroy, though he refers to useful European-centered theory (such as Lacan) when necessary. He discovers a series of connected formulas markedly present in Lewis’s work on the planter side (sugar-cure-order, obeah-disease) and for the slaves (obeah-threat-disorder) (p. 29). A “narrative of order and purity” developed around sugar “which served the interests of preserving vertical exclusionary structures predicated on both race and class” (p. 35). Sugar production and export could involve fraud, paralleled on the open sea by the murder of slaves by captains who threw them overboard. But in English cities, sugar was part of a polite and affluent culture in which, as Sandiford says, “the slave presence was wholly invisible yet vitally there” (p. 41).

There follow close readings of Ligon (Chapters 3 and 4), and Lewis (Chapters 5 and 6). Sandiford seeks to define specific forms of the imaginary under discussion, namely “radical,” “social,” and “instituting” (p. 53). The first occurs when people encounter a new environment and must sharply change their idea of the world (as with Ligon’s experience, even before he reached
Barbados). The second is an attempt to impose an order, though often cognizant of resistance to that order. The third arises from those who are subjugated.

In Chapter 4, Sandiford reads Ligon’s map along with his History to discover hidden resistances within it (the social imaginary). This chapter is particularly fascinating because it explores Ligon’s painterly representation of many ideas in his mind about Barbados. His colonial imagination represented, as Sandiford writes, “work, slavery, hunting, seaborne access and food supply,” but he demonstrates as well how to read beyond Ligon’s explicit intention. He also points out the presence of Amerindians in the margins of Ligon’s book about Barbados. Chapter 5 begins with the voyages of Ligon and Lewis across the Atlantic, 164 years apart, but as Sandiford points out, linked by their oceanic experiences. Furthermore, he explores the tropes of sea and sugar, the subtext of Lewis’s Journal (counterorders) and Lewis’s “relations to Amerindian and African epistemes” (p. 100).

Chapter 6 discusses Lewis’s The Isle of Devils, where the dominant trope is obeah, fascinatingly explored. The Demon-King in Lewis’s poem “suggests the possibilities oceanic marronage afforded … slaves … in his design to translate private dream into revolutionary social action … he combines the magic and occult powers of myal and obeah to plot the demise of white plantation power” (p. 132). So a planter with literary gifts and an unusual imagination – both an uneasy tolerance of his own slave-owner role and an opposition to slavery as an idea – exhibits an “Atlantic imaginary” unusually aware of conditions of life for the subordinated in the Caribbean. Sandiford also reminds us of revolutionary politics in both England and the colonies when Lewis was writing his prose and his drama on both sides of the Atlantic, beginning just a few years before the French Revolution, with Ambrosio, or The Monk (1796). In a powerful conclusion, he sees Lewis’s “instituting” imaginary as prefiguring the apprehension of a Caribbean subconscious in Wilson Harris.

The book does suffer from frequent infelicities of style (a bit of old-fashioned signaling of theory), and an overly heavy hand in laying out arguments, but the high quality of the research, evident in both text and notes, and the importantly provocative, incisive argument make those drawbacks trivial. This book should help us think anew about the way a colonial settler/planter can contribute to a progressive imaginary, once a canny reader like Sandiford finds the subterranean (or suboceanic) text beneath the surface.
“We cannot ignore Naipaul,” admits Lawrence Scott, like Naipaul a writer of Trinidadian heritage (p. 180). But the terms of his engagement with Naipaul, embodied as “wrestling” with one of the most controversial writers of our time, characterize the approach of a number of contributors to this volume of essays that emerged from a symposium on Naipaul held in April 2007 at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, and from a lecture series tied to the celebrations of his seventy-fifth birthday. Naipaul has invited extreme reactions, ranging from gushing tributes to his masterly style and craft to outraged denunciations of his perceived admiration for the West alongside his alleged contempt for colonized and postcolonial peoples. Noting that the relationship between the prodigal son and the land of his birth was at best a “love-hate” one, Al Creighton’s report on the seventy-fifth birthday celebrations surmises that “there was a mild suggestion that the only place they [the Naipauls and the West Indian public] were ready to bury the hatchet was in each other’s heads.” While the contributors to this volume show no such violent impulse, it is not quite a conventional Festschrift either. The general tone, however, is one of admiration not just for Naipaul’s undeniable talent, but also for what Bhoendradatt Tewarie, the Principal of the St. Augustine campus at the time of the commemorative events, calls the “honest brutality, or if you prefer, brutal honesty” of this Trinidadian enfant terrible (p. 196).

To identify Naipaul as simply Trinidadian may be debatable, considering that he sometimes claims (and is claimed by) multiple modernist, postcolonial, and more dubiously postmodernist literary traditions, intellectual genealogies, and spatial geographies, all of which are certainly acknowledged in the volume. But the essays, written by some of the most distinguished scholars from the Caribbean, ultimately embrace this notoriously prickly personality as indeed their own, even if some do so cautiously. Such a gesture is not without irony, revealed in the very choice of the title Created in the West

Indies. As the various essays repeatedly note, the title echoes (but also goes on to dispute or reinterpret) the proclamation that arguably won Naipaul the most opprobrium in the Caribbean: “History was built around achievement and creation; and nothing was created in the West Indies” (1996:20).

In her introduction to the volume, Jennifer Rahim disagrees with the charge of “literary treason” (p. x) provoked by such statements. Like Gordon Rohlehr, in his study of the confessional mode in Naipaul, she believes that the puckish humor and performative trickster qualities of the writer, who clearly delights in causing a sensation, are identifiably Trinidadian traits. In the several excellent close readings offered by individual essays, Naipaul’s nerves, his sense of violation, his vulnerability to the losses recorded by the history of the region, and his long day’s journey into the night of colonialism are generally accepted with more understanding. Speaking of reconciliation and confession, there is some forgiveness for the soreness of scabs reopened and picked upon by Naipaul and, as Rhonda Cobham-Sander concludes, a sense of shared pain and even guilty pleasures. Regardless of the different interpretations of individual works, they share a firm claim over Naipaul’s formative years in Trinidad, a source he uncannily returns to over and over again in his writing even as he occasionally disavows its productive influence.

While the essays provide a thoughtful and interconnected narrative for how best to read Naipaul, they are neither repetitive nor do they always speak in unified chorus. Sometimes the contradictions or differences are not brought to the surface, but flank each other in subtle and interesting ways. For instance, far from taking umbrage at Naipaul’s refusal to consider Trinidad an area where a globally significant subject can be “created” without travel, as against other small nations such as Switzerland (Tewarie, p. 189), Evelyn O’Callaghan believes that exile and migration have actually benefited the region. Forced out by their position as outsiders for various reasons, writers like Naipaul bring perspectives from elsewhere that break up the insular mindset of static societies in the Caribbean, India, Africa, and the Middle East. Jamaica Kincaid, Shani Mootoo, Robert Antoni, and others have challenged the homophobia of Caribbean cultures. Their critiques, O’Callaghan continues, are partly Naipaul’s legacy as the agent provocateur who left and turned his critical gaze inward on the region. While this may be possible, it is left to Edward Baugh, Cobham-Sander, Paula Morgan, Sandra Pouchet Paquet and Scott to raise the undeniably troubling aspects of Naipaul’s work, specifically instances of sexism, racism, and homophobia.

Many of the contributors refer to Naipaul’s self-invention, the flickering interface between author and character, the play-acting persona who so often appears to be the narrator himself, but to what extent the sometimes-repellant statements can be separated from the author is not examined too closely. Nevertheless, the various original readings of several works from multiple perspectives including religion, film criticism, and discourse analysis dem-
onstrate the mixed blessings of Naipaul’s legacy. Not only is Trinidad no longer the “half-made” society where “litricher and poultry” never exceed the stultified aspiration of B. Wordsworth in Miguel Street, it is the generative space where writers like V.S. Naipaul were created.

REFERENCE


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A book that I and others have been waiting for and have wanted for all our lives, Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley’s Thieving Sugar: Eroticism between Women in Caribbean Literature is at once a culmination and an opening.¹ Now, the longing has met its match. We wait no longer. Tinsley’s sea finally wets us down.

As a riverine response to Jamaican lesbian novelist Michelle Cliff’s query, “What would it mean for a woman to love another women in the Caribbean?” (pp. 1, 2), Tinsley assembles an archipelago of texts across the borders of geography (Suriname, Jamaica, Haiti, Martinique, and Trinidad), language (Dutch, English, French, and their dynamic Creoles), genre (poetry, dance, song, photography, and literature) and time period (from the first half of the twentieth century to the beginning of the twenty-first). A truly Caribbeanist text for meeting the forbidding challenge of doing a region-wide analysis,

1. Here I appropriate the words of gay Jamaican-American writer and activist Thomas Glave, whose textual longing opens his edited volume Our Caribbean (2008). I cite this watershed text both because Glave’s words are so appropriate and because many of the artists, activists, and academicians he gathered have longed also to touch Tinsley’s text.
Thiefing Sugar simultaneously takes up and queers the Caribbean landscape in order to chart the various ways by which same-sex-desiring Caribbean women have theorized their own intimate anticolonial paths to each other as a black feminist push against the “empiricism of empire” (p. 18).

Tinsley is able to unearth a disruptive impulse in the epistemological narratives she harvests from the fertile ground of literature in large part because of her critical praxis of “intimate reading” (pp. 27-28). She brings the keen eye and ear of a linguist and a linguistic anthropologist’s attentiveness to the sociocultural worlds woven into language to every text that passes before her. In fact, she is at her strongest when she is officiating over close readings of texts or parsing particular terms— including the (im)mobile terrain of terms one must negotiate in order to describe “same-sex desiring” individuals and communities (pp. 6-9).

Although Tinsley formally cleaves Thiefing Sugar in two parts, the six chapters that constitute the text resist the sections that only loosely confine them. The work begs to be swallowed whole. Chapter 1 reads the performance poetry of same- (and opposite-) sex desiring mati (“girlfriends” in both senses) in turn-of-the-century Suriname as a way to augment the archive of “alternatives to heterosexuality” that have long circulated throughout the African diaspora (p. 37). Chapter 2 reads the symbolic effects of interracial same-sex desire on the colonial racial hierarchy in white Jamaican novelist Eliot Bliss’s 1934 novel, Luminous Isle (p. 72). Chapter 3 reads the “undercover [same-sex] eroticism” in the poetry of elite Haitian expatriate Ida Faubert, who writes her “half seen” poetics from an imaginary Haiti while living in 1920s Paris (pp. 105-6).

Chapter 4 reads the queerly authored 1948 pseudo-autobiography of Afro-Martinican novelist Mayotte Capécia I Am a Martinican Woman. While sorting through the various lives and names Capécia claims for herself, Tinsley levies a somewhat effusive critique of fluidity as an always libidinal metaphor (pp. 138, 168). Chapter 5 reads like a kind of love story between a “male woman” (or a “woman-identified man”) and her/his female love in lauded Jamaican lesbian novelist Michelle Cliff’s 1987 novel, No Telephone to Heaven (pp. 171, 174, 175). Through Cliff’s characters, Tinsley delivers a resounding call for a gender/sexuality project mindful of the specificities of non-Euro-American spaces and a postcolonial project open to the possibilities presented by a Trans-consciousness (p. 180).

And the final chapter performs an “intertextual reading” of Dionne Brand’s 1990 poetry collection, No Language Is Neutral, through a tour-de-force analysis of Brand’s impressive oeuvre without forgoing the intimate precision of reading Brand’s poetry line by line (pp. 205, 220). Using Brand’s writings, Tinsley maps embodied resistance through “intersubjective engagements” and the “radical work of introspection” (p. 204); this cartography also proves a subtle concluding meditation on eroticism and change in the Caribbean (p. 205). And coming full circle, Tinsley’s final chapter takes up the text whose title poem’s final stanza begins with the title of Brand’s 1996 novel (In Another
Place, Not Here), whose opening lines provide Tinsley’s own title (“Grace. Is grace, yes. And I take it, quiet, quiet, like thiefing sugar”).

Consistently, each chapter in Thiefing Sugar is most supple where Tinsley turns to close literary analysis, but she seduces us into these close readings with brief anecdotes about queer life, queer rights, and queer circumstances in the contemporary Caribbean and its diaspora. These introductory segments provide a precarious bridge to literature written a century earlier. This wind-rocked path is perhaps the haunting result of Tinsley being drawn away from her initial intention to work on contemporary texts and issues in the region toward “ancestor texts” from the first half of the twentieth century (p. 4). Nevertheless, the rope bridges between these opening sequences and the texts they introduce are passable if one approaches them without looking down.

These anecdotes tease us in part because we undoubtedly want them to be longer or to return more substantially at the conclusion of each chapter, but they also whet our appetites – even if indirectly – for more flesh and blood sources. Sources like the generous residents of Blanchisseuse (Trinidad) whose stories about the history of their town pointed Tinsley to – and perhaps through – museum archives (p. 255). Tinsley has certainly made use of other living archives – that much is certain; I beg merely for more of the stories she collected in the process of collecting the stories she so masterfully offers us.

Finally, if Thiefing Sugar refuses to hand over a particularly conspicuous concluding chapter, perhaps this is because the text challenges us to resist the yearning for a formal conclusion and instead embrace another kind of closure. A queer kind of closure that brings us quietly back to the title of the text by another path, and yet offers still an opening, an opportunity, an invitation. Following from her insistence on washing away the divide between theorizing and imagining (p. 28), Tinsley sets us down with a poet in our final moment with her text all the better to imagine different “erotic geographies” for Queer Theory and new creative uses of same-sex eroticism in Postcolonial Theory (pp. 3-4). Overall, an eagerly welcomed trans-disciplinary text that makes an indelible contribution to African Diaspora Studies, Queer Studies, Caribbean Studies, Transnational Feminist Studies, Postcolonial Studies, and Comparative Literature, Thiefing Sugar sweetly satiates even the most discerning intellectual appetites.

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Haitians have been writing their people’s independent existence ever since Haiti shattered the colonial world in its violent revolution, creating in the process the very lexicon of the postcolonial literary and theoretical discourse. Francophone before the word was invented, the country’s writers pioneered the linguistic and aesthetic strategies that allow artists to turn a foreign tongue into a fit instrument for rendering the collective experience. Despite such an avant-garde role in the construction of postcolonial and Francophone literatures, however, Haitian authors have long been either ignored or subject to benign neglect by scholars in postcolonial studies, specialists of Caribbean and Francophone literatures in particular. But the intellectual zeitgeist encouragingly seems to have metamorphosed in the last thirty years, and the muting of Haitian literary voices is now a thing of the past. The increasingly hefty catalog of monographs, special issues of established journals, published articles, and journals devoted to Haitian writings constitutes the clearest sign of the enracination of Haitian letters in the North American academy. Among the most noteworthy recent scholarly contributions to this integration of Haitian literature within the field of postcolonial criticism, Kaiama L. Glover’s *Haiti Unbound: A Spiralist Challenge to the Postcolonial Canon* stands out as an insightful study of the Spiralist novel, the narrative fiction of three of Haiti’s foremost contemporary writers: the now famous Frankétienne and the lesser known Jean-Claude Fignolé and René Philoctète.

*Haiti Unbound* is an elegantly conceived work. Following a panoramic preface contextualizing and synthesizing her study, Glover’s theorizing of the Spiralist narrative arises organically, in five integrated parts, from her textual analysis of a selection of works by the three novelists: Frankétienne’s *Mûr à crever* (1968), *Ultravocal* (1972), and *Les Affres d’un défi* (1979); Fignolé’s *Les possédés de la pleine lune* (1987) and *Aube tranquille* (1990); and Philoctète’s *Le Peuple des terres mêlées* (1989). Through the close reading of these works she brings into relief the thematics as well as the formal and ideological characteristics of the Spiralist novel. For Glover,
these texts, in “writing the postcolonial subject” (p. xix), dramatically foreground the tensions and contradictions inherent in the postcolonial. These, she proposes, are manifest in the novels’ often dysphoric landscapes, the disjunction between place and identity, the recurring mythos of the zombie, and the narrative polyphony (emblematized particularly in Frankétienne’s “schizophrenia”), among a variety of distinctive elements of form and content. Meticulously deconstructing the six selected novels and referencing the writers’ own rare and reluctant theoretical pronouncements, Glover describes Spiralism as “a structural and syntactic narrative model” (p. xxi), which uses a symbolic language in its mimesis of the spiral, dynamic, and open-ended, “integrally reflective of the processes by which organisms and living systems grow and develop” (pp. vii-viii).

Glover states that “Haiti Unbound fills […] a rather astonishingly empty place in the assessment of postcolonial Caribbean aesthetics” (p. xi). She is indulging in a bit of hyperbole here. Indeed, as she herself acknowledges, her work stands on the foundation built by scholars who preceded her in the field, notably Jean Jonassaint (2008) who has studied with great critical insight and scholarly thoroughness the writings of the Spiralist novelist par excellence, Frankétienne. In a rather elegant and direct style that generally eschews the opacity of critical jargon, as she nods to these earlier scholars of Spiralism, Glover achieves superbly her stated intention in Haiti Unbound, which is both “to emphasize the singularity of the Spiralists’ aesthetic and discursive interventions” (p. xi) and “to put Frankétienne, Fignolé, and Philoctète in dialogue with regional writers and intellectuals, and to consider the extent to which Spiralism not only connects with but significantly enriches contemporary models of literature and theory in the postcolonial Caribbean” (p. xi).

Everything considered, then, Haiti Unbound stands as an impressive scholarly achievement, a most significant contribution to the study of the Caribbean and postcolonial novel. Still, the work evidences a few surprising elisions, some insufficient emphases, and the occasional lack of factual or argumentative nuance. Thus, Glover might have positioned Spiralism as the latest temps fort in the historical development of a Haitian aesthetic of the narrative that has been consistently informed by the oral tradition, placing the Spiralist novel in a formal and ideological continuum that proceeds from the folktale to the lodyans to the marvelous realist narrative. In view of this organic connection between the oral tradition and the Spiralist narrative, it is rather astonishing that Glover omitted Frankétienne’s Kreyol novel Dezafi (1975) from her study. By its use of the Kreyol language, its narrative structure, its world view, and its symbolic and semantic frame of reference, Dezafi is in many ways the very template of the Spiralist novel. It is actually a very different work from Les Affres d’un défi, which some critics mistakenly think is a translation of the Kreyol work. The aesthetics of Dezafi are thus inseparable from the Kreyol language, which is ontologically Spiralist.
in its allusiveness, indirectness, and polyphony, and a rather efficacious instrument of subversion and discursive marronage. Finally, in contextualizing Spiralism socially and politically, Glover sometimes resorts to the facile tropes about Haiti, as in her references to the totalitarianism of the Duvalier regime (p. vii) and to the presumed alienation of Haitian writers from the realities of the masses (p. 239). In doing so, she evidences a certain lack of direct familiarity with Haiti, a country where paradoxically social relations are more fluid and political structures more dynamic than her categorical pronouncements might suggest. Generally, a more nuanced understanding of the socio-political context of the Spiralist phenomenon might have led to more finely modulated extrapolations and conclusions about the Spiralist novel and social realities.

