Policing and transgressing borders: soldiers, slave rebels, and the early modern Atlantic

Soldiers Johan Karel Mangmeister and Jean Renaud were lucky. They escaped the gruesome punishment of their black co-conspirators in the Berbice slave rebellion of 1763-1764. Rather than being slowly roasted to death while having pieces of their flesh pulled out with pinchers, Mangmeister and Renaud were merely beaten to death. First, the executioner cut off Mangmeister’s right hand, slapped him in the face with it, and tied him to the rack. Then taking careful aim with his iron bar, he struck the condemned man’s body with blows designed to break the bones but not the skin. Renaud received the same treatment. Just before the first blow, Renaud allegedly comforted Mangmeister “bidding him to keep a good heart; that the voyage of Life would soon be over” (Stedman 1988:77).

Such was the price these men paid for protesting their poor labor conditions and the “bad housekeeping,” as the colonial authorities would later put it, of their officers struggling to maintain control on the far margins of the Dutch empire. For Renaud’s and Mangmeister’s punishment was the end point of a series of events that pointed to the dangerous liaisons between colonized and colonizers that occurred in borderlands where the distinctions between slaves, Indians, and soldiers clouded over in the mist that rose over the wild, uncharted tropic beyond the last plantation.

The executions took place in July 1764 in Paramaribo, Suriname. They constituted the conclusion of the court-martial of six soldiers for mutiny. Besides Renaud and Mangmeister, one more soldier was hanged; the remaining three received corporal punishment and saw their military service...
extended. The men had mutinied in neighboring Dutch Berbice a year earlier. They had been members of a regiment of some seventy mercenary soldiers sent from Suriname to Berbice to help subdue a large slave rebellion that had broken out in February 1763. But, fed up with their treatment in Berbice, two-thirds of the men had mutinied in July 1763 and deserted their post. Then they joined the very slaves they had been sent to defeat. This slippage of loyalties alludes to the liquid qualities of borders, both geographical and cultural, throughout the New World in the age of empire. The Dutch mercenary soldiers were not only the instruments of colonial power, but also its objects. Their own sense of oppression caused the soldiers to kindle what turned out to be a dangerous sympathy and common cause with the enslaved rebels of Berbice.

Colonial historians have usually studied professional soldiers in their capacity of border enforcers, men sent overseas to maintain the cultural and legal divisions upon which colonial authority rested. Yet, in fact, soldiers regularly became key figures of connection as they straddled and crossed the very boundaries (literal and metaphorical) the authorities intended for them to maintain. Generally stationed on contested middle ground on the edges of empire, soldiers forged individual connections with indigenous peoples and slaves. Some of these contacts were considered routine and were accepted by the authorities. Others, however, struck hard at the very foundations of colonialism, challenging and violating European ideological premises with potentially explosive results. The mutiny in Berbice, carried out in the midst of a huge slave rebellion, represents one such threat.

This paper reconstructs the mutiny from Dutch records and uses it to look at the role of soldiers as border-crossers in the Atlantic world. In reconceptualizing the roles and experiences of soldiers, I aim to rescue them from their exclusive confinement to military history. Soldiers not only patrolled the boundaries of empire, they also worked to take them down. Such a reconceptualization, I suggest, helps historians of empire to better understand why the fluid and at times mutually sympathetic relationships on the margins called for ever stronger boundaries to be built – ones erected on race and assumptions of cultural superiority.

**The Slave Rebellion**

In order to understand the soldiers’ mutiny, I must first back-track to describe the slave rebellion that prompted it. The rebellion and the mutiny occurred in

2. Krijgsraad Gehouden alhier Aen Paramaribo Donderdag de 19e Julij 1764, July 19 and 20, 1764, Sociëteit van Suriname, 1682-1795 (hereafter SvS), 1.05.04.04, 323, National Archives (hereafter NA), The Hague.
a small corner of the colonial world. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Dutch established a number of colonies between the Amazon and the Orinoco Rivers, an area known as “the wild coast,” or Guiana, in northeastern South America. Moving from east to west, Dutch Guiana consisted of four colonies each named after the main river of settlement: Suriname, Berbice, Demerara, and Essequibo. For the first one hundred years of its existence, Berbice was a patroonship in private hands. In the early eighteenth century, it was sold to a group of private investors, who founded the Company of Berbice and obtained a charter from the Dutch Estates General in 1732. The colony grew but slowly. By the time the enslaved revolted in 1763, 4,500 to 5,000 enslaved Africans and creoles, another 300 native slaves, and some 350 Europeans lived in the colony. Close to 1,500 enslaved workers produced sugar on eleven large plantations owned by the Company on the Berbice River. Twice that number of bond people grew coffee and cacao on some 140 privately owned plantations on the Berbice and its tributary, the Canje River. Beyond the sliver of riverside plantations stretched the rest of the country, a thick wall of uncharted rainforest and vast savannas inhabited by Amerindians who traded with the Dutch. By treaty the Amerindians had agreed to fight for the Dutch in case of foreign attack or slave rebellion. Their presence discouraged marronage, and their help in suppressing the 1763-1764 uprising proved indispensable. Neither the Company nor the planters

3. In 1791 the States General, the Dutch general decision-making body in which each of the seven provinces (or “states”) had one vote, took over all four Guiana colonies. Early in the nineteenth century, Berbice, along with Demerara and Essequibo, passed into British hands and the area became known as British Guiana. Independent since 1966, it is now the Republic of Guyana. Suriname remained Dutch until 1975 when it became an independent republic. Almost nothing is known about Berbice before 1720 since no family archives exist for the Van Pere family, which ran the colony. Nor is there much secondary literature on eighteenth-century Berbice, or, for that matter, the 1763-64 slave rebellion. There are only two books on the rebellion, both in Dutch, written in 1770 and 1888, respectively: Hartsinck 1974 and Netscher 1888. See also Goslinga 1985 who relied extensively on Hartsinck. For an excellent unpublished study, see Velzing 1979.

4. Missieven van de Directeuren der Geotroijerde Colonie de Berbice, Amsterdam, August 17, 1763, Sociëteit van Berbice (hereafter SvB), 1.05.05, 149, NA. Compare the small size of the Berbice slave population with that of neighboring Suriname, which reached 50,000 in 1770. There is no way to know the proportions of creoles and Africans in the enslaved population, nor do we have a clear picture of origins. According to David Eltis (2001:39), “in the Guianas, two-thirds of all arrivals before 1750 came from the adjacent Gold Coast and Bight of Benin. A switch to West Central Africa in the third quarter was followed by a Cuban-style provenance pattern after 1775.”

were keen to spend much money on the defense of the colony, and at the time of the slave rebellion, there were a mere eight healthy soldiers in Berbice.

The rebellion broke out at the end of February 1763, organized by a coalition of Africans and creoles in which the “Amina,” or Akan, prominent in collective resistance throughout the Atlantic, predominated.6 The first leader of the Berbice rebellion, Coffij, who took the title of “governor,” had allegedly come into Berbice as a small boy. The immediate cause of the rebellion was, according to letters the rebels sent to the Dutch, abusive treatment.7 The rebellion expanded rapidly as rebels moved from plantation to plantation, urging and forcing people to join. The Dutch, panicked and badly outnumbered, fled downriver to a small fort on the coast. The rebels set up command posts on various plantations while the former hamlet of New Amsterdam, located some 75 miles inland, served as Coffij’s’ headquarters. In late March, just as they were about to abandon the colony, the Dutch were reinforced by almost a hundred men from Suriname. These reinforcements encouraged the governor to leave the fort and sail upriver to the sugar plantation Dageraad, where the Dutch would be pinned down for the next year and a half.

Until the late fall of 1763, the two camps occasionally skirmished but for the most part, warily watched each other. For the first six months of the rebellion, Coffij tried to keep his men from attacking the Dutch as he negotiated with Governor van Hoogenheim about dividing the colony. Distrustful of these negotiations, in which the Dutch engaged only to win time, and increasingly impatient, a faction of Africans staged a coup against Coffij and took over, but by then they lacked the strength and weapons to drive the Dutch out. The Dutch, despite reinforcements from Suriname and St. Eustatius, felt equally incapable of overtaking the rebels. Over the summer, more than a third of the newly arrived sailors and soldiers had died, and another third was sick.

The Europeans began a counteroffensive in November, 1763, when at last the first 150 of a total of 1,000 troops from the Republic arrived. Pressed by these soldiers and their Amerindian allies and suffering critical shortages of weapons and food, the rebels began to lose ground. As they did so, they increasingly fought among themselves (Kars forthcoming).

Over the course of the winter, the anticolonial rebellion against the Dutch dissolved into a bloody African civil war. Rebel leaders, each with their own followers in bands which subdivided into smaller groups as time went on,

7. For the letters the rebels sent to the Dutch governor, see Lichtveld & Voorhoeve 1958:81-89.
moved about the colony hiding from the Dutch and fighting with each other. The main antagonists were the Amina forces and a large group of Congo. There was also conflict with the Louango as well as between Africans and creoles. As each band ran out of weapons and ammunition, and all increasingly suffered from hunger, leaders saw their followers melt away. They deserted for other leaders or the Dutch. By February, increasing numbers of former slaves began to turn themselves in to the Europeans every day; the number quickly mounting to several thousand. Indian allies upriver prevented the others from settling beyond the reach of the Dutch. This Indian cordon forced people back to their plantations, where they lived in the bush hoping to scavenge in the fields, and where they could more easily be captured by the Dutch. All of these factors led to the demise of the rebellion. It nevertheless took the Dutch troops another six months, until the end of summer of 1764, to subdue the last determined fighters.

Eager to divest themselves of the large numbers of returned slaves, the Dutch in March began the process of investigating the culpability of the many slaves in their custody, a process that intermittently occupied them the rest of the year. Over the course of 1764 they executed 140 men and four women for their participation in the insurgency on the stake, the gallows, and the wheel. Including these unfortunate people, about a quarter of the enslaved did not survive the rebellion.

The uprising had been costly in terms of lives and material goods. At the end of 1764, a mere 3,370 slaves and 116 whites remained in the colony, a serious reduction from the 4,000 to 5,000 slaves and 350 Europeans at the start of the rebellion. Most of the missing slaves had been killed in battles with Amerindians, Dutch soldiers, or each other, or had died of illness, hunger, and exposure. While most Europeans had fled, some had been killed by the slaves and others had died in battle. Of the eleven Society plantations, five were largely destroyed. More than a third of the private plantations were abandoned after the revolt and many others had to be rebuilt from the ground. Despite considerable losses, the Dutch had nevertheless restored both their authority and the institution of slavery.

8. These Congo are usually referred to as “Gangoe,” less often as “Cango” or “Guango.”
9. Douglas to Bentinck, February 12 and 26, 1764, Collectie Bentinck, G2-54 IB, Koninklijk Huisarchief (hereafter KHA), The Hague; Dagregister [Daybook] van Gouverneur Generaal W. S. van Hoogenheim (hereafter DH), February 28, 1763-December 31, 1764, SvB 226, esp. January 24 and February 4, 1764; Van Hoogenheim aan de Directeuren, March 29, 1764, SvB 135; Verbaelen gehouden bij den Collonel Desalve, Archief Staten Generaal (hereafter ASG), 1.01.05, 9219, NA.
DISCONTENTED SOLDIERS

Slaves were not the only discontented workers in Berbice. During much of 1763, the sailors and soldiers sent from St. Eustatius and Suriname to help fight the rebels were dissatisfied with conditions in the colony. The men had hired on for duty in Berbice hoping to see action and increase their pay with bounty money. After a major battle with the rebels in May of 1763, they had forced the Berbice governor to establish premiums for killing and maiming rebels. Subsequently, however, the men saw little action until the counteroffensive with the state troops started in November.

Rather than adding to meager wages by fighting rebels, the men battled disease in the humid tropical climate. Berbice had been in the grip of a fever and dysentery epidemic for several years before the rebellion. Newly arrived sailors and soldiers were particularly susceptible, falling ill and dying in alarming numbers. It was not long before the remaining healthy sailors stopped working and announced that they wanted to go home. Only threats could get them back to work. Even those who did not fall victim to serious illness suffered from a host of minor annoyances, from insects and vampire bats that sucked their blood at night to chiggers that burrowed into their feet till they could barely walk. Incessant downpours in the year’s two rainy seasons followed by parching heat during the two dry seasons added to the men’s misery and ill health.

To add insult to injury, the men did not get enough to eat and what they got was frequently not to their liking. Many gardens and provision grounds had been destroyed in the rebellion and supplies from Europe and other colonies arrived irregularly and often spoiled. A shortage of ovens in which to bake the bread meant that the men regularly had to eat moldy ship’s biscuits. Such deprivations have traditionally caused unrest and recalcitrance among sailors and soldiers in the early modern world and this proved true for the men sent from St. Eustatius and Suriname (Bruijn 1982, Rediker 1987, Way 11. May 13, 1763, DH; Notulen van resolutien genomen bij den ed. Hove van Politie en Crimineele Justitie (hereafter Notulen), May 2, 4, 6, 8, 11, 14, 1763, SvB 134. The men also wanted to be paid in case they lost limbs themselves “as is customary in the islands.” It seems likely that the soldiers from St. Eustatius were WIC soldiers, while those from Suriname had been hired by the Society of Suriname.

They repeatedly protested short or inedible rations. Others complained about irregular payments, as their wages frequently arrived late from their home colonies. By the end of the summer of 1763 the officers of the regiment sent from Suriname declared to the governor and his council that they could “no longer trust their men and suspected a conspiracy among them.” Nor, incredibly, could they rely on the loyalty of their men should it come to a fight with the rebels. As if to prove the validity of their officers’ suspicions, later that month, two soldiers deserted to the rebels, taking with them not only their weapons and shot, but valuable intelligence about the desperate state of the Dutch. A distressed Van Hoogenheim worried that their desertion might be the spearhead of a larger mutiny.

