Lisa Lindquist Dorr, *A Thousand Thirsty Beaches: Smuggling Alcohol from Cuba to the South during Prohibition*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018. 299 pp. (Cloth US\$39.95)

Growing up in Florida, we knew what a “square grouper” was and how drugs and illegal goods could wash ashore. Stories used to circulate in local bars—in the Florida Keys and northward up the coast. Smuggling networks linking the U.S. South with the Caribbean islands have a long history.

In Lisa Lindquist Dorr’s new book, *A Thousand Thirsty Beaches*, we learn about Cubans, Floridians, southerners, and islanders smuggling alcohol from Cuba to the United States. In the 1920s and early 1930s, during the era of Prohibition, the U.S. southern coastline became “a crossroads where rum runners and their co-conspirators” from the Caribbean delivered millions of cases of liquor to eager consumers (p. 6). In January 1919, Congress passed the 18th Amendment banning the manufacture, sale, and transportation of “intoxicating liquors” in the United States (although there was no ban on drinking). As a result, lucrative transnational networks emerged to import and sell booze on the black market. Dorr explains that “one needed only a schooner, a relationship with a liquor wholesaler in Havana, and a relatively modest amount of capital to become a rum runner” (p. 19).

Fortunes, large and small, were made by illegally bringing alcohol into the United States. In the 1920s the U.S. South—with its vast coastline, sparse population, and proximity to Cuba and the Bahamas—became an ideal entry point for this illicit commerce. Many southerners still remember, fondly, this economic boom time. The image of a “rum runner” became a sort of heroic figure in the U.S.-Caribbean world. Dorr’s well-written account of smuggling conjures up images of characters like Harry Morgan (played by Humphrey Bogart) in the 1944 film, *To Have and Have Not*, adapted from Ernest Hemingway’s novel of the same name. Fishermen and sailors, who struggled to make a living in their traditional trade, could turn to rum running for a few years and, if lucky, retire early. Dorr offers a valuable collection of entertaining and insightful microhistories of maritime smuggling.

The book also explains overlooked aspects of the history of Prohibition. Beyond the glamour of individual smugglers, it documents how the ban on alcohol became an impetus for federal government expansion in order to control the U.S. coastline and to extend its federal reach into international waters. Laws of the Sea, for example, traditionally allowed nations to enforce their territorial laws within a three-mile limit of the coastline. Smugglers used this boundary as a legal loophole, staying outside the three-mile limit and then unloading their cargo onto smaller “contact boats” that could swiftly move

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liquor to shore, and if need be, hide from the authorities in shallow bays and estuaries. This made federal enforcement almost impossible. In response, U.S. officials expanded their jurisdiction to twelve miles offshore, creating a legal precedent still in effect today.

Despite all its efforts, the federal government was unable to stop the flow of alcohol into the United States. In 1925, five years into the “Noble Experiment,” the prohibition commissioner, General Lincoln C. Andrews, announced that the government was capturing less than 5 percent of the liquor smuggled into the country. Dorr analyzes these state records—documenting failed enforcement and occasional captures—to build her narrative. Government efforts to shut down smuggling appears, in the end, like someone trying to squeeze a balloon that refused to pop. Wherever authorities tried to apply pressure, the energy simply relocated and re-formed.

Because of entrepreneurial adaptability, Prohibition was as much a Caribbean story as it was U.S. history. If one follows the goods, as this book does, it becomes clear that Cuba and more broadly the Caribbean were intimately linked with the liquor trade in the U.S. South in ways that both scholars and the public have often overlooked.

As Dorr argues, Prohibition instigated a new, modern era of U.S.-Caribbean relations defined by the expansion of U.S. federal power at home and abroad and, on the flip side, an updated route for smugglers not only moving alcohol but also people and, later on, drugs such as marijuana and cocaine. The routes of growing authority and illegal activity, interestingly, also supported the emergence of Caribbean and southern tourism industries focused on booze and other forms of outsourced “vice.” In this sense, *A Thousand Thirsty Beaches* provides excellent context for anyone—student or scholar—looking to understand the complicated processes of illicit and licit trade connecting the United States with the Caribbean.

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