BY DYNAMITE, SABOTAGE, REVOLUTION, AND THE PEN: VIOLENCE IN CARIBBEAN ANARCHIST FICTION, 1890s-1920s

INTRODUCTION

The fall of the Soviet bloc at the end of the twentieth century witnessed a renewed mobilization of activists who believed in a form of decentralized, nonstatist socialism more popularly known as anarchism. In the two decades since the fall of the Berlin Wall, anarchist groups arose as part of a larger coalition of antiglobalization activists who supported local initiatives in the face of what they saw as the juggernaut of global capitalism’s spread around the world. To many anarchists, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and similar international bodies represented the unchecked wave of financial and industrial capitalist violence being waged against the global poor. At times, anarchists themselves resorted to violence against property in attempts to attract attention to their message and cause, such as occurred during the 1999 WTO meeting in Seattle, Washington.

Emergence of an antigovernment, anticapitalist anarchism was nothing new. Rather, in many ways it replicated anarchist movements during the heyday of global capitalist expansion from the late 1800s to the early 1900s. At that time, international capitalism expanded into Latin American and Caribbean mines, ports, factories, and fields. Anarchists challenged industrialists and what anarchists saw as the industrialists’ allies in both the government and the Church. Anarchists envisioned and portrayed their struggle as one of freedom and equality against an unholy trinity of Church, capital, and state. As a result, throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, anarchists led labor movements, helped to coordinate strike activities, created counter-cultural initiatives in health care and education for working people, created literary and dramatic events, and – at times – engaged in violence.

Throughout history, the opponents of global anarchism did their best to portray these leftwing radicals as godless purveyors of destruction. They were loners out to unmake civilization by destroying religious institutions, kill-
ing prominent businessmen, and blowing up symbols of the state – symbols in both marble and flesh. The portrayal has been effective through today as popular perception still imagines the anarchist as a rather dastardly comic figure with his dark overcoat and little black bombs. The image emphasizes the anarchist use of physical violence and destruction above the anarchist political goals of liberation and creating a new egalitarian society. Those seeking a more favorable view of anarchism often go to the opposite extreme in describing anarchists. Students and followers of anarchism have generally downplayed anarchist uses of physical violence. Instead, they focus on more peaceful, though still confrontational, paths of anarchist work in unions and cultural endeavors designed to prepare the working class as a whole to be mentally, physically, and politically fit for a future social revolution. This revolution would usher in a new dawn of equality and freedom without the physical or structural violence of the state, industrial capital, or organized religion. In this alternative portrayal, anarchist violence is marginalized or ignored entirely.

However, violence and violent symbolism were central to anarchist messages about the destruction of corrupt societies and the creation of new ones. This article examines how anarchist authors in Cuba and Puerto Rico incorporated violence and violent struggle into their fiction and within the context of the anarchist movements of which they were a part in the first decades of the twentieth century when both islands had become free of Spanish tyranny but found themselves under close North American scrutiny. These male and female anarchists used their writings to struggle against state-sponsored violence, war, militarism, and the rise of obligatory military service laws in Cuba and Puerto Rico. At the same time, they celebrated the violence of sabotage, banditry, “purging of old ways,” assassination, bombings, and of course revolution. These authors, though, did not limit their critical use of violence to events only in Puerto Rico and Cuba. Rather, anarchist authors incorporated historical violence from the Mexican Revolution, World War I, and the Russian Revolution as well – events that played heavily on the revolutionary imaginations of Caribbean radicals who saw themselves as part of a transnational anarchist movement.

These late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century authors tapped into a long history of anarchists in the Americas and around the world who at times resorted to and justified violence to put forth their message. The most widely known anarchist use of violence was the so-called “propaganda by the deed” utilized by some late-nineteenth-century anarchists. In Europe where it originated, propaganda by the deed originally referred to an uprising against capitalism and the state. However, by the 1890s the phrase began to refer specifically to assassination. This change was particularly evident in Spain at this time as governmental repression forced anarchists underground and increasingly into clandestine cells. Unable to operate as openly as before, some of these cells resorted to political assassination (Casanova 2005:82; Lida
These anarchists believed that a single violent act – if of high enough symbolic value – could galvanize the masses to rise up against their economic, political, and religious oppressors. As repression against anarchists spread throughout the Atlantic World, anarchists attempted to or did assassinate prominent political and economic figures in Europe and the Americas. By the 1890s, Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta – a respected theorist among Caribbean anarchists – opposed indiscriminate terrorism that resulted in the deaths of innocents (“it is our duty to do all in our power to see that the necessary violence does not degenerate into mere ferocity”), but he refused to condemn assassinations of kings and presidents due to their symbolic importance for galvanizing the movement (Malatesta 2005:163). Nor did Malatesta discount the need to fight back when repressed: “It is only because today one class has the monopoly of power and riches, and is therefore able to force the people, at the end of a bayonet, to work for it, that we have the right, and that it is our duty to fight for attaining, with the aid of force, those conditions which render it possible to experiment on better forms of society” (Malatesta 2005:163). As historian Peter Marshall notes, Malatesta argued that “all struggles for partial freedom are worth supporting, but in the last analysis the struggle must involve physical force since the only limit to the oppression of government is the power with which people oppose it” (quoted in Marshall 1993:354). Other important anarchists such as the Russian-American Alexander Berkman justified violence. Berkman promoted revolutionary violence, including assassination, arguing in his ABC of Anarchism that “terrorism was considered a means of avenging a popular wrong, inspiring fear in the enemy, and also calling attention to the evil against which the act of terror was directed” (quoted in Marshall 1993:632). Even the internationally lauded anarchist Peter Kropotkin was sympathetic to revolutionary violence in the late nineteenth century. Unlike Berkman, Malatesta, and others, though, Kropotkin grew to despise propaganda by the deed because of the negative public image it gave anarchists and due to the intense repression of anarchists that such acts prompted (Marshall 1993:663).

Other anarchists supported different types of violence. For instance, anarcho-syndicalists throughout the Atlantic World in the 1910s and 1920s urged workers to take direct control of the means of production and organize unions along industrial lines. To achieve these results and thus use them to create a libertarian society, they promoted “direct action” tactics. Specifically, anarcho-syndicalists advocated the general strike that could readily include sabotage against property, if not people. Just as propaganda by the deed originally had been associated with insurrection, direct action was seen as one more justified use of violence that would terrorize the bourgeoisie and the state, inspire followers, and ultimately lead to a social revolution (Linse 1982:217).

Most anarchists seemed to support (at least at various times in their lives) violent revolutionary struggle, assuming a revolutionary movement
could in fact be organized and could fight for the liberation of a people. Yet, for the transatlantic anarchist community from the 1890s to the 1920s, there were very few opportunities on this front. While revolutions emerged in Russia in 1905 and 1917, the most prominent examples of revolutionary violence to free a society from tyranny were in the Western Hemisphere, especially the Caribbean. The Caribbean Basin was unique in the history of anarchist movements in Latin America and thus with their exposure to and use of violence. Radicals in this area experienced two revolutionary wars in a short span of time either in their midst or close by. The Cuban War for Independence (1895-98) and the Mexican Revolution (1910-20) exemplified the only times in the history of anarchist movements in the Americas where truly revolutionary violent struggles emerged that included the active participation of large-scale anarchist movements.

**The Uniqueness of Anarchism in the Spanish-Speaking Caribbean**

In the past decade, there has been a growing interest in the history of Caribbean anarchism as a movement for social change. Studies have analyzed the role of anarchism in labor movements in the region. Other studies have focused on the cultural dynamics of this movement that produced a plethora of plays, novels, poems, and short stories designed to create an anarchist image of both Caribbean “reality” and a means to achieve an anarchist-defined future of freedom, equality, and being in harmony with Nature. Joan Casanovas has illustrated how anarchists shaped not only the demands of urban labor in Cuba but also how anarchists played a key role in bringing along working-class support for the island’s independence struggles against Spain in the 1890s (Casanovas 1998). Evan Daniel has explored the transnational roles of anarchists who migrated between Cuba and the United States at the turn of the century while Ámbar Sánchez Cobos has traced the influence of Spanish anarchism on the rise of Cuban anarchism (Daniel 2006; Sánchez Cobos 2006). Rebecca Condron has analyzed the rise and decline of anarcho-syndicalists in Cuba during the 1910s and 1920s due to both governmental repression and internal conflicts (Condron forthcoming). Elsewhere I have examined the countercultural dynamics of anarchism as a social movement in Cuba in the three decades after Cuba gained its independence from Spain (Shaffer 2005).

While smaller than its Cuban neighbor, Puerto Rican anarchism has begun to attract historical attention. Norma Valle Ferrer’s work on anarcho-feminism and the writings of Luisa Capetillo – the Caribbean’s “Red Emma” Goldman – have led the way (Valle Ferrer 1990, 2008). I have extended my own research from Cuba to explore the transnational linkages between anarchists throughout the Caribbean, specifically looking at Puerto Rican anarchists and their
relationships with Cuban and North American radicals as well as their struggles against labor factions and politicians within Puerto Rico as they sought to define an anarchist identity for the island (Shaffer forthcoming).

By “Caribbean anarchism,” I mean the anarchists who emerged in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean as a direct result of the influence of Spanish anarchists on the islands as well as anarchists born in the Spanish-speaking islands. While anarchist groups existed in England and the Netherlands, no such influences seem to have emerged in those countries’ Caribbean colonies (Quail 1978). Likewise, even though there was a sizeable French anarchist movement at the beginning of the twentieth century, anarchist groups do not appear to have emerged in Martinique or Guadeloupe (Sonn 1989).

Caribbean anarchism and its expression in anarchist cultural productions were also unique compared to the anarchist experience throughout the rest of Latin America. Unlike Argentine, Uruguayan, Brazilian, or Chilean experiences, anarchists in Cuba and Puerto Rico emerged in the context of late Spanish colonialism and rising U.S. expansionism. As a result, Spanish laborers found easy passage to Cuba and Puerto Rico before the outbreak of the Cuban War for Independence in 1895. Anarchists who arrived as workers and artisans joined in these migrations. Many anarchists in Puerto Rico and Cuba found work in the tobacco industry, and as that industry expanded into southern Florida, Spanish-speaking anarchists emerged there as well. As a result, by the time of Cuba’s independence from Spain at the end of 1898 – and the arrival of U.S. rule in both Puerto Rico and Cuba – anarchists were creating newspapers, writing pamphlets and books, and organizing groups in an arc stretching across the Florida Straits to the eastern Caribbean.

The islands’ relations with the United States at the turn of the century likewise contributed to the unique features of the Caribbean anarchist experience in relation to other anarchists in Latin America. The United States controlled Cuba from 1899 to 1933, either as a surrogate, through application of the Platt Amendment to the Cuban constitution, granting the Americans the right to militarily intervene in Cuban affairs in case of unrest, or through the waves of U.S. cultural and economic imports flooding the island. Meanwhile, Puerto Rico came under direct U.S. control immediately after 1899 and then found its residents were suddenly U.S. citizens as a result of the Jones Act of 1917. No other Latin American anarchist movement – save Mexican anarchists in the United States and the small anarchist groups in the U.S.-controlled Panama Canal Zone – encountered this overbearing U.S. presence in their mobilizing efforts. Anarchists throughout Latin America generally challenged and were challenged by local and national political, religious, and economic elites. Anarchists in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean encountered these same challengers, but they also had to grapple with ever-present U.S.-based political, religious, and military elites, as well as the antianarchist American Federation of Labor (AFL) – all of whom had their own U.S.-
centric designs for the region. Added to this conflict with North American foreign policy designs was a larger struggle between differing visions for the Caribbean islands’ futures. While anarchists supported their own internationalist ideals for progress, freedom, decentralized democracy, and communist equality, the United States had its own capitalistic visions of progress, freedom, and democracy for Cuba and Puerto Rico.

ANARCHISM AND ANARCHIST AUTHORS IN CUBA AND PUERTO RICO

Anarchists and anarchist groups emerged in Cuba and Puerto Rico in the late 1800s, centering on tobacco production which employed large numbers of native-born and Spanish migrant workers. Production of Cuban cigars extended to southern Florida at this time when factory owners began to flee the increasingly anarchist-dominated labor unions of Havana. However, workers (and anarchists) also traveled to the Florida factories, creating a labor chain stretching from South Florida to Puerto Rico (Shaffer forthcoming). The tobacco trades were ripe for anarchist agitation thanks not only to the migration of activists throughout this network but also due to the prevalence of lectores (readers) who read newspapers, pamphlets, and fiction to workers while they de-stemmed tobacco leaves or rolled leaf into cigars. Workers chose what the lector read, and from the 1890s onward these included anarchist newspapers and other material printed in Cuba, Florida, Puerto Rico, and Spain (Casanovas 1998:83-91; Pérez 1975:443-49; Shaffer 2005:176-77).

With the outbreak of war between Cuban revolutionaries and Spain in 1895, anarchists throughout the region came to uphold the violent struggle for the island’s independence. Some anarchists were reluctant to support what they saw as a nationalist struggle that would merely replace one bourgeois government for another and ignore the interests of the working class. Most anarchists, though, backed the struggle. Some joined the rebel armies and fought in Cuba. Others raised money for the cause. Many wrote in support of war in the anarchist press (Casanovas 1998:222-33; Shaffer 2005:39-61).

Following the war’s conclusion with the Treaty of Paris (1899) between Spain and the United States, anarchists in Cuba and Puerto Rico struggled to achieve their ideals under the ever-growing influence of the United States, as well as Cuban and Puerto Rican governments that facilitated the entrance of U.S. companies and antianarchist U.S.-based trade unions. Still, anarchists – stronger in Cuba than in Puerto Rico – continued to agitate and lay the groundwork for what they envisioned to be a future social revolution that would sweep the region. In the decades that followed, Cuban anarchism went through two waves. The first saw anarchist groups rooted in and around Havana as well as dotting the island. These groups challenged elite cultural practices such as carnival and bullfighting, public and religious education
which anarchists cynically saw as unthinking or unscientifically mystical, patriotism, and those who attempted to pit Spanish workers against Cuban workers. Government clampdowns and deportations caused the movement to fade by early 1915, facilitated by the disappearance of the thirteen-year-old anarchist weekly newspaper ¡Tierra! Yet, anarchists within the labor movement remained active in the waves of strikes that emerged in 1917 and beyond. Anarchists then led efforts to create the largest labor federations on the island, and thus with the institutional and financial support of these organizations, they were able to publish numerous newspapers, create their own schools, open vegetarian restaurants, and support alternative health institutes. In the 1920s, anarchists both in and outside the labor federations continued to attack their old nemeses, including the Cuban state, the Catholic Church, reformist labor unions, and the growing “feudalization” of Cuba by U.S. agricultural firms. Their agitation, growing strength, and sympathy with the Bolshevik Revolution led to a Cuban government crackdown in 1925 that undermined the movement and whittled it to a shadow of its former size and strength (Shaffer 2005:7). It is impossible to state the numbers of supporters on the island and abroad since membership lists were anathema to anarchist notions of freedom. One can, however, discern that throughout this long history between 1898 and 1925 Cuban anarchists created nearly thirty newspapers (some short-lived, others running weekly editions for thirteen years straight), set up several musical bands and theater troupes, opened restaurants across the island, funded schools in large cities and small towns, raised money for local and international anarchist causes, held weekly meetings and performances, and pulled in hundreds of supporters to celebrations and gatherings (Shaffer 2005).

In Puerto Rico, meanwhile, anarchist agitation was much smaller by comparison. In the 1890s, small anarchist and socialist groups emerged in San Juan to publish newspapers and organize the island’s first labor unions. One of the primary organizers was Santiago Iglesias Pantín, a young Spaniard who migrated to San Juan in 1897 after working with anarchist groups in Cuba (Iglesias Pantín 1958:17-19). Most of the island’s labor leadership – led especially by Iglesias Pantín – made a calculating move by 1900 when they abandoned anarchist and radical socialist ideals to merge the Federación Libre de Trabajadores (FLT) union with the reformist U.S.-based AFL. Thinking that such actions could better secure economic benefits for Puerto Rican workers, the FLT leaders urged their members to abandon anarchist practices such as propaganda by the deed and anarchist ideals of creating a revolutionary society (Iglesias Pantín 1958:216-18). While the FLT leaders merged with the antisocialist AFL, its leadership nevertheless openly talked about government-related socialist solutions for the island’s workers. Some of the socialist leadership, such as the former anarchist-leaning Ramón Romero Rosa, maintained good relations with the island’s anarchists, who
joined the FLT and regularly pushed the union – though to little success – to follow anarchist ideas (Galvin 1976:28-30; Quintero Rivera 1983:21-28).

While most of the FLT’s top leaders rejected anarchism, Puerto Rican anarchists often dominated local branches of the federation and played key roles in periodic FLT conferences. Occasionally, anarchists generated short-lived anarchist newspapers and revolutionary fiction which was published on FLT-affiliated presses and distributed to the large number of FLT rank-and-file and mid-level organizers who remained sympathetic to anarchist ideas (Dávila Santiago 1985:164). Some Puerto Rican anarchists joined the migration circuit and traveled the anarchist network that by the 1910s stretched from Puerto Rico to New York either directly or via Cuba and South Florida. By 1920, small numbers of anarchists remained on the island, especially around the city of Bayamón. Beginning in 1919, these anarchists published their own newspaper *El Comunista*, which for a year and a half regularly attacked U.S. foreign policy and islandwide working conditions. They also criticized both Puerto Rican nationalists and those supporting U.S. statehood for their narrow, insular goals. However, U.S. postal service laws enacted against leftists during the post-World War I “Red Scare” soon closed this paper and Puerto Rican anarchists lost their last published voice (Shaffer forthcoming).

From the 1890s to the 1920s, both the Cuban and Puerto Rican anarchist movements produced writers important to their cause. In their newspaper columns, poetry and short story collections, novellas and novels, these men and women imagined their world from an anarchist viewpoint and framed the anarchist struggle for readers. In Cuba, the leading writers were the Cuban-born Antonio Penichet and Spanish-born Adrián del Valle. Penichet rose through the laboring ranks as a printer – a trade that introduced him to anarchist ideas and writings. During the 1910s and 1920s, Penichet became a labor union leader as well as an anarchist organizer, columnist, newspaper editor, and fiction writer. In 1925, he worked with socialists and communists to found the Confederación Nacional de Obreros Cubanos – the first islandwide labor federation – and headed its efforts to create anarchist-based rationalist schools throughout Cuba to offer children a nonsectarian, nonstate-defined, nonreligious education.

Penichet’s more erudite counterpart was fiction writer Adrián del Valle – internationally known as well as Palmiro de Lidia. Whereas Penichet was Cuban-born, Del Valle arrived in Cuba just before the War for Independence, left for New York during hostilities, and returned in January 1899 to create the

1. The newspapers *Eco de Torcedor* and *Nuevo Horizonte*, published in 1908 and 1909, were founded by anarchists in conjunction with other leftists and labor leaders. The papers regularly featured news about and by Puerto Rican anarchists. For examples, see *Eco de Torcedor*, November 7, 1908 and *Nuevo Horizonte*, July 31, 1909 with articles by anarchists José M. Dieppa and Pablo Vega Santos.
island’s first postcolonial anarchist newspaper *El Nuevo Ideal* the same month that the U.S. military formally took control of the island. For nearly half a century, Del Valle published newspapers, wrote regular columns in national newspapers and magazines, served as the leading librarian in Havana’s top library – the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País – and wrote more anarchist books, plays, and novellas than any other Caribbean anarchist. He was widely known in Havana, even winning public accolades from his fellow (nonanarchist) Cuban writers in 1927 (Shaffer 2005:15-18).

In Puerto Rico, Ramón Romero Rosa, Juan José López, and Luisa Capetillo published anarchist fiction and verse. With Iglesias Pantín, Romero Rosa helped to found the first Puerto Rican labor unions in the 1890s and wrote for the two most prominent early labor journals, *Ensayo Obrero* and *El Porvenir Social*. Like most of these late-nineteenth-century radicals, he originally was an anarchist. However, owing to the uncertain future of the island, its submission to U.S. rule, and the belief that they could achieve more materially by abandoning anarchism, these labor leaders linked their organizations to the nonsocialist AFL and paradoxically the U.S. socialist movement. Romero Rosa, a typesetter by trade (like his Cuban counterpart Penichet), went so far as to be elected to the Puerto Rican House of Delegates in 1904 (Dávila Santiago 1985:37-41; Quintero Rivera 1980-81:27-32; Tirado Avilés 1980-81:3-26). Still, during this time he remained sympathetic to anarchism, even defending it in his book *Entre broma y vera* (Del Romeral 1906:33-39).

In Puerto Rico, many anarchists began to call themselves *socialistas libertarias* because this term emphasized evolutionary and educational change, while at the beginning of the twentieth century “anarchist” connoted violence – in part, a connotation derived from “propaganda by the deed” activities (Ferrer y Ferrer 1932:37). For people trying to link themselves to the AFL and its Puerto Rican affiliate the FLT in order to gain bread-and-butter benefits for their members, this semantic change allowed working-class agitators to maintain an ideological commitment to the goals of anarchism while deflecting disparaging names from being thrown at them.

José López was a lesser-known figure in the island’s labor movement but worked with anarchist groups and alongside leading anarchist personalities until his death in 1917.² His better-known contemporary was Capetillo. Born and raised on the island, she became involved in FLT and anarchist politics by 1907 when she published *Ensayos Libertarios*. Her columns and other anarchist writings on labor and women’s issues circulated in anarchist newspapers in New York, Florida, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. For over a decade, Capetillo traveled the anarchist network that stretched along the Atlantic Coast of the United States to the Caribbean. While on tour raising money for

labor, feminist, and anarchist causes, she gave regular lectures, worked as a lectora, and published several books and pamphlets until her death in 1922 (Valle Ferrer 1990, 2008).

These Caribbean writers dealt with a plethora of issues in their fiction, including anarchist critiques of gender, race, nationalism, patriotism, simple living, and industrialized life. This article examines how these writers imagined and portrayed different aspects of violence in their fiction. Many critiqued the use of violence by the state, especially when linked to militarism. Some never completely condemned the necessity for violence such as strikes, assassinations, bombings, and revolutionary change by the popular classes against the state. All utilized fictional or historical violence to promote the anarchist cause in the Caribbean and to a broader Spanish-reading audience in the Americas and Spain.

**Battling Against War and Militarism: Antidraft Laws and World War I**

As Cuba and Puerto Rico increasingly fell under U.S. influence in the 1910s, both islands found themselves drawn into larger U.S. foreign policy designs that stretched beyond the Caribbean. As war swept Europe beginning in 1914, the U.S. pledged to remain neutral, but that neutrality ended when President Wilson formally declared war on April 6, 1917. The next day, Cuban president Mario Menocal followed suit and declared war on Germany. The Cuban congress then passed an obligatory military service law, and suddenly Cuban men found themselves eligible to fight in Europe. At the same time, Puerto Rican men became potential soldiers. The passage in the U.S. Congress of the Jones Act in March 1917 granted U.S. citizenship to Puerto Ricans. With citizenship came vulnerability to the U.S. military draft. While thousands of Cubans and Puerto Ricans were drafted for the war effort by their respective governments, very few actually saw any action. Nevertheless, such laws became fodder for anarchists who despised governments on principle and coercive government laws designed to raise warriors for the state in particular.

Antonio Penichet placed antimilitarism and a critique of draft laws central to ¡Alma Rebelde!, novela histórica and La vida de un pernicioso. Anarchists always linked antimilitarism with their traditional hatred of the state. In this view, the military merely served the interests of the hegemonic elite which ruled society. This rather simplistic, direct association appears throughout ¡Alma Rebelde! The novel traces the life of Rodolfo from his boyhood in Cuba during the 1895-98 War for Independence to the late 1910s. As a child during the war, his mother told him that Cubans were fighting to have their own government like Spain. When the child asked why Cubans would want a government that ordered people to kill other people, his mother sent him...
out to play (Penichet 1921:14). This questioning of the militaristic aspects of governments arises again midway through the novel. By the 1910s, Rodolfo has become a working-class leader, sympathetic to anarchist ideals. When the government creates the law to draft Cubans for possible service into the Great War, Rodolfo leads workers on a general strike. Until this point, both Rodolfo and the narrator had bemoaned working-class reluctance to challenge the Cuban government on any number of ills because, as the narrator puts it, “the workers could not protest because they would be called antipatriotic and be persecuted, and the native-born would be jailed and the foreign-born expelled” (Penichet 1921:83).3 However, Penichet portrayed the new draft law as an egregious assault on workers. Workers were compelled to strike back against a government that not only abused them and made them cower but also now wanted to force workers to put their lives on the line for that very state in order to kill other workers. The narrator has Rodolfo recall his mother’s words from the independence war: “Rodolfo remembered again his mother’s words: ‘Governments oblige one to be a soldier,’ ‘governments order one to kill’” (Penichet 1921:85).

While Rodolfo emerges relatively unscathed from this ordeal, Penichet’s character Joaquín in La vida de un pernicioso is less fortunate. While Rodolfo was a young boy of ten growing up during the War for Independence, Joaquín arrived in Cuba as a Spanish soldier before tearing off his uniform and joining the independence forces (Penichet 1919b:27). Thus, unlike Rodolfo, Joaquín experienced warfare as a young man. At war’s end, Joaquín remained in Cuba, becoming an anarchist labor leader. Following a series of strikes and workers meetings that are broken up by the police, Joaquín is arrested and put on trial. Some of the most serious charges leveled against him are his urging of workers to desert the military and of publicly speaking out against the mandatory conscription law. In his defense, Joaquín asked the court “Is there anything more inhuman, more criminal than to create obligatory service in order to put on uniforms, removing them from their factory jobs and the warmth of their homes?” (Penichet 1919b:115). Not persuaded, the court finds Joaquín guilty and sends him to jail for his antipatriotic activities.

As noted, the conscription laws in Cuba and Puerto Rico arose as belligerency enveloped the European continent during World War I. That war brought to the fore an important division and controversy within the international anarchist community. Most anarchists and anarchist movements around the world advocated neutrality. In accordance with other leftists, anarchists tended to see the war as one more conflagration pitting the wealthy against each other for material and territorial gains while employing workers as cannon fodder in the trenches of Europe. To this end, most anarchists opposed the war and

3. All translations are the author’s.
thus rose up in opposition to draft laws. However, in 1914 one of the most respected anarchists, the Russian exile Peter Kropotkin, charted a different course. Kropotkin feared what he saw as German authoritarianism, believing that if left unchecked the Germans would sweep through Europe and destroy humanity’s march toward freedom. He went further, though, than just criticizing Germany. In fact, Kropotkin urged anarchists to unite against what he saw as the threat of Prussian militarism. To this end, he countered anarchist positions on antimilitarism by calling on people to join the Triple Entente military effort against Germany (Marshall 1993:332; Woodcock 1971:217).

Such a stance alienated most anarchists. For the Cuban anarchist Adrián del Valle, this was undoubtedly a troubling development. Del Valle was a long-time admirer of Kropotkin, eventually writing a short biography of the great anarchist in 1925. Like Kropotkin, Del Valle wrestled with whether or not to work against the recognized threat of German expansionism and militarism; or, if doing so by aligning with a German opponent among the Triple Entente would create its own problems. While it was one thing to pick up arms to fight for a people’s liberation as anarchists in Cuba did in the 1890s, Del Valle and others were less sure that choosing sides in the current conflict would advance the anarchist cause.

Del Valle confronted this dilemma in his ambitious novel *Jesús en la guerra*. He began the work in late 1914, after Europe began descending into conflagration. In August that year, the Havana-based anarchist newspaper *¡Tierra!* began to cover the war for the regional anarchist movement, hoping that “after the fratricidal war that today covers Europe in blood, perhaps then the liberating revolution will emerge.” Del Valle’s 224-page book was not completed and published in Havana until 1917, just as the Cuban government initiated the military draft and declared war on Germany.

In the novel, Del Valle’s Jesus roams the cities and countryside of war-ravaged Europe, meeting soldiers, mothers, anarchists, and even Kaiser Wilhelm. In his conversations, Jesus echoes most of the anarchists’ antiwar, antipatriotism stances. For instance, early in the novel he meets Pablo, who hates all Germans. German soldiers had killed his son who died “defending the motherland”; they ransacked his possessions, raped his wife and two daugh-

---

4. The conflict reached Caribbean shores in late 1914, just as the long-running Cuban anarchist newspaper *¡Tierra!* was about to fold. In one of its last issues, a front-page editorial adopted the official movement rejection of Kropotkin and published a critique of Kropotkin by Alexander Berkman. The New York City-based anarchist newspaper *Cultura Obrera* — widely read among Caribbean anarchists — likewise rejected Kropotkin and ran a multi-issue debate between its editor Pedro Esteve and Kropotkin. See *¡Tierra!*, November 26, 1914, p. 1 and *Cultura Obrera*, December 12, 1914, pp. 1-2; December 19, 1914, pp. 1-2; and January 2, 1915, pp. 1-2.

5. *¡Tierra!*, August 13, 1914, p. 1.
ters, and then burned his home to the ground. He tells Jesus that he would rather die than try to forgive and love those who destroyed his life. Upon meeting other people made refugees by the German war machine, Jesus reproaches them, urging the people to consider that “the soldier is a blind instrument” who cannot see what he has done because he has been brainwashed. When a French mother prays to Jesus to help her son – a French soldier – to kill Germans, Jesus is aghast and implores the mother to think about what if a German mother prayed to him to do the same. “That’s not important. Jesus is able to distinguish those who truly follow him” (Del Valle 1917:27-28). Jesus continues to encounter such use of religion in support of nationalism and personal vendetta on the German side. When a German official acknowledges that he was taught to love all as brothers, he also tells Jesus that he was taught to love his country above all others. “God cannot prohibit a good patriot from defending his motherland” (Del Valle 1917:30). Finally, Jesus encounters another mother who has lost her son. When he asks her why she allowed him to go to war, she notes that “I was forced to because the government ordered it.” With little sympathy, Jesus asks, “Who gave him life, the government or you?” The mother rebukes the simplistic Jesus and lectures him on reality: “Even if I had opposed it, he would have left. La patria was claiming him, and when a boy becomes a man, la patria can be more influential than his mother” (Del Valle 1917:105).

In the end, Jesus’ antimilitarism, antipatriotism rhetoric is too much. Not only is he lampooned or rejected by the people he meets but also the state has the last word. Just as Jesus of Nazareth was crucified by Pontius Pilate and the Roman state, Del Valle’s Jesus meets this fate at the hands of Kaiser Wilhelm. In a face-to-face confrontation, the Kaiser claims that Germans had become God’s new chosen people, justifying his quest to assert German supremacy across Europe. When Jesus rejects this, he is thrown in jail and then put on trial, charged with being a French spy, being complicit in the deaths of German pilots, and attempting to assassinate the Kaiser. Jesus is found guilty and executed (Del Valle 1917:199-222).

Throughout Latin America, World War I had a very negligible military impact. Had the war dragged on a few more years, though, it is highly feasible that large numbers of Cubans and Puerto Ricans could have been drawn into the conflict. As it was, the men on these islands did encounter the patriotic coercion of obligatory military service – laws that anarchists were convinced would further impede the freedom of working people in the name of advancing the political and economic agendas of the elite both at home and abroad. Thus, anarchists in the Americas came to accept the notion that the Great War was not their fight. One can see this in Antonio Penichet’s works from the immediate postwar period. Del Valle’s novel, though, could be considered in a different light. While the book is highly critical of patriotic nationalism and militarism, Del Valle’s treatment of the encounter between
Jesus and the Kaiser can be read as sympathetic to Kropotkin’s concerns about Prussian militarism. By portraying the state as Jesus’ executioner, Del Valle symbolically criticizes all governments – especially those persecuting defenders of peace and freedom. However, by making the Kaiser (not the French or English governments) the executioner, Del Valle seems to sympathize with Kropotkin’s concerns that pacifism against such states (especially Prussian militarism) will not benefit anyone. This use of Jesus symbolism and violence in anarchist fiction requires further consideration.

**Violence, Religious Symbolism, and Jesus**

Anarchists long rejected organized religion, especially Christianity and definitely, in Latin America and Spain, the Catholic Church. Following the general leftist critique that religion was a purveyor of false consciousness, anarchists additionally portrayed the Church as deceitful, an ally of coercive political and economic elites, a perpetrator of unhealthy family life, and a denier of the progressive benefits of scientific inquiry and experimentation. Yet, anarchists had a tradition of adopting what they viewed as the true teachings of Jesus to support their messages of revolution against inequality, wealth, militarism, and tyranny. To this end, anarchists throughout the Americas, including Cuba and Puerto Rico, “liberated” the symbols of Jesus from the Church and put them to use in the anarchist cause. They portrayed anarchists and Jesus as the counterweights to Church-sanctioned or legitimized violence and used this symbolism to reflect a struggle of good and freedom (anarchists and Jesus) versus evil and authority (political and religious institutions).6

In *Jesus en la guerra*, Jesus and anarchists find themselves helping one another. As Jesus travels through the war zones, he attracts a series of disciples, including the anarchist Andrés. As Jesus, Andrés, and other disciples preach against the war throughout France and Belgium, either they are ignored or called “antipatriotic” and “anarchists.” More anarchists begin to follow Jesus and want to protect him, “seeing Jesus not as the Son of God ... but as the man challenging and exposing everything, he went from town to town denouncing the abominations of war and the divisions of men by country, condemning excesses of power and wealth, and predicting the arrival of an era of peace, based on loving one another and respecting human life” (Del Valle 1917:123-25). As the narrator describes it, these radicals were “anarchists converted into voluntary guardians of Jesus” (Del Valle 1917:128).

However, Jesus’s pacifism begins to alienate the anarchists who increasingly see violence as the only way to stop the madness. “We want freedom

and well-being for all,” says one anarchist. “We long for a peaceful and loving society, but we need to conquer that society by revolution, by violence since it will never arrive by persuasion and passive sacrifice ... And before picking up a rifle to defend a bourgeois patria, I prefer to be armed as a traitor to la patria.” While Jesus argues that “sacrifice” and not “violence” is the only answer, the anarchists argue that the people will learn more from actions than rhetoric, and that includes violent agitation if necessary (Del Valle 1917:173). Thus, while sympathetic to Jesus’ philosophy, Del Valle’s anarchists come to the conclusion that violent struggle against patriotism – Prussian or otherwise – may be the only answer.

The association of Jesus and revolution against militaristic states increasingly appeared in Caribbean anarchist fiction in the late 1910s and early 1920s. While one could find examples sprinkled throughout the anarchist press of the region before this period, not until later did it appear in novels and short stories. In ¡Alma Rebelde!, Penichet tapped into a long Cuban anarchist association that linked Jesus with Cuban independence leader José Martí. As a young boy, the novel’s main character Rodolfo heard stories of Martí, imagining him to be like Jesus: “always suffering, good, generous ... he believed that Jesus effectively was Martí” (Penichet 1921:11). Following the Cuban government’s jailing and expulsion of anarchists during anti-World War I protests, Rodolfo remembered Martí’s call that Cuba was to be a “republic for all.” Increasingly, though, revolutionaries would need to continue to struggle to fulfill that idea, and to Rodolfo it appeared that Martí’s cause for freedom – like that of Jesus’ – was slipping away (Penichet 1921:112-13).

What developed, then, was conscious anarchist sympathy for religious symbolism and even “religious” characters for their association with freedom, universal love, and peace. Two more characters stand out here: Don Emilio in ¡Alma Rebelde! and Cristo Recio in Del Valle’s Juan sin pan (1926). Don Emilio and Rodolfo frequently talk with one another. Rodolfo is impressed that this priest is unlike any he has known before. Don Emilio calls the church a “business,” charging that the church exploits people’s sentiments in exchange for power and wealth (Penichet 1921:72-74). Cristo Recio is a homeless man who befriends the title character Juan in Del Valle’s novel. Midway through the story, Juan and other lumpenproletariat join in a massive violent uprising. One of these men – Betun Chico – is killed in the uprising. At his funeral, Cristo Recio pulls out the New Testament and reads Scripture over the grave of the revolutionary while nearby and throughout the town the rebels are killing priests, destroying religious artifacts, and burning convents and churches to the ground (Del Valle 1926:98-109). Thus, while none of these religious/Jesus figures advocates violence, they do not condemn it either. Their ideological sympathies lie with anarchists.

As a result, Jesus and religious symbols play different roles in discussions of violence by Caribbean anarchist fiction writers. At times Jesus is used as a
symbol of freedom; at other times as a naïve pacifist, but still a respected figure pursuing antimilitarism and universal peace. Meanwhile, other religious characters such as Don Emilio and Cristo Recio do not complain that anarchist revolutionaries justify violence in the name of liberation from tyranny and state-sponsored militarism.

**Supporting Working-Class Violence**

As the previous section describes, Caribbean anarchist fiction romantically spoke of the nobleness of engaging in violent revolutionary struggle to bring about a new society modeled on anarchist notions of equality, freedom, and justice. The call to arms in anarchist fiction was accepted in many different forms from praises of assassinations to the violence of the general strike, sabotage, and banditry. Sometimes the ultimate goal – social revolution – emerged out of these violent story lines, while at other times, violence seems to get the perpetrators nowhere.

**Assassinations and Bombings**

In the introduction, I noted how the anarchist use of assassination and bombings as part of propaganda by the deed actions had limited impact. Assassinations removed an immediate target, and even attempted assassinations could inspire romantic notions of “action” against tyranny. Bombings – whether used in assassination attempts or directed at property – could have the same effect. However, such violence also resulted in state repression against anarchists and their potential sympathizers.

Actual assassination attempts were rare in the history of global anarchism, and almost nonexistent in the Caribbean. For Caribbean anarchists, there were two important assassination attempts. First, during Cuba’s independence struggle, the Italian anarchist Miguel Angiolillo assassinated the hated Spanish Prime Minister Antonio Cánovas del Castillo in August 1897 (Casanova 2005:83). In his position, Cánovas played a central role administering the Spanish empire and coordinating Spanish efforts to suppress the Cuban insurrection. Word of the assassination was reported with praise by the anarchist press, but as one writer to the Tampa-based anarchist newspaper *El Esclavo* noted, it was a shame that the cause of freedom and anarchism had to sacrifice heroes such as Angiolillo who was tried and condemned for his act.7 No other anarchist-associated assassination attempts occurred again for two decades. In 1920, labor strife and radical resistance in Cuba escalated to include an assassination attempt against the family of Cuban

---

Violence in Caribbean Anarchist Fiction, 1890s-1920s

In May of that year, Antonio Penichet and other anarchists were arrested and then released in connection with a series of bombings in Havana. On June 14, 1920, another bomb exploded at the Teatro Nacional during a performance by Italian opera singer Enrico Caruso. In attendance were Menocal’s mother-in-law and daughter. Again, Penichet was arrested along with fellow anarchist Marcelo Salinas (Fernández 2001:52; Primelles 1957:256, 259, 412-13; Sublette 2007:349). As more anarchists were arrested in the government roundup, the Puerto Rican anarchist group “Enrique Creci” (the name of a Cuban anarchist who died fighting during the War for Independence), condemned the wave of arrests in Cuba, but went further when they urged Cuban anarchists to assassinate President Menocal. “With any luck the ray of Sarajevo will be repeated in Havana” – a not so subtle reference to the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand which launched World War I. Cuban anarchists did not answer their comrades’ call.

The use of assassination – whether in Spain or the Caribbean – was rare. However, in times of labor strife (as noted above in 1920) or during war (as in the 1890s), anarchists used bombs for strategic and propaganda purposes. For instance, in September 1894, five months before the outbreak of the Cuban War for Independence, El Esclavo (a newspaper widely read both in Florida and Cuba) published a letter on how to make dynamite and the different kinds of explosives one could utilize. It concluded “They [the Spanish government and its allies] want war; they got it. Death to the bourgeoisie.” In August 1895, El Esclavo praised the level of rebel violence unleashed throughout Cuba. “Hurray for dynamite! Let the spirit of destruction guide the revolutionaries’ paths,” proclaimed one front-page article. To this end, anarchists blew up bridges and gas lines throughout Havana. The most celebrated bombing occurred in 1896 against the quintessential symbol of Spanish rule: the Palace of the Captains-General near Havana harbor. Planned in Florida with poor-quality dynamite, the explosion succeeded merely in destroying the latrines (Casanovas 1998:227). Yet, Tampa celebrated the bombing for its symbolism and further encouraged “those producing similar explosions!”

While movement leaders may have engaged in or at least called for assassinations and bombings, the more lasting impact of this violence could be seen in the portrayal of similar violent acts in Caribbean anarchist fiction. Yet, the message could be mixed. For instance, in her 1907 play Influencias de las ideas modernas, Puerto Rican anarcho-feminist Luisa Capetillo disparages the

8. Both Penichet and Salinas were found guilty in their 1921 trial and sentenced to death but were pardoned and released following the collapse of the Menocal administration.
10. El Esclavo, September 26, 1894, pp. 3-4.
12. El Esclavo, May 19, 1896, p. 3.
use of anarchist violence. Angelina – the lead character, who is the thoughtful daughter of a rich, progressive factory owner – begins reading anarchist works and believes that education, not violence, is the only way to transform society (Capetillo 1916:6-7). When workers strike local factories (including her family’s factory), her father Don Juan de Ramírez quickly agrees to workers’ demands. Meanwhile, Angelina converses with strike leader Carlos Santana about what makes “true anarchists.” In her view, many “call themselves anarchists in order to take power, after which they are more or less as tyrannous as other tyrants. They don’t love humanity, nor do they concern themselves with spreading libertarian propaganda” (Capetillo 1916:34). Carlos agrees, suggesting that anarchists who resort to violence in order to topple a government are not real anarchists. Nevertheless, Capetillo acknowledges the use of assassination by anarchists. While speaking with Carlos and Carlos’s mother Mariana, the house servant Ramón condemns the apparent hypocrisy of those political leaders who are responsible for killing thousands but then condemn anarchists for committing a single assassination.

Some explain anarchy as a doctrine of crimes and violence; nevertheless, those same accusers burn thousands of human beings in the name of Christ... Anarchy has not committed those crimes. Some fanatics have removed from the scene a Carnot, a Cánovas, a Humberto, a McKinley, but they are isolated cases. Furthermore, ... they are forgivable, those Ravachols, those Palláses, those Caserios, and those Angiolillos. They are only a few while the Torquemadas, the Cánovases, and the Louis IXs seem to multiply with astonishing ease. (Capetillo 1916:38-39)

Thus, while Capetillo does not want the anarchist movement to be defined as a whole by the violence of a few, she seems perfectly willing to excuse those who resort to executing society’s oppressors while stopping short of celebrating their actions.

