Stella Dadzie, *A Kick in the Belly: Women, Slavery & Resistance*. New York: Verso, 2020. xiv + 209 pp. (Cloth US\$24.95)

The study of enslaved Black women on Caribbean plantations has been the object of scholarly pursuit by specialists, male and female, from inside and outside of the region for at least three decades. Well received and reviewed for the most part, the works that they produced sought to bring enslaved women, whose contributions had been largely ignored in Caribbean historiography, out of anonymity. The paucity and fragmented state of archival data notwithstanding, they succeeded in illuminating many aspects of the social condition of enslaved Black women, and broadened our knowledge of their lives. Thus, it is no wonder that Stella Dadzie draws substantially on these studies to produce an admirable, succinct synthesis—*A Kick in the Belly: Women, Slavery & Resistance*. Dadzie's objective was "to bring what has been a largely academic debate into the realms of popular history, thereby making this hidden 'her-story' accessible to a wider readership" (p. xi). As the recipient of a British public-school education she considers deficient due to bias in the curriculum and stereotypes about people of color unchallenged by insensitive teachers, she was convinced that "Black people had been literally airbrushed out of the picture" (p. 4) and determined to locate Black women in history. Her book is the culmination of a nine-year-old hunger to produce a history inclusive of women like herself. And she did so "armed with a healthy Afrocentric take on the subject and a tendency to side with the underdog" (p. 4).

A Kick in the Belly begins with a revealing personal introduction that charts the trajectory of Dadzie's intellectual growth and social consciousness, leading to her determination to center Black women in history. Seven chapters and an afterword follow. The first two chapters deal with a wide range of issues pertinent to the slave trade in Africa and the Middle Passage. Thus, the procurement and harsh, degrading treatment of African captives prior to and during their confinement in slave castles such as El Mina, and the ammunition supplied to Africans by the Royal African Company, are juxtaposed against several prominent African women leaders and warriors who resisted European encroachment, including Yaa Asantewaa of Ghana. In the Middle Passage, where torture, rape, and high mortality rates prevailed, women were instigators. They resisted by committing suicide, refusing to eat, and staving off the sexual aggression of European males, when able. Dadzie uses the voyages to endorse Eric Williams's triangular trade thesis that the profits accrued provided a stimulus to the British economy.

In the remaining chapters, Dadzie captures the experience of enslaved Black women in areas such as labor, discipline, reproduction, resistance, and cul-

tural transmission. Drawing on examples from Worthy Park and other estates in Jamaica, she argues, rightly, that women's contribution to labor has been underestimated, given that they constituted "the backbone of the work force" and were "beasts of burden" (pp. 70–71). She employs solid secondary sources in discussing women's roles in providing the hard, intensive labor required for sugar production, and the impact that labor and poor diet had on women's health and fertility, noting that "birth rates ... were abysmal" (p. 136). She does an excellent job in demonstrating how women's conditions were exacerbated by prolonged physical abuse, corporal punishment, and coercive measures. And she captures the plight of the enslaved when she writes that "violence meted out to the enslaved was casual, indiscriminate and way over the top" (p. 91) and alludes to "the possibility that gender may have rendered women's suffering more acute" (p. 111).

The multidimensional ways in which women responded to slavery—from Old Doll in Barbados who resorted to whitening her lineage through miscegenation, to Cubah, Queen of Kingston, who participated in the Christmas Rebellion in Jamaica (1831–32)—serve to reinforce Dadzie's central theme of resilience. While not all women were rebels, they "were not passive victims ... despite the extremity of their lives" (p. 113). They kept the memory of Africa alive and served as vehicles for the transmission of African culture, evidenced by the passing on of Anancy stories.

Dadzie's book would have profited from engagement with the work of Marcus Rediker, Joseph Inikori, and other recent studies of women and slavery. Her use of the word "tribe" is out of place. And accusing scholars across the board of "lying by omission" (p. 6) is unnecessarily condemnatory. But her demonstration of the presence of Blacks in England and the activism of women abolitionists there is revelatory. The book offers no new findings, but it is a concise, gripping, engaging narrative that will endure.

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