Deborah A. Thomas, *Political Life in the Wake of the Plantation: Sovereignty, Witnessing, Repair*. Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2019. xv + 301 pp. (Paper US\$28.95)

In this layered weave of a book, Deborah Thomas continues to explore questions of race, violence, and sovereignty in a Jamaica perennially implicated in transnational matrices. She builds on the writings of Sylvia Wynter and others who trace the roots and ongoing consequences of that pivotal ontological distinction in Western thought between (European) Man and those considered lesser humans: the violence and collective trauma consequent on this division. Thomas sees Caribbean societies as continuously burdened by this ever-mutating falsehood, and implicitly considers institutional mechanisms of liberal democratic governance incapable of correcting it. Her ultimate concern is with “the real realignments of sovereignty that must happen” (p. 63), the way new processes of accountability, habits of human recognition and intersubjectivity might gradually transform those based on racial fixing and hierarchy foundational to plantation societies, and indeed, to modernity itself.

As with her last book, *Exceptional Violence*, and film, *Bad Friday*, Thomas engages here in a “transmedial” project of witnessing and archive-building that includes the film *Four Days in May*, and the exhibition *Bearing Witness*. The film, exhibition, and first chapter of *Political Life* center on narratives and portraits of survivors of the 2010 Tivoli “Incursion”—the siege of a West Kingston community by Jamaican military and police forces supported by U.S. surveillance. In portraying Tivoli residents in their everyday dignity, Thomas goes beyond the kinds of assessment and recommendations for institutional remedy that the Commission of Enquiry that investigated the event produces. She seeks new possibilities for intersubjective belonging that extend locally and transnationally, asking, for example, what other forms of political possibility might be brought into being if middle-class people could imagine a reality in which the basis for our humanity were “recognition by and through the garrison dweller” (p. 65).

Reading between past and present, Thomas unsettles the idea of Caribbean and Jamaican sovereignties by reminding us that plantation development, the slave trade, and the conceptual disappearance of indigenous peoples displaced any “straightforward relationship among territoriality, nativeness, and nationalist governance” (p. 7). Moreover, land rights, political authority, and the adjudication of intergroup conflicts depended on the overwhelming power of a planter class whose widespread absenteeism severely retarded social and political development. Further impeding Black political capacity and laying the ground for today’s garrison communities based on patterns of political patron-

age and clientelist loyalty, Thomas suggests that political authority was both racialized and “tied to territorially rooted patterns of protection that ... encouraged alliances between the powerful and those they exploited and undermined alliances among the exploited themselves” (p. 9). Hence, she argues, the plantation “shaped the infrastructures, practices, and processes of politics during the post-Emancipation period” (p. 10) as it did those of economic production and labor organization. In this region of adulterated, unrealized sovereignties, humanness and sovereignty remain constantly in question. Thus does Thomas sketch a broader field of vision for the sociohistorical incubation of violence.

So too with the incubation of *affect*, the slippery concept Thomas uses to attend to the underlying tissue of political belonging and desire deeply etched in the collective consciousness. Her interest lies in how sovereignty is felt, experienced, and imagined by Jamaicans, particularly those overlooked by the dominant order of Creole nationalism. Political subjectivity, perception, and agency, she argues, are enmeshed in an interacting set of affective dispositions produced through everyday experience, past and present. *Political Life* reflects, then, on exemplary moments that illustrate (and reproduce) key affective dispositions and sociopolitical fields: the Tivoli incursion and its afterlife; the sense of redemptive certainty felt by members of the Peacemakers Association—a movement started in the mid-1960s geared toward economic self-determination and racial self-respect; and the divisiveness and inquietude fomented by U.S. and British institutional penetration in the early Cold War years. While much of the burden of colonial and national rule has induced variants of despondency, dissipating political will, Thomas shows that the Black prophetic tradition has made available recuperative strains of affect that enable political agency and nurture alternative, more humane ways of forging community together.

Political Life's imaginatively choreographed structure—three big chapters punctuated by shorter biographical interludes and photo documentaries—complicates understanding of the Jamaican state and state violence. It deepens appreciation of the coformation of citizenship and the state, and the state's imbrication in both transnational and local sociocultural and political processes. Looking forward toward redress, Thomas urges reliance not simply on remedies that states might produce. She reaches beyond juridical ideas such as reparations, pushing us to think more broadly of *repair*: a citizenship agenda wider than the territorial nation-state, and one that recognizes “the limits of justice within the contextual terrain of liberal post-Enlightenment humanism” (p. 213).

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