One of the most prominent examples of praise for anarchist assassinations in Cuban anarchist fiction is a small section in Penichet’s La vida de un pernicioso – published a year before the Teatro Nacional bombing. Like many before him, the narrator praises the utility of focused violence such as assassination. Angiolillo’s assassination of Cánovas is viewed as necessary and pales in comparison with the butchery that Cánovas oversaw in the Spanish repression of Cuba’s liberation fighters. In addition, the narrator praises the 1906 attempted assassination of Spanish King Alfonso XIII by anarchist Mateo Morral. As Alfonso and his new bride paraded through the streets of Madrid immediately following their wedding, Morral threw a bouquet of bomb-laden flowers at the royal coach. The bouquet bounced off the coach and exploded, killing a guard and splattering the new queen with the blood of the bomb victim. Penichet’s narrator uses the late-nineteenth-century propaganda by-the-deed justification of such acts as a signal for radi-
Violence in Caribbean Anarchist Fiction, 1890s-1920s
calls to rise up and punish evil-doers – in this case a king who oversaw the
deaths of thousands under his rule (Penichet 1919b:121).

Strikes, Sabotage, and Banditry
Because anarchist movements emerged from and counted so heavily on the
working class, labor actions became frequent concerns for the movements.
Strikes rippled through the sugar, construction, manufacturing, and tobacco trades in Cuba and Puerto Rico in the first decades of the twentieth century. With these came numerous campaigns of sabotage directed at docks, transportation routes, and factories. While anarchists over the years may have at times been apprehensive about killing people, they rarely shied from attacking property. As one Tampa-based anarchist during the Cuban independence war put it, using violence against property “has taught workers to have less respect for property and to successfully handle the torch and dynamite.”

Worker-originated labor violence can be found throughout Caribbean anarchist fiction, beyond what has already been noted. The first use of this came in Adrián del Valle’s 1898 play Fin de fiesta, cuadro dramático – a play published under one of Del Valle’s noms de plume, Palmiro de Lidia. The play centers on the factory owner Don Pedro, his daughter Elena, and striking workers at Don Pedro’s factory. Don Pedro refuses to negotiate with the strikers and decides to permanently close his factory. Outraged by this, the workers decide that if he is going to deprive them of a livelihood then they too will deprive him of the ability to sell off the factory to make money. So, they burn it to the ground. The now armed workers then set off for Don Pedro’s house where they are confronted by the pistol-toting owner who asks what they want. Three workers, emboldened by their actions and their weapons, respond: “We want the bread you eat but deny us.” “We want the riches you accumulate from the cost of our labor.” “We want your blood in order to avenge the injustices and abuses that you committed against us.” When Don Pedro raises his pistol and shoots at the offending workers, Elena steps between her father and the strikers, taking the bullet. Shouts arise: “Kill! Kill!,” but the workers are urged to let Don Pedro live so that the suffering from killing his own daughter will be his ultimate punishment (De Lidia 1898:15-16). The play, published in New York where Del Valle lived during the Cuban War for Independence, became the most widely and frequently performed anarchist play in Cuba during the following decades. Its popularity and simplistic implications of revolutionary labor violence saw it performed in other parts of the Spanish-speaking anarchist world in North America. In Puerto Rico, anarchists received a copy of the play from Del Valle in late

Anarchists and socialists began performing the play there in 1899 and continued to perform it at May Day celebrations. Later in his life, Del Valle appeared less certain of the utility of worker violence and strikes but he was no doubt still moved by their perceived righteousness. This becomes apparent in two works of fiction from the 1920s – the novel Náufragos and his novella Arrayán. In the former, Alvar is a doctor from Cuba who has become disillusioned with his practice. He leaves the island and eventually finds himself sailing in the Pacific Ocean as the personal doctor of an aristocrat. The yacht he serves on becomes shipwrecked on a Polynesian island where he finds a “natural” people living simply, without shame and not guided by religious superstition or state authority. His fellow survivors are soon rescued, followed shortly by the permanent creation of a Protestant mission and then a U.S.-owned phosphate mining company. These “un-natural” intrusions undermine the island’s communal structures, and the islanders are turned into wage slaves for the phosphate company. Alvar the Cuban becomes the leader of a Polynesian resistance movement. First, he burns down the missionaries’ main house (Del Valle n.d. c: 90). Then, as a doctor for the phosphate company, he utilizes his contact with the workers to create a revolutionary cell of Polynesian and imported Chinese laborers. Fed up with their circumstances, Alvar leads these workers in an uprising against the company, but the workers are suppressed and Alvar is deported (Del Valle n.d. c: 104-10).

While the company (and capitalism) wins against Alvar, the results for the Cuban bandit Arrayán in the book by the same title are quite different. Set on a Cuban sugar mill, the story centers on Arrayán, a former small landowner who had been kicked off his land as U.S.-based sugar companies expanded across the island. When company officials came to remove him, he fought back, killing a man. Rather than go to jail, Arrayán fled and “became a bandit living freely in the manigua” (Del Valle n.d. a:23). From their jungle hideout, Arrayan’s bandit gang joins with striking workers against the owner of the Victoria sugar complex. The strikers and bandits have a common enemy: corporate agriculture. For instance, during a strike, Arrayán’s armed group arrives to support the striking workers, sabotaging Victoria by burning down one of the mills.

In these two stories, Del Valle taps into two historically relevant phenomena of the day: the role of growing worker resistance to the encroachments of international capitalism in general and the historic role of Cuban bandits aligning themselves with rebels and resisting workers in their use of violence to pursue social justice. The latter role of banditry in Cuba requires elaboration. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, agroindustrial capitalism spread through Cuba, displacing small landowners or making them

14. El Porvenir Social, October 27, 1898, p. 4; La Miseria, April 25, 1901, p. 1; Dávila Santiago 1985:15-19.
dependent on large, usually foreign-owned mills for the processing of their small quantities of sugar. While some displaced landowners moved to urban areas or became wage laborers on the new sugar complexes, others resorted to acts of sabotage, kidnapping, ransom, and “criminal” violence against the complexes. During Cuba’s War for Independence, some of these “bandits” lent their services to the revolutionary forces. While many such bandits did so as a way to gain access to the spoils of war, others such as the famous Manuel García became large fundraisers for the rebels via ransom activities. At other times, their sabotage of sugar mills, railroads, and other pieces of capital helped the rebel cause. Consequently, the violence waged by Arrayán and his armed bandit group become—in Del Valle’s portrayal—acts of justified working-class violence. That the story was published in the 1920s, as U.S. sugar companies continued their expansion across Cuba, turning the island into what anarchists regularly called an American feudal estate, suggests that Del Valle might have been celebrating—even advocating—acts of bandit sabotage.15

ANARCHISTS AND REVOLUTION

While anarchists may have dealt with bread-and-butter issues such as education, health, and labor organization on a regular basis, they always saw their actions leading to a Revolución Social, as they put it. The means to arrive at this complete overhaul of society, though, were not always agreed upon. Some anarchists saw violent revolution as necessary while others came to view educational tasks among the workers as key to steering society toward a more orderly transformation. No matter the path, the rhetorical use of revolutionary violence cannot easily be overlooked in anarchist literary works. Caribbean anarchist writers approached this issue in two ways. Some writers explored the more conceptual notion of a revolutionary transformation that would “cleanse” society. Other authors incorporated real revolutionary struggles they knew about and/or had experienced, in particular Cuba’s War for Independence and the Mexican Revolution.

The Cleansing Flames of Revolution

Whether it was the poetry of anarchists such as Juan José López or the futuristic revolutionary society in Luisa Capetillo’s fiction, the symbol of the bonfire played prominently in violently cleansing society of its decadent, unjust past. In his Voces Libertarias (1910), Puerto Rican anarchist Juan José López published a selection of his tracts critical of both Puerto Rican politics and concepts of patriotic nationalism. In “Subamos,” he critiqued how recent

agricultural strikes and strike leaders had been repressed and persecuted by authorities, how Washington had failed to do anything to help the laborers’ plight, and how all of this was little more than a cruel joke waged by “the grand republic” of the United States and its island lackeys to keep the masses down. Criminally, he argued, the same thing was happening elsewhere under U.S. eyes and with U.S. complicity: the trials of Chicago’s Haymarket anarchists in the nineteenth century, the harassment of the U.S.-based Mexican anarchist brothers Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón by U.S. authorities, and a recent lynching of tobacco workers in Tampa, Florida. Inspired by the Mexican Revolution just then gaining momentum, López urged workers in “Subamos” to ignore patriotism and the flag and “come with us, the anarchists ... We’re rising up!” (López 1910:32). Such a call to arms ended a book that had begun with López’s poem “Lucha Roja” where he argued that rational beings could not defend a national flag, should ignore socialism, choose anarchism, and unite. In the final stanza, López writes, “Decent people should unite around her [anarchy] / Together with all that is good and benevolent / To fall in with the so-called RED STRUGGLE / She invites you to the triumph of love / She incites you to kill the rulers / We will ignite the bonfire in her name” (López 1910:7).

The bonfire can symbolize both the violence that initiates a revolution as well as the violence that cleanses the remnants of the past from the new dawning age. This latter usage of revolutionary bonfires emerges at the end of Luisa Capetillo’s novella La humanidad en el futuro (1910). In Capetillo’s romantic telling, the workers in an unnamed place rise up in a general strike. The strike’s intensity, longevity, and breadth ultimately lead to a revolutionary overhaul of society. The strike committee has become the vanguard to lead this reform, and they call on their followers to collect everything in society that is useless or has caused harm. A cart is pulled around the community, collecting such items from offices, courtrooms, museums, and churches, and then they are deposited onto an ever-growing mound in the central plaza. When priests complain, not only are they reprimanded and told their properties will now become schools but also they are forced to remove their cassocks and add them to the pile of useless objects to be burned – a contrast, notes the strike leader, to how priests in the past burned people. Then, when all such objects have been collected and deposited in the plaza, the mound of refuse is set alight. The pyre burns for hours. The ashes are then gathered and sent to the countryside as fertilizer for the newly reorganized agricultural enterprises (Capetillo 1910:17-18). Thus, the flames of revolution burn the old items to ashes, which now will help give birth to a new era.

The previously discussed topics of antimilitarism and strikes merge with revolutionary violence in the second half of Del Valle’s Juan sin pan entitled “Revolución.” Workers in the Cercado barrio of an unnamed city lead a general strike to protest their country’s new war effort and militarist mobili-
zations. As the strike ensues, workers struggle to shut down all aspects of the city. As a tram passes a group of strikers, they pummel it with stones. Then, a radical leaps atop the tram to speak: “Compañeros, nothing of value comes from protest without violence. It’s not enough to cross your arms, taking a pacifist posture. It’s necessary to work energetically and decisively, opposing force with force in order to demonstrate to the government and the bourgeoisie that the workers are not willing to continue being playthings for their ambitions.” As the cavalry charges, one striking worker unsheathes a pistol and kills a soldier, exclaiming “One!” and then kills another (Del Valle 1926:82-83). Upon talking with his associates following the tram conflict, the title character Juan speaks approvingly: “For me it was good” (Del Valle 1926:101).

The romantic portrayal of revolutionary violence continues as the rebellious multitudes break out of their barrio and spread throughout the city, not only burning the houses of the rich or churches and convents but also attacking government buildings and burning the port where the rich make their wealth off the backs of workers in the export economy (Del Valle 1926:121). The uprising is short-lived, though. One by one, the rebels’ barricades are conquered by military forces sweeping through the city. At one of the last barricades, Juan and his comrades hopelessly await the cavalry assault that will kill them all (Del Valle 1926:170-76).

The desire to initiate revolutionary change in society and thus cleanse the world of an unjust past often brought anarchists and their sympathizers into contact with the forces of state repression – spies, police, and soldiers in particular. The cavalry charges against radicals in Juan sin pan are illustrative. But some Caribbean writers portrayed an imagined unity between radicals and those who enforced the state’s rule. The Puerto Rican Ramón Romero Rosa’s (aka R. del Romeral) La emancipación del obrero: Drama alegórico en un acto (1903) and Cuban Antonio Penichet’s El soldado Rafael: Páginas de la vida real (1919) portray such alliances between rebels and enforcers of the state to bring about revolutionary change.

Romero Rosa’s call for a revolutionary change in society without resorting to violence rested on his idealized view that workers and those sent to repress them would need to unite to avoid violence. The play focuses on Juan (symbolizing the workers’ cause), Pedro (representing workers who live in ignorant servitude to the bourgeoisie), and an extranjero (representing the arrival of working-class ideals to Puerto Rico). While much of the play focuses on Juan attempting to spread the extranjero’s ideals so that his fellow workers will transform themselves, a less-noted transformation occurs with the police. While the police in Scene Two attack Pedro for spreading his “pernicious teaching” and the extranjero in Scene Three for stirring things up on the island, by the seventh and final scene the police are having second thoughts about the repression they levy. As two policemen go to arrest the
extranjero, he exhorts them to consider their actions: “Stop and listen!,” he calls in the familiar vosotros voice. “You, who come from the same working people, are also workers dressed in uniforms; you are instruments of oppression that the stupid bourgeoisie values for destroying our freedoms ... Come, then, with us so that as the workers who you truly are you can serve your true cause!” Upon quick reflection, one officer says, “What you say is true! ... I’ve never taken a rich man to prison! All have been poor ... I now know that I’ve served a bad cause! I surrender to your eloquence and I know now that this [holding up his pistol] no longer belongs to me.” He throws the gun to the ground, and his colleague does the same, deciding to join forces with the workers (Del Romeral 1903:30-31).

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 would have a similar impact on some Cuban anarchists. Anarchists had long been persecuted by Cuban police, rural guards, and the military. Whether it was the suppression of meetings, murder of activists, or rounding up of anarchists who were deported as “pernicious foreigners,” relations between workers and the military were rarely positive on the island. However, the example of workers and soldiers aligning in Russia at the end of World War I enriched the political imagination of Antonio Penichet in Cuba. His short sixteen-page, pamphlet-size story El soldado Rafael created tremendous turmoil in elite circles – so much so, that the government went to great efforts to suppress its distribution (Primelles 1957:112).

Set in Cuba, Rafael is a rural laborer, sent to work early in life with his two brothers – all orphans. Poor conditions prompt the workers to quit and find work on a better paying estate. In response, the landowner calls for the rural guard to interfere and forcibly return the workers to his estate. However, to the surprise of Rafael and his cohorts, the head of the guard refuses, declaring that the guard would “not commit injustices. These workers are honorable men who declare a right that cannot be denied ... I am not inclined to be an instrument for either you or the other estate owners” (Penichet 1919a:5). Though initially surprised at the guard’s actions, Rafael realizes that those who are guardsmen were former workers just as he was – “workers who, when they stopped being soldiers, will return to their former jobs and again become workers.” Besides, he notes, workers should understand that soldiers make no real money either (Penichet 1919a:7). As he grows older, Rafael too leaves agriculture and becomes a soldier. But when a new workers’ strike ensues and his unit is summoned to crush it, Rafael remembers that earlier episode and knows that the workers have gone on strike merely to survive. When workers storm warehouses, ports, and docks to acquire food, Rafael’s unit is sent to suppress the rioters. His unit is the first to encounter workers carrying away cans of condensed milk. Rafael’s captain orders the soldiers to disperse the workers, but Rafael says “no” and the rest of the soldiers support his refusal. Rafael then leads his fellow soldiers to join the ranks
of the workers. The unity between the oppressed and the former agents of state repression leads to the dawn of a “better society, based not on the law of force but situated on principles of equality and justice ... Workers and soldiers, embrace one another” (Penichet 1919a:16).

**Historical Revolutionary Violence in Caribbean Anarchist Fiction**

While Caribbean anarchist writers could posit romantic notions of revolutionary change with bonfires or worker-repressor alliances, and while sometimes these could be based on real historical events such as the Bolshevik Revolution, some writers used historical Latin American examples of revolution in their calls for revolutionary action. As noted earlier, unlike most anarchists in Europe or elsewhere in Latin America, Caribbean anarchists had direct exposure to revolutionary conflict, in particular Cuba’s War for Independence and the Mexican Revolution. Both conflicts were important to Caribbean anarchists in the early twentieth century, though more so for the better developed movement in Cuba. After all, many Cuban anarchists had fought in that island’s independence struggles and a later generation of anarchists continued to reference the war as a fight for liberation whose goals had been subverted by an elite eager for personal gain. Meanwhile, anarchists in Havana kept close tabs on the anarchist dimensions of the Mexican Revolution, including raising money for the cause, maintaining contact with Mexican anarchists such as the Flores Magón brothers in the United States, and publishing the correspondence of Mexican anarchists during the revolution (Shaffer forthcoming). Both Del Valle and Penichet incorporated these real struggles into their literary works in praise of violent revolutionary struggle to liberate society from oppression.

In the years immediately following Cuba’s independence from Spain as well as during the late 1910s and 1920s when the Cuban anarchist movement surged to new levels of success and activism, Del Valle and Penichet used the image of independence struggles in Cuba to promote the anarchist cause. While revolutionary violence was never a central component in these works, it nevertheless was celebrated as part of a struggle to liberate an island from despotic tyranny, though at great costs. In 1907 Del Valle published his collection *Por el camino* that included the short story “Amor de padre.” In “Amor,” Carlos is a captain in Cuba’s independence forces and argues with his father who is a colonel in the Spanish army. When the father accuses his son of a treason that borders on patricide, Carlos flies into a rage. “If I struggle against Spain, it is not because I hate her, but because I love freedom for the place where I was born ... I fight for Cuba’s freedom just as I would fight for the freedom of any oppressed people” (Del Valle 1907:111). Published less than a decade after independence as the island’s postindependence anarchist movement began to develop with islandwide propaganda tours, efforts to develop anarchist schools, and the establishment of a weekly press, the
story from the island’s best-known anarchist urged readers to remember why so many picked up arms to fight for liberty. All around them in 1907, Cuba’s elites were siphoning off the icons of independence such as the image of José Martí and the war itself for their own political uses while the United States militarily occupied the island and would do so until 1909.

As Cuban anarchism blossomed again in the late 1910s and 1920s, Del Valle and Penichet incorporated the spirit of revolutionary violence and Cuba’s independence struggles into their anarchist message. In *La vida de un pernicioso* and *¡Alma Rebelde!*, Penichet depicted the war in different ways. On the one hand, as in *¡Alma Rebelde!*, he portrayed the war as little more than a struggle between nationalists (Cuban and Spanish). The violence of war unleashes new waves of violence against workers by the independent Cuban government. Yet, Penichet portrays the war and the violence associated with it in much nobler terms in *La vida de un pernicioso*. In this novel, the main character Joaquín arrives in Cuba as a Spanish soldier to put down the insurrection, but then deserts the Spanish side. He eventually joins the rebels, “believing their rebellion was quite just.” The portrayal of a future anarchist (Joaquin) as a former independence warrior who becomes disillusioned with the state of Cuban affairs by the late 1910s fed into a popular late 1910s-early 1920s anarchist narrative. As the movement in Havana grew and came to dominate Cuba’s labor federations, anarchists increasingly attacked Cuba’s elite for selling out the island to U.S. military efforts in World War I as well as U.S. economic interests. Thus, the spirit of revolutionary violence from the independence war fed into the growing anarchist desire to model themselves after the Bolshevik Revolution’s link between soldiers and workers while fighting the growing “feudalization” of the island (Penichet 1919b:27).

While anarchist writers could look to Cuba’s War for Independence for inspiration, they could also refer to strong anarchist involvement in the Mexican Revolution. By the time a formal declaration of revolution came from Mexican independence leader Francisco Madero in 1910, Mexican anarchists led by Ricardo Flores Magón based in exile in the United States had been leading campaigns against the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz for half a decade. After revolutionaries launched a full-scale revolt in 1910, Cuban anarchists organized fundraising campaigns to support the revolution. Men and women in Cuba, the Caribbean, and beyond regularly sent money to the weekly Havana anarchist newspaper *¡Tierra!* There, it was collected and forwarded to anarchists in Mexico as well as to the Flores Magóns in Los Angeles. In addition, by 1913, a leading anarchist teacher in Havana (J.F. Moncaleano) relocated to Mexico to help found anarchist organizations in Mexico City. He was soon deported and eventually went to Los Angeles to work with the Mexican anarchists there. Thus, from 1910 to 1913, the Mexican Revolution played prominently in Cuban anarchist press cover-
The legacy of this interaction revolving around violent revolutionary struggle emerged in the 1920s in Del Valle’s short novel *De maestro a guerrillero*. By the early 1920s, the violent, internecine warfare of the Mexican Revolution had settled into an attempt to build a revolutionary society – despite occasional flareups such as the Cristero Movement of Catholics who resisted the revolution’s secularization efforts later that decade. Del Valle, who always saw his works as a form of anarchist education, penned a romantic tale of revolutionary action by drawing on the early years of the Mexican Revolution. In 1911, anarchists based in the southwest of the United States invaded Baja California, Mexico, attempting to create anarchist agricultural communities there. The Mexican government of Francisco Madero used force against these revolutionaries. By the end of 1911, the anarchists had been forced back to the United States but Madero would soon be betrayed and overthrown by one of his officers, General Victoriano Huerta, in early 1913.

This was the context for Del Valle’s ode to anarchist revolutionary violence and radical land reform in *De maestro a guerrillero*. Sancho Canales is a teacher sent to a small Indian community in Baja California by the Madero government. Not only does he teach people how to read and write but also he instructs on hygiene, the history and cruelty of the Spanish conquest, and how struggles for political independence had little to no impact on improving Indians’ lives. Sancho falls in love with a twenty-year-old girl who must fight off the advances of the son of Don Romero, a large landowner. Upon Huerta’s overthrow of Madero, Don Romero is inspired to destroy Madero’s local achievements and closes the public school. Soon afterward, the girl is kidnapped and raped by Don Romero’s son and his friends. When Sancho bursts in on the rapists, they flee, but not before shooting the girl to death. The outrage triggers a violent response in Sancho. “Now is not the time for teaching, but for fighting.” He takes to the hills and leads a guerrilla war against the landowners, going from being a simple teacher to a guerrilla fighter. Inspired by land redistribution efforts in southern Mexico by Emiliano Zapata, Sancho begins to redistribute the lands he “liberates” from

16. Such publication on the exploits of anarchist violence began to appear in the Cuban anarchist press in early 1911, shortly after a leading U.S.-based Mexican anarchist (Práxedis G. Guerrero) was killed in a raid into Mexico. See, for instance, *¿Tierra!*, February 18, 1911, p. 1 and regular front-page coverage and reprints of letters from leading Mexican anarchists in the year to follow focusing on key events, including violent efforts to take over and forge anarchist communities in Baja California in 1911.

17. To understand more of this episode within the contexts of both the Mexican Revolution and the anarchist movement along the U.S.-Mexican border, see Hernández Padilla 1988 and Poole 1977.
landowners. Don Romero’s lands, too, are liberated and redistributed while his house is turned into a school and recreation center. But still Sancho is not satisfied. In the end, he proclaims that for the Indian masses to truly benefit, there must be complete communalization of lands, and thus he continues his violent campaign to achieve that goal (Del Valle n.d. b:25).

Globally, anarchist involvement in violent revolutionary struggle has been limited by the few cases whereby violent revolutions emerged in countries that likewise had significant anarchist movements. While anarchists were involved in revolutionary struggles in Russia and China, for instance, anarchists in the geographical heart of the movement, namely the Atlantic World, had few such opportunities. Two of those opportunities occurred during Cuba’s War for Independence from 1895-98 and the Mexican Revolution in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Both times, anarchists in the Caribbean participated personally in these struggles. Years later, fiction writers incorporated these struggles into their stories, frequently celebrating the people who took up arms to achieve social justice just as their allies (and sometimes friends) during the actual campaigns.

**Conclusion**

Caribbean anarchists faced most of the same issues as their comrades scattered throughout the Americas, Europe, and beyond at the turn of the twentieth century. While recruiting followers, educating workers and children in the ways of freedom, improving the health and well-being of comrades, and challenging the elites who ran their societies, these men and women regularly suffered violent repression. Fearing jailing or deportation, abuse, or even execution, anarchists in Cuba and Puerto Rico struggled to be heard and they agitated for revolutionary change under the apparatus of state-church-capital repression.

Partly out of response to these events and partly guided by their larger goals of educating followers to be prepared for the dreamed-for social revolution, some anarchists took to the pen and page to write about violence. In Spain – the ideological and sometimes practical training ground for many anarchists in Cuba and Puerto Rico – anarchist violence had long been justified as a legitimate response to the structural violence of state repression. Violence against a state that used force to maintain control seemed a rational means to liberate society (Bernecker 1982:106). While a few Caribbean anarchists did partake in violent struggle – such as fighting in Cuba’s War for Independence or the Mexican Revolution – and they were not beyond using bombs for sabotage or assassination attempts, leading anarchists in the islands were more likely to use the weapon of literary violence to educate and motivate their readers. To this end, Adrián del Valle, Antonio Penichet, Luisa Capetillo, and others in Cuba and Puerto Rico criticized state-sanctioned
violence while often celebrating labor and revolutionary violence in their plays, poems, short stories, and novels.

While it was one thing to create these anarchist visions for educating and motivating readers, a healthy skepticism is in order as to how widely read these works were. No publication run figures seem to have survived the passage of time, so it is impossible to know how many copies of any particular novella, play, poetry collection, or novel were in circulation at a given point in history.

One can nevertheless note that literacy rates in both Cuba and Puerto Rico at this time were sufficiently high so that a potential pool of readers existed. Censuses in Cuba from 1899, 1907, and 1919 reflect this. The ability to read rose from 36 percent of the population over ten years of age in 1899, to 56.6 percent in 1907 and 61 percent in 1919. Men and women benefited almost equally from the increased ability to read. In 1907, 58.3 percent of males and 54.6 percent of females could read, rising to 62.1 percent and 61 percent respectively in 1919. In addition, literacy was highest in the cities, especially Havana, where anarchists primarily published, agitated, and performed. There, literacy for all groups – men and women, black and white, native and foreign born – rose from 83.9 percent of Havana’s population in 1907 to 86 percent in 1919.18

Meanwhile, in Puerto Rico, swift advances in literacy rates meant that ever-growing numbers of people were able to read. In 1899, years of Spanish neglect resulted in only 16.6 percent of the population having the ability to read, though these numbers were significantly higher in the largest cities: Mayagüez 55.5 percent; Ponce 46.2 percent; and San Juan 51.8 percent.19 The creation of public education on the island after the United States took control increased literacy rates; however, because of different methods used by the U.S. Census Bureau – which included Puerto Rico in its U.S. censuses beginning in 1910 – direct comparisons of figures are inexact. That is because the bureau measured the level of “illiteracy,” which it defined as “any person 10 years of age or older who is unable to write, regardless of ability to read.”20 Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that if one could write, then one could read. As a result, the census found that illiteracy rates from 1899 to 1910 fell from 79.6 percent to 66.5 percent. Men were less illiterate than women in 1910 (62.3 percent and 70.7 percent respectively). Urban areas, as one would expect, also had lower illiteracy levels than rural areas (39.7 percent to 74.2 percent respectively).21

Thus, while it is obvious that not every man, woman, and child could read, there was sufficient literacy to read and understand these rather simplistically

18. Censuses Cuba 1899, 1907, and 1919.
written expressions of anarchism. In addition, one did not need to be able to read to see plays staged at meetings or to hear poetry recited at fundraisers. Finally, because the tobacco trades were central locations of employment for Caribbean anarchists and sympathizers, and because anarchists at times were lectores – like Luisa Capetillo – we can surmise that some of this fiction (though we do not know which fiction exactly) was read by the readers to tobacco leaf selectors, de-stemmers, and cigar rollers. Consequently, there is every reason to believe that anarchist fiction could have been widely disseminated.

One-hundred-year-old Caribbean anarchist fiction is not easy to acquire. Most surviving copies are preserved in institutes and libraries in Europe, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. Thus, these stories – like much primary source historical documentation – are out of most people’s reach. But they are valuable historically and can be insightful for the present. Historically, the literary creations of social movements show us sides of these movements that communiqués, demonstrations, and slogans cannot. They highlight how key figures within these movements envisioned their past and present, while offering visions of what their idealized future could bring. By focusing on how anarchist social movements portrayed labor and revolutionary violence in fiction, we even get a taste for what they may have secretly approved of but could not express in a public meeting or publish as a radical insert in one of their newspapers without facing repression.

Beyond that, we can look at the cultural productions of past movements as guides to study the messages of today’s social movements. Whether these are anarchist movements around the world or more localized Caribbean movements for social change, their literary creations provide a vision for how social movements understand reality, their roles as agents of change, and their vision for the future. In years to come, such productions will be valued historical documents of these movements seeking local change and attempting to thwart the modern forces of globalization in the same way that we can now utilize the literary creations of Caribbean anarchists who fought against those same global and local elites from a century ago.

In the end, early-twentieth-century anarchists were not necessarily pacifists in the sense that all violence was bad and even to be avoided. All seemed to agree that peaceful, evolutionary change toward an anarchist “new dawn” would be best, but all also acknowledged the past necessity (and future need?) for the popular classes in these societies to resort to violence for liberation. In a sense, their writings tended to reflect the position on violence laid forth decades later by the Guyanese historian Walter Rodney who reminded those who opposed all violence that there is a difference between the “violence of oppression” and the “violence of liberation,” and that one cannot measure the two by the same yardstick. This was the operating code of Caribbean anarchist fiction writers and activists decades earlier as well.
REFERENCES


CAPETILLO, LUISA, 1910. La humanidad en el futuro. San Juan: Real Hermanos.

—, 1916. Influencias de las ideas modernas: Notas y apuntes, escenas de la vida. San Juan: Tipografía Negrón Flores. [Orig. 1907.]


DEL ROMERAL, R. (AKA ADRIÁN RAMÓN ROMERO ROSA), 1903. La emancipación del obrero: Drama alegórico en un acto. Mayagüez, Puerto Rico: La Bruja.

—, 1906. Entre broma y vera maneras en salsa picante que conviene digerir con calma y sana intención, para bien de la higene social. San Juan: La República Española.

DEL VALLE, ADRIÁN, 1907. Por el camino. Barcelona: F. Granada.


KIRWIN R. SHAFFER
Latin American Studies
Pennsylvania State University – Berks College
Reading PA 19610, U.S.A.
<krs14@psu.edu>
On July 14, 1938, the Jamaican *Daily Gleaner*, the most widely read newspaper in the British colony at the time, printed a long article entitled “It Does Interest You – Birth Control” by journalist Aimee Webster. Webster, the London-educated daughter of wealthy Jamaican planter/politician Herbert Webster, was a well-known art critic and social reporter, serving as the “Society Editress” for the *Daily Gleaner* from 1938 to 1939 (Thoywell-Henry 1940:192). In this article, Webster discussed the growing concern over the high birth rate of the “Jamaican poor,” who “due to ignorance, produce children with reckless irresponsibility [while] upper class persons artificially regulate the coming of their children with due regard to the family’s income and the health of the mother.” Although she admitted that “as late as ten years ago, it might have been considered good economy for the planter and capitalist classes to know that there were large peasant families from which to obtain cheap labor,” in recent years the situation had changed so that these large families were no longer seen as beneficial to Jamaica’s economy or society. She attributed this shift to the rising expectations of a working class no longer satisfied with its role as cheap labor, whose “growing demands” were “stimulated not a little by the slogan of philanthropic persons and societies, crying aloud and proclaiming from posters and the press: Save the child – save the nation.” The goal of her article, Webster suggested, was to uncover attitudes toward a new plan to establish birth control clinics for the working classes.2

1. For their feedback on earlier versions of this article, I would like to thank Lara Putnam and the anonymous reviewers of the NWIG, as well as participants at the “Does the Caribbean Have Borderlands?” workshop in Pittsburgh, the 2008 Canadian Association of Latin American and Caribbean Studies Conference in Vancouver, and the Spring 2008 Writing Seminar at the University of Pittsburgh.
Recognizing that medical opinion was “of utmost value,” Webster sought out the views of several doctors from Kingston, the island’s largest city. Although she found that all were “sympathetic, if not actually enthusiastic” about the cause, only Dr. William Edward McCulloch, a Jamaican physician, and Dr. Jai Lal Varma, an Indian-born doctor resident in Jamaica since 1933, agreed to have their views published. “Birth control,” McCulloch claimed, was “an absolute necessity,” particularly because Jamaica had “the highest illegitimacy birth rate in the world,” leading to a situation where “already the population exceeds the economic possibilities of Jamaica to maintain.” He predicted that in forty years’ time, the population would be doubled if the birth rate “which is not merely unnecessarily large, but dangerously large, is not checked.” Varma, who was credited by Webster for increasing interest in the topic, agreed that “birth control must be adopted for the masses if we are to check the high illegitimacy birthrate which hinders economic progress in Jamaica.” To that effect, he called for the formation of a Birth Control Society by interested citizens to teach the “desirability” and methods of birth control.3

The next day, the *Daily Gleaner* published another full-page article by Webster on birth control, this time an interview with one of its most vocal critics, the respected Roman Catholic, Father Joseph Krim. Krim expressed his own concern over the high numbers of children born out of wedlock, which he likened to Roman Empire-style sexual overindulgence and which he also saw as contributing to a situation of moral and social decline in Jamaica. However, Krim argued that birth control was no answer to this problem; instead, it was even more “dangerous” than McCulloch’s fears of growing population, was “morally degrading,” and in fact was a direct attack on Jamaican family life. He suggested instead that Jamaica’s moral problems be addressed through religious instruction and self-control and its economic problems through the institution of a living wage and improved housing for the working classes.4

These articles were just two of 262 birth control-related pieces published by the *Daily Gleaner* from June 1938 to March 1939. This included 122 articles, announcements, interviews, and editorials written by *Daily Gleaner* staff documenting a growing birth control campaign on the island led by a number of prominent men and women. These birth control advocates, such as Varma and McCulloch, argued that birth control was an “absolute neces-
sity” considering the threat posed by the overabundance of (illegitimately born) working-class children in Jamaica. Such views, however, were vehemently opposed by a number of islanders including local clergymen, religious organizations, and labor leaders, who claimed that birth control was against God’s plan, threatening to Jamaica’s future growth, and/or a false panacea being used to cover up the real causes of poverty and inequality on the island. All of this activity prompted a heated debate in the pages of the Gleaner, which printed 140 letters related to birth control sent to the editor from interested (largely middle- and upper-class) readers during this period, as well as in packed lectures, conferences, and sermons across the island. Despite the widespread controversy, on March 18, 1939 Dr. Varma saw his wish realized with the creation of the first-ever Jamaican Birth Control League, which opened its first clinic in August 1939.

How can we explain the explosion in public interest, controversy, and action surrounding birth control during these ten months? As Webster recognized, it was driven in part by the activism of doctors such as Varma, as well as by social workers, many of whom were in dialogue with international birth control and eugenics movements. Reporters such as Webster and the Daily Gleaner newspaper itself also played an important role in both publicizing and sometimes explicitly promoting the birth control campaign. Yet it is Webster’s reference to the rising expectations of the working classes that perhaps provides the biggest clue as to why the birth control debate erupted that particular summer and why it became so heated over the course of the next ten months, a period in which these “growing demands,” the failure of the colonial government to address them, and the need for new answers were particularly visible and urgent. After all, the birth control debate came on the tail end of one of the largest labor rebellions in Jamaican history, a rebellion that not only demonstrated the potential of the working classes to disrupt order but also seriously challenged the legitimacy of British control over the colony and provided a substantial boost to the growing nationalist movement; in fact, many historians identify this moment as “the beginning of the end” of British rule in Jamaica.

5. For the role of the Daily Gleaner as a medium for middle-class and elite views, see Moore and Johnson (2004:xix) and Carnegie (1973:162-76). Although it is difficult to determine the class of those who wrote under pen names, nearly all described themselves as “we” vs. a working class “them” (with some notable exceptions), suggesting they at least identified themselves with the middle and upper classes.


8. The most detailed analysis of the rebellion and its aftermath is provided by Post (1978); see also Holt (1992) and Hart (1989, 1999). Bolland (2001) places the rebellion into the context of British Caribbean labor politics.
This climate of disorder and frustration but also optimism for the future of a “new Jamaica” would open up the public arena to controversial issues such as birth control, lend the demands of birth controllers a particular sense of urgency, and shape the direction the birth control debate would take. The debate became a medium through which a number of islanders articulated their own understandings of what was behind the unrest, what the solutions were, what this “new Jamaica” should look like, and who would play what roles in its creation. Although for all sides of the debate these issues were linked to particular understandings of working-class Jamaican sexuality and family life that were envisioned in highly stereotyped forms, participants could not agree on how these issues were connected to poverty, what the “ideal” family would be, and who among them should be in charge of controlling the Jamaican family and nation. As a result, the birth control debate exposes some of the deep class, religious, political, and social divisions in Jamaican society during this particularly formative historical period, as well as unearthing some of the ambivalences between those who sought to lead the nationalist movement and the population they at once desired to help, mobilize, and control. If the labor rebellion signaled the beginning of the end of colonial rule in Jamaica, then the birth control debate highlights the tensions that would plague this transformation right from the beginning, as well as the ways these were intimately linked to reproduction and sexuality.

“IT WOULD BE DISASTROUS”: FAMILY, ECONOMY, AND ORGANIZATION, 1838-1938

The concern over high rates of illegitimacy and “irregular” family structures in Jamaica voiced by both pro- and anti-birth controllers was not a new phenomenon in 1938. In fact, the perceived sexual looseness of slaves on Jamaican sugar plantations was a primary target of Christian clergy and missionaries arriving in the British colony from the sixteenth century on. This was sometimes a source of friction between church representatives and local planters (themselves producers of illegitimate children with slave mistresses) who had discouraged marriage among slaves until the abolition of the slave trade made increased reproduction (and thus, it was believed, more stable relationships) necessary (Austin-Broos 1997:31; Besson 2002:28). Attempts to instill Christian marriage and gender order into the population increased after slave emancipation in 1838 as the Church of England, Roman Catholic Church, Baptist Mission, and others expanded their network of churches, schools, and charitable organizations across the island. Illegitimacy also became a prominent issue among the local white population, British colonial authorities, and the emerging “respectable” black middle classes, who defined it as an exclusively lower-class (black) characteristic and a cause of
societal disorder and criminality (Austin-Broos 1997:97; Moore & Johnson 2004:96-136). In spite of efforts to control illegitimacy by reforming marriage, maintenance, and birth registration laws, however, many Jamaicans continued to lead their lives and have children in informal arrangements; indeed, illegitimacy rates hovered around 60 to 70 percent of all births in the period 1881-1950 (Roberts 1957:288). As such, it remained a source of consternation for those who saw the adoption of marriage as “an index of civilization, of movement from a state of slavery and from an African permissiveness” in the context of postemancipation Jamaican society (Austin-Broos 1997:31).

The class and racial tensions underlying ideas about illegitimacy, and the birth control debate more generally, also had deep historical roots. Although emancipation brought formal freedom for hundreds of thousands of African-descendent slaves, it left in place inequalities of access to wealth and land intimately linked to a color hierarchy in which those viewed as “darker” found fewer opportunities to climb the social, economic, and political ladder. While some former slaves did manage to obtain plots of land, rise to middle-class professional careers, and even enter politics, political power and control of the economy still remained largely in the hands of a small, unrepresentative white elite answering to the colonial office more than the local population.9 This racial inequality and the tension it threatened to ignite was, according to historian Patrick Bryan, largely dealt with “by declaring that Jamaica had no racial problem, and that, officially, no distinctions were to be made between Her Majesty’s subjects on the grounds of color” (Bryan 1991:17). This denial did not, however, eliminate actual inequalities.

The dire situation of much of the population only increased when the economy in Jamaica began to shift towards the production of fruit (particularly bananas) for export in the late nineteenth century. Small-scale peasants found themselves forced off the land as multinational corporations such as the American United Fruit Company and Standard Fruit and Shipping developed a monopoly over fruit production and export on the island (Holt 1992:316-40). Joining these landless peasants in the wage labor pool and in growing Kingston in the 1920s and 1930s were thousands of West Indian migrants returning from Central America and other Caribbean islands, which had for decades willingly absorbed Jamaica’s labor surplus but began to close their doors; from 1930-1934 some 30,000 emigrants were repatriated to Jamaica (Bolland 2001:301). According to demographer G.W. Roberts, this return migration coupled with declining mortality rates help explain popu-

9. The Legislative Council consisted of the governor (appointed by the British government) as president, the brigadier of the British regiment stationed in Jamaica, five officials, ten persons nominated by the governor (who were expected to support the governor or resign) and fourteen elected members (Hart 1999:3).
lation growth on the island from 1921 to 1943 (a period in which average fertility rates were actually declining) particularly in the city of Kingston, which grew from a population of 63,700 in 1921 to 110,100 in 1943 (Roberts 1957:42-58). At the same time, the fruit industry was facing hardship due to crop destruction by hurricanes, banana disease in the 1930s, and the collapse of the American fruit market in 1935 (Holt 1992:358). Combined with the effects of the worldwide depression in Jamaica, these factors contributed to a massive unemployment problem and volatile economic situation, as work became difficult to find and laborers were forced to settle for “starvation wages” (Hart 1989:31).

This situation enhanced discontent and social tension, but also fed the growth of a series of organizations amongst all classes aimed at achieving political, economic, and social change, many of which would play prominent roles in the birth control debate. This included Citizens Associations formed across the island in the 1930s, the Jamaican Workers’ and Tradesmen’s Union (1936), and the short-lived Jamaica National League (1934-1936), which focused variably on monitoring the activities of local government branches and agitating for constitutional reform, land settlement, housing schemes, and worker’s rights. Jamaica Welfare Limited (JWL), formed in 1937 with prominent barrister Norman Washington Manley at its head, also worked for “social, economic and cultural development of the peasants and small farmers of the island” (Bryan 1990:55) through cooperative agriculture and encouraging economic reform. Local branches of Marcus Garvey’s working-class-based Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) addressed the reality of racial inequality, combining a black nationalist message with economic aid to increase black Jamaican self-sufficiency. Jamaicans also began to organize nationalist groups such as the Harlem-based Jamaica Progressive League (JPL), which brought its commitment to Jamaican self-government to the island in December 1937. That same year saw the beginning of publication of the progressive, nationalist newspaper Public Opinion, whose founders included members of a growing group of Jamaican Marxists (Bolland 2001:302-8).

