Brian Meeks & Jermaine McCalpin (eds.)

Freedom, Power and Sovereignty: The Thought of Gordon K. Lewis. Kingston: Ian Randle, 2015. xvi + 220 pp. (Paper US\$ 24.95)

This book's ten chapters were first presented in 2010 at the Seventh Caribbean Reasonings Conference at the Centre for Caribbean Thought at UWI, Jamaica. The previous six conferences in the series had been devoted to Sylvia Wynter, George Lamming, Stuart Hall, the New World Group, Richard Hart, and M.G. Smith, making Lewis the only "Caribbean" thinker so honored who was neither of Caribbean birth nor Caribbean heritage. Yet it would be hard to argue that this transplanted Welshman, educated in Cardiff, at Oxford, and at Harvard, who spent his entire professional life at the University of Puerto Rico, should not be considered one of the most important Caribbean thinkers of the twentieth century.

Inevitably, the chapters are uneven. But many are riveting. Anthony P. Maingot delves into the heart of Lewis's internal contradictions or, better, tensions between a firm if sometimes romantic Marxism and an insistent Burkean decency. This balancing act, Maingot argues, helped Lewis make sense of such disturbing events as the Grenadian Revolution, which he could applaud ideologically but criticize in terms of its militarization and tragic bloodletting. Paget Henry takes up a criticism of Lewis's *Main Currents in Caribbean Thought* that he'd first offered in the 1990s from the perspective of what he called "Africana philosophy," accusing Lewis of systematically underrepresenting the intellectual and cultural contributions of the Afro- (and Indo-) Caribbean masses. Here, he focuses on Lewis's refusal to consider (or unmusicality about) the initial intellectual and political contributions of Africans brought to the New World, citing, for example, the sophisticated political organization of eighteenth-century Saamaka and other Maroon societies. (At the same time, Henry applauds the Fabian socialist framework of Lewis's thought and its strong anti-imperialist perspective.) His reasoned critique of a marked absence in Lewis's thought remains in that sense unfortunately Eurocentric.

Tennyson S.D. Joseph takes up some of Henry's critique and tries to find further ways to deal with the problem of what he calls "European epistemological hegemony" in a more strictly philosophical mode. Claudette M. Williams, in the only literary contribution to the book, tries to show how Lewis's "all-inclusive map of Caribbean antislavery ideology" helps us read nineteenth-century Cuban antislavery fiction. Delroy A. Reid-Salmon decries the marginalization of theology in Caribbean intellectual thought generally and teases out relevant threads of theological thought in Lewis's *Main Currents*. Rose Mary Allen takes up the cause of various Curaçaoan scholars whose work she con-

siders insufficiently appreciated in wider treatments of Caribbean intellectual history, including Lewis's. Jessica Byron examines the issue of sovereignty—anti-imperialism, decolonization, self-determination, independence—one of the knottiest and most persistent problems Lewis dealt with, trying to bring that never-ending tangle up to date. Edward Greene considers regionalism in the Caribbean, mainly CARICOM, and its future, taking off from Lewis's early thoughts on Caribbean integration. (I would add to his contribution that Lewis harbored real hopes for this future, once writing: "Pessimism is, perhaps, not altogether justified. Although a healthy antidote to much of the romantic nonsense that is uttered about Caribbean unity, it is necessary to point out that the insularity is an accident of history. It is not necessarily a permanent law of Caribbean society. Just as history, in the past, made it, so history, in the future can unmake it" [*Main Currents*, p. 12].) Rafael A. Boglio Martínez goes back to Lewis's 1963 book, *Puerto Rico: Freedom and Power in the Caribbean*, to consider the restructuring of the colonial situation that has taken place since; one imagines that his somewhat pessimistic conclusions about Puerto Rico would be that much more despairing today.

Finally, Ralph Premdas reflects on Lewis's *Gather with the Saints by the River: The Jonestown Holocaust of 1978*. (I remember discussing the mass suicide with Gordon at his home in Río Piedras soon after the event. He declared that Jim Jones was "obviously Welsh," from his name, so this was a story he just had to explore.) In fact, Premdas shows that the affair fascinated Lewis from several angles—he related it to the mass suicide of Amerindians in sixteenth-century Hispaniola and Cuba as well as to that of the Caribs who threw themselves off the cliffs in Grenada ("the first chapter in the history of resistance on the part of the victims of colonialism and imperialism" [p. 178]), but as Premdas argues he also saw Jonestown as illuminating "not only colonialism and imperialism in the shaping of the Caribbean but ... the impact of industrial modernity on the human condition generally and, equally significantly, on the challenges to Caribbean socialism and governance and leadership" (p. 178). Premdas concludes that as an antimodel, Jonestown pointed Lewis toward guidelines for a true Caribbean socialism, one that was democratic and egalitarian rather than autocratic. In the end, Lewis saw hope, as well as horror, in Jim Jones's ill-fated experiment.

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