Frances R. Botkin, *Thieving Three-Fingered Jack: Transatlantic Tales of a Jamaican Outlaw, 1780–2015*. New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2018. vii + 227 pp. (Paper US\$ 28.95)

“Three-Fingered Jack” (aka Bristol, Jack Mansong) was a fugitive slave and freedom fighter who, in the late eighteenth century, terrorized the British colony of Jamaica. Although his sabotage of the colonial machine lasted only two years before he was captured and killed by Maroons in 1781, he became a Jamaican folk hero and a transatlantic model of black resistance. *Thieving Three-Fingered Jack* charts the literary and cultural history of his rise to fame, from the earliest reports of his exploits in the Jamaican *Royal Gazette* (1780) through to the Jamaica National Pantomime performance of Ted Dwyer’s *Mansong* (1980). Frances Botkin has tracked the “badass rebel” through the archives in London, Boston, New York, Spanish Town, and Kingston. She has also followed his footsteps through rural Jamaica, consulting people from the Jamaican parishes of Saint Thomas and Portland, particularly those of Maroon descent, and across the Cunha Cunha Pass. The English figurations of Three-Fingered Jack, othering him as the terror and scourge of Jamaica, serve to reveal how the colonizers defined themselves against those whom they both enslaved and feared. But his persistence as a protagonist in contemporary Jamaican and U.S. popular culture also provides Botkin with a springboard to explore “the problematic legacy of black masculinity in the Atlantic world” (p. 22).

The first report of the battle between Jack’s black magic (obeah) and the Christian powers of John Reeder (Quashee), the “white obi” who shot and killed him, occurred in Benjamin Moseley’s *A Treatise on Sugar* in 1799. As Botkin points out, both William Earle’s sentimental novel, *Obi: or, The History of Three-Fingered Jack* (1800) and William Burdett’s adventure story, *Life and Exploits of Mansong, commonly called Three-finger’d Jack, the terror of Jamaica* (1800), drew heavily on Moseley’s account. But Burdett also borrowed extensively from Mungo Park’s *Travels in the Interior of Africa* (1858). John Fawcett’s *Obi; or Three-Finger’d Jack*, which debuted on the London stage in 1800, again cited Moseley. It is likely, however, that Fawcett’s pantomime also drew on contemporary accounts of the Caribbean slave rebellions (in Saint Domingue, Saint Vincent, Suriname, and Jamaica), particularly evoking the image of the Black Jacobin, Françoise-Dominique Toussaint. (See Jenna Gibbs, “Toussaint, Gabriel, and Three Finger’d Jack: ‘Courageous Chiefs’ and the ‘Sacred Standard of Liberty’ on the Atlantic Stage,” *Early American Studies*, 13, 3 [2015], pp. 626–660.) Botkin’s introduction provides a useful overview of the texts that she surveys. There is such a plethora of these, and their intertextual relationships are so multifarious, however, that the reader begins to wish as the

book proceeds for a ready-reckoning timeline to assist the navigation. The comprehensive bibliography provided by Diana Paton on her webpage, “Histories of Three-Fingered Jack” (<http://www.brycchancarey.com/slavery/tfj/>), is particularly useful in this regard, organizing the published accounts according to whether they followed Moseley’s treatise, Burdett’s adventure story, Earle’s sentimental novel, Fawcett’s pantomime, or indeed the melodrama adapted from it by William Murray in 1830. On the other hand, Botkin’s more expansive discursive analysis is able to reveal a more complex picture of influence and indebtedness, in which the Jamaican outlaw emerges as a transatlantic hero of black resistance to the colonial state.

Botkin’s interest ultimately is in the way circulating narratives and counter-narratives of Three Fingered Jack have, for more than two centuries, helped shape the idea of black agency in its defining relation to resistance. For this reason, her study begins with the Maroons in Jamaica, because they furnished the outlaw with his first models of resistance to slavery and colonialism, but also because the British treaties with the Maroons inevitably pitted him against them, pardoning their resistance as it criminalized his. Botkin traces a line of complex continuity from this criminalization of resistance in Jamaica—originating with British colonial methods of “divide and conquer”—through to contemporary manifestations of “badass” masculinity such as the Jamaican Rudie, the don, the dance-hall artist, even the Rasta man. They, she argues, are Three-Fingered Jack’s legacy. “The criminalization of resistance in Jamaica continues to create the conditions for extra-legal modes of survival. In turn, these criminal activities can perpetuate violence against and between black men who, in fighting for survival, face the distinct possibility of imprisonment, death, or both” (p. 160).

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