Many nondenominational charitable organizations aimed at lessening the suffering of the working classes were also formed in the early twentieth century, often focusing specifically on issues of child welfare and the need for social and moral reform to accompany economic aid. Elite and middle-class women figured heavily in these types of institutions, which, as scholar Veronica Gregg (2005:48) has argued, provided a means for these women to work outside the home by “exploiting the patriarchal linkage of the so-called natural attributes of womanhood – virtue, patience, selflessness, nurturance – to a predisposition for social work.” This included the Child Saving League, the Women’s League, and the Save the Children Fund, all created in the first three decades of the twentieth century and focused on providing meals and
medical care for poor women and children, battling child prostitution, and providing employment for women in sewing, upholstery, and basket making (Bryan 1990:37-43). Although, as historian Rhoda Reddock (1994:181) has pointed out, most “tended more towards charity than solidarity” with working-class women, some of these organizations became increasingly activist, nationalist, and feminist in the 1930s. The Women’s Liberal Club, for example, formed in 1936 by three black women social workers, outlined its mandate to

foster and develop a national spirit among the women of Jamaica; to encourage women to take an active and intelligent interest in local and world events ... to study politics, economics, government particularly, to study Negro History ... to study social and economic conditions, to advance the status of Jamaican women, socially and politically. (Bryan 1990:40-41)

The women of these organizations, particularly those in the Women’s Liberal Club, would become some of the most outspoken advocates of birth control.

Even before the labor rebellion a handful of Jamaican social reformers showed interest in spreading birth control to the general population. Although there is no clear data on usage at the time, all who wrote in the Gleaner in the 1920s and 1930s accepted as fact that “artificial birth control” (most likely referring to the diaphragm and/or jellies, foaming tablets, condoms, and douching units) had been in use by middle- and upper-class Jamaicans for decades but was largely out of reach of the working classes.10 The idea that distributing artificial birth control more widely might help solve some of Jamaica’s social and economic problems was discussed briefly by a union of teachers in Clarendon as early as 192511 and by the Women’s Liberal Club in 1937.12 J.L. Varma, the Indian doctor interviewed by Webster in July 1938, also held a talk on birth control and sex education in April 1938,13 after returning from a trip to England where he visited the International Birth Control Centre and the International Birth Control Association.14

10. Although in the 1938-39 debate artificial birth control was usually referred to vaguely as “mechanical apparatus,” “appliances,” and “chemicals,” advertisements for diaphragms and jellies, available through mail-in orders or at local pharmacies, appeared sporadically in the Gleaner in the late 1930s. A reference to “rubber goods” also suggests the existence of condoms. A study by Judith Blake (1961) confirmed that in the 1950s, interviewees were aware of these as well as douching and foam tablets, although few working class/rural participants had access to them.
Daily Gleaner editor, novelist, and social commentator Herbert George de Lisser had also begun to make birth control a topic of his popular editorial column, particularly after noticing some “alarming” trends in the 1921 island census:

Those given as “white” were one thousand less than in the previous census; those given as “coloured” were fully ten thousand less. Those included in the category of “black” had gone forward; but amongst the black population of the islands there are many classes, and it is highly probable that the higher classes of the undiluted people of African descent control their birthrate to a certain extent. This too is in accordance with what has been observed in other countries. The lower classes hardly practice birth control, the higher classes do. Will this lead in Jamaica to the submerging of the latter? The higher classes do represent a superior intelligence as well as a better position: this is quite irrespective of any question of color. And it would be disastrous if the less intelligent, the less energetic, and the less progressive sections of the people were to swarm the limits of their ability, while the others steadily diminished.15

In other areas of the world, de Lisser noted, steps were being taken to deal with such “problems” through birth control and sterilization. He remained ambivalent about whether birth control was right for Jamaica or not, however, and seemed reluctant to open up his paper to the controversial topic; as he wrote on January 29, 1938: “woe unto the paper that advocated birth control. Its Catholic correspondents could not tolerate that; and many who are not Catholics would certainly object to it.”16 Indeed fewer than two articles per month on the topic were featured in the paper before June 1938, few of which took a definite stance on the subject.

Only a few months later the Daily Gleaner would become an essential medium for the expression of both a fervent birth control campaign and its opposition, publishing on average 22 articles/letters per month on the topic from June 1938 to March 1939. But between January and June the political sit-

15. De Lisser, “Editorial,” Daily Gleaner, November 4, 1929, p. 12. According to Roberts’s data (1957:65), from the 1911 to 1921 censuses the black population had increased by around 30,000 from 77 to 78.1 percent of the population, while the colored population declined by around 10,000 from 19.6 percent to 18.3 percent of the population, and the white declined by 1000 from 1.9 percent to 1.7 percent of the population. However, as Roberts points out, these numbers are affected not only by fertility rates or who “practices birth control,” but also by immigration, emigration, and mortality rates; in fact, average birth rates in Jamaica had been declining since the early 1900s.
The 1938 labor rebellion and the debate over birth control

The 1938 labor rebellion and its aftermath

On April 28, 1938, unrest broke out on the Frome estate in the parish of Westmoreland. Employees of the West Indies Sugar Company, frustrated with long waits at the pay office and the series of deductions taken from their checks, began throwing rocks at the pay clerk, who fired a shot into the air in response. Within a few days the laborers had called a strike, leading to a violent confrontation with police that left four dead and fourteen injured. On May 23, strikes and riots erupted in Kingston, which was brought “to a standstill as mobs surged through its streets halting streetcars, overturning cars and garbage cans, and firing shops” (Holt 1992:386). Main streets were blocked off by police barricades and cluttered with “debris of all sorts” and police, strikers, and bystanders met in violent clashes (Hart 1989:51). The unrest intensified with the imprisonment of labor activists Alexander Bustamante and St. William Grant in late May, and by June 1 it had spread to nearly every parish on the island. Labor mediation by Bustamante and his cousin Norman Manley, combined with the British government’s commitment on June 5 to a “New Deal” policy of economic reform, helped bring the island under some semblance of control. Sporadic outbreaks, however, continued over the course of the next year.

Although labor unrest had been mounting across the British Caribbean, and within the island of Jamaica, the scale and violence of the summer of 1938 took most middle- and upper-class Jamaicans by surprise (Bolland 2001:311). “The main reaction,” according to Ken Post (1978:308), “was to fall back upon the customary ideological position, and thus to emphasize repression and control.” This reaction was dominated by fear of the black masses by those who saw their property destroyed and businesses threatened as employees went on strike. These middle- and upper-class Jamaicans rejected demands of the strikers, seeing the rebellion as an irrational upsurge by excitable “African savages” who had been misled by criminals or driven by greed, and thus should be answered by the imposition of police order and other methods of social control. However, Post (1978:316) also identifies “a minority voice [which] spoke out for amelioration as an alternative way of dealing with worker and peasant protest.” This included not only labor leader Bustamante, who began organizing laborers into the new Bustamante Industrial Trade Union (BITU) before the rebellion sizzled out, but also the many middle- and upper-class lawyers, philanthropists, and social work-
ers involved in the organizations discussed earlier. These men and women formed committees to investigate the rebellion and drew attention to the problems of the working classes in public hearings before the West Indies Royal Commission, sent from Great Britain to investigate the upsurge of rebellion across the British Caribbean.17

This sympathy for the poor was also emphasized by nationalist groups who saw the aftermath of the rebellion as an opportunity to challenge colonial rule and begin the reconstruction of a “new” Jamaica, a Jamaica in which, as envisioned by Public Opinion, workers and the middle classes allied together to develop “a truly national policy.”18 In advocating a cross-class alliance against the colonial government, these groups were careful to heed New York JPL member Jaime O’Meally’s warning to “avoid race issues.”19 This was taken up by Jamaica’s first nationalist political party, the People’s National Party (PNP), formed on September 18, 1938 with JWL founder Norman Manley at its head. At a speech before the Ward Theatre in Kingston that day, with labor leader Bustamante at his side, Manley announced the PNP’s commitment to universal suffrage and stressed the importance of alliance between the middle classes and

[the] common mass in this country, whose interest must predominate above and beyond all other classes, because no man is democratic, no man is a sincere and honest democrat who does not accept the elementary principle that the object of civilization is to raise the standard of living and security of the masses of the people. (Post 1978:365-67)

Manley also called on Jamaicans to begin working towards eventual self-government; within a few months sixteen branches of the PNP had been set up across the island (Post 1978:365-67).

All of this was encouraged by a general upsurge in activity and debate following the labor rebellion. As Gregg (2005:49) argues, across the British Caribbean

the aftermath of the 1935-38 uprisings, a period marked by social change, intense intellectual and political debate, and a sharpened focus, made available (temporarily) social and discursive spaces hitherto defined as unspeakable or nonexistent.

17. The Royal Commission was stationed in Jamaica from November to December 1938. For a discussion of the purpose and procedure of the commission, see Hart (1998:133-34) and Bolland (2001:383-84).
These spaces allowed not only for the rise of the organized labor movement and an open discussion of the problems of the masses, but also for articulations of other reform projects. This included a boost to the Jamaican feminist movement, as women organized to critique gender inequalities in judicial, educational, and political systems at the first-ever Women’s Conference held on February 20-22, 1939, and it saw the election of the first female politician, Mrs. Mary Morris-Knibb, to the Kingston-St. Andrew Corporation Council in March 1939.20

In this atmosphere mixed with fear of the lower classes and recognition of their real problems, frustration with colonial rule, and enthusiasm for the possibility of building a better Jamaica, the topic of birth control would be projected onto the public stage. The arguments debaters made would respond to and embody all of these tendencies, but the division between those who saw themselves as superior to and sought to control the lower classes and those who had sympathy for and sought to ally with them appears less clear in the context of the birth control debate. Here, dreams of social unity and progress sat alongside contempt for and fear of the dangerous potential of “the common mass,” and the upper classes saw themselves divided by their understandings of what it meant to be a moral, responsible, and nationalist Jamaican.

“THERE IS ONLY ONE ANSWER”:
BIRTH CONTROL, ECONOMY, AND SEXUALITY

Those who publicized their support for birth control following the labor rebellion included a diverse group of black, “colored,” and white, middle- and upper-class, men and women occupying a variety of occupations and positions on the political spectrum. Most shared, however, a history of involvement with the various charitable and activist organizations that had made the fate of Jamaica their focus in the preceding decades and in particular after the labor rebellion. As well, they shared a passionate faith that spreading birth control to the working classes would help solve what they defined as Jamaica’s most important problems, be it overpopulation, lack of land, the desperate situation of poor women, and, most often, the poverty and criminality they associated with high rates of illegitimacy on the island.

Prominent among these advocates were a number of physicians who were also active in one or more philanthropic and nationalist organizations. Dr. Varma, for example, was a member of JWl, represented the Jamaica Progressive League (JPL) before the Royal Commission, and was known as

a “writer and lecturer on Social and Political matters” with “personal experience of India’s fight for independence” (Thoywell-Henry 1940:185-86).\(^{21}\) Dr. McCulloch, who spent several years researching health and nutrition in Africa, was also a director of JWL and collaborated with Varma and others in developing a blueprint for rural reconstruction following the labor rebellion, a report that harshly criticized colonial policy and advocated cooperative landownership for Jamaican peasantry (Post 1978:368). Both doctors wrote a number of letters to the *Gleaner* advocating birth control; Varma also held several well-attended lectures on the topic, and McCulloch wrote a pamphlet entitled “Parenthood by Choice and Not by Chance,” published by JWL in December 1938.\(^{22}\)

Members of JWL also collaborated with Amy Beckford Bailey, a well-respected teacher, secretary, and the cofounder of the Save the Children Fund, and vice-president of the Women’s Liberal Club, in organizing a three-month islandwide lecture tour by British feminist and birth control advocate Edith How-Martyn from January until March 1939.\(^{23}\) Bailey, who wrote a number of articles for the nationalist *Public Opinion* as well, was a fervent critic of gender inequalities and also spoke out about the reality of racial inequality on the island. Judith DeCordova, a prominent white charity worker who had previously clashed with Bailey on the issue of racism on the island, was also an outspoken advocate of birth control.\(^{24}\) Joining these women was a large group of female social workers, nurses, and teachers who integrated calls for increased distribution of birth control into their program for social, political, and economic reform announced at the first Women’s Conference in February 1939 after an impassioned speech by economist, social worker, and nurse May Farquharson on the topic of illegitimacy. These women also wrote letters to the *Gleaner* and spoke on the matter before the Royal Commission; as Veronica Gregg (2005:50) has pointed out, these activities were important

---

21. Varma, who regularly returned to India, also had contact with the birth control movement there, which was already in full swing by the 1930s (see Ahluwalia 2008 for the history of birth control in India).
22. “Parenthood by Choice and Not by Chance,” Institute of Jamaica, West India Reference Library. Hereafter referred to as “Pamphlet 1938.”
23. During the 1930s, How-Martyn had joined with other British and American birth control advocates (including Margaret Sanger) in promoting the cause of birth control abroad, particularly in India (see Ahluwalia 2008:26)
24. Judith de Cordova, in responding to accusations by politician Mary Morris Knibb that her Child Welfare Association did not allow black women to participate, claimed that Knibb was merely trying to create “what has never existed in the country – a Color Question,” and argued that, with a few exceptions, she had experienced “nothing but indifference from the better offs among the black race, for their poorer brethren” (Gregg 2005:160).
ways in which women of this generation carved out a space in the growing political movement.

The actions of birth controllers were also publicly encouraged by prominent Jamaicans including author and poet J.E. Clare McFarlane, planter-politician G.R. Sharp, barrister E.E.A. Campbell, and former member of the Jamaica National League and “perennial Press contributor” (Carnegie 1973:107) Jas H. Blackwood, as well as a host of anonymous *Daily Gleaner* readers who wrote in support of the cause. They also had as an ally one of the rising stars of the island, barrister and politician Norman Manley who would go on to be recognized as one of Jamaica’s five “national heroes” for his role in achieving independence for Jamaica in 1962; by 1938, he was already head of JWL and the leftist PNP. In the months after the rebellion, Manley utilized his public presence to promote the birth control cause, both through his work with JWL and in his widely attended and publicized testimony before the Royal Commission.25

Also crucial to the spread of the movement was the support and publicity the campaign gained through the *Daily Gleaner* under the editorship of Herbert George de Lisser. The *Gleaner’s* long-standing reputation as a “respectable” paper ensured that it became a powerful political force, with the ability to fuel public debates, particularly under de Lisser’s reign (Carnegie 1973:162). Described alternately as a deeply conservative racist who desired to contain women of all classes and as a truly avant-garde nationalist who championed lower-class Jamaican culture, de Lisser had a particular power to influence public opinion through his editorials and satirical “Random Jottings” column; as scholar James Carnegie (1973:172) has remarked: “It was [de Lisser’s] words that educated Jamaicans drank in every morning.”26 Although de Lisser provided plenty of space in the newspaper for opposition and encouraged everyone to write to the paper because “in a country like Jamaica ... we like to hear both sides of a question,”27 by August 1938 he had clearly stated that he had “no objection whatever to the people in general in the island being told or taught about birth control.”28 The newspaper’s journalists also propelled the birth control debate forward by interviewing advocates and the opposition, writing editorials, and making space on their

25. When asked by a commissioner whether or not he advocated birth control, Manley responded: “Definitely, yes, and I propose to take practical steps about it.” “Mr. Manley on Degeneracy and Gross Corruption of Our Quasi-Democratic Institution,” *Daily Gleaner*, November 15, 1938, pp. 16-17.
26. For the first opinion, see Gregg (2005:72); for a more positive assessment see Baxter (1970:82-83). For recognition of both sides of his personality, see Austin-Broos (1997:28) and Carnegie (1973:173-76).
own pages for pro- and anti-birth control opinions. This included not only Aimee Webster, but also Daily Gleaner sports editor and political columnist Gordon St. Clair Scotter, “Men’s World: A Weekly Page for Men” editor Ian Barry-Moore, and particularly Esther Chapman, a British permanent resident who edited the “Saturday Women’s Page,” where she published only pro-birth control articles and letters.

Yet birth control undoubtedly gained support and public attention during this period not only because of who the advocates were, but also because of the particular argument they made. In the context of a society struggling to deal with the unemployment, poverty, and unrest on the island brought to the forefront by the recent labor rebellion, birth controllers provided a very straightforward line of reasoning: overpopulation was Jamaica’s biggest problem, and birth control was the solution. As Gordon Scotter wrote in July of 1938:

Admirable as are the Land Settlement Scheme; proposals for developing minor industries here; large programmes of work by the P.W.D., to go on; these things can never be a complete solution of Jamaica’s problems; they are indeed little more than patches on her weather worn economic garments, when what is needed is a whole new suit of clothes.

Like practically every other country in the world today Jamaica is suffering from an ever increasing population and a never increasing amount of land to put them on – the people of Jamaica grow, but the land itself doesn’t... there is only one answer as far as the future is concerned; population itself must be limited; and there is only one way of doing that, by Birth Control.29

Since birth control was something that the middle and upper classes apparently had well in hand and there was no shortage of organizations and social workers enthusiastic about taking on this task, this solution likely seemed manageable at the time; at least, more manageable than larger-scale economic and political reform. Although many birth control advocates also argued for structural changes before the Royal Commission or in committee reports, in the context of the birth control debate they consistently stressed that none of these changes could be successful if overpopulation was not tackled first. As McCulloch stated simply: if the population continued to grow, “instead of any improved standard of living for the people, in spite of the proposed new Land Settlement Scheme, standards will be lower than they are now.”30

Although advocates usually claimed to have “discovered” this overpopulation problem during their travels through villages and Kingston streets

where they saw “so many children”\textsuperscript{31} or because of the existence of high rates of unemployment, they were also influenced by worldwide concerns over population growth. This is unsurprising, as most of the advocates had been educated in Great Britain and, as mentioned earlier, the \textit{Gleaner} had been publicizing such debates since the 1920s. As a result, birth controllers and their supporters consistently referred to overpopulation as a global phenomenon, as “the world’s perpetual problem”\textsuperscript{32} which was currently manifesting itself in Jamaica. Some advocates also utilized globally popular neo-Malthusian arguments that assumed a direct correlation between land, population, and economic prosperity.\textsuperscript{33} In his introduction to Edith How-Martyn’s lecture at the Ward Theatre, for example, Norman Manley stressed the “fact” that Jamaica was a country with 1.25 million people (an estimate at best, considering there had not been a census since 1921) on only 2 million acres of cultivable lands, of which “at least 75 percent” was not really worth cultivating; this worked out to little more than one acre per man, which clearly did not fit with the estimates of American economists that each person needed two and a half acres of land to lead a comfortable life.\textsuperscript{34}

The arguments of birth controllers in Jamaica also took on features of the various “eugenics” movements that spread across Europe and the Americas during the 1920s and 1930s. These movements advocated policies of “better breeding,” in which those deemed “eugenic” (usually white, upper-class citizens of European and North American countries) were encouraged to propagate while the “dysgenic” (lower class, mentally ill, and/or members of “inferior” races) were discouraged, either through distribution of birth control or direct sterilization.\textsuperscript{35} Some birth control advocates such as Varma had actually attended eugenics conferences in Great Britain and elsewhere,\textsuperscript{36} and these movements were also covered by the \textit{Gleaner}. Although most advocates, in keeping with official policy, avoided explicit arguments about racial

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{33} According to Malthus’s 1789 \textit{Essay on Population}, because population grows at an exponential rate while agricultural resources increase at a linear rate, if it is not restrained this will lead to wide-scale poverty, starvation, and unemployment (though he advocated moral restraint, rather than birth control). For the revival of Malthusian logic and its use as a justification for birth control in England in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Soloway (1982:48-69); in India, see Ahluwalia (2008:23-53); in Puerto Rico, see Briggs (2002:81-108).
\textsuperscript{35} For descriptions of eugenics movements in Latin America, see Stepan (1991); for the United States, see Stern (2005); for England, see Soloway (1982).
\end{flushright}
degeneration when arguing for birth control in public arenas and denied any plans for forced sterilization (which, according to one \textit{Gleaner} reader would be “too much like Germany” and thus “would never be tolerated under British Rule”\textsuperscript{37} they frequently utilized the language of “better breeding.” Advocates reiterated the danger created by the overbreeding of “the wrong class”\textsuperscript{38} of “the ignorant, the immature, the under-nourished, the criminal, the diseased and the feeble-minded” rather than “the educated, cultured and well-nourished classes.”\textsuperscript{39} As May Farquharson warned those in attendance at the Women’s Conference, excessive breeding by those who were not “fit” could only lead to “depreciation in the condition of their people.”\textsuperscript{40}

But if concerns about overpopulation and overbreeding of the lower classes were recognized as worldwide problems, advocates also claimed that these issues took on a particular urgency in Jamaica because of the high rates of illegitimacy on the island. For birth controllers, the production of children outside of legal marriage was especially dangerous, for, as de Lisser argued, these children “are apt in time of trouble to behave with the same irresponsibility as brought them into being.”\textsuperscript{41} Varma told Webster that the illegitimate female child was “more liable to turn a prostitute than her sister who has been born in wedlock,”\textsuperscript{42} and others agreed that the illegitimate male child usually ended up swelling the ranks of the unemployed and riotous.\textsuperscript{43} When Esther Chapman held a competition for letters addressing “Birth Control and Illegitimacy” on her “Saturday Woman’s Page” in July 1938, for example, one of the winning submissions pointed out that most birth control advocates seemed to believe that “there would not have been any rioters or strikers, if Jamaica had not produced so many illegitimate children, in order to form that vast throng that caused so much trouble here about a month ago.”\textsuperscript{44} Indeed, this connection was implicitly or explicitly made by many writing to the \textit{Gleaner} in support of birth control.

By pointing to high rates of illegitimate reproduction, middle-class and elite Jamaicans provided a simple and solvable explanation for the labor

\textsuperscript{40} “Women Deal with Big Problems,” \textit{Daily Gleaner}, February 28, 1939, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{42} J.L. Varma, quoted in “Toc H Branch Hears Talk on Sex Education,” \textit{Daily Gleaner}, April 28, 1938, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{44} Thinker, “Letter,” \textit{Daily Gleaner}, July 16, 1938, p. 36.
The 1938 Labor Rebellion and the Debate over Birth Control

rebellion; it was also an explanation which placed the blame for the unemployment and poverty of the working classes primarily in their own sexual and familial practices. In making these claims, middle- and upper-class birth control advocates exposed some of the deep reservations and stereotypes they held regarding the “common mass” of people they sought to ally with in building Jamaica’s future. For birth controllers, the high levels of illegitimacy symbolized “rampant” sexual promiscuity among these classes, which was explained as being a “hang-over of slavery,” a response to not having “the means of recreation,” a result of limited contact with the “enlightened” classes, or even, in a rare moment of explicit reference to color, as a racial trait: according to Dr. Varma, it was “a psychological fact that a negro is a more highly sexed individual than his Caucasian brother.”

The children of such immoral and irresponsible parents were destined to become prostitutes, criminals, and rioters because “the lower classes of Jamaica just cannot realise the responsibilities and obligations of parenthood: they will not reach that stage of mental evolution for decades to come.” These arguments relied on a highly stereotyped image of the “irresponsible Jamaican father” who “is a most unreliable person where his offspring is concerned,” and the “ignorant Jamaican mother” who was like the old woman “who lived in a shoe who had so many children because she didn’t know what to do.”

As advocates doubted the potential of the Jamaican father to reform his ways, birth control could at least reduce the number of children produced and the suffering on the side of the woman.

45. “An Economic Idiot,” in a letter to the editor, argued that slave women would breed indiscriminately in order to gain the favor of the master, Daily Gleaner, July 22, 1937, p. 10.


47. Violet Allwood, in an interview with Webster, “What’s Wrong with Village Life?,” Daily Gleaner, July 5, 1938, p. 16.


52. Pamphlet 1938.
But if they displayed sympathy toward the troubles of Jamaican lower-class women, birth control advocates (including those who would be considered among the growing group of “feminist” women on the island) stressed more often the threat these women’s uncontrolled reproduction held to the new nation they were planning to build in the aftermath of the rebellion. More than just the cause of the labor rebellion, “improper” Jamaican families became, in the eyes of advocates, the key problem holding Jamaica back from ever truly progressing. Working-class promiscuity was, according to de Lisser, “seriously undermining our social fabric,” while others described illegitimacy as one of the “twin scourges of this island” (along with venereal disease) and as “Jamaica’s most vital problem” which could fuel “discontents leading to bloody wars, or to what is known in these days as communism.” For those interested in working towards social reform, raising the standard of living and achieving self-government after the labor rebellion, this spelled disaster as the family was the “basis of social organisation” of the nation. As May Farquharson proclaimed, speaking on the topic of illegitimacy at the Women’s Conference: “If the babies keep on coming at the rate they are coming at this very moment, we will have to give up all idea of these things that we want to see in Jamaica.” Indeed, without birth control, argued Judith de Cordova, Jamaica was “doomed.”

If the working classes’ sexuality and reproduction was holding the island back, middle-class and elite doctors and social workers were more than willing to assume responsibility for setting Jamaica on the right path, and they were profoundly enthusiastic about their ability to do so. Based on the assumption that working-class parents had children solely because they were “ignorant” of birth control methods, most advocates believed that providing wider access to birth control would be enough to entice them to reduce their birth rates, and thus, the reproduction of illegitimate children. To that effect, Dr. Varma claimed to have access to a method (likely a diaphragm) which was successful “99 percent of the time,” cost less than eight shillings per annum, and could be easily distributed at birth control clinics, which could also offer biannual examinations of the “apparatus.” McCulloch’s earlier mentioned pamphlet similarly stressed the authority of doctors to deal

60. Interview with Webster, “It Does Interest You – Birth Control,” *Daily Gleaner*, July 14, 1938, p. 16.
with issues of reproduction. Female social workers and teachers also spoke before the Women’s Conference and on the pages of the *Gleaner*, touting their particular awareness of the needs of poor families and stressing the important role social workers could play in the campaign.\(^{61}\) In response, a number of *Gleaner* readers suggested these women should set up a local “Mother’s Bureau” to teach the responsibilities of motherhood and distribute birth control\(^{62}\) and argued that all clinics should operate under close supervision by doctors to ensure birth control methods were used properly.\(^{63}\)

Advocates also appeared particularly confident that they could implement this program without the support of a British colonial government increasingly criticized as insufficient in the aftermath of the rebellion. Varma assured his supporters that the program, at least at first, would have to be enacted primarily by wealthy and willing Jamaicans,\(^{64}\) and the delegation from the Women’s Conference likewise stressed that the imposition of proper “family life” would rest largely on the activity of social workers, asking only that the government encourage the medical officers of the government and parochial boards to “include Birth control advice in their Services for mothers.”\(^{65}\) As *Gleaner* editor de Lisser insisted, if birth control would be widely advocated in Jamaica, it would not be because of any recommendation by the Royal Commission, but because of our own appreciation of our circumstances; and the necessary advice will be given, if not by our Government, at any rate by private individuals which is indeed already, to a certain extent, being done ... we ourselves will have to attend to our population problem and to our wages question; these are matters, we repeat, with which only Jamaica herself can deal.\(^{66}\)

As McCulloch insisted, those targeted by birth control propaganda were “our people,” who would be best attended to by JWL, an organization no one


\(^{64}\) Interview with Webster, “It Does Interest You – Birth Control,” *Daily Gleaner*, July 14, 1938, p. 16.


could deny was “a friend of the people.” By linking reproduction to the fate of the island and proposing birth control as the only truly adequate response, birth controllers thus managed to place themselves at the core of a Jamaican future based on the reform of working-class sexual and family practices by morally and technologically enlightened doctors and social workers.

**“The Word Jamaican Die With Them”: Opposition to Birth Control**

This vision of what Jamaica should look like after the rebellion, who would build it, and how, however, was not shared by all of those who read and contributed to the *Daily Gleaner*. By invoking the issue of illegitimacy and placing themselves as the authorities on the issue, in particular, birth controllers had stumbled into a moral arena that had largely been the domain of the Christian churches and missionary groups. Although these groups had seen some of their official influence over Jamaican politics decline over the past decades, they proved unprepared to relinquish their authority over morality on the island and quickly became the loudest critics of the birth control movement. Respected Roman Catholic clergyman Father Joseph Krim came out strongly against the birth controllers in highly publicized sermons as well as in a four-part, full-page series of articles written for the *Daily Gleaner*, and the leaders of the nine major Christian denominations announced their “almost universal” opposition to birth control before the Royal Commission in November 1938.

Church and religious leaders rooted their criticism of birth control and its advocates biblically, claiming it went directly against God’s Genesis 1:28 command to “go forth and multiply and replenish the Earth.” But birth control advocates also likely enhanced Christianity’s reaction by suggesting, for example, that “religion has failed to find a solution to the lure of sex among

68. This included the disestablishment of the official Church of England in 1870; churches also lost their traditional monopoly over school administration at the turn of the century, and they faced declining funds as they lost links with international chapters (Moore & Johnson 2004).
unmarried people.”70 These accusations tapped into the insecurities of many religious leaders, who were unable to deny that their Christianizing mission thus far had largely failed to control Jamaican working-class sexuality. Rev. Walter Brown of the Church of England admitted to the Royal Commission that Jamaica had “definitely” been “going backwards” in terms of increased promiscuity, despite the advent of “civilization.”71 Bishop Hardie, the head of the Church of England in 1939, also relented that they had “no right to speak except in shame, for in spite of the work of the Churches of Jamaica, the percentage of illegitimate births has hardly fallen at all.”72 Unlike the birth controllers, however, few saw this as proof that religious leaders were no longer a relevant source of moral authority on the island or that Christian doctrine had expired as a possible guide for people’s lives. Krim criticized those who “declared self-control and chastity impossible,” accusing them of promoting a sort of “MORAL DEFEATISM” that would lead to “mortal anarchy.”73 A. Wesley Knott of the Baptist Union wrote:

That our people cannot be called “nice” is a bitter pill to swallow, but I am convinced that they are not beyond the point of redemption, provided a real helping hand is given them – larger opportunity, backed up by honest and fair means of attaining a higher ideal.74

Or, as the anonymous “Catholic Layman” put it: “The Church has not failed. Her ideas have not been tried and found wanting. They have been found difficult.”75

This clerical response to the birth control campaign also included a larger attack on the “New Morality” being promoted by upper- and middle-class Jamaicans which, according to Rev. E.L. Maxwell of the Church of England, had been gradually replacing Christianity since the Great War.76 Krim suggested that the single purpose of his Gleaner series was to “pass judgment on the newer morality before the system is foisted on a heedless people,” and he described as “pseudo-morality” any notion that the material benefits of birth

control made it morally acceptable.\textsuperscript{77} Although this challenge included a critique of doctors who were seen as promoting birth control in order to acquire more money from patients,\textsuperscript{78} middle-class and elite women took most of the heat for promoting and practicing this dangerous “New Morality.” Even though female birth controllers were usually more concerned with protecting the nation from illegitimate children than “liberating” working-class women, religious leaders used the opportunity to critique middle-class women’s own use of birth control and the women’s movement in general. As Krim pronounced in the \textit{Gleaner}:

The entire Birth Prevention movement is part of the scheme for emancipating womanhood — from what? First from a husband, now from children. No wonder the movement, originating in minds that had lost hold of Christianity, ends in broken homes, and the loss of God himself?\textsuperscript{79}

Father Walter J. Ballou likewise painted a grim picture of “the willfully barren wife” who was a “social failure, a shirker, a slacker, a betrayer of home and of country.”\textsuperscript{80} The sexual and family practices of middle- and upper-class Jamaicans were thus portrayed as being as threatening to the future of a “new Jamaica” as those of the working classes; in this context, only the truly morally advanced religious leaders could direct Jamaica towards its proper path.

If much of the religious-based opposition was focused on the issue of morality, however, religious leaders were also among Jamaicans who used the birth control debate as an opportunity to critique the unequal economic system on the island and the collaboration of middle- and upper-class Jamaicans in colonial economic and political repression. They challenged the legitimacy of claims that the island was “overpopulated”\textsuperscript{81} arguing instead that the root of Jamaica’s poverty problem was not too many children, but poor housing, low wages, lack of native industries, and the unequal distribution of land. Addressing these problems through economic reform rather

\textsuperscript{81} Walter J. Ballou referred to overpopulation as “a hobgoblin without foundation in fact: it is unreasonable and unscientific” and claimed Jamaica could support three times its current population, “So-Called Birth Control – A Social Menace,” \textit{Daily Gleaner}, January 24, 1939, p. 24. Rev. J.J. Dillon pointed out that there were still 2,848,160 acres of mostly undeveloped land with a population of only 1,250,000, thus fears of overpopulation were essentially groundless, “Letter,” \textit{Daily Gleaner}, February 11, 1939, p. 12.
than through birth control propaganda would either relieve the problem of illegitimacy, or at the very least prevent the poor from becoming morally corrupt as well. As Rev. Walter J. Ballou, SJ, wrote in an article for the journal *Catholic Opinion* (reprinted in the *Gleaner*):

> Poverty is an economic difficulty and must be met by an economic remedy, not by moral perversion. The place to remedy poverty is in the factory, not in the home, and the poor, God bless them, would be the first to say so.

At times, this criticism of the unequal economic system and those who benefited from it went so far that men such as Father Krim were accused of preaching “a virulent form of class war.”

Echoing these arguments were men such as J.A.G. Edwards, a prominent member of the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union, who also wrote a number of letters to the *Gleaner* criticizing middle-class birth control advocates. Edwards, whose organizational roots began with Garveyite organizations and the Citizens Associations, argued that birth control advocates blamed poverty and unemployment on overpopulation in order to “keep the bulk of the people in ignorance of the true cause of the conditions affecting them, with the hope of further achieving their selfish ends.” It was ironic, he thought, that it was the very descendents of slave owners, whose own immorality had encouraged the illegitimacy problem, who were now advocating birth control. Edwards argued that birth control was “against spiritual laws” as well as against the true principles of a strong and firm Government. Don’t forget that the strength of a nation lies firstly in its moral and spiritual relationship with the cause of its existence (Bible history supports this); secondly, in its manpower, as the practice of war reveals.

St. William Grant, a member of the UNIA and labor leader Bustamante’s right-hand man for a number of years, also held a meeting at Market Square where he denounced birth control, claiming it would decrease the manpower of laborers and was little more than a false cure-all used to deflect from the real problems at hand.

---

Jamaicans writing to the *Daily Gleaner* also used the topic of birth control to question the project and authority of the middle/upper-class nationalist movement represented by Manley, JWl, and the PNP. Sydney S. Foulkes of Black River announced his surprise to see “a man of his [Manley’s] calibre” promoting birth control when it was so obviously against Christian principles,87 and engineer Braham T. Judah, after Manley condemned those who went out and “spawn[ed] over all the street” in a lecture, exclaimed: “What language! And this man is attempting to create a National Spirit in Jamaica!!”88 Judah thought it was a pity that the PNP had “dragged into their politics a matter of faith and morals.”89 JWl was also accused of catering to “the modern whims of an esoteric few” through its promotion of birth control, when it was supposed to be “a Body which should act for the Welfare of the entire country.”90 Carl Preston, one of the few *Gleaner* readers to identify himself as a “poorer” Jamaican, criticized “those wealthy ones who are now favouring Birth Control,” and accused them of trying to destroy “the Jamaican nationality” rather than lead it toward independence; did birth controllers, he asked, want a situation in which, when the people die, “the word ‘Jamaican’ dies[ ] with them, thus leaving our dear little Island to the benefit of foreigners?”91

Indeed, JWl’s foreign backing provoked particular criticism from many of those opposed to their involvement in the birth control movement.92 According to the anonymous “Genesis,” JWl “may as well be called Foreign Fruit Corporation’s Welfare Unlimited,” because its American funding source created a situation where “we have the anomaly of financially powerful outsiders dictating a social policy which large social groups, headed by experienced and patriotic Jamaicans, have unequivocally condemned.”93 “Examiner” likewise stressed that the involvement of “soulless ... blind ... large alien corporations” seriously damaged the credibility of JWl to claim it was working for Jamaicans.94 For his part, Manley attempted to de-link JWl from these American backers by asserting before the Ward Theatre in January 1939 that “the fruit companies have not initiated this programme ...

92. JWl was funded by the UFC and Standard Fruit, who agreed to donate one cent to a local development organization for every nine bunches of Jamaican bananas exported from the island (Post 1978:89).
they have not got any control whatever over our activities,”95 and the PNP also printed an announcement in the Gleaner in late January asserting that “Birth Control Forms No Plank of [the] Party,” despite Manley’s involvement in the campaign.96

This did not, however, prevent the opposition from challenging the allegiances of birth controllers; rather, these only intensified with JWl’s support of British feminist Edith How-Martyn’s islandwide lecture tour. Numerous letters to the Gleaner questioned her role in the spread of birth control in Jamaica, asking whether hers was really the “kind of mentality that ought to have been imported to ‘enlighten’ (?) the people of this island.”97 Many responded in particular to a letter How-Martyn wrote to the Gleaner in which she argued that those insulting birth controllers were also insulting the British government (which she claimed supported birth control in England) and “as loyal subjects if for no other reason we should resent such imputations being cast on His Majesty’s Government.”98 As the anonymous “Old Timer” replied: “This English lecturer will not succeed in making a fetish of a British Government sanction to those of us who know the history of British Governments.”99 Others were offended by anti-Roman Catholic comments How-Martyn made at a lecture at the Ward Theatre in Kingston; Major J.J. Hallinan, Director of Medical Services in Jamaica, for example, explained his departure from the lecture by pointing out that, unlike in Mrs. How-Martyn’s Britain, “Jamaica prides itself upon the happy tolerance and cooperation that exists between all of its churches and creeds.”100 Perhaps, as one Josh B. Phillips wrote, How-Martyn should “leave the tropics to tropical people and the temperate zone to temperate people.”101

For their part, birth control advocates attempted to justify their support for Edith How-Martyn’s tour and reassert their own nationalism by stressing that she was a privately interested British citizen, rather than a member of the colonial bureaucracy, who had herself been imprisoned by that government during the suffrage movement in Britain. Described as an exceptional “tribute to white people,” she was praised at a dinner at the Esquire Restaurant on March 18, 1939, days before her departure, for being

the type of link they wanted with England and Jamaica. It was a link not so much connected with monthly pay cheques or the Colonial Office, but it was one of culture and Jamaica would always welcome her again (hear, hear).\footnote{102}

At the end of that same dinner, held both to bid How-Martyn farewell and to honor Councilor Mary Morris-Knibb for “her brilliant achievement in making history being the first woman to enter the political life of the island,” the birth controllers also demonstrated that they were prepared to move ahead with their vision regardless of the opposition. Edith How-Martyn closed her farewell speech by expressing her thanks to her supporters, dismissing those who opposed her, and also announcing the formation of the first-ever Jamaica Birth Control League.\footnote{103} Anyone seeking information was told to direct their enquiries to social worker Miss May Farquharson, who would go on to become the League’s Honorary Secretary and Treasurer. Joining her on the Board of Directors were prominent doctors McCulloch, Varma, Charles Levy, H. Robertson, and George P. Allen, as well as planter, politician, and JWL member Rudolph Burke, wealthy merchant, industrialist, and drug manufacturer Cecil B. Facey, and Aubrey Allwood.\footnote{104}

Although Edwards and others would continue to write letters to the \textit{Gleaner} opposing birth control following this announcement, in general the birth control debate, at least through the medium of the \textit{Gleaner}, died out temporarily; compared to the thirty-five articles published on the topic of birth control in March of 1939, none were published in April and only two in May.

CONCLUSION

Those in attendance at the Esquire Restaurant that day heard a number of enthusiastic speeches regarding the rapid advances Jamaicans had made towards building a new Jamaica in the aftermath of the labor rebellion. Councilor Mary Morris-Knibb gave an inspiring speech about Jamaicans taking steps to remedy their own situation and “save Jamaica” by “taking care of the children.” Wishing How-Martyn farewell, Amy Bailey remarked:

I want you to take away with you the picture of the representative body of middle class Jamaicans, who are proud of the fact that they are Jamaicans, who are all serving in one way or the other for the benefit of Jamaica.  

Honorable E.E.A. Campbell similarly remarked that it was “amazing how so many great things had happened in Jamaica during the last ten months” and declared that Jamaica “had made more progress in ten months than she had during the first century of emancipation.”

It is no coincidence that the announcement of the formation of the Birth Control League concluded such an event; after all, birth control had become an integral part of the program middle- and upper-class Jamaicans had launched following the labor rebellion. The many doctors, social workers, and other professionals had found in overpopulation a problem that they believed themselves more than equipped to deal with, even without the support of a government that was increasingly falling into disfavor. By stressing the importance of family and linking the need to control illegitimacy and working-class reproduction to the fate of the nation, these actors thus carved out an important role for themselves in the march towards independence.

The enthusiasm and ideals shared by this group of men and women would indeed be integral in guiding the island towards independence in 1962. But the birth control debate also reveals the lack of consensus surrounding this particular trajectory from its inception. Jamaicans from a variety of backgrounds, though less unified than the birth control advocates, had their own understandings of Jamaica’s problems and solutions that led them to question the authority and integrity of those taking command after the rebellion. Like the advocates, they recognized the importance of morality in the creation of Jamaica’s future, but defined that morality based on religion or a sense of social justice rather than “responsible” reproduction. If some advocated limiting families through self-control while others suggested large families might provide the manpower and nationalist base valuable to the island’s future, all agreed that the vision of birth control advocates and the organizations they were involved with was seriously flawed.

These conflicting views were perhaps less visible in the months after the rebellion if one looks only at the political sphere during this period, where nationalist Manley and labor leader Bustamante were working together to settle the labor rebellion and standing side by side at the opening session of the PNP. However, as labor historian Bolland (2001:324) points out, “their temporary coalition barely hid deeper divisions that were to emerge in the

following year and that subsequently split the labor and nationalist move-
ment in Jamaica.” According to Bolland (2001:333), by mid-1939 the link
between these two movements had begun to disintegrate, and the national-
ist movement led by Manley and the PNP lost its root in labor, a situation
which “remained a serious and persistent problem in Jamaica.” While dis-
agreements over the desirability of birth control in 1938 were not likely the
main cause of this split, they do reveal early challenges by religious and
labor leaders to the ideological and strategic plans of middle- and upper-class
professionals and nationalists.

The birth control debate also exposes the social and cultural distance
between these middle- and upper-class nationalists and the “common mass”
of the island, precisely at the moment when they were supposed to be uniting
as Jamaicans to develop a “truly national policy.” If nationalists believed that
the interests of the masses “must predominate over all others” (as Manley
claimed before the PNP), they also seemed deeply skeptical about the ability
of the working classes (stereotyped as ignorant and sexually/socially immoral)
to define interests and act in ways fit for the construction of a stable indepen-
dent nation. This nationalist agenda thus seemed to rely not only on support
for, but also control of, working-class needs and desires. Although birth con-
trol itself as an issue would fade out of the public eye temporarily, this per-
ceived need to reform working-class sexual behavior remained integral to the
middle-class Jamaican nationalist movement’s program of “self help through
moderate middle-class leadership and the transformation of (lower class)
people’s cultural practices, without substantial reform of the larger political
and economic context” (Thomas 2004:30). According to Thomas (2004:55),
this narrow focus on culture over socioeconomic inequalities helps explain
the “failure of anti-colonial nationalism to catalyze more egalitarian social
relations” on the island and has led to declining faith in middle-class leader-
ship over the past century, a situation which has weakened the government’s
ability to mobilize the population to address recent economic crisis.