_Haiti Unbound_ will considerably enrich the scholarly field of Caribbean and Francophone literary criticism and theory in particular, and of postcolonial studies in general. By foregrounding Spiralism as a narrative mode rooted indeed in Haiti but with rhizome-like connections to the rest of the Caribbean, Glover’s book does indeed widen the postcolonial theoretical field. Nonetheless, it calls for a sequel, one that would highlight Spiralism as a modality of the Kreyol discourse, in all its subversive capacity and symbolic power, in its maroon-like ability to liberate the postcolonial subject from an oppressive reality.

**Reference**

The oft-neglected, multifaceted, and complex literary production of the Dominican Republic is once more receiving the attention it deserves from scholars. In *Divergent Dictions*, the newly published translation and updated version of his *Escrituras de desencuentros en la República Dominicana* (2005), Néstor E. Rodríguez analyzes texts whose significance and value have been determined by their proximity to the discourse of identity. His objective is to identify the “epistemic variables” that have perpetuated this rhetoric in the definition of Dominican identity. In fact, Rodríguez refers to its pernicious influence upon all forms of Dominican culture as a symbolic form of violence. For him, the fact that *dominicanidad* is a racial identification with a native population that hasn’t existed since the sixteenth century illustrates this point as well as the demonization of the Dominican diaspora. Although he laments that the foundation of the national identity has remained unchanged for centuries, *Divergent Dictions* illustrates that there has been significant effort to dismantle its rhetoric.

The book is organized into five chapters preceded by a brief Introduction. In Chapter 1, Rodríguez dismantles the premises sustaining the pro-Hispanic discourse that corroborates the fictitious ethnicity of the Dominican “race.” The concept of Dominican national identity was first initiated by nationalists of the nineteenth century emerging from the twenty-two years of Haitian occupation, but was perfected over time by the “theoretical Trujillismo” which fabricated its foundation upon the Hispanophile discourse of (racist) nationalism.

In Chapter 2, Rodríguez identifies the perpetuation of the stagnant theoretical apparatus of *dominicanidad* by analyzing the essays of the “intellectual triad” of the 1940s, Manuel Arturo Peña Batlle, Joaquin Balaguer, and Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, and the contemporary essayist Manuel Núñez. He contends that the discourse of Dominican national identity remains unchanged today because the intelligentsia still believe that the sovereignty of the nation is dependent upon a homogenous vision of culture based on shared racial and
Rodríguez shows that the perdurability of the discourse of dominicanidad is directly dependent upon the collaboration of political power and culture when he discusses Balaguer’s pseudo-scientific/cultural study, La realidad dominicana: Semblanza de un país y de un regimen (1947).\[1\] He proposes that Núñez, in identifying the common trope of the Trujillista city as the “most Spanish and most traditionalist in America,”\[2\] was hoping to update its fundamental message in order to ensure its continuity. Rodríguez argues that despite Núñez’s belief that his essays form new ideologies about dominicanidad, his ideas are essentially identical to those in the previous works of Trujillo loyalists. In *El ocaso de la dominicanidad* (1990, 2001) Rodríguez writes that Núñez camouflages the very same ideology in his rhetoric of disaster for fear of the loss national sovereignty.

To counter the rhetoric of disaster of those intellectuals who are finding themselves “increasingly incapable of dominating the debate on Dominican cultural identity,” Rodríguez brings in the poetic production of Manuel de Cabral, Hernández Franco, and Aída Cartagena Portalatín in Chapter 3. Even before the assassination of Trujillo, he asserts, writing against the theoretical apparatus functioned in the margins of society. Citing examples from *Trópico negro* (1942) and *Compadre Mon* (1943), he suggests that del Cabral’s creation of the black subject evokes an admission of African heritage in the nation. Despite the fact that other critics disagree with his assertion, he argues that del Cabral’s poetry is an act of defiance if we consider that his use of the black subject comes during a critical point of the anti-black movement, under Trujillo. Although Hernández Franco held opinions that coincided with those of the regime, Rodríguez interprets his poem *Yelidá* (1942) as subverting the trujillista dominicanidad. However, Rodríguez once again finds his opinion about the representation of the mulata at odds with other critics. On the other hand, Rodríguez credits Aída Cartagena Portalatín for taking the first great leaps to foreground the subjectivity of women, making her the first Dominican writer to escape the patriarchal “homo-hegemony” of the discourse. He affirms that the poems from *Una mujer está sola* (1955) make “one feminine voice’s declaration of agency” that serves as a call to action.

In the fourth chapter, Rodríguez asserts that Aurora Arias, Rita Indiana Hernández, and Manuel Rueda make a frontal attack on the premises of Dominican ethos in their effort to subvert the ideal of a fixed cultural identity. In Rueda’s 1998 polemic epic poem, *Las metamorfosis de Makandal*, he sees a criticism of the use of the island as a foundational trope. According to

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1. This essay was updated and republished in 1983 as *La isla al revés*.
Rodríguez, Rueda’s depiction of the island as chaotic and unstable, incorporating a symbiotic relationship with the Haitian leader Makandal, subverts the dominant discourse. Similarly, he identifies the literature of Arias and Hernández as subversive in its proposal for the re-writing of Dominican history. He considers Arias’s books of short stories – *Invi’s Paradise y otros relatos* (1998) and *Fin de mundo y otros relatos* (2000) – the demonstration of a “hyperconsciousness” of a past that remains an obstacle for modernity. Hernández’s novel *La estrategia de Chochueca* (2000) has a postmodern element in her treatment of the surmountable Past. In this way, the Past’s power is taken away, history is undermined and questioned to the point that it loses its importance entirely.

The final chapter of *Divergent Dictions* focuses on the diaspora and its literary production that challenges the accepted national identity discourse prevalent on the island, as the writer in exile (re)constructs the *isla imaginada*. While Rodríguez considers the writers of the diaspora non-conformists, his analysis of the essays of Silvio Torres Saillant in *El retorno de las yolas* (1999) shows that they perpetuate the same “hegemonic norm” that they aspire to subvert. Rodríguez argues that Torres Saillant’s goals of recovery of the authentic identity differ very little from the identity myth that had already defined the *dominicanidad*. Rodríguez also recognizes Julia Álvarez’s novel, *How the García Girls Lost their Accents* (1991), as an example of diasporic writing whose significance is in its act of evocation. Like Torres Saillant, Álvarez is also talking back to the island, a geographic space she no longer occupies, but continues feeling attached to culturally. The perspective of cultural ambivalence in the literature of the diaspora illustrates that its critical approach is inherently centered on identity politics with the intentions of forming a new paradigm.

*Divergent Dictions* is a short but densely packed critical work that thoroughly studies and analyzes the theoretical foundation of the rhetoric of national identity encompassing every facet of Dominican culture as it is observed in contemporary Dominican literature. It is by far the most complete study of the issues of racial/ethnic and national identity and its literary conspirators. In this updated and translated version of his original monograph in Spanish, Rodríguez also provides a superb introduction to some of the lesser-known Dominican American authors. The book is a must-have for every humanities library and should be a required text in courses on Hispanic Caribbean literature. In addition, this study of culture vis-à-vis literature is appropriate for Latin American Studies, African Diaspora Studies, Anthropology, and U.S. Latino Studies programs. The translation finally makes Rodríguez’s research accessible to an academic English-speaking readership.

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The Caribbean Short Story constitutes a significant contribution to Caribbean literary studies, in particular the movement to expand Anglophone Caribbean literary historiography that has so privileged the predominately male, London-based novelists of the 1950s, such as George Lamming and V.S. Naipaul. Editors Lucy Evans, Mark McWatt, and Emma Smith present strong evidence that the focus on this generation has also privileged the novel, reducing the short story to a training phase for Caribbean writers. While Caribbean literary scholars have overlooked the critical role played by short stories in the development of the region’s literature, literary theorists of the short story and editors of anthologies have tended to omit the Caribbean altogether. This omission results, Evans et al. argue, from theorists’ emphasis on the formal characteristics of the short story, which has blinkered scholars to the importance of historical context – a decisive factor in shaping Caribbean literature. The collection’s introduction and nineteen original essays redress these lacks by outlining the prominent role of the short story in the historical development of Caribbean literature and in the work of canonical poets and novelists, including Kamau Brathwaite, Jean Rhys, and V.S. Naipaul. Furthermore, they illuminate the importance of short stories by non-canonical authors such as Seepersad Naipaul, Edwina Melville, and Inez Sibley and provide the foundation for a new theory of the Caribbean short story grounded in the region’s history of colonialism and migration.

Part I, “Publishing Histories,” radically expands and rethinks Anglophone Caribbean literary historiography of the 1940s-1960s, a period of particular interest because it saw the simultaneous development of nation states and of national literature. Based on extensive archival research, Alison Donnell’s analysis of short stories broadcast on the influential BBC program Caribbean Voices, and Suzanne Scafe’s study of short stories published in Jamaican newspapers and magazines (The Gleaner, Public Opinion, and Focus) document that literature of this period included more women writers, more Caribbean residents, more experimental narrative techniques, and a more diverse vision of ethnicity, modernity, and the nation than the corpus of novels...
suggests. Essays focused on single authors Seepersad Naipaul, Ismith Khan, and Andrew Salkey further enhance our understanding of this critical period. For instance, James Proctor explicates Seepersad Naipaul’s highly nuanced representation of Indo-Trinidadians’ negotiation of modernity and tradition to argue that Naipaul’s short stories, long seen as inward-looking contemplations of rural Hindu communities, participated both in the development of Trinidadian national literature marked by the emergence of yard fiction and the *Beacon* group and in the international movement of writers centered in London. Jak Peake reinforces Proctor’s sense of the coherence of Trinidad’s literary tradition by tracing the way Earl Lovelace and Lawrence Scott have transformed the trope of the yard formulated by the *Beacon* group. By contrast, Raymond Ramcharitar attacks this tradition and the half-century of scholarship that has presented the *Beacon* group as inaugurating the region’s nationalist aesthetics. The *Beacon* Group, he argues, in fact “stunted the growth of a ‘national’ literature” because it reproduced British colonial tropes and therefore lacked a national imaginary (p. 74). Patricia Catoira’s analysis of the impact of the fall of the Soviet Union on the Cuban short story offers a fascinating counterpoint to these studies of the Anglophone Caribbean.

Part II, “Sociopolitical Contexts,” complements these examinations of the history of the West Indian short story with three essays on the representation of history in Caribbean short stories. Abigail Ward analyses Khan’s portrayal of the legacies of Indian indentureship; Elizabeth Hackshaw-Walcott explicates the use of temporal frames to depict Haitian history and politics in the short stories of Yanick Lahens and Edwidge Danticat; and Claire Westall explores the emphasis on cricket and socialization in a broad spectrum of writers including Sam Selvon, Beryl Gilroy, and Cyril Dabydeen.

The remaining three sections – “Modernity and Modernisms,” “Folk Tales and Oral Traditions,” and “Generic Boundaries and Transgressions” – examine the theoretical significance of form. For instance, three essays illuminate the refashioning of anancy stories and other forms of oral tradition by Andrew Salkey (Emily Zobel Marshall), Nalo Hopkinson (Gina Wisker), and Pauline Melville (Patricia Murray) to criticize contemporary phenomena from white standards of beauty to postcolonial corruption and corporate destruction of the environment. Elaine Savory traces Brathwaite’s reinvention of the short story form through poetry and national language since the 1950s while Shirley Chew illuminates a parallel play between poetry and prose in the work of Olive Senior. Taken together, these suggest that Caribbean short story writers share the imperative for formal innovation and generic border crossings between non-fiction and fiction, between oral and scribal tradition, between poetry and prose. This diversity and fluidity of form reflect the shared desire to narrate the relationship between the violence and alienation of the colonial past and those of the postcolonial present; to articulate Caribbeans’ experience of diaspora and migration; and to make
visible Caribbean modernity by challenging the oppositional relationship traditionally posited between peasantry and city folk, between metropole and colony, and among ethnic and racial groups. While novelists and cultural critics share much of this agenda, these essays suggest that the form of the short story and the short story collection have theoretical advantages. Thus, Dave Gunning argues that largely neglected short story collections – Claude McKay’s *Gingertown* and Eric Walrond’s *Tropic Death* – offer a more complex vision of black internationalism than do the novels, such as McKay’s *Banjo*, that scholars have used as a foundation for their theory because short stories and collections feature multiple geographical and historical settings, protagonists, and narrative styles. By contrast, the novel, Gunning argues, is limited by its historical and formal association with narrating the nation.

The collection is greater than the sum of its well-reasoned and well-written essays because its focus on one genre bridges longstanding divides between pre- and post-1950s writing, between male and female authors, and between writers based in the Caribbean, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. I recommend it with great enthusiasm.


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Palo practitioners in Cuba live immersed in a world of the dead. The dead may be dear ancestors called upon by name, or they may be anonymous immanent forces. They may be harnessed in steel cauldrons, bitted and bridled, cursed, reviled, adored, fed, and forced to work. They may be reverenced in tiny corner alters consisting of broomsticks and decrepit dolls’ heads, sharing plates of rotting food with Havana’s rats. The dead leave their traces in the world of the living through the most insignificant signals: a glance, a pun, a tremor, goose bumps, or an unnamable nagging feeling that robs you of sleep. But they can also be as momentous as a murder on Good Friday.
Todd Ramón Ochoa immerses us in this Cuban world of the ambient dead. His narrative ethnography is sometimes terrifying, always compelling, and perhaps unique in the long history of writings on Cuban religions that draw their inspiration from Africa. His object of study may be loosely termed as Palo. Palo hovers in an ill-defined space between magic, witchcraft, and religion. Ochoa calls it an inspiration. Palo practitioners harness the power of the dead to the projects of the living. They work this power for good or for evil and certainly for money. They embrace the labels brujo and brujería (witch and witchcraft) and are cavalier in their dealings with the Devil. They are frank in their malice and kind to their suffering clients. They work in a morally ambivalent world that anthropologists have often preferred to ignore.

Perhaps this is why Ochoa has chosen to avoid (or relegate to his endnotes) the vast literature on Afro-Cuban religions. This may be a virtue rather than a shortcoming as this literature is all too easily wrapped up in its own parochial debates and stale retellings of African origin myths. His only ethnographic interlocutors are the founding mother and father of Afro-Cuban religious studies: Lydia Cabrera and Fernando Ortiz (both of whom are long overdue for English translations). His theoretical references are drawn from Continental philosophy and critical theory. But this is not a book that will be remembered for its bibliography. It will be remembered for the unsettling portrait that it paints of the power of the dead in times of economic hardship.

Ochoa begins with the world of Kalunga, the fluid, amorphous, and omnipresent realm of the dead. Individual spirits, beloved ancestors of blood or ritual families, may emerge from Kalunga to offer succor and wise counsel to their descendants. But for the most part the power of Kalunga exists in potentia, imperceptible to all but the most sensitive and knowledgeable adepts. It underlies everything. It accounts for successes and failures in the most quotidian actions, like trying to wrest some cooking oil, a light bulb, or a course of antibiotics from Cuba’s illegal markets. It underpins the baroque ceremonial finery of the religion known to outsiders as Santería, whose practitioners admit that Iku lobi ocha (El muerto pare Santo) or The dead give birth to the Saint.

Santería and Palo are usually opposed in the ethnosociology of religious forms in Cuba. The first stands for benevolent healing and worship. The second stands for malevolent witchcraft and magic. Palo is often publicly reviled (even if it is privately practiced) by adepts of the cult of the Orichas. Paleros may be initiates to Santería. However, they draw their power not from the Saints but from the dead.

The materialization of and channel for this power is the Nganga. The Nganga takes many forms and goes by many names. It is a cauldron made of steel or clay containing graveyard dirt and other powerful powders, railroad spikes, staves of sacred wood, and a human skull. Ochoa was a party to the making of several Ngangas. He describes the conniving with gravediggers and traffickers in stolen human remains, the labyrinthine networks of ille-
gal commerce in religious goods, the struggle to find sacred plants in urban spaces, and the erotic fascination of blood sacrifice.

He tells us what it is like to put the Nganga to work on missions of mercy or hate designed to alter the fates of living men and women. He gives us a vertiginous glimpse into a world rife with envy, gossip, and slander where revenge is taken with bloody incantations and bilongo charms buried in cemeteries.

Most Ngangas, paradoxically enough, are Christian. In their heart lies the skull of a man, woman, or child baptized in the Catholic Church. While they were alive they were washed in the metaphorical Blood of the Lamb. After they die they are laved in the very real blood of chickens and goats when they are seated in their sacred cauldrons. As Christians, they cannot kill. But the privilege of murder is not denied to the even more fearsome Prendas Júdias, the Jewish Ngangas.

It is a strange ethnohistory that makes Jews more murderous than Christians in the eyes of Cuba’s African-inspired witches. It is not much stranger that the skulls of Chinese immigrants and condemned murderers are somehow more Jewish than the ones robbed from Havana’s tiny and presumably depleted Hebrew Cemetery. These dead Chinese Jews of African Cuba are sent on their murderous errands on Good Friday when Jesus hangs on the Cross and the Devil is on the loose in the world.

Palo is an open secret. There will be some who believe that its stories are better left untold, and they may be right. But Palo has found its ethnographer and for better or for worse, his stories ring true.


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*El Lector* documents the diffusion of the practice of reading aloud in tobacco factories from Havana to Spain, Puerto Rico, the United States, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. In 2006, Casa de las Américas awarded an honorable mention to the Spanish-language manuscript of this volume. Tinajero, graced with an agile and enjoyable prose, presents a historical tour of the
factory reader tradition from its beginnings to the present, in the style of a nineteenth-century travelogue. Upon meeting a reader in Havana, she began “trembling and stuttering” (p. xv). She interviewed male readers in cigar factories and female readers at leaf stemmeries (p. xvi) and used her professional training in Spanish literature very effectively, constantly bringing in literary characters to explain the emergence, changing role, and sunset of readers.

The book’s first part (Chapters 1-2) addresses the origins of the reading-aloud tradition up to 1900. Chapter 1 traces recitation from Greek antiquity through medieval monasteries to conclude that the design of cigar factories resembled that of monasteries, and that the reader’s raised platform bears a similarity to the pulpit. Between the initiation of the practice at Havana’s El Figaro cigar factory in 1865 and the early 1890s, the reader became a well-established figure in factories. Cigarmakers’ committees often chose reading materials that faced opposition from the manufacturers. The printed matter that was read ranged from local newspapers and socialist and anarchist literature to the works of Victor Hugo, Charles Dickens, and Alexandre Dumas, among others. Tinajero then recounts the life of a character named Amparo in Emilia Pardo Bazán’s *La Tribuna* who was a reader at a cigar and cigarette-factory in A Coruña, Spain, presenting an analysis Amparo’s personal life and growing class consciousness. Much of Amparo’s radicalism stemmed from the literature she read to the women workers. As expected, the managers of the factory tried to suppress reading aloud because of the nature of the texts. Tinajero’s contextualization of Spanish tobacco relies heavily on José Pérez Vidal’s *España en la historia del tabaco,* ignoring Ana Romero’s history of the Palloza factory, which provided the setting for Pardo Bazán’s novel.

