Orlando Patterson, *The Confounding Island: Jamaica and the Postcolonial Predicament*. Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019. x + 409 pp. (Cloth US\$35.00)

Why would Jamaica, a small island in the Caribbean with a resident population of something less than three million, have such an outsized global footprint? Why would a country that boasts the greatest number of churches per square mile have such high rates of interpersonal and political violence? These are the paradoxical questions that open Orlando Patterson's new book. Throughout the seven chapters and coda, which range from classical historical sociology to reflections on his own role in policy-making and governance, Patterson shows us that these aren't really paradoxes at all. Moreover, he demonstrates how one place—in this case, Jamaica—can provide critical insights into the broad theoretical and political issues of our time. Of course, the issue preoccupying him has to do with how to generate economic growth, political stability, and socio-cultural vitality within postcolonial societies. Ultimately, Patterson emerges, as readers familiar with his work would already know, as a believer in institutionalism, and the most compelling chapters of *The Confounding Island* are those that most directly provide evidence for this position.

Most appreciated for this reader was the chapter on why independent Jamaica has trailed Barbados in terms of sustained growth. Classic Patterson, it delivers a careful and comprehensive reading of the way different terrains, patterns of settlement, forms of control and colonial governance, and responses to metropolitan policy created legacies that postcolonial policies cannot easily equalize. Unlike Jamaica, where emancipation led to the development of a strong and relatively autonomous peasant sector that also enabled the consolidation of creolized African cultural and religious practices, in Barbados, Patterson argues, “a single cultural system emerged” (p. 78). To be sure, the Barbadian system was one that was marked by racial segregation and class cleavages, but it had stable institutions, including that of the family, that, in the context of Jamaica, are so often described as “fractured” or “faulty.” Indeed, Patterson cites Sidney Greenfield's classic anthropological study, *English Rustics in Black Skin*—which asserted that “Neither Africa nor the institution of slavery can account for the forms of the family to be observed in Barbados” (1966:174, cited p. 78)—as support for his argument that the greater number of resident (and married) elites buttressed a more stable political and economic base. While my own advisor, anthropologist Constance Sutton, who conducted fieldwork in Barbados at the same time as Greenfield, would have disagreed with the strict mapping of Black Barbadian families on the English ideal, the point that (White) elite control of Barbados went relatively unchallenged through-

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out the postemancipation colonial period, and that this led to a more gradual (and largely peaceful) transition to self-rule, is of critical importance.

Similarly, Patterson's reassessment of the thesis that views democracy and peace as co-constituting sheds additional light on Jamaica's history of political violence, a preoccupation of many across the disciplines. Demonstrating that democracy, both in ancient and modern contexts, emerged through violent conflict, Patterson reorients our attention to the relationships among a history of patron-clientelism, income inequality, and the violent abuse of women by men (and subsequently of children by mothers). Like others, he argues that the Jamaican state must take over the state functions currently being performed by gang leaders in many downtown Kingston communities, and that it must focus special attention on gender-based violence and educational reform. Patterson's reflections on his own involvement in policy formation and community work during the Manley government's attempt to implement a "basic needs approach" to eradicating poverty in one Kingston constituency are particularly illuminating, as are his moving reflections on Manley himself, originally published in Rachel Manley's *Slipstream* (Key Porter Books, 2000) but reprinted here.

My biggest question while reading *The Confounding Island* had to do with the way its audience was envisioned. For specialists, the section on "Cultural Puzzles" would seem out of place with the rigorous engagements with history in other chapters, and the question of whether globalization produces cultural homogenization seems to me to have long been settled. For whom, I wondered, are these "puzzles" actually puzzling? And, more generally, what work does presenting these phenomena as "paradoxes" *do* to reinforce the kinds of exceptionality often directed at Jamaica, an exceptionality that Patterson has otherwise critically destabilized. Nevertheless, *The Confounding Island* is a welcome capstone to a long and committed engagement with the legacies of slavery, the way the imperial era damaged us (rather than tutoring us, as is so often touted), and the ways the past lives in the present.

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