Beyond the shores of the island, the vision of working-class “illeg-
itimate” sexuality brought forth by birth control advocates in late-1930s
Jamaica would also contribute to the construction of a growing regional
discourse on the “pathological” West Indian family. Promoted by the 1945
West Indies Royal Commission report (which called for “an organized cam-
paign against the social, moral and economic evils of promiscuity” [Reddock
1994:6]) and a 1946 study by Social Welfare Advisor Thomas Simey that
rooted the region’s problems in family “disorganization,” this discourse
would “set the agenda for discussion on the family for the next two decades”
(Chamberlain 2002:189) and shape the direction of the rising academic field
of Caribbean sociology (Barrow 1999:2-26). A series of studies on fertility
in Jamaica funded by the American-based Conservation Foundation (Blake
1961; Roberts 1957; Stycos & Back 1964) would also place Jamaica along-
side Puerto Rico and other Latin American nations as a “classic” example of “dangerous” fertility in tropical areas (Roberts 1957:vii), further enhancing the international panic over “overpopulation” cited by Jamaican birth control advocates in 1938. This scholarship would in turn be used to bolster both local and international calls for a government-led family planning program on the eve of independence in Jamaica.

The newly independent Jamaican government of 1962 would indeed identify the need for “the spread of information on and techniques for the spacing or limitation of families” as an integral part of their “Five-Year Plan,” and by 1968 a massive campaign funded by state and international aid agencies had been launched in this direction (Brody 1981:12). But the work of spreading birth control to the working classes had begun decades earlier under the auspices of the Jamaican Birth Control League, an organization that continued to lobby the government and influential personalities throughout the 1940s-1960s, while also boldly taking the lead in distributing birth control to the working classes. Within a month of its formation, the League was publishing regular ads in the Daily Gleaner calling on working-class women to write in for information on birth control or make an appointment at the new clinic set up in Kingston in August 1939. Over the next few years, League secretary May Farquharson would indeed respond to over five hundred letters from women interested in applying this new technology to address their own diverse array of problems and concerns, defined according to their own understandings of family, morality, and prosperity. Many of these women would also visit the clinic, as well as another set up in the late 1950s by Dr. Lenworth and his wife Beth Jacobs, where they would receive and use reproductive technologies; some of them would also become test groups in the scholarly studies of fertility already mentioned. How Jamaican women and their partners would experience this attention and efforts to reform their reproductive lives as the island was transformed from a colony to an independent nation, however, remains to be fully explored.

107. These connections were primarily drawn by men such as J. Mayone Stycos and Kurt Back, who also did extensive work in Puerto Rico and South America (see Briggs 2002:117-20).
REFERENCES


NICOLE BOURBONNAIS
Department of History
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburg PA 15260, U.S.A.
<nicbourbon@gmail.com>
LOMARSH ROOPNARINE

THE REPATRIATION, READJUSTMENT, AND SECOND-TERM MIGRATION OF EX-INDENTURED INDIAN LABORERS FROM BRITISH GUIANA AND TRINIDAD TO INDIA, 1838-1955

INTRODUCTION

For over three-quarters of a century (1838-1920), British, Danish, Dutch, and French governments transported an estimated 500,000 indentured Indian laborers from the Indian subcontinent to the Caribbean. The laborers were distributed over British Guiana (238,960), Trinidad (143,939), Suriname (43,404), Guadeloupe (42,236), Jamaica (37,027), Martinique (25,404), French Guiana (8,500), Grenada (3,200), Belize (3,000), St. Vincent (2,472), St. Lucia (2,300), St. Kitts (361), Nevis (342), and St. Croix (325) (Roopnarine 2006a:6). The arrival of indentured laborers corresponded with a labor shortage, arising from the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth-century Caribbean and disjunctive colonial capitalist development in India. The indentured laborers were drawn principally from north and south India and varied in age, gender, religion, and language. The largest group was that of single young males between the ages of twenty and thirty, while families, children, and single women made up the minority. The female-male ratio of Indian migrants was as low as 3 to 100 but climbed gradually to 40 to 100 towards the end of the indentured service. The religious composition of the migrant group mirrored the religious distribution in India: 84 percent were Hindus while 16 percent were Muslims and other religions (Mohapatra 1995:231). The indentured laborers were recruited from principally the middle and lower castes. They spoke a variety of languages such as Bengali, Punjabi, Hindu, Urdu, Oriya, Nepali, Gujarati, Telugu, Tamil, Oraons, Santals, Vanga, Radha, Varendra, and...

The colonial Indian government agreed to send these indentured gir-mityas (agreement-signers) or kismet (I will go) to labor overseas but was powerless in protecting them from abuses. The most fundamental problem with the indenture system was that general welfare of Indian laborers was not of great concern to the Caribbean planters. There emerged on the Caribbean plantations a perfect divorce between power and responsibility. Without a doubt, the indenture system was designed to help the world capitalist economy in general and the planter class in particular, but not the indentured laborers, who were expected to be marginal beneficiaries of the indenture system. Authors like Hugh Tinker (1974), Keith Laurence (1994), Brinsley Samaroo (1982), Walton Look Lai (1993), Verene Shepherd (1994), Basdeo Mangru (1987), and Rosemarijn Hoefte (1998) have shown persuasively how indentured Indian laborers were kidnapped, lured, and duped into indentured service. These authors have also demonstrated how the indentured laborers were ridiculed and maltreated in the depot, on the sea voyage, on the sugar plantations as well as in their own isolated communities. Restrictions were placed on the laborers’ mobility. The laborers were not allowed to leave the plantation without a pass. Moreover, the indentured laborers did not have the right to bargain for better wages or to refuse allocated work. Even their right to a return passage to their native country was manipulated. Ex-indentured Indian laborers were forced to contribute significantly to the cost of their return passage and were discouraged from taking the return passage at all, with the planters encouraging them to accept small parcels of land instead of it.

Despite these glaring irregularities, the colonial Indian government encouraged continuous emigration from India to the Caribbean with superficial modification. The Indian government promoted emigration mainly to provide job opportunities for its citizens and to generate revenues via remittances. The Indian government insisted that it was better for India that ex-indentured laborers return home with their savings and that their place in the Caribbean be taken by others who were in need of employment. However, the government’s colonized status impaired its ability to carry out mandated responsibilities such as managing and monitoring indentured immigration regulations. The end result was an inefficient and ineffective supervised indenture system. Sir William Des Voeux, a magistrate in British Guiana, espoused the idea that the magistrates, emigration agents, and the colonial

The Second-Term Migration of Ex-Indentured Indian Laborers

Governors were receptive and subservient to the views of planters and indifferent to the plight of indentured servants. He stated furthermore that duties were cruelly neglected and justice was perverted in the colonies. Critics like Rosemarijn Hoenke (1987, 2005), Kusha Haraksingh (1987), Basdeo Mangru (1996), Radica Mahase (2008), Lomarsh Roopnarine (2006a), among others, show that Indian laborers were abused in the Caribbean but also argue that the laborers manipulated the indenture system, through techniques of physical and psychological resistance, to their benefit. In particular, the argument is that peasant rebellions and resistances in colonial society could only be understood by looking at ordinary, everyday actions which are not blatant. Therefore it is important to place peasants’ resistance within the realm of their own context and value system. The peasants’ art of resistance is camouflaged and their conformity as well as compliance to power is really the outer form of submission, when in actuality, underneath this behavior there is symbolic and ideological resistance (see Scott 1985).

A similar analytical approach can be used to understand the under-researched side of Indian social re-adjustment or the normal return to their social structure and material base as well as their remigration or the second-term migration of ex-indentured laborers from India to the Caribbean. Throughout the indenture period, there was a small and continuous inflow of second- and third-term Indian indentured laborers from India to the Caribbean. Some migrants served five to fifteen years in the Caribbean and returned to India but decided to go back to the Caribbean. Other migrants served indenture in other parts of the world (Mauritius, Fiji, and Natal) and chose the Caribbean instead of returning to their original indentured destinations. These migratory dynamics make the indenture system more complex and, above all, pose some serious challenges to the existing scholarship on Indo-Caribbean indenture.

The fundamental scholarship on Indo-Caribbean indenture reveals and replicates a historical analysis of a neoslave system. Indian indentured laborers were perceived as victims and the powerful colonial regime as leaving no room for the struggle against diverse forms of institutional and ideological domination. Moreover, the literature reveals that indentured Indians were taken to the Caribbean, manipulated to stay there, or returned to India when their contracts expired. Although scholars acknowledge these views, questions about the Indian experience in the Caribbean remain. Why would indentured servants continue to come to work in a system that repeatedly failed to protect them from the worst forms of abuse? Why were second- and third-term migrants so eager to come to the Caribbean when the colonial government did not actively promote their remigration? Full answers

to these questions are missing, but an examination into them will provide a balanced view of Indo-Caribbean indenture. The main objectives of this article are to examine the reasons why so many ex-indentured East Indian laborers returned home when they were induced to stay in the Caribbean, to assess the re-adjustment problems they encountered in their homeland, and finally to analyze their reasons for migrating to the Caribbean for a second and even third time. The focus of the article is really on the English-speaking Caribbean, mainly British Guiana and Trinidad. Some supporting references will be given to Suriname and other Caribbean islands where Indians were indentured. The sources were gathered from Indian Record Office and the Colonial Record Office in London, the Guyana National Archives, the University of the West Indies library in St. Augustine, personal interviews, and from a systematic review of secondary sources.

REASONS FOR RETURNING TO INDIA

The indenture system was intended to substitute the loss of slave labor in the nineteenth-century Caribbean, as former slaves gradually drifted from the plantations for better opportunities elsewhere. The indenture system was thus expected to provide a temporary, not a permanent, labor force. Indeed, in the initial stages, the labor system proceeded as expected as indentured laborers were recycled from India to the Caribbean for periods ranging from three to ten years. In the signed or finger-printed contracts, the laborers worked and returned when their service expired. The Indian government also insisted that migrants have the right to a return passage mainly to protect Indian laborers from abuses abroad.5

The planters’ desire to reduce costs, however, changed the regular return of ex-indentured Indian laborers to their homeland. By the mid-1850s, the planters argued that East Indians should re-indenture for another five years, receive a $50 bounty and qualify for free return passages. The argument gained currency, and in British Guiana between 1850 and 1851, 2,210 Indians re-indentured and received bounties of $107,410 (Roopnarine 2008:210) while in Trinidad in 1865, 5,920 Indians re-indentured and received bounties of $291,800.6 A decade later, the planters again pushed for a change in the return policy, arguing for the right to a return passage to be exchanged for grants of land (about 10 acres) in the Caribbean (Roopnarine 2006b). The planters’ reasons for requesting the change of policy were that it was

too expensive to send back indentured laborers and that it made little sense to invest in indentured laborers and then send them back home so quickly. They also insisted that the regular return of Indians was draining the labor market and demanding large sums of money. For example, in British Guiana, the amount paid for return passages of Indian immigrants from 1850 to 1870 was $478,217 and in Jamaica between 1891 and 1895 $22,710 were paid (Shepherd 1985:21). They insisted that these sums of money be spent in the Caribbean colonies, not India (Roopnarine 2008).

The main reason, however, for not sending back ex-indentured Indian laborers was to avoid financial responsibility. This became more evident when the planters influenced the colonial officidorm to change the laws to suit their needs. Law 12 of 1879, Section I, was introduced stating that returnees had to contribute one-fourth of the passage money for males and one-sixth for females. This law was subsequently amended by Law 2 of 1899, which increased the portion of passage money payable by immigrants by one-half for males and one-third for females. Destitute or disabled migrants with dependents were entitled to a free return passage. This remained in effect until the end of the indenture system in 1920.8

In spite of the planters’ determination to encourage Indian laborers to stay in *Karma Bhumi* (“land of work”; the Caribbean), an estimated 175,000 of 500,000 indentured Indians brought to the Caribbean from 1838 to 1920 returned to their *Janma Bhumi* (“land of birth”; India). The return rate was around 8 percent a year and some laborers contributed to or paid their passage in full. The following table provides a sample of returnees during the first half of the indenture system.

Table 1. Return Migration from British Guiana, Jamaica, and Trinidad to Calcutta, 1850-1869

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colony</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Infants</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>Landed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.Guiana</td>
<td>1850-69</td>
<td>5,435</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>6,305</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>5,547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>1853-58</td>
<td>1,459</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>1,722</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad</td>
<td>1851-69</td>
<td>3,082</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3,573</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>3,439</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


D.W.D. Comins (1893b:26) reported that from 1850-91, 12,082 Indians returned from Trinidad to India. The statistics for the Immigration Agent General report of 1881 indicate that from 1843 to 1881, 17,235 Indians left British Guiana for India. From the same colony in 1929, 520 Indians departed from Georgetown for Calcutta.9

The ex-indentured Indian laborers differed in the time they spent in the Caribbean, how they adapted to plantation life, their age and gender, whether they were entitled to a free return passage, and in their reasons for returning. An example of their heterogeneity is the 865 passengers who, in 1936, sailed on the Ganges from Georgetown to Calcutta. Fifteen of them were given passages after ten years in British Guiana, 576 went back with assisted passages, 17 paid their own passage, and 257 were sent back as paupers. The ages of these returnees were as follows: 89 persons were under the age of ten; 89 between 11 and 20 years, 39 between 21 and 30 years, 43 between 31 and 40 years, 351 between 41 and 50 years, 202 between 51 and 60 years, and 52 over 60 years.10

The ex-indentured laborers’ reasons for returning were not clear mainly since we did not hear from ex-indentured laborers themselves. However, we can make speculations from colonial records, dispositions, and from the contemporary voices of Caribbean Indian descendants.11 There were indentured servants who had served their terms of contract either for the first or second term and were entitled by law to a free return passage, at least until the 1890s, to India. These migrants wished to return because they were interested in using the indenture system to earn wages and did not develop any permanent attachments to the Caribbean. Many of these migrants may have had a bad experience with the indenture system in that they were not entirely aware of true nature of the labor rules and expectations. Perhaps some of them were even duped into coming to the Caribbean and were just waiting for their contract to expire so they could leave. Many secondary sources show that some Indians left under a false pretext (Mangru 1987, Shepherd 1994).

Some ex-indentured laborers came to the Caribbean to work and save enough money to buy a piece of land, rejoin their waiting families, and settle in their village in India (Roopnarine 2006b:320). Others were transmigratory migrants, that is, they were aware that the indenture system provided job opportunities elsewhere. These ex-indentured laborers were returning

11. In a personal interview with Brinsley Samaroo in early July 2008, he says that the post-indenture returnees did voice their desire to return to India. Dr. Samaroo recorded this information in a book he recently helped to edit and publish. See Dabydeen 2007.
home to contract themselves to another colony. For example, in 1920, 44 ex-indentured laborers from Natal, South Africa arrived in British Guiana to work on the sugar plantations.12

On almost every return ship from the Caribbean to India, there were paupers, invalids, and insane, who unfortunately had no choice but to return because the colonies did not want them because of the economic liability they represented, and because for the most part, they were entitled to a free passage back to India as stipulated in the labor contracts. For instance, in 1929, on the return ship the Sutlej from Georgetown to India with 520 ex-indentured laborers, there were 97 paupers.13 Some Hindu ex-indentured laborers wanted to spend their last years meditating (sanyasi) and eventually to die in their homeland (Samaroo 1982:52). Contemporary ethnographic research supports the view that Caribbean Hindu Indians continue to display religious nostalgia for India with regard to birth and death rites there. There has been an eternal call for the Ganges among Indians in the Caribbean, especially in the later stages of their life (Dabydeen et al. 2007:xlvii-lxi; Rajkumar 1951:36).

There were also Indians who wanted to leave because of economic hardships and appalling working conditions in the Caribbean, as the Moyne Commission’s report of 1930 testifies (Dabydeen et al. 2007:xlvii-lxi; Rajkumar 1951:52). Some ex-indentured laborers mistakenly believed that India had achieved independence and wanted to return to a free India (Roopnarine 2006b:320). Moreover, by the 1940s, ethnic tensions between the Africans and Indians had reached a breaking point in British Guiana as the country was moving towards independence (Dabydeen et al. 2007:lii-liii). Many Indians feared living in an independent nation dominated by Afro-Caribbeans and therefore chose to return to India. Finally, some Indians returned home simply because “there is no place like home”.14

Still, many Indians returned because they had saved enough money in the Caribbean and were ready to take these savings back with them to India. The opportunity to save and remit money and jewelry was, after all, one main reason that pushed Indians to leave their homeland and work in the Caribbean. On the ship Malabar, which sailed from British Guiana to India in 1879, the statistics showed that ex-indentured Indians took back with them savings of $43,477, and a jewel worth of $49,477. The average remittance

14. PP, 1910, XXVII (Cd. 5192-94), Part II: Report of the Committee on Emigration, Testimony of Mr. Francis Evelyn Mohammed Hosein, Minutes of Evidence, July 16, 1909, paragraph no. 9730, p. 313.
was £27, 12s, 3p. The immigration agent James Crosby of British Guiana reported that from November 1850 to December 1877 twenty-seven ships sailed from British Guiana to the Port of Calcutta with 9,833 Indians and among them 5,680 deposited $903,556, an average of $159.00. From the same colony but to the Port of Madras, from 1851 to 1859, seven ships took 1,444 Indians and among them 333 deposited a total of $56,525, which is an average of $169.00 per person. The following table shows how much savings individual ex-indentured Indians took with them from the ship the Ganges, which traveled from British Guiana in 1907.

Table 2. Savings Taken Back from British Guiana to India in 1907

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Total Savings ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rampersad</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>driver</td>
<td>Poudireyen</td>
<td>1,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasoda</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>weeder</td>
<td>Albouystown</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beharry</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>shovelman</td>
<td>Peter’s Hall</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badlu</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>barber</td>
<td>Blairmont</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bebidin</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>goldsmith</td>
<td>Port Mourant</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shewbahadur</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>shovelman</td>
<td>Bath</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pargasia</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>weeder</td>
<td>Ruimveldt</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dheunki</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>shovelman</td>
<td>Albion</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debaran</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>shovelman</td>
<td>Albion</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramdari</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>weeder</td>
<td>Albion</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jhakri</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>weeder</td>
<td>No. 59 Village</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramkali</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>weeder</td>
<td>Albion</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaino Sing</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>shovelman</td>
<td>Enmore</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonesh</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>shovelman</td>
<td>Bath</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Some interesting observations may be gleaned from these data. These figures do not include material savings, such as jewelry, which means that Indians might have taken back more savings than documented. Oliver William Warner, the Protector of Immigrants for Trinidad, told the Sanderson Commission that returned Indians did not declare large quantities of jew-

elry but stuck them in belts around their waist. Furthermore, on an average, more males than females returned to India with savings. This was not unusual since fewer women were associated with the indenture system. Women might also have had a lesser desire to go back home since it was believed that they came to the Caribbean to emancipate themselves (Emmer 1986), perhaps never to return to India. The savings that Indians earned did not come solely from indentured service but from other occupations like shop-keeping, money-lending, cow-keeping, and cane-farming. Finally, the data is not representative of all returned migrants. Many did go back with enough savings to justify their stay in the Caribbean. A majority, however, went back with average of $300-500 after being in the Caribbean for about three to ten years, if not more. Other ex-indentured servants went back penniless. One has to take into consideration that indentured Indian laborers were earning on an average about 25 to 30 cents a day.

Unfortunately, remitted money did not always reach the designees. When Indians left their homeland they were told that if they were to die in the Caribbean the facilities were there to transfer their savings and properties to their families in India. However, some designees were not found because their villages had vanished in natural disasters, or because they had died. Other designees were constantly on the move looking for jobs and were difficult to trace. Part of the problem was also manufactured by the colonial officials. Names and places were misspelled and mismatched. Colonel Duncan G. Pitcher revealed that the agents sometimes had balances on their hands because the spelling of the names was so “transmogrified between the registration and the departure for the colonies that it was no wonder they could not find the villages.”

17. PP, 1910, XXVII (Cd. 5192-94), Part II: Report of the Committee on Emigration, Testimony of Mr. Oliver Warner, Minutes of Evidence, March 26, 1909, paragraph no. 587, p. 25.
18. PP, 1910, XXVII (Cd. 5192-94), Part II: Report of the Committee on Emigration, Testimony of Mr. Oliver Warner, Minutes of Evidence, March 26, 1909, paragraph no. 588, p. 25.
Indian social structure, and its transferal to the Caribbean, plays a crucial role in understanding the readjustment challenges return Indian laborers faced in India. William J. Duiker and Jackson J. Spielvogel (2007:43-47) insist that the Aryan invaders imposed in India the rigid caste system that persists with only minor changes down to the present day. Subsequently, caste was formed and dictated by, and functioned according to the Laws of Manu, which is really a theoretical treatise on the social order of Hinduism from the point view of the Brahmans.

There are thousands of castes and subcastes (*jati*) in India. Caste, however, is traditionally ranked within four *varnas*: Brahmin (priests), Kshatriya (rulers and warriors), Vaisyas (merchants, agriculturalists, and tradesmen), and Sudras (laborers). Caste is essentially an enclosed form of social stratification which orders its members according to skin color or parental religion, insists on endogamy, and guards against ritual pollution by restricting contact between members of different castes (Senart 1930:94). Caste revolves around separation, internal cohesion, interdependence, hierarchy, ritual purity, and pollution. Louis Dumont (1980) argues that caste has been so fundamental to the core cultural values of India’s traditions and civilization that every other entity, including politics, was subjected to its dominance. According to Dumont, caste is a religious system that has survived unchanged from the ancient times.

Recent scholars like Bernard Cohn (1996) and Nicholas Dirks (1987) have challenged such essentialist views of caste. They have questioned how much of the Indian caste system has been really a continuation of ancient social practices, whether it was instead a result of British colonial rule. In other words, was caste in India invented by British colonialism and Orientalism? Cohn argues that India was reconfigured to meet the expectations of British colonialism so that the colonizer would have absolute control and command. India, he wrote, was redefined by the British to be a place of rules and orders, and when this was achieved to the satisfaction of the colonizers, Indians had to conform to these constructions (Cohn 1996:162). This was done through colonial census-takers, language, and legislation. Caste was, therefore, a colonial invention. Dirks also argues in his two classic studies, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (1987) and *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (2001) that caste was a not a basic core value of ancient India, but a colonial invention. Before the British entered India, caste had more functions than just upholding religious and social orders. It was central to the political process that shaped precolonial India. Caste was not the only form of social identity. Other significant units of identification existed, such as the region, the village, and the residential temple community. Dirks (1987, 2001) posits that caste was a product of colo-
nial knowledge, a conscious design of British colonial policy in India. The British used caste to organize India’s diverse social groups to benefit themselves, mainly to have control over India’s population and resources. Susan Bayly (1999:365) concludes that “no one model or explanatory formula can account for either the durability or the dynamism of caste.” It appears, however, that caste has hybrid origins, particularly during the period of British colonial rule, in India. Caste was started and shaped by Indian civilization and was transformed, or even solidified, under British colonialism.

What happened to the Indian caste structure in the Caribbean? Was caste sustained, transformed, or did it disappear? Was caste reinvented in the Caribbean the same way that Cohn and Dirks say it was for colonial India? The answer to these questions lies in an examination of the types of caste that were brought to the Caribbean. The indentured laborers were recruited mainly from north-west Provinces, Oudh, Fyzabad, Gonda, and Basti in the United Province. A majority were from the middle and low castes, although a small but significant number of Hindus came from the upper caste. The following Indian immigration report in 1873-74 shows categories of caste among Caribbean indentured Indians.

Table 3. Caste Categories among Caribbean Indentured Indians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste and Religion</th>
<th>British Caribbean</th>
<th>French Caribbean</th>
<th>Dutch Caribbean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindus, Brahmans,</td>
<td>1,454</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high castes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agriculturalists</td>
<td>3,281</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>1,012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>artisans</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low castes</td>
<td>4,951</td>
<td>1,249</td>
<td>1,158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>1,845</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12,434</td>
<td>3,218</td>
<td>3,523</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Bridget Brereton (1974:26) shows for Trinidad that the Brahmin and other high castes were 18 percent, artisan 8.5 percent, agricultural castes 32 percent, and low castes 41.5 percent. For Guyana, Raymond Smith (1959:34-39) suggests that high caste were 13.6 percent; artisan 8.5 percent; low castes 31.1 percent. These figures may not be totally accurate simply because some indentured servants falsified their caste status to gain a new higher status in the Caribbean, although it was not easy to gain this higher status (Clarke 1967:177).
The caste system in the Caribbean has received substantial attention and practically all studies have agreed that caste was transformed and virtually disappeared (Davids 1964:383-96; Nevadomsky 1980:434-36; Niehoff & Niehoff 1960). Ravindra K. Jain (2004:180) writes that removing Indians from their home and placing them as individual indentured laborers in foreign colonies “struck a deathblow to caste as a traditional functional system of social stratification in the new setting.” The caste system began to break down in the holding depot in India and on the voyage to the Caribbean. All Indian emigrants, regardless of caste, were huddled together in a small space and were forced to share food and intermix (Speckmann 1965). Western-oriented plantation work routine paid scant attention to caste rules based on purity and interdependence. Christian missionary efforts, especially by the Presbyterians, aimed at the conversion of Indians from Hinduism to Christianity, sped up the transformation of the caste structure. The influence of missionary activities was more profound in the school system, despite resistance from the Brahmins and Indian leaders. Unstable family patterns, that is, a skewed sex ratio, the distance between India and the Caribbean, the cultural differences between the East and West, and the religious and linguistic diversity of the immigrants and their different geographical origins contributed to the overall breakdown of the caste system in the Caribbean.21

One overlooked reason for the disappearance of caste in the Caribbean has been the initiatives of Indian migrants themselves through conscious motivations. Bayly (1999:154-55) demonstrates that by the nineteenth century Indian caste was viewed as “incubus” which considered caste as a pernicious force, the “golden chain,” which regarded caste as a spiritual entity, and “corporation” which saw caste as jati, an ethnographic fact of Indian life and a source of historical national strength. Whether in real life the average Indian lived in accordance with Bayly’s theoretical categorization is not precisely known. But what is certain is that Indians who left for the Caribbean realized that the caste system was not a fixed social structure, but they did not have the power to challenge and change it. They did realize that caste was a major obstacle to freedom, personal growth and development, and that above all, it was caste restrictions that pushed them to the Caribbean. Therefore, whenever opportunities surfaced, Indians attempted to redefine the caste structure in the Caribbean:

In an environment where conditions and thought patterns of life were changing and memories and identities were being re-evaluated and reconstructed one would expect the dissonant and dissident low-caste Indians to be diametrically opposed to the consecrative and ceremonial caste ideologies of patriotism. Indeed, there was the development of a sub-

culture within a sub-culture in which the semi-free play of polarities and pluralities repeatedly characterized indentured communities. Low caste servants grabbed the slightest opportunity, though within certain limitations, to abandon the traditional caste system and adapt semi-Western ways. (Roopnarine 2006a:71)

The process of caste disappearance was gradual. By two decades after the collapse of the indenture system (1920), caste existed only in symbolic forms. What emerged were two interesting phenomena. The first was a reversal of the caste system to a point where it can be argued that Indians re-entered into a new caste structure in the Caribbean. The low caste became the best workers, the middle caste the good workers, and the upper caste the worst workers (Moore 1977:98). This caste reversal can be described as the de-institutionalization and re-institutionalization of the Caribbean Indian social structure according to plantation system expectations (Jain 2004:108). The upper caste was perceived to resist work, to stir riots, and to question the food while the lower and middle caste followed and obeyed, for the most part, indenture rules and regulations. The second was that the caste system was transformed into two extreme forms: high and low nation, reflected more racial class characteristics (Jain 2004:181). The Brahmin influence, however, still persisted (Van der Veer & Vertevoc 1991).

By the end of the indenture system, the social structure of the Caribbean Indian population was markedly different from that in their homeland. The caste structure diluted and began to share Indian-Caribbean bred social characteristics. Trinidadian historian Brinsley Samaroo (1982:59) states that the caste system was replaced by a bond forged by common experience of life in the compound in Calcutta prior to departure for the colonies as well as shared happy and unhappy moments on the ocean crossing. This “brotherhood of the boat” (Jahagi Bhai) formed a new bond among immigrants which cut across caste/religious barriers and persists even today among the descendants of the original “jahagis.”

Alongside these changes there was the arrival of fresh migrants or casuals who brought with them the caste social structure. Though the new arrivals entered a predominantly Hindu environment as opposed to a Creole community, it was different from India. These individuals, over time, without even realizing it, either rejected creolization, adjusting or assimilating to the changing caste system. The changes exemplified a sort of hybridization of Indian social structure and locality, a mixture of caste and class and a mixture of India and the Caribbean. The planters, on their part, were cognizant of these internal dynamics and used them to maintain control over the indentured Indians. On other occasions, it was convenient for the planters to lump all Indians into one community on the premise that this community was
developing and defending its own interests. Therefore, the internal changes, as far as is known, were not fully documented. The consequence is that we cannot say precisely what percentage of indentured Indians lived by their changed social structure. The ex-indentured laborers, however, spent enough time in the Caribbean to witness and experience a different social structure from their homeland. Their re-adjustment to home then has to be analyzed within the framework of how they were perceived by their own communities in India and by their Caribbean experience, especially those who returned as late as in the 1950s. The last return ship, the *Resurgent*, left British Guiana in 1955 with 235 returnees.

Hindu customs in India dictated that crossing *kala pani* was a curse, to be punished with caste expulsion. The fundamental view of those indentured laborers who had gone to the Caribbean was that they had violated the caste rules. However, the injunction against sea travel was applied mainly to the higher caste. To nineteenth-century Indians, sea travel meant a movement from a shared community to an uncertain distant place which represented pain and suffering. The ex-indentured Indian laborers on their return to India were seen and treated like *tapuhas*, strange island people. Mahatma Gandhi commented that these people were social lepers who did not even know the language of the people:

> They all looked famished. Their lot is the lowest ebb of human misery. The fact that the majority of these men are Colonial born aggravates their misery … These men are neither Indian nor Colonial. They have no Indian culture in the foreign land they go to, save what they picked up from their uncultured half-dis-Indianised parents. They are Colonial in that they are debarred access to the Colonial, *i.e.*, Western Culture. They are therefore out of the frying pan into the fire. There, at least they had some money and a kind of a home. Here they are social lepers, not even knowing the language of the people.

This is an overstatement since Indians were returning to a familiar environment. But certainly Caribbean Indian-born children would have encountered problems of adjustment to an unfamiliar social caste system, especially in light of their Caribbean Christianization experience. This is not to say that Caribbean Indians were living in a fluid class system. To be sure, they were living in a hierarchical social structure that stratified or relegated them to

---


The Second-Term Migration of Ex-Indentured Indian Laborers

the basement, or the lowest rung, of Caribbean society. There were, however, some differences. Their Caribbean experience instilled a new or an alternative sense of identity (class) among them. Put differently, Indians had adopted or modeled their behavior on European ideals, which were obviously inconsistent with the traditional social customs and expectations of village life in India. Indeed, Caribbean Indian-born children generally chafed at the caste-ridden social structure around them. Some Indians in Suriname did not go back to India because of their Caribbean-born children. Nevertheless, there was a steady return of Indian laborers. For example, 5,580 colonial or Caribbean-born children were taken by their parents from British Guiana from 1871 to 1890 (Comins 1893c:46). These children certainly encountered problems of social adjustment in an environment where caste rules were firmly entrenched. To bolster the argument to have Indians remain in the Caribbean instead of sending them back to India, the colonial authorities claimed that the children in particular were at a major disadvantage when it came to learning new customs and ways (Comins 1893c:46).

The long-term residents, in particular, who had spent at least ten years in the Caribbean faced adjustment challenges in their homeland. For example, from 1871 to 1890, 125 ex-indentured Indian laborers spent anywhere from 22 to 44 years in British Guiana (Comins 1893c:46). Spending so much time in a foreign land with little meaningful contact with “home” and where there were, at least in theory, no caste rules or where the customs and cultures were different from those “back home,” would certainly have caused some basic changes in their mannerisms, speech, and eating habits. Some ex-indentured laborers indeed acquired a taste for rum, meat, and fish in their sojourn in the Caribbean:

> In the new and rapidly changing Caribbean environment the Indian, quite often without realizing it, became a different person. His language was now interspersed with English, Spanish and French patois words, his diet now had more meat and fish in it, he had become used to cheap and very available rum in the sugar island and the ruggedness of plantation life had made him a more aggressive person. (Samaroo 1982:61)

The newly acquired habits and changing social values coupled with the exposure to a different flexible social structure, and the low caste’s economic opportunities, in particular, were inconsistent with Indian caste rules. These ex-indentured Indians were seen as strangers or misfits in their villages. Even their children could not find marriage partners. Comins (1893c:12) remarked

that ex-indentured Indians were going back to the misery they fled and were
disgusted with the inferior positions and low wages they earned as “com-
mon coolies.” Oliver Warner noticed a marked difference between an Indian
leaving India and returning. He explained that when an Indian arrived in the
Caribbean he normally stooped to the feet of authority figures but when an
Indian left the Caribbean he would say, “How do you do?”

Re-integration or a normal return into the respective caste was possible
but costly. The ex-indentured laborers could have re-claimed their caste
status through a purification ceremony. The ceremony was very expensive
mainly because the ex-indentured laborer had to give a substantial amount
of his savings for a feast for the priests and other respected village members.
An immigration report in 1881 stated that

return immigrants frequently dissipate the bulk of their savings shortly
after in India, feeding their ‘Gurus’ [spiritual advisers] and feasting their
friends. Relatives innumerable, with the most remote claims to kinship
appear when least expected, on the arrival of a well-to-do Indian in his
native ‘bustee’ [village] and hard earned savings are soon squandered in
vain oblations to the family penates and ‘barra khanas’ to his kindred.

Some ex-indentured Indians did not return to their villages but stayed in the
urban sprawl of Calcutta mainly to conceal their sojourn in the Caribbean.
They stayed away from their villages to avoid caste exclusion and family
members who wanted to swindle them of their savings. Others changed or
terminated their Caribbean relationship. For example, one high-caste woman
married a low-caste man in the Caribbean and lived with him for ten years.
Upon their return to India, the woman said “you low-caste man; I will have
nothing more to do with you.”

25. PP, 1910, XXVII (Cd. 5192-94), Part II: Report of the Committee on Emigration,
Testimony of Mr. Oliver Warner, Minutes of Evidence, March 26, 1909, paragraph no.
711, pp. 29-30.
26. Bara khana is a big meal usually given by the lower castes to their upper-caste villag-
ers in expiation of an obligation, and in this case, for cleansing after crossing the kala pani.
27. IAG, 1882, British Guiana: Report of the Immigration Agent General for the Year
1881, Demerara, p. 5.
28. PP, 1910, XXVII (Cd. 5192-94), Part II: Report of the Committee on Emigration,
Testimony of Sir Neville Lubbock, Minutes of Evidence, May 5, 1909, paragraph no. 2611,
pp. 94-95.
Table 4. Indians who Migrated for the Second Time under Indenture from another Colony to British Guiana in 1881

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colonies</th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Minors</th>
<th>Infants</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demerara</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Vincent</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reunion</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suriname</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>193</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 5. Indians who Migrated to British Guiana for the Second Time under Indenture between 1872 and 1881

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Minors</th>
<th>Infants</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>not given</td>
<td>not given</td>
<td>not given</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>not given</td>
<td>not given</td>
<td>not given</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Remigration to the Caribbean**

How many ex-indentured Indian laborers migrated to the Caribbean or from other colonies for the second and even third time is not precisely known. Remigration was nonetheless continuous. If we calculate that remigration began in the 1860s and ended in 1920 averaging around 200 a year, based on scattered archival information and statistics for British Guiana (Laurence 1994, Look Lai 1993), the estimated number of remigrants would be around 40,000 to 50,000 for all colonies. We took into consideration that
migration was of a smaller scale and spanned shorter periods on other islands (Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, St. Kitts, and St. Croix, for example). Forty to fifty thousand remigrants were a significant figure when considering that 500,000 left India, 350,000 stayed in the Caribbean, and 175,000 went back to India. Equally interesting is that an unknown number of intended remigrants were rejected, which means that the remigration figure could have been over 75,000 if immigration was not strictly regulated for second-term migrants. The preceding tables provide some insight into how many Indians returned to the Caribbean in 1882, to British Guiana from 1872-81, and to Trinidad from 1877-92 for the second time.

The emigration agent for British Guiana stated that 1,949 persons who had previously been in the colony remigrated between 1880 and 1890 and advised that twice that number would have returned had they proved eligible (Comins 1893c:10). A similar remark was made in Trinidad where the yearly average number who returned and remigrated to Trinidad during the same period was 42 (Comins 1893c:11). The West Indian Committee, writing to the Colonial Office in 1876, stated that a considerable number of those who do return to India merely go on a visit and remigrate a second time to the colonies. In one of the ships this season there were no less than 87 of such people coming to Trinidad for the second time, and some of these paid their own passages. (Comins 1893c:11)

From 1882 to 1892, 141 men, 97 women, 25 boys, 20 girls, and 4 infants, a total of 276 remigrants paid or deposited 8,386 pounds, 11 shillings and 9 pence in Calcutta to be refunded to them in Trinidad (Comins 1893b:25). As late as in 1921, 270 second-time migrants returned to British Guiana and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colonies</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Colonies</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad</td>
<td>757</td>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demerara</td>
<td>591</td>
<td>Natal</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>Suriname</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Vincent</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>Bourbon, Martinique, Guadeloupe</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>St. Lucia</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangoon</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cayenne</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

44 were from Natal, South Africa. The Sanderson Committee reported that hundreds of Indians did remigrate yearly, “some avowedly [openly] as re-migrants others unavowedly [secretly].” The committee reported that in 1914, 88 persons had remigrated to Trinidad. In fact, Trinidad was the popular destination.

Why did Indians remigrate to the Caribbean? Their continuous migration to the Caribbean was driven by the socioeconomic problems at home, even if leaving these circumstances behind meant traveling over high seas, violating caste rules, and working under appalling conditions. Indians remigrated because they considered the Caribbean, despite its authoritarian structures, to be materially and economically superior to their homeland. The Indian immigration proceedings for 1874 reveal that 96 Indians were found willing to return to Demerara for a second time because of the high remuneration in the Caribbean. Likewise, Rosemarijn Hoefte (1998:65) states that 150 Indians were willing to remigrate to Suriname. Their remigration to Suriname and other Caribbean islands was encouraged by private organizations and by the planter class to boost Caribbean Indian settlement schemes and to avail the planter class of financial repatriation responsibilities as well as to provide them with a cheap, regular labor force. Moreover, Indians realized that, apart from land acquisition opportunities, possibilities existed for the transplantation of their homeland culture and customs to the Caribbean. Therefore those who benefited from the plantation system in the Caribbean returned to India half-heartedly. They used the free return passage “for the purpose of a pleasure trip and a few months’ freedom from work on good and plentiful food,” and if eligible, would remigrate to the Caribbean (Comins 1893c:11). Other Indians returned to India to see their families and friends and then departed for the Caribbean on the first ship they could locate (Comins 1893c:11-12). This movement from the Caribbean to India for the sake of visiting occurred after the 1890s and was not common. However, the movement shows that Indians were not totally locked in the plantation system. Does this movement constitute another side of the indentured Indians’ experience?

The acculturation, or forced cultural changes, and assimilation, or adapted cultural ways, determined Indian remigration to the Caribbean. One source claims that when Indians arrived in the Caribbean they were

raw, ignorant and unskilled, often unused to manual labor; prejudiced, lazy, unable to take care of themselves, and prone to diseases; depressed and careless for the reasons which have induced them to leave their homeland and find themselves in a new country amid strange surroundings. (Comins 1893c:11-12)

After serving their terms of service, “Indians acquired habits of industry engendered by steady work, accumulated wealth, obtained agricultural skills, and assimilated to the laws and customs of the Caribbean” (Comins 1893c:12). Remigration to the Caribbean was dictated by the liberal and assimilating effects of the plantation system. These views, of course, were echoed by the planter class which intended to promote indentured emigration. But they nonetheless revealed a transformation in Indian laborers who had gone to the Caribbean. Upon arrival in India they realized an option or alternative to their inflexible village social structure was possible. One colonial official supported this view and claimed that ex-indentured Indians after a few months in their homeland knew “that their best interests and advantages lie in the colony they left” (Comins 1893c:11-13).

The principal reasons for Indians’ migrating to the Caribbean for the second time were similar to those that drove them out of their villages in the initial or first migration phase. Indians were pushed by British colonialism, natural disasters, and civil wars, deceptive recruitment practices, socioeconomic oppression and restriction, caste rules, and world capitalism, and they were pulled by job opportunities in the Caribbean. The major difference between the first and second migration was that in the former case Indians were not fully aware of the indenture irregularities. Yet in the second migration phase, Indians made conscious efforts to come to the Caribbean. Oliver Warner punctuated this point in front of the Sanderson Commission:

If you see an emigrant ship leaving Calcutta, and if you watch the coolies’ faces as they go on that ship, they are in fear and trembling the whole time. It is quite a mistaken idea that they are cheering on going off, and so glad to go. A certain percentage of them, those who have been before and know what the colony is, are delighted, and you will see them cheering, but the ordinary coolie who just goes on board ship does not like it at all.32

The argument can be made that the desperate, unchanging conditions in India and job opportunities in the Caribbean caused ex-indentured Indians to re-indenture themselves overseas. It appears, however, that the Caribbean

32. PP, 1910, XXVII (Cd. 5192-94), Part II: Report of the Committee on Emigration Testimony of Mr. Oliver Warner, Minutes of Evidence, March 26, 1909, paragraph no. 706, p. 29.
plantation system offered more opportunities for personal and even family advancement than India. The planters certainly encouraged and supported this process by inducing Indians to settle in the Caribbean by rewarding them financially and granting them landownership. But marked differences between India and the Caribbean also allowed the laborers to make their individual choices with regard to upward social and economic mobility.