Overall, the research and discussion show a markedly Cuba-centric bias, which becomes the book’s strength but also its weakness. The Cuban sections are up to date and better discussed than those beyond the periphery of Havana factories. Despite its encompassing subtitle, the book does not examine the reading tradition outside the areas where the Havana style of cigarmaking took root, though Tinajero does mention a reader in David Hirsch’s mostly German-manned cigar factory in New York. Hirsch’s case was not unique; other U.S. cities, such as Detroit, had readers in German cigar factories with no known Cuban connection. Had the exploration been expanded to Germany, the *Vorleser* – the reader – would have appeared as a central figure to cigar makers and among the most class-conscious workers. The *Vorleser* became so closely associated with the cigar makers that sculptures representing the two of them can be seen in some German public spaces.

The book’s second part (Chapters 3-5) follows the diffusion of the reading tradition to Key West and Tampa, and to the legendary Luisa Capetillo. Chapter 3 documents readers’ activities outside of their factory jobs. Some of the readers were distinguished literary figures; for example, Ramiro de Maeztu, a sometime reader in Havana, and others were notable defenders of
Cuban independence. Tinajero argues that besides having a powerful voice, most readers were respected members of their communities. They occupied significant cultural spaces in their capacity as masters of ceremonies and were influential in the hiring of musicians and literary figures.

Chapter 4, on Tampa, documents the strong opposition of cigar manufacturers to factory reading because of the socialist and anarchist content of many texts. In time, the radio diminished notably the tradition of reading aloud. Tinajero patiently documents the jobs of the displaced readers, concluding that many found employment in the very medium that replaced them. Chapter 5 centers, not on a cigar manufacturing center, but on one itinerant reader, Luisa Capetillo and, following the Memoirs of Bernardo Vega, depicts the life of cigar makers in New York. Capetillo, a reader in her native Puerto Rico, as well as Havana and Tampa, became one of the first women to gain renown for her reading skills. The literature written by workers in cigar factories followed what Tinajero wrote about Capetillo. “In essence, they wrote to be read aloud” (p. 147).

The book’s third section (Chapters 6-9) follows readers in twentieth-century Cuba, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. Chapter 6, focusing on Cuba up to the Revolution, pays considerable attention to Cristina García’s, The Agüero Sisters, especially Reinaldo Agüero, a reader, who is the grandfather of the two main characters. Chapter 7 follows readers from the Revolution to 2005. After the Revolution, the number of women reading increased notably in the factories. Today, while tobacco workers still listen to readers, they spend more time with the radio. Socialist and anarchist literature and novels have given way to the reproduction of speeches and other forms of recitation.

The depth and breadth of the Cuban chapters seem lacking in Chapters 8 and 9, which are devoted to Mexico and the Dominican Republic. Tinajero manages a good rendition of contemporary reading practices during the second half of the twentieth century as she relies principally on interviews with aged workers. Had historical materials been included, the discussion of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could have gained the scope of the Cuban sections. To mention just one example, reading was so ingrained among cigarmakers that its reestablishment became a central demand during one of the longest strikes in Dominican history (Baud 1990:9).

El Lector is an update and expansion, beyond Cuba, of Rivero Muñiz’s extraordinary “La lectura en las tabaquerías.” The volume is a refreshing depiction of a major source of the reading-aloud tradition and its implications for working class radicalism and Cuban national identity.
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Based on a study of two communities of sugar mill workers, Blazing Cane explores the involvement of the working classes in the formation of the Cuban state in the period up to 1959, setting out a more nuanced, complex, and less linear version of the story than previous studies. By drawing on local history sources, Gillian McGillivray is able to add other groups to the narrative and to uncover other facets going beyond the version of national history that has at times restricted itself to the history of the city of La Havana and its province, or to Santiago de Cuba. Her analysis of the evolution of Cuban society and politics focuses on two sugar-producing communities as a lens through which to examine the involvement of other sectors of society in the process of nation building. This is not an easy task, given that, as other authors such as Robert Whitney have pointed out, it is difficult to define and quantify the Cuban middle class. In Cuba, up until the end of the 1920s, the basic distinction used to define the country’s social groups divided the population into the clases económicas and the clases populares. This landscape became more complex in the late 1920s, however, with the swelling of the
ranks of public employees, teachers, lawyers, merchants, and people working in the services sector during the early decades of the century.

Taking this social and economic context as her starting point, McGillivray’s aim is to show that we can only understand the country’s changes by focusing on both international and local actors. She therefore studies the development of the social classes linked to sugar production (sugar workers, cane farmers, and owners of the sugar mills) from 1868 to 1959 and examines their contribution to the formation of the state. Throughout the study she seeks to establish a dialogue between international developments and the conduct of different groups both nationally and locally. Thus she analyzes how local matters were related to changes in power nationally and internationally from the comparative study of two sugar mills, Tuinucú and Chaparra, located in the center of the country (Las Villas province) and on the eastern border of the sugar-growing area. The choice of the two communities reflects the very different role each played in the history of Cuba, in terms of their modes of production and use of labor, as well as in the epoch shaping their development.

Tuinucú had a presence going back to the colonial period, whereas Chaparra began to gain in importance after 1898, becoming much more significant on the political scene and the fight for sugar workers’ rights than Tuinucú.

The study also focuses on Spanish landowner Manuel Rionda, owner of the Tuinucú sugar mill and a key figure in Cuban business history. He created one of the largest sugar production and marketing groups in Cuba, consisting of three companies: the Czarnikow-Rionda Company, the Cuban Trading Sugar Company, and the Cuban Cane Sugar Corporation. The Rionda family acts as the guiding thread running through the account of the country’s economic and social development as well as workers’ responses to these changes (union struggles, strikes, formation of workers’ and political associations, militancy, etc.).

At the end of the period studied, McGillivray discusses new interpretations of the 1959 Revolution by including new social actors such as workers, many of them from the middle class. In this context she notes that in 1959 as in 1868, working-class action (the burning of cane fields) drove the reforms that followed. From her study of these years, she concludes that more work on the cold war is needed before accepting the story that the leaders and fighters of the Revolution acted in a context from which a middle class was absent.

Despite this observation, McGillivray has not managed to move beyond the political history of Cuba and set it in a broader context in which the cold war acted as a decisive factor in its evolution, especially in the case of the popular nationalism of the 1940s. The political dialogue between the international and national context from which to explain the political development and evolution of the Cuban state remains to be established. In this regard, a complement to the analysis that is missing from McGillivray’s work on how Cuban nationalism relates to international politics, and to U.S. politics...
in particular, can be found in Vanni Pettinà’s *Cuba y Estados Unidos, 1933-1959*, whose main aim is to analyze the relationships between U.S. foreign policy and the processes of political change in Cuba between 1933 and 1959.

Finally, the extensive search that McGillivray has made of primary and secondary sources in various archives in Cuba and the United States stands out, as does her use of oral history as a means of recording certain recent past events that have in some cases left no trace in the written documentation. Despite these efforts however, inexplicably, her research makes no reference to important works produced in Spain in recent years, and it makes only fleeting reference to just a few books published in this country. A dialogue with these studies could have further enriched and strengthened the methodological apparatus of *Blazing Cane*.

**REFERENCE**


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*The Purposes of Paradise: U.S. Tourism and Empire in Cuba and Hawai‘i.*


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In an original and provocative analysis, historian Christine Skwiot examines the simultaneous development of tourism and the workings of empire in Cuba and Hawaii. The *Purposes of Paradise* is a well-argued and detailed study, presenting a close reading of travel narratives with institutional investigation contextualized in political, social, and cultural histories of colonialism. It describes how Hawaiians and Cubans struggled with issues of sovereignty, settler colonialism, and race-based labor formations from the early nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth and documents how the expansion of U.S. tourism worked to support the making of U.S. empire. Through an
examination of writings by statesmen, journalists, travel writers, tourism promoters, and newspaper editors, Skwiot shows how their cultural productions worked with a multiplicity of imperial and anti-imperial ideas and praxis. Racial, sexual, and gender politics figure prominently in her analysis. Recognizing that the writings were not simply amusing material but narratives with extensive and widespread consequences for the construction of empire, she focuses on divergences, commonalities, contradictions, and the agreements that brought together these “fantasy islands ripe for seduction.”

Chapter 1, “First Fruits of a Tropical Eden,” describes how travelogue writers, annexationists, politicians, and designers of tourism projects articulated a vision for Cuba and Hawaii as territories worthy of inclusion in the United States and destined to be governed by whites. This required reforming discourses of race to transform the racialized subjects of the islands as worthy of and “capable of becoming American enough, civilized enough, republican enough, and white enough to warrant the privilege of joining the body politic” (p. 16). The inspirational and educational travel writings converted armchair travelers into agents of Manifest Destiny as ideas of conquest, occupation, and settler colonialism were reinforced as natural, inevitable, and consensual.

Chapter 2, “Garden Republics or Plantation Regimes?,” traces the development of influential enclaves at the beginning of the twentieth century, as exclusive white elite communities were formed in Honolulu’s Waikiki and Havana’s Marianao to accommodate and attract tourism investors and private planters as dominant governing classes. This chapter studies the configuration of informal colonial control and political management and its connection to tourism. In 1898, U.S. citizens who condemned European imperial politics as oppressive had to reconcile their perceptions with the forcible annexation of Hawaii and the occupation of Cuba. Helped by the education provided through travel narratives, they could persist in believing that they were delivering liberty, republican virtue, and economic development.

To deal with the upheavals of annexation and occupation, elites turned to tourism and the pleasures of imperialism that it created. In Chapter 3, “Royal Resorts for Tropical Tramps,” Skwiot establishes the importance of creating fantasies about Hawaiian royalty and the sexual allure of the conquered exotic “others” for the promotion and enhancement of white subjectivities. At the same time that histories of anti-imperialism and racialized labor strife were repressed, tourists were lured by casinos, hula, and erotic pleasure, represented as part of the nature of the locals and unrelated to the staging of tourism enterprises.

Chapter 4, “Revolutions, Reformations, Restorations,” begins with a rape trial in Hawaii that exposed the double standard of the law for haole and people of color. The sexualized racial politics of the 1930s-1950s opened possibilities for Cubans and Hawaiians to escalate their clamor for rights and
racial democracy. The struggles were often framed against inequalities established by tourism, an imperial project that affirmed colonialism and exposed everything that was wrong with U.S. domination.

Chapter 5, “Travels to Another Revolution and to Statehood” and the Conclusion, consider Hawaiian statehood and the Cuban Revolution. Resonant with the annexationist politics of half a century earlier, revolution and statehood supporters continued to ignore a long history of U.S. exploitation and the opposition to annexation, colonial rule, and statehood that it generated. Multiple narratives maintained that the people of Cuba and Hawaii were connected to the United States by affection and kinship, obligation and fate. Throughout the book, however, Skwiot proposes that U.S. empire worked to whiten the islands and erase natives, blacks, and working-class immigrants. In Chapter 5 she offers a riveting scrutiny of the role of the U.S. media in crafting narratives about Cuban revolutionaries and Hawaiian mixed-race people as almost white and hence worthy of acceptance. She argues forcefully that the abuses of U.S. empire were not unlike those of other empires.

*The Purposes of Paradise* is a must-read for scholars of empire, postcolonialism, Pacific and the Caribbean history, area studies, tourism studies, and critical ethnic and gender studies, as well as for upper-division and graduate courses in these areas.

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Aviva Chomsky has written an engaging, accessible, and concise overview of the Cuban Revolution of 1959. This book is intended as a primer for students and newcomers to the field of Cuban Studies, and in that capacity it succeeds admirably. Chomsky analyzes Cuba’s revolutionary society in broad brushstrokes, synthesizing recent scholarship from both Cuba and the United States. Her stated aim is to demystify the popular imagery of Cuba as either a rum-drenched beach resort or a “dingy, gray, repressed police state, where
citizens live in dreary fear” (p. 193). The book’s overarching argument is that the Cuban Revolution, despite being a poorly understood phenomenon, sheds light on broader trends within the Western hemisphere, such as the entrenched underdevelopment and deep social inequality of former colonial societies.

Several aspects of the book make it particularly suitable for course use. Chomsky recaps various authors’ conflicting assessments on issues such as race, popular culture, economic reform, and so on, all without openly taking sides, an approach that may prove fruitful for sparking classroom debate. Moreover, the book follows developments all the way through 2009, making it one of the most up-to-date surveys available. This clarifies certain trends, such as the nearly full reversal, after 2005, of the economic reforms introduced during the Special Period of the 1990s, and the emergence of an overwhelmingly disaffected generation of Cubans, too young to remember the relative economic stability of the 1970s and 1980s. Chomsky briefly mentions Raul Castro’s rise to the presidency in 2008, which roughly coincided with the U.S. election of Barack Obama; yet as she notes, these changes in leadership have not resulted in significant alterations to bilateral relations.

With an eye toward accessibility, Chomsky has used clear and concise language and provides succinct explanations of key terms such as capitalism, socialism, dependency theory, négritude, and so on. The brevity and self-contained nature of the chapters make them easy to assign on their own. The book will thus serve as a complement or alternative to classic overviews such as Marifeli Pérez-Stable’s The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course and Legacy, and Louis Pérez Jr.’s Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution.

The book is organized more or less thematically, beginning with two introductory chapters that gloss Cuban history to 1959 and briefly explain Cuban socialism’s socio-economic achievements and failures. A third chapter (the only one to draw significantly on primary sources) provides a detailed discussion of U.S. policy toward the Revolution. Subsequent chapters treat diversity, internationalism, and the arts. The final two chapters provide a detailed account of Cuba’s Special Period, drawing on scholarship and to some extent on Chomsky’s personal observations during travels to the island.

Some chapters and sections are stronger than others. For example, Chomsky’s attempt to clarify the murky history of the U.S. government’s continued support for, or at least tolerance of, exile attempts at sabotage on the island is particularly useful, although it remains unclear how effective or damaging such attacks were. And her chapter on art and culture contains a fine discussion of internal political debate, in which she includes the subtle critique voiced internally by some Cuban intellectuals, usually drowned out by the media focus on dissidents. As she notes, “there exists a voice in Cuban intellectual life that seeks change from within, seeking to slowly open space for dialogue and debate by their own work” (p. 131).
Chomsky tends to focus on structural, cultural, and social change, deemphasizing formal political structures and the role of the leadership. In general, this is a welcome approach in a field still dominated by biographies and diplomatic histories. Yet it can also lead the book to skirt some thorny questions, such as whether popular opinion coincides with the leadership on certain issues, and to what extent popular support has eroded over time. For example, Chomsky cites one recent survey (p. 15) suggesting that 47 percent of Cubans “approved” of their government while 40 percent “disapproved.” Of course, these figures reflect the relative exhaustion and disenchantment that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and Cuba’s consequent economic catastrophe; the regime likely had far higher support prior to 1990. But statistics such as these nevertheless seem to require some further explanation or discussion, especially given the triumphalist expressions of unanimity that emanate from the Cuban government.

This issue points to a larger question about the way the book is framed. Chomsky strives to debunk myths of Cuba as a tourist paradise or police state, but she is less concerned with challenging the officialist narratives of the Cuban Revolution propagated by the leadership itself. A slightly more critical eye in this regard might have been welcome. Still, although the book is largely sympathetic to the Cuban Revolution in its tone and interpretations, it wisely avoids overt judgments. As Chomsky notes in her conclusions, “I do not wish to sum up the Cuban revolutionary experience or cast an overarching judgment on it. The Revolution has been wildly audacious, experimental, and diverse. It has evolved under often adverse circumstances. It created unprecedented socioeconomic equality … It also showed just how extraordinarily difficult it is to overcome economic underdevelopment” (pp. 194-95).

REFERENCES


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The Cubalogues promises to explore an oft-commented but ill-comprehended episode of U.S.-Cuban cultural intercourse: the Beat writers in Havana and Havana in the Beats ... or how the Cuban Revolution irrupted into the consciousness of the United States’ nascent New Left in the early 1960s and how this drew some of the most prominent exponents of the Beat aesthetic southwards to experience, and perhaps participate in, what C. Wright Mills called “a spontaneous anti-capitalist democracy in its becoming” (in Tietchen p. 39).

Tietchen sets the scene of this Beat extrospection with great skill. Hemmed-in and harried by a rigid “rational world paradigm” (Walter Fisher, in Tietchen p. 40) with rabid anti-communism at its core, and by a bullish assertion of heteronormative order, the Beats allowed their imaginations to wander in what Tietchen calls a “quest for anti-nationalistic conceptions of human community and ‘stranger’ expressions of political subjectivity” (p. 29). In revolutionary Cuba in the early 1960s, the quest seemed to have come to an end. Captivated by the precedence of praxis over ideological premeditation, by the endemic and effervescent spontaneity, and by the apparent permeability to transnational cultural exchange, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Harold Cruse, Marc Schleifer, Amiri Baraka, and others beheld the Cuban Revolution as an epiphanic “true world forum” where the analogical myopia afflicting Western metaphysics would quickly be cured (C. Wright Mills, in Tietchen p. 44).

Tietchen’s analysis of the diverse Beat responses to Cuba beyond this utopic first impression is also commendable. Through the bildungsroman of a carnivalesque train journey down the spine of the island to hear Fidel Castro speak, he traces a coming-of-age among these authors, both in their growing impatience with the more politically vapid fringes of Beat and in a cooling of their original fervor for the Cuban revolutionary experiment.

Regrettably, Tietchen’s reading of the Cuban cultural and historical contours among which this bifurcation of the Beat and revolutionary paths took place is stymied by some of the same “presumptuousness” toward the communist Other for which he roundly criticizes U.S. opinion-makers of the day (p. 158). First, he leaves certain terminological ambiguities unchallenged.
Echoing Cuban author Gabriel Cabrera Infante’s vitriolic anti-Castroism, Tietchen claims that “cosmopolitanism” had been classified as a cardinal sin in Cuba by mid-1961. While hostility to cultural currents from Paris, London, or the Beat capitals of San Francisco and New York certainly became evident in Cuban cultural policy as the 1960s progressed, this could be alternatively interpreted as an ideological salvo against perceived cultural imperialism, rather than a determined turn toward expressive autarky. Hence, while Greenwich Village gurus received a frosty welcome by the mid-1960s, writers and artists from the “non-aligned” world were received with enthusiasm as Cuba recalibrated its cultural compass southwards and eastwards. A year after Allen Ginsberg was unceremoniously expelled, for example, Cuba opened its borders to delegates from more than eighty countries as the “Tricontinental” conference infused Havana with a different kind of cosmopolitanism.

Second, Tietchen’s portrayal of the summer of 1961 and the pronouncement of Castro’s contentious Words to the Intellectuals as marking a catastrophic schism in Cuba’s cultural trajectory glosses over some critical historical nuances. His assertion that the formal alliance with the Soviet Union “effectively shut down Havana as the site of an open and improvised interculture” (p. 48) masks both the turbulence of Cuba’s relations with the USSR throughout the 1960s and the stubborn survival of heterodox aesthetic visions well beyond the alleged demise of what Cabrera Infante called Cuba’s fleeting “cultural renaissance” (in Tietchen, p. 10).

Third, and perhaps critically, Tietchen (and the Beat writers he follows) simply cannot see eye to ideological eye with Castro and the revolutionary regime. Whereas Tietchen describes Cuba as only “momentarily open to a host of politically progressive intellectuals” (p. 1), the early 1960s’ literacy campaign, urban housing and land reforms, nationalization of key economic sectors, and the ever-present mass mobilization that animated many of these projects could be perceived as placing the “progressive” mantle firmly on the Cuban Revolution’s shoulders.