Such fears were amplified when sailors resorted to collective work stoppages, drawing on a long tradition among early modern European workers (Dekker 1992, Way 2000:782). When the men from St. Eustatius did not receive their allotment of bread one day, for instance, they lifted anchor and left their position protecting the Dageraad. When Van Hoogenheim threatened to punish the ringleaders and promised that they would have their bread, they agreed to sail their ship back to its former position, upon which, as the governor noted, “the entire safety of this plantation depends.” Work stoppages by workers whose tools were weapons were dangerous in more ways than one, as the Dutch well understood. Van Hoogenheim regularly complained to the home authorities that he had more to worry about than merely “Swarte” (Blacks). “We have to be as much prepared at all times,” he impressed upon the Society directors in Amsterdam, “for bad faith and treason from within, as for attacks from without.” Clearly, shared New World enemies at the gate did not mute Old World labor conflicts inside.

It was in this climate of pervasive discontent with challenging working conditions and poor treatment that the soldiers later executed in Paramaribo engaged in mutiny. The men were part of a regiment sent to Berbice by Suriname’s Governor Wigbold van Crommelin to prevent rebels from crossing the Corentyne River into Suriname. The men arrived at Post Auriari on...
the Corentyne River, some eight hours by canoe, already aggrieved. A number of them had served “over their time.” This meant that their customary four-year contracts had expired, but they had not been given their “passport,” a written discharge from service. Without their passports, the men could not leave the service and repatriate. Finding it difficult to entice new recruits from Europe, the societies of Suriname and Berbice, who were responsible for hiring the soldiers customarily stationed in those colonies, withheld soldiers’ passports until they had settled their debts, many forced upon the men at the time of enlistment, and their replacements had arrived. Such policies kept soldiers in a state of bondage; at any time, almost a quarter of the men were serving beyond their four years (Lohnstein 1987). Under such circumstances, how the men were treated and whether or not they received what they considered their customary due in what we might call a military moral economy took on added importance. It was precisely such customary rights and privileges that set soldiers apart from slaves. It is not surprising, then, to learn that even before the soldiers got to Berbice, there had been talk that if they were not treated well, they would try to make off for the Spanish.

Once at Post Auriarie, the soldiers found themselves overworked, subjected to harsh discipline, and treated disrespectfully by their own officers. With enslaved workers gone, they wore themselves out in the sticky heat doing the work of slaves: clearing brush, cutting wood, and building their own huts. The men were driven hard, and neither harsh words nor the whip were spared. The men’s pronouncements at the time of the mutiny that “we are no Negroes; we don’t want to work or be treated like them,” suggest the depth of their resentments over working conditions and the blurring of lines between bond and free labor. Their commanders could have pressed

18. The men were stationed near Ephraim, a Moravian mission deserted by the Brethren at the start of the rebellion. Ephraim had since become an Indian station. The Dutch had long maintained such posts on the borders of Guiana where so-called postholders (literally post-holders), usually military men, traded with local Indians and maintained diplomatic relations. The local Indians had fled at the start of the rebellion but had since returned, and the new post was intended to encourage them to stay allied with the Dutch (Albert Heuer aan Van Hoogenheim, April 2, 1763, SvB 134, NA). For the Moravians in Berbice, see Staehelin 1997. Post Auriarie may be the same post visited by the explorer Robert Schomburgk in 1836, then called Orealla, next to an Arawak village of that name. There were also several Warao settlements in the area. Schomburgk notes that Arawak captain Matthias had in his youth been baptized by the Moravians, a further indication that Auriarie and Orealla are the same place. See Rivière 2006:122, 135-36, 137-38.

19. For an insightful discussion of how the moral economy of customary rights and privileges set semi-bonded soldiers apart from permanently bonded labor, see Neimeyer 1996:132-33.

20. Informatie Gedaan en Genomen over den WelEdele Heer Captijn Baron von Canitz, Post Ephraim, August 12, 1763, SvS 320; De Blanke Rebellen aan Crommelin, August 2,
local Indians into service, but the governor had expressly ordered the regiment’s officer not to involve the native peoples for fear of alienating these valuable military allies. And so the soldiers felt doubly insulted: they deeply resented being treated like slaves, particularly in the presence of Indians who were exempted from harsh usage.

Anxieties about status and identity were not confined to comparisons with Africans and Amerindians; they played within the European community as well. Many of the soldiers were foreigners. The Frenchmen among the Suriname soldiers deeply resented what they perceived as a pervasive anti-French climate. Everything that went wrong, they complained, was blamed on the French. Some of the officers were quite brazen about their anti-French sentiments. Particularly galling had been the comment of one of the officers that he “thought the French as bad as the Jews and would rejoice to see both nations hanged.”

Affronts to soldiers’ dignity and anger about perceived injustices increased in the weeks leading up to the mutiny. On June 13, 1763, at the height of the rainy season, forty of the soldiers, along with some seventy Native American

1763, SvS 319. See also Informatie gehouden op de plantagie Amsterdam in Rio Demerarij den 15e December 1763 over twee Deserteurs uit de Cornetijn die allhier opgebragt zijn, SvB 135; Rapport van J.W. Kaeks, Paramaribo, July 28, 1763, SvS 319; Informatie ten Overstaen van den WelEdele Heer Majoor van Ewijk over den Heer Lieutenant Marchal, August 13, 1763, SvS 320. The court later accepted the soldiers’ view of the officers’ behavior, see Krijgsraed Gehouden allhier Aen Paramaribo Donderdag de 19e Julij 1764, SvS 323; and August 21, 1763, DH.


22. While throughout Europe armies employed foreign nationals, their proportion in the Dutch army was higher because of Holland’s small population and the large number of Dutch men swallowed up by the insatiable maws of the Dutch East India Company and the Dutch merchant marine. No precise figures are available but as many as a quarter of the officers and half of the Dutch army’s soldiers were probably foreigners. Such percentages were even higher among the forces hired by the Societies of Suriname and Berbice, which consisted, besides Dutchmen, of Germans, Swiss, Frenchmen, as well as a smattering of other nations (Zwitser 1991:43-54).

23. For quote, see Informatie ten Overstaen van den WelEdele Heer Majoor van Ewijk over den Heer Lieutenant Marchal, August 8, 1763, SvS 320. The authorities were generally suspicious of the Frenchmen among the soldiers. Van Hooghenhein considered them “most all libertines with little or no discipline,” July 31, 1763, DH. Gov. Crommelin claimed that Frenchmen had been involved in every mutiny in Suriname. He requested that no more French soldiers be sent to the colony, explaining that they were “meest van de Contrebandiees van mandereijn en van de Struijkroovers van Fischer,” Crommelin aan de Societéit van Suriname, July 30, 1763, SvS 319 and Crommelin aan Van Hooghenheim, August 1, 1763, SvS 319. Jews were not welcome in Berbice, Demerara, and Essequibo, in contrast to Suriname, where they made up a large part of the white population (see Netscher 1888:131).
allies, went on a week-long river expedition trying to locate slave rebels suspected of hiding in a nearby creek. Horrendous thunderstorms soaked the miserable contingent to the bone as the men paddled up the Corentyne only to find several small deserted rebel villages, the houses ruined by flash-floods. At last, the Indians located a group of insurgents. The troops left their canoes at the river’s edge and slogged all night in single file, “one holding the other,” through the blackened rainforest. At dawn, they crossed a creek, those who could by swimming, the others dragged under the arms by the Indians. Once across, they surprised the rebels. In the fighting that followed over the course of the week, six men and sixteen women and children were killed, most of them beaten to death by the Indians as they tried to escape by swimming across the creek. One young woman was taken alive. Only one Dutchman lost his life.24

Now a series of ill-advised actions on the part of the expedition’s commander, Captain Frederik Willem Baron von Canitz, brought the soldiers to the breaking point. When apprised of the Dutchman’s death, Von Canitz proclaimed that he would rather see a European soldier than an Indian killed, a remark that infuriated his men. During the return journey, ignoring the claims of the men, Von Canitz added insult to injury. He confiscated the contraband that had been taken from the rebels. Almost 300 guilders had been discovered, along with trade goods seized in an earlier attack on one of the Dutch posts. The native allies had immediately claimed the merchandise as their payment. The soldiers expected to get the cash. At the start of the expedition, Von Canitz had promised that “whatever they would seize, would be for them.” Now, ignoring his earlier promise, he took the money, explaining it would have to be shared with the Indians at a later date. Instead, the men each got two shillings for drinks, which, according to custom, they should have gotten for free as a reward for their dangerous mission. The young female captive, whom some of the soldiers coveted for themselves, was likewise taken away by the officers. The men “cursed and murmured” among themselves “that they got none of the spoils for which they had risked their lives,” one of the mutineers later testified. No one dared complain openly for fear of reprisal, but when the expedition returned to camp on June 19 and the time seemed ripe, the soldiers translated their mounting anger into action.25

The Mutiny

The mutiny started on July 3, 1763, two hours before sunrise. Those not in on the rebellion recalled being startled awake in their hammocks, hearts pounding, fearing the commotion signaled a rebel attack. Instead, they found their officers, still in their nightshirts, pleading with the mutineers for their lives and promising that if the soldiers returned to their duties, all would be forgotten. Such negotiations were common: angry men threatened mutiny, chastened officers made concessions, and through such negotiations relations of authority were restored. But in this case the mutineers were not so easily appeased. Some even threatened to kill the officers. Others defended specific men under whom they had served. The soldiers rehearsed their grievances, emphasizing slave work and physical abuse, prejudice toward the French, and the confiscation of the plunder.26

The mutineers, in fact, nursed many of the same grievances as the rebellious slaves. And just as the slave rebels, who in their letters to Governor van Hoogenheim at the start of the rebellion, had singled out particular owners by name as the worst offenders, the mutineers pointed out their commander and Captain von Canitz as the two officers whose conduct they felt had been most reprehensible. Some mutineers proposed to kill these men, and one even took aim, but his gun misfired.27 The leaders of the mutiny, Frenchman Jean Renaud among them, managed to prevent rash actions and the gentlemen got off with a mere beating. Thereafter the commander fled to Ephraim, still in his nightclothes. Some of the soldiers tried to persuade the two junior officers to lead them on a march to inform Governor van Hoogenheim in person about their maltreatment. The officers refused and tried to talk the troops out of deserting. Just as some of the soldiers began to waver, surgeon Mangmeister broke up the discussion with the reminder that the officers could not be trusted to keep their word and that the soldiers “had much to do.”28

Having rejected negotiation and compromise, the men reached the point of no return. Much like the rebelling slaves who appropriated their masters’ possessions, the mutineers helped themselves to the officers’ liquor, fancy clothes, and weapons. Next they escorted the remaining three officers to the river’s edge where they allowed them to board a canoe with what was left of their belongings. When Von Canitz requested a few Indians to man the boat, the soldiers responded that they had learned to row; surely he could too. Surgeon

26. The mutineers rehearsed their grievances in a letter to Gov. Crommelin, see Missieve van de Gerebilleerde Soldaten in de Corentijn, no date, SvS 324.
27. Informatie of scherper examen van Matthias Dijmens, July 18 and 19, 1764, SvS 324.
28. Informatie ten Overstaen van den Wel edele Heer Majoor van Ewijk over den Heer Lieutenant Marchal, August 13, 1763, SvS 324.
Mangmeister, cutlass drawn, prevented Von Canitz’s personal servant, a free mulatto named Steven, from boarding the canoe. “You have been free a long time,” Mangmeister allegedly told Steven, “but now you’ll be my slave.”

With the officers gone, the mutineers had difficult decisions to make about their options, none of them ideal. Some wanted to make their way west to the Orinoco River to hire themselves out as mercenaries to the Spanish in Venezuela. Surgeon Mangmeister told the men, wrongly it turned out as the distance was over 400 miles, that this was only a three-day march once they would get to the “breede (broad) water,” a large lake between the Corentyne and Canje Rivers. Unfortunately, no one knew exactly how to get to the Orinoco, though several people (including the black female prisoner whom Jean Renaud had set free in order to take her along) claimed to know the route. Others wanted to make common cause with the slave rebels. A third group suggested that they should attack the rebels as a sign of their loyalty to the Dutch. Then, they reasoned, the governor of Berbice would realize they had not really deserted, but had merely left their post to acquaint him with the bad behavior of their officers.

In the end, the men decided to make for the Spanish settlements. Before they set out on what would turn out to be a long, and for many fatal, odyssey, they destroyed everything of value they could not carry, and tossed extra guns and powder in the water. Next they bundled their belongings in their hammocks, chose Sergeant Adam Niese as their leader, took an oath to stick together, and vowed to shoot the first man who changed his mind. Then they set off, the ringleaders decked out in the officers’ colorful finery, and the “swarte meyd” (black wench) with Jean Renaud at the head. The soldiers also took along, possibly by force, several Indians knowledgeable about the terrain, one of whom, unlike most of the mutineers, spoke Dutch well. Twenty-two soldiers stayed behind, having hid in the bush when the mutiny first started.

29. Informatie ten Overstaen van den WelEdele Heer Majoor van Ewijk over den Heer Lieutenant Marchal, August 13, 1763, SvS 324; Informatie Gedaan en Genoomen over den WelEdele Heer Captijn Baron von Canitz, Post Ephraim, August 12, 1763, SvS 324; Rapport J.W. Kaeks, “intrims militaire Fiscaal,” Paramaribo, July 28, 1763, SvS 319; Informatie … op ende jegens de persoon Steven Andries vrije mulat, April 5, 1764, SvB 324; Confrontatie Mangmeister met Steven, April 5, 1764, SvB 321.

30. In 1746, nine soldiers had deserted their post on the Berbice River and taken off for the Orinoco, where they allegedly joined a ship from Trinidad engaged in disrupting Dutch trade in Essequibo. Commander Essequibo to the WIC, December 7, 1746, at http://www.guyana.org/Western/. It seems likely that what the Dutch called de breede water is now called Ikuruwa Lake at N 5° 33' 0" W 57° 27' 0".

