Patricia J. Fay, *Creole Clay: Heritage Ceramics in the Contemporary Caribbean*.

Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017. xxv + 349 pp. (Cloth US\$90.00)

A walk around St. Lucia's Castries market in 1993 was an eye-opener to tourist potter Patricia Fay. There she found "the most honest pots I had ever seen ... pots created entirely for use" (p. xix). Her fascination with handmade pottery by women in the town of Choiseul led to further visits to St. Lucia, as well as to other English-speaking Caribbean territories that have their own potting traditions: Nevis, Antigua, Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad, and Guyana.

Now an American university art professor, Fay shares with us her knowledge of and appreciation for the potters she met. We are enlightened in her technical descriptions of pottery production by the beautiful photographs of traditional West Indian pottery making, and the use to which those objects are put. These are supplemented by historic images of Caribbean pottery, some dating to the early nineteenth century. She also writes about contemporary studio pottery, a term she employs to describe functional ceramics made using a non-Caribbean *savoir-faire*.

Fay's concluding remarks are devoted to her concern for the survival of historic Caribbean pottery making, and more specifically to traditional potting in St. Lucia. She sees potters modifying production to a growing tourist demand for miniature pots that are easily transportable, the purchase of flower pots and decorative objects by hoteliers, and the intermittent bulk exports of iconic coalpots (handmade clay braziers). But to ensure the perennity of this cultural heritage she believes that the government needs to promote museum displays of local pots, create programs that teach traditional pottery, and invest in Choiseul, a heritage community of potters who epitomize a diversified economy.

For decades, visiting scholars and Peace Corps volunteers have had similar feelings for the entrepreneurial population of Choiseul, where handicraft production has included the making of straw hats, rocking chairs, flour-bag clothing, and so much more. Fay is correct that Jeannie and David England's Shipwreck Shop promoted and sold such goods, but it was between 1968 and 1983 that Jeannie (the potter), not David (the businessman), first used local clays to make earthenware pottery that could fire high enough for both a biscuit and a glaze firing.

While Fay knows about pottery production, she is less knowledgeable about history. A theme that runs throughout the book (pp. 1, 7, 15, 49, 71, 288–89) is the preconception that after British West Indian slave emancipation in 1838, ex-slaves suddenly became more entrepreneurial and made more pots in more

varied forms; there is no established archaeological or historical proof for such a view. Other errors include the idea (p. 16) that sailors on the *Olive Branch* intended to settle in St. Lucia in 1605; they were actually bound for the River Wiapaca in the Guianas when they sailed off course. Contrary to what Fay says on page 24, St. Lucia's Morne Sion *was* named after an estate, Sion Hill being the property of John McClane by 1822. She suggests that three Choiseul windmills were built on "an apparently short-lived nineteenth-century sugar plantation" (p. 31), but the reality is that windmills for manufacturing sugar throughout the islands were expensive to construct, and St. Lucia's numerous sugar estates were in decline after the Brigand Wars (1794–98). Those mills were likely built by 1784 on three sugar estates owned by the Gervais brothers, Jean-Baptiste Mongouge and Barthélemy Philippe. Nowhere in the parish registers is any mention made of Guillaume Quémain having Amerindian blood (p. 31); rather he was a métisse, someone with a mixture of black and white ancestry. France's colonial legacy in St. Lucia was *not* more prominent in the south (p. 49). There is no proof that the wheel-thrown and kiln-fired earthenware carafes that Fay saw were made in Choiseul (p. 58); the owner of those items had travelled widely (pp. 49–50), and it is far more likely that they were produced by traditional Martiniquan potters who made them until the late twentieth century; carafes and other pots were being exported from Martinique across the region by 1809 and undoubtedly before.

Despite the fact that her detail concerning Caribbean history is often flawed, it is manifest that Fay has a profound respect for Caribbean potters. In this literary exercise she demonstrates the dedication of potters, and St. Lucian potters in particular, and she shows that their perseverance is primarily of their own making. She believes that were the local authorities to use the tourism sector as an agent for aiding the pottery industry, the centuries-old tradition would have a better chance of survival in this era of globalization.

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