Tietchen and the Beats simply don’t share the same “revolutionary” paradigms with Castro and his acolytes. The writers from the United States (and many of their Cuban counterparts) advocate revolution through committed cultural insurgency that deploys the “stranger” and more spontaneous relations between human communities to dissolve the “prosaic nature of conventional (and reified) political realities” they see blighting the geo-politically bipo-

1. Although the 1961 closure of the Cabrera Infante-edited cultural supplement Lunes de Revolución can almost certainly be attributed to cultural Machiavellianism, the ideological idiosyncrasies of later literary and filmic projects such as Edmundo Desnoes’s Memorias del subdesarrollo (1965), Tomás Gutiérrez Alea’s Muerte de un burócrata (1966), and José Lezama Lima’s Paradiso (1966) belie Tietchen’s description of Cuba’s ferrous cultural policy post-1961.
lar world (p. 43). The insular revolutionary idiom is perhaps more “rational” (in the C. Wright Mills’s sense), or at least more pragmatic as the guerrillas in government sought to erode the cognitive frontier between nación and Revolución to thus conquer an idiosyncratic interstice amid capitalism, communism, and one hundred years of radical Cuban nationalism: “First and foremost comes the Revolution itself,” said Castro in his 1961 Words to anxious intellectuals. “Only later will we concern ourselves with other matters.”

Without sensitivity to this mutual misapprehension, and without cognizance of cultural movements as “sites of intense rhetorical or argumentative activity” (p. 10), the history of the Beats in Havana and Havana in the Beats can perhaps be only partially understood.

REFERENCE


The Devil in the Details: Cuban Antislavery Narrative in the Postmodern Age. CLAUDETTE M. WILLIAMS. Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2010. x + 206 pp. (Paper US$ 18.00)

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In The Devil in the Details, Claudette M. Williams invokes “a nuanced notion of antislavery” to “breathe new life” into nineteenth-century works of fiction. She specifically focuses on works of fiction published before the abolition of slavery in Cuba in 1886 that present antislavery sentiment as “a political instrument.” As articulated in the introduction, she proposes alternative ways of thinking about and understanding the works covered. While the book is divided into chapters that may be read independently, major themes
targeted for analysis include the representation of slave/slave owner relations and slave resistance.

The selected works include lesser-known as well as well-established texts: Félix Tanco y Bosnie’s *Petrona y Rosalía* (1838), Anselmo Suárez y Romero’s *Francisco* (1839), Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda’s *Sab* (1841), Francisco Calcagno’s *Romualdo, uno de tantos* (1869), Antonio Zambrana’s *El Negro Francisco* (1875), and Cirilo Villaverde’s *Cecilia Valdés* (1882). With the exception of *Sab*, each of these works originally appeared in print under the influence of literary critic Domingo del Monte in a climate of strict censorship that forced authors to circulate manuscripts within their literary circles. Williams’s stated objective is to introduce critical insights interpreted by means of a postmodern optic to expand on previous readings of these antislavery narratives.

Since Anselmo y Suárez’s *Francisco* did not pass the censor in 1839, the novel did not actually appear in print until 1880. Williams offers an in-depth character analysis of *Francisco*, providing keen insights on the complexity of Suárez’s vision for the manifestations of slave resistance. She examines how complicity and resistance operate in slave societies despite the apparent acquiescence of slaves to dominance by the slave owners. The steady undercurrent of slave rebellion in the novel includes clandestine meetings between the protagonists, vengeful thoughts, singing in solidarity, and other controlled forms of resistance, revealing the work’s “non-radical subversion” (p. 54). References to various survival strategies, including the retention of African cultural practices and the consciousness of an African homeland, highlight the role of identity in achieving endurance and slave resistance.

While the chapters on *Sab* and *Petrona y Rosalía* examine racial relationships at some length, they offer scant treatment of slave resistance. Avellaneda’s abolitionist work, *Sab*, written by the sole female author in the group, and banned in Cuba, merits particular attention. Despite Williams’s extensive psychological analysis of the romanticized protagonists, the antislavery theme receives less emphasis. She argues that the antislavery message is undermined by Avellaneda’s feminist stance, “consigning the issue of slavery to a lower place on the novel’s ideological agenda” (p. 89). Williams acknowledges, furthermore, that Sab’s hybridity and role as an overseer contribute to the novel’s complexity, rendering the theme of slave resistance problematic. In some respects, Sab’s ambivalent voice echoes that of Avellaneda herself who simultaneously assumed the roles of maverick and conformist. Williams concludes that Avellaneda’s vision of the slaves’ resistance represents a continuation of the anticolonial struggle of Cuba’s indigenous population.

Slave resistance appears center stage in Calcagno’s seldom-studied short work of fiction, *Romualdo*. Following thirty years of suffering brutality under bondage, the proud Romualdo remains defiant and flees the plantation.
Calcagno’s work is unique for its treatment of the oppressive Cuban measures that provoke specific resistance strategies. Appearing as focal points of the narrative are plagio – the corrupt practice of kidnapping and selling emancipated slaves – and the courageous agency that led to the creation of marronage – where slaves found refuge, formed communities, and fought oppression to the death. As Williams reminds the reader, Calcagno’s gradualist approach to abolition was espoused by liberal-minded Cuban opinion, including members of the Del Monte tertulia. (A notable exception was the abolitionist Richard Madden, the first Superintendent of Liberated Africans, whose efforts to eradicate the illegal slave trade during the period 1836-1839 led to the rescue of hundreds of transported Africans from a life of slavery in Cuba.)

Williams suggests that Zambrana’s El Negro Francisco yields new meanings when viewed as a parodic adaptation of Suárez’s Francisco. Noting the intertextual relationship between the two novels, she reminds the reader that Zambrana, “el nuevo historiador” (the new storyteller), claimed to have been so moved by his first reading of Suárez’s work as a sixteen-year-old that he became a committed abolitionist. Written while in exile in Santiago de Chile during the decade-long war for Cuban independence (1868-1878), El Negro Francisco takes the original work as a point of departure to represent Cuban slave reality four decades later. Rather than portraying his protagonist as bozal (a recently transported slave), Zambrana’s Francisco is characterized as a “negro de nación” (a native African) whose sense of identity ensures his resistance. Among the insights that set Zambrana’s work apart are the slaves’ expressions of discontent that prompt them to contemplate a legal change of masters and Francisco’s ability to awaken in the beautiful mulata house slave Camila a consciousness of her ancestral connections. This type of agency appears as an empowering spirit that creates solidarity in the face of extreme oppression and, in the latter case for Williams, a “potent antidote for [Camila’s] alienation from Africa” (p. 129).

Concluding with Cecilia Valdés, Williams furnishes more nuanced insights to uncover motifs that expand on the antislavery theme. Informed by a postcolonial reading, she views María de Regla – the embodiment of slave resistance who defiantly nurses two babies – and the rebel slaves on the sugar plantation who choose the ultimate option, as exercising agency to disrupt the power relationship. Further, she expounds on some of the myriad ways in which slaves undermine and circumvent their enslavers’ authority.

Given the sustained interest in nineteenth-century antislavery narratives, The Devil in the Details is a timely addition to the scholarship on this subject. Williams’s analysis of the complexity of slave society’s interrelationships should generate renewed critical readings of this important body of literature.
In fall 2010, director Esteban Insausti was in Venezuela “blowing up” his first feature – that is, transferring Larga Distancia from digital format onto celluloid for 35-millimeter projection. With the film’s reliance on new technologies for its creation, the theme of emigration driving the narrative, a New York-based Cuban playing the lead role, coproduction as the financing mechanism, and a website marketing the work, this project demonstrates the very “long distance” that Cuban revolutionary filmmaking has come over the past half century.

Film has been a key arbiter of Cuban revolutionary identity; the Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC) was “born” with the Revolution, created as it was in the second decree of the new government in 1960. It is through the medium of cinema that notions of citizenship have been defined and promoted, that relationships to the state have been negotiated, and that alliances have been forged. The cultural project that began a half-century ago, wielding a camera to help construct a new nation, has continued into the present – but with significant changes. A series of new books has expanded the information available on this nation’s rich film tradition.

In Cuba, Ediciones ICAIC has marked the national film institute’s fiftieth anniversary with numerous monographs and edited volumes. In Lágrimas en la lluvia (2008), the late Rufo Caballero presents two decades’ worth of his “thinking about film” – works from Cuba as well as from other parts of the world. In Conversaciones al lado de Cinecittá (2009), Arturo Sotto compiles a series of interviews with film directors, producers, editors, scriptwriters and sound specialists. In Romper la tensión del arco: Movimiento Cubano de cine documental, Jorge Luís Sánchez tracks documentary production in Cuba during the twentieth century, with special attention devoted to the 1960s. In Conquistando la utopía: El ICAIC y la revolución 50 años después (2010), nine film professionals share their reflections on relevant topics including animation (Mario Masvidal), women’s films (Danae C. Dieguez), and polemical works (Sandra del Valle). In Ojeada al cine cubano, Pedro R. Noa Romero compiles film essays and reviews by the prolific Cuban film critic,
José Manuel Valdés-Rodríguez. And in *Los cien caminos del cine cubano*, Marta Díaz and Joel del Río examine the development of cinema in their country from its origins to the present, and append a comprehensive encyclopedia of Cuban films, most with lists of prizes and awards. Cuban cinema is framed within the regional movement of New Latin American Cinema in *Latitudes del margen* (Joel del Río and Maria Caridad Cumaná, Ediciones ICAIC, 2008); pioneers of the island’s cinema are treated in *Entre el vivir y el soñar* (Arturo Agramonte and Luciano Castillo, 2008); and a series of blog posts are compiled in *Bloguerías* (Juan Antonio García Borrero, Editorial Acaña, 2009). Taken together, these volumes provide film scholars and aficionados with exceedingly useful information about the ways in which films have been made, circulated, and critiqued in Cuba.

In recent years, university presses in the United States have also introduced more titles related to this island’s film and media. Among them are *Digital Dilemmas: The State, the Individual, and Digital Media in Cuba* by Cristina Venegas (Rutgers University Press, 2010), *Cuba Represent!: Cuban Arts, State Power, and the Making of New Revolutionary Cultures* by Sujatha Fernandes (Duke University Press, 2006), and *On Location in Cuba: Street Filmmaking during Times of Transition* by Ann Marie Stock (University of North Carolina Press, 2009). Hector Amaya’s study, *Screening Cuba*, joins this growing body of work.

Whereas many of the resources already mentioned are devoted to charting the history of film production, capturing the memories of the creators, or providing analysis of the film texts, *Screening Cuba* sets out to compare the critical reception of select Cuban films at home and in the United States from the late 1950s into the 1980s. Before moving to his case studies of four works that have become “classics” of Cuba’s revolutionary cinema – *Memories of Underdevelopment, Lucia, One Way or Another, Portrait of Teresa* – Amaya provides a comprehensive review of the respective “cultural fields” in Cuba and the United States during the Cold War era. Against this backdrop, he demonstrates how critics framed these films according to their own political cultures during this time. Amaya reveals that reviews, essays, and interpretations from Cuba consistently emphasize the promises of the Revolution, whereas comparable texts from the United States celebrate the films’ resistance to U.S. hegemony and promotion of progressive values. His findings reiterate the words of the renowned Cuban filmmaker, Fernando Pérez, who has observed that “*No vemos las cosas como son, sino como somos*” (“We don’t see things the way they are but rather the way we are”). In probing the political and politicized nature of film criticism, *Screening Cuba* makes a meaningful contribution to media reception studies. In addition, it will certainly be of interest to scholars of Cuban revolutionary culture and film.
Perceptions of Cuba: Canadian and American Policies in Comparative Perspective. LANA WYLIE. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010. xii + 178 pp. (Paper US$ 22.95)

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It is common knowledge that marriages and family reunions have a better chance of remaining harmonious if the subjects of politics and religion are simply avoided. Discussions about beliefs, self-identity, ultimate purpose, and morality usually trigger strong emotional reactions and camps quickly become polarized and entrenched – poor conditions for polite dinner conversation. Oddly enough, political scientists seem to forget this in their search for academically rigorous, objective, scientific explanations of historical and current events.

Lana Wiley’s short book is a refreshing and insightful exploration of how and why the United States and Canada, two countries with so much in common, can have such vastly different policies toward the same country – Cuba. She couches the well-accepted realpolitik explanations of how these differences came to be in the not so real context of the processes of ideation, perception, and identity. Her analysis exposes the soft belly of the so-called hard facts.

Wiley provides a synopsis of the historical development of U.S.-Cuban and Canadian-Cuban diplomatic and commercial relations with a focus on the development of divergent policy platforms toward the Castro regimes (Fidel and subsequently Raúl) from 1959 to 2010. While the United States chose isolation, Canada chose engagement. Wiley itemizes the often heard explanations of how these differences came to be. In the case of the United States, the policy of isolation was rationalized during the cold war era as a non-military response to concerns over Cuba as a national security threat (not completely unfounded given the missile crisis). Though Cuba is no longer a real threat to the United States, this vestigial and ineffectual policy remains more or less unchanged. Clinton codified it, G.W. Bush hardened it, and Obama softened it. The reason given for the continuation of this hard-line policy of isolation is that it is the policy advocated by the small but
politically powerful Cuban-American community in Florida, an important “swing” state in U.S. electoral math.

In contrast, the Canadian policy of engagement is usually explained as the result of the search for commercial competitive advantage. U.S. commercial competition is relatively absent (though Cuba buys most of its food from the United States). Wiley also shows that despite advocating very different policy means, the United States and Canada share similar policy goals – a democratic and relatively market-oriented Cuba.

Wylie concurs with scholars and policy analysts who argue that these reasons for policy divergence have a great deal of merit. However, she is willing to take one further step by asking why and how they come about. In answering these questions, she delves into psychological and epistemological modes of inquiry by using a constructivist approach. She successfully argues that the policies are different because the two countries have different identities and perceptions. In her words: “though there is not a hard-and-fast line of causality between identity, a single perception, and a certain policy outcome, patterns of perceptions reinforce certain policy choices over others ... This pattern becomes the default” (p. 118).

Wylie points to the “core self image of exceptionalism” (p. 20) in the United States, a nation economically, morally, and militarily superior with a missionary responsibility over the fate of other “less fortunate” countries. For the United States, revolutionary Cuba is the ultimate “other” – the antithesis of its democratic and pro-market values, but living in its own backyard (geographically and politically, given annexation movements in both countries). In contrast, Wylie argues that anti-Castro Cuban Americans have managed to gain unprecedented political power by projecting (and believing in) an image of themselves as cold war warriors close to the heart of American political self-image.

Wylie argues that Canadians see themselves as good international citizens committed to moderation, compromise, social justice, and the rule of law. Canada is a peacekeeping nation that promotes dialogue, respect for sovereignty, and multi-lateral approaches. Moreover, for Canada, the “other” is not Cuba, but rather, the United States. Canadians abroad are quick to point out that they are not American and, at home, they resent any action that is perceived as American bullying. Thus, Cuba’s defiance of U.S. bullying is close to the Canadian heart.

Within this context, Wiley examines the U.S. and Canadian responses to different events. For example, she recounts the shooting down of the exile-piloted “Brothers to the Rescue” planes by Cuba’s air force. This event forced President Clinton into signing the Cuban exile-supported Helms-Burton Law. In Canada, the shooting down of civilian aircraft was deplored, but at the same time Cuba’s claim that it was defending its air space seemed a reasonable cause of concern for the Cuban state, though an unfortunate
policy response. Canadian national outcry focused instead on outrage over the illegal and extra-territorial nature of Helms-Burton.

Fortunately, as Wylie reminds us, social constructs such as national identity are plastic, malleable, and impermanent. They change and they evolve. She suggests that change in both U.S. policy toward Cuba and Cuban policy toward the United States is possible and that policy is indeed changing. In contrast, Canadian policy has remained relatively stable despite the more U.S.-leaning policies toward Cuba adopted by Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Wisely, Wylie also warns that these arguments for change in the U.S.-Cuban impasse must address the link between identity and foreign policy in both countries. Moreover, it must do so by changing the way that people connect these two concepts; protection of U.S. values does not equal isolation of Cuba. Exactly how these ideational changes will take place remains uncertain and very challenging. Will it take a game-changing major event – the sudden death of Fidel and/or Raúl Castro? Or will the slow progression of new perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes eventually erode conceptual barriers?

This book has one gap. Cubans’ sense of identity, self-image, and perceptions are not adequately examined. How does Cuba’s own exceptionalism entrench anti-U.S. sentiment in Cuba, as well as anti-Castro/pro-U.S. sentiment in the exile community? What do members of the small Canadian Cuban exile community think and why do they seem so uninterested in affecting Canadian policy toward the island? What are Cubans’ perceptions of their relationship with the United States and Canada? How has history affected Cubans’ perceptions of them? The United States has had an unusually high level of involvement in Cuba that has included annexationist movements in both countries, including the U.S. invasion – the so-called Spanish-American War and the Bay of Pigs. On the other hand, Canadian involvement has been minimal, and based on an ethos of solidarity with the revolutionary cause, and since the mid-1990s, on commercial interests and tourism.

This book is an easy to read, well-informed, and insightful exploration of how policy is constructed – and what might be required to change it – with many possible scholarly spin-offs and practical policy applications.

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The complicated experience of Afro-Latinos in the United States is a long neglected topic that has been receiving increased scholarly attention. An African face with a Spanish accent provokes a quandary, a rip in the seam of racial assignment during the Jim Crow era and beyond. Where in the hierarchy of color and nationality are persons of such identity measured? Do burdens of racism compound burdens of xenophobia, or do ambiguities transgress categories and open spaces for advantage? What national similarities and differences are there in the hermeneutics of race, color, and culture, and how do these circumstances affect interaction and collaboration? This encounter raises questions that are important for larger issues of social identity and community formation, and for sorting out the complex and ever ramifying strands of the African diaspora. Frank Guridy’s Forging Diaspora makes a valuable contribution to this emergent line of inquiry.

Guridy sets out to illuminate “the essence of diaspora-making by following historical actors as they move across borders” (p. 14). Drawing on diverse archival sources in the United States and Cuba, especially the rich holdings of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, he sketches multi-generational interactions between African Americans and Afro-Cubans and ferrets out the international channels and linkages that developed between individuals with common interests, shared problems, and mutual appreciation for each others’ cultural achievements. The time frame begins in the aftermath of the so-called Spanish American War in 1898 and ends with the Cuban Revolution of 1959 (with a brief epilogue from contemporary Cuba). He examines experiences and beliefs of elite actors in both nations, focusing on four specific outcroppings of direct and sustained interaction. In what he describes as “hidden histories” he unfolds events and personalities involved in four scenarios set roughly in sequence: Afro-Cuban students who attended Tuskegee Institute in the early years of the twentieth century; Cuban involvement in the Marcus Garvey UNIA movement during the 1910s and 1920s; Afro-Cuban-American literary and musical cross-currents in Harlem and Havana in the 1920s and 1930s; and the emergence of institutionalized networks of elite relationships.
in the post-World War II period, following improvised channels of Jim Crow tourism. Castro’s rise to power ironically diminished these connections with the U.S. embargo on travel, just as the Civil Rights movement in the United States was building new momentum. His concern with elite individuals allows him to portray the agency of individual actors by focusing on those who had demonstrable influence or access to opportunities.