31. Notulen [of the commission to investigate the mutiny], July 4, 1764, SvS 324.

32. Rapport J.W. Kaeks, July 28, 1763, SvS 319. See also Interrogatoire Mangmeister, April 9, 1764, SvS 324; Informatien gehouden 12e August 1763 over de Soldaten Pieter Bormans, van Majoor Reijnet Compagnie, Frederik Claassen van de Comp. van den
The exact events of the following days are sketchy. By their own account, some of the men celebrated their new freedom with the officers’ liquor. This may account for the murder of an Indian boy before the mutineers left camp, as a soldier later claimed to have been told by an Amerindian. The mutineers spent their first night in an Indian village “on the road to Berbice.” There, the same soldier reported, they killed three more Indians and abducted nine women, turning potential allies into resentful enemies.33

The next morning, the mutineers lost some of their members. Eight of the soldiers volunteered to return to the post to look for stragglers. Once back, however, the three subaltern officers and five soldiers (among them Mattheus Dijmens, who would be severely punished in Paramaribo a year later), perhaps scared or repentant after the initial excitement, or, as the court-martial later alleged, too drunk to keep walking, decided to abandon their comrades and turned themselves in the next day. The remaining forty-two mutineers, guided by the slave woman and the Indians, continued west toward the Orinoco River.34

The authorities could not pursue the mutineers; the Indians were not willing and their own soldiers not capable. Completely mistrustful of their remaining men, however, the Dutch commanded the Indians living near the Post Ephraim to keep any intelligence about the whereabouts of either rebels or mutineers secret from the soldiers stationed there. They also asked the natives to return any soldiers who were found beyond the view of the sentries, and, inverting the usual social order, they authorized them to use force if necessary.35

Capitein Texier, Henrik Charton van de Compagnie van de Lt. Collonel Meijer, Albert Jansen, van de Comp. van de Majoor Ewijk, August 12, 1763, SvB 320. For a complete list of all the men involved in the mutiny see Lijst der manschappen van ’t Detachement onder den Majoor Rijnet in rio Correntijn dewelke op den 3 Julij 1763 hebben gerebelleert en zijn gedeserteert, SvS 319.

33. For the killing of natives, see Reijnet aan Crommelin, July 8, 1763, Post Ephraim, SvS 319 and Crommelin aan de Sociëteit van Suriname, July 27, 1763, SvS 319. Curiously, neither the killing of Indians, nor the abduction of the women, was brought up in any of the interrogations of captured mutineers. Renaud does mention spending the night in the Indian village but, perhaps not surprisingly, does not mention either killing anyone or taking any women. Interrogatoire Renaud, April 25 and 26, 1764, SvS 324. For the fact that some men got drunk, see Confrontatie en Informatie Mattheus Dijmens, Jan Renaudt, Jacques Montagnon, Jan Carolus Mangmeister en Michiel Fredrik Schott, May 16, 1764, Paramaribo, SvS 324. Note that not all clerks spelled names in the same way.

34. Informatie of scherper examen van Matthias Dijmens, July 18 and 19, 1764, SvS 324; Sententie Mangmeister, July 20, 1764, SvS 324.

35. Reijnet aan Crommelin, July 8, 1763, SvS 319; Journaal van Van Ewijk, August 5-17, 1763, SvS 320.
As in all rebellions, meanwhile, the greatest challenge for the mutineers did not lie in the initial act of emancipation, but in the subsequent process of trying to hold on to that freedom. The start of the rainy season made travel difficult. Torrential downpours accompanied by thunder forced the men to wade through flooded savanna and boggy forests pestered by swarms of insects. The mutineers were divided by nationality and language. And they did not trust one another. Some men required coercion to keep going, and guards were sent along when anyone went into the bush to relieve himself. The soldiers had little sense of the region’s geography. Before the mutiny the surgeon apparently had claimed to possess a map of the area, a valuable and rare treasure, but it turned out he did not even bring part of a map.36

Without a map, the men were dependent on the local knowledge of their indigenous guides and that of the African woman. Two of the Indians, perhaps forced to go against their will, did not remain with the soldiers long. One Indian ran off after drinking a bottle of wine and hitting the drummer on the head with the empty bottle; another was shot in the head in retaliation.37 Yet, despite this setback, the soldiers finally found a path. Ironically, it may have been the one the Indians called “the slave path,” as it was used by Indian slave traders to lead captive natives for sale to the Dutch (Bos 1998:62-63).

After several days the men reached the “breede water” where it took forty-eight hours to build rafts to cross it. They may have tricked an Indian into guiding them across, under the pretext that they were a commando looking for slave rebels. After another two days traversing soggy savanna they reached and crossed the Canje River. Then, a week into their journey, they “lost the path to Spain” and ran out of food. The rebel woman led them to an abandoned plantation but they failed to find the provisions she had promised.38 At this point, the men decided to change plans, a decision which would prove fatal to the majority of them.

JOINING THE REBELS

During their interrogations, the recaptured mutineers blamed the change of plans on hunger, the unexpected distance to the Orinoco, and the persuasive words of the slave woman. She apparently suggested that the men nego-

36. Interrogatoire Matth. Fiderer, Notulen, July 4, 1764, SvS 324; Interrogatoire Mangmeister, April 9, 1764, SvS 324; Informatie Tomas Keller, Serg’t, July 2, 1764, SvS 324.
37. On the running away of one “bok” and the killing of the other, see Interrogatoire Mangmeister, April 9 and 10, 1764, SvS 324.
38. Interrogatoire Mangmeister, April 9 and 10, 1764, SvS 324; J. Reijnet aan Crommelin, August 2, 1763, SvS 319.
tiate with the slave rebels for permission to travel through the colony of Berbice rather than being forced to take the long way around. Or perhaps the men themselves decided to join the rebels, given their desperate situation and few other options. Either way, on July 11, a small delegation of soldiers led by Mangmeister, Renaud, and the captive woman herself went to the plantation Stevensburg, one of three rebel camps on the Canje River, to negotiate. Quasie, Stevensburg’s commander, was understandably mistrustful. He inquired about the mutineers’ numbers, ordered them to hand over their weapons as a gesture of goodwill, and promised to send messengers to slave rebel leader Governor Coffy, headquartered at the Dutch Fort Nassau in the former settlement of New Amsterdam on the Berbice River, for instructions.39

When the rest of the mutineers arrived on Stevensburg plantation, they were disarmed and all were undressed. Quasie, anxious to protect his outpost, did not wait for Coffy’s answer. He had the testimony of the captured woman that these were the same soldiers who had killed so many rebels the previous month, and he moved quickly, out of decisiveness or fear, to thin their ranks. Making his own estimation of each soldier’s usefulness, Quasie selected twenty-eight mutineers who were taken naked to the cacao fields and shot. When the Dutch authorities were informed of these events later on, they smugly characterized it as “a miraculous instance of divine providence” that the mutineers had been executed by “those they had chosen as their deliverers.”40 The remaining thirteen mutineers, including several of their leaders, were taken to Governor Coffy’s headquarters at Fort Nassau the next day where they were clothed and put to work.41

As could be expected, relations between the black and white mutineers were tenuous and ambiguous. Most of the testimony comes from the court-martial of the surviving mutineers who portrayed themselves as having been betrayed and coerced by the rebels. It is not surprising they claimed to have been victims. With their lives on the line for having mutinied at time of war, these men would have wanted to avoid the impression that they had compounded their offense with treason by voluntarily joining the enemy, and a “heathen” enemy at that. This would only have increased their chances of

39. Interrogatoire Mangmeister, April 9 and 10, 1764, SvS 324; Interrogatoire Renaud, April 25 and 26, 1764, SvS 324.
40. Sententie Mangmeister, July 20, 1764, SvS 324.
41. Interrogatoire Renaud, April 25 and 26, 1764, SvS 324; Interrogatoire Mangmeister, April 10, 1763, SvS 324; Examinatie Adou (aka Boas) from Plantation Prosperiteit & Zion, March 3, 1764, SvB 135. Adoe was sent by Coffij to bring the mutineers from Stevensburg plantation to Fort Nassau.
receiving the death penalty. For their part, the rebels had every reason to treat the soldiers, so deeply implicated in the maintenance of slavery, as prisoners.

Yet, driven by fear, need, and a shared interest in defeating the Dutch, the mutineers and the rebels built bridges across the racial divide that normally separated them. Coffy and his lieutenants disapproved of Quasie’s decision to execute the soldiers on Stevensburg. They realized full well that the soldiers’ presence among the rebels dealt a powerful psychological blow to the colonial authorities, who were indeed greatly alarmed at reports that the “Christian Rebels and Rebel Negroes” lived in “close harmony.” Dutch officials were convinced that the soldiers were instructing the former slaves in the handling of weapons and the “maneuvers of the Suriname runaways,” a reference to the fears that Berbice, like Suriname, might henceforth have to deal with large numbers of maroons. And so Coffy kept the remaining Europeans alive and set them to work. Over time, some became more or less trusted allies and advisors. Others remained little more than slaves. Several eventually ran away, some were murdered, while others ended up fighting the Dutch on the rebel side. Trying to make the most of a situation in which they had few good options, the mutineers became absorbed in the slave rebellion in much the same way as many of the slaves – as the result of contingency, force, and compromise.

The mutineers who stayed with the rebels, fewer than a dozen in all, were incorporated into the rebel hierarchy. Ironically, it rekindled among the soldiers many of the resentments that had led them to mutiny in the first place. The rebel leaders accorded the leaders of the mutineers preferential treatment compared to the common soldiers, and gave them jobs of greater importance. Sergeant Adam Niesse assisted Governor Coffy by exercising troops, serving as clerk in Coffy’s written negotiations with the Dutch, and ordering the other mutineers about. To their chagrin, he had his own men paint Coffy’s quarters. For his service, Niesse was rewarded with fancy clothes, good food,

42. De Heeren Capiteins der Zuriinaamse militie aan ‘t gemuitineerde detachement van de Corentijn, dat zig bij de rebelle neegers heeft toevoegt, July 30, 1763, SvB 135.
43. Interrogatoire Renaud, April 25 and 26, 1764, SvS 324.
44. Van Rijssel aan Reijnet, August 7, 1763, Collectie Fagel, 1.10.29, 1824, NA. Van Hoogenheim aan de Sociëteit van Berbice, December 6 and 17, 1764, SvB 134. From the beginning the authorities expected, and dreaded, that the mutineers would make common cause with the rebels. Coffy’s letters as well as reports from Indian scouts and others fueled the fears of the Dutch authorities that with European soldiers at their side, and perhaps even at their head, the rebels would become that much more formidable. Van Hoogenheim even ascribed the perseverance of the rebels to the instigations of the “treasonous mutineers.” One wonders whether such fantasies helped reduce the psychological impact of the initial success of the slave uprising, which could now be partially attributed to the presence of a few white men.
and a comfortable hammock. Johannes Mangmeister, the surgeon, ministered to the rebels’ health and received an African slave boy to minister to him as a mark of his status. Jean Renaud, who had saved himself from execution on Stevensburg by claiming to know how to make gunpowder, busily tried to hide his ignorance with sand and water only to be unmasked when the surgeon provided him with the saltpeter he had claimed he had lacked. To save the Frenchman from beheading, rebel leader Fortuijn, who had taken a liking to him, took the soldier with him when he left Coffy’s camp to take command of the rebels on the Canje River.

The common soldiers fared less well than their leaders. They were set to work as tailors and carpenters, occupations they had no doubt carried out before they mustered. They also cleaned and repaired guns, stood guard, and a few even accompanied the rebels on raids against the Dutch. Most of them were eventually sent away from Fort Nassau to other rebel posts to serve alongside black slaves as “footboys” to deserving rebel leaders, once again overturning customary colonial hierarchies. The men who had resented working like slaves now ended up working for them.45

DEFEAT

Coffy’s death in the early fall changed not only the course of the slave rebellion but the circumstances of the mutineers. It appears that Niesse, so deeply implicated in Coffy’s controversial negotiations with the Dutch, was executed.46 Surgeon Mangmeister was taken to Hooftplantage, headquarters of the new leader Attá, who put him to work distilling liquor. Many of the others were dispersed among different rebel camps, some on the Berbice, others on the Canje River. As the men were scattered, they fade from view. From then until the end of the year, we only learn that in mid-November, a rebel band attacked the plantation of James Abercrombie near the mouth of the Canje River and abducted a number of slaves living there. This band was commanded by one of the mutineers and two of Abercrombie’s former slaves.47

The Dutch expeditions up the Canje and Berbice Rivers at the end of 1763 spelled the death or capture of the surviving mutineers. Mangmeister was taken in a dugout canoe on the Berbice River toward the end of November

45. Crommelin aan Van Hoogenheim, January 14, 1764, Svs 321; Interrogatoire Mangmeister, April 9 and 10, 1764 and Renaud, April 25 and 26, 1764, SvB 324; Interrogatoire Schuijlen, July 3, 1764, SvB 324; Interrogatoire Fiderer, July 4, 1764, SvB 324.