Of paramount importance was that every indentured laborer entered the Caribbean on an equal footing regardless of religion, caste, or gender, something most indentured laborers had never before experienced. This equality was undermined on the plantations but also allowed the low-caste Indians to improve their status through indentured service. Many Indians also could not feed themselves because of hardships and famine in India. The Caribbean planters did not provide adequate rations for their indentured servants, but starvation and famine, at least to the same degree as in India, was unknown in the Caribbean. Equally important was that the position of indentured servants was not static, with firm boundaries, in particular, that of the ex-indentured laborers, after indentured emancipation. They had, at least in theory, access to the same opportunities as other ethnic groups in the Caribbean. Furthermore, the Caribbean plantation system, including its authoritative and repressive characteristics, did not allow occupational roles to revolve around caste. Even land purchase shows no significant difference between the high and low caste. Lesley Potter (1989) shows that among the East Indian population in British Guiana, caste was not an important determinant for land acquisition. Walton Look Lai, in his book, Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar (1993), did not even mention caste as a characteristic for land settlement or land acquisition. Actually, statistics for land acquisition based on caste are hard to find. The freedom from caste restrictions was one reason that Indians were able to achieve a measure of success in the Caribbean. These characteristics certainly encouraged remigration to the Caribbean.

The colonial authorities, however, were very skeptical of second-term migrants. The planters generally informed emigration agencies in India not to recruit migrants who had indentured to the Caribbean. Able-bodied individuals capable of performing well under harsh tropical conditions were preferred. A returnee at the age of thirty-five was considered too old to remigrate. Some discretion was used if remigrants were married. Older workers were a burden or a liability to the plantation system. Intended second-term migrants were refused and rejected on “account of old age or some bodily infirmity” (Comins 1893c:9).

The planters were also concerned that remigrants were the “old soldiers” likely to protest plantation conditions, and their re-entry to the Caribbean was discouraged. Arthur Marsden, a colonial official, said to the Sanderson Commission that the returnees generally gave more trouble, knew too much about the colony, and asserted themselves more vigorously. He stated further that if returnees were not prosperous in the colonies they would not send them back under indenture. The position of the colonial authorities towards second-time migrants was as follows:

Return coolies re-emigrating are not much in favor among Emigration Agents, either because they have grown too old, or on account of the trouble they often cause among the new coolies by bad advice and in other ways presuming on their superior knowledge and experience. Unless they are particularly strong and good laborers, the Emigration Agents reject them, and if the number thus rejected were added to those who return to the colony, the total would be much larger. (Comins 1893c:10)

CONCLUSION

An analysis of the repatriation, readjustment, and second-term migration of ex-indentured laborers from British Guiana and Trinidad from 1838-1955 shows an unusual but under-researched migration dynamic of Indo-Caribbean indenture. Much attention has been given to Indian indentured laborers’ arrival in and departure from India to the Caribbean and back to India but the re-adjustment to their home and migration from India to the Caribbean for the second time has been largely ignored in Indo-Caribbean literature. Yet, second-term migration does not only challenge the neoslave scholarship of Indo-Caribbean indenture but forces us to seek an answer for or to understand why streams of remigrants would want to come to work in the Caribbean under an oppressive labor system. Indeed, remigration does not support the view that the indenture system was totally oppressive. In fact, it reveals that the system was also semi-free which provided opportunities for personal, familial, and community reconstruction, adaptation, and above all, advancement.

Why Indians migrated for a second and even third time to the Caribbean is complex and multifaceted. Two broad but interrelated characteristics are responsible for the remigration of Indians to the Caribbean: their Caribbean indentured experience and the inflexible social and economic structure in India. Those who remigrated for the second reason were not expected to

34. PP, 1910, XXVII (Cd. 5192-94), Part II: Report of the Committee on Emigration, paragraph no. 4849, p. 181.
be permanent settlers in the Caribbean but temporary laborers until some solutions were found for the loss of slave labor. The indenture system stipulated that Indians work for three to ten years and return home. The colonized Indian government insisted on this ordinance mainly to protect Indians abroad and to bring badly needed revenues to India. Special circumstances, however, emerged to challenge the very nature of indenture while Indians were in the Caribbean. The planters argued for the abolishment of the laborers’ right to a free return passage and to exchange it for the granting of small parcels of land so that these Indians would be transformed from sojourners to permanent settlers in the Caribbean. The impetus for the radical change of policy was to avoid financial responsibility and to provide a permanent cheap labor supply for the planter class. Remigration to the Caribbean then was interconnected with the planters’ aim to settle Indians in the region. The eventual settlement of Indians, which began after the 1870s, provided a domain or domicile for remigrants. Had it not been for the permanent settlement schemes there might not have been any remigration to the Caribbean. The second-term migrants came to the Caribbean to stay and to start a new life to which, for the most part, they were accustomed, or with which they were familiar. Indeed, they were able to transplant, secure, and sustain their culture in the Caribbean amid westernization.

The Caribbean experience, despite its authoritarian and repressive characteristics, transformed indentured Indians. Many became harsher from plantation labor; many acquired new eating habits, eating fish and meat as well as consuming alcohol; many paid little attention to caste rules and embraced religion liberally; many were exposed to Christian missionary conversion efforts. Interestingly, these “Western habits” were not enforced or enhanced by the plantation system, but by Indians themselves. Low-caste Indians, for instance, were more than eager to dispel the restrictive caste system and accept the flexible Caribbean class system. Problems arose, however, when these new behaviors were taken to India.

The Indian social structure was not even remotely open to anything different from its core values. Social rules or customs that revolved around pure versus impure, high versus low caste, male versus female authority, extended versus traditional family patterns, and traditional versus modern had not changed since Indians departed for the Caribbean. Return migrants, whether culturally transformed or not, violated caste rules. Travel overseas was a serious violation to be punished with caste expulsion. Return migrants had the option to be reinstated into their respective caste through an expensive ceremony. However, many could not afford it, or they dismissed the ceremony. Other return migrants were rejected by their families for fear that they would share in the returnees’ disgrace. Caribbean-born children and long-term return residents had a particularly difficult time accepting the
strict Indian social customs. For these reasons, remigration to the Caribbean occurred in spite of the planters’ conservative policy of limited acceptance.

REFERENCES


—, 1893b. Note on Emigration from India to Trinidad. Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat.

—, 1893c. Note on the Abolition of Return Passages to East Indian Immigrants from the Colonies of Trinidad and British Guiana. Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat.


RAJKUMAR, N.V., 1951. *Indians Outside India*. Delhi, India: All India Congress.


LOMARSH ROOPNARINE
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
University of the Virgin Islands
St. Croix USVI 00850
<lroopna@uvi.edu>
In *Two Thousand Seasons*, the great Ghanaian novelist Ayi Kwei Armah describes the effects of centuries of European exploitation and violence in Africa and the alienation and death that separated Ghanaians in 1973 (when the book was published) from those before them. “Pieces cut off from their whole are nothing but dead fragments,” he laments. “From the unending stream of our remembrance the harbingers of death break off meaningless fractions. Their carriers bring us this news of shards. Their message: behold this paltriness; this is all your history” (Armah 1973:2). It is this seeming paltriness, this history of meaningless fractions that Anne C. Bailey and Saidiya Hartman explore in their latest works, identifying and mending shards of memory and written and oral fragments into recognizable and meaningful forms. As with Armah in *Two Thousand Seasons*, for Bailey and Hartman, “the linking of those gone, ourselves here, those coming ... it is that remembrance that calls us” (Armah 1973:xiii). Both of them, haunted by remembrance and driven by a personal quest for reconciliation with the past and a scholarly desire for the truth, are unwilling to accept the past as passed, or to settle for the scattered silence that so often substitutes for the history of Africans and those of the diaspora.

Focusing on the transatlantic slave trade in Ghana and its legacies, Bailey’s *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade* and Hartman’s *Lose Your Mother* are two of the most significant recent works in a field of “history-memory” studies that attempt to illuminate the past from the perspective of Africans,
as well as those of the diaspora. Unlike others in the field, however, Bailey and Hartman seek less to separate the muddied waters of memory and history than to plumb their confluence for unspoken truths. Where other scholars have warned against conflating history (“the critical, skeptical, empirical source-bound reconstruction of past events”) and memory (“the spontaneous, unquestioned experience of the past”) (Bailyn 2001:249, 250), Bailey and Hartman, in very different ways, combine the two so that, at times, neither is quite recognizable from the other. They also challenge those historians who would admonish against “exploring the slave trade through the moral dimensions of local African memory” (Austen 2001:237). Their aims, though not identical, are more in line with those of Rosalind Shaw, who has sought “a history of moral imagination . . . told primarily in the language of practical memory through places and practices, images and visions, rituals and rumors” (Shaw 2002:22). While Bailey and Hartman scrupulously document the oral and written sources they cite, their works – told in their unfaltering, immediate voices as narrators – are unlikely to win over scholars wary of emotion and present-day concerns in historical writing.

As much as *African Voices* and *Lose Your Mother* share in subject matter, they differ greatly in style, approach, and substance. Bailey’s *African Voices*, a revision of her 1998 dissertation, centers upon the slave trade as experienced by the Anlo Ewe society in what is now southeastern Ghana. Bailey seizes on vast gaps in the written record and, through evidence collected during 42 interviews conducted between 1992 and 2001, weaves together competing narratives that add African voices to those of Europeans and Americans, reorienting the chronology of slave trading in the area in fundamental ways. Perhaps the most important of her findings is the significance of “The Incident at Atorkor” in the historical memory of the Ewe people, an event in 1856 that signaled a turning point in the nature of slave trading along the West African coast – traders were now kidnapping members of coastal communities that were long-established intermediaries between European and American traders on the coast and domestic traders in the interior (p. 27). Bailey thus concludes that the transatlantic trade was a cycle that began with the kidnapping and general chaos wrought by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europeans. This initial period was followed by an era of “systematized operations” in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (through which coastal African peoples supplied slaves from the interior to European and American traders). Then, mirroring to some degree the disarray of the slave trade’s initial phases, “a period of disorder and chaos” emerged around 1856,

in which random incidents, such as that which occurred at Atorkor, fed the increased demand for illegal slave voyages to Cuba and Brazil (p. 151).

Bailey successfully synthesizes “the fragments, the broken pieces of history and narrative that periodically, but not consistently, break the overwhelming silence on this period of slavery” (pp. 21-22). *African Voices* is a straightforward academic exploration of slavery in West Africa, the workings of the transatlantic slave trade, and the effects of both on the peoples of West Africa, presented in an accessible way that might appeal to undergraduates in an African history survey or a course on the transatlantic slave trade. But it is also a case for Western culpability and a passionate argument and justification for “some sort of redress” for the “real and devastating impact of the slave trade on the Ewe community” and other African peoples (p. 225). In her final chapter, Bailey not only offers a brief, excellent overview of the history of the reparations movement, but outlines two forms of reparations “worthy for consideration” – reparations as redress and as “rememory” (p. 229). “That there is a debt to be paid, there can be little doubt,” she argues (p. 225). In this way, *African Voices* is as much a call for justice and action in the present as it is an explanation of how the slave trade may have functioned in Atorkor, Bono Manso, and other sites in West Africa in the past.  

Hartman’s *Lose Your Mother* is also an investigation of splintered pieces of the past as well as an exploration of the very processes of remembering and forgetting today. She, like Bailey, wants to know why we choose to remember, forget, or silence the past and how, particularly, such processes affect the representation of slavery and the slave trade in Ghana today. Fragments, shards, and broken memories drive Hartman’s quest to reconcile and reconstruct the African past, as well as her own, a genealogy that “added up to little more than a random assortment of details about alcoholics, prosperous merchants, and dispassionate benefactors” (p. 77). Hartman’s journey along the slave routes of Ghana is, more than Bailey’s, a search for her own identity, for belonging, for a home. Like the “spectral figures” (p. 81) that haunt her research, an unspoken question colors nearly every observation she makes on contemporary Ghanaian society: how African or how Ghanaian is an African American academic from New York City, with roots in rural Alabama, Curacao, and Ghana?

Written more as memoir, biography, or novel than academic prose, *Lose Your Mother* reveals itself in fragments, in broken pieces, in thoughts and

2. For more on the role of historians and anthropologists in the reparations movement, see the conference papers delivered at “Repairing the Past: Confronting the Legacies of Slavery, Genocide, and Caste,” Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition, Yale University, October 27-29, 2005, http://www.yale.edu/glec/justice/index.htm.
events that defy chronology – much as a dream or a series of memories might be hastily (but eloquently) scribbled down before one forgets. For example, Chapter 4, “Come, Go Back, Child” begins at the entrance of present-day Elmina castle, where Hartman stands reading a sign declaring, “No one is allowed inside this area except tourists” (p. 84). At the sounds of the voices of youths attempting to woo foreign visitors to the castle, her thoughts center on the words of one of the children: “Because of the slave trade you lose your mother” (p. 85). Parting with the present, Hartman ruminates on the roots and meaning of the Akan word onkor, or slave; she then jumps to the island of St. John and recalls the details of a slave revolt that occurred there in 1733, only to move on to thoughts of her grandfather in Brooklyn in the twentieth century. Finally, she returns to Elmina Castle, where she stands in “the dark recesses of the holding cell for female slaves” contemplating her isolation and the terror of the past (p. 99). Hartman’s transitions – geographic, thematic, and chronological – are as seamless as they are dramatic.

The power and charm of Hartman’s narrative stem from her ability to allow herself certain liberties typically untaken by the straight-laced scholar. She recreates lengthy conversations that entertain as well as depict various events, places, and characters in fine-grained detail. In fact, in a number of instances, she simply imagines what she could not find in written records or the memories of those she encountered, as she does with the experiences of Kwabena, or Ottabah Cugoano, in the dungeon at Anomabu or Cormantin. Unsatisfied with Cugoano’s brief published account of his experiences (containing, sadly, more silence than description), Hartman describes in lurid detail what he might have experienced, based upon her reading of his 1787 antislavery tract, Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery. Like her many frustrations with other accounts in the book, written and oral, Hartman admits, “I was most interested in the story he had been disinclined to share” (p. 123). Indeed, some of the most compelling passages of Lose Your Mother are conversations between Hartman and herself, history imagined (and probable, believable) but unsubstantiated, as in the five-page description of those who “fled from slave raiders and traders from Asante, Gonja, Dagomba, and Mossi” (pp. 222-26). But need history have a footnote, if we know that it happened?

Most impressive is Hartman’s treatment of several key historiographical issues that have dominated the work of Africanists and Americanists since the 1960s, especially those concerning Africans’ roles in the transatlantic slave trade. Both Bailey and Hartman resolve the question of African involvement in the trade by illustrating damaging effects of the trade, on the one hand, and compelling examples of African agency and resistance on the other. For Bailey, “dual involvement of Europeans and Africans in the slave trade ... did not imply equal partnership but rather parallel lines of activity originating from different cultural and political spaces” (p. 65). In document-
ing the operations of the trade, Bailey convincingly shows that European and American actors controlled five of its six “legs” (p. 151). For Hartman, the “unequal returns” of the trade are best illustrated in the flow of cowry shells to West Africa as inconvertible currency: “War and predation enabled Africa to produce slaves and purchase luxury goods, and permitted Europe to accumulate the capital necessary for economic development” (p. 208). Both authors agree with much of what Walter Rodney and Eric Williams had to say about the slave trade’s deleterious effects on African society and its contribution to furthering economic and political institutions in Europe and America.

For Bailey and Hartman, it is less a question of deciding whether Africans were complicit in the transatlantic trade (it is clear that many were) than determining which Africans, in which areas, and during which periods, chose or were driven to participate as actors in the commerce. Bailey argues that “class issues were at the heart of the level and depth of slave trading that became systematized in the eighteenth century in the Ewe example and at other periods in other regions” (p. 89). Hartman sees kinship, rather than class, as the determining factor in who sold whom into slavery. “Africans did not sell their brothers and sisters into slavery,” she concludes. “They sold strangers: those outside the web of kin and clan relationships, nonmembers of the polity, foreigners and barbarians at the outskirts of their country, and lawbreakers expelled from society” (p. 5). For both authors, the memory of African complicity in the trade, as well as the guarded knowledge of who descends from slaves and masters – and who not – in contemporary Ghanaian society, explains much of the silence on the issue and clarifies why ancestors’ involvement in slavery and the slave trade – either as slaves or masters – is still a source of shame today.¹

Looking out across the Atlantic in Two Thousand Seasons, Armah asks, “Is it a wonder we have been flung so far from the way? that our people are scattered even into the desert, across the sea, over and away from this land, and we have forgotten how to recognize ourselves?” (1973:2). Writing nearly thirty-five years later, Bailey and Hartman share Armah’s dedication to remembrance and his conception of African diaspora history and the history of the transatlantic slave trade, still largely written only in groupings of shards, fractions, and fragments. But, as Bailey and Hartman demonstrate, a new generation of scholars has begun to answer his elegy for mutual recognition and shared identity. In two vastly differing accounts of the memory and legacies of slavery and the slave trade in Ghana, Bailey and Hartman demonstrate that a shared, recoverable past is more than mere possibility. For

¹. For examples of how this and related issues are represented in mainstream African media today see, for example, Duodu 2003, 2005 and M’Bokolo 2003.
Bailey, the prospect of reparations promises hope for “healing the wounds of the past” (p. 230). For Hartman, the singing of four girls jumping rope in Gwolou provides the conclusive proof of the existence of a common past: “Here it was – my song, the song of the lost tribe. I closed my eyes and I listened” (p. 235).

REFERENCES


TED MARIS-WOLF
Department of History
College of William and Mary
Williamsburg VA 23187-8795, U.S.A.
<edmari@wm.edu>
DISCOVERING THE REALM OF EL DORADO: RALEGH AND SCHOMBURGK IN THE GUIANAS

Sir Walter Ralegh’s Discoverie of Guiana. JOYCE LORIMER (ed.). London: Ashgate (published for the Hakluyt Society), 2006. xcvii + 360 pp. (Cloth £55.00)


The historiography and ethnology of northeastern South America has, with the publication of these two excellent volumes, been firmly and illuminatingly advanced. Firmly since the scholarly abilities of both editors in their preparation of the texts and key source materials make these works definitive. And illuminatingly because the primary documentary and published materials relating to both Walter Ralegh and Robert Schomburgk have, in different ways, been difficult to access. In the case of Ralegh (and here I am writing as the editor of a recent edition of his Discoverie) the location of the original source manuscript for the 1596 edition was unknown and thought lost. In the case of Schomburgk the publication of his travel accounts in the form of short articles, mostly in the Royal Geographical Journal, often made it difficult to access or copy these accounts. The result was that our understanding of the full impact of his travels and the corpus of his published work was considerably lessened.

Peter Rivière has produced two outstanding volumes which go far toward rectifying this obscuring of Schomburgk’s achievement by showing the importance of his legacy of travel and description for understanding a crucial period in the history of northeastern South America. There is no other scholar of this region who could have done such a fine job of setting the journeys and writings of Robert Schomburgk in their appropriate context.
The period from the 1830s to the turn of the century was one of unparalleled industrial and capital expansion of Europe across the globe. In that process Britain was to the fore and its burgeoning middle classes, firmly entwined with the landed elites, sought to improve and extend its opportunities, in part through travel and travel literature. As a result the writings from this era of imperial consolidation reflect both the changing social origins of travelers and the purposes and topics on which they write. A central element in this imperial gaze was the lens of “Science” which made the otherwise individual and idiosyncratic observer a source of credible and possibly profitable information. As a result travel writing is as much concerned with consolidation of existing empire as it is with the exploration and discovery of new lands. Indeed the tenor of much of these writings suggests that such discovery, with all its attendant romantic overtones, should now be supplanted by the stolid if solid work of colonial development.

Robert Schomburgk then is a key figure in the consolidation of the British presence in this region of northeastern South America but, as Rivière points out, unlike many of his contemporaries and peers such as Richard Burton or David Livingstone, and although a winner of the Royal Geographical Society’s prestigious Gold Medal in 1840, he is little known in the wider annals of nineteenth-century geographic exploration and ethnological description. The scattered nature of his publications, the lack of a published book-length work, and the fact that he spent little time in Britain all contributed to this rather obscure legacy.

Rivière’s introduction to Schomburgk’s writings does a superb job of lessening that obscurity and placing Schomburgk in the wider context of British imperial geography and exploration. A short biographical section, informing us of the family history, personal appearance, and proclivities of Schomburgk, moves efficiently to a consideration of Schomburgk’s earliest sojourn in the Americas, his 1830 trip to the Virgin Islands where he collected plants for the Linnaean Society.

It was during this time that he began contacts also with the Royal Geographical Society, which was fortuitous as his relationship with the Linnaean Society did not prove fruitful. However, his turn to geography was also caused by his witnessing of the aftermath of the wreck of three slave ships off Anegada, which produced the gruesome sight of the dead slaves still chained to their benches bobbing just beneath waves offshore (p. 6).

Schomburgk had failed to gain support from the Linnaean Society for projected exploration and plant gathering in the United States Mississippi region and his early approaches to the Royal Geographical Society nearly came unstuck for similar reasons. Nonetheless Schomburgk did finally accept the suggestion that he work in South America, specifically in the Orinoco basin and, of course, British Guiana whose political boundaries he did so much to define. Rivière carefully outlines Schomburgk’s travels against the
background of useful summaries of the political economy of the colony, its indigenous inhabitants, and the scientific ideas that preoccupied Schomburgk in his research in the interior.

Schomburgk’s various accounts of his interior journeys, which originally appeared in the Royal Geographical Society’s journal, are helpfully situated by brief introductory discussion. Essential bibliographical information on subsequent reprintings and detailed accounts of the circumstances surrounding each expedition thus also make this volume an invaluable work for anyone trying to understand the nature of literary scientific production at this time.

The complex bibliographical trail that Schomburgk left, the centrality of his experience to a proper historical understanding of British Guiana, and the prolific nature of the man both textually and in his travels are evident in these volumes, which constitute essential reading for any serious historian of the region.

In a similar vein Joyce Lorimer has produced an outstanding work deriving from the discovery of Raleigh’s manuscript for the Discoverie at Lambeth Palace in England. I became aware of this discovery some fifteen years ago through a personal communication from Lorimer. At that time I was beginning my own research for a projected edition of Raleigh’s work which was published in 1997. As a result I have waited with mild anxiety ever since, being all too aware that the manuscript version that Lorimer was editing could completely undercut the interpretations that I had based on the published edition, perhaps by revealing a substantive difference, or series of differences, between the original manuscript and the published edition of 1596. Of course, although this would be personally frustrating it would also be an exciting intellectual event, as such differences between manuscript and published version would open up a whole new hermeneutical field of inquiry and debate.

So it is with mixed feelings that, on reading the Lorimer volume, I realized that there were actually only minor and negligible differences between the manuscript and published versions. Indeed, as I read the volume relief at realizing my edition was still relevant gradually gave way to mild disappointment that in fact little more was to be learned from the manuscript version. There are some nice ethnological details that were excised for publication, including mention of “crystals” and their uses, hammocks, herbal remedies, slaving, and local political relations with the Spanish. However, none of these tidbits affects the overall interpretation of Raleigh’s ethnological reportage and the architecture of his account is exactly the same.

As a result, the thrust of Lorimer’s introductory essay to the volume is to situate Raleigh and his writing in the political context of Elizabethan and Jacobean England. In this way Lorimer provides a fascinating complement to anthropological readings of the text, which she also incorporates into her
assessment of Ralegh’s writing. In this way her work is a valuable historiographically based edition which will be of particular interest to historians of the English court and its violent changes of regime in the period 1590-1620.

My own ethnological reading of Ralegh suggested to me that the then-prevalent historian’s assessment of Ralegh as an insubstantial fantasist was completely inadequate, given the evidence of accurate and detailed reportage in the Discoverie. Lorimer’s evaluation of his political performance and the place of the Discoverie within that accords well with this view, and while it is too much to say that Ralegh is thereby historiographically rehabilitated as a serious political force in his day, it seems likely that such a view will emerge from subsequent evaluations. In short, history and ethnology tend to the same conclusion as regards the significance of the Discoverie, both then and now. Both Rivière and Lorimer are to be applauded for putting into place fundamental building blocks for the history and anthropology of northeastern South America. Their contributions will remain required reading for many decades to come.

NEIL L. WHITEHEAD
Department of Anthropology
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Madison WI 53706, U.S.A.
<nlwhiteh@wisc.edu>
It is once again our solemn duty to induct a select group of scholars into the Caribbeeanist Hall of Shame. Despite cordial reminders over a period of many months, these colleagues have neither produced the reviews that they promised nor returned the books so that someone else could take on the task. As is our custom, and in an attempt to exercise discretion and protect the reputation of innocent Caribbeeanists, we follow the eighteenth-century convention in identifying delinquent reviewers by first and last initials.

- *Out of Order! Anthony Winkler and White West Indian Writing*, by Kim Robinson-Walcott (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2006. x + 208 pp., paper US$ 25.00) (K—e D—s)
- *Caribbean Wars Untold: A Salute to the British West Indies*, by Humphrey Metzgen & John Graham (Kingston: University of West Indies Press, 2007. xv + 256 pp., paper US$ 20.00) (G—d H—e)
As always, we begin our yearly roundup with works of Caribbean literature that have come our way – fiction, poetry, and drama (none of which are otherwise reviewed in the journal).

First, novels. In Guyanese-born poet and novelist David Dabydeen’s *Molly and the Muslim Stick* (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2008, paper £5.15), a young Lancashire girl, hardened by the abuse of her coal-mining father and his band of “pals” in the period between the two world wars, becomes susceptible to demons, and skilled at the “evocation of the ghastly and distressing.” By the time she enters into conversation with her walking stick, we’re already deep into a world of clairvoyance and the supernatural, and ready to follow the rest of her mythopoetic life story, which eventually leads her from Coventry (incidentally, where Dabydeen teaches) to the jungles of Demerara, all told in sumptuous but delicate prose. In some ways, *Molly* is a reprise of themes explored in Dabydeen’s *Our Lady of Demerara* (Leeds, UK: Peepal Tree Press, 2008, paper £9.99), first published in cloth in 2004, a brooding experimental novel that also moves across decades and between working-class Coventry and Guyana, this time involving, as well, East Indians and Irish priests in both sites. *Trouble Tree* (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2008, paper US$ 11.95) is the debut novel of John Hill Porter, a U.S. expat who retired some years ago to Barbados. This murder mystery, focusing on Redlegs, moves between Brooklyn and the island, told through the diaries of a NYPD detective. Though the writing, plotting, and characterization are sometimes heavy-handed, there’s a generosity about people, places, and history that keeps one turning the pages and wanting more. *Rum Justice* (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2008, paper £6.70) is an English version of Dutch journalist and historian Jolien Harmsen’s racy whodunnit, *Rum, Roti, Onrecht* (Amsterdam: Luitingh-Sijthoff, 2003): expats (Dutch, Australian, English, American) on a St.-Lucian-like island, where guns, booze, drugs, Rent-a-Rasta sex, corruption, and gossip call for crude dialog, with surrounding prose to match – not a pretty picture of the contemporary Caribbean.

*Hamel, the Obeah Man* (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2008, paper £8.50, with a new introduction by Amon Saba Sakana and notes by John Gilmore), is a quintessential Gothic novel, except that the setting is early nineteenth-century Jamaica, shifting between the great house of the master and the labyrinthine cave of rebel slaves. Treatment of the themes of race and colonialism – and the narrator’s sensitivity to the sufferings and injustices of slavery combined with a belief in white racial superiority – raise questions about the author’s identity and direct experience in the Caribbean. *A Permanent Freedom* (Leeds, UK: Peepal Tree Press, 2008, paper £8.99) is Curdella Forbes’s second novel, telling nine partially interwoven stories about migration, love, death, sexual attraction, and memory in Jamaica and the United States. And Laura Fish’s *Strange Music* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2008, cloth £16.99) weaves a dense, textured narrative, based in part on historical events and sources, of three
women’s inner lives during the period 1837-1840, moving between England (and the diaries of poet Elizabeth Barrett) and the Barrett estates in Jamaica during the sufferings of apprenticeship – ambitious, imaginative, linguistically challenging, and very worthwhile.

Anthony C. Winkler’s latest, *The Duppy* (New York: Akashic Books, 2008, paper US$ 13.95) follows in the footsteps of *The Lunatic, Dog War,* and all the others, combining everyday Jamaican realities with his special brand of jaw-dropping humor – when Baps the shopkeeper (and narrator) drops dead and becomes a duppy, the heaven he’s transported to (in a crowded minibus) is full of surprises; in fact it turns out to resemble a bawdier version of Jamaica. Winkler also has now brought out *Trust the Darkness: My Life as a Writer* (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2008, cloth £10.00), a matter-of-fact autobiography, tracing his movement from growing up as a white Jamaican to his discovery as a youth of the United States, and his subsequent shuttling back and forth as a writer, two of whose stories were made into Hollywood films.

Finally, in *Black Is Black* (Monaco: Éditions Alphée, 2008, paper €19.90), which despite its title is in French, Raphaël Confiant picks up the carnavalesque tone of his *Bassins des ouragans* (Paris: Éditions Mille et une nuits, 1994) to mock numerous aspects of the “franco-colonial civilization” of Martinique, weaving a caustic, cynical, bitter, and intended-to-be comic tale that includes a Kossovar in Belgium who makes love to a woman fourteen times in one night, a transvestite flight attendant on Air Panama, French publishers credulous about the Caribbean exotic, and the joyful discovery on a Martiniquan beach by a “Black Anglo-Saxon Protestant Professor of Gender Studies from Massachusetts” of the 84-inch-long member of “an authentic negro.”

Next, poetry. Tobago-born M. NourbSe Philip’s *Zong!* (Middletown CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2008, cloth US$ 22.95) is a remarkable poetic rendering, somewhere between a chant, a moan, and a scream, of the infamous 1781 throwing overboard of more than 130 enslaved Africans so the ship’s owners could collect insurance monies – a haunting, disturbing reflection on history, memory, and forgetting. *Leaving Traces* (Leeds, UK: Peepal Tree Press, 2008, paper £8.99), by Jamaican scholar and poet Velma Pollard, is an accessible collection of poems that are warm, honest, and intelligent, and that modestly but deftly combine the political and personal. *After Image* (Leeds, UK: Peepal Tree Press, 2008, paper £7.99) are poems drawn from the manuscripts left by Jamaican Dennis Scott after his death in 1991, collected here by his friend Mervyn Morris – frank, vibrant, vernacular, and moving. *Limestone: An Epic Poem of Barbados* (Leeds, UK: Peepal Tree Press, 2008, paper £9.99), by the Georgia-based Bajan poet and novelist Anthony Kellman, evokes major events in the island’s history, from European conquest through particular slave revolts and emancipation and beyond, to finally set-
tle on details of the political and cultural happenings of the postindependence period, all drawing on the rhythms of the Tuk or ruk-a-tuk bands.


Finally, drama. In *Bellas Gate Boy* (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2008, £5.95), Jamaican dramatist Trevor Rhone chronicles his early life in the countryside, trying his fate in drama school in London, and his eventual return to the challenges of building a Jamaican theater. The accompanying CD features Rhone performing the two-act comic monologue.

Three books about writers and the literature they produce. *Caribbean Literature after Independence: The Case of Earl Lovelace*, edited by Bill Schwarz (London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2008, paper US$ 30.00), is a warm and insightful set of appreciations of Lovelace’s work, setting it for the first time firmly within both the Trinidadian and broader Anglophone Caribbean historical context. We particularly liked the contributions by Schwarz, John Thieme, Louis James, and Lawrence Scott, which – along with those by others – made us want to rush back to reread the novels and short stories. *Love Labor Liberation in Lasana Sekou* (Philipsburg, St. Martin: House of Nehesi, 2007, paper US$ 15.00), by Monserratan historian and poet Howard A. Fergus, heaps paean of critical praise (and comparisons with everyone from John Donne to Aimé Césaire) on the St. Martin poet and House of Nehesi publisher, covering such themes (besides the three in the book’s title) as folk culture and history and the aesthetics of the poet. *Joseph Zobel: Le coeur en Martinique et les pieds en Cévennes* (Matoury, Guyane: Ibis Rouge, 2008, paper €20.00), by novelist and poet José Le Moigne, is
an affectionate personal tribute to one of Martinique’s greatest twentieth-century novelists, best known for La rue cases-nègres and Diab’-la.

Martiniquan novelist and polemicist Raphaël Confiant, with the support of GEREC-F (Groupe d’études et de recherches en espace créole et francophone) at the Université des Antilles et de la Guyane, has brought out a monumental (1427-page), two-volume Dictionnaire créole martiniquais-français (Matoury, Guyane: Ibis Rouge, 2007, paper €69.00). Announcing itself as the first dictionary of Martiniquan Creole ever published, it provides some fifty pages on such subjects as erosion in the use of Creole over recent decades, published works on and in the language, and the terminology, sources, and methods used in compiling the dictionary. Most entries include a sentence using the word (often from Creole literary sources) and its French translation, and some cite longer explanatory texts from French sources. Given the unintelligibility of Martiniquan Creole to French speakers, we were struck by the remarkably high proportion of Creole words with clear French origins. (Our life in Martinique has also made us aware of how much Martiniquan French is permeated with creolisms. Last month in Paris we were corrected when we alluded to the finissement of a project; Confiant’s dictionary has helped us understand that finisman [termination, finishing touches] is what Parisians call finition.) All in all, this dictionary is a very welcome resource.

The year’s social science essays include Habiter le monde: Martinique 1946-2006, by Marie-Hélène Léotin (Matoury, Guyane: Ibis Rouge, 2008, paper €15.00), a strange little left-leaning history of postdepartmentalization Martinique, stressing labor conflicts, the decline of industry and rise of consumerism, and the gross imbalances of the economy (and its unparalleled dependence on France). In a very brief final chapter (and on the back jacket), Léotin celebrates (without any apparent irony) the recent growth of a Martiniquan identity – such things as the fact that local rums now have an “Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée” label from the French authorities and that aspects of the folkloric patrimoine, like the tour des yoles (traditional sailing craft), are growing in popularity. It’s as if the Glissant of Le discours antillais, who railed against just such false consciousness, had been completely forgotten. Then there’s the caustic and clever Le monde tel qu’il est: Entretien à propos de Quand les murs tombent de E. Glissant et P. Chamoiseau (Vauclin, Martinique: Lakouzémi, 2008, paper €10.00), by poet-activist Monchoachi – who also wrote Eloge de la servilité, a critique of the famous Eloge de la créolité. In this new work, Monchoachi takes Glissant and Chamoiseau to task for ignoring their true place in the world, for chastising (from their unacknowledged position of colonisés!) the French state for not properly defending Republican values. Gilbert Pago’s Lumina Sophie dite « Surprise » 1848-1879: Insurgée et bagnarde (Matoury, Guyane: Ibis Rouge, 2008, paper €15.00) is a brief but rewarding history/biography set in postemancipa-
tion Martinique, telling the story of a young female participant in the 1870 Insurrection of the South and her banishment to the bagne of Guyane.

Then a pair on Guyane. Comprendre la Guyane aujourd’hui: Un département français dans la région des Guyanes, edited by Serge Mam Lam Fouck (Matoury, Guyane: Ibis Rouge, 2007, paper €40.00) is a more-than-700-page collection of thirty-some individual articles, two-thirds written by residents, on diverse but expectable aspects of life in this faraway speck of France in South America, ranging from history, geography, and education to language and identity. In Guyane Française: L’or de la honte (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2007, €18.00), French journalist Axel May presents the results of months of traveling and interviews with players at every level – the prefect and police chiefs, gendarmes and légionnaires, the owners of large local mines and the poorest small-scale garimpeiros, and prostitutes – to trace a devastating picture of the effects of gold extraction on the people and forest of Guyane. From failed state policies dictated in Paris and the complicity of local politicians to the machinations of notorious multinationals such as Cambior (Iamgold), Golden Star, and Newmont, and with an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 illegal Brazilian immigrants now working in small-scale mining, Guyane (like neighboring Suriname) is deeply affected by the steep rise in the international price of the precious metal. May shows that no matter how hard the state has tried to clamp down on illegals (and these efforts are often desultory), the Brazilians manage to adjust and to continue bringing vast quantities of heavy earth-moving equipment, barrels of gasoline and diesel, and tons of mercury deep into the uncharted forest, creating major ecological and public health depredations. No end is in sight.

Our chosen reviewer was unable, for personal reasons, to complete his review of France and the American Tropics to 1700: Tropics of Discontent?, by Philip P. Boucher (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008, paper US$ 24.95), which we bring to readers’ attention with our apologies.

Three other historical works. Slave Revolts, by Johannes Postma (Westport CT: Greenwood, 2008, cloth US$ 45.00), “intended for high school and junior college students,” provides a brief introduction to revolt and maroonage, from Ancient Greece to Korea and on to Africa and the Americas. Jamaica in 1687: The Taylor Manuscript at the National Library of Jamaica (Kingston: University of Jamaica Press, 2008, cloth US$ 60.00), edited by David Buisseret, some thirty years in the making, publishes for the first time the most significant portions of Taylor’s manuscript, expertly edited, and containing fascinating passages on everything from flora and fauna to the beliefs and practices of the island’s enslaved Africans. K’ranti! De Surinaamse pers 1774-2008, edited by Archie Sumter, Angelie Sens, Marc de Koninck, and Ellen de Vries (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2008, paper €24.50), which accompanied an exhibition in the Persmuseum in Amsterdam, is the first
full-blown history of Suriname newspapers from the eighteenth century to the present.

As for the birds, *Birds of the West Indies* and *Birds of the Dominican Republic and Haiti* – multiauthored paperback field guides published by Princeton University Press (in 2003 and 2006, respectively) – offer color images plus information on voice, status and range, habitat, and danger of extinction for well over a thousand of the Caribbean’s feathered friends. The former (216 pp., US$ 24.95) is an abbreviated paperback edition of the same authors’ more comprehensive 1998 volume of (nearly) the same title (see *NWIG* 74:129-30). The latter (258 pp., US$ 35.00) contains a number of well-done full-page illustrations of birds in their habitat and is particularly rich in detailed information. A related work is *Hispaniola: A Photographic Journey through Island Biodiversity* / *Hispaniola: Biodiversidad a través de un recorrido fotográfico*, by Eladio Fernández (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 2007, cloth US$ 60.00), which has bilingual texts by specialists on birds, insects, reptiles, and flora and fauna to accompany the hundreds of spectacular color images.

The scholar who agreed to review *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World*, by Susan Scott Parrish (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006, paper US$ 22.50), concluded that the book was not worth a *NWIG* review but helpfully explained why: “While the book provided a general overview of well-known and already well-covered European travelers’ reports of the Atlantic colonies, it did not seriously engage with the exciting body of criticism that has developed in the past few decades about the colonial construction of these spaces, particularly work in Caribbean Studies. Structurally, indigenous and African contributions to the fashioning of Atlantic ‘natural history’ seem like afterthoughts to a representation of European (and Euro-American) masculinity as originary agent of the New World.”

*Maria Sibylla Merian & Daughters: Women of Art and Science*, by Ellen Reitsma (Amsterdam: The Rembrandt House Museum; Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008, paper US$ 44.95), is a thick catalogue of the Merian exhibition that traveled from Amsterdam to Los Angeles and reproduces a large number of Merian’s works; only a relatively small portion of the book is devoted to the Suriname years and its productions. For those primarily interested in the technical (art historical) aspects of Merian’s insect paintings and drawings, the book is a must. Nonetheless, Kim Todd’s *Chrysalis: Maria Sibylla Merian and the Secret of Metamorphosis*, mentioned in last year’s Bookshelf, in our view does a better job of capturing the tone and significance of Merian’s Suriname work.

Several visual works. *Llewellyn Xavier: His Life and Work*, by Llewellyn Xavier and Edward Lucie-Smith with a foreword by Lowery Stokes Sims (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2007, cloth £25.00), illustrates the impres-
sive range of this St. Lucian artist’s creativity, from luminous abstract paintings and brilliant renderings of plants and animals to works inspired by George Jackson’s prison letters and collages using recycled materials that reflect Xavier’s abiding concern for the fate of the island’s environment.

*El Caribe precocolombino: Fray Ramón Pané y el universo taíno* (Barcelona: Museu Barbier-Mueller, 2008, paper €22.00), edited by José R. Oliver, Colin McEwen, and Anna Casa Gilberga, is the sumptuous color catalog, written by numerous specialists, of an exhibition that traveled from Barcelona to the British Museum and the Museo de América. *Vodu: kunst en mystiek uit Haïti* (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2008, paper €24.50), edited by Jacques Hainard, Philippe Mathez, and Olivier Schninz, is the Dutch-language version of the catalog of an exhibition originating in the Musée d’ethnographie de Genève that was then shown at the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam (and later in Sweden and at two German museums), based mainly on the astonishing ritual materials brought back from a half century of residence by Swiss collector Marianne Lehmann. *Black Is Beautiful: Rubens to Dumas*, edited by Elmer Kolfin and Esther Schreuder (Zwolle, the Netherlands: Waanders Publishers, 2008, cloth €22.50), accompanied an exhibition at Amsterdam’s Nieuwe Kerk that was designed to show “the attraction exerted by black people on Dutch artists over seven centuries.” Self-consciously choosing to show how Dutch artists depicted blacks as beautiful people, the project has been rightly criticized for sanitizing art history, showing for example the Stedman/Blake engraving of a happy slave family but not their iconic depictions of torture and execution. *Havana Deco*, by Alejandro G. Alonso, Pedro Contreras, and Martino Fagiuoli (New York: Norton, 2007, cloth US$ 39.95), creates a stunning record of how Cuban architects, engineers, and graphic artists transformed art deco into a Caribbean mode. Finally, postcards from the early twentieth-century heyday of posed souvenir images shot in the French Antilles are grouped in four small, cloth-bound volumes published in Paris by HC Éditions: *La Mer* (2006), *Les Vieux Métiers* (2006), *Le Rhum et la Canne* (2006), and *Femmes Créoles* (2007), each for €5.90.

A number of miscellaneous works have come our way. Garry Steckles’s *Bob Marley* (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2008, paper £8.50) is a lively biography aimed at a general audience. Similarly, Peter Mason’s *Learie Constantine* (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2008, paper £8.50), quoting from the cricket writing of C.L.R. James and Michael Manley, recounts for a general audience the life of the great Trinidadian all-rounder who later became a barrister and a diplomat and cabinet minister under Eric Williams, as well as an activist for racial equality in England and the first black member of the British House of Lords. Boasting a foreword signed by Mick Jagger, *A Taste of Mustique* by Kevin Snook (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2007, cloth £25.75) combines intriguing recipes (from carambola barbecue and banana crème brûlée to “kick-ass” tuna made with Wreck-Tum sauces),
an effusive éloge to life on the private corporation island, and photography to rival the glossiest of travel magazines. *Reshaping the Contextual Vision in Caribbean Theology: Theoretical Foundations for Theology which Is Contextual, Pluralistic, and Dialectical* (Lanham MD: University Press of America, 2007, paper US$ 49.95) is by Michael St. A. Miller, a Jamaican who teaches in the United States. *Democracy & Constitution Reform in Trinidad and Tobago*, by Kirk Meighoo and Peter Jamadar (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2008, paper US$ 30.00), considers the constitutional reform process in the Commonwealth Caribbean, focusing on T&T, where the authors are based. *Aluminium Smelting: Health, Environmental and Engineering Perspectives*, edited by Mukesh Kare, Clement K. Sankat, Gyan S. Shrivastava, and Chintanapalli Venkobachar (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2008, cloth US$ 55.00), brings together contributions made to UWI symposia in 2006 and 2007 in Trinidad, considering the environmental and economic impacts of the establishment of a smelter in the south of the island.