The Tuskegee Institute, a well-known landmark in African American history, is the subject of Chapter 1. In the early years of the Cuban Republic, when Afro-Cubans were struggling to get a foothold in the economy, Tuskegee offered a relatively proximal destination for Cubans seeking skills. The prestige of Booker T. Washington added to the lure. Juan Gualberto Gómez, a leading Afro-Cuban writer and activist, was instrumental in recruiting a handful of Cuban students who enrolled in Tuskegee. The project met with little success. Guridy’s conclusion is drawn from letters, mostly of complaint, by Cuban students who apparently did not adapt well to the demands of the place.

Chapter 2, “Enacting Diaspora in the Garvey Movement,” which reconstructs involvement by Afro-Cubans in the UNIA, is primarily a description of people and events at the intersection of Cubans and the UNIA. The Afro-Cuban elite club, Atenas, is the focus of much of this narrative, with some discussion of differences in racial perceptions of Cubans compared with other nations, and an emphasis on practice and “performance” within the UNIA organization. West Indian migrants in Cuba, whose grievances were not quashed by the mythic Cuban “racial democracy,” appear to have been the majority of supporters, but several high-profile Afro-Cubans were also involved. There is an interesting, if incomplete, discussion of the contradictions between entrepreneurship, which Cuban elites could endorse, and racial consciousness, which was much less comfortable for them.

The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s coincided with *afrocubanismo* (an upsurge in popularity of Afro-Cuban music, art, dance, and poetry), the subject of Chapter 3. Relationships forged by Langston Hughes with Afro-Cuban writers and musical performers, especially poet Nicolás Guillén, form the central theme. Guridy explores cultural contradictions in primitivism, the commercialization of leisure and tourism, and the shifting tone and urgency of their work with the deepening depression and increased racial tensions in both Cuba and the United States.

The final chapter examines the vicissitudes and ingenuity involved in travel between the United States and Cuba during the Jim Crow era. This perspective serves as a framework for discussing the development of myriad professional, political, and cultural ties between elite African Americans and Afro-Cubans in the period after World War II. A growing, although still tiny, African American upper middle class developed a circuit of pleasure travel, cultural education, and political collaborations. Some of the nodal personalities, including second-generation Afro-Cuban immigrants from Florida, are detailed.
A ten-page epilogue completes the volume. In a captivating narrative, Guridy recounts scenes from a recent trip to Cuba, passing by the now deserted Club Atenas and spending evenings with elderly Cuban musicologists who reminisce about the persons and times portrayed in Chapter 3. Although there is some interweaving of the themes, personalities, and issues among the chapters, there is a lack of overall conclusions or analysis. This book will be of most value to readers already familiar with the history of race in Cuba and elite African American actors and institutions.


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David T. Gleeson deserves great credit for serving as academic editor of *The Irish in the Atlantic World*, which covers the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries. Conference proceedings are notoriously difficult to pull together. In addition, the agendas of the funding agencies behind the conferences often make it difficult to choose judiciously in any edited version. The present volume emanates from the 2007 conference of the College of Charleston’s Program in the Carolina Lowcountry and the Atlantic World. Gleeson, author of an excellent monograph on the Irish in the South, was employed by this program before receiving his present appointment at the University of Northumbria in England.

To apprehend the book’s virtues, one first needs to do some window-cleaning. The articles on Father Mathew’s Irish temperance crusade, on nineteenth-century Irish copper-mining, and on the Second Anglo-Boer War are interesting, but aside from bits of top-and-tail that refer vaguely to the Atlantic World, they are irrelevant to the book’s central theme.

The bulk of the volume does indeed deal with the Atlantic World and, in many cases, with the character of the Irish in the southern United States who were part of that world. The fascinating thing here is an unspoken demarcation between two definitions of the Atlantic World: American imperial vs. world-view. The classic American imperial definition of the Atlantic World comes from Walter Lippman’s masterful piece of World War II propaganda,
The US War Aims (1944) – a source not mentioned by any of the contributors. It postulated a single cultural imperium: “The national differences within the Atlantic region are variations within the same cultural tradition. For the Atlantic Community is the extension of Western or Latin Christendom from the Western Mediterranean into the whole basin of the Atlantic Ocean” (Lippman 1944:87). Not surprisingly, there were only two points that really counted in that imperium – Europe, including the British Isles, and the United States and its pre-revolutionary antecedents.

Within that imperial tradition, one finds some useful essays in this volume. Particularly impressive is Scott Spencer’s pioneering work on the way that Irish music migrated back and forth across the Atlantic in the early years of sound recording. This is front-edge work, and displays the rough-hewn quality that such research must necessarily have: Spencer works from disparate sources such as old recordings, oral and written interviews, and record catalogs to provide an entry into an emerging field. (He manages to do so without dealing with John McCormack, the meteor that almost blotted out the sun as far as Irish recordings were concerned.) Secondly, Lauren Onkey provides a satisfying and perceptive discussion of Van Morrison, especially his musical interaction with traditional American Blues well before his rock and roll period. Onkey’s essay has a set of subtle suggestions concerning how this interaction served as a prophylactic against Morrison’s getting lost in the sectarian subtext that blights so much Irish traditional music. And, thirdly, one admires Bernadette Whelan’s discussion of the “idea of America” – meaning the United States. She manages to show how pervasive, complex and often-contradictory concepts of America were, without losing the reader in the swirl. These three essays work nicely on their own terms and also as related entities. Note that they concern cultural matters of the twentieth century, a period when the secular culture of the Irish in the Atlantic World was indeed largely under U.S. domination. (The religious culture was an entirely different story.)

Against the definition of the Atlantic World as a U.S. imperium stands a second band of essays that present the Atlantic World as a wider and more historically diverse entity. It is a view that (for the Irish) included Newfoundland and British North America (the main receptors for pre-Famine Irish migration). In this view, the Caribbean in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was as important economically and socially as were the U.S. mainland colonies. And, finally, it potentially recognizes that for almost the entire twentieth century Great Britain was the country in the Atlantic World to which the Irish most frequently migrated and which was the social center of their world once they had left Ireland. (This latter point is sufficiently uncomfortable that none of the scholars deal with Great Britain with any directness.) The master-historian Donald M. MacRaild has the widest perspective in the volume. His discussion of “The Orange Atlantic” forcibly reminds readers that Protestantism is a consequential aspect of the Irish culture internationally, and
that from at least the late eighteenth century onwards, one cannot speak sensibly about Irish culture in North America unless one deals with British North America – especially what is now Ontario, which was proportionally the single most ethnically Irish jurisdiction in the entire English-speaking world.

Situated in a wide-lens view of the Atlantic world, the book’s bravura article is Orla Power’s examination of the movement of Irish-Catholic slaveholders of the Leeward Islands into St. Croix, the Danish West Indies. She mastered a variety of old sources, discovered a rich vein of new ones, and shows how the “Quadripartite Concern,” a co-partnership of Irish planters, moved from the British Leewards into St. Croix. The willingness of the Irish Catholics to take part in the slave game is made clear, and Power’s work ties tightly into recent studies by Nini Rodgers, which show that dealing with the slave islands was a major source of funding for the Catholic gentry’s efforts to overcome the effects of the eighteenth-century Penal Laws. There is a fine book in the making here and one hopes that it will appear soon.

Other articles tie into the matter of the Irish, slavery, and, necessarily, Africa. Angela Murphy discusses the problematics of Irish nationalism and the slavery question in the South in the first half of the nineteenth century, and Susan M. Kroeg analyzes the way that West-Indian planters were worked into pre-Famine Irish novels as both characters and social archetypes. There are also two admirable pieces of local history – Richard MacMaster’s essay on a band of Ulster migrants to the Carolinas in the eighteenth century, and Michael D. Thompson’s sophisticated analysis of the interaction of Irish and black dockers in Charleston, amidst the economic confusions caused by yellow fever.


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*The Chinese in Latin America and the Caribbean* is a welcome addition to the growing scholarship on Asians in the Americas. Before I discuss the collection itself, the nature and genealogy of this publication merit comment and context.
First, the co-editorship. The prominent scholar of Chinese and South Asians in the British Caribbean, UWI Professor Walton Look Lai, has teamed up with Hong Kong-based specialist of Chinese in Southeast Asia, Professor Tan Chee-Beng, thus linking the Asian diasporic scholarship of the Caribbean and Latin America with the long and deep tradition of the study of Chinese diasporas in Nanyang. The book is a selection from an issue of the *Journal of Overseas Chinese* (edited by Tan), which is published by the International Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas (ISSCO), founded in 2005 and based at the Singapore Chinese Heritage Centre.

Second, the use of “Chinese Overseas” (a literal translation of *huaqiao* – *qiao* signifying “bridge”) was first a political policy of the former Republic of China, now Taiwan. Sun Yat-sen, the “father” of the 1911 Revolution was himself a *huaqiao* who had traveled to the Americas to raise funds. After the 1949 Revolution and Chiang Kai-shek’s exile to Taiwan, Chiang’s Guomindang party dominated overseas Chinese communities throughout the Americas and elsewhere. But since the end of the cold war, the People’s Republic of China has increasingly found utility in this term, as has Singaporean President for life Lee Kwan Yew. The Chinese Heritage Centre, founded in 1995, commissioned Lyn Pan’s *Sons of the Yellow Emperor* (1994) as an inaugural framing of its Singaporean touting of a global overseas Chinese history.

Finally, it’s worth mentioning that the *Journal* is published by Brill in the Netherlands, which helps the Dutch continue their political-historical interests in a region where they held colonies and have consistently supported Nanyang Chinese overseas studies.

I offer these comments to highlight patterns in the globalization of scholarship that reveal both prior colonial linkages and cross-postcolonial studies; in the era of Anglo American and British academic domination, it is significant to access studies that do not *de facto* privilege U.S.- and British-centric world views. But I do so also to note the contestation over claims of what can be called “Chinese-ness,” or Americaness belonging among diasporic peoples in relation to the countries to which they migrated, either involuntarily or voluntarily. These epistemological issues are important to understand as I discuss the volume itself.

After a useful, but all too brief, introduction by Look Lai, the essays range historically from the early colonial period and “classic migrations” to the present. Edward Slack Jr.’s tantalizing essay about Chinese influence on New Spain and the pre-Opium Wars migration of Chinese is a valuable baseline framing of the early Manila-Acapulco “China trade,” the Asian peoples moving to colonial Mexico, and the emergence of the New World typology of “chino” or “indio chino,” a legal subcategory of the “indios” of the Americas. “Chinos” referred to a polyglot mix of East Asians, Southeast Asians, and South Asians. Slack has taken fragments from the Archivo General de Indias
in Seville and the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City and put them together in a manner useful for translocal, transcolonial studies.

Equally foundational are three essays on the development of Chino-Latino/a communities over moments of isolation and new migrations. French political geographer Isabelle Lausent-Herrera explores the way generations of single male Chinese indentured laborers caught between plantation exploitation, nineteenth-century Castilian discourses of racial degeneracy, antichinismo hostility, and twentieth-century Chinese nation-building movements devised ways of intermarrying, creating injertos and native-born Chinese Peruvian communities, while claiming Chinese-Chinese political and cultural allegiances. Her essay complicates simplistic one-way notions of assimilation and represents a people strategizing to survive and gaining limited but significant agency.

Anthropologist Paul B. Tjon Sie Fat examines the ethnic political struggles among the earlier Suriname “mud Ducks” (mainly Afro-Chinese), “Tang Ducks,” and “New Chinese” against Suriname’s spikes of anti-Chinese paranoia familiar to Chinese diasporic peoples and scholars. Tjon Sie Fat’s Chinese-Dutch Indonesian experience gives him a critical vantage, allowing him to offer useful translocal comparisons. Authentic “Chineseness” in mestizaje Latin American cultures is also what historian Kathleen López explores in her valuable essay on Cuban tourist revitalization efforts of Havana’s “colonia China” to promote a “Chinatown without Chinese” as part of a new PRC state-to-Cuban state relationship-building process. Ways in which these three distinctive postcolonial and nationally-bounded inter-racial dynamics might relate to each other is suggested in the essays by Look Lai, Hu-DeHart, and Robinson, though not explicitly framed as such.

Belizean scholar St. John Robinson takes up Lok Siu’s challenge for comparative analysis of Central America by offering a quick, preliminary overview. Look Lai provides a broader comparative perspective on the roles that both Chinese and South Asian migrations have played in the industrial capitalist relations of production in colonial core economies. And Evelyn Hu-DeHart, an esteemed activist scholar who was trained in Latin American studies and also bridges with U.S.-style Ethnic Studies, examines the overall pattern of antichinismo hence extending Alexander Saxton’s “indispensable enemy” question to the Americas writ large. She asks if diasporic Chinese have been consigned to a paradoxical subject position of “integrated and foreign,” first posed by Mexican scholar Nicolás Cárdenas García. Hu-DeHart raises a central question that demands further serious theoretical examination.

The collection testifies to the importance of this emerging field, exploring questions that move beyond parochial nationalist narratives, and contributes significantly to field-building and field-bridging. But all this for what larger, extra-academic purpose? As neoliberalism and privatization continue to reformulate public and private universities, academics are constantly
faced with the question of “so what”? This volume provides the seeds of a response. The interview by literary scholar Lisa Yun of Hong Kong-born, San Francisco-based historical novelist Ruthanne Lum McCunn reflects on the relationships of time and space, present and past, here and there. In this interview, McCunn and Yun engage with questions of the dialogics between the historical imagination, despite the problems of fragmented archival scantiness, and reasons why history matters.

For this field in development, there are several possible horizons in further epistemological and comparative work, and importantly in public engagement. Venezuelan anthropologist Fernando Coronil’s recent work extending the analysis of “the coloniality of power” to bring together studies extending Edward Said’s theory of European orientalism with the current era of neoliberalist globalization offers an important dialogue between scholars examining East/West axes of power and those exploring differentiation with global North/South questions of the Americas. Focusing on the formation of Occidentalism provides a fruitful nexus to understanding the diasporas and racial formations of Chinese and Asians in the Americas south.

Furthermore, recent scholarship focusing on the everyday and “structures of feeling” within critical theory, and ethnic, feminist, and queer studies offers the possibility of understanding the play of agency and power in any given locale and across locales. Yet, even when macro-theories such as these are conjoined, the challenge of what work it does for addressing ongoing issues of paranoia and scapegoating in realtime and realplace remain. Here publicly engaged scholarship and curated spaces for reflexive grassroots dialogue are necessary. Shouldn’t the people who are the subjects of this work become a part of the analysis, interpretation, and dialogue about their lives? Significantly, this volume moves us closer to that possibility.

Yet, in this age of extreme “free” market commodification, such historically engaged interventionist initiatives are less and less likely to be supported by state funding. What can academics, who are also under the knife of cutbacks, do in collaborating with community-based initiatives?
Jamaican Jewish history spans more than 350 years. Indeed, the Jews (or crypto-Jews under Spanish rule, 1509-1655) lived on the island before it was English and continue to play an active role there to this day. *The Island of One People* shows the extent to which they are one of the many peoples that have contributed to the contemporary Jamaican nation-state. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Jamaica’s Jewish population was larger than the entire Jewish population of British Colonial North America. Long ago did we forget in North America that Jamaica (and to some extent Barbados) was the center of English-speaking American Jewry, not New York. For much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, New York and Philadelphia were cold, northerly backwaters that Jews passed over for sunny, and economically prosperous Kingston and Spanish Town. These British and Dutch Sephardic Jews were attracted to the burgeoning sugar cane trade like bees to honey, as well as to the mercantile-based economy that supported it.

*The Island of One People*, presently one of the few books on Jewish-Jamaican history in print, is valuable for those just getting acquainted with the heritage of Jews in Jamaica and the Caribbean. The book bears many similarities to Ernest Henriques de Souza’s *Pictorial: Featuring Some Aspects of Jamaica’s Jewry and His Community Activities* in both content and structure. Delevante and Alberga do acknowledge this work and the permissions given to them by Judy de Souza, Ernest’s widow. From an academic perspective, *The Island of One People* takes on the feeling of an update to de Souza’s *Pictorial*, filling in Jewish-Jamaican history since the early 1980s, as well as a few miscellaneous topics. The book is an impressive assortment of reproduced historic prints and photographs, though their reprint quality is disappointing. All of the images are grayscale and many are too small or grainy to allow readers to decipher the intricate details. Nonetheless, the impression of a rich material culture in Jewish Jamaica does come across.

While *The Island of One People* usefully takes on the approach of a national history for a specific ethnic minority group, what seems to be looked over is that Jamaica is a relatively small country. In other words this national
history is at the same time a local history. Very few primary sources are used and there is an overly heavy reliance on several secondary sources. This is disappointing when one considers that the authors, as well as many of the major archives in the country, are all located in Kingston. The book’s 223 pages are divided into 29 chapters – with the average chapter just over seven pages – making the narrative choppy. Most of the first 16 chapters focus on the island’s Jewish history as a whole, the synagogues and other communal institutions, and the four past and current significant communities; Kingston, Spanish Town, Montego Bay, and Port Royal. Chapters 17-26 provide a summary history and genealogy of significant Jewish-Jamaican individuals, such as notable Rabbis and families (e.g., Lindo, deLisser, Myers, deCordova, Ashenheim, Henriques, Matalon, and Albergas). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, most of Jamaica’s early influential families were of Sephardic-Iberian origin, with Ashkenazim from Central and Eastern Europe settling in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The book’s final three chapters delve into the history of the island’s Jewish school, Hillel Academy; a biographical overview of past historians on Jewish-Jamaican history since 1941; and population statistics on Jamaica and Jews between 1700 and 2002. Though Jamaica’s Jews represent an old community, the authors believe that their future will not be as good as it was during the halcyon days of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Other than this finding a concluding chapter explaining what new things have been learned from this research is lacking.

In the preface Delevante and Alberga describe their book as “a celebration and remembering. Tribute must be paid to those who went before and took the time to document some of our history” (p. ix). This book does celebrate, remember, and pay tribute to the past so that it is not forgotten, which is a noble goal. However, The Island of One People appears to have been an overly ambitious research project for the authors. It is not the much-needed contribution to scholarship on Jamaica’s Jewish history that we have been waiting for. An investigation of Jamaican-Jewish history with an emphasis on primary source usage and analysis has yet to be written. Nonetheless, Delevante and Alberga are successful in providing access to an aspect of Jewish history that is often a footnote in longer narratives. For those with Jewish-Jamaican ancestry, their book can be a valuable resource for researching one’s family history. A book of this kind is also very valuable for the lay audience or those just beginning their studies; however, the intellectual growth beyond what was already known by most scholars of Caribbean Jewish history is minimal.

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Suriname is home to the oldest Jewish community in the greater Caribbean, where it shares the distinction of longevity with the Jews of Curacao. Its founding members arrived in the 1650s, primarily from the Iberian Peninsula via northwestern Europe, seeking economic opportunity in an environment where Judaism was a legal religion and its adherents were protected and privileged, although barred from full equality. They and their descendants exemplify a colonial American elite whose group boundaries continually shifted, and who became increasingly nativized through the generations, both culturally and ascriptively, without losing their original appellation.