46. Examinatie van no 82. Aboi van Nieuw Caraques, SvB 135.

47. Notulen November 19, 1763, SvB 134; Interrogatoire Mangmeister, April 9 and 10, 1764, Svs 324.
1763. According to the soldier who arrested him, Mangmeister hastily threw a bag in the water, which could not be retrieved from the river’s bottom. The bag may have contained the valuables the rebels had given him in exchange for his services. He was imprisoned on the warship St. Maartensdijk until he could be returned to Paramaribo. He related to the Dutch much about the “housekeeping” of the rebels, claiming that the “Delminas” had killed many “Angolans” and enslaved those of other nations as well as the creoles.48

Two soldiers, both French and part of rebel leader Atta’s inner circle, were also returned alive. The first, Jean Renaud, was taken, sword in hand, around Christmas 1763 during the major battle on the plantation Savonette where, according to both European and indigenous witnesses, he had been a leader.49 The second, Jacques Montagnon, had also been present at the Savonette battle. Armed merely with a stick, he was either taken or turned himself in to the Dutch advanced guard on December 24, 1763.50 The body of a third Frenchman, Jean Pierre, a deserter from the Dageraad plantation who had joined the rebels two months earlier, was spotted floating in the Berbice several days later among the many Blacks killed in the battle.51 By then, three more mutineers had been arrested in neighboring Demerara. One died after his arrest. The remaining two, Matthias Fiderer and Leonard Schuijler, claimed that they had absconded from the rebels by a ruse. They had talked the rebels into letting them go to Demerara to buy powder and lead, a purchase their white skin would presumably have facilitated. It is not clear whether they were captured in Demerara or had turned themselves in.52

And so, five of the thirteen mutineers ended back in Dutch custody; the others had died of illness, in gun battles, or been murdered by the rebels. These five, along with Matthias Dijmens who had been a leader of the plot but had turned himself in on the second day of the mutiny, were transported to Suriname where they were questioned. Governor Crommelin was eager to make an example of men who had not only mutinied against their officers but had joined their erstwhile enemies to fight against their own kind.53 The

49. December 27 and 29, 1763, DH, SvB 226.
50. Memorie door de [illegible] Raden Van Politie en Criminee Justitie ... aan Gouverneur Crommelin, Paramaribo, [?] March 1764, SvS 321; Sententie Mangmeister, July 20, 1764, SvS 324.
51. December 29, 1764, DH, SvB 226.
53. Crommelin wrote that he was particularly interested in Renaud “die een van dat volkje van de Mandereijns is, die in Vrankrijk soo veel Leven heeft gemaakt, sijnde van dat gespuijs dat Capabel is alles te onderneemen,” [who is one of those people called
members of the council agreed and they petitioned the governor that they, and not a court-martial, should be allowed to try the men, as the mutineers were accessories to the murder, rape, and arson committed by the slave rebels.\textsuperscript{54} Evidently the issue was resolved in favor of a military court. This court met in Paramaribo in July and charged the men with high treason and lese majesty, desertion, robbery of state property, and mutiny. Three were condemned to die and another three received corporal punishment and saw their service extended. The court also decided to reprimand two of the regiment’s officers, including Captain von Canitz who was found guilty of “bad management, ill-treatment, and prejudice toward the French nation.” His handling of the booty seized from the rebels had been unauthorized.\textsuperscript{55}

In their condemnation of the officers, the military judges agreed with Governor Van Hoogenheim’s judgment that \textit{quade huishouding}, (literally “bad housekeeping,” i.e. ill management) had been the cause of the mutiny, which he referred to in this context as “this horrifying revolution.”\textsuperscript{56} Of course, the Dutch similarly attributed the slave rebellion to the \textit{quade huishouding} of particular slave masters. Seeing rebellions as caused merely by poor treatment on the part of masters allowed the Dutch to remove agency from both enslaved and semi-bonded workers like soldiers, whose joint housekeeping had so deeply disturbed them.\textsuperscript{57}

So ended a mutiny that was still talked about with wonder in Suriname ten years later, when the Scottish maroon-fighter John Gabriel Stedman, who had seen and heard a few odd things in his life, described it in his journal as “the most peculiar in its kind, that ever existed” (Stedman 1988:76).

\textbf{Soldiers as Border Crossers}

What are we to make of this “peculiar” story? It is surely a tale of exploitation, conflict, and violence. It is also a story of protest, rebellion, and uneasy solidarity. It is a quintessential colonial story in its cultural diversity, its preoccupation with race and slavery, its \textit{Heart of Darkness} opacity. It is also a story of a topsy-turvy world in which customary relationships are reversed

\textsuperscript{54} Memorie door de [illegible] Raden Van Politie en Crimineele Justitie ... aan Gouverneur Crommelin, Paramaribo, [?] March 1764, SvS 321.
\textsuperscript{55} Krijgsraed Gehouden alhier Aen Paramaribo Donderdag de 19e Julij 1764, SvS 323.
\textsuperscript{56} August 21, 1763, DH.
\textsuperscript{57} August 21, 1763; DH. For the point on agency, see Johnson 2003:113-24.
and the usual categories historians employ to understand the colonial world do not fit well. And it is a story about people often taken for granted. The records spawned by the mutiny allow an intimate and valuable glimpse of soldiers’ working conditions, their attempts at improving their lives, and their relationships with their superiors, natives, and slaves. But was the joining of the mutineers with the rebels slaves really so “peculiar”? What do we know about the contacts of soldiers with subject peoples?

Despite their immense importance as “the living tools of empire,” professional soldiers have been largely ignored by all but military historians. Most histories of the early modern Atlantic world, for instance, do not even contain an entry for “soldier” in the index, although soldiers lurk in the text. Historians have studied missionaries, mixed race people, traders, and women as “go-betweens,” yet no one has paid much attention to soldiers who straddled and crossed colonial boundaries. And while the “new” military historians have focused increasingly on the experience of war and the effects of warfare on society, they have as yet paid little sustained attention to soldiers’ complex relations with subaltern people (Citino 2007, Lee 2001).

European soldiers in the Atlantic world protected empires from competing European claims, from native attack, and from internal uprisings, especially slave revolts. Stationed either in forts near the coasts or, more often, on contested ground further inland, troops came in close contact with both natives and people of African descent. Many of those conflicts were violent and exploitative, as soldiers were sent overseas to keep subordinate peoples in their places. However, while soldiers were instruments of state power, they were also themselves subject to that power. Located near the bottom of the colonial hierarchy, soldiers were notoriously ill-fed and ill-treated. To ameliorate their circumstances, and even, on occasion, to evade military service all together, soldiers regularly made common cause with Indians and slaves. Thus, servicemen did not just enforce geographical and cultural borders, they frequently crossed them, engaging subaltern people in trade, sex, and insubordination, thus subverting the state power they had been sent to enforce and preserve. A few examples from the eighteenth-century Atlantic, drawn disproportionately from my area of specialty, North America, should

58. I would argue that it makes little difference whether soldiers were in the employ of nation states or of private colonizing companies, such as the societies of Berbice and Suriname.
59. For a convenient collection of essays on go-betweens in North America, see Cayton and Teute 1998. Even a book concerned with the crosscultural cooperation of early modern Atlantic rebels, Linebaugh & Rediker 2000, does not contain an entry for soldiers in the index.
60. For an exception, see Way 1999. I am making a distinction here between regulars and provincials, i.e., professional soldiers brought over from Europe and local men serving in local militias.
So lDi e r s, sl a v e rebels, a nD t h e ea r ly MoDe r n atlantic suffice to demonstrate that soldiers, not just as enforcers of borders, but as border crossers, deserve sustained attention.

While Indians, slaves, and soldiers battled each other viciously in the New World, they also cooperated as military allies which brought them in intimate and personal contact. Indians and Europeans fought together in the Berbice slave rebellion which led to such scenes as Indians swimming soldiers across swollen creeks and saving them from getting lost in the jungle. In Suriname, enslaved Africans and mercenaries together battled maroons. Mercenary John Gabriel Stedman’s commando, for instance, consisted of 42 Europeans and 23 Africans, who lived in the bush together for months on end in the early 1770s (Stedman 1988:119, 226). The English, French, and Spanish all used Native Americans to aid them in their imperial expansion. As a result of fighting together, European soldiers in the New World learned about surviving in the wilderness, military tactics, and different cultural sensibilities from native and African allies.

Soldiers not only fought with and alongside natives and Africans; they also routinely engaged in intimate contact with subaltern women. The nature of these engagements differed from time to time and place to place, shaped by circumstances, customs, and motivations on both sides. Some encounters were consensual and mutually beneficial, while others were exploitative and violent. On the Dutch Wild Coast, both casual sex and lasting connections were common. Soldiers routinely had black and Indian sexual partners and many took local wives. John Gabriel Stedman’s love affair with the enslaved Joanna is but one famous example of what was known in the area as a “Surinamese marriage.” In the Lower Mississippi Valley, one historian has written, “soldiers were the most visible of European men who engaged frequently in both sexual abuse against and cohabitation with Indian and Negro women” (Usner 1992:234). In eighteenth-century Louisiana, unmarried soldiers owned female Indian slaves who performed wifely duties, a practice that continued, according to a recent assessment, well beyond the Seven Years’ War (Duval 2007:275, Hall 1997). In the Western Great Lakes area, or the Pays d’en Haut, not only fur traders but soldiers, too, intermarried with Indians living around forts (Sleeper-Smith 2001:54-57).

If sex drew soldiers and subaltern people together, so did commerce. In the Lower Mississippi Valley, slaves, Indians, and lower-class Europeans, especially soldiers, engaged in extensive face-to-face marketing and created what one historian has called “a frontier exchange economy” (Usner 1992). In South Carolina, Cherokee country, native women supplied soldiers with local produce. One fort in Cherokee country, its commander complained in 1756, took on “the Appearance of a Market” as native women sold “eatables” to the troops (Hatley 1993:97). In the years between the Seven Years’ War and the outbreak of the American Revolution, nations such as the Delaware, Shawnees, and Iroquois traded extensively with the British army and with
individual soldiers stationed in the Ohio Country (McConnell 2004:107). In the Pays d’en Haut, many French forts were more important as trading communities than as military strongholds. To soldiers, such trade was crucial in supplementing meager rations.

Soldiers regularly parlayed the contacts they had made with subaltern people through joint warfare, trade, and sex, into crucial aid in resistance and subordination. Soldiers fed up with military service relied on slaves and Indians to escape. At times they escaped together, forging close bonds in the process. A group of soldiers and slaves who fled Louisiana jointly in 1739, for instance, were still living together in Havana, Cuba, a decade later (Hall 1992:146-47). For others, native villages exerted a powerful draw. As early as 1712, French soldiers living in destitution in Louisiana were deserting to the Indians. Throughout the eighteenth century, the Quapaw Indians in the Arkansas River Valley provided sanctuary to soldiers and refused to give them up to French authorities. Occasionally, they sheltered runaway slaves (Duval 2006:79-82). In the 1740s and 1750s, French soldiers in the Lower Mississippi Valley ran away to the Indians in large numbers. While Indians often returned such men, native leaders felt compelled to complain about the brutal punishments such soldiers received (Hall 1992: 131; Usner 1992). In one case, the deserters had to be pardoned before the Choctaw retreated from their threat that if the soldiers were punished, they would start helping them escape. French officials explained that had they not given in to the Indians, they “would no longer be able to retain one soldier” (Hall, 1992:23). When the French and their native allies captured Fort William Henry in 1757 in upstate New York, some forty British regulars chose to remain with their Indian captors rather than return to army service. In fact, British desertion to the Indians during the Seven Years War reached such proportions that when recaptured soldiers claimed they had been abducted by Indians against their will, their superiors rarely believed them and they were forthwith court-martialed (Colley 2002:181, 195-96). More than a year after the end of the Seven Years’ War, the British were still trying to discover the whereabouts of soldiers who had gone native.

Despite the frequency with which European soldiers sought the aid of subaltern people in resistance and flight, we have as yet but little evidence of soldiers actually joining slave rebels. A quick search revealed only one other example of soldiers collectively joining maroons or rebelling slaves in the Atlantic world. In 1803, a unit of Polish soldiers in Haiti defected from the French, who treated them in derogatory fashion, and some thirty men joined Dessalines’ rebel forces (Dubois 2004:294-95). In this respect, then, perhaps the Berbice mutineers were unusual though research may well turn up other cases. We know, for instance, that soldiers in Suriname were punished in 1764 for plotting their escape from service after declaring that
they would be better off living with maroons or boschnegers. In colonial Brazil, army deserters ran off to maroon communities known as quilombos (Flory 1979:123). Individual soldiers were implicated in the 1741 New York slave conspiracy as well as in the Pointe Coupee plot in Spanish Louisiana in 1795 where the Spanish authorities were convinced that the French soldiers involved in the plot were planning to coordinate the rebellion with a French invasion of the colony (Hall 1992: 369, 373, 374; Zabin 2004:121, 131-32). In the 1790s, the authorities of Spanish Florida worried that soldiers might make common cause with maroons and discontented slaves and, in the words of one of its governors, “turn the province into a theater of horrors” (Landers 1999:205).

These examples of transgressive cross-cultural cooperation are not meant to deny the growing racism and elaborations of European whiteness and superiority vis-à-vis natives and Africans over the course of the eighteenth century. Rather these instances of common cause may suggest why racism became so essential. No doubt, colonial authorities throughout the New World condoned and sometimes even encouraged crosscultural contact. But when such alliances threatened carefully constructed social hierarchies, they reacted with alarm at the figurative and actual crossfertilization of the border lands. They responded to such threats with conscious attempts to widen racial divides. They discouraged camaraderie among soldiers, Blacks, and Indians, prohibiting them from talking or drinking together, and they frequently, though not always, forbade intermarriage. Whenever they could, they bound Indians by treaty to hunt and return military deserters. When such deserters were punished, they employed slaves and Indians to carry out the sentences. Soldiers were offered bounties for maiming and killing slave rebels and enemy Indians, which encouraged brutality and increased animosity and hatred. In many colonies, if Blacks were allowed to serve as soldiers, they served in segregated units. Authorities experimented with replacing regiments every few years to sever soldiers’ local connections.

And they were often successful. Despite the many cases of cooperation that can be dug up, the adventures of the mutineers in Berbice are “peculiar” and they show that alliances between mutineers and African rebels did not come about easily. I am thus not suggesting that where soldiers and subaltern people combined forces, notions of race and ethnicity played no part. But I am suggesting that on the frontiers of empire where European authority was tenuous and contested, those who were the enforcers of empire, and those who were its objects, could, and did, cross divides of color. The slippery, malleable relations between soldiers and the people they were charged

61. SvS 323.
with overseeing meant that soldiers at times saw themselves in a new place – as oppressed as the slaves, as having common cause with them. In those moments when class trumped race, the borders of empire became potentially explosive for imperial leaders. The 1763 mutiny provides an unusually close look at one such moment.

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The British Caribbean has long existed as an important source of activism within the black diaspora. From the struggles against slavery, through the postemancipation era, and into the anticolonial activities of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the region and its people have long been intricately connected to the global struggles of black peoples. Their representation among the leadership and rank-and-file of various black diaspora organizations in the twentieth century, including black nationalist and black Marxist movements, have far outweighed their limited numbers and reached well beyond the seascape of their Caribbean homelands.