*Memory and Identity: The Huguenots in France and the Atlantic Diaspora*, edited by Bertrand Van Ruymbeke and Randy J. Sparks (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008, paper US$ 32.50), has a single chapter relating to the (French) Caribbean. Likewise, *Blue Ships: Dutch Ocean Crossing with Multifunctional Drugs and Spices in the Eighteenth Century*, by A.M.G. Rutten (Rotterdam, the Netherlands: Erasmus Publishing, 2008, cloth €32.50), has only scattered references to the Caribbean.

We list several books for which, despite our best efforts, we could not find a willing reviewer: *Waves of Decolonization: Discourses of Race and Hemispheric Citizenship in Cuba, Mexico, and the United States*, by David

This year’s reprints and translations include: *Memoir of an Amnesiac* (Coconut Creek FL: Caribbean Studies Press, 2008, paper US$ 19.50), Jan J. Dominique’s novel about Haitian history and politics published in French in 2004, which is sensitively translated by Irline François with a foreword by Edwidge Danticat. Lyonel Trouillot, arguably Haiti’s premier contemporary novelist, has published *Children of Heroes* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008, paper US$ 20.00), translated from the 2002 French edition by Linda Coverdale, told through the voice of a child. And André Breton’s surrealist classic *Martinique, charmeuse de serpents* has been brought out for the first time in English as *Martinique: Snake Charmer* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008, cloth US$ 19.95), with illustrations by André Masson.


AISHA KHAN
Department of Anthropology
New York University
New York NY10003, U.S.A.
<ak105@nyu.edu>

This collection is based on a School of American Research seminar held in 1999 and organized by Kevin A. Yelvington, which brought together scholars to work toward new directions in interdisciplinary and critical research on African diasporas in the Americas. Variously engaging from different angles the scholarship of Melville and Frances Herskovits, seminar participants explored the social, political, and cultural contexts of knowledge production: what we know about Africa in the Americas, what has been truncated or omitted, what alternative ways of knowing might be possible. Keeping blackness central without measuring authenticity or essentializing, and keeping anthropology central without fixing disciplinary borders, the volume engages in fresh ways such abiding questions as the context-contingent construction of categories, the relationship between empirical research and theory building, and the nature of cultural change.

The range of chapter topics is held together by a dialogic approach, or, what J. Lorand Matory calls “live dialogue” (p. 171), an alternative metaphor to such conventional concepts in Afro-Americanist anthropology as collective memory, survivals, and creolization. Illustrated in Matory’s chapter by his research on religion in Nigeria and Brazil, this enduring dialogue metaphor “represents homelands not as the past but as the contemporaries of their diasporas, and diverse diasporic locales not as divergent streams but as interlocutors in supraregional conversations” where there is “mutual transformation over time” (p. 183). The theme of dialogue is discernable in all of the chapters and creatively connects them not in seamless repetition but in a reinforced message.
The volume is divided into four sections: “Critical Histories of Afro-Americanist Anthropologies,” with contributions by Yelvington, Sally Price, and Richard Price; “Dialogues in Practice,” containing the essays of Matory, John W. Pulis, Joko Sengova, and Theresa A. Singleton; “The Place of Blackness,” which includes chapters by Sabiyha Robin Prince, Arlene Torres, and Peter Wade; and “Critical Histories/Critical Theories,” offering an overview commentary by Faye V. Harrison. Yelvington examines the anthropological discourse on Africa and the New World through the work of Melville Herskovits, particularly the institution building and social networks that developed from his relationships with interlocutors Fernando Ortiz, Jean Price-Mars, and Arthur Ramos. Sally Price considers the changing evaluations of visual art in the African diaspora, focusing on Maroon clothing, Southern American quilts, and gallery art in order to assess scholars’ interpretation of the relationships among these art forms, African textile traditions, and the culture history of the African diaspora. Data often dismissed as trivial are nonetheless always in dialogue with broader context; both, she argues, must be studied simultaneously to fully understand the diaspora’s “cultural fabric” (p. 111). Richard Price expands on his and Sidney Mintz’s *The Birth of African-American Culture*. He engages major debates that ensued from the theoretical and methodological exploration of African American pasts, clarifying what is at stake. While dialogue typically ends in winners all around, in the sense that open discussion is always beneficial, here it is clear why, for so many of us, Price’s position prevails.

Interested in the eighteenth-century diaspora of black loyalists who left America’s Revolutionary War for Jamaica, Pulis provides a close reading of African American folk preacher George Lisle’s codifying document about the religious practices of Native Baptism (Anabaptism) and subsequent influences on indigenous forms of Afro-Jamaican Christianity. Sengova explores “Gullah/Geechee” language and culture for connections between Southern American and African cultures through a reflexive lens of being both subject and object of study. Singleton explores the role of archaeology in scholarly dialogues about the African diaspora, exemplified by her research in Cuba. She argues, against the grain, that African American archaeology and diaspora scholarship inform one another and are interdependent.

Prince examines narratives of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Africans and their descendants in New York City, emphasizing the political economy of labor. She aims to contribute to discussions about African continuities, not by seeking authentic survivals but by “conceptually restoring Africans to this time period and making this history available ... in compelling and creative ways” (p. 321). Torres looks at the relationship between museums and ethnography, investigating the multiple dialogues that go into Puerto Rican identity construction, legitimization, and contestation in exhibits and other public events at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American
History. Wade focuses on popular music, showing that what is considered “black” or “African” in Colombia has varied historically according to viewpoint, agenda, and practice. He argues for understanding blackness in terms of a balance between change and continuity, and between culture’s discursive constructions and their manifestation in daily life.

In a space of her own, Harrison nicely elaborates on the volume’s themes and issues. She makes a number of good points, including some close to this reviewer’s own heart: that many of the latest trends in diaspora studies privilege recent dispersions, but studying the legacies of historic diasporas promises a great deal for theorizing diasporas (p. 383); that we need continuous interrogation of the anthropological canon to reevaluate works considered irrelevant or secondary by earlier or currently fashionable trends (p. 392); and that these efforts must be informed by an “ongoing engagement with ethnographic subjects” and all the interpretations embedded in our interactions with them (p. 392).

In addition to its thoughtful discussions, what makes this volume especially welcome is that it offers some frank observations that needed to be made. There is, for example, Prince’s critique of academia’s lethargic attention to the public dissemination of knowledge; Singleton’s challenge to doubts, from surprising corners, about the potential of archaeology to contribute to African diaspora studies; Sally Price’s careful yet unflinching interrogation of some of Robert Farris Thompson’s claims about African/American connections in the arts; and Harrison’s observation that a number of early diaspora scholars concerned with the centrality of the black Atlantic to the culture and political economy of modernity (e.g., W.E.B. Du Bois, C.L.R. James, Eric Williams, Walter Rodney, Sylvia Wynter, St. Clair Drake) have been overshadowed by attention to Paul Gilroy – a worthy scholar but not without important predecessors. Harrison refreshingly asks whether anthropologists will “engage in a more democratic and less starstruck reading strategy” (p. 390) if they bear in mind that thinkers are situated within broader relations of intellectual production.

There is a large and growing cross-disciplinary literature on African diasporas. In this collection, contributors’ thoughts about what directions we should pursue propel us forward by bringing us back to reflections on how both diaspora studies and anthropology should be done.

**Reference**


JAMES H. SWEET
Department of History
University of Wisconsin
Madison WI 53706, U.S.A.
<jhsweet@wisc.edu>

In 1996, Ira Berlin published the first of a series of pathbreaking works in which he developed the argument that the Charter Generation of North American slave society consisted largely of “Atlantic Creoles.” In Berlin’s formulation, Atlantic Creoles were “cosmopolitan men and women of African descent … Their knowledge of the larger Atlantic World, the fluidity with which they moved in it, and their chameleonlike ability to alter their identity moderated the force of chattel bondage … Atlantic creoles found themselves very much at home in their new environment” (1996; 2003:6, 32). Linda Heywood and John Thornton utilize Berlin’s idea as the conceptual framework for their new book, but with one crucial alteration. Instead of Atlantic Creoles emerging from the relationships between European and African traders in West African coastal entrepots, Heywood and Thornton argue that the vast majority of North America’s Atlantic Creoles emanated from West Central Africa. Indeed, Heywood and Thornton convincingly demonstrate that between 1585 and 1640, “almost all, if not all, of the first enslaved Africans” in English and Dutch North America came from West Central Africa (p. 48).

By itself, this revelation of Angolan and Kongoles dominance is an important contribution to the early history of North American slave society, where scholars have long assumed a predominant West African provenance. Over the first three chapters of the book, Heywood and Thornton develop in fine detail the ways that Central Africans arrived in North America. In Chapter 1, they argue that English and Dutch privateering of Iberian slave ships provided the majority of North America’s African slaves up to 1640. Though others have suggested that piracy was responsible for African arrivals, Heywood and Thornton provide the most systematic and thoroughly documented examination of the early seventeenth-century North American slave trade to date. In Chapters 2 and 3, they describe the series of Central African conflicts that led to widespread enslavement in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This close reading of Central African political and military history
is to be commended, particularly in the glaring absence of such histories in most renderings of African American history.

Though Heywood and Thornton make substantial contributions to establishing the importance of Central Africa in the foundation of American slave society, their arguments about the social and cultural content of these contributions are less satisfying. For them, as for many scholars writing about African-Atlantic creolization, the concept of Atlantic Creoles is strictly limited to the process by which Africans became Europeanized. Central Africans spoke Portuguese, dressed in Portuguese styles, ate Portuguese foods, and most importantly, practiced Catholicism. Ultimately, “their knowledge of European material culture, religion, language, and aesthetics made it easy for them to integrate into the [American] colonial environment” (p. 2).

In Heywood and Thornton’s rendering, Portuguese culture suffused across Central Africa, from the highest nobles to the lowliest slaves. Inferences of widespread Catholicism abound in the book, but these expressions of faith are almost always tied to political imperatives. For example, the authors argue that when Portuguese military captain and first governor of Angola, Paul Dias de Novais, “initiated the process of getting sobas [local rulers] to submit formally to vassalage … he required them to be baptized” (p. 100). If baptism was a condition of military alliance, how do we know the sobas did not convert for simple political expediency? Even if one concedes that Central African elites became conversant in Portuguese culture, this still does not explain how the majority of common folk, those most likely to be enslaved in the chaos of war, would have integrated Portuguese ideas into their everyday lives. Heywood and Thornton want their readers to take at face value Portuguese documents that claim 5000 to 6000 Mbundu baptisms in 1582 (p. 102) or “70,000 souls for mass” in Soyo in 1615 (p. 171). Just because soldiers, vassals, and slaves represented Christian interests politically does not necessarily mean that they were themselves Christians. Ultimately, one wonders how those in regions characterized by constant warfare, banditry, exile, and slavery could constitute any sort of stable culture, let alone an “Atlantic Creole” one.

To their credit, Heywood and Thornton point out that the spiritual beliefs of Atlantic Creoles included the “mixing of Christian ideas with local religious concepts” (p. 62). Unfortunately, these local concepts are neither fully developed nor given the serious consideration they deserve. The unidirectional Portuguese-to-African approach to creolization almost completely erases any process of cultural transformation among Central Africans. This approach also elides the prospect that the Portuguese might have embraced the “religious concepts” of Central Africans. Heywood and Thornton make passing reference to Luso-Africans resorting to African poison ordeals (p. 193), but Portuguese Whites sometimes adopted these same ordeals. Why
is the Portuguese embrace of African culture not given equal weight in the “Atlantic creole complex”?  

Heywood and Thornton’s idea that creolization was synonymous with Europeanization, rather than a more universal process of cultural exchange, is nowhere clearer than in a series of maps where they attempt to quantify the relative degree of creolization in Central Africa – no creolization, least creolization, medium creolization, most creolization (pp. 227-35). The idea that there was “no creolization” in some areas is shorthand for saying that Portuguese influences had not penetrated those regions. Conversely, the regions described as “most creolized” – Luanda, Mbanza Kongo, and Massangano – possessed the highest concentrations of Portuguese settlers. Here, creolization ceases to be a “process” and becomes a rigid, quantifiable “thing,” based on the extent to which Africans became measurably Portuguese. Readers are left to assume that the Central Africans occupying the “no creolization” zones were a “pure,” homogenous counterpoint to those Atlantic Creoles inflected with Portuguese culture. Meanwhile, in the “most creolized” regions, such as Kongo, civil wars “might produce victims with manners and bearing similar to those of higher class status in Europe” (p. 169). According to Heywood and Thornton, a majority of war captives came from these “most creolized” zones, meaning that “Atlantic Creoles always represented a significant proportion of the captives exported to the Americas” (p. 222). Later in the book, the “significant proportion” of Central Africans who were Atlantic Creoles is, at times, inexplicably expanded to all Central Africans. Describing the enslaved population of New Amsterdam, Heywood and Thornton write that “the majority of them came from Central Africa and were thus Atlantic Creoles” (p. 267).

Ultimately, this teleological Europeanization of Central Africans in early North America leads to a view that their lives as slaves were somehow made more tolerable: “Being Atlantic Creole, and especially being Christian, gave many members of the Charter Generation greater access to freedom; it also made it easier for them to prosper and to feel comfortable in the world of European settlers” (p. 282). The cultural proximity of the Charter Generation to their masters afforded them opportunities that contrasted sharply with those of the Plantation Generation that followed it. In particular, Heywood and Thornton point to frequent manumissions. By the 1660s, the arrival of large numbers of non-Christian West Africans into North America meant that slaves had greater difficulty appealing to their masters’ Christian charity. The culture of these West Africans “was different and more alien to Euro-American expectations. This influx of West Africans came with economic changes that eventually would affect law and close the door even for Central Africans, including the descendants of the manumitted Charter Generation” (p. 331). Here, West Africans – uncreolized, non-Christians – are positioned as the diametrical opposites of Central Africans. The implication is that
if West Africans had been Christians, American slave society might have evolved differently.

All in all, Heywood and Thornton have written a remarkably provocative book, one that is sure to spark strong debate. Though many of their arguments for Portuguese and Christian influences among Central Africans are convincing, they often seem driven more by a desire to prove the existence of a category of Europeanized Africans than by the aim of demonstrating the processes by which Africans alternately embraced and rejected European ideas, depending on social and political circumstances. If, as they argue, Central Africans naturalized Christianity to their own belief systems, surely these beliefs also continued and are worthy of study alongside Christian ones.

REFERENCES


CARL THOMPSON
Centre for Travel Writing Studies
Nottingham Trent University
Nottingham NG11 8NS, U.K.
<carl.thompson@ntu.ac.uk>

For many people today, the word “Caribbean” conjures up images of a tropical paradise. The visual iconography associated with the region is well established, and well-nigh ubiquitous in our culture. In posters, billboards and magazine ads, in films and TV programs, the same signifiers circulate repeatedly: clear blue seas, golden beaches fringed with palm trees, and laidback locals whose quaintly ramshackle living arrangements seem a world away from the hectic bustle of modernity. This is the Caribbean as it is regularly
sold to us by advertisers and the tourist industry – a potent and hugely profita-
ble fantasy, or at least, a highly selective vision of a far more complex and
diverse reality.

In this excellently researched new study, Krista A. Thompson explores the
emergence of this paradisiacal image, tracing the forces that have shaped it,
its evolution over the last century, and – not least – its often problematic con-
sequences for many in the local population. As she puts it, her theme is the
“tropicalization” of the Caribbean – that is to say, the process by which the
islands of the region have emerged as “spaces of touristic desire for British
and North American travelling publics” (p. 4). For as she usefully reminds
us, they were not always regarded in this way. For much of the nineteenth
century, potential visitors were most likely to associate the Caribbean with,
on the one hand, slavery and its awkward aftermath, and on the other, vari-
ous forms of tropical disease and the high probability of an untimely death.
Only in the 1880s, as island economies languished after the decline of the
sugar industry, did local elites begin to cast around for new forms of rev-

enue. Many saw tourism as the way forward. And the promotion of tourism
required in turn an extensive “re-imaging” exercise, intended to establish the
islands as idyllic rather than fearful destinations.

*An Eye for the Tropics* takes Jamaica and the Bahamas as its case studies
for how the Caribbean was marketed visually. It focuses principally on the
pivotal role played by photography – and especially, the picture postcard and
the magic lantern slide – in the re-imaging process. (Magic lantern slides,

it should perhaps be noted, featured prominently in the many lecture tours
undertaken to promote the Caribbean in Europe and the United States, in the
late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.) Chapters 1 and 2 deal with the
first wave of this process, from the 1890s to the 1930s. They explore how the
very different landscapes of Jamaica and the Bahamas were initially assim-
ilated into prevailing European ideals of picturesque beauty, and they consider
the legacy of the “visual grammar” that was established for the Caribbean in
this period. The doleful story that Thompson relates in this regard will be
familiar to most students of tourism and the “tourist gaze.” Key sights/sites
– often, in their photographic representation, subtly staged or touched-up or
otherwise improved – became “sacralized”; and as these idealized images
became iconic of the Caribbean, so they began to exercise a subtle or not-so-
subtle tyranny over real places and people. For the poor, black population
of the islands, this had various pernicious consequences. On the one hand, they
began to be routinely cast as backward, primitive, and quaint, so as to lure
tourists who wanted to feel that they were escaping modernity. On the other,
local customs and practices that potentially threatened the idyllic image –
the riotous Junkanoo carnival on Nassau, for example – were suppressed or
subjected to new forms of discipline. In some tourist destinations, indeed,
policies of racial segregation were introduced, so as not to offend the visitors’ sensibilities.

Subsequent chapters extend the study’s central theme in various directions. Chapter 3 focuses on photographic representations of the sea around the Bahamas, paying particular attention to the underwater films of J.E. Williamson, while the final two chapters examine local responses to the tropicalization of the Caribbean, both in the colonial and postcolonial eras. Thus Chapter 4 takes as its starting point the actions of the black Jamaican journalist Evon White, who in 1948 dived into the swimming pool of the Myrtle Bank Hotel, Kingston, in protest over the hotel’s unofficial color bar. Chapter 5, meanwhile, looks at the afterlife of the early picture postcards of Jamaica and the Bahamas, exploring the ways in which they have been variously repackaged for the nostalgia market, utilized by postcolonial historians, and re-appropriated by modern artists and photographers. Throughout, Thompson’s analysis of her source materials is intelligent and theoretically sophisticated, although at the same time there is perhaps little here that significantly extends existing theories or methodologies relating to the topic of touristic representations.

Notwithstanding this limitation, An Eye for the Tropics is a valuable contribution to Caribbean studies. In particular, it does an admirable job in alerting scholars to the problems inherent in regarding postcards and other photographic representations of the region as somehow truer, or more objective, than other historical documents. Even postcolonial historians, concerned to reconstruct “from below” the black history of the islands, have sometimes displayed such critical naivety in their use of these materials, as Thompson shows in one of the most interesting sections of her book. But as she goes on to ask, “can postcards, the very representations that denied historicity to the black population, ever unproblematically yield ‘black history’?” (p. 275). The answer that emerges from this study is an emphatic “no”; they must always be interpreted with an eye to historical context, rhetorical convention, and not least, the subtle elements of staging often involved in them.

FREDERICK H. SMITH
Department of Anthropology
College of William and Mary
Williamsburg VA 23187, U.S.A.
<fhmsmt@wm.edu>

For decades Caribbean archaeologists and ethnohistorians have wrestled with explaining the identity and social organization of the Taíno, the people who greeted Columbus when he arrived in the Caribbean in 1492. In the early twentieth century, Irving Rouse and other prominent archaeologists outlined elaborate culture histories for the Taíno that set the standard for most studies of Caribbean prehistory. Beginning in the 1970s, New Archaeology in the region ushered in a fresh focus on Taíno settlement patterns, demographics, subsistence activities, and other behaviors. In Taíno Indian Myth and Practice, William F. Keegan moves well beyond culture histories and processual studies to capture the ideological realm and cosmological essence of the Taíno. Keegan skillfully combines archaeological and documentary evidence with Taíno oral tradition and mythology to complicate the culture concept that scholars have imposed on the Taíno and to free it from the popular legends and simplistic interpretations that have shrouded the complexities of Taíno society. Drawing heavily on the work of Marshall Sahlins, Keegan investigates Caonabó, a powerful cacique in Hispaniola who challenged Spanish colonial intervention, and places him within the Taíno’s mythological framework of the stranger king. The study of Caonabó’s position within Taíno society provides a platform for Keegan to call for archaeologists to seek out broader social processes in their research and design new models for exploring the ways in which individuals negotiated their roles within society. Keegan’s narrative style and ideological focus are a vast departure from his earlier work, which, as Keegan admits, was largely shaped by the detached objectivity of processual archaeology. The phenomenological approach he embraces in this book is obviously a new direction for him, but one that he navigates well. More importantly, Keegan, adapting concepts from chaos theory, develops an anthropological history for the Taíno that offers a sophisticated and innovative postmodern model for the broader arena of archaeological research. The model, what he calls “Cultural Archaeology,” allows him to elucidate what he sees as the emerging concept of culture in anthropological archaeology.
Keegan shows how mythology structured Taino-Spanish interactions and social relations. Through a critical reading of Spanish texts concerning Caonabó, he sheds new light on the Spanish chroniclers’ interpretations of Taino cosmology and shows that Caonabó was in fact a real person who possessed the mythical qualities of a stranger king. He argues that historians have too often read the chroniclers’ accounts of Caonabó literally, which has obfuscated our understanding of the diversity of the indigenous Caribbean at the time of European contact and oversimplified the dynamic nature of interactions that characterized Taino-Spanish relations. Keegan seeks to untangle Taino social organization from the mythological net of Spanish-Catholicism in order to explicate Caonabó’s real and mythical role as the stranger king.

Drawing on more than twenty-five years of archaeological research at Lucayan settlements in the Bahamas and in the Turks and Caicos, Keegan begins the process of identifying archaeological correlates of the stranger king narrative. Specifically, he attempts to locate the foreign homeland of Caonabó. He delivers a site-by-site survey of Lucayan settlements in the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos, and through a process of archaeological elimination, argues that site MC-6 in the Middle Caicos was the likely homeland of Caonabó. According to Keegan, the site represented a small-scale version of the large Taino settlements found in Hispaniola. In addition, the site reflected characteristics consistent with matrilineal descent and avunculocal residence patterns, which he sees as critical, yet often overlooked, aspects of Taino social organization. Indeed, Keegan seeks to resurrect earlier emphases on kinship and social organization in archaeological thought. The study is also solidly grounded in political economy. Keegan portrays MC-6 as a specialized site that produced fish, salt, and perhaps prestige goods for the principal villages (cacicazgos) in Hispaniola. Its specialized role enhanced the importance of the site and helped to make its chief, Caonabó, a prominent cacique. It was also a cosmologically charged site, which is evident in the astrological layout of the settlement and the cosmological placement of monuments and structures on the landscape. The site’s layout visually reified and perpetuated the social structure of Taino society. In addition to these archaeological interpretations, by clearly and deliberately explaining rather complex archaeological processes and concerns, Keegan provides a glimpse into the practice of archaeological research and the role that serendipity plays in archaeological interpretation. He embraces a narrative style that is expressive, and he adopts a reflexive phenomenological approach that helps to draw readers into the experience and practice of archaeology.

Taino Indian Myth and Practice is a must read for all serious scholars of Caribbean prehistory and ethnohistory. A rudimentary understanding of the major changes in archaeological thought over the past century will be helpful, though not necessary, as background for college students and general audiences. Keegan creatively uses archaeological evidence to complement
and expand our understanding of Taino mythology, as well as to challenge ethnohistorical accounts of Caonabó and his interactions with the Spanish. In addition, Keegan’s research compels Caribbean scholars to recognize the dynamic and diverse cultural milieu that characterized the indigenous Caribbean at the time of European contact. More importantly, Keegan skillfully plays documentary sources against the archaeological record to reveal the complex nature of Taino-Spanish interactions and the way mythology, both Taino and Spanish, structured those relations.


RICHARD L. KAGAN
Department of History
Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore MD 21218, U.S.A.
<kagan@jhu.edu>

“The aim of this work is to provide a reference tool for detailing seminal events in the evolution of the cities of the New World” (p. xix). So begins what is arguably the first attempt to provide a comprehensive guide to the historic cities of both North and South America. Divided geographically by region, the encyclopedia surveys forty-six cities, twelve of which are in the Caribbean: Bridgetown (Barbados), Nassau (Bahamas), Cap-Haïtien and Port-au-Prince (Haiti), Fort-de-France (Martinique), Havana and Santiago (Cuba), Kingston (Jamaica), San Juan (Puerto Rico), Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), Port-of-Spain (Trinidad), and Willemstad (Curaçao). The emphasis accorded to the Caribbean compares favorably with other parts of the Americas: Mexico merits only 10 entries, Central America 4, South America 19, and North America, including Canada, 15. Important pre-Columbian urban enclaves such as Tiwanaku (in what is now Bolivia) or Teotihuacan (Mexico) are missing as Marley seems interested in applying the label “historic” only to cities that were founded in the post-1492 colonial era and which perdure today.

Missing too is any explanation of the criteria that determined which “historic” cities merit discussion and which do not. Boston, Halifax, and St. Augustine are included in the section on North America, but Providence,
Baltimore, Williamsburg, and Santa Fe are absent. The choices for Mexico appear equally capricious. Why Campeche, for example, as opposed to Morelia (the former Valladolid), capital of Michoacan. As for South America, there are entries for the current national capitals, except for Asunción (Paraguay), but none for such historic cities as Arequipa and Trujillo in Peru, Sucre (La Plata) in Bolivia, or Cuenca in Ecuador. Reading between the lines, the selection seems almost random, with choices apparently predicated partly on a city’s economic and political clout, partly on its military importance. It would have been helpful if the preface had spelled out the grounds for inclusion.

As for the individual entries, Marley explains in the preface that he is seeking to reverse the customary emphasis on modern urban growth and the cursory treatment of earlier epochs. He therefore sets out to offer a historical overview of each of the cities he has selected. Including illustrations (a hodgepodge of plans, engraved views, and vintage photographs), entries range from six pages (for Potosí) to twenty-four (for Havana), and are subdivided into chronological units. A typical entry begins with the city’s foundation (or initial settlement), marches forward through the colonial period and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and ends somewhere in the 1990s with reference to runaway demographic growth, urban sprawl, and the increase in tourism.

The chronological emphasis makes for a seamless narrative, but it also tends to limit the reference value of each individual entry. Do readers interested in the population history of Fort-de-France really need to plough through twenty-one pages of narrative searching for demographic data when a single paragraph would have provided such information at a glance? And what if they wanted to compare recent changes in Fort-de-France’s population with that of other Caribbean cities? They would have to read twelve different entries, jot down the figures, and then do the math before reaching a conclusion.

This example illustrates the extent to which the encyclopedia’s organization by city hinders its overall usefulness as a research tool. Noticeably absent are topical entries on such key issues as population, migration, and urban growth, as well as graphs and charts highlighting important economic and social developments, including, for example, the number of slaves entering Havana, or the volume of sugar exports moving out. Especially unfathomable is the lack of both general and regional maps locating the cities whose history Marley has chosen to recount. Again with reference to the Caribbean, readers will search in vain for a regional map pinpointing the location of the region’s cities, let alone a more detailed one of Jamaica indicating Kingston’s location on the island’s southern coast. The absence of maps means readers interested in determining the location of the city surveyed in the entry must either consult an atlas or the web.
Encyclopedias are useful in providing guides to other, more detailed sources of information. Traditionally, as in the Britannica, these are listed at the close of each individual entry. But here the publishers have folded such references into the select yet sprawling and consequently unwieldy bibliographies included at the end each volume (121 pages in the first volume, a bit over 130 pages in the second). For the most part these listings are comprehensive, but out-of-date to the extent that references to books and journal articles published after the late-1990s are not included.

Such problems aside, the encyclopedia’s historical snapshots are not only accurate but easy to digest. Marley’s extensive knowledge of the urban history of the Americas is evident throughout, yet as I read through the entries, I kept asking myself what kinds of readers are likely to find these volumes useful for research purposes. Those interested in architecture, for example, are likely to be disappointed, as the entries tend to skip over issues relating to culture and the arts. Nor is there much on questions relating to delinquency, racial issues, or women. In sum, this encyclopedia has its uses, but it is not one I would ask my university librarian to rush out and buy.


JAMES SIDBURY
Department of History
University of Texas
Austin TX 78712, U.S.A.
<sidbury@mail.utexas.edu>

This anthology seeks to provide a survey of the use of armed slaves in military settings. Its twelve case studies do not – could not – offer a comprehensive discussion of the subject, but they range from Classical Greece to Islamic societies prior to the rise of the Ottoman Empire to Africa and the Americas. Given the book’s title, readers will probably not be surprised to learn that enslaved people have often served as soldiers, but they may be startled by the variety of systems of military slavery that the authors discuss. At different times and places, armed slaves have policed the free, they have fought to overthrow slavery, they have fought to defend slavery, they have served as the primary or subsidiary military forces within states, they have
constituted private armies fighting for powerful individuals, and they have been de facto rulers of states. John Thornton closes his essay, “Armed Slaves and Political Authority in Africa in the Era of the Slave Trade,” by noting that the “complexity of arming slaves in Africa parallels the complexity of the institution itself and challenges us to consider and reconsider . . . the meaning of slavery in the African portion of the Atlantic world” (p. 90). The same could be said more broadly about the complexity of arming slaves throughout the world and the meaning of slavery as a historical institution.

While *Arming Slaves* moves from classical to modern times, it is heavily skewed in favor of the modern. Eight of the twelve case studies discuss slavery in the Americas, and two examine sub-Saharan African slavery during the era of the Atlantic Slave Trade. Nonetheless, the two chapters that open the collection – Peter Hunt’s on Classical Greece and Reuven Amitai’s on military slavery in the Islamic world – create a foundation for reading the rest of the book, showing that precedents for the extensive use of military slaves were well established in western culture long before the emergence of the modern Atlantic. Hunt does a wonderful job spinning meaning out of a spotty documentary record. He describes the “sources of information about the role of slaves in ancient Greek warfare” as “pitiful” (p. 16) – explaining the policing function of Scythian slaves in Athens, the anomalous position of Helots in Sparta, and the reasons that slaves were more welcome as rowers in Athens’s powerful navy than as infantrymen. Amitai faces something close to the opposite of Hunt’s challenge, as he synthesizes a thousand years of Islamic military slavery in fewer than forty pages. The military slavery of Turkish “pagans” in the Near East emerged out of a “‘medieval’ model,” but then developed a “dynamic of its own” (p. 42), morphing into the complicated mamlūk institution that helped dominate the Muslim world for centuries. That domination resulted in part from the flexibility of the system, something Amitai illustrates across time and space, but it finally proved unable to adapt to the challenges of the Ottoman Empire, and largely disappeared upon its rise. During its heyday, however, the slaves recruited as mamlūks constituted a dominant force in the Islamic world.

These two essays on precedents for arming slaves in the Americas are followed by two discussions of sub-Saharan Africa – John Thornton’s survey of West and Central Africa in the era of the slave trade, and one by Allen Isaacman and Derek Peterson on the Chikunda in Southern Africa. Thornton discusses the private and public arming of slaves in Angola and Kongo as well as parts of West Africa, showing that complicated, variegated, and changing traditions of arming slaves flourished within two of the main catchment regions for the Atlantic slave trade. Isaacman and Peterson, by contrast, examine a single tradition over the course of a quarter century – that of the Chikunda on the Zambezi River in Southeastern Africa. Portuguese colonists purchased slaves and enrolled them in private armies, both to fight
with competitors over the ivory trade, and to police the peasant farm villages over which colonizers claimed sovereignty. Over time the Chikunda emerged out of this experience of slavery as an identifiable ethnic group with gender norms, linguistic traditions, and folklore that differed from those of neighboring peasant farmers. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Chikunda ceased operating as military forces, but they maintained their distinct identity.

Eight fine contributions on the Americas follow: three on Spanish America, two each on French and Anglo-America, and one on Brazil. In each case the authors discuss ideological hindrances that masters raised to arming slaves while pointing out that, under many circumstances, those hindrances were overcome. Perhaps more interesting, each finds that slaves themselves were generally willing military conscripts. That comes as little surprise when, as was the case in the French Caribbean between 1794 and 1801 or the United States in the 1860s, many slaves were offered opportunities to further emancipation, but it seems less intuitively obvious that such would have been true in the many cases in which the enslaved were armed to reinforce the slave order. No doubt one explanation lies in the grinding brutality of life on sugar (and other) plantations and the degree to which it made the rigors of military life seem mild. Another answer may well lie in the opportunity that military service gave to men enslaved as POWs in Africa to reassert identities as soldiers that they had forged in their homelands. The tentative answers that some essays provide to questions about the motivations of enslaved soldiers – and David Geggus, Laurent DuBois, Joseph Reidy, and Ada Ferrer are less tentative than others – underscore one of the central challenges posed by the current literature on arming slaves in the Americas. We know far more about the motivations of the masters doing the arming than of the slaves being armed. Gaining access to masters’ reasons for acting is, of course, less fraught with evidentiary problems, but the work on American slavery in this volume should inspire scholars to tackle that question.

Christopher Leslie Brown’s wonderful synthetic essay brings the volume to an end. Brown surveys traditions of arming slaves throughout an even broader swath of human history than that covered by the preceding essays, and he turns a sharp analytical eye toward the questions raised when different traditions are juxtaposed across time and space. Thankfully, he does not seek to offer a unified theory of the arming of slaves, nor does he surrender in the face of the variety of systems that his survey of secondary literatures uncovers. Instead, he takes a middle analytical ground, identifying three arenas of fruitful comparative analysis – the social contexts within which slaves have been armed, the experiences of slave soldiers, and the ways that the arming of slaves has been implicated in transformations in slave societies – and points toward important avenues for future research. Brown’s concluding chapter, along with the brief but penetrating introductory essay by David
Brion Davis, help unify this volume in a way that is rare for essay anthologies. *Arming Slaves* offers uniformly excellent case studies that range across a broad spectrum of time and space – space limitations preclude giving each contribution the attention it deserves – and highlights promising directions for future work, while demolishing the intuitive assumption that the arming of slaves has been unusual in human history.


KENNETH MORGAN
Department of Politics and History
Brunel University
Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 3PH, U.K.
<kenneth.morgan@brunel.ac.uk>

Russell Menard is a leading economic historian of the British North American colonies who has specialized in the economy and society of the colonial Chesapeake, the factors that led to the emergence of a plantation labor force in the American South, and the migration of coerced and free people across the Atlantic Ocean to early modern British America. His work is associated with the Chesapeake School of social historians, a loosely connected group that, over the past four decades, has transformed our knowledge and understanding of Colonial British America through close investigation of tax lists, censuses, probate inventories, and land records. Menard’s best-known publications are *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789*, co-authored with John J. McCusker, and his collected essays, *Migrants, Servants and Slaves: Unfree Labor in Colonial British America*. *Sweet Negotiations* marks Menard’s debut as a scholar of the British Caribbean.

The title of the book, taken from a contemporary source, indicates the subject matter covered, which focuses on the reasons behind the emergence of African slavery and sugar plantations in seventeenth-century Barbados. The purpose is to contest existing interpretations that characterize that island as having undergone a sugar revolution in the period from ca. 1630 to 1660. Menard finds the notion of a sugar revolution an inappropriate and misleading description of the changes that gave Barbados a plantation system. Here is his thesis in a nutshell: “Sugar did not bring plantation agriculture and
African slavery to Barbados; rather, it quickened, deepened, and drove to a conclusion a transformation already under way when sugar emerged as the island’s major crop” (pp. xii-xiii). To carry out his task, he has undertaken (in difficult personal circumstances) research in the Barbados Archives, notably among the Deed Books, and he has situated his findings within a broad historiographical context.

A common thread among previous discussions of the Barbadian sugar boom of the mid-seventeenth century is the emphasis on the Dutch as suppliers of capital to finance the sugar plantations in Barbados and as providers of the prototype (via their sugar estates in Brazil) for the organization of production adopted in the British West Indies. Another thread in the existing literature is an emphasis upon the emergence of sugar plantations as transforming the economic state of Barbados. Menard accepts that the Dutch did provide an important model for the organization of sugar production in Barbados, but he challenges convincingly the other statements just made. First, he shows that most financing for sugar plantations in Barbados came from London merchants who provided capital, credit, and loans. Though he has not searched Dutch or Dutch-colonial archives, a thorough trawl through the Deed Books in Barbados revealed very little evidence of Dutch financial involvement in Barbados. Menard concludes that the emphasis on the Dutch role in the establishment of the sugar system in Barbados is a myth that can be traced back to contemporary propaganda.

Second, Menard shows that before the sugar boom Barbados had a successful agricultural economy based on the cultivation of tobacco, indigo, and cotton. Each of these tropical groceries eventually failed to reach higher levels of production, but they were produced successfully in the 1630s. Menard argues that this is a significant reason why London merchants were prepared to finance the creation of sugar plantations on the island in the 1640s. The origins of sugar plantations on Barbados are therefore connected to the prior success of the economy on the island, and both that success and the adoption of sugar were the fruits of English endeavors.

Menard covers many other significant aspects of his overall topic and has interesting arguments on each issue he raises. Thus the reader will find stimulating passages on the following matters: the reasons why sugar production in Barbados took off in the 1640s, linked to falling prices and rising consumption; the complex process by which various types of servants were eventually replaced by slaves as the main plantation labor force; the emergence of racialized ideologies and legal codes; and the external impact of Barbados and Barbadians on other colonies in British America.

The book raises as many questions as it answers, and plenty of topics are highlighted that deserve further research. Two matters in particular stand out. One is that, as Menard shows, historians need to find better data on the commodity output, export levels, and prices of the agricultural sector
in Barbados before 1640. These data have proven elusive, but a thorough search through records at the National Archives, Kew, England, would probably turn up new data to flesh out the picture painted in *Sweet Negotiations*. Such data would enable scholars to write with more precision about the early economic history of English settlement in Barbados. The other topic in need of new research is the nature of work organization on seventeenth-century Barbadian sugar plantations. Menard shows just how little we know about this topic. The secondary literature mainly discusses plantation work in terms of the gang system, with some attention to the introduction of task work arrangements in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But Menard has found no references to gang labor on Barbadian plantations before 1740. It is possible that that form of work organization only emerged with the demands placed on enslaved Africans to increase productivity as the British Atlantic economy expanded in the first half of the eighteenth century, but the research needed to establish this has yet to be undertaken.

A helpful appendix provides details of the cost of establishing plantations and farms in the British American colonies. The publishers have provided suitable illustrations of maps and sugar mills from the James Ford Bell Library, Minneapolis, and there are relatively few proofreading errors (though some dates on page 80 are incorrect). It remains to say that the book is written elegantly and concisely, and that the economic history is presented in a way that is fully understandable for those not trained in economics.

**References**


This book is an insightful first-hand account of postslavery Jamaica in 1850 by John Bigelow (1817-1911), an American journalist who was an editor at the New York Evening Post and an organizer of the Free-Soil Party. The introduction by Robert J. Scholnick, a professor of English and American Studies at the College of William and Mary, highlights the significance of the book (first published in 1851 in New York and London, where it received a mixed reception) “for the ongoing transatlantic dialogue on slavery” (p. lii). As Scholnick notes, “Even before its passage on August 29, 1833, the British Emancipation Act became a double-edged sword for American abolitionists, inspiring but fraught with danger if the ‘mighty experiment’ of freeing some eight hundred thousand slaves in the [British] West Indies should be judged a failure” (p. ix). The case of Jamaica, the most important British West Indian colony, was crucial in the debate.

After abolition, the production of Jamaican sugar (the main plantation crop) dropped. Jamaica had to compete with slave-grown sugar from Cuba and Brazil, and many planters abandoned their estates. In the United States, Southern pro-slavery statesmen argued that enslaved Negroes were unfit for freedom and used Jamaica’s economic decline as “proof.” As Scholnick observes, “Bigelow realized that the only way to explode such myths would be to report factually about actual conditions on Jamaica” (pp. xxvii-xxviii). Drawing on his first-hand observations, “Bigelow argues that Jamaica’s economic collapse was caused not by the alleged incapacity of former slaves but rather by the incompetence of largely absentee plantation owners functioning within a dysfunctional colonial system,” challenging arguments of racial inferiority and portraying “heroic black resistance and achievement” (p. xii).

Bigelow constructs his argument through seventeen chapters, which vividly portray continuity and change in postslavery Jamaica (and also sometimes anticipate later developments such as tourism). Chapter 1 remarks on the delights of ocean travel by steamer from New York to Jamaica in winter and provides first impressions of the colony’s color-class system, comment-
ing on the black ex-slave hucksters in the boats that surrounded the steamer on its arrival at Kingston harbor and the Mulatto pilot who guided the ship into port. Chapter 2 portrays the dilapidated state of the commercial center of Kingston, with its predominantly colored population including emancipated slaves and indentured East Indians and where old people and children were most noticeable on the streets. Chapter 3 highlights the Jamaican color-class system, but indicates the prevalence of miscegenation and the easy interaction between Whites and Coloreds (in contrast to tensions between Coloreds and Blacks) and the prominence of colored people in public and professional occupations. Chapters 4 and 5 describe the political system, centered on the British Governor’s residence and the House of Assembly in Spanish Town, and identify the ineffectiveness of political representation based on a high property qualification. Chapters 6 and 7 contrast the poverty of the Jamaican plantation economy (with its many abandoned sugar and coffee estates) with the island’s rich resources – reflected in the ex-slaves’ productive provision grounds and small-scale marketing system (rooted in slavery), the colony’s mineral, timber, and water resources, and Jamaica’s role in supplying nine-tenths of the global pimento trade.

Chapters 8 to 15 are central to Bigelow’s argument. He noted the colonial explanations of Jamaica’s poverty as being due to the abolition of slavery, inadequate compensation to slave owners, and the repeal of the protective duty on British sugar. Bigelow advanced an alternative explanation focused on the low status of agricultural labor, the absenteeism of British planters, the inactivity of white Creoles, the hierarchy of inefficient plantation middlemen (attorneys, overseers, and bookkeepers), the mortgaging of plantations from before emancipation, the accumulation of land by large-scale landholders, high imports, the absence of a landholding middle class, and the opposition of planters to the sale of land to the former slaves. For Bigelow, the solution was land sales to the ex-slaves, whose desire to become landholders was evident. Such landholding, he argued, would provide the basis for political participation, food crops, and surpluses for marketing. Indeed, the rapid increase of small-scale landholding and the significance of the related marketing system (conducted especially by women and children) were already noticeable. Another solution for Bigelow was to centralize sugar mills, a development that would later characterize the Caribbean, and to develop the potential of manufacturing resources such as coconuts. Bigelow challenged Carlyle’s arguments on the high cost of West Indian labor, revealing instead that such labor was plentiful and cheap.