Creole Jews: Negotiating Community in Colonial Suriname is a slight revision of a doctoral dissertation of the same name, completed in 2008 in the Faculty of History and Arts at Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam. Wieke Vink tells the story of leaders and laymen (the two were not always mutually exclusive) staking out communal boundaries in a slave society where Jewish belonging, largely defined by race, shifted to a halakhic understanding in the mid-nineteenth century, following the loss of Jewish communal autonomy in 1825 and intensifying ties with the Jewish community of the Dutch metropolis. Vink argues that Suriname’s Jews maintained an unstable relationship with whiteness. Although the community was legally classified as white by ruling elites, Jewishness set it apart from Christian whites, while its legal status and early roots in the colony secured its membership in the slave-owning class. This complicated the position of Jews relative to creolization, which Vink defines as a variegated process of cultural change specific to New World slavery, masterhood, and coloniality (p. 6). Their position was further imbricated by the communal inclusion of Eurafri- can Jews who, under specific conditions, could secure white status for their grandchildren. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as the largest remaining group of local whites, Suriname’s Jews had come to be identified with the colony’s Christian ruling elite, the very people who had long excluded Jews from full civil and political rights. Ironically, this process of “indigenization,” which Vink seems to use synonymously with creolization, coincided with colonial reports that classified Jews, together with Afro-Surinamese, as natives.
Creole Jews is a pointillistic study. It is not a systematic survey that exhaustively or evenly proceeds through the ages, but rather a thematic overview that relies on “case studies” and jumps, sometimes joltingly, forward in time. Vink takes into account developments in the late seventeenth through early nineteenth centuries, but her main focus is on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Her staccato approach and thin archival evidence mean the omission of incremental details essential to explaining and nuancing broad historical processes, such as the struggle for equal ritual and burial rights among Eurafircan Jews, or language shift among Jews of Portuguese and Spanish ancestry. To illustrate her point about linguistic creolization, Vink mentions the protocols of two Jewish notaries (pp. 63-64) and invents a “fictitious Portuguese Jewish female” living in the eighteenth century on a plantation who speaks only Sranan Tongo, the colony’s Creole (p. 262). Why the need to invent this “Ribca de Abraham Fernandes,” given the richness of the archives? In fact, most eighteenth-century Eurafircan Jews who filed wills with the Dutch colonial government dictated their last wishes in either Dutch or Portuguese, an *afortiori* argument against creolization.3

These lacunae, perhaps unavoidable given the paucity of researchers in the field, do not detract from what is a confident and compelling account. Vink’s portrait of Surinamese Jewish creolization is a captivating counternarrative to the “modernization,” emancipation, and secularization of Europe’s Jews, one that invites historians of the Jewish past to unhinge Jewish modernity from its European focus. It also implicitly poses broader, comparative questions regarding the struggle for equal civil and political rights as experienced by white Jews and gentile Eurafricans. These comparative questions are especially relevant for Suriname, where the categories of Jews and Eurafricans overlapped conspicuously. In demonstrating the relevance of Surinamese Jews to broader themes of Caribbean history, something her scholarly predecessors Robert Cohen (1991) and Jonathan Schorsch (2004) did not do, Vink breaks new scholarly ground.

Vink’s narrative should stimulate lively debate about the utility of various concepts and interpretations. One wonders, for example, if “creolization” as a way to describe colonial acculturation or cultural transformation exoticizes Suriname’s Jewish community as uniquely permeable. Also open to discussion is the idea of a “global Jewish diaspora” (p. 101) that served as a counterpoint to Surinamese Jews as they “creolized,” and Vink’s suggestion that the Jewishness of her subjects, rather than their whiteness, was what destabilized their social position. Vink’s conclusion that High German Jews (Ashkenazim) were less color conscious than Portuguese Jews (Sephardim) does not explain why the former rescinded discriminatory regulations against Eurafricans almost two decades later than Sephardim.

The salient challenge to this research is not so much the lack, but rather the sheer abundance of archival material that legibly survives, mainly in the Netherlands. Neither the prodigious records of Suriname’s Jews, nor those kept by the colonial and municipal governments, have been systematically mined, with or without the theme of Jewish history in mind. *Creole Jews* persuasively and evocatively demonstrates that these archives – and the book’s protagonists – are eminently worthy of excavating and pondering.

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*Only West Indians* is aimed at determining the factors that shape Creole nationalism. Secondly, it addresses the issues of identity during colonialism and in the postcolonial era. F.S.J. Ledgister delves into selected aspects of British and Caribbean historiography to compare and assess the development and evolution of Creole nationalism in the British West Indies. He contends that during colonialism Creole nationalism was “a Caribbean form of European liberal nationalism; one that takes into account both the European origin of dominant institutions and the African origin of the dominated mass” (p. 25).

The difficulty of devising suitable definitions of “creolization,” “creole society,” and “Creole nationalism” is explored in the first chapter. This includes the examination of the views of scholars and advocates of Creole nationalism such as Percy Hintzen, Nigel Bolland, Deborah Thomas, and Don Robotham. Ledgister and others limit Creole nationalism to the intro-
duction of enslaved peoples from Africa into the Caribbean. A question that he did not consider is: Did the earlier interaction of Europeans with the indigenous peoples constitute a form of Creole nationalism?

Chapter 2 “Racist Rantings, Travellers’ Tales, and a Creole Counterblast” deals with the impact on the British West Indies of racist ideas and writings by men such as James Froude, Thomas Carlyle, and Charles Kingsley. The caustic responses of West Indians to such biased writings provide the foundation of Creole nationalism.

Chapters 3 and 5 focus on two influential personalities from Trinidad and Tobago – C.L.R. James and Eric Williams. Both men helped shape Creole nationalism in the post-World War II era in the Caribbean and abroad. Ledgister argues that James’s pamphlet, *The Case for West Indian Self-Government*, is a major contribution to West Indian political thought. Furthermore, the publication is assessed as a forerunner of Creole nationalism which would subsequently emerge in the British Caribbean. Likewise, the academic and political input of Eric Williams is gauged as having a major influence on the growth of nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago. Two subsections of the chapter on Williams, “Founding a Free State” and “The Democratic Nation-State,” demonstrate the making of a Creole nation.

Chapter 4, “Norman Manley: The Dutiful Intellectual,” is dedicated to one of Jamaica’s iconic politicians who appreciated the link of nationalism with democracy, creativity, and liberty. For some readers it would be difficult to label Manley a Creole nationalist. This is due to his philosophy of democratic socialism, his work with the West Indian federation, and his pronouncement in 1957 that Jamaica was a multiracial society.

In the final chapter, “Creole Dilemma, Creole Opportunity,” Ledgister argues that Creole nationalism constituted “a progressive movement which sought to revolutionize the political structure of the West Indies by bringing to power the people of the West Indies via their elected representatives in either a single West Indian state or a group of West Indian states” (p. 151).

It was an oversight not to consider adequately the status and contributions of the Indo-Caribbean and ethnic minorities (such as the Syrians, Chinese, and Portuguese) within the framework of Creole nationalism. Ledgister briefly mentions these groups in Trinidad and Tobago (pp. 121, 142), but fails to properly situate them within a Caribbean context.

A major shortcoming of *Only West Indians* is the focus on two nations (Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago), to the neglect of the Creole nationalism in other British West Indian territories. Readers would wonder about the contributions of politicians and intellectuals from St. Vincent, St. Kitts, Barbados, British Honduras, and Grenada to the development of Creole nationalism.

That said, *Only West Indians* is written in a coherent style and would be a useful introductory book for readers desiring to learn about the interaction of colonialism, politicians, and intellectuals in the emergence and growth of Creole nationalism in selected British West Indian colonies.
This book is a feminist ethnography of the rural black Jamaican gender system based on fieldwork in Frankfield, Clarendon Parish. Its central theme is that “gender is to culture as deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) is to biological life” (p. x), with similar paired features of “longevity-mutability and uniqueness-collectivity” (p. xv). After a preface and acknowledgements, Chapter 1 describes the fieldwork and contribution “to the literature on gender in the Caribbean region” (p. xvii). Chapter 2 presents views of gender in the island, parish, and community. Chapter 3 elaborates the gendered history of Frankfield. Chapter 4 interprets the gender system, including dancehall culture. Chapter 5 stories gender with personal narratives; this chapter, where rural Jamaicans speak for themselves, is the strength of the book. Chapter 6 reviews applied anthropological projects on HIV/AIDS involving Diana Fox and her students. Chapter 7 reaffirms the relevance of the DNA metaphor to the rural Jamaican gender system as framed by the work of the Centre for Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies, in which Fox held a Fulbright fellowship.

Despite its critique of ethnographic authority, the book seems overly embedded in the identity of the Centre for Gender and Development Studies. In addition, Fox ignores important themes central to gender in rural Jamaica that are also significant to Caribbean anthropology.

Drawing on the work of the Centre for Gender and Development Studies, Fox rightly states that “The general attributes of a gender system” include “roles surrounding marriage and kinship” (p. 216). However, in her three-page section on this theme she states (p. 112) that “Both for common-law and married relationships a system of bilateral kinship exists, through which children’s descent is reckoned through both parents. Besson (1998:138) also points out that ‘serial polyandry’ and ‘serial polygyny’ (sequential husbands and wives) are common practices.” However, my research (which does not use the Eurocentric concept of “common-law marriage” for Caribbean consensual cohabitation) distinguishes bilateral kinship from cognatic descent. Bilateral kinship refers to an ephemeral personal network of relatives on both parental
sides, whereas cognatic descent describes enduring gendered lineages often embedded in “family lands,” cultural sites of identity at the heart of Jamaican rural communities that include migrants overseas (Besson 1998, 2002). Yet despite a passing reference (p. 150) to burial in the yard (a significant feature of family land), Fox makes no mention of these lineages. These family lines are rooted in the cultural resistance of the enslaved, who created customary land-holding kin groups traced through both genders opposing slavery and the plantation system (based on primogeniture) which undermined their gendered personhood. These lineages both resembled and differed from West and Central African unilineal descent groups, maximizing forbidden kinship lines and scarce land rights in the Caribbean context. These creole lineages have both endured and further mutated with transnational migration.

Fox’s definition of “fictive kin,” discussed with the Centre for Gender and Development Studies, as “the anthropological term for the integration of the anthropologist into a kin network in the course of doing fieldwork” (p. 220 n.5) overlooks the wider anthropological meaning of this concept and the importance of the fictive-kinship slave-shipmate bond that was the atom of the African-Caribbean kinship and marriage system (Mintz & Price 1992, Besson 1995a).

Such themes of endurance and transformation are closely related to Fox’s theme of longevity-mutability. Yet the debate on African cultural continuities and Caribbean creolization (e.g., Mintz & Price 1992) is not addressed. Instead, there are assertions of African continuities that are not explored. These include the statement that the Jamaican “informal savings institution known as pardner (partner)” is an African survival (p. 115). Yet such gendered rotating savings and credit associations in the Caribbean reflect creolization (Besson 1995b). Likewise the assertion that Jamaican free villages are African-derived (p. 56) overlooks Caribbean peasantization (Mintz 1989, Besson 1992, 2002). Elsewhere in the book, too, general sources are sometimes drawn on instead of in-depth studies; for example, Elitis et al. (1999) would have been informative on the slave trade, especially as not all slaves imported to Jamaica disembarked at Port Royal (as implied on p. 52). My monograph on gendered rural life in Jamaican free villages (Besson 2002), based on fieldwork in Trelawny Parish, which experienced intensive plantation slavery and peasantization near Frankfield, might also have been useful.

Despite the focus on Rastafarian masculinity and Nanny the Maroon’s femininity in gendered Jamaican history, Fox’s discussion of maroons is flawed. Cudjoe, who signed the treaty of March 1739, is presented as leader of the Windward Maroons in the eastern mountains (pp. 66, 223 n. 6), whereas he was leader of the Leeward Maroons in the west-central mountains (Besson 1997, Bilby 2005, Campbell 1990). The First Maroon War was waged by the British colonists against the Leeward as well as the Windward Maroons and not just against the Windwards (p. 223 n. 6). The Windward
treaty was signed in June 1739 not 1730, and it was the Leeward (not the Windward) treaty that established maroon lands in the Cockpit Country (p. 223 n. 6). My study of the (Leeward) maroon society of Accompong is misquoted and mis-referenced. Regarding Nanny (symbolically appropriated by the Leeward Maroons from the Windwards), I wrote that “stones likewise mark her reputed grave” (Besson 1998:140), not “[‘stories likewise mark her reputed grave’ ([Besson] 1998, 144)” (p. 68). The reference (p. 223 n.3) to my reputed use of “loose community” for “Rastas” (Besson 1998:144) is inaccurate; I referred to a “Rastafari network.”

Fox makes multiple references to the themes of respectability and reputation, but says nothing about these gendered concepts as Peter Wilson (1973) first developed them or the related debate (e.g. Besson 1993, 2002). This debate would have illuminated Fox’s interpretation of dancehall, the house-yard, and “aggressive street and male cultures” (p. 211), underlining culture-building by African-Jamaican women as well as men.

REFERENCES


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In *Women in Grenadian History, 1783-1983*, Nicole Laurine Phillip explores the experiences of women in Grenada from slavery to modern times. A product of an interest she had since she was an undergraduate student at the University of the West Indies, the book seeks to present “a picture of Grenadian society through the eyes of women estate workers, domestic workers, teachers, civil servants, doctors, lawyers, revolutionaries and politicians” and thereby “seeks to capture the story of Grenadian women in all its riches and complexity” (p. 2). This is a monumental task because the Windward Islands have been sorely neglected in Caribbean historiography, and the data required to conduct a serious pioneering study of this kind are difficult to assemble.

Based on primary and secondary sources, as well as personal interviews that Phillip conducted with women aged 75 to 90, the book is divided into a brief introduction, six chapters, and a conclusion. Regrettably, neither the
introduction, which highlights the main aspects of the book, nor the first chapter, which gives a historical background on Grenada, offers a review of the literature on women or gender, which would have enabled readers to assess Phillip’s contribution. The remaining five chapters, which concentrate primarily on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, are arranged chronologically: one on women in slave society (1783-1838), three on women in the postemancipation era (1838-1899; 1900-1950; 1951-1979), and one on women in the Grenadian Revolution (1979-1983).

Though informative, Phillip’s single-chapter treatment of enslaved women in Grenada lacks depth and the kind of rigorous, sustained and detailed treatment such a subject deserves. Most of her data come from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and this may have led to a circumscribed treatment. Also, there is an overreliance on the works of Hilary Beckles and a glaring neglect of more recent studies of gender and slavery that would have given the book a comparative perspective. Even so, Phillip investigates many of the same themes, and reaches strikingly similar conclusions about the social conditions of enslaved women as those pursued by other scholars, albeit with less evidence. These include the arduous labor that enslaved women performed despite inadequate and poor diets, the physical abuse to which they were subjected, the forms of resistance in which they engaged, and their prospects for manumission.

In Grenada, women outnumbered men in the field gangs after 1800. Phillip uses statistics from the Lataste Estate in the parish of St. Patrick which indicate that enslaved males were the majority of field laborers in 1789. By 1804, however, data from the Lower and Upper Pearls Estates in the parish of St. Andrew show female majorities in the fields (p. 20). As elsewhere in the region, enslaved men monopolized the specialized tasks and were the carpenters, blacksmiths, and coopers (pp. 20-23). Also, although women were valued primarily for their labor, they were still expected to reproduce. However, the slave population did not reproduce itself biologically; indeed, slave registration records show that there were more deaths than births in the period 1817-1833 (p. 24). With regard to resistance, women engaged in marronage – the most popular form of resistance – malingered, feigned illness, acts of poison, and arson. In 1823, for example, an enslaved woman named Germaine “was given fifteen stripes for willfully destroying canes in the field and for general neglect of the duty” (p. 34). Not surprisingly, mixed-race women obtained freedom more frequently than black women (pp. 36-37).

In the postemancipation period, women in Grenada had limited options, made worse by gender discrimination and their perceived inferiority to men. After 1838, some remained on the estates where they were as vulnerable as previously to sexual and other abuses. Others worked on family land or on land they purchased on their own account, becoming entrepreneurs cultivating and marketing cash crops such as nutmegs, bananas, and cocoa. Still
others migrated in search of domestic and other types of employment, first to Trinidad and Tobago, British Guiana, Cuba, Panama, and Aruba, and later to Britain, Canada, and the United States. Phillip is at her best when describing the endeavors of these women who struggled against the odds, worked for lower wages than men, educated their children, and provided for a better future. The example of Frederica Lewis, who worked on the Pleasance Estate from the 1940s to the 1990s and raised five children whom she sent to secondary school, was fairly typical (p. 60).

With the rise of trade unionism, party politics and the emergence of Eric Gairy’s Grenada People’s Party in the 1950s, women formed self-help associations (such as the Home Industries’ Association where they could acquire craft skills), and moved into the public sphere where some occupied high public office such as governor of the island and ambassador to the United Nations. Core supporters of Gairy, women made further strides under the New Jewel Movement which overthrew him in 1979. Backed by an impressive array of photographs of Grenadian women who came to prominence through political activism or other means during this era of the People’s Revolutionary Government (PRG), Phillip makes an original and important contribution by identifying them and illuminating their work. They formed the Women’s Desk and the National Women’s Organization, took an active role in trade unionism, and initiated maternity leaves and equal work for equal pay. They also participated in public works projects, introduced immunization programs for children, and joined the militia and the army (pp. 119-35). Were it not for the U.S. invasion of October, 1983 which brought the strife-prone PRG to an end, the string of achievements that women could boast might now be longer.

An easy read, Women in Grenadian History is uneven in dealing with the experiences of women and lacks critical analysis throughout. It is, however, a very useful work from which undergraduates and lay people will benefit. Phillip deserves credit for taking gender studies one step further.
British-Controlled Trinidad and Venezuela: A History of Economic Interests and Subversions, 1830-1962. KELVIN SINGH. Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2010. xiii + 294 pp. (Paper US$ 44.00)

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Analyses of the political, economic, and diplomatic relations between two countries are the traditional stuff of international history. Kelvin Singh of the History Program at the University of West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad has, however, taken a unique approach in his study of bilateral relations between Trinidad and Venezuela. This book is a study of how a British colony struggled to assert its presence with an independent state. Singh emphasizes that Venezuela must be seen as a Caribbean country and not just a South American country or a major oil-producing nation situated within the constellation of the United States. His insights are undergirded by impressive archival research in Trinidad, Venezuela, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

At their closest point, Trinidad and Venezuela are separated by only thirteen kilometers (about eight miles) of seawater. The two nations share the Gulf of Paria, which has significant oil deposits; and Venezuela’s great Orinoco River, which drains deep into northern South America, exits in front of Trinidad. As Singh notes, for the British, Trinidad was to Venezuela as Gibraltar was to Spain. As the preeminent global power of the nineteenth century, Britain used its control of Trinidad to meddle in Venezuela’s internal affairs, dominate its trade, and counter the growing power of the United States in the Caribbean region. Venezuela, which was politically unstable in the nineteenth century, often fell in arrears on paying the interest and principal on loans it had contracted with British banks and investors. British warships engaged in “gunboat diplomacy,” with shows of naval force along the Venezuelan coast. In 1902-3, British warships blockaded Venezuela’s ports. And for more than one hundred years, London permitted Venezuelan insurgents to use Trinidad as a staging ground for attacks on the central government in Caracas. British policy was aimed at keeping Venezuela weak, dependent, and incapable of contesting London’s fiat on the proper boundary between Venezuela and its eastern neighbor, the colony of British Guiana.