While much has been written on the significance of British Caribbean activists in various movements associated with black diaspora politics in the twentieth century, particularly their important roles in Pan-African struggles, little has been written on how the various British Caribbean colonies themselves were envisioned among diaspora activists and within the scope of black diaspora politics. Did such Caribbean activists, especially those interested in and connected to diasporic movements beyond the British Caribbean, and their African American and African counterparts forsake the British West Indies as a focus of political engagement for other lands and causes? If not, what was the place of “West Indian liberation” and nation

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2. For one of the best explorations of this disproportionate participation, see James 1998.

3. In this essay, the author uses West Indian and Caribbean, and West Indies and Caribbean interchangeably.
building in the British Caribbean in relation to black diasporic struggles in the early twentieth century?

This article addresses these questions through an examination of how the idea of a united “West Indian nation” (via a federation or closer union) among British Caribbean colonies was envisioned within black diaspora politics from the turn of the twentieth century through the 1920s, and the ways in which racial consciousness and motivations informed conceptualizations of such a nation among black political activists of the British Caribbean and other parts of the diaspora. This study argues that efforts to create a federation in the Anglophone Caribbean were much more than simply imperial or regional nation-building projects. Instead, federation was also a diasporic, black nation-building endeavor intricately connected to notions of racial unity, racial uplift, and black self-determination.

Although ideas for a federation in the Caribbean existed beyond the English-speaking islands, including plans for a nineteenth-century Antillean Confederation between Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic, and other plans involving Haiti and various islands of the region, it was within the British Caribbean that the idea that had the longest endurance (Mathews 1954). The various efforts to create some form of a “united West Indies,”

4. While many people undoubtedly recognize the existence of a “Caribbean Diaspora” in areas like Harlem and London, this article treats these centers and the West Indies themselves as parts of the broader “Black Diaspora” – much like many of the activists of this article do. For a discussion of “overlapping” and “multiple” diasporas, see E. Lewis 1995 and James 2004. In addition, though my definition of black diaspora politics is similar to many definitions of Pan-Africanism, I feel the latter term offers a more monolithic image whereas black diaspora politics presents itself as an umbrella term able to better encompass the wide-ranging activities and goals of many organizations and activists. Moreover, “black diaspora politics” helps to highlight the periphery of the anticolonial struggle beyond the African continent. Among the key components of black diaspora politics, I include (a) ideas of a common ancestry with contemporary relevance, (b) race pride, (c) demands for equal and nonexploitative treatment at the hands of Europeans or Americans, (d) a firm belief in racial liberation and self-determination, especially in areas where the majority of the population is of African descent, and (e) equal treatment and opportunities where peoples of African descent are minorities.

5. Ideas of federation beyond the Anglophone Caribbean, much like those centered in the British West Indies, varied in their focus and motives. Calls for an Antillean Confederation, for example, did not use race as the basis for unity, nor did Antenor Firmin of Haiti who expressed more Pan-American visions of regional unity. Nonetheless, others did. In the early nineteenth century, Alexander von Humboldt believed the Caribbean could become an “African Confederation of the free states of the West Indies.” Additionally, in the early twentieth century Adolphe Lara of Guadeloupe called for a federation of Afro-Caribbeans from all islands of the region (Mathews 1954:71, 93-94; Plummer 1998:217-18).
be it federation, confederation, or closer union, represent one of the longest and most sustained nation-building ideas in the British Caribbean, coming both before and after the 1930s labor uprisings often cited as the genesis of nationhood. Throughout this long history of federation, the idea for such a configuration was frequently a popular solution to a range of problems and desires put forth by disparate and often competing groups concerned with the region. Beyond the surface, the seemingly common goal of a federation was characterized by diverse motivations and visions of the nation-to-be, embodied with different motivations and expectations, dependent upon the particular group questioned and the era under review.

Numerous plans for varying degrees of regional unity amongst some or all of the British West Indies existed between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. Before the twentieth century, most efforts to create a British Caribbean federation emanated from the metropole and represented imperial designs to institute efficient government via the streamlining of colonial administration in the region. This included the Leeward Island Association of the late seventeenth century, and various other Leeward and Windward Island groupings attempted on and off in the eighteenth century with limited success. One of the few successful and lasting experiments of uniting different colonies was the creation of British Guiana in 1831 from Berbice, Demerara, and Essequibo. During the reorganization of colonial rule in the postemancipation era British Caribbean, including the installation of crown colony government in most colonies, various new colonial unions were proposed and instituted. For some government officials, the success of the Canadian confederation of 1867 revived hopes for successful amalgamations in the British Caribbean, such as the Leeward Islands Colony created in 1871. Another proposal for a federation between the Windward Islands and Barbados later in the decade, however, was met with violent opposition in the latter colony. A Windward Island association was created in 1885 with

6. From 1866-98, most of the British West Indies (with the exception of Barbados, British Guiana, and the Bahamas) became “Crown colonies.” British Guiana maintained its Dutch-based, semi-representative system until 1928, at which time it became a Crown Colony too. Under this system, which was often welcomed by local whites fearful of black majority rule which could more easily occur under representative government, local representative governments were replaced by either an entirely nominated legislature (i.e., “pure Crown Colony”), or, in some cases, a legislature with both nominated and elected members (i.e., “semi-representative Crown Colony”), under a powerful Crown-appointed governor. This system dominated the majority of the British Caribbean colonies well into the twentieth century. For a helpful discussion of these nineteenth century constitutional changes, see Wrong 1969.

7. The Leeward Islands Colony brought together the individual presidencies of Antigua, Montserrat, the Virgin Islands, and Dominica, with an additional presidency over St. Kitts and Nevis, under a single governor for the federal colony and a general legislative
a common governor but individual legislatures for Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, and Tobago, with Tobago eventually removed in 1889 and joined with Trinidad to form a single colony. Additional discussions and proposals for some form of federation can also be found in the reports of two royal commissions to the region in the 1890s, yet nothing came of these.8

Plans for different levels of regional cooperation and union continued to appear in the early decades of the twentieth century. The colonial office remained one of the most steadfast supporters of the idea based on the continued call for administrative efficiency in the region. Such initiatives were bolstered by periodic plans from some associated with the planter-merchant oligarchies of the region too who, despite their general long-standing opposition to most plans for federation, began to view some levels of regional cooperation and unity as a means to combat the weakened economic status of the region.9 Many of these proposals, like those from the colonial office, viewed the grouping of smaller colonies into a larger united group as not only efficient, but essential to the prestige and development of the region.

With few exceptions, plans for federation from the official “power brokers” of the British West Indies and Empire (local and metropolitan government officials, the Colonial Office, the planter-merchant oligarchies, and their interest groups in the metropole) were limited to visions of administrative efficiency and increased commercial prowess. Such schemes were rarely conceived as a way of providing expanded political opportunities to the nonwhite majorities in the colonies, who remained largely subjects,

council composed of members from the island legislatures. In the mid-1870s, the Colonial Office proposed a merger between Barbados and the Windward Islands of Grenada, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, and Tobago. Pronounced resistance from the middle and upper classes of Barbados (which was not a crown colony), however, helped spur an islandwide riot in 1876. Though this federal initiative was shelved in the aftermath of these disturbances, Barbados and the respective Windward Islands retained a joint governorship until 1885, when Barbados was disassociated completely from all other colonies (Proctor 1957:7-9).

9. Many within the planter-merchant oligarchies of the pre-twentieth-century British West Indies were often irritated by and outright opposed proposals for federation due to their desires to maintain control of their respective colonies through the powerful, local representative assemblies that existed in most colonies before the installation of crown colony government. Moreover, there was relatively little sense of a regional identity among the white ruling class, as most West Indian colonies competed against each other economically, which created island-based rivalries that tended to undermine reform projects for multiple colonies or the region as a whole. Many colonists particularly feared prosperous colonies being joined with poorer colonies, as could occur under some plans for a federation. Though such insular issues remained prevalent in the early twentieth century, there were increased calls for federation from within this group. See, for example, Lamont 1912, Murray 1911, 1912, and Rippon 1912.
rather than citizens. Nevertheless, federation came to be more than simply a top-down debate in the British Caribbean. While efforts by colonial politicians and local white elites sought largely to achieve greater administrative and economic efficiency and productivity via a “united status quo,” many regional and diasporic activists viewed federation as a means to liberate and empower the region for the good of the local populations. Federation, therefore, existed simultaneously as a colonial, regional, and diaspora project throughout much of the twentieth century.

Despite the long history and multiple perceptions of British Caribbean federation, the historiography of the topic remains limited and largely dated. The vast majority of these studies have focused primarily on the “official history” of federation within the realm of colonial and regional politics, particularly the post-World War II debates that led to the West Indies Federation of 1958-1962. With few exceptions, such studies have generally avoided discussions of race and federation, and overlooked the idea of federation within diasporic perspectives.

Racialized conceptualizations of a British Caribbean federation were prominent in the early twentieth century. Within the British Caribbean, federation became a cornerstone of burgeoning West Indian nationalist movements. Though such nationalists often operated with both transracial and racial visions of a West Indian nation, depending on the particular time and space of their activism, many melded local, regional, and global aspirations with an obvious racial consciousness. This was particularly true for many West Indian nationalists’ visions of federation in the early twentieth century, including William Galwey Donovan, Louis S. Meikle, T.A. Marryshow, and

10. A notable exception from within the colonial government is Charles Spencer Salmon’s 1881 proposal for a Caribbean Confederation of all the British West Indies, in which he proposed a regional state with full political rights and equality for the Caribbean’s nonwhite populations (Salmon 1971). Salmon’s career included stints as President of Nevis (British West Indies), Colonial Secretary and Administrator of the Gold Coast, and Chief Commissioner of the Seychelles Islands.

11. For a comparative study of these disparate visions of Caribbean federation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Duke 2007.

12. The bulk of the works on British Caribbean federation were published in the years before or after the West Indies Federation of 1958-62. The vast majority of these studies examine the imperial and regional dimensions of this federation, particularly the interactions of West Indian politicians and colonial and imperial officials. In these studies, as well as the few that do note the long history of federation before the twentieth century, the place of federation within the black diaspora is overlooked for the most part. However, the recent boom in studies of international black activism has provided some notable exceptions to the dated historiography of Caribbean federation. For two recent examples of studies that do consider the diasporic dimensions of British Caribbean nationhood, see Stephens 2005 and Parker 2008.
other Afro-Caribbean activists of the region. Similarly, in diaspora centers like Harlem, where both West Indian identity and West Indian causes were overtly racialized, key leaders and organizations, including, among others, Marcus Garvey, Hubert Harrison, the African Blood Brotherhood, W.E.B. Du Bois, and others, viewed Caribbean federation as a means to empower people of African descent in the region, and West Indian unity as but a part of a larger push for racial unity. By recognizing the diasporic dimensions of British Caribbean federation, within both the British West Indies and other areas of the black diaspora in the early twentieth century, this article provides another example of black diaspora political activity in the twentieth century, a case study of black nation-building efforts outside of Africa in this era, and an often overlooked basis of support for federation.

**Within the West Indies**

In her study of decolonization in the British Caribbean, Elizabeth Wallace (1977:96) notes that by the late 1930s and early 1940s, “pressures for federation were no longer based mainly on the white planters’ interest in economy or on Britain’s administrative convenience, but on black and brown West Indians’ desire for more control over their own affairs.” Wallace’s assertion, however, could have been applied to previous decades as well. In the early decades of the twentieth century, support for federation seems to have been as widespread among the black populations as it was among the colonial officials and the white oligarchy who ruled the region.

In response to the obvious embedded racism of British colonialism under the crown colony system that dominated the majority of the West Indian colonies in the early twentieth century, an array of local, regional, and diaspora-focused organizations appeared among West Indians of African descent in the early twentieth century. This included various middle-class-led organizations that demanded greater inclusion in the political scene of the region, and became central components of the emerging West Indian nationalist movement in these years. Given the centrality of racial justifications of British colonialism that promised self-government when “fit,” but rarely implemented it in “nonwhite” areas of the empire while the so-called “white dominions” sped toward self-government, the programs of many such groups incorporated overt calls for racial equality and racial uplift, not only in the West Indies but worldwide, into their demands.

The work of Dr. J. Robert Love in Jamaica provides one such example. The Bahamian immigrant, who came to Jamaica in the 1890s after living in the U.S. South and Haiti, worked for better economic conditions and greater political participation in Jamaica’s government for the black and colored populations. This included the presentation of public lectures, the creation of
such organizations as the People’s Convention, and the columns of his newspaper the *Jamaican Advocate*. Like other black activists of this era, Love was not solely concerned with local conditions, however. No doubt influenced by his own migration experiences, Love connected the Jamaican struggle with the global struggle of black peoples for racial uplift and racial unity, even helping to establish a Jamaican branch of Sylvester Williams’s Pan-African Association (Bryan 2000, Lumsden 1998).

The activism of S.A.G. (Sandy) Cox in Jamaica through the National Club and his biweekly newspaper, *Our Own*, shows a similar focus. This organization and newspaper both demanded constitutional reform, including the extension of representative government in Jamaica (i.e., self-government within the empire), and included calls for labor organization and improved working conditions (Richards 2002a, 2002b). Cox, like Love, also connected the plight of Jamaica’s African-descended populations to the struggle of peoples of African descent in the black diaspora. Writing in 1911, Cox declared (in Lewis 1988:44), “The coloured and black people in Jamaica can only hope to better their condition by uniting with the coloured and black people of the United States of America and with those of other West Indian islands, and indeed with all Negroes in all parts of the world.”