Chapter 16 identifies the potential of Jamaica, with its healthy climate, as the “Italy of the West” (p. 174), advocates the arrival of American visitors by steamers for winter residence, and highlights the prevalence of well-trained British doctors on the island. Chapter 17 assesses constraints on the sale of land to foreigners, as well as to ex-slaves, who might become “small capital-
ists” (p. 178), notes good postal services, newspapers, and journals on the island, and highlights a transitory population in the colony with no feeling of home. This conclusion, however, begs the question of Creole identities (Besson 2002).

Four appendices report on Bigelow’s visit to the emperor of neighboring postrevolutionary Haiti and on Jamaica’s exports, revenue, and expenditure, and the situate colonial policy in Jamaica within the wider context of the British Empire.

Bigelow’s book represents an early ethnography on the industrious postslavery Jamaican peasantry, rooted in pre-emancipation processes. Scholnick’s introduction indicates some parallels with the work of Sidney Mintz (1974) on peasantization but could have drawn out the implications of Bigelow’s analysis for the current “flight from the estates debate” among historians and anthropologists (e.g., Hall 1978; Smith 1995; Paton 2001; Besson 2002).

REFERENCES


In his impressive first book, Christopher L. Brown poses a deceptively simple question: when British men and women started to organize opposition to the transatlantic slave trade in the late eighteenth century, what was it they were trying to do? Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism continues a distinguished trajectory of critical historiography, from Eric Williams through David Brion Davis, which considers abolitionism as a movement driven by self-interest, where freeing enslaved Africans was not necessarily the preeminent consideration. However, Brown’s meticulous and lucid analysis of the self-regarding, self-interested, and self-validating impulse in British abolitionism presents a much more nuanced and compelling argument than we have seen before.

What distinguishes Brown’s finely honed critique is the way he has teased out the complex irony that the self-serving impulse which drove the humanitarian political agenda made it very effective. To be primarily self-interested, Brown demonstrates, was not to be disinterested in the plight of others or less dedicated to seeking reform. William Wilberforce, along with his fellow evangelicals in the Clapham Sect, was keen to get rid of the slave trade because he believed complicity in the trade degraded the moral integrity of the nation. The primary concern of the Clapham Sect was that their souls might be free from taint and they threw themselves into the abolitionism as a way to advance their overarching agenda to make the British better and more morally responsible Christians. Wilberforce was genuinely appalled with the terrible experiences to which his fellow humans from Africa were subjected, but he astutely understood that inhumanity to innocent Africans could be harnessed to drive a campaign to revitalize Christianity in England. Such self-serving pragmatism made Wilberforce a very potent political reformer. Equally, the abolition campaign of the 1790s may never have gotten off the ground without the indefatigable Thomas Clarkson, who wore himself out in strenuous, and sometimes dangerous activity, collecting evidence and lobbying against the trade. Clarkson’s intense commitment was driven by a self-aggrandizing
hubris that allowed him to position himself as the redeemer of African liberty. It was because Clarkson thought so highly of himself, and had such a need for acclaim, that he was prepared to take on the powerful interests of the slave trade. A man who thought less of himself would not have done it.

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of *Moral Capital* comes from the second question that Brown poses: what caused this powerful movement at the very heart of the greatest slaving empire to develop at the time that it did? The idea that economic benefit might be sacrificed for moral integrity represented a dramatic shift in British thinking in the eighteenth century. Brown demonstrates that while this idea emerged full blown in the abolition campaign of the 1790s, it actually had its roots in the American Revolution. During that disturbing fratricidal colonial contest, many intellectuals in Britain were engaged in an intensified self-scrutiny about the imperial enterprise, in which complicity in the slave trade was seen to have sullied the moral character of the nation. As the military struggle with the American colonies escalated, they began to articulate views about slavery that would distinguish the British from the slave-owning American colonists and put forward the view that the slave trade was a national disgrace and the emblem of imperial tyranny, which undermined the nation’s claim to integrity. The notion that slavery was an institution inconsistent with British law and repugnant to British sensibility was increasingly voiced as an index of national virtue, especially in the face of ignominious defeat. Granville Sharp went so far as to suggest that the disastrous war was a form of divine punishment for Britain’s complicity in the slave trade. It was near the close of the war, in 1781, that the black Londoner Olaudah Equiano informed Sharp that the captain of the slave ship *Zong* had thrown 132 chained Africans into the Atlantic Ocean in order to claim insurance for lost cargo, thus providing a powerfully emblematic case to stimulate public unease about this repugnant trade. Although Sharp failed to have the ship’s captain and crew prosecuted for murder, he did succeed in making an indelible impression upon the public imagination of the brutal inhumanity of this British mercantile enterprise. In the wake of an unpopular and ultimately disastrous war, concern for enslaved Africans had a critical role to play in maintaining national integrity and allowed the British to accumulate moral capital at a time when national self-regard was at a particularly low ebb. There was a deep need for the British people to reassert the claim that they, and not the rebellious Americans, were a moral people uniquely dedicated to liberty, but their engagement in the lucrative trade in human beings made such claims unsupportable. “To a people who wished to think of themselves as Christian, moral and free,” Brown concludes, “the abolitionists presented an opportunity to express their reverence for ‘liberty, justice and humanity,’ at little cost to themselves” (p. 450).
Karen Olwig’s latest book on Caribbean migrants examines the families of three groups of siblings who grew up on three different islands in the English-speaking Caribbean – Jamaica, Nevis, and Dominica – and who became dispersed through migration. *Caribbean Journeys* examines these extended families not in the sociological abstractions characteristic of a lot of the early migration literature, but from an ethnographic perspective. Olwig believes the popularly used concepts of diaspora, transnationalism, and hybridity that are central to so much of the recent migration literature do not fully capture the lives of Caribbean migrants. This work is also a departure from recent migration research that has focused on the cultural expression and identity formation of migrants, such as in ethnic festivals and cultural politics. Instead, migration is viewed in the context of family narratives and the maintenance of family networks which span several nations – England, the United States, and diverse Caribbean islands. The migrants’ social networks are shown to perpetuate migration by creating opportunities for potential migrants (i.e., extended family members) at new destinations. Olwig is not interested in the traditional view of migration as the movement from one country or nation-state to another, because she asserts that this reveals little about the pathways of interpersonal relations by which the move actually takes place.

Regarding method, this study required a shift away from the more traditional, community-based localized research in a rural village or in a Western urban ghetto, in favor of multiple, short visits in many locations across a half dozen nations to conduct interviews. Olwig comments that some anthropologists “might shake their heads at this sort of field work, dismissing it as shallow jet-set ethnography producing thin, if not useless, data” (p. 37). I
don’t think so. Most readers will be convinced of the value of this multisited research.

The data come primarily from “life story” interviews with family members at the different migration destinations. I wasn’t sure how Olwig’s life story method – which she defines as “entailing an account of an individual’s movements through life – geographical, as well as social, economic, and cultural” – is different from “life history.” Perhaps the difference is in her vague assertion that life stories are not just accounts of “individual trajectories,” but also “histories of specific periods in places as these have been experienced by the narrators” (p. 6). I would have liked some discussion of the difference between the two.

In the early going, I was skeptical that the life stories of many members of a family network was really an advance over the more in-depth individual life histories of migrants that others have produced, including my own *Double Passage: the Lives of Caribbean Migrants Abroad and Back Home* (1992). But as I got further into the book, I could see that Olwig’s life stories of individuals in dispersed family networks did offer a deeper insight into the complexity of the movements and interconnectedness of Caribbean migration. An added benefit of collecting multiple life stories was the wide range of rich stories, anecdotes, and examples she had to draw upon. There are topics, such as work and racism, for which the lengthier individual life history approach is better suited.

The book is well written, although descriptions of the conceptual and theoretical frameworks are sometimes unnecessarily obscure. At some points obtuse passages muddy more than clarify the points Olwig is trying to make. But in the ethnographic chapters the prose is crisp and the family narratives are enjoyable to read.

*Caribbean Journeys* succeeds admirably in showing how a migrant’s network of family relations provides the central context for migratory moves and the nature of relations migrants maintain with their places of origin. Olwig offers us a level of complexity and understanding that goes beyond most accounts of Caribbean migration.

REFERENCE


KEVIN BIRTH
Department of Anthropology
Queens College, The City University of New York
Flushing NY 11367, U.S.A.
<kevin.birth@qc.cuny.edu>

Afro-Caribbean Immigrants and the Politics of Incorporation provides an important critique of the literature on immigrants’ political engagements in the United States as well as a powerful argument for the influence of transnationalism on Afro-Caribbean participation in American politics. Reuel R. Rogers seeks to evaluate the pluralist and minority group models of how immigrants participate in American politics. He questions whether either model can accommodate the distinctive features of the large Afro-Caribbean community in New York City that resulted from 1965 reforms to immigration law.

Pluralist models argue that immigrants develop a sense of group cohesiveness that then serves as a foundation for their political socialization and eventual integration into the political system. According to this model, middle-class values eventually overshadow the sense of group belonging, and political participation becomes based on class interests. This model is derived from accounts of European immigrant groups within the United States.

The minority group model emphasizes the experience of African Americans and argues that racism caused the path toward political participation followed by this group to be quite different from that of European immigrants. It argues that the collective politics of African Americans remains more important than class interests and that political participation includes reformist and even revolutionary agendas and often involves unconventional political actions, such as public protests.

For Rogers, Afro-Caribbean immigrants’ middle-class aspirations and accomplishments, when combined with their phenotypic appearance, provide a test case for both the pluralist and minority group models. Most of the book involves the detailed exploration of the implications of each model and a discussion based on field research from the mid-1990s to demonstrate the key areas in which Afro-Caribbean immigrants’ political experiences defy both models.

The data that Rogers musters to make his argument includes interviews, demographic information, and participant observation on four crucial issues:
the Afro-Caribbean experience of racism in the United States, residential patterns, economic achievement, and the efforts of Afro-Caribbean elites to mobilize politically the community. He demonstrates that the effects of racism on Afro-Caribbean immigrants have not led them to follow the political strategies of African Americans, but that racism has also been a force working against participation in electoral politics. In discussions of economic mobility and residential patterns, Rogers shows that the Afro-Caribbean community is concentrated in specific parts of New York City and that the most frequent contacts of its members are with others in the community. He argues that this has worked against both their joining forces with African American politicians, as the minority group model would predict, and their losing their distinctive political identity, as the pluralist model would predict.

In discussing Afro-Caribbean elites, Rogers notes two forces that undermine efforts at collective politics. First, the political party machines in New York have been reluctant to incorporate Afro-Caribbean immigrants. Second, the Afro-Caribbean community has been reluctant to become fully engaged with local politics.

In demonstrating the flaws of the pluralist and minority group models, Rogers uncovers the powerful influence of transnationalism on Afro-Caribbean political behavior. He argues that the Afro-Caribbean response to American racism is shaped by Caribbean experiences and continued ties to the home society. The reluctance to become heavily involved in New York City politics is also linked to ideas of politics formed in the West Indies coupled with intentions to return to the Caribbean – even if these intentions are never acted upon. Residential concentrations, the ease of communication with the Caribbean and travel to it, and the factors that exclude Afro-Caribbean immigrants from politics countervail those that encourage widespread mobilization of this community.

There are a few minor weaknesses in the book. First, it does not address the way political actions of the Afro-Caribbean community in New York before the 1965 immigration reforms might have influenced contemporary Afro-Caribbean politics. Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael both referred to the influence of Caribbean parents in their autobiographies, and the legacy of Marcus Garvey remained part of the consciousness of the city for many years after Garvey had left. Second, in discussing electoral politics within New York City, Rogers does not fully describe how the term limits referendum that passed in 1993 influenced local politics. The limit of two two-year terms for council members has, in my experience as a resident of a Caribbean community in Queens, encouraged more Caribbean candidates to run for office, yet it also seems to set a collision course between aspiring politicians from the Caribbean community who wanted to continue to hold an elected office and those politicians from the old Democratic Party machine who occupied statewide or national offices that had no term limits. To be fair to Rogers,
however, this trend only began at the end of the period in which he conducted
field research, and besides, in May 2008 (after this review was initially writ-
ten) the City Council voted to overturn the referendum on term limits.

This book is nevertheless both an important contribution to the literature
on the political behavior of immigrant groups and it extends the insights of
the literature on transnationalism toward understanding how Afro-Caribbeans
participate in American political processes.

US$ 16.95)

WILSON A. VALENTÍN-ESCOBAR
Departments of Sociology and American Studies
Hampshire College
Amherst MA 01002, U.S.A.
<wvalentin@hampshire.edu>

Juan Flores, the former professor of German studies at Stanford University
who “migrated” to sociology and Puerto Rican studies after being politicized
on account of the antiwar and Chicano student movements during the late
1960s and early 1970s (Alcoff 2003), is acknowledged as one of the found-
ing scholars of Puerto Rican studies in New York City. Having worked as
a researcher and director at the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter
College from its early inception, Flores helped organize numerous research
projects, including the migratory narratives of the Puerto Rican communi-

cies settling in New York City’s early *colonias* before and after World War
II. *Puerto Rican Arrival* is a product of this effort that complements earlier
historical critiques (Colón López 2002; Glasser 1995, Matos Rodríguez &
Hernández 2001; Sánchez Korrol 1994). First published as *Divided Arrival*
in 2003, the text brings together the migration experiences and reflections of
Bernardo Vega, Juan B. Huyke, Jesus Colon, and Guillermo Cotto-Thorner
– all male leaders who traveled via ship from the ports of San Juan to New
York City.

The book highlights the initial testimonial and literary accounts of
diasporic Boricuas as they navigated the economic changes occurring before
and after the industrial planning of “Operation Bootstrap,” which was mas-
termined by the administration of the former Governor Luis Muñoz Marín.
Although “divided arrival” has been removed from the book’s title in the current edition, it is still present in the text itself, highlighting the varied migratory experiences for Puerto Rican migrants on account of their class differences. If these narratives were compiled and analyzed within a more contemporary analytical lens, race, gender, and sexual identities would take center stage and reframe the ways in which migratory experiences are understood and theorized. The current impetus to move now lies in the domain of other social, political, health, and cultural issues, ranging from access and better-quality health care within the states to sexual tolerance and understanding by friends, colleagues, and neighbors in more urbane settings.

The accounts provide a glimpse of early reflections of the migratory experience. All but one describe the “psychological and existential trauma” of leaving Puerto Rico and arriving in New York City (p. 19), where, as Bernardo Vega remembers, “cornflakes … replaced corn on the cob” (p. 41) and “skyscrapers seemed like tall gravestones” (p. 47). Also lured by the “opportunity ideology” that magnifies premigratory views of U.S. capitalism and “rags-to-riches optimism” (p. 17), we see Colon, Vega, and Cotto-Thorner navigating the urban intensity of subways, people, social networking, politics, and employment as they seek to construct “their own little castles in the sky” (p. 43) alongside other Boricuas or “Hispanos.” Manhattan’s Upper East Side neighborhood of “El Barrio” was still emerging as the central Puerto Rican emigrant colony after Brooklyn’s standing Boricua community. Jesus Colon, a former activist and member of the Communist Party USA who authored his reflections regarding his social and political ideas, efforts, and emigrant experiences (Colon 1982), was a stowaway on the S.S. Carolina where he was discovered in a linen closet by ship personnel and thus required to wash dishes, mop floors, and complete other manual tasks in exchange for his trip to New York (pp. 101-7). Like his good friend and colleague, Bernardo Vega, Colon had various jobs when he landed in the city, including one in response to an ad that read “Easy job. Good wages,” where he earned 23 cents an hour removing labels from bottles using his fingers.

In contrast, Huyke’s “words of encouragement” (p. 65) seem more like a paternalistic account from a Republican who supported a statehood political option for Puerto Rico. The young men who left Puerto Rico gave him confidence, as they embody good citizenship, moral aptitude, and an ideology of social uplift, thus displaying positive impressions to non-Puerto Ricans: “I know [Puerto Ricans] have a good name in America, thanks to those who have gone there to work, and that we in Puerto Rico should try to do something for those young people who leave, even if only to gather statistics so that we know how many young people are struggling outside Puerto Rico for Puerto Rico” (p. 75). Huyke believes “God will help” the “strong, willing, intelligent youths who leave voluntarily, self-confidently” to work in New York, for “work is … life’s blessing” (p. 79). Migration and work seem to be
essential requirements for a modernist project in Puerto Rico: “Young people who are leaving our shores benefit Puerto Rico. If they return to the Island, they will bring with them the experience of living in a large country, and they will know how to see things from a broader perspective” (p. 77). Huyke also believes that Puerto Ricans have a future in U.S. politics: “Imagine the day when one of our young men, or one of their sons, is elected Representative, or Senator, or President of the United States! After all, Roosevelt’s ancestors were Dutch” (pp. 78-79). Huyke’s endorsement of comparing Puerto Ricans to the Dutch, or even his support of a Protestant ethic, overlooks the way U.S. colonialism created the conditions that promoted unemployment, poverty, social inequality, and emigration to the states (City University of New York, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, History Task Force 1979).

Also included in the anthology is the writing of Guillermo Cotto-Thorner, a former ordained Baptist minister and educator who had a column called the “Progressive Pulpit” in the revolutionary newspaper Liberación, and who authored a novel, Trópico en Manhattan (Manhattan Tropic) (Cotto-Thorner 1951). Portraying Puerto Ricans as actively redefining the physical and cultural landscape of the city, this novel is one of the first books to include a glossary of “Neoyorkismos,” a list of definitions explaining the new linguistic practices of New York Puerto Ricans (p. 127) that give rise a generation later to the Nuyorican poetry and literature sparked by Piri Thomas’s Down These Mean Streets (1967). Cotto-Thorner adopts a perspective that is still used in contemporary multicultural discourse around diversity and difference: “Our colony is something like a shiny tile mosaic …. Our people are bound together by an eternal spirit. And just like that mosaic there’s a whole range of colors, designs, and shades. We, too, are divided but also united. Believe me, we’re part of a mosaic encrusted in the bedrock of Manhattan” (p. 167). This mosaic metaphor is later adopted by David Dinkins, the first African American mayor of New York City (1990-1993), who celebrated the “gorgeous mosaic” of New York City’s residents.

Overall, Puerto Rican Arrival in New York is an accessible reminder to readers that not all Latinos are immigrants, that Puerto Rican emigration to the States is a U.S. byproduct of what Juan González aptly describes as a “harvest of empire” (González 2000), and that not all migrants understand and experience migration similarly. Both Spanish- and English-language readers can appreciate this bilingual edition. It will be an asset for middle school, high school, and early college students who seek to understand the diverse experiences of Puerto Rican emigrants in New York City.
REFERENCES


In *The Conquest of History*, Christopher Schmidt-Nowara examines the creation of national histories by intellectuals and politicians in Spain and its colonies, from the 1810s, when Spain lost the majority of its American empire, to 1898, when the United States took over its remaining colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. This is a peculiar time period, as the simultaneous destruction and continuity of empire forced elites in Spain and Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines to reconsider the origins and meaning of Spanish conquest and colonization. But their quest was different. Whereas Spaniards looked for the reasons of their empire’s fall, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Filipinos sought explanations for their continuing colonization and imagined a distinct future. They turned for answers to the same body of sources: the chronicles, letters, and natural histories written by the conquerors in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Yet their reading differed: Spaniards drew a history of assimilation of the indigenous societies into the Spanish nationality; colonial patriots stressed indigenous resistance as a basis for the building of Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Filipino nationality, looking into their country’s precolonial past for that purpose. This quest was complicated by sharp divergences among colonial historians about the future of their country: independence, autonomy within the Spanish empire, or annexation to the United States. To make matters even more complex, all of them, Spaniards and colonials alike, measured the history of the Spanish empire against the British empire, which had also lost its thirteen American colonies in 1783 but had regenerated and grown bigger since then. And all crafted their histories in a dialogue with British and U.S. historians.

Schmidt-Nowara analyzes a rich body of methodologies and sources to map and interpret this multifaceted contest for history (re)writing. First are the scholarly works by nineteenth-century Spaniards, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Filipinos, especially José María Saco, Emilio Castelar, José Rizal, Augustín Stahl, and William H. Prescott. Also analyzed are annotated editions of early Spanish chronicles. In addition, Schmidt-Nowara conducted research in Spanish, Cuban, and U.S. archives to study the personal papers
and correspondence of major historians. He reviewed some important periodicals. Finally, he examined past publications and images of monuments, exhibitions, and museums.

The book opens with a discussion about how Spaniards of different regional and political affiliations understood the relation between empire and nation as Spain, following the independence of its continental American colonies, rebuilt itself as an inclusive nation binding metropolis and colonies, colonizers and colonized. Next is an exploration of Spanish efforts to transform Christopher Columbus into a national symbol against claims by his native Italy, the United States, and the Dominican Republic. The intellectual battle was not only for Columbus’s memory and what he stood for, but also for his mortal remains after the Dominicans claimed to have found them in 1877 in the cathedral of Santo Domingo. Here the author shows that the centrality of the conquest and colonization as well as representations of the colonial past for Spanish national identity did not begin after 1898, as other recent studies assert, but already in the nineteenth century. For example, in the 1860s or at the 1881 Americanists’ congress in Madrid, Spain erected monuments to Columbus that symbolized fraternal harmony between the metropolis and the Americas. Spain’s project of national building, however, was doomed to conflict with historical and symbolic interpretations by colonial historians. For some Cubans fighting for independence, Columbus became either a bloodthirsty conqueror or a suffering martyr (when he was stripped of his powers and returned, in chains, to Spain by the royal official Bobadilla). Another domain of contention between Spain and its colonies was prehistory. As examined in Chapter 3, with the development of archaeology and anthropology, some Puerto Rican and Cuban patriots began to craft their own national histories by highlighting their distinct origins in the vanished indigenous population. Schmidt-Nowara skillfully places this indigenist claim in the context of the highly exploitative slave plantation economies of the two colonies. He convincingly shows that such a focus also helped marginalize and silence claims by Puerto Ricans and Cubans of African descent to participate in the making of the new nation, either as contributors to history writing or as fighters in the anticolonial armed struggle.

The book’s high point is Chapter 4, “The Specter of Las Casas.” Here Schmidt-Nowara weaves together sixteenth-century accounts and histories with nineteenth-century scholarly and political works by Spanish, Cuban, and U.S. writers, without ever losing the contexts in which these writings were produced. Indeed, all contenders appropriated Las Casas’s *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* to document their arguments. For the defenders of Spain’s Black Legend, it was a fundamental piece of evidence of Spanish cruelty and barbarism. For Spanish nationalists, Las Casas embodied the virtues of Spanish colonization, founded on compassion, racial inclusion, and Christianity against the British model of economic exploita-
tion, trade, and racial exclusion or extermination. For many patriots in the colonies, Las Casas was the first American rebel, a precursor of the independence struggle. However, for Cuban historians, he was a more ambivalent figure, playing a major role in the development of African slavery as a means of replacing indigenous slave labor. In particular, Cuban historian José Antonio Saco, on the basis of a comprehensive reading of his writings, came out with an interpretation of Las Casas not as a critic of slavery and colonialism, but as “an explicit defender of slavery and implicit advocate of empire” (p. 136).

The last chapter examines the conflict between the Filipino historian Rizal, who countered the official claim of Spanish civilizing mission in the Philippines with a history of precolonial plenitude followed by decline, and the Spanish defender of colonialism, Wenceslao E. Retana. An important part of that contest was held at the Madrid Exposición de Filipinas in 1887, where peoples from the archipelago were exhibited to show primitiveness.

The book ends with Puerto Rico ten years after the 1898 U.S. takeover and on an ironic twist of history: the ceremonial burial of the remains of Juan Ponce de León, conqueror of Puerto Rico in 1508, a ceremony that brought together the Puerto Rican, Spanish, and U.S. elite and Church officials of San Juan. Embracing the Spanish past and language had become a weapon in Puerto Rican scholars’ self-affirmation against U.S. rule.

Although Schmidt-Nowara’s inclusion of the Philippines in his analysis is commendable, he does not always master this colony as well as Puerto Rico and Cuba. Nevertheless, The Conquest of History is a fundamental contribution to postcolonial studies and the rapidly growing field of memory and historiography in nationbuilding.

REFERENCE

At the outset of their substantial and detailed introduction to *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World*, editors Diana Paton and Pamela Scully capture the comparative gendered approach that underpins the volume and draw attention to its geographic coverage: “From Brazil to Cuba to the U.S. South, from Jamaica to the British Cape Colony, from Martinique and Haiti to French West Africa, gender was central to slave emancipation and to the making of the nineteenth-century Atlantic world” (p. 1). Essentially, they argue, the process of emancipation and the societies that emerged in its wake were gendered.

Paton and Scully posit that the gendering of slave emancipation in the nineteenth-century Atlantic arose principally from the enslaved themselves who “drew upon a variety of sources for the elaboration of ideas about masculinity and femininity, including the gender conventions and ideologies of their particular African backgrounds, the organization of gender in the specific slave society in which they lived, and their encounter with European gender ideologies” (p. 5). This explains why the process of emancipation was masculinized, particularly in regions where the destruction of slavery occurred through armed rebellion, and where men emerged as citizens on the basis of military service, while women were relegated to the status of political minors. The masculinization of the emancipation process meant that the experience of formerly enslaved men and women in almost every sphere was different during the postemancipation period. As colonial authorities, abolitionists, the Church, and Christian missionaries generally endorsed patriarchy and supported the status quo, men were able to assert new authority in the domestic scene.

Thus the principal areas of investigation that the fourteen essays in *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World* seek to tackle are the role that gender played in emancipation and the ways in which those involved in emancipation also produced and reproduced gender difference through such avenues as the allocation of work, the organization of sexual relationships, the reconstruction of households, the appropriation of language, and engage-
ment in political action. To accomplish this enormous task across broad geographical frontiers, the editors divide the volume into three parts, followed by Paton’s useful bibliographical essay.

Part One highlights the importance of gender ideologies for processes of emancipation and for the construction of citizenship in postemancipation societies. In the postemancipation era generally, gender endowed males with more authority. Sue Peabody shows that in the French Caribbean self-purchase and manumission were gendered processes; women had greater access to manumission than men, but it was often attained through concubinage and liaisons with their benefactors and consequently had adverse effects on their image (p. 70). In the postemancipation period, however, men had more opportunities for advancement and exercise of political agency than women, “thus minimizing many of the advantages that universal freedom should have bought to women” (p. 57). Or again, Scully looks at the ways in which newly emancipated males in South Africa’s Cape Colony asserted their rights as citizens, viewing themselves as new masculine individuals. Certainly, she concludes, “the slave liberated into citizenship was a man” (p. 44). Similarly, Mimi Sheller writes about how patriarchy prevailed in Jamaica where the patriarchal family became the norm and was endorsed by Christianity (pp. 81-82).

Part Two focuses on “the relationship between women, the household, gendered labor ideologies, and postemancipation political economy” (p. 21). In the postslavery period, female labor continued to be as important as it had been during slavery. Women’s ability to maneuver was constrained by concepts of gender and marriage in some areas such as French West Africa where men were much more mobile, as Martin Klein and Richard Roberts show (pp. 162-75). But, in other areas such as the British Caribbean, as Bridget Breerton convincingly argues, women pursued economic strategies, for example, withdrawing from plantation labor in favor of child care, family farm work, and marketing, thereby securing a degree of autonomy and economic security. Likewise, women in Cuba banded together and engaged in mass purchase of land in urban areas during the emancipation era (1873-1890s). As Michael Zeuske observes, “Women used almost everything they had to obtain a small house and plot of land. Despite having little money, they used some of it to pay the notary for a written deed” (p. 185). And in Puerto Rico, Ileana Rodríguez-Silva argues, the formerly enslaved appropriated language of the liberal abolitionist elites to their own ends in order to achieve rights and better labor conditions. This was a period (1873-1876) when their response to apprentice legislation was crucial in the formation of the identity of free working people.

Part Three could well have constituted a separate text as the essays on reconstruction in Arkansas and Louisiana, by Hannah Rosen and Marek Steedman respectively, and the tone of the section as a whole, are out of
sync with the other two parts. It concentrates on how emancipation led to a
dramatic expansion in the public sphere where the formerly enslaved could
often engage in sociocultural actions that defied European norms. Thus in
Kingstown, St. Vincent, as Sheena Boa shows (p. 254), men and women
from the poorest sectors of the society rejected European mores and engaged
in their own forms of leisure activities – dancing, drinking, and gambling
around the local rum shops.

Despite some unevenness in the quality of the contributions, Gender
and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World is a work of serious and cre-
ative scholarship. Its biggest weakness is that it highlights patriarchy at the
expense of race. After all, in slavery as in freedom, black men and black
women stood together to confront racism perpetrated by their white oppres-
sors, male and female.

Gender and Democracy in Cuba. ILJA A. LUCIAK. Gainesville: University

FLORENCE E. BABB
Center for Women’s Studies and Gender Research
University of Florida
Gainesville FL 32601, U.S.A.
<flabb@wst.ufl.edu>

As Ilja A. Luciak points out in Gender and Democracy in Cuba, research
published in the United States on Cuba is nearly always controversial
(p. xiii), viewed as either too supportive or too critical of Cuban politics and
society. Although he has the advantage of being a European national, Luciak
will not escape the scrutiny of those readers eager to identify him with a
“pro” U.S. or Cuba camp. Most readers should be pleased, however, to find
a balanced analysis of the changing participation of women in Cuban poli-
tics from before the Revolution through the transitional period during which
Raúl Castro was made interim head of state.

The six brief chapters read as a sort of extended essay that includes an
examination of gender differences during and after the Cuban Revolution,
the contemporary Cuban political system and views of democracy, gender
in the Communist Party and the state, and finally the 2002-2003 elections
and prospects for gender equality. Luciak is a political scientist with well-
established credentials for examining gender politics in postrevolutionary
societies and he makes effective use of comparative material from his work in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala.

Luciak made ten trips to Cuba between 1998 and 2003, interviewing forty individuals including government officials, members of mass organizations, feminists, and others. The interviews, informal conversations, official data, and everyday observations provide the substance drawn on to support this work. Notably, the Federation of Cuban Women, the mass organization that is the women’s arm of the state, presented obstacles to Luciak’s efforts to obtain official permission to conduct research in Cuba, something that has eluded many others conducting work there. He nonetheless was able to carry out a project that moved well beyond the Federation’s fairly conservative stance on women’s issues.

Given the recent proliferation of scholarship on Cuba and the already abundant literature, my concerns were about the book’s contributions and a certain old-school approach despite its more nuanced and feminist sensibility. As I read the first two chapters, on women in the Revolution and in postrevolutionary society, I considered whether this third of the text was not simply revisiting questions of the “revolution in the revolution.” However, Luciak breathes new life into his discussion of women’s incorporation into the revolution, raising questions that were not asked twenty or thirty years ago when the first crop of writings on women in postrevolutionary Cuba appeared. Avoiding some of the earlier polemics, he nonetheless makes a strong case that “democracy cannot be successfully consolidated without the full incorporation of women into the political process both at the party and societal level” (p. xv). While this echoes others’ (and Luciak’s own) findings about the success of revolutions depending on women’s participation, he goes on to show that the Cuban government’s containment of any sign of an independent feminist movement had the unintended consequence of holding back efforts toward women’s equality and toward a more democratic society in general. He offers the first “in-depth study on the gendered reality of political decision-making” (p. xvi).

Luciak establishes that despite its achievements, the Cuban revolutionary government failed to bring women into the highest echelons of political decision making to a significant degree and that Cuban women confront a “glass ceiling” as they rise to positions of greater responsibility and power. The Federation of Cuban Women, far from offering a feminist critique, has “deactivated” efforts to build autonomous women’s organizations that might threaten its hold over the base and call for more far-reaching change. Luciak is straightforward in offering his own view that “the federation would benefit from the existence of alternative independent voices articulating women’s interests” (p. 36).

In the third chapter Luciak departs from gender analysis to examine the Cuban political system and notions of democracy. One of his principal inter-
viewees, National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcón, described the selection of candidates who, even running unopposed, have a strong turnout at the polls for a “unity vote.” Luciak draws attention to the “explosion of NGOs over the past decade” (p. 51), suggesting that Cuba may have what we would call civil society (though Cubans themselves generally consider the state-led mass organizations to be their equivalent of civil society). If the lines remain blurry in Cuba, it may be because despite a certain level of dissatisfaction, “almost every Cuban has a personal stake in the system’s survival” (p. 62).

Chapters 4 and 5 are the most substantial in presenting new insights into Cuban gender politics in the Communist Party and the state. Luciak argues that women have been drawn into political decision making and gained ground in the first decades of the revolutionary government, but then lost some during the economic crisis, or “Special Period in Times of Peace,” of the post-Soviet 1990s. The explanation for the decline in women’s participation is related to the persistence of the double standard whereby women shouldered more of the burden of providing for families and households during a difficult time. This made the demands of public service especially hard at the local level where far more time is required than at the national level of decision making. This has produced a “Cuban anomaly” (p. 69) whereby more women are active nationally than locally. Nonetheless, Luciak emphasizes that fewer women are found “the closer one moves to the pinnacles of real power” (p. 78). In his view, “without a public dialogue, prevailing machista attitudes which impede women’s advancement, will not be challenged” (p. 87). Examining the 2002-2003 national elections in which there was a substantial “unity vote,” Luciak notes the growing percentage of women in the National Assembly, but the continued poor showing in Communist Party leadership and the Council of State.

In his conclusions, Luciak references the special period and its special demands on women in partial explanation for the limited gains women have made in key positions of decision making. He suggests that an autonomous women’s movement and strengthening of civil society might have put more pressure on the Communist Party and the state to bring about change. Like some earlier feminist analysts, Luciak maintains that more was promised than delivered in formal efforts toward equality in gender relations. While some greater attention to everyday experience might have enlivened the text, this study nonetheless offers significant new material based on interviews and conversations with a host of Cubans. It will be read profitably by those interested in gender and political transition in Latin America and the Caribbean and especially by those eager for discussion of the Cuban political process and its prospects for the future.
Ana Serra’s thought-provoking work focuses on literary accounts of the Cuban Revolution during the 1960s. This period was ushered in by two of Fidel Castro’s most often-quoted speeches, “Words to the Intellectuals” and the closure of the First Conference of Writers and Artists in Cuba (1961), in which he outlined his government’s cultural policy. The slogan “within the revolution, everything; outside the revolution, nothing” became the battle cry for many intellectual debates at the time. Thus, Serra probes how Cuban novels, popular during this period, articulated the official ideology and sometimes undermined its basic premises, such as its gender bias, racial exclusions, and images of peasants as noble savages.

Serra approaches the Cuban Revolution primarily as “a discursive event, that is, as a social, political, and cultural movement that was represented and reflected upon in a vast amount of textual production” (p. 3). Although she devotes most of her attention to works of fiction, she also incorporates political speeches, literary criticism, journalistic articles, popular magazines, propaganda posters, and photographs. The book draws on “various theoretical frameworks – from gender, psychoanalysis, postcolonialism, film theory, or deconstruction – to articulate a number of oppositional readings that these texts can yield” (p. 6). Acknowledging Homi Bhabha, Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler, and Laura Mulvey among her most important sources of theoretical inspiration, Serra is mainly interested in how certain “foundational fictions” (to use Doris Sommer’s suggestive expression) translate the dominant discourse of the Cuban Revolution into literary plots. Her disillusionment with the government’s unfulfilled promises informs her understanding of these texts. As a young Spaniard who initially shared a romantic view of socialism, she became increasingly disaffected with the Cuban regime, which she now views as embodying a dystopia.

Serra chose five novels published in Cuba between 1962 and 1971 as exemplars of state-supported revolutionary narratives: Daura Olema García’s *Maestra voluntaria* (1962); Edmundo Desnoes’s *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (1975); Pablo Armando Fernández’s *Los niños se despiden* (1968); Miguel
Cossío Woodward’s *Sacchario* (1970); and Manuel Cofiño’s *La última mujer y el próximo combate* (1971). All but one of these works (*Memorias del subdesarrollo*) received the prestigious literary prize for best novel by Casa de las Américas. All were printed and widely read in Cuba; all depicted “bourgeois characters as heroes who become proletarian revolutionaries” (p. 13). All but one (*Los niños se despiden*) were framed in relation to a revolutionary milestone, such as the 1961 literacy campaign and the 1970 ten-million-ton sugar campaign. The only one to have been translated into English or to have received sustained critical attention is *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (translated as *Inconsolable Memories*); in 1968 it was also made into a movie by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea. In addition, Serra includes an epilogue (which seems out of place in this book) on four detective novels by Leonardo Padura Fuentes, published during the “Special Period in Times of Peace” (initiated in 1989), a time of prolonged economic, political, and even moral crisis in Cuba.

Among Serra’s most revealing findings is that the revolutionary narratives of the 1960s typically adopted the format of the *bildungsroman*, centering on a young man’s ideological maturation, and less frequently the *künstlerroman*, charting the course of a writer’s vocation. The novels under examination are fictional autobiographical renditions of their protagonists’ transition from a prerevolutionary to a revolutionary identity. Furthermore, Serra stresses that Soviet-style socialist realism influenced these works’ narrative style, including their insistence on political engagement, revolutionary values, direct literary expression, linear character development, and broad public appeal. More substantively, she shows that the novels usually relegated women to secondary roles, as mothers, housewives, teachers, and prostitutes. In her own words, “women, especially their bodies, were defined by the masculine norm of the Revolution” (p. 48). Other ideological tensions characterized revolutionary discourse, such as those that pitted rural against urban residents, Whites against Blacks, and heterosexuals against homosexuals. According to Serra, the New Man was an essentializing and totalizing fiction that silenced the diversity of the Cuban people.

Serra concludes that “the New Man reveals itself as an empty construct” (p. 171). Her book dwells on the Revolution’s multiple flaws, especially the government’s inability to instill a radical transformation of subjective consciousness. She interprets the literary representations of the Cuban Revolution during the 1960s as evidence of its most glaring shortcomings: the leaders’ paternalistic relationship to the people, especially the peasantry; ambivalence toward intellectual as opposed to manual labor; emphasis on a revolutionary’s “manly” qualities and responsibilities; condemnation of homosexuality; and neglect of gender and racial differences. From Serra’s perspective, the discourse of the Cuban Revolution has not effectively addressed the need to eradicate prerevolutionary attitudes toward gender, sex, and race. Instead, it has often reproduced conventional ideas and practices, such as the sexu-
alization of the *mulata* or the stigmatization of the *maricón* (faggot). In the epilogue, Serra contends that the epic figure of the New Man has practically lost all of its former glamour in Cuba since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In her appraisal, Padura Fuentes’s narratives portray contemporary Cuban society as decadent, corrupt, and alienating – arguably capturing the prevailing tone of despair and discontent among ordinary Cuban citizens. In the end, Serra brands the Revolution as “a failed experiment on human beings” (p. 174).

Serra’s insightful but polemical work may be read partly as a telling sign of the growing disenchantment of European and Latin American intellectuals with the Cuban Revolution, especially since the 1990s. Ironically, she seems overly eager to denounce the cultural policies of Fidel Castro’s government during the first decade of the Revolution, when many progressive writers and artists worldwide sided with the government. In any case, her treatment of the Revolution as a discourse, whose ideology is transparently reflected through literary texts, seems insufficient. Crucial aspects of the revolutionary process – such as personality conflicts, class struggles, institutional practices, public policies, and international intrigues – are missing from Serra’s analysis. Moreover, her eclectic use of high theory does not illuminate some controversial aspects of the philosophy of the New Man, such as its dominant heterosexual “male gaze.” Finally, not all Cuban writers and artists have entirely abandoned the utopian project of the 1960s. While many display a loss of faith in their works, some express their hope for change, reform, and a better future. Nevertheless, Serra argues compellingly that unchecked state control and censorship inevitably lead to an impoverished intellectual discourse and repressive practices. Her book constitutes indispensable critical commentary on cultural politics in postrevolutionary Cuba and elsewhere.

REFERENCES


Lydia Cabrera and the Construction of an Afro-Cuban Cultural Identity.


BRIAN BRAZEAL

Department of Anthropology
California State University, Chico
Chico CA 95929, U.S.A.
<brazeal@uchicago.edu>

Edna M. Rodríguez-Mangual argues that Lydia Cabrera’s ethnographic and fictional writings on Afro-Cuban religions anticipate the insights of postmodern cultural studies and their critique of traditional ethnographic writing. Seeking to debunk the scholarly lineage that positions Cabrera as an intellectual descendant of her brother-in-law Fernando Ortiz, Rodríguez-Mangual shows how Cabrera’s ethnographic and fictional works blur the generic lines that divide ethnographic monographs from novels and testimonials in the Latin American tradition. She argues that this generic blending opens up a space for Afro-Cubans to articulate their own identity and realize their own subjectivities independent of elite, white authority.

This book is noteworthy in being the first full-length study in English devoted to Lydia Cabrera, an author who had a vast impact both on Latin American literature and Afro-Cuban ethnography as well as on the practice of African-derived religions throughout the Hispanophone world. Only one slim volume of Cabrera’s voluminous corpus has been translated into English so far: Afro-Cuban Tales (2004). Her masterpiece, El Monte: Igbo, Finda, Ewe Orisha, Vititi Nfinda (1975), still awaits its translator.

Rodríguez-Mangual’s book begins with a brief biographical introduction. Cabrera was born in 1900 (though this date is disputed) to an elite white family in Havana with connections to politics and publishing. She excelled in painting and as a young woman traveled to Paris where she studied at L’École du Louvre and L’École des Beaux-Arts. There she was exposed to surrealist and cubist paintings which incorporated African influences. Also while in Paris she read African colonial ethnographies and the poetry of Aimé Césaire. Her contact with these paintings, books, and poems, Rodríguez-Magual argues, provided Cabrera’s first inspiration to investigate the African traditions of her homeland and to represent them in a nontraditional manner.

Cabrera wrote two volumes of short stories before the 1954 publication of El Monte. Then she wrote another volume of short stories, a vocabulary of an Afro-Cuban liturgical language, and a treatise on the Abakuá secret society before the Cuban Revolution in 1959. In 1960 she went into exile in Miami,
where she continued to publish ethnographic and fictional works based on her Cuban fieldwork well into the 1980s. She died in 1991.