The United Kingdom’s policy toward Venezuela shifted in the twentieth century, reflecting changes in the global and regional balances of power. In 1895, the increasingly powerful United States forced London to resolve the
boundary issue between Venezuela and British Guiana, albeit on terms favorable to the British colony. President Theodore Roosevelt also demanded in 1903 that the British lift the naval blockade. In the 1920s Venezuela became a leading producer of petroleum, and foreign oil companies, such as the British-Dutch combine, Royal Dutch Shell, invested heavily in Venezuela. The Foreign Office in London then decided it would be wise to conciliate Venezuelan strongmen, like Juan Vicente Gómez (1908-35). During World War II, the United Kingdom became critically dependent on Venezuelan oil. London responded to Venezuela’s support by conceding Venezuelan control over the islet of Patos in the Gulf of Paria.

The Foreign office’s policies at times coincided with the aspirations of Trinidad’s merchant elite and their colonial representatives, the governor-general in Port-of-Spain and the Colonial Office in London. Merchants desired a flourishing trade with their larger neighbor, and colonial officials averted their eyes, as traders conducted an extensive smuggling trade with Venezuela. Merchants also envisioned Trinidad as a lucrative transshipment point for goods from the Caribbean into Venezuela. But, in the 1880s, the government of Antonio Guzmán Blanco (1879-84) responded to the constant British meddling in Venezuelan politics by imposing a 30 percent surtax on transshipped goods. For the next eighty years, the Colonial Office and Trinidad’s merchants beseeched the Foreign Office to pressure Venezuela into repealing the surtax. But the Foreign Office became less interested in the issue as Venezuelan oil became more important to the British economy. As Singh notes, the United Kingdom’s policy always favored metropolitan interests (London) over insular interests (Trinidad). In the twentieth century, the Foreign Office usually won debates with the Colonial Office on issues affecting Trinidad’s relations with Venezuela.

Although this is a unique piece of scholarship, Singh has taken a traditional approach to his subject. Responding to criticisms that they were methodologically out-of-date, historians of international and diplomatic history have revolutionized the field in the past twenty-five years or so, adding, for example, categories of race, gender, and ethnicity to their analytical toolboxes. British officials, both in London and Port-of-Spain, quite obviously took a patronizing tone toward Venezuelans. In 1880, a colonial official labeled Venezuela “the scene of perpetual revolutions” (p. 48). Singh does not, however, pursue the cultural meaning behind such condescending comments. He confines himself to political and economic analyses. Too often, the text is filled with accounts of “what one clerk told another clerk.”

This otherwise worthy study also needs an epilogue. When Trinidad gained its independence in 1962, some of the key issues – contraband trade, illegal immigration, the 30 percent surtax – were still festering. Readers will want a brief synopsis on how the two independent nations have addressed these issues over the past five decades. The book ends, however, with the
weak, disappointing statement that only “time would reveal” how “the leaders of the island and mainland would deal with the mutual issues affecting them in the new era of island independence” (p. 225).


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Although researched and submitted as a thesis to Oxford University in 1958, the contents of this book remain as relevant and useful to scholars today as they were fifty-three years ago. The book offers more than its title suggests, for it discusses the development of the economy of the unified colony of Trinidad and Tobago (rather than only Trinidad) during the interwar period. Organized into nine chapters, it examines the main exports and the interplay of the forces that had impact on the trade of the colony’s export-based economy. Two primary influences are identified: external influences (namely world economic forces operating in a period that was characterized by depression and sharp fluctuations in world trade and commodity prices), and internal influences (including the reactions of the internal economy to the external trade factor and the impact of purely internal matters on the trade statistics).

Essentially, this is a study of the economic history of the colony, centered on the struggles of an agricultural economy in an era of depression in which the interplay between prevailing external and internal forces is reflected. These struggles are couched in the context of an emerging petroleum sector, which, despite facing its own ebbs and flows of fortune, came to rescue the colony’s economy and to dominate its exports. In the process, Alleyne provides a detailed exposé of the nature and organization of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago and the strengths and weaknesses of its elements. He also traces the trajectory of its fluctuating fortunes during the period under study. While each sector of the economy is described in detail, their operations remain contextualized so that the individual experience of each subsec-
With respect to the experience of the three main export commodities (cocoa, sugar, and petroleum), Alleyne identifies five distinct phases across the period under study – three of prosperity and two of depression. In examining the contributions of each commodity to the total value of exports, he notes that change occurred in the composition of exports, and more importantly that the colony’s economy remained characterized by imbalance. First there was the imbalance created by overdependence on one commodity. Initially in the agricultural sector, it was cocoa, and then sugar. In the case of cocoa, export earnings were not used to strengthen the foundations of the industry, which could not withstand the negative development on the world market during the depression years. Then dependence on agriculture was replaced by dependence on petroleum, and the resulting movement from local to foreign ownership intensified the flow of profits abroad.

The study includes a discourse on the colony’s labor situation. This begins with an outline of historical influences such as immigration and indentureship, and goes on to discuss the factors of population growth, health and education, the varying and sometimes competing demand for labor posed by the various sectors of the economy, public finance, and governmental policies. Wages, working conditions, and the labor struggles of the period are examined. Alleyne notes that the position of labor deteriorated as imbalances occurred in the economy, and argues that labor discontent, particularly that of 1937, marked an era of transition for the development of both labor and politics. These disturbances, he suggests, contributed importantly to the growth of trade unions in the colony.

Alleyne posits that the interwar period witnessed a transition from an economy dependent on agricultural exports to one that was mainly dependent on petroleum. The accompanying shift from local to foreign ownership of the chief export industries was caused by a decline in the main agricultural industries and the expansion of petroleum production. The decline of the cocoa industry resulted from the interplay between local and international forces as the price on the world market fell, due to increased production from West Africa and the decline in demand from some importers. Unfavorable market conditions revealed and aggravated the internal weaknesses of the industry. The sugar industry, which remained largely stable, was rescued at critical times by imperial preference. Contrary to cocoa, sugar production increased as prices fell, so that the net earnings from exports of sugar remained stable but “the industry was, however, inefficient both in field and in factory when compared with say, Cuba and Puerto Rico” (p. 289) and the process of amalgamation of the sugar industry was carried even further during the interwar years. Alleyne argues that there were no real worthwhile alternatives as fluctuating export prices also beset the minor agricultural
industries. The economy was gridlocked by the tendency to become more oriented to foreign ownership of productive resources both in mining and agriculture. The sugar industry needed capital to improve efficiency. Thus the more capital-intensive economic activities were engaged the more the economy depended on foreign sources for the required finance as there was no internally generated capital for such undertakings. This trend was further strengthened by the government’s debt policy from the 1930s when loans were issued in London rather than at home. The absence of long-term government planning based on stable revenues was identified as one of the most important shortcomings of the interwar period.

The book is strong on the histories of the major industries. It provides some analysis of governmental policies in the petroleum sector, but does not scrutinize health and land issues facing the working classes in a critical manner. Despite its shortcomings, it provides valuable information on the history of the economic development of Trinidad and Tobago. Added value is provided in the four appendices, which present important statistical data that will be useful to any researcher on the history of Trinidad and Tobago.


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On January 27, 1964, Colin and Gillian Clarke arrived in Trinidad to conduct ethnographic research on ethnic politics and creolization. Their study was supported by the Research Institute for the Study of Man, whose director, Dr. Vera Rubin, had noted that research on rural Trinidad “had emphasized East Indian isolation, cultural retention and hostility to Creole domination” (p. 1). The Clarkes therefore asked, “Were urban East Indians the same?” (p. 1). On August 31, 1962, Trinidad and Tobago transitioned from being a colony of Britain to being an independent country in the Commonwealth. How would the two dominant ethnic groups in Trinidad, East Indians and Afro-Creoles, negotiate the politics of this moment? Although the Clarkes “suspected that cultural
differences – and racial exclusiveness – between Indians and Creoles had not been eradicated” (p. 7), their research was aimed at understanding the extent to which creolization among urban Indians differed from that documented in rural Indo-Trinidadian communities. Post-Colonial Trinidad is the publication of the ethnographic journal that was produced during their fieldwork in Trinidad, from January 28 to September 12, 1964.

The book’s introduction provides an overview of the ethnographic setting and reviews literature related to Indian ethnicity and creolization in Trinidad. Chapter 2, “Settling In,” marks the beginning of the ethnographic journal entries and gives an account of the Clarkes’ initial contact with Trinidadian people and culture. The longest chapter, “Taking Soundings,” records observations from experiences in the field – weddings, religious rituals and commemorations, social gatherings, and political rallies. The journal concludes with “Conversations” – notes from individual and group interviews with cultural consultants.

The Clarkes produced a richly detailed snapshot of urban Indo-Trinidadian life in 1964. Given that Hindus constituted the demographically largest group within the Indo-Trinidadian community, there is an abundance of data about Hindu life, rituals, and identity. The Clarkes recorded the tensions between different sects of Hinduism, ideologies of caste and equality, familial relationships and structures, community organization and obligation, the overlap of religious and secular education, and the intersection of ethnic, religious, and national identities. There is also considerable attention to the position of Christian and Muslim Indians within the framework of the Indian community and the larger Trinidadian population. Through almost daily journal entries, the Clarkes impressively recorded the complexity of this newly postcolonial plural society, and the micro- and macro-level debates about how the new nation would be constructed and the extent to which conflicting ideas about difference, hierarchy, service, and power were being negotiated in tandem with concerns about modernity, tradition, mixing, and purity.

Attitudes toward interethnic relations are recorded in many of the journal entries. In the June 18 entry, Colin Clarke notes, “Racial feeling is strongest among Indians. Hari Maharaj commented, ‘everywhere there are blacks in the world there is trouble,’ and it is likely that this is the opinion held by most Indians in Trinidad. Blacks display a contemptuous disregard for the Indians. There is no need for open hostility, since they are in the majority” (p. 135). In a plural society, these racial attitudes are not uncommon. What is significant, however, is that Trinidad has not erupted into the ethnic violence experienced in Guyana, a similarly plural society. Trinidadian ideologies and structures that fostered positive relationships across ethnicity could have been more deeply investigated.

Given that the Clarkes are white and British, I was also interested in the extent to which their identities affected their research on interethnic relations
and creolization in a nation newly independent from British colonialism. Since anthropological debates about self-reflexivity primarily took place in the 1980s, it is not surprising that this is hardly addressed in the journal entries written in 1964. Yet, the Clarkes note in the introduction to the journal (presumably written within the last few years), “while we can claim with some authority that the journal is not about us, we cannot deny that it is about Indians and Creoles in San Fernando and the adjacent area, filtered through us” (p. 17). The publishing of this journal presented a wonderful opportunity to reflect upon and analyze how “filtering” took place and the implications of their racial, national, and class privilege in a society that was, and in many ways still is, suffering from a legacy of Eurocentric bias. This was a missed opportunity.

*Post-Colonial Trinidad* raises important questions about ethnography. One’s field notes have historically been private affairs where the researcher records detailed observations, emergent ideas, and very preliminary theories that, over time, are revisited, revised, questioned, or complicated. They are also where the challenges and frustrations of immersing oneself in the culture of the field site are recorded. It is often that which one draws from in the production of something else – a conference paper, a journal article, a monograph. The publication of the journal forty-six years after it was originally written entreats us to discuss the function and, ultimately, the disposition of field notes. What does it mean for a private document to be made public? What are the ramifications for people in the field whose controversial opinions might be revealed without the cover of pseudonyms?

This book is an important contribution to Caribbean anthropology, detailing many of the nuances and contradictions of creolization in early postcolonial Trinidad. The 2010 election of Indo-Trinidadian Kamla Persad-Bissessar as prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago, heading a multi-ethnic coalition government, demands that we continue to examine the complex nature of interethnic relations in Trinidad. I recommend *Post-Colonial Trinidad* for its value as a window into the thoughts and landscape of a plural Caribbean society at an important historical moment – independence from colonialism – as well as for provoking debate and self-reflection about the ethnographic process and our relationship to those in the field.
In this volume, Swedish economist Mats Lundahl offers a compilation of his articles on Haiti’s contemporary predicament. The theoretical and explanatory framework informing these articles published over the past twenty years does not depart from Lundahl’s previous and well-known writings on Haiti. Embedded in neoliberal political economy, his analysis suggests that the country is a “failed state” mainly because of two fundamental domestic factors: “population growth and political irresponsibility” (p. xvii). On the one hand, population pressure in Lundahl’s view has had profoundly negative consequences as it destroyed the soil, both prompting the utter decline of agriculture and precipitating a massive and chaotic urban migration. On the other hand, he argues that Haiti’s self-interested politics has engendered a deep social fissure between rulers and ruled which in turn has contributed to the development of an unaccountable and kleptocratic state.

While Lundahl points out that the devastation caused by the catastrophic earthquake of January 12, 2010 may paradoxically offer an opportunity to implant democratic political institutions and foster sustained economic growth, he remains pessimistic about the likelihood of such a happy outcome. It is not just that he doubts political irresponsibility and population pressure will cease, but he notes that foreign assistance, which is absolutely essential for Haiti’s reconstruction, has a record of failure. The question then is: what is to be done?

Despite his concerns about the ineffectiveness of international aid, Lundahl believes that Haiti is incapable of structuring its own way out of underdevelopment without the guidance of foreign powers. In his view, such guidance is especially critical in the aftermath of the earthquake and the country’s turbulent and violent post-Duvalier politics. Haiti simply cannot extricate itself from its predicament alone. As Lundahl explains, “foreign supervision will have to continue for quite some time until it is certain that peace, democracy, and honesty have the upper hand over violence, dictatorship, and plunder. The entire history of Haiti is crystal clear on this point” (pp. 14-15). While it may be evident that Haiti needs to count on the solidar-
ity of the international community, it is hardly “crystal clear” that “foreign supervision” can generate the necessary environment conducive to governmental accountability and material prosperity. In fact, one does not need to “hate the United States,” as Lundahl claims, to argue that the history of such “supervisions” is at best mixed, if not altogether disastrous.

For instance, the first American occupation of Haiti, from 1915 to 1934, resulted in few achievements and left the country at the mercy of a centralized military that undermined any democratic alternative. Similarly, the more recent interventions of the United States, France, and the United Nations in the 1990s and 2000s have contributed little to Haiti’s economic development and democratic practice. If anything, foreign meddling has exacerbated internal tensions and fostered a thoroughly dependent mentality among government officials. Moreover, the economic policies favored by international financial institutions have emasculated state capacity and engendered what Haitians have called “la République des ONGs.” The inability of the Haitian government to deal with the devastation of the earthquake is symptomatic of this syndrome of dependence on NGOs and the international community. This very dependence is in great part the consequence of close to forty years of neoliberal economic policies that have privileged NGOs as recipients of foreign assistance and bypassed the state. In addition, the complete opening up of the Haitian market to external goods has had devastating results for local and state manufacturing as well as for agricultural production. An excellent example is rice, which used to be grown locally, but is now predominantly imported from subsidized American farms.

Since the Jean-Claude Duvalier era, neoliberal policies have also favored the development of the garment and textile industry as the prime vehicle for Haitian “industrialization.” While it seems clear that any strategy of development cannot ignore this sector, there are good reasons not to give it primacy. Not only does it rely on ultra-cheap labor, but even at its peak in 1990, it never created more than 50,000 jobs, as Lundahl acknowledges (p. 245). Moreover, its development has always been at the expense of the agricultural sector and especially domestic food production. Given this rather dismal record, it is surprising that Lundahl believes this sector to be the one that “deserves priority over agriculture and tourism” (p. 251). In fact, he seems to believe that garment and textile factories are capable of providing enough employment to absorb further migrations from rural areas, migrations that he describes as necessary and salutary. As he puts it: “People must leave the countryside. There is no way around it ... Any argument to the contrary is simply naïve” (p. 244).

Lundahl’s overall argument seems to lead to the continued espousal of old and failed economic policies. His approach echoes the recent report commissioned by the United Nations and written by the well-known economist Paul Collier who put forward the same agenda that the World Bank had favored under Jean-Claude Duvalier. These prescriptions are “old wine in
new bottles.” In addition, Lundahl goes too far in minimizing the deleterious consequences of imperial interventions in Haiti’s internal affairs. The reality is that in the past few years Haiti has become a virtual trusteeship of the international community. WikiLeaks’ recent release of secret “Haitian Cables” shows a preponderance of American influence in the making of Haiti’s domestic decision-making. This is not to say that internal politics is a mere reflection of the wishes of the United States, but rather that it is determined as much by foreign as domestic elites. Finally, where Lundahl is right on target is in his analysis of Haiti’s rulers whom he describes as predatory and self-interested. Whether the earthquake will contribute to changing the character of this class remains doubtful. As Lundahl concludes: “Does Haiti have a future? I wish I could be optimistic” (p. 261).


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Millery Polyné’s prevailing theme in From Douglass to Duvalier is Pan Americanism, which he defines as having two main variants. The first has historically served the interests of U.S. foreign policy in the Americas. The second is fraternal, and represents the democratic aspirations of the peoples of the Western hemisphere. Polyné adds a twist to the latter: black Pan Americanism characterizes the particular affinities surrounding the relationship between Haitians and those he calls “U.S. African Americans.”

Beginning with an account of Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide’s communications with African Americans following the coup against his government, Polyné traces the links between Haitians and African Americans from the late nineteenth century to the early years of the Duvalier dictatorship. The larger themes explore how Pan Americanism, thus defined, functioned in relation to nationalist and reformist narratives (both Haitian and African American); the role of imperialism; and the way in which liberals sought to resolve or reconcile exploitation with Washington’s democratic avowals.
The nineteenth-century material focuses more on the African American side and less on the contribution of Haitians to what Hannibal Price called “La réhabilitation de la race noire.” While most Haitian polemics and criticism have historically addressed specifically nationalist issues, many also embraced a broad vision of both Pan Americanism and Pan Africanism. The late 1800s witnessed an outpouring of Haitian apologetics and analyses that foreshadowed modern debates about dependency and underdevelopment. They were written in the context of a global capitalism that was rapidly swallowing up agricultural producers outside of the industrial world. It would be fascinating to compare these texts to similar literature emanating from the United States during the period when Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois and others were mulling over the future of African-descended populations. Du Bois is oddly absent from this book as are certain contemporaneous Haitians. The contributions of Price, Anténor Firmin, and others would have benefited from more discussion. Firmin, for example, participated as a scholar in the short-lived American Negro Academy, the cosmopolitan aims of which seem tailor-made for this thesis.

Polyné chooses to skip the well-trodden topic of the U.S. occupation of Haiti but singles out a particular event that illustrates the black Pan American theme. President Herbert Hoover appointed Tuskegee Institute president Robert R. Moton to head a commission to investigate education in Haiti. At the moment it seemed that the better instincts of the U.S. government might prevail: under its aegis African American leaders could play a role in the modernization of Haiti. Unfortunately, the Moton Commission’s findings were generally disregarded in Washington and the commissioners themselves were treated disrespectfully. Hoover’s Good Neighbor policy, subsequently adopted by his successor, Franklin D. Roosevelt, was a product of Depression-era cutbacks and did not represent a permanent revision of U.S. policy toward Latin America. Polyné gives such historical actors the benefit of the doubt, however. Indeed, his book does not register the indignation frequently found in works about the trials imposed on Haiti. It optimistically suggests the potential for progressive stewardship in spite of much evidence that the U.S. government has had little interest in promoting democratic values in that country.