Within the context of racism, colonialism, and imperialism, which affected the lives of African-descended peoples across the globe, such organizations, though often island-based, frequently connected their local activism to the larger realm of the Caribbean and black diaspora. Many Afro-Caribbean activists, therefore, viewed their local struggles as “but a local phase of a world problem.”13 Racial activism and consciousness were far from new in the region, with numerous examples occurring before and into the twentieth century.14 In such an atmosphere, what then were the motivations, justifica-

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14. Some prominent examples include J.J. Thomas’s defense of the region’s black populations against James A. Froude’s racist condemnation of the West Indies in the late nineteenth century. Thomas’s *Froudacity* (1889) rejected the gloomy picture of the British Caribbean if the black majority were to gain political power, as portrayed in Froude’s *The English in the West Indies: Or, the Bow of Ulysses* (1888). Shortly thereafter, the region produced both leaders and supporters for turn-of-the-century Pan-African movements. This includes the leadership of Trinidadian, Henry Sylvester Williams, in the First Pan-African Conference of 1900, and the subsequent establishment of Pan-African Association branches in the Caribbean. In the aftermath of World War I, the proliferation of Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) which included numerous branches throughout the Caribbean, United States, and other sections of the black diaspora in the postwar era, showcases the continuation of a significant racial con-
tions, and goals of many black West Indian nationalists who advocated a Caribbean federation?

From the turn of the twentieth century, support for a West Indian federation became part of many Afro-Caribbean demands for increased economic and political opportunities through the introduction of representative, and eventually responsible, self-government with dominion status (and in some visions, outright independence). Given the racial consciousness of many activists who connected local, regional, and global liberation, federation came to exist as both a regional and diaspora project. The hope of federation became simultaneously infused with hopes for increased political rights and self-determination within and outside of the British Empire, regional and global visions of uplift and empowerment, and a means to challenge white supremacist ideologies on multiple levels. It embodied racialized visions of nation-building in line with contemporary ideas in which the creation of a sizeable nation-state was deemed the ultimate goal in political development.

One of the earliest examples of support for federation from the colored and black communities of the British Caribbean is the work of William Galwey Donovan in Grenada. Donovan was the editor of the *Federalist and Grenada People* newspaper from the 1880s through the pre-World War I era. In a recent study of Donovan, Edward Cox describes him as a “race man” and “champion of the black man” who “clearly linked his demand for local empowerment to black racial solidarity” (Cox 2002:75-76). In the late nineteenth century, Donovan began his campaign for the empowerment of Afro-Grenadians. Beyond this local focus, and in line with contemporaries such as Robert Love and S.A.G. Cox, both of whom were also newspaper editors, Donovan connected the struggle for political power in Grenada and other areas of the West Indies with the global struggles of black peoples.

Described by some as the “First of the Federalist,” Donovan proved a staunch supporter of local, regional, and racial empowerment – ideas that he combined and pursued through his early and consistent advocacy of federation. Donovan believed that federation, “by uniting West Indians, and uniting [his] race in the West Indies” would form a crucial foundation for Afro-Caribbean advancement. “For Donovan, political advancement and federation were useful vehicles through which blacks could truly become masters of their home” (Cox 2002:75). While Donovan did not go so far as to suggest a break from the British Empire, he did envision a West Indian nation with local self-government where the majority population of African descent would have equal opportunity and full political participation. Given his involvement and avid support for Pan-African activities in the early twen-

sciousness in the region. See Martin 1983 for a helpful discussion of Pan-Africanism in the Caribbean.
tieth century, including his coverage of and support for the 1900 Pan-African Conference and subsequent efforts to establish Pan-African Association branches in the Caribbean, it seems clear that he connected his idea of a federated West Indies to the wider struggle for self-determination (Cox 2002:75-80). In such circumstances, federation was both a regional movement within the British Empire, and part of an international project of racial uplift within the black diaspora.

Similar support for federation is found in Confederation of the British West Indies versus Annexation to the United States of America: A Political Discourse on the West Indies, published by Jamaican doctor and dentist Louis S. Meikle in 1912. No doubt influenced by his education and employment in the United States, Meikle denounced the idea of the possible annexation of the British West Indies by the United States or Canada, which had been debated periodically since the late nineteenth century. Even though the British Empire placed the West Indies on a different path than the white dominions, he, like many of his contemporaries, believed it to be better than the other imperial powers of the era. Nonetheless, Meikle opposed Crown Colony rule in the West Indies as “autocratic in principle, and a gigantic farce,” a “government of subjugation, under which the people are semi-slaves” (Meikle 1969:38-39, 200). Instead, Meikle called for a West Indian confederation with self-government within the British Empire (i.e., dominion status).

Meikle sought such a confederation as a means to “preserve the West Indies for the West Indians” (Meikle 1969:6). On the surface, such an idea was not connected overtly to issues of race. His stand against U.S. annexation of the West Indies and his justifications for federation, however, portrayed a striking racial consciousness that clearly illuminated the racial dimensions of Meikle’s call for a united region. He rejected any association with the United States due to the overt racism of that country toward people of African descent, an issue he warned went far beyond the racism of British colonialism. “With the Americans you must be White! White!! White!!! You must be white to be truthful and honest. You must be white to hold any position of trust outside of the political realm … and so it is wherever the Stars and Stripes float as the controlling power” (Meikle 1969:43). He advocated, instead, a West Indian confederation with self-government as a means to empower and develop the region for the good of West Indians – a people he

15. Meikle was educated at Howard University in Washington, D.C., and actually spent some time teaching at the dental school there, before going on to study medicine. Meikle briefly worked for the U.S. Public Health Service in Panama during the building of the Panama Canal, before returning to Jamaica (Hill 1983:22 n. 7).
16. Meikle used “confederation” and “federation” interchangeably.
defined as “negro.”17 His appeal for a “federation, with responsible government,” was “made with the negro in the foreground” (Meikle 1969:254).18 Meikle believed a federation would create a homeland and a land of opportunity for peoples of African descent, from which the “white population could migrate, if conditions did not suit them in the change of authority” (Meikle 1969:89).19 This “change of authority” would no doubt involve the empowerment of the black and colored population in place of white oligarchical rule.

Meikle’s visions of a united West Indies went well beyond “official” proposals of federation made by the colonial office and local oligarchy during that era. While agreeing that regional unity would create greater economic opportunities in the region, his unwavering demand for federation with self-government, “a government by the people for the people,” illustrated his desire to move beyond simple commercial ties under the current colonial regimes. A federation without self-government, Meikle believed, would only keep power in the hands of the “Official Masters, namely ‘The West Indian Committee,’ who, acting in conjunction with the ‘Colonial Office’ dominate the West Indies” (Meikle 1969:183). Like those of Donovan, therefore, Meikle’s vision of a united West Indies promulgated ideas of racial uplift via regional empowerment and unity, with ramifications beyond the West Indies.

Calls for some form of regional unity also emerged from the experiences of the British West Indian Regiments (BWIR) of World War I. These regi-

17. Ironically, despite Meikle’s description of “West Indians” as “Negro,” the publishers of the 1969 edition of his text included an editor’s footnote that explained that the “term ‘West Indians’ is intended to mean the children of immigrants, both white and black, and their offspring born in the West Indies.” This seems to contradict Meikle’s own definition in the text. However, this could be because later in the book, Meikle expands his conception of “West Indians” to include “white, black, or coloured” (Meikle 1969:6-7, 255). Nevertheless, given the bulk of his argument for federation, it seems that Meikle believed peoples of African descent to be the “real West Indians” because of their numerical superiority, as well as their historical contributions to the region’s development.

18. Meikle goes on to note that such a position is not a selfish act nor is it done with malice toward the white population, but because peoples of African descent, both black and colored populations, form the vast majority of the West Indian population and, therefore, deserved primary consideration in the discussion of a possible federation. Meikle repeatedly states, however, that there is no reason for whites to fear black majority rule. For example, see Meikle 1969:250-55.

19. Interestingly, Meikle claims, “The British West Indies have no race issue of any moment to solve … chiefly due to the fact that these islands are not the home of the white man.” For other examples of Meikle’s discussion of the region as “the assets of the coloured man,” and the West Indies as a sort of black homeland, see Meikle 1969:254-55.
ments became one of the most prominent groups associated with the creation and affirmation of a regional West Indian identity in the early twentieth century. After much debate within the empire over the recruitment and participation of black men in the war effort, their participation was agreed upon. Despite numerous descriptions of these regiments as symbols of the unity and transracial character of the British Empire, their actual wartime experiences did little to prove the irrelevance of race within the empire. The BWIR, like many other nonwhite colonial regiments of World War I, faced widespread discrimination during the war at the hands of their supposed imperial brethren. These soldiers often operated under trying, unequal conditions, were restricted from commissions, were used primarily as laborers instead of “fighting men,” were subjected to racist slurs and hostility from white soldiers, received unequal pay, and led a generally segregated life. For many soldiers of the BWIR, such experiences with racial discrimination helped to entrench a racial consciousness into the emerging regional West Indian identity, bolstered from their experiences together outside of the insularity of their own colonies as West Indians, and their inclusion in a black international identity through their experiences alongside other black troops of the empire which suffered similar mistreatment.

The frustrations of the BWIR finally exploded into rebellion at Taranto, Italy in December 1918. Though the rebellion itself was important, the aftermath proved equally significant. Shortly after the Taranto rebellion, between fifty and sixty sergeants of the BWIR organized an intraregional group called the “Caribbean League.” At the initial meeting of this organization, the topics discussed included “black rights, self-determination, and closer union in the West Indies” (Howe 2002:165). At a later meeting, the correlation between these issues was stated more bluntly when one sergeant said that the “black man should have freedom to govern himself,” and take it by force if necessary. In reporting these activities, one British official noted that the League’s discussion “drifted from the West Indies and became one of grievances of the black man against the white.” Rather than seeing these topics as separate, as this official seemingly did, in the minds of many members of this Caribbean League discussions of the West Indies and the problems of the black man were not separate subjects. They were instead, intimately

20. Hall (2003:41) claims, “The naming of black regiments as West Indian fractured the prevailing image of West Indian as an exclusively white identity.” While I agree with this statement, I think that it would be more appropriate to say such action further fractured whiteness from a West Indian identity, which had been ongoing since the late nineteenth century.
related, if not melded, via a racialized regional consciousness. Their desire for “closer union” in the West Indies, therefore, combined racial, regional, and international ideas of unity and power in numbers.

In the latter war years and the immediate post-World War I era, a time marked by numerous episodes of social unrest within the Caribbean and across the globe, various political reform organizations appeared in the British Caribbean. Many of the leaders and members of these organizations incorporated the race and class-consciousness of the era into their respective reform efforts. While most of the organizations focused on constitutional reform, particularly representative government, several also added a demand for federation into their general programs. As Allister Hinds23 has argued, such support for federation marked the conjunction of political aspirations, and a heightened racial consciousness among the “black and colored intelligentsia” within these island societies.

Out of these reform movements emerged two of the most famous West Indian nationalists, renowned for their lengthy support of, and leadership within, the push for federation in the early twentieth century: T.A. Marryshow of Grenada and A.A. Cipriani of Trinidad. As friends and allies, Cipriani and Marryshow worked in their own islands for better social, economic, and political conditions, and traveled widely among the West Indian colonies advocating the establishment of a federation as an essential step in the overall advancement of the region as a whole. As a result, both men were at times given the title of “Father of Federation,” though that title is most often associated with Marryshow.

Despite their parallel action, the careers of the two men also symbolize different aspects of West Indian nationalism and the accompanying federation movement. The frequent cooperation between Marryshow (a black man) and Cipriani (a white creole) suggested and symbolized the possibility of a transracial vision of West Indian nationalism and unity. Both, at times, together and individually, represented what Deborah Thomas (2004:29-57) has referred to as “creole multiracial nationalism.” Such nationalism focused on, among other things, island or regional development, with little overt attention to matters of race. In fact, this strand of nationalism implicitly sought to portray either specific islands or the entire region through a transrace-

24. In this text, Thomas discusses the coexistence of creole multiracial nationalism alongside black nationalism in Jamaica. Bogues (2002:373-74) makes similar distinctions in his study of Jamaican nationalism, which he says includes “brown creole nationalism” and “black nationalism.”
cial image that suggested they were “beyond” conventional racial ideologies and politics. As previously noted, however, many black and colored West Indian nationalists added a racially conscious component to their activism – a racialized nationalism that often included a diasporic element. West Indian nation-building, including federation, therefore, could (and did) exist as both a transracial and racial venture.

Marryshow provides one of the best examples of how West Indian nationalists ably juggled racial and transracial visions of federation. Given his lengthy and consistent support for federation, he was eventually recognized as the “greatest and most accomplished protagonist of Federation,” and the “first citizen of the united West Indies.” Through his positions as co-owner and editor of the Grenada-based *West Indian* newspaper, a leading member of the Representative Government Association (RGA) in Grenada, president of the Grenada Workingman’s Association, an elected member of Grenada’s legislative council, and an important figure in the British Guiana and West Indies Labour Congress, Marryshow worked for such issues as racial and class equality, labor rights and organization, an expanded franchise, the return of representative government to the British Caribbean, and a federation with self-government. While the cooperative work of Cipriani and Marryshow on many of these issues represented the transracial nature of West Indian nationalism, much of Marryshow’s work, especially his role as a journalist, his associated race consciousness, and involvement in black diaspora politics, added a familiar racialism to his West Indian agenda. These issues also shaped his ideas of a federation within the British Caribbean in the early twentieth century.

The *West Indian* became an important outlet for Marryshow and many other West Indian nationalists in the early twentieth century. No doubt influenced by his time as a delivery boy and protégé of William Donovan, Marryshow created a newspaper whose title asserted a regional identity and agenda, and which provided a space for the coverage of and commentary on local, regional, and black diaspora events (Cox 2002). In this manner, Marryshow carried on Donovan’s legacy in Grenada, the West Indies, and the broader black diaspora (and in many ways the legacies of Love and Cox too). Though Marryshow was by no means the sole contributor to the *West*.

26. Marryshow was not unique in this regard, but rather a prominent example of the ways in which many journalists of the region called for and led reform movements with often overt racial motivations. This includes the previously mentioned Love, Cox, and Donovan, as well as a new generation of racially conscious West Indian journalists in the 1920s (Martin 1988:130).
Indian, he did contribute a great many writings and, as editor, was largely in charge of selecting the articles and editorials that appeared in the newspaper. Therefore, even those articles not penned by Marryshow in many ways represented his ideals.