Rodríguez-Mangual’s excavation of Cabrera’s works begins with an examination of the writings of her brother-in-law (many would say her mentor) Fernando Ortiz. Ortiz, generally held to be the father of Afro-Cuban studies, began his career as a criminal anthropologist in the Lombrosian phrenological tradition. His first book, commonly known as *Negros brujos* (1906), equates Afro-Cuban religion with forms of black criminality and attributes its persistence to the hereditary inferiority of Cuba’s African descendants. As Ortiz’s career progressed he rejected hereditary explanations for Afro-Cuban social problems in favor of economic ones, especially the history of slavery. In his later publications he celebrated Afro-Cuban religious contributions to national music, dance, and theater. He also took on a ceremonial role in an Afro-Cuban temple.

Rodríguez-Mangual takes Ortiz’s entire corpus to task for constructing an Afro-Cuban identity defined by opposition to the elite Whites who write and read about them. By providing monolithic, hegemonic accounts written in the ethnographic present and by citing fellow social scientists while leaving Afro-Cuban informants anonymous, Ortiz defined Afro-Cuban culture from the outside as exotic and other. Still, because he remained on the island after the revolution he has been adopted as the national icon of the study of Afro-Cuban culture.

Rodríguez-Mangual argues that Cabrera’s work is to Ortiz’s as narrative, self-reflexive anthropology is to the traditional ethnographic monograph. *El Monte* incorporates Cabrera’s point of view, but also the voices of scores of named Afro-Cuban informants. She weaves these together in a polyphonic, self-referential, and often contradictory account that, Mangual-Rodriguez argues, consistently destabilizes the power of empirical knowledge and thus the ability of white elites to define Afro-Cuban cultural identity. Her insider’s point of view makes elite, white Cubans into the exotic others.

Rodriguez-Mangual’s last two chapters are dedicated to the blurring of the genres of ethnography and fiction in Cabrera’s later writings. By including Afro-Cuban myths in her fictional short stories and by including stories from admittedly unreliable informants in her ethnographic works, Cabrera threw the boundary between fiction and ethnography into question. Thus, says Magual-Rodriguez, she anticipated many of the insights of 1980s and 1990s postmodern cultural studies. Although her last books were written in Miami and Madrid, they were based on material gathered in Cuba. In this way Cabrera is seen as opening up the space for the creation of a Cuban subjectivity in exile.

The central thesis of this book is beyond reproach. Cabrera’s work challenged the disciplinary conventions of anthropological writing in the 1950s by frankly acknowledging her own positionality and incorporating the diverse
voices of her informants into a text that is anything but monolithic. As such it stands in stark contrast to most of Ortiz’s corpus (though an examination of his last book, *História de una pelea cubana contra los demônios*, would reveal a multivocal landscape where the voice of the slave Leonarda plays a prominent part). Those who are already familiar with texts in Spanish by Cabrera and Ortiz and who enjoy postmodern literary deconstructions of classic ethnographies will find this book useful.

Unfortunately, several factual errors mar this book’s infrequent discussions of Afro-Cuban ritual practice. Readers unfamiliar with these traditions should be aware that divination is not usually conducted with snail shells or metal chains, that Iyalochas do not always recognize the superior authority of Babalawós (p. 111), that Ngangas (not Orishas) are seated in metal cauldrons and sent out to plague their owner’s enemies (p. 72), and that most writers on Santería spell it with an accent.

Much anthropological research remains to be done on the impact of Lydia Cabrera’s study of the practice of African-derived religions all over the world. Intellectual historical work is also needed on Cabrera’s place in the trajectory of Afro-Cuban studies and Latin American literature. Finally Cabrera’s writings await an English translator. If Manguel-Rodríguez begins an Anglophone tradition of writing on Cabrera she will have done a real service to the memory of this great scholar.

REFERENCES


Worldview, the Orichas, and Santería: Africa to Cuba and Beyond.

ELIZABETH PÉREZ
Divinity School
University of Chicago
Chicago IL 60637, U.S.A.
<eaperez@uchicago.edu>

For students of Afro-Atlantic religious formations – especially the tradition called regla de ocha or Lucumí, and more popularly, Santería – 2007 was a fine year, bringing the publication of Mary Ann Clark’s lucid, well-structured, and classroom-friendly Correcting the Myths and Uncovering the Realities of a Growing Religion; Claire Garoutte and Anneke Wambaugh’s stunningly executed, extraordinarily accomplished Crossing the Water: A Photographic Path to the Afro-Cuban Spirit World; and Kristina Silke Wirtz’s assured and provocative Ritual, Discourse, and Community in Cuban Santería, also based on research conducted in Santiago de Cuba. Jualynne Dodson’s Sacred Spaces and Religious Traditions in Oriente Cuba further extends this list, thereby increasing the number not only of Anglophone works concerning African-derived traditions in southern Cuba but also of books on those religious formations that have yet to capture the scholarly attention that Santería and Palo Monte – both now widely practiced outside of Cuba – have managed to garner.

Over thirty years ago, Mercedes Cros Sandoval’s first book, La Religión Afro-cubana (1975), was a serious description and analysis of Lucumí that appeared at a time when the few contemporary volumes on the tradition available were marred by sensationalism or the intention of serving as how-to manuals for would-be connoisseurs of the “occult.” Mentored by the legendary ethnographer and fiction writer Lydia Cabrera, Cros Sandoval applied her familiarity with anthropological and sociological theory to Afro-Cuban religious phenomena, offering astute observations and sometimes poetic accounts of Lucumí myth and ritual. Expectations for Cros Sandoval’s new book, then, were high, but its most profitable sections are, unfortunately, translated excerpts from her first study, now made available to a new audience.

Using the concept of “worldview” developed by Michael Kearney, Cros Sandoval contends that the similarities in attitudes and behaviors between lower-income Cubans of Spanish and African descent were what allowed Santería to crystallize into its current form and achieve widespread popular-
ity on the island. She assesses their compatibility according to sociological “value orientation profiles” designed to evaluate perspectives on the character of human nature, temporal modes, modalities of human action, and the relationships of humans to each other as well as to nature. “On the basis of descriptive materials provided about the ethos of lower-income groups in colonial and republican Cuba,” Cros Sandoval writes, “inferences can be made about the probable positions that might have been taken by both black and white respondents to such an instrument” (p. 43). As this quotation suggests, the resulting analysis builds on a series of rationalizations that prove misleading at best. As Rane Willerslev (2007:156) writes, “the concept of worldview … implies that a body of context-free, prepositional knowledge about spiritual beings, their characteristics and interrelations, lies fully formed inside people’s heads.” Although for several decades now, the concept of worldview has had considerable currency in folklore studies and historical ethnographies, depictions of reality and conceptualizations of human experience are nowhere consistent and unambiguous, conforming to some preexisting model separate from everyday, practical engagement with the world, with the totality of such images constituting a “worldview.”

One is eager to give Cros Sandoval credit for trying to make sense of complex historical processes, but the interrelationship between “mind,” environment, and action is undertheorized to the point of producing cliché: for instance, “Both the Yoruba and the Spanish are socially oriented” (p. 28) is one of the insights to be found here. And while Cros Sandoval writes, “Santería as a religion is an abstraction derived from many different local groups, differing in some matters of dogma or ritual but sharing one common denominator: access to wisdom and power through worship of the oricha/santo” (p. 71), the framework of the book depends on the reification of Santería as a set of cultural representations that amount to a cosmological map, the constituent parts of which may be compared to that of others. This leads Cros Sandoval to fault practitioners for not hewing to Nigerian Yoruba conceptions – assuming we can faithfully reconstruct what those were during the precolonial period, rather than simply relying on William Bascom’s much later fieldwork – thus unwittingly casting Santería as a derivation or deviation from an original whole, as when she writes, “among most practitioners of Santería, the belief in the [guardian angel] and the belief in reincarnation are blurred, and many don’t know about the relationship of [spiritual guide], reincarnation, destiny, and divination” (p. 91).

Cros Sandoval also goes against current scholarship – such as that of Apter (1991) – in contending that the failure of Nigerian cultic organizations to regroup in Cuba represents “the loss of a coherent conceptualization of the afterworld, or of punishment and reward,” and of related concepts (p. 91). Moreover, while Cros Sandoval characterizes Santería as “for the most part the fruit of a conscious and unconscious search for equivalencies in meaning
between the gods that the slaves brought from Africa and the Catholic saints of their masters,” the evidence presented in the form of oral histories and *pat-akines*, or myths, suggests no such quest for analogies or pressing need for a reconciliation of elements labeled “African” or “Catholic” (p. 78).

The sections on Cuban history are written with a heavy dose of nostalgia, but little interest in depicting the more unsavory aspects of colonial or early republican history: “Most white and black Creoles became attached to Cuba, to its insular and tropical charms and sensuality – a sensuality manifested in the beaches, the moonlight, the sway of the palm trees … Cuba was perceived in human terms. Cuba, this sensual female, invited Cubans to live and enjoy life” (p. 26). Accordingly, the “race war” of 1912 during which over 3,000 Cubans were massacred – and the subject of Aline Helg’s book-length study as well as the scholarship of others in the form of book chapters, numerous articles, and unpublished theses – is never mentioned by name, nor are the *brujería* scares that claimed the lives and livelihoods of those criminally charged with aberrant religious practices in the early years of the Republic afforded more than a handful of three-sentence paragraphs.

The glaring omission of these materials would appear to be a strategic choice to avoid discussion of events that would challenge the alleged compatibility of the Spanish and Yoruba worldviews. More difficult to understand, however, is the number of truly gratuitous errors in the text – too many to list here – from the information on the playing of the sacred drums (p. 99) to the circumstances under which possession may occur (p. 96). It is difficult to believe that for a volume published by the University Press of Florida, no scholar or practitioner competent to scan the manuscript for errors could be pressed into service to amend them.

This is a volume that disappoints particularly in that its aspirations so far exceed its accomplishments, failing to furnish readers with the definitive, encyclopedic source of information on Santería that it hopes to be. Despite the madly, and maddeningly, uneven quality of the book, however, reading it is not without rewards; the voices of practitioners – too seldom heard even in the finest scholarship on the tradition to date – emerge from both vibrant oral histories and excerpts from the manuals called *libretas*, often containing retellings of myths that serve as moral-ethical “action guides” for practitioners. Similarly, Cros Sandoval’s treatment of divination is excellent and amounts to an intriguing, all-too-brief glimpse at what the rest of the book might have been.
REFERENCES


MANUEL BARCIA
Department of Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies
University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT, U.K.
<m.barcia@leeds.ac.uk>

The history of slave conspiracies and revolts in the Americas is receiving more attention than ever before. Among the amalgam of works on this subject, some address the problem of slave resistance within a broad context and others dissect particular slave movements. While conducting one of these more specific studies Matt D. Childs has also produced a precious examination of issues that were far from being delimited by the geography of the island of Cuba – issues relevant to the entire Atlantic world, from Africa to Brazil, from the Caribbean to Europe.
Any reader who knows something about the events that Childs discusses will be immediately surprised by his inclusion of the word “rebellion” in the title. Earlier scholars have always referred to the movement crushed by the Spanish colonial authorities in 1812 as a conspiracy rather than as a revolt. The title, therefore, is a statement in itself, or better a challenge. Childs is telling us that we are up for a daring historical ride.

Supporting his analysis through a vast array of sources located in Cuban, American, and European archives and libraries, Childs discusses in remarkable detail both the plot and the rebellious outbreaks related to it. The result is a microhistorical gem through which the lives and actions of the protagonists – and this includes the plotters, the soldiers, the colonial authorities, and the planters – are scrutinized and connected by admirable heuristic work.

Not only has Childs taken on the traditional history but he has also questioned why previous historians – with the exception of José Luciano Franco – had not already attempted to produce a monograph on Aponte, despite conducting archival research on the events. Even more significant, Childs lets us know in no equivocal terms that he seeks to unveil the forces behind rebellions by slaves and free people of color during the Age of Revolution through the prism of Aponte’s movement. He is not alone in viewing the Haitian Revolution as one of the main sources of inspiration for those involved in the movement, but his archival work has paid off in a startling manner in this book. At the end, he is not only able to demonstrate the impact of the Haitian Revolution among Aponte and his fellows, but he has also treated another potentially important source of inspiration, discussed earlier by scholars such as Michael Craton and David Geggus: the use of rumor.

In chapter after chapter, Childs examines almost every single social group that was, in one way or another, related to the movement. Authorities, aristocrats, slave owners, free people of color, and slaves are all well represented throughout the book. Some key relationships, although not always theorized, are nonetheless explored in unusual depth. Take for example the always edgy relationship between slaves and free colored people, or the even hazier connections between the plotters and rebels living in the cities and countryside throughout the Age of Revolution.

Childs also looks at the big picture, that of the island of Cuba and its geopolitical environment. He explores the international conflicts of the time, the ethnicity of many of the rebels, and their cultural and social forms of socialization in the island. In doing so, he has added a new dimension to the study of African cultures in the New World, to a large extent thanks to the sources he worked with, but also, significantly, thanks to his commitment as a scholar to find as much as possible about what the plotters and rebels had in their minds.

The book’s one noteworthy problem is not directly the responsibility of the author and should not discourage anyone from reading it. Typographic
errors, sprinkled throughout, sometimes make the reading frustrating and should have been taken care of by the press before publication. I have assigned the book in one of my undergraduate courses and would recommend it without hesitation to both undergraduates and graduate students, as well as to any scholar interested in issues related to slavery in the Atlantic world. In the years to come, Childs’s work on the Aponte Rebellion may well become obligatory reading for anyone interested in the intriguing and exciting topic of slave rebelliousness in the Age of Revolution.


SELWYN RYAN
Institute of Social and Economic Studies
University of the West Indies
St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago
<selwyn.ryan@sta.uwi.edu>

This book on Trinidad and Tobago’s historical development fills the gaps and seeks to correct the narrative in Eric Williams’s History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago which, it is generally agreed, is both partial and partisan.

Harvey Neptune justly complains that “the story of occupied Trinidad has gone largely untold within academic groves [and that] this reticence has its reasons” (p. 11). One reason has to do with the fact that unlike what happened in much of Latin America, there was never any serious clash in Trinidad and Tobago between the occupied and the occupiers. As Neptune observes, “the island’s inhabitants mounted no challenges – overt or otherwise – to Yankee occupiers. Absent of any clear and totalizing battles between ambitious civilizeds and recalcitrant nations, this instance of U.S. intervention languished in historical obscurity” (p. 12).

The book sets out to reconstruct Trinidad’s historiography and that of other states in the Caribbean in terms of struggles for cultural rather than economic or political hegemony. It makes the controversial point that the existing Caribbean nationalist narratives are overdone and overimagined. As Neptune puts it, “from Cuba to Guyana, the imperatives of nationhood have organized and authorized conceited stories about the emergence of people-
hood, tall tales that vastly overstate the autonomy and persuasive powers of the nation idea. *Caliban and the Yankees* is premised on the notion that suspension of any belief in these plots promises a fuller comprehension not only of the Caribbean’s history, but also its present” (p. 13).

In what can be regarded as a clear rebuke to Williams’s historiography, Neptune tells us that “the memory produced in the intensively nationalistic moment of the late 1950s neglected the actual struggles and nuances of the wartime years, figuring occupiers as little more than an exploitative foreign force” (p. 18). What one needs, he argues, is a more nuanced history of Trinidad and Tobago, one that relies more on “hidden transcripts” and less on official documents.

The book tells us a great deal about the cultural politics and activities of the 1930s and 1940s, and it familiarizes (or refamiliarizes) us with some of the trends and social fashions that were triggered or accentuated by the occupation such as dress styles (the zoot suit and the jitterbug shirt), ethnic and gender relationships, and the tensions caused by the importation from Barbados of labor to replace the thousands who had stampeded to the base in search of the Yankee dollar. Drawing heavily on journals such as *The Beacon, New Dawn,* and *The Observer,* the book also introduces readers to some of the artists and dancers of the day such as Carlyle Chang, Amy Leong Pang, Ivy Achoy, Sybil Attack, Sylvia Chen, Beryl McBurnie, Boscoe Holder, and political activists and authors such as Ralph de Boissiere, Alfred Mendes, C.L.R. James, Lloyd Braithwaite, Ralph Mentor, Hugh Stollmeyer, Albert Gomes, Michael Hamel-Smith, and Captain Andrew Cipriani in his incarnation as an ardent opponent of the divorce legislation that the colonial government of the day sought to introduce.

Also featured were calypsonians who were folk historians in their own right. The story of the best selling *Rum and Coca Cola* sung by the Andrews Sisters is also retold. The tendency of many of the calypsonians of the time to tailor their compositions and presentation styles to American tastes led some critics to express concern that the calypsonians (like the sex workers or “mopsies” of the day) were pandering to the American dollar, and in the process, betraying their traditional responsibilities as *griots* of the people.

Despite its emphasis on cultural politics, the book does not ignore the fact that some struggles had their political and economic dimensions. It tells us of the struggle on the part of the plantocracy to dampen wage rates which exploded because of the demand for the labor needed to construct and operate the base, about the attempt on the part of officialdom and the local white Creole and British elite to prevent those whom the Mighty Sparrow would immortalize in his calypso, *Jean and Dinah,* from behaving as if they were “color blind” in terms of whom they slept with and where.

There was general anxiety about preserving the old colonial social order which equated whiteness with prestige. Neptune’s conclusion was that the
struggle proved futile and that notwithstanding the occasional clash between
native Caliban and foreign Prospero, Americanophilia generally prevailed.
As he concludes on p. 9,

this sweeping array of change, not surprisingly, sparked a response within
the establishment and broadly among those invested in the status quo. Through
out the occupation, Trinidad’s white plantocracy, its respectable, anglocentric
types, and more generally, its male population, maneuvered to pre-empt, counter, and
manage what they experienced as a period of electrifying disorder. The colony was
a veritable theatre of social battle in those years. By the time the dust cleared, the
result was indisputable; those groups fighting to turn back the hands of time, to
restore the society to its prewar mores and conditions, ended on the side of futility … such was the deci-
siveness of the upheaval that by late 1943, the ubiquitous social observer Albert Gomes, could
declare that the “old Trinidad will never return.”

This was the climate within which Eric Williams launched his war on the
“white creole massas” and the Americans for the return of Chaguaramus from
which most of the 25,000 men who soujourned there during the War had already left. It was perhaps the American soldiers and sailors who were
responsible for massa’s social death, and not Williams as the mythology
would have us believe. Perhaps the most significant contribution the book
makes is that it puts Williams’s epic battle for Chaguaramus into context, and
it challenges his interpretation of that pivotal interlude in Trinidad’s history.

REFERENCE

WILLIAMS, ERIC, 1964. History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago. New York:
Praeger.

Claims to Memory: Beyond Slavery and Emancipation in the French
Caribbean. CATHERINE A. REINHARDT. New York: Berghahn, 2006. xiv +
202 pp. (Paper US$ 70.00)

DOMINIQUE TAFFIN
Archives Départementales de la Martinique
97263 Fort de France cedex, Martinique
<dominique.taffin@wanadoo.fr>
Claims to Memory falls within a realm of historical analysis that has been gaining steam over the past several years in both Anglophone and Francophone research: the history of representation, particularly the public representation of history. Exploring the construction of “collective memory,” it follows in the footsteps of Pierre Nora’s writing on lieux de mémoire, which is amply cited in the text. Studies of the history of slavery paid scarce attention to the issue until the late 1990s. Reinhardt’s book, written in 2003 (though not published until 2006), thus constitutes a significant contribution to the debates that have been engaging historians and also to more public debates in the U.S., British, and French media concerning commemorations of abolition.

Reinhardt’s focus is on the French Antilles – especially Guadeloupe, where she conducted her research. Her thesis is that representations of slavery forged at the end of the eighteenth century (together with the more general philosophy of the Enlightenment) were responsible for producing an alienating discourse on slavery, or even total amnesia. Citing recent writings by Edouard Glissant and the 1998 sesquicentennial commemorations of France’s abolition of slavery, and leaning also on Glissant’s Discours antillais (1980), Introduction à une poétique du divers (1996), and Quatrième siècle (1964), she argues that Antilleans have only recently initiated efforts to re-appropriate their own past. “Beneath layers and layers of silencing, erasure, and purposeful forgetting, realms of memory are now summoned to narrate the untold story of a people reclaiming their rightful share of the past” (p. 124). More than fifty years after Fanon’s denunciation of slavery and seventy years after the development of Négritude, Antilleans are accepting their slave past and demanding the erection of monuments. In the process, they are revisiting eighteenth-century lieux de mémoire and giving them new meaning.

The first chapter, on Enlightenment discourse about slavery, is the most coherent and is based on printed documents from that era. Reinhardt’s approach consists of analyzing pro- and antislavery discourses prior to the first abolition of slavery in the French colonies (1793 in Saint-Domingue and 1794 for all other French colonies – both retracted by Bonaparte in 1802). She adopts the postcolonial critique of L’Esprit des Lumières (Todorov 2006) which emphasized limits to the application of universalist principles by French philosophers in the eighteenth century and showed the ties that existed between some of them and the commercial elites. Not surprisingly, Reinhardt picks up on the arguments advanced for deconstructing the republican myth at the end of the nineteenth century, which justified French colonial enterprises in the name of Liberty and Equality. Here, her arguments are often well to the point and backed up by the writings of publicists and writers from the 1780s and from the Revolution who expressed themselves on the question of colonialism. Her remarks are, however, not new, since they had already been put forth by a number of historians of ideas and historians of
colonization during the Ancien Régime and the Revolution (for example, Michèle Duchet and Marcel Dorigny).

The chapters following – “Realms of the Maroon,” “Realms of Freedom,” and “Realms of Assimilation” – deal with demands made during the French and Haitian revolutions by free persons of color and slaves, a subject studied mainly by French historians tied to Yves Bénot and, in the United States, by David Geggus and Laurent Dubois. They depict slaves as active agents in securing their freedom, and free people of color as agitators for “assimilation.” (Note that claims for assimilation do not have the same meaning during the Revolution, in the nineteenth century, and in the twentieth. Reinhardt’s use of this term in the chapter title runs the risk of producing more confusion than clarification.)

The most original aspect of this book should be its analysis, in the final chapter, of the representations conveyed through selected monuments and memorials in Guadeloupe and to a lesser extent Martinique. This part is, however, poorly integrated with the preceding chapters.

Above all, even though Reinhardt raises the general issue of memory, reflected in the present case by the French government’s creation of a committee for the memory of slavery (chaired by Maryse Condé), she does not take sufficiently into account the intensity of identitarian debates which are crystallized by the issue of the memory of slavery. Nor does she treat their political implications – see, for example, Giraud 2005, Vergès 2006, and Vergès & Condé 2005. (She must be aware of these lacunae, since the final page of the book points to the possible numbing effect of an ongoing, permanent commemoration of slavery. As Fanon remarked long ago, “I am not the slave of slavery.”) Also, she has neither addressed the political fallout nor seized the opportunity to propose a well-researched interpretation of new and old monuments. For example, the statue of Joséphine (Martinique) and the monument to the mulatresse Solitude (Guadeloupe) are described only cryptically, though it would have been especially interesting to compare the allusions and intentions behind the two, by both the artists and the patrons, as well as their respective receptions by the public.

And more generally, Reinhardt displays a tendency to treat the history of representations in a rather facile manner:
- The lack of a sociological analysis means that there’s no way of knowing in the end whose memory of slavery is being characterized. Does the frequently evoked discourse of Edouard Glissant reflect an official or folk vision of the history of slavery?
- As for the issue of reception and the transmission of these representations, Reinhardt’s introduction alludes to Pierre Nora, Michel Foucault, Maurice Halbwachs, and Benedict Anderson in connection with the construction of collective memory, but the rest of the book indulges in a very fuzzy use of the idea of “memory.” The terms “memory” and “representation” are conflated,
as are (at times) the notions of source document and memory. Often the concept of memory is reduced to the sense it has in the media or in intellectual discourse, without taking into account the modes of diffusion, transmission, and reconstruction as they are actually lived and experienced.

One rather curious omission undermines the book’s authority and contradicts its stated goal. After many details about eighteenth-century representations and claims, it suddenly leaps right into the late twentieth century without having treated the processes of construction and reconstruction of the memory of slavery during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The process of memory develops at variable speeds and is certainly not linear, but rather it is subject to distillations and reminiscences that are heavily influenced by the context at a given moment. Nonetheless, one can’t discount the “true” longue durée, which needs to take into account social, economic, and political evolutions. This is particularly important in the case studied in this book, since the Antilles of the nineteenth century witnessed the transformation of the slave society into a “colonial republican” society – not without paradoxes and contradictions. It was also in the nineteenth century that the first native historical discourse developed in Guadeloupe and Martinique, first by white Creoles and quickly thereafter by people of color. And it was in the nineteenth century that people began to develop their own ways of viewing the relationship between national French history and local history.

Reinhardt’s analysis is considerably weakened by her failure to raise these points, in spite of occasional mention of the emergence of the figure of the nègre marron as the hero of a history in which Antilleans are no longer victims, but active agents.

The book is also marred by a certain naiveté, particularly in adopting Glissant’s proposal to substitute the writer’s “prophetic vision of history” for the rigors of written history. Obviously, it makes sense to take into account, as historic facts, the origin and reverberations of “prophetic” or “poetic” visions, especially for anyone interested in the history of representations and memory. It’s quite another thing, however, to depict them as the only alternative to the absence of history, or the amnesia of societies born of slavery. That would be falling victim to the illusion that memory is “spontaneous,” that it emerges from a collective unconscious uninfluenced by efforts at intelligibility and the self-awareness of societies in which every historian plays a part.

REFERENCES


RAY A. KEA
Department of History
University of California at Riverside
Riverside CA 92521-0204, U.S.A.
<ray.kea@ucr.edu>

Like the slave plantation of the Americas, the European trading station was a modern institution. Different chartered trading companies established stations – castles, forts, and lodges or factories – along the Atlantic African littoral in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The highest concentration of stations was to be found on the eighteenth-century Gold Coast. How did the stations function and who were the personnel that ran them? What was their everyday world? The Gold Coast-based Cape Coast Castle was one of the largest and better known of the stations. It was administered by chartered companies – primarily the Royal African Company and the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa – which were deeply rooted in British society. The Castle was, as William St. Clair notes, “the headquarters of the entire British involvement in the transatlantic slave trade” (p. 1). St. Clair has written an informative and eloquent account of the history of the Castle and life within it, from its construction in the second half of the seventeenth century to the nineteenth. While his focus is on the Castle, he provides useful comparative information about other British forts on the Gold Coast. His study consists of an introduction, nine chapters, a map, and more than twenty con-
temporary illustrations (although some pertain to the Slave Coast rather than the Gold Coast). The bibliography is substantial. Sources are divided into “manuscripts” (that is, records from the National Archives at Kew), “electronic” (the transatlantic slave trade database), and “printed.”

St. Clair begins by linking the Castle with the Atlantic sea lanes and the ships that served it. He follows this account by a description of the Castle’s architectural history and its relations with local notables and Danish, Dutch, and other European competitors. He then takes the reader inside the Castle – its living quarters, the library, the warehouse, the stockyard, the cannon and armory, and the prison or slave dungeon. Chapter 4 examines the lives of British officers who resided in the Castle and the other forts. St. Clair writes that “although the cadre of officers was tiny, the British families from which the officers were drawn were a large and integral part of the political, ecclesiastical, professional, and commercial life of the entire British nation” (p. 84). Interestingly, an ability to speak Fante was a precondition for promotion to the higher officer ranks. Chapter 5 describes the life conditions of soldiers and workers employed in Cape Coast Castle and the other British forts. They received no pay in cash, St. Clair tells us, but frequent rations of tradable goods (p. 133). Many of the soldiers were recruited from British jails, and the workers, men, women, and children, were “public” slaves owned by the Company. In a rather cleverly contrived metaphor of the political economy of the British West Indian plantation system, St. Clair concludes, insightfully, that “Cape Coast Castle, on the edge of the South Atlantic Ocean, was a microcosm of the British industrial economy” (p. 146).

Chapter 6 begins with these words: “One of the attractions of the African Service was the prospect of plentiful sex” (p. 147). “Wench unions,” locally sanctioned marriages between Gold Coast women and Britons, were a standard practice. The British often had wives in Britain. St. Clair draws interesting comparisons between British and wench marriage contracts. Chapter 7 looks at Anomabu Fort, the main center of the British slave trade on the Gold Coast in the second half of the eighteenth century. Through numerous quotes from the Company’s records, Chapter 8 examines various aspects of the Castle’s commercial transactions – the buying and selling of slaves, merchandise, slave resistance, panyarring (public arrest), and pawns and pawning.

Chapter 9 records the changing functional status of Cape Coast Castle, following the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, under British colonialism. St. Clair briefly considers the effects of Atlantic slaving on local African societies, the African Diaspora, and Great Britain. He concludes the chapter by addressing the question of historical memory and the way in which Cape Coast Castle is to be explained to present-day generations. Memory among Ghanaians and persons of African descent, he reveals, does not recreate an identical Castle. Rather, the Castle means different things to different constituencies.
St. Clair offers an informative and lively picture of the transatlantic slave trade from the perspective of one of the trade’s major trading and administrative sites. His fluid narrative carries readers into the hierarchic, gendered, carceral, and sexual economies of the site. At different times in its history – from precolonial to postcolonial – the Castle carried ideologies of class, patriarchal gender roles, religion, and race. My only regret is that the Castle is not located in its larger urban milieu, namely the town of Cape Coast (Ogua in the Fante language) with its council of elders, merchants, brokers, militia, artisans, day laborers, salt producers, and fisher folk as well as its public marketplace and its hinterland of agrarian communities. This place was a locale of globalization in the sense that it served as a node in the global circuit of labor, commodities, and consumption. This, however, is perhaps a minor quibble. William St. Clair has produced an illuminating and exciting narrative about a “grand slave emporium” and readers should commend him for his worthy effort.


OLOWYN M. BLOUET
Department of History and Philosophy
Virginia State University
Petersburg VA 23806, U.S.A.
<omblouet@hotmail.com>

Frank Moya Pons, *the* authority on the history of the Dominican Republic, has written a classic. In *History of the Caribbean*, he uses the development of sugar plantation economies and societies to discuss the shared experiences of the Caribbean islands before 1930. Despite diverse colonialisms and cultures, he considers sugar plantations as central to the Caribbean region and to the development of capitalism in the Atlantic world. Although the sugar economy rose and fell in different islands at different times, a similar pattern developed, involving capital-intensive sugar plantations, exploitation of enslaved and indentured labor, abolition of slavery, the emergence of peasants and proletarians, and the rise of big American sugar. This is not a new idea but Moya Pons treats us to a thorough survey of developments in the major sugar islands: Spanish, French, and British. Detailed coverage, of the
whole Caribbean mosaic, is a great strength. So too is the exhaustive bibliographical essay at the rear of the book.

The story begins with the Spanish occupation of the Antilles and the demographic collapse of Native American peoples. Shortages of indigenous labor led to the introduction of enslaved Africans first for gold mining, then for sugar cane cultivation. Experiments with sugar production began in Hispaniola as early as 1506; the first sugar shipment went to Spain in 1521. The age of Caribbean sugar and slavery had begun. From the outset enslaved peoples resisted with insurrection and marronage.

Sugar exports from Hispaniola and Puerto Rico declined sharply after about 1584 due to Brazilian competition. Ginger, a high-value crop characterized by relative ease of production and shipping, became favored. Cattle were also important for fresh meat, jerky, and hides.

Despite Spanish efforts to retain a trade monopoly with the Antilles, Dutch, French, and English vessels traded with Spanish settlers. North Europeans occupied islands in the Lesser Antilles and soon switched from tobacco to sugar. A “sugar revolution” began. Barbados, first off the mark, was by 1655 “the most densely populated area in the New World” (p. 59) with 23,000 Europeans and 20,000 slaves. Moya Pons details the significance of Dutch expertise in this transformation. Jamaica (taken from Spain in the 1650s) outperformed Barbados after 1720. During the 1700s sugar production in the French colonies of St. Domingue, Martinique, and Guadeloupe expanded. French sugar dominated the continental European market.

Eighteenth-century wars transformed the economic and political map of the Caribbean. Neutral ports of the Dutch and Danes thrived during wartime. At the end of the Seven Years’ War/French and Indian War (1763), Britain gained the “ceded islands” of Grenada, Dominica, St. Vincent, and Tobago where new sugar frontiers developed. The American Revolutionary Wars, which saw Britain face American colonists (1776), France (1778), Spain (1779), and the Netherlands (1780), were hard on the Anglo Caribbean, where supply costs increased, shortages followed, and mortality rose.

The Haitian Revolution is covered in Chapter 11, “The French Revolution in the Antilles.” In just over twenty pages, Moya Pons unravels the complex story succinctly. His deep knowledge of the interconnected histories of Haiti and the Dominican Republic is a great asset here and throughout the book.

Partly inspired by events in Haiti, the British government moved to prohibit the slave trade (1807-1808) and later abolish slavery (1833-1834). British planters (and later the French) had to grow sugar without slaves. The sugar industry was saved by indentured labor (mainly from India and China) and modernization. The French planters, facing competition from beet growers in France, were the first to introduce steam-powered centrales. Moya Pons details this technological shift as a regional process, something not done elsewhere in the literature.
Meanwhile, during the early nineteenth century, new sugar revolutions in Cuba and Puerto Rico saw plantations grow and slave numbers increase. Cuba mechanized, using steam power and modern machinery, and had the first rail line in 1837. By 1860 Cuba was the world’s leading sugar producer and Puerto Rico was second. Sugar developed later in the Dominican Republic.

Abolition of slavery in Cuba and Puerto Rico was complicated because of connections to the independence movement. Using Spanish sources, Moya Pons analyzes the turbulent history of rebellion and abolition, including the Ten Years’ War in Cuba (1868-1878), and later the Spanish-American War. A fine chapter details the rise of the American sugar empire in most of the Greater Antilles between 1880 and 1930. We learn how U.S. companies and banks took over land and centrales in a belligerent fashion, especially after World War I, despite peasant resistance in such countries as the Dominican Republic. Workers from Jamaica and the Lesser Antilles migrated to Spanish-speaking areas for jobs in sugar.

The story ends with the Great Depression and World War II when sugar declined or disappeared throughout the Caribbean except Cuba. Ironically, socialist Cuba retained sugar as a key economic sector, trading it for petroleum with the Soviet Union. Perhaps Caribbean sugar will be refashioned as fuel (ethanol), not food, as is happening in Brazil.

Frank Moya Pons has produced a most valuable account of the crucial role sugar played in Atlantic history, leading to economic, demographic, social, and political changes of monumental significance. His work will be consulted for many years to come.


KAREN FOG OLWIG
Institute of Anthropology
University of Copenhagen
Copenhagen K, Denmark
<karen.fog.olwig@anthro.ku.dk>

This volume is part of a long series of history books on the Caribbean published by Macmillan Caribbean. Brian Dyde has already authored or co-authored several books in the series and clearly has a vast fund of information
on Caribbean history upon which to draw. Perhaps his extensive experience at writing Caribbean history has given him the confidence to introduce the book with this bold statement: “The many books and articles listed in the bibliography have all helped in writing of this book, but at the same time they can be seen as adding to – in the words of the Trinidadian-born intellectual and historian C.L.R. James – ‘that crowded vagueness which passes for the history of the West Indies’” (p. xiii). Thus, “there is next to nothing that gives an overall picture of how things really came to be as they are for the present inhabitants of any one of them” (p. xiii). The ambition of this book is no less than that of bringing St. Kitts, Nevis, and Anguilla out of that crowded vagueness.

Dyde goes about his historical mission by first describing the natural environment of the three islands and the early inhabitants, followed by chapters on the European discovery and settlement of the islands, the many wars fought (primarily between the French and the English) during the islands’ early history, and the various systems of government established through time. After a couple of chapters dealing with the construction and maintenance of the plantation societies, he describes more wars and developments in the colonial governmental system and then the events leading to the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and emancipation of the slaves. The rest of the book narrates the economic decline that characterized the postemancipation era, the indifference of the British colonial system toward the plight of the emancipated and their descendants, the rise of the labor movement on St. Kitts, and the long, uncertain, if not torturous, road toward independence for St. Kitts-Nevis and reaffiliation with Britain for Anguilla. The book ends in 1983, but includes a brief afterword on the secession movement on Nevis that was still active when the book went to press in 2003.

Has the book then given “an overall picture of how things really came to be as they are for the present inhabitants” of the three islands? It provides great detail on the ins and outs of British colonial maneuvers, and it includes long quotations from colonial records and descriptive accounts by various British residents and visitors that often give a vivid impression of the way British colonial society thought and acted. It is much less generous in its treatment of the African-Caribbean people who are portrayed primarily as victims of an exploitative plantation society. In this narrative, their major achievements become the organization of a labor movement during the early twentieth century on St. Kitts, the staging of an Anguillian “revolution” against St. Kitts during the 1960s and 1970s, and the unsuccessful fight for secession from St. Kitts by Nevis since the 1970s.

We learn little of the complex social and economic relations and cultural traditions that emerged among the slaves and free Colored during slavery. And the historical development of the African-Caribbean societies that inherited the islands after the British departure is given little if any attention in the
This is particularly striking in the treatment of Anguilla. Throughout the book, Dyde tends to focus on St. Kitts, the most significant island from a British colonial point of view, with only brief forays to Nevis. Anguilla figures mainly as an irrelevant appendix, attached dutifully at periodic intervals. This is in accord with Dyde’s view that Anguilla played an “unimportant role … in Caribbean history” (p. x). For the people living on Anguilla, however, the historical development of Anguillian society was of major significance. We get a hint that the society that emerged on Anguilla, an island that existed virtually outside the sphere of the British colonial regime, must have been quite remarkable when we read (p. 226) that in 1898 Anguilla’s infant mortality rate (138) was lower than that of St. Kitts (207), Nevis (196), and London (155). Readers are at a loss as to how to interpret this historic achievement, mentioned in passing as one of the many fragmented bits of information on Anguilla that Dyde sprinkles throughout the book.

One is therefore led to question what kind of “overall picture” it is that Dyde wishes to present. What sort of “things” does he wish to include in this picture in order to write a history “for the present inhabitants”? Dyde seems to assume that a British colonial history comprises the overall picture needed to understand “how things really came to be as they are for the present inhabitants.” This history stops in 1983, with the devolution of British interests after the independence of St. Kitts-Nevis. Readers are left to wonder whether anything of any note has happened during the past couple of decades.

As a major publisher of Caribbean history books, many of which are used in the secondary and tertiary schools in the Caribbean, Macmillan has a great responsibility to present its readers with the current state of the art within historical scholarship on the region. In my view, history has more to offer than the compilation of British colonial facts presented by this book.

---


NEIL L. WHITEHEAD
Department of Anthropology
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Madison WI 53706, U.S.A.
<nlwhiteh@wisc.edu>
This volume addresses the important topic of how imagery plays into ethnographic representation and how such imagery simultaneously represents a cultural product, expressive of values that are not part of professional anthropology’s analytical use of such imagery. Stephen Nugent in many ways pioneered the study of “non-Amerindian” Amazonia and his perspective on such issues is from the vantage point of one not directly engaged in the classic anthropological topics that have become associated with Amazonia. He is therefore potentially in an excellent critical position to lay bare the follies and misrepresentations of those engaged in researching “Indians” and to show the connections between the anthropology of the twentieth century and the colonial representations that preceded and, to some extent, gave birth to the ethnographic agenda of contemporary anthropologists working in this region.

Certainly, as Nugent observes (quoting Alcida Ramos), the Indian has become a somewhat “hyperreal” if not surreal category in the imagining of both foreign anthropologists and the national societies of the region and this is often driven by the visual record as much as travel texts and academic writing. The irony here is that he does not consider, especially in the light of recent controversies over the practice of anthropology in Amazonia, the way in which the figure of the “anthropologist” has reached equally surreal proportions, making it unclear who is designated by such a term.

The book begins with a consideration of the extent to which the visual is actually a distinct field of knowledge or representation: that is, whether or not a distinct “visual anthropology” is viable as a form of knowing others that can express aspects of ethnographic engagement not feasible through text or text alone. His conclusion is that if it is, such promise has yet to be realized. Indeed, one may add that Euro-American anthropology’s theoretical focus on issues of identity is bound to fail in this regard (p. 57) as such representation is necessarily incomplete. However, Nugent does not consider how a different anthropological agenda, specifically a focus on experience, might alter this prospect.

This oversight is also the crux of the problem with this volume – it is itself incomplete in the sense that the discussion of anthropological uses of imagery in ethnographic works is riddled with error of fact and omission. One should immediately add that given the vast scope of Nugent’s ambition – visual depiction of Amazonia through history and the specific statistical analysis of the imagery in over 100 ethnographies – this is perhaps inevitable. Unfortunately the result is not convincing as the errors seem to indicate a faulty appreciation of the anthropological debates. For example, the Marajó archaeological culture was not thought to derive from the Caribbean but rather the Andes, the twentieth-century ethnographic record for Amazonia does not begin solely with Nimuendajú, and the works of John Gillin and Walter Roth are not even mentioned.
Moreover, while particular anthropologists may well show a blindness to the variety of Amazonian peoples this cannot be said of anthropology more widely. No consideration is given to the work of anthropologists working with Maroon societies or earlier studies of urban and peasant peoples. There is no doubt that Amazonian anthropology has often been ahistorical and overly engaged in specific kinds of study of symbolic and social systems, but effective critique of such approaches and of the explosion of historical anthropological work over the last two decades really needs to be better thought through.

In an effort to render the source materials controllable, Nugent severely limits the range of discussion to certain kinds of “monographs,” and then only those published in English. He does acknowledge the problems of such an approach, but that does not make the results any more compelling. Moreover, even within such limitations, there are significant oversights, as in the suggestion that there are no anthropological equivalents to John Hemming’s collation of historical sources for his compendious volumes on the history of the Amazon region (p. 119), despite the fact that The Cambridge History of Native American Peoples has been available for nearly a decade and clearly presents a range of historically sensitive anthropological studies now prevalent in scholarship about Amazonia.

This is a great pity as Nugent’s own ethnographic work is first-rate and the need to better historicize the “Indian” is certainly a methodological constant. The corpus of visual representation is an important site for theoretical advance in anthropology but cannot be separated from the textual contexts in which such material often appears. As a result Nugent’s failure to consider scholarship on the literature of travel and exploration in Amazonia greatly hampers his analysis. Moving image and sound may well be considered a distinct category of materials but might be better dealt with as an aspect of “tropical” cinema more widely than by trying to configure Amazonia as a sole, or even particularly unique, site for the production of cultural imagining of the exotic tropics. Nugent is to be congratulated for having broached such a vast and complex series of topics, but this only serves to underscore how much more needs to be done before we are anywhere close to having a reliable framework of analysis and case study for “scoping” the Amazon.

REFERENCE