The book is an addition to recent literature that probes less understood episodes in Haitian history. Monographs that explore the years bracketed by the Marines’ departure and the Duvalier regime now accompany the considerable work on the Revolution and the U.S. occupation. The 1940s and 1950s are particularly rich for the issues that interest Polyné. The arrival of Haitian painting on the world art market and indigénisme, related to the synchronous indigenismo movement in Mexico and other parts of Latin America, abetted a rediscovery of folk life. Polyné demonstrates how African Americans supported this development by advocating tourism and helping to mainstream Haitian cultural forms. He focuses especially on dance as a medium through
which Pan American exchange took place. The rich mid-twentieth-century epoch of art, music, dance, and ethnography ended with François Duvalier’s ascent to power.

I am inclined to argue with Polyné’s central premise that black Pan Americanism structured Haitian and African American relations. Even as generously defined, Pan Americanism always references nationalism and nation-states. It is based on the mutual relations of sovereign peoples. Thus, the comparability of an independent state with a racial-ethnic minority remains problematic, especially when elite figures are the focus of investigation. Polyné holds Duvalier-era repression responsible for the cessation of networking between Haitians and African Americans, a cooperation resumed only with Aristide. There may, however, be another explanation. Haitian Garveyism, for example, was weak not only because the occupation authorities opposed it, but because Haitians, in possession of their own country, had no need to redeem Africa. The ideology that sustained minorities and colonized subjects did not play out in the same manner in an independent black country, however troubled it might have been. This may help explain why Haiti in this narrative appears more important to African Americans than African Americans are to Haitians. The content is certainly more weighted to African American voices. Moreover, the instability of the categories “black nationalist” and “Pan Americanist” is suggested by the fact that at certain points Polyné identifies particular individuals as belonging to one or the other. At other points, however, figures first noted as black nationalists are claimed for Pan Americanism, depending on the era being described.

*From Douglass to Duvalier* is a provocative work that analyzes an under-studied relationship and provides enough grist for continued research on the subject.
Port-au-Prince, Haiti. January 12, 2010. When the ground stopped shaking, less than a minute after the earthquake began, hundreds of thousands of people were buried under the rubble. Well over a million others were left to camp out on the streets and pray for salvation. The gwo kastefis also created an exodus – in the days and months after the earthquake, people from the magnetic capital returned to their original hometowns across Haiti. I have heard friends, including a 22-year-old college student who crawled out of a house with nothing but managed to borrow money to make the twelve-hour trip by motorcycle and bus back to her home in northern Haiti, tell and retell their stories. But by mid-2011, the capital seemed to regain its pull, once again drawing young people back.

What was left, over a year after the quake, was the inevitable rubble in a country characterized by a gridlocked state government, foreign NGOs, and a massive stream of donations and pledges that never make it to tent cities. For the residents, what remained was the retelling of their stories, life hanging onto the hope of normalcy, and political disaffection.

Martin Munro’s edited volume, Haiti Rising, brings together 25 writers to document, discuss, and contextualize the earthquake. While some of the entries are useful and refreshing, and two in particular are excellent, many of the chapters fail to say anything new and instead rehash critiques of international media, Haitian politics, and the details of the earthquake’s aftermath.

What kind of justice does this book do to the earthquake experience, or to the experience of the people in tents? Individually dated, the essays were written on the heels of the event (between January and June 2010). But it seems that even five months is too soon to expect a fully developed analysis of such a catastrophe; writers are still processing the event and struggling to find useful ways to talk about Haiti in disaster.

Despite being published by a university press, the text is not purely academic. Munro lays out his threefold purpose: to acknowledge Haitian culture and history, to record testimonies, and to raise funds for Haitian artists. Much
of the cultural and historic information will be old hat to those who already know something about Haiti.

The book is divided into four sections. The first, “Survivor Testimonies,” can be useful for other survivors who want to compare experiences, or for those unfamiliar with the obvious points to be made about disadvantaged Haiti – unfair media coverage, an unjust world system, disaster capitalism, social inequality, etc. Part Two, “Politics, Culture, and Society,” includes essays by a number of influential scholars. Deborah Jenson’s “The Writing of Disaster in Haiti” looks at Haitian representations of disaster in Haitian letters, including the writing of Louverture, Dessalines, writer Hérard Dumesle, and others. Jenson also alludes to the historic and often forgotten string of earthquakes in the region. This is easily one of the book’s best chapters. Part Three, “History,” offers useful context, though it tends to repeat well-known facts. Contributors include John Garrigus, Laurent Dubois and Jean Casimir, and Patrick Bellegarde-Smith. Part Four, “Haiti and Me,” includes contributions by people with long connections to the country, among them Maryse Condé, whose essay is largely autobiographical.

The best chapter in the book is its last: “Port-au-Prince, I Love You,” by Matthew Smith. This sort of heartfelt and well-researched history, offered next to post-earthquake landscape imagery, is an ideal form for contextualizing the gwo katasrof. Smith takes an imaginary walk through the city, recalling its names, places, people, and music throughout the years. Only six of the contributors lived through the earthquake. Fourteen were not present, and readers can only guess where the other five were. For the best chapters, physical presence hardly matters; in other pieces, however, writers struggle with either a lack of data or the unwieldy emotional baggage that accompanies survival.

When it comes to discussing Haiti after the earthquake, eyewitness authority competes with the authority of those who were not witnesses but have other professional experience with Haiti. Scholars and Haitian-American friends have told me they wish they had been there, to experience the catastrophe in their field site or homeland. These regrets take survival for granted – the accident of time and place that survivors know intimately. Nonetheless, observing from afar has had major effects on the claims that have been made about Haiti during and after the event.

Clichéd critiques of CNN and the news media recur in the book, and contributors often draw on completely imaginary scenes to talk about what happened. Imagining the darkness of Port-au-Prince that night, as Bill Drummond does (p. 174), is quite different from living a night that was, indeed, very dark, except for the bright lights from the backed-up cars and trucks along the Delmas Road and other thoroughfares. The book allows space for its authors to record memories and feelings, and space to share the basics of Haiti with a broader audience. Its best pieces are those that avoid
the lesson of emotional pessimism taught by the disaster, those that find perspective and remember that Haiti is not just Port-au-Prince at 4:50 p.m. on January 12, 2010.


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In this well-documented book, Margarita Mooney explores the meaning and power of faith for Haitian immigrants living in Miami, Paris, and Montreal, and compares the role of the Catholic Church in mediating the adaptation of Haitian immigrants in these very different settings. She focuses on the role of the Church as both a religious and social institution embedded in distinct cultural and political contexts which shape how the Church responds to the needs of immigrants. Haitian immigrants’ experiences with the Church and the government in Haiti in turn influence what they expect from parallel institutions in the receiving countries. In addition, immigrants have particular histories and needs – most left their homeland in search of better economic situations or to escape political repression, and they are often undocumented and in need of assistance to rebuild their lives. Mooney notes that although Haitian communities in the three settings share certain features, the ability of the Church to mediate and advocate on behalf of the immigrants affects their integration quite differently and leads to different outcomes for the immigrants.

Mooney creates an intricate methodological and analytical framework to manage the complex set of variables that such a comparison generates. She uses concepts such as “cultural mediation” to show how faith and religious ideas infuse meaning into Haitians’ narratives of migration and adaptation and “mediating structures” to refer to community and religious institutions that “help bridge the gap between individuals and state, creating a space where people can fashion their identities and create meaning in their lives” (p. 35). She arrives at an interesting set of observations and connections. For example, cultural notions such as the American melting pot, Canadian mul...
ticulturalism, and French republicanism shape the ways in which national, social, and religious institutions relate with the immigrants and these relationships in turn influence how Haitian immigrants are incorporated in each of the three societies. A comparison of interactions between mediating institutions and governmental structures in the three settings unveils a high level of cooperation in Miami, while tensions dominate the relationships in Montreal, and lead to invisibility in Paris. Such interactions suggest that Haitians would indeed create different coping mechanisms to “make it” and that they would have different levels of success adapting to each of the societies. Mooney illustrates her observations with ethnographic vignettes that offer valuable insights into the lives of Haitians in the three host countries.

The most interesting aspect of the book is its focus on the importance of religion in the lives of Haitians. Religious symbols permeate narratives and shape relationships between members of immigrant communities. Mooney demonstrates that Haitian migrants’ religious beliefs sustain them through the hardships of their often stark lives and give meaning to their suffering, their feeling of alienation, and their experience of racism. “God is good” punctuates conversations to convey that hope is still alive in the midst of chaos or that when all else fails, only their trust in God sustains them. Mooney also notes that the media portrayal of Haitians in Florida leads to the stereotype that depicts Haitians as mostly uneducated boat people illegally in the United States while the profile of Haitians in Montreal stresses their Francophone education and status as professionals. However, even though they come from a Francophone country, Haitians in Paris tend to be less educated than their counterparts in Canada and have greater difficulty integrating into French society.

The book is divided into five chapters and two informative appendices. Although Mooney devotes a chapter to each of the sites, her major focus and the strongest part of the book is the study of the Haitian community in Miami. Her ethnographic description of that community is rich and textured. She does a superb job of documenting the evolution of the community and the pivotal role that Notre Dame d’Haiti Catholic Church and the Toussaint Center played in helping Haitian immigrants through the chaotic wave of migration of the 1980s and the AIDS crisis. Her representations of the communities of Montreal and Paris pale by comparison. This could be construed as a weakness of the book but on the other hand, discussion of the experience of Haitians in Montreal and Paris provides an opportunity to compare the impact of three national models of immigrant integration on the successes and failures of one immigrant group. It also is an invitation for other ethnographers to fill the void and add to the ethnography of Haitian migration in other parts of the world. A study of the younger generation of immigrants would also be fruitful and could shed light on how changes in the receiving countries affect minority groups and whether, or how, Haitians find a permanent niche in foreign lands. Appendix A (“Methods”) is a welcome addition.
to the book and provides valuable information and insights into Mooney’s rationale for doing this kind of study and her entrance into each community. Appendix B (“Ayiti Cheri: Notes on the Haitian Homeland”) provides a succinct summary of Haitian migration patterns and a quick discussion of the impact of Liberation Theology on Haitian contemporary politics.

*Faith Makes Us Live* would be a good addition to a class on ethnographic methods and could do quite well for a course on the Haitian diaspora and Caribbean culture. It should also be of interest to anyone interested in Haitian communities abroad and migration in general.

*This Spot of Ground: Spiritual Baptists in Toronto.* CAROL B. DUNCAN. Waterloo ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2008. xvi + 275 pp. (Cloth US$ 85.00)

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*This Spot of Ground* is a fascinating ethnography that thoroughly explores the history, setting, and worshipers of the transplanted Spiritual Baptist Church in Toronto. Carol Duncan emigrated to Canada from the Caribbean as a child and has friends and acquaintances in the Spiritual Baptist religion in Toronto. She conducted her fieldwork over a period of about fourteen years beginning in 1992 in both Toronto and Trinidad.

“This spot of ground” refers, at least in part, to the attempt by displaced Trinidadians to lay a religious foundation in yet another new land. The Spiritual Baptist religion, from the point of view of the worshipers, originated in Africa, was brought to the New World by Africans during the Middle Passage, and became established in Toronto sometime in the mid-1970s. There are currently a number of Spiritual Baptist churches in Toronto, mostly founded by Trinidadians, who make up the bulk of their membership.

“Mourning” is featured prominently and illustrates many of the important themes discussed in the book. The mourning ceremony is a typical sensory-deprivation ritual in which the worshiper “travels” to virtually anywhere on the globe and meets a variety of spirits. Adherents will generally “mourn” once a year as doing so facilitates moving through the various ranks in the
Church. Upon completion of their spiritual travels, which may last anywhere from three to seven days or more in some cases, the returning “pilgrims” publicly report their experiences to the rest of the congregation during a service that is partly dedicated to that purpose. Mourning experiences are, of course, very subjective and personal, which allows some individuals to be a bit more “creative” than other worshipers can tolerate; for this reason, the Church can exercise its authority by “tempering” the more enthusiastic participants. Nevertheless, it is precisely this subjectivity that makes the mourning ritual such a powerful adaptive mechanism for Caribbean immigrants in Canada. Whatever the actual source of the information obtained during spiritual travels, it cannot be denied that it allows individuals, within limits of course, to “fit” themselves to a strange situation in a strange setting. Duncan discusses the themes of empowerment, travel, relocation, assimilation, and the “other” within the context of the culturally rich and personally meaningful mourning ritual.

The Spiritual Baptist religion, both in Toronto and Trinidad, is associated in a variety of ways with the Orisha religion. The Orisha religion in Trinidad and Canada is an African-derived religion which includes in its rites, beliefs, and liturgy several elements that closely resemble those of Orisha worship in the Yoruba culture of southwestern Nigeria. It is interesting that the perception of Orisha worship is quite different in Trinidad and Canada. In Trinidad, the overwhelming majority of Spiritual Baptists want to have nothing to do with the Orisha religion and bristle at the term “Shango Baptists” that outsiders sometimes use. In Toronto, at least according to Duncan, the Spiritual Baptists seem to be much more willing to respect and embrace, at least conceptually, the Orisha religion and its important deities. Alluding to the themes of relocation and assimilation in a new land (once again), it appears as though the (relatively) recently relocated Trinidadians in Canada, in an attempt to “ground” themselves in their cultural roots, have chosen not to downplay or ignore the Orisha religion the way the Spiritual Baptists in Trinidad have. This more pronounced tendency to associate with Orisha worship in Toronto notwithstanding, the Toronto Baptists do not appear to engage in actual Orisha worship or integrate the practices of this religion into their own.

Noting that about 90 percent of the Spiritual Baptists in Toronto are women, Duncan spends some time engaging in a socialist feminist analysis of “mothering work” there. She contrasts the low prestige, domesticated mothering work with the role of “mothers” in the Church, a title/position that is associated with a great deal of power and prestige.

This Spot of Ground comprises six relatively long but well-organized chapters. The first discusses Toronto as an “endpoint” in a journey that began in Africa, continued through the Middle Passage and the period of slavery, and persisted with the establishment of the Spiritual Baptist Church in Trinidad before appearing in Toronto; of particular interest here is Duncan’s
investigation of the social and ethnic positions of black Trinidadians in multicultural Toronto. Chapter 2 focuses on the Spiritual Baptist Church in Toronto as it functions to meet the needs of a diverse group of people immigrating from the Caribbean and the various stratagems employed by the immigrants to fashion a form of worship that addresses their specific needs. Chapter 3 considers the mediating function of the Spiritual Baptist religion for recent immigrants dealing with issues of employment, housing, etc. Chapter 4 focuses on the Spiritual Baptists’ attempts to deal with the “tension” inherent in the dynamic that exists between grounding their identity on an African foundation on the one hand and forging a new life in a new land on the other. Chapters 5 and 6 discuss “mothering work” in both religious and domestic contexts.

Duncan’s fine ethnography is well-researched, culturally rich, and intellectually sophisticated, making her book suitable for readers from a variety of academic disciplines. This Spot of Ground is highly recommended for anyone researching Afro-Caribbean or African American religious experiences in the New World.


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The title “Interrogating the dead” refers to the ancient West African and Suriname Maroon custom of questioning the spirits of the deceased to establish the cause of their death. This inquest is conducted by fastening the corpse to a bier and raising it so that its two bearers can carry it on their heads. Questions are then put to the spirit by village elders and gravediggers. The movements of the bier are interpreted as answers to these questions. A chief focus of interest is the moral stature of the deceased: was this person a witch or a decent person, perhaps a victim of witchcraft? Until a few decades ago the “carrying of the corpse” was a normal procedure among the Ndyuka Maroons of southeastern Suriname. Today those Ndyuka who live in villages
below the Gaanolo-falls of the Tapanahoni River still perform the inquest, while those further upstream have discontinued the practice.

The first thing that strikes the reader is that this book is not about “interrogating the dead,” but rather about the debate engendered by suggestions from certain quarters that all Ndyuka should again resume this ancient custom. In the village of Moitaki, where Parris conducted most of his fieldwork, the persons interviewed were dead-set against any revival of such investigations. They pointed out that not only were decent persons convicted of witchcraft (Parris prefers the term “sorcery”), but their possessions were then confiscated by the priests of Sweli Gadu, a religious cult supervising all local investigations of this nature. The elders in Moitaki (translatable as “Judicious Talk”), didn’t even wish to debate the matter with the Gaanman (tribal chief); in fact what they presented the ethnographer with was a list of complaints about the chief and his people, points of view dutifully recorded by Parris, who deliberately abstained from cross-checking them with the accused dignitaries (p. 11).

The people of Moitaki appeared less than judicious when proclaiming that their clan, the Misidyan, was the most prominent among “The Twelve (clans),” a synonym for the Ndyuka nation. Most of their ancestors, we are told, had never been slaves (pp. 96-97), a rather remarkable assertion as all oral history accounts stress that the majority of the Misidyan were persuaded to leave the plantations and help their kinsmen in what appeared to have been a local fight for supremacy. This took place around the time of the peace treaty between Ndyuka and the planters (1760). Parris is at pains to point out that these biased historical views of the Moitaki elders should be understood as part of a political debate. Sure, but nonetheless, as he willfully abstained from collecting competing points of view, we are left with a distorted historical account. This becomes even more glaring when, on the basis of information given by Moitaki’s elders, the clans along the downstream part of the Tapanahoni River are portrayed as latecomers, arriving on the scene long after the Misidyan, and playing no significant historical role. But then, for once, Parris stepped in, and showed himself willing to concede that at least one of these clans, the Dikan, could have played a role of some importance. Again, when discussing the religious cults of the Ndyuka, he stresses the pivotal role of the Na Ogii and Sweli Gadu cults in Ndyuka history, whose shrines are located above the Gaanolo-falls. The third main cult, that of Agedeonsu, is mentioned between parentheses only (pp. 112-13). But then the shrines are located in the downstream area, so what can one expect?

However, we would advise readers not to be taken aback by this contorted historical account but to appreciate the book for its really valuable parts. For example, when Parris relates how elders gather in the morning around the ancestor shrine for prayers, libations, and other offerings, readers may well feel that they are present as well. One gets a vivid impression of this central
event, brought to life by a detailed and moving description of the stories of patients and other supplicants. What also emerges is that the most important political unit is a group of neighboring villages (wan pisi wataa, “same stretch of the river”) whose elders cooperate in performing the required rites.

The book is to be recommended for its careful description of the death rites and its account of the long and taxing mourning period among Suriname’s eastern Maroons. Too often, on the basis of linguistic similarities between Sranantongo – the Creole of the coast – and Ndyukatongo – language of the Ndyuka – the idea is proposed that, in a cultural sense, only minor variations distinguish coastal Creole culture from Ndyuka culture. But both the strategic death rites and the exacting period of mourning clearly differentiate Ndyuka culture from that of the Creoles. Parris’s fieldwork helps to dispel the myth.