A particularly common topic of discussion in the West Indian was the idea of a West Indian federation. From the first issue on January 1, 1915, Marryshow noted the newspaper’s support for an “administrative and fiscal union” between the West Indian colonies. A few days later, the West Indian advertised an essay competition on “West Indian Federation.” In February, another editorial called for the subordination of the various insular island identities in favor of a regional West Indian identity that would seemingly pave the way for the creation of a federation that would lead to recognition of the region as a “respectable force in the affairs of the world.” Articles and editorials related to federation continued to appear with some regularity in the West Indies over the next several years. In the midst of World War I, calls appeared for “a nearer West Indies, a united West Indies,” and for federation as a means to give the region a greater voice in the Empire. Discussions of the possible annexation of the West Indies by Canada or the United States, primarily in the immediate postwar years, were dismissed on multiple occasions, in many cases in favor of a West Indian union of their own. Upon hearing rumors that the Empire was considering creating a new Pacific dominion of British islands and recently captured German islands

29. “News and Topics,” West Indian, March 18, 1917, p. 2; J.A. Martineau, “Annexation of the West Indies to the USA a Danger,” West Indian, September 26, 1919, p. 1; C.H. Lucas, “No Yankee Rule for Us Negro British West Indians,” West Indian, November 7, 1919, p. 1; Ernest Bentham, “A New West Indian Consciousness: the Call of 1920,” West Indian, January 19, 1920, p. 1. Such rejections of the extension of the United States into the Caribbean were not confined to the British West Indies. In August 1917, the West Indian reprinted an editorial that appeared in the New York News on the transfer of the Danish Virgin Islands to the United States. In this editorial, C.H. Emanuel noted that “We, as natives of this land [Danish Virgin Islands], want it to be distinctly understood by those already here, as well as by every other Caucasian newcomer who may have occasion to pitch his tent among us, that this island is ours by divine right ... the purchase of our liberties was not included in the [purchase of the islands],” (“Prejudice Follows the American Flag in the West Indies,” West Indian, August 3, 1917, p. 3). Such ideas highlight the heightened racial consciousness in many parts of the Caribbean and black diaspora in the era. Moreover, its publication within the pages of the West Indian shows the diasporic coverage of the newspaper, and suggests the broader context for such feelings among many peoples of the British West Indies in this era.
after World War I, one editorial asked why a new dominion among the British Caribbean islands was not being considered.30

As discussions of federation increased in the postwar era, Marryshow welcomed discussion of a possible federation by the colonial office and local oligarchy; however, he, like many other West Indians, demanded federation with self-government – a step few, if any in the colonial office and local crown governments, considered feasible.31 Marryshow’s demands echo the earlier sentiments of West Indian nationalists like Donovan and Meikle, as well as contemporaries like Cipriani, who viewed federation as an avenue for change rather than a structure to bolster the status quo. Such editorials, a great many by Marryshow himself, presented federation as a key step in the development of the region, a “summit,” which could only be attained through representative government.32 Ostensibly, few overt mentions of race are found within these calls for federation. Within the broader context of the West Indian, however, such discussions were connected to a larger program of racial unity, racial consciousness, and self-determination embodied in the work of Marryshow.

Alongside the calls for federation, Marryshow’s West Indian included numerous antiracist editorials, coverage of and support for black diaspora groups and activities, and demands for representative government. For instance, Marryshow covered the struggle to organize the BWIR and their wartime experiences. Extending beyond the West Indies, the newspaper carried articles on the activities and treatment of African American soldiers.33 It also included coverage and editorials on the postwar activism in the black diaspora, including defenses of Garvey’s Negro World in the face of postwar sedition charges, reports on the UNIA’s activities, and the program of the African Progress Union in London.34 In 1920, Marryshow even published

33. “Trinidad’s ‘White’ Private Contingent,” West Indian, November 23, 1915, p. 2; “The Black Soldier in the United States,” West Indian, June 22, 1917, p. 2; “Execution of Negro Soldiers in America,” West Indian, March 4, 1918, p. 7. Various letters and editorials on and from the BWIR can be found in the West Indian throughout the World War I years.
an original poem in praise of the famous African American leader Frederick Douglass.\textsuperscript{35} Taken as a whole, such writings speak to the race-consciousness and racial activism of Marryshow in this era. If such issues appear disconnected from Marryshow’s support for federation, which would be hard to assume, one of his most famous writings draws his views on race and nation-building together more obviously.

In 1917, Marryshow penned a series of editorials in the \textit{West Indian} titled “Cycles of Civilisation” in reply to a May 1917 speech by General Jan Christian Smuts of South Africa in which the Boer general lamented the problem of creating a “White South Africa” and “outlined a programme for the suppression of Africans in the interest of white members of the Empire.” Though Marryshow claimed that “In the West Indies, when public men speak on race questions they are condemned by some who think they have no right to discuss such questions,” these articles, shortly thereafter published in book form as \textit{Cycles of Civilisation}, spoke directly to the issue of race (Marryshow 1917:1).

One of the major components of \textit{Cycles} was Marryshow’s unwavering defense of a glorious African past. This included, for instance, discussion of the early and sophisticated civilizations of Africa while Europe was at the earliest stages of civilization, and Africa’s place in the Bible. With such rebuttals, Marryshow directly challenged white supremacist notions that claimed Europe as the cradle of civilization, and provided inspiration to black peoples throughout the globe, especially those suffering under European colonialism.

Marryshow’s key argument, however, was that in the unfolding of history a cyclical pattern could be identified in which nations (and races) rose and fell. He argued that recent and current European dominance was simply “their time” and but a small fraction of world history. Marryshow believed that this was temporary, and forecasted that the demise of this era was near. He challenged the idea that European civilization was the zenith in human development, or in any way a permanent fixture, including the British Empire (Marryshow 1917:11-12). In conjunction with the eventual demise of European nations, Marryshow predicted the rise of new nonwhite nations,

\textsuperscript{35} “To Frederick Douglass,” \textit{West Indian}, April 9, 1920, p. 3.
particularly within Asia and the Americas. Africa, he said, would have its time again soon too.\(^{36}\) While *Cycles* was in many ways an anticolonial treatise that appealed to various nonwhite peoples and not solely to Africans and West Indians, Marryshow focused primarily on the past, present, and future of people of African descent, especially those of the English-speaking world in Africa, the West Indies, and North America. Within *Cycles*, Marryshow (1917:23) asked rhetorically, “Is there to be no place under the sun … where Negroes are to experience free human development.” To this question, Marryshow answered emphatically, no.

He, who is “too wise to err and too good to be unkind” did not send the Negro in His world to be sport and toy of nations. As Negroes, and in the highest spiritual instinct, we look up to the day – smile of the long-expected dawning of a truer world. (Marryshow 1917:48)

Marryshow (1917:7) declared, “The great Negro Race has had its turn, and its turn is coming again.”

More than just a reference to a possible African redemption, this “turn” also alluded to the rise of a West Indian nation, a region he described, “in all departments of thought and activity, [as] a coloured man’s West Indies.” Marryshow (1917:1-2) asserted, “The indication of the times point to a great prosperity that shall dawn for the West Indies and a high type of civilisation that shall come a-wooing in these parts.”\(^{37}\) The next great rise of people of African descent, therefore, might not occur in Africa, but possibly in the diaspora, specifically in the West Indies. The only obstacle to such a nation was “that so many [West Indians] are blind to the value of unity of purpose and direction, and prefer loose and easy compromises which do not make for race identity and dignity” (Marryshow 1917:1-2). A new West Indian nation, he believed, would require regional and racial unity. Marryshow’s strong support for the development of a united West Indies via federation in these

\(^{36}\) Marryshow was especially impressed with the rise of Japan because in fifty years, Japan rose “from a nation of half-blind, insular and self-centered hermits, with no voice in the world, to a great enterprising and vigorous power – a force in international affairs.” Japan was likely of particular interest to Marryshow given the fact that it had been heralded as the “Champion of the Darker Races” in the early twentieth century after its defeat of Russia in 1905, as well as the fact that it was a nation of islands, much as a united West Indies would be. As for the Americas, he argued that the opening of the Panama Canal would be a great boost to nations of the Americas and the Caribbean, not just North America (Marryshow 1917:4-6).

\(^{37}\) In this instance, it appears obvious that Marryshow’s use of “coloured” applied to peoples of African descent, both colored and black. This also ostensibly connected with Meikle’s call for a confederation earlier in the decade.
passages show that it was not simply Caribbean nation-building, but a black diaspora nation-building project as well – a step in the appeal for racial uplift, unity, and self-determination for people of African descent internationally.

Throughout the 1920s, Marryshow continued to be an active force in both West Indian and diaspora politics via his role as editor, politician, labor organizer, West Indian nationalist leader, and Pan-African activist. His role within black diaspora politics in no way diminished his ability to work for local or regional causes via the Representative Government Association, the Grenada Workingman’s Association, as an elected member of the Grenada legislative council, or as a major figure within the British Guiana and West Indies Labour Congress. Instead, like many others, it added an extra dimension to his various activities within the West Indian nationalist movement.

Such racialized visions of Caribbean federation were not confined to the Caribbean. Federation also emerged as a subject of debate and concern among black diaspora activists and groups outside the Caribbean. These contributions added still further visions of a united West Indies as an important project within black diaspora politics.

**Beyond the West Indies**

The early twentieth century has long been recognized as a significant era for the development and proliferation of numerous race-conscious movements pursuing, among other things, national and international demands for racial equality, justice, and self-determination. One of the goals inherent in many of the black diaspora political movements in the early twentieth century, whether “New Negro” or “Pan-African,” was intraracial cooperation and unity via a “Race First” philosophy. To many it was obvious – if white peoples could meet at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 to divide Africa amongst themselves, and, while seemingly continuously warring with each other over larger shares of the nonwhite world, still maintain the belief that they as a supposedly “superior race” had a right to dominate the globe, then peoples of African descent had both a right and duty to organize themselves on such a “Race First” ideology for their own liberation. While intraracial tensions often existed the shared experience of racism, as well as the conscious efforts of black peoples themselves to unite, pushed many beyond their own ethnic differences for the sake of the race.

In diasporic centers like Harlem, the migration of significant numbers of black people from the U.S. South and various international sources created a unique environment in which various peoples of African descent were brought together and, in many cases, melded into a collective, but not necessarily homogenous, racial identity. For many British Caribbean migrants, the migration experience included transformations from insular identities into a
regional identity, and that regional identity into a subsection of an international racial identity. West Indian migrants, as overwhelmingly peoples of African descent, were not only racialized into what Frank Guridy (2003:21) has recently described as a “racial citizenship,” the conditions and respective struggles of the West Indies themselves also became part of a racialized global struggle.

In Harlem, alongside the calls for black peoples to adopt a “Race First” ideology, many periodicals also carried news and informational pieces on the British West Indies. These served not only to keep West Indians in Harlem aware of their homelands and to educate African Americans on their “brothers abroad,” but also to help forge an international consciousness which many diaspora movements believed was necessary given the current global oppression of black peoples. Mainstream black newspapers like the New York Amsterdam News, organizational periodicals such as the UNIA’s Negro World and the African Blood Brotherhood’s Crusader, and socialist newspapers like The Messenger contributed news and notes on the British West Indies, as well as other key sites of struggle for peoples of African descent. While Africa and Africans remained largely imagined in Harlem during this era, African American and West Indian connections offered tangible examples of international black interactions.

Throughout the early twentieth century, there were numerous calls from black diaspora organizations for an end to the crown colony system in the British Caribbean and the installation of majority rule in those colonies. Given the underlying notion of “strength in unity” among most of these movements, many did not wish to see the creation of small, struggling, self-governing nations in the region. Instead, parallel with projects for uniting portions or all of Africa under majority rule, there was a call for the British West Indies to unite in order to form a stronger black nation that would bring both respect and power to peoples of African descent throughout the world. With such a goal, a united, federated West Indies was often seen as one of the most logical and powerful embodiments of racial unity and black nation-building in the West.

Marcus Garvey and the UNIA, which galvanized millions of black peoples throughout the black diaspora in the late 1910s and 1920s, provides various examples of such conceptualizations of federation. While Garvey, like many black diaspora activists of the era, focused primarily on the African continent (in his case, the desire for a united Africa and the “Back to Africa” movement for which he is most remembered), ideas of racial unity and self-determination among black peoples in the West were also very important in his movement – including the creation of a Caribbean federation. As Richard

A. Hill (1974:47) has noted, before Garvey’s vision of an “African Empire,” he imagined a federated West Indies as the basis of a “Black West Indian Empire.”

One of Garvey’s earliest illustrations of this view is found in a 1913 article in the *African Times and Orient Review*.

There have been several movements to federate the British West Indian Islands, but owing to parochial feelings nothing definite has been achieved. Ere long this change is sure to come about because the people of these islands are all one. They live under the same conditions, are of the same race and mind, and have the same feelings and sentiments regarding the things of the world.

As one who knows the people well, I make no apology for prophesying that there will soon be a turning point in the history of the West Indies; and that the people who inhabit that portion of the Western Hemisphere will be the instruments of uniting a scattered race who, before the close of many centuries, will found an Empire on which the sun shall shine as ceaselessly as it shines on the Empire of the North today. This may be regarded as a dream, but I would point my critical friends to history and its lessons. Would Caesar have believed that the country he was invading in 55 B.C. would be the seat of the greatest Empire in the World?39

In Jamaica in 1914, Garvey also penned an editorial to the *Gleaner* in which he called for a West Indian federation. Despite the fact that Africa became the primary focus of Garvey during the glory years of the UNIA in Harlem, with only a brief mention of the West Indies in the UNIA’s “Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World,” it is unlikely that he simply dismissed the idea of federation in the West Indies. Rather, he seems to have seen Caribbean federation as a step in the unification and empowerment of black peoples throughout the world.

Support for a West Indian federation also became a cornerstone of Garvey’s political career upon his return to Jamaica in the late 1920s. As Tony Martin has noted in his study of Garvey’s activities in this era, particularly his People’s Political Party in Jamaica, Garvey demanded majority rule for the Caribbean, dominion status (i.e., self-government) for Jamaica, and the establishment of a Caribbean federation which he hoped would come to include even non-English speaking islands. Writing in the *Blackman* in May 1929, Garvey said, “Federation of the West Indies with Dominion Status is the consummation of Negro aspiration in this Archipelago” (Martin 1983:61,

Without a doubt, Garvey’s support for federation represented a black nation-building project in the Western Hemisphere.

Another prominent example of a black diaspora group with Caribbean ties and interests was the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB) founded in Harlem in the postwar era by Cyril Briggs, Richard Moore, W.A. Domingo, and Grace Campbell. During its brief existence from 1919-1924, the ABB shuffled between black nationalism and revolutionary socialism, addressing both race and class issues. In spite of some key ideological differences and serious disagreements with other black diaspora movements during these years, particularly Garvey, the ABB did share a fundamental belief in the need for racial unity and uplift for black people throughout the diaspora and on the continent. Alongside goals of racial equality, race pride and harmony, and political and economic liberation for black peoples, the ABB sought to organize the national strength of the entire Negro group in America for the purpose of extending moral and financial aid and, where necessary, leadership to our blood-brothers on the continent of Africa and in Haiti and the West Indies in their struggle against white capitalist exploitation.

Like Garvey and other movements of this era, the ABB supported self-determination and nation-building efforts in Africa as well as the diaspora. In fact, their *Crusader* publication sought to “awaken the American Negro to the splendid strategic position of the Race in the South American and the West Indian Republics.” Through various editorials and articles in the *Crusader*, the ABB pushed this goal. In conjunction with the “rising tide of colour” against the “alien overlords” across the globe, the ABB and its supporters called for the development of the West Indies for West Indians, and black nation-building initiatives in the West. This would seemingly include the idea of a West Indian federation.

Let us unite from the ends of the earth on the common purpose of liberation and redemption of our motherhood and the rejuvenation of the great states that in ages past held Africa securely for her children … Let us even include in our aims the lands of the New World for which our blood was shed and where still we are numerically predominant. Let us aim for a

greater rule that will include Haiti and the rest of the West Indies and the vast republic of Brazil in South America with the ancient homeland.  

While actual discussions of federation appear to be rare in the ABB program, one news note in the October 1919 edition of the *Crusader* remarked that,

Falling in line with the world-wide sweep of the Negro movement for national existence and freedom from the white heel, residents of Dominica, B.W.I., have started a movement for an independent federation of the West Indies on the principle of national freedom.

Though it is debatable whether these undefined residents of Dominica considered their actions to be connected with black diaspora politics, it did not matter to the ABB. They, like most involved in black diaspora politics saw such an effort as part of the struggle for racial uplift and self-determination. Caribbean federation was once again racialized within the diaspora as a linking of regional and racial concerns.

The minutes of the Pan-African conferences and congresses of the early twentieth century also show the racialization of West Indians and the West Indies in black diaspora politics. The role of West Indians in the formal Pan-African conferences and congresses convened in the early twentieth century is well chronicled. Beginning with the Pan-African Conference in London (1900), organized by Trinidadian barrister Sylvester Williams, through the Fourth Pan-African Congress in New York (1927), numerous West Indian delegates joined with African American activists and smaller numbers of Africans to discuss the problem of race. Within most of these meetings, the future of the British West Indies was conjoined with African, African American, and other Caribbean areas as sites of struggle for peoples of African descent, with the continent taking precedence. The bulk of the declarations that came from these meetings sought a wide array of reforms connected to self-determination for black peoples in these areas. For instance, the 1900 Pan-African Conference called for the British Empire to provide “responsible government to the black colonies of Africa and the West Indies” which would ostensibly create majority rule in these areas.

45. While this editorial does not note the particular group within Dominica, it is quite possible that the ABB correctly ascertained the objectives of these residents given the significant presence of Pan-African activism in the island. This includes, among others, the activities of J.R. Casimir and multiple local UNIA branches (Martin 1983).
were made about the West Indies in the first three Pan-African Congresses in 1919, 1921, and 1923. After failed attempts to organize the Fourth Pan-African Congress in the Caribbean in 1925, the meeting finally took place in New York in 1927. At this meeting, the usual calls were made for “self-government” for the colonies (but not necessarily independence). In addition, constituents at this meeting “urge[d] the peoples of the West Indies to begin an earnest movement for the federation of these islands.”47 No explanation is given for why federation was needed in the British Caribbean, but once again, given the context in which the statement is made, it is reasonable to assume that these delegates viewed federation as the best means to empower and unite the West Indies, which they viewed as a black region.

Aside from the formal programs of black diaspora organizations such as the UNIA, ABB, and Pan-African conferences and congresses, calls for federation litter the writings of various black activists in this area. For instance, Hubert Harrison included a discussion of a West Indian federation alongside discussion of the broader Caribbean in one of his “West Indian New Notes” columns in the Negro World in March 1922 (Perry 2001:234). W.E.B. Du Bois, who had previously referred to the West Indies as a “new Ethiopia of the Isles,” seemingly supported the cause of West Indian federation in his 1925 article “The Negro Mind Reaches Out,” published in Alain Locke’s The New Negro compilation. Noting the fear of black self-rule among Europeans, Du Bois asked, “Why is there not a great British West Indian Federation, stretching from Bermuda to Honduras and Guiana, and ranking with the free dominions? The answer was clear and concise – Color.”48 Once again, federation was viewed as a program through which black peoples in the West Indies could achieve self-determination; however, at this time, in Du Bois’s opinion, the British Empire prevented this. While some may write off the significance of Caribbean federation within black diaspora politics given its often brief, passing mention by some activists, it could also be assumed that they deemed so logical as to not need great clarification or discussion.

Caribbean federation also became a goal among many black communists in the late 1920s. Richard B. Moore, former member of the ABB, represented the American Negro Labor Congress (ANLC) at the International Congress Against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism and for National Independence held in Brussels in 1927. Here the various resolutions “for the benefit of the oppressed Negro peoples in the world” included a demand for an end to imperialist occupation and independence for nations such as Haiti, Cuba,

and the Dominican Republic, and self-government for Caribbean colonies, including a “Confederation of the British West Indies.”⁴⁹ In 1928, the black communist leader George Padmore penned a lengthy article for the ANLC’s Negro Champion newspaper. This article noted the growing movement for federation in the West Indies, and called for the colonial masses of the region to support such an initiative “in their own interest” and not just for the reasons that the colonial governments and middle class pushed it. He also called for West Indians in the United States to support the cause of federation, and closed by stating that the “The Negro Champion … [stood] ready to give its full support to a militant movement among the islanders for the federation and the freedom of the West Indies.”⁵⁰ Similarly, a 1929 editorial in the Liberator (formerly the Negro Champion) presented Caribbean federation as a means to fight British colonialism and end the Crown Colony system in the West Indies. Once more, there was a call for workers to resist colonial and middle-class ideas of federation, and instead, “seize the movement and turn it to their own advantage in a relentless struggle against both native and foreign exploiters … for a Free independent West Indies!”⁵¹ Taken as a whole, these black communist editorials represented the joint race and class struggles that characterized the views of many black Marxists who refused to set aside race and focus solely on class as orthodox Marxism prescribed.⁵² Caribbean federation was yet again interpreted as a means through which black peoples could achieve self-determination in the West Indies.

Finally, in the late 1920s, A.M. Wendell Malliet, a Jamaican immigrant who worked as a journalist for the New York Amsterdam News and as the secretary of the West India Committee of America, published a brief book titled The Destiny of the West Indies (1928). In this text, Malliet claimed that the British Caribbean offered the most opportunities for people of African descent in the New World, as “there [was] room in those colonies for the coloured man to grow to full stature” (Malliet 1928:2). However, for the region to reach its full potential, he believed the Crown Colony system must be abolished and replaced with a West Indian federation. Like many other activists of the era, in and out of the Caribbean, he noted the advancement of the white dominions of the empire and called for the same opportunities for the British Caribbean so that they could take their place as a united, “self-

governing nation within the British Commonwealth of Nations” (Malliet 1928:4, 15, 20).

Though not as involved in the more radical black diaspora organizations, Malliet was a diasporic activist nonetheless through his involvement in West Indian, African American, and intraracial ventures in Harlem in this era. Despite Malliet’s desire to assure his readers that a united West Indies would not be “governed on the principle of race,” his appeal undoubtedly portrayed a prominent racial consciousness like many of his contemporaries (Malliet 1928:14-15). He envisioned a federated British Caribbean as a key step in the transformation of white-ruled colonies into a strong black homeland in the West where peoples of African descent could reach their fullest potential. In this, his ideas aligned closely with various other diaspora visions of the West Indies and federation popular in the early twentieth century and beyond.

CONCLUSION

The diasporic dimensions of British Caribbean federation are more prominent than many may assume. Within the Caribbean, proposals for regional unity pushed by the Crown were readily reshaped and adopted by Afro-Caribbean activists as a means through which to challenge their exclusion from political power and what many believed to be the blatant degradation of their race. This support for federation arose from a long tradition of racial activism in the region, and became a vehicle for racial uplift and empowerment for many supporters. Beyond the Caribbean, in other portions of the black diaspora, federation, like the region and its population, was racialized and incorporated into the global struggles of black peoples.

Racialized conceptualizations of British Caribbean federation continued beyond the early decades of the twentieth century. From the 1930s through the mid-1940s, West Indian nationalists continued to put forth both racial and transracial ideas for federation, while a revived Pan-African movement, bolstered by the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and growing discontent in the colonial world, continued to merge the call for a federation with the liberation struggles in Africa and the United States. In the aftermath of World War II, the idea of federation moved from a long-standing dream to an impending reality in the 1950s. Within the Caribbean in this era, as West Indian political leaders and parties worked with colonial officials to plan the federation, there was an overall decrease in overt racial appeals for federation and increased

53. While there is tendency for some scholars to dismiss such support as just an example of Pan-African support for “nonwhite” independence struggles (such as India), this overlooks the historic ties between Africa, Black America, and the British Caribbean within Pan-African movements, which is distinct from a general anticolonialism (Duke 2007).
depictions of it as a transracial, regional struggle. Nevertheless, racial motivations for federation did not completely disappear in the region, and in diaspora centers like Harlem and London, which remained major sources of support for federation, race remained a strong factor in desires for federation. Ironically, Caribbean politicians often appealed to such supporters outside of the Caribbean on the basis of race, while often avoiding such appeals back home. When the official “West Indies Federation” was inaugurated in 1958, various depictions of the new nation continued. To some it was the creation of a nation beyond race, and to others, the creation of a new black nation (Duke 2007:174-212). Such a contrast might have made for interesting debates within the new nation, but before that could occur, the West Indies Federation imploded after only four years. The collapse occurred for a variety of reasons, including the insular focus of many member islands at the expense of regional cooperation. This episode, however, is but a small part of the larger history of British Caribbean federation.

The ultimate failure of the West Indies Federation does not mean that the study of British Caribbean federation is ostensibly a study of a failure.54 New lessons can be learned when one pushes beyond these years and typical depictions of federation. By viewing federation in a truly comparative context, inclusive of black diaspora perspectives and beyond the limited scope of the West Indies Federation, one can more fully appreciate the multiple stories of federation. As this essay has shown, the history of federation shows another example of Caribbean involvement in black diaspora politics. For many supporters, the Caribbean federation movement was a significant black nation-building project beyond Africa. Though the liberation and unity of the British Caribbean was not as significant of a goal as the struggles of the African continent, the former was not forsaken or forgotten by those activists from its shores, or by their African American and African counterparts. Thus, for many, within and beyond the West Indies, the pursuit of a Caribbean federation was an important source of racial activism in the early twentieth century concretely connected to the liberation struggles of black peoples across the globe.

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ANTON DE KOM AND THE FORMATIVE PHASE OF SURINAMESE DECOLONIZATION

*Wij slaven van Suriname* (We slaves of Suriname) by Anton de Kom (1898-1945) stands out as one of the classics of Surinamese historiography and one of the most debated books among contemporary scholars involved in Surinamese studies. Remarkably, the work obtained this high-profile status only recently. At the time of publication (1934) *Wij slaven van Suriname* did not attract an appreciable audience beyond the communist-oriented circle of writers, activists, unionists, and politicians the book ideologically stems from. Discredited by the political establishment and lacking substantial media coverage, not many people in either the Netherlands or in Suriname took note of it.

In the early 1970s Surinamese students in the Netherlands rediscovered *Wij slaven van Suriname*, labeling the book a landmark in the expression of a true Surinamese anticolonialism. The young Surinamers considered De Kom a forerunner of the nationalism they endorsed and were particularly inspired by his plea for class allegiance and social justice. Back in Suriname these graduates aspired to transform the message of *Wij slaven van Suriname* into political action. Yet, the political parties they established did not generate the public support they had hoped for. As of the early 1980s, when the
country was under military rule, a number of radical leftist representatives of these parties accepted high positions in the country’s administration and declared De Kom a national hero. This official tribute gave rise to reprints of *Wij slaven van Suriname*, a Spanish edition of the work in Havana, and a growing popular identification of the book with anticolonialist and anti-imperialist struggle.

This re-evaluation of De Kom’s work was accompanied and sustained by a change in scholarly judgment. From the late 1940s until the beginning of the 1980s, Rudolf van Lier’s authoritative social history of Suriname had largely determined the image of De Kom. Adhering to pluralist theory, Van Lier carefully addressed the psychological causes and effects of the 1930s labor disturbances in Suriname that De Kom had been involved in. He termed the author’s display of the mentality of the lower-class Surinamer, particularly as demonstrated in the memory of the sufferings endured by the ancestors of the Afro-Surinamese, the chief merit of *Wij slaven van Suriname*. However, Van Lier (1971:370) also argues that this memory had become “part of a pathetic sense of grievance and a rancor which, however much justified by the circumstances in which the lower classes found themselves, prejudice a proper insight into the past.” The author seemed to suggest that De Kom, a representative of these classes himself, clung to a similarly partisan view.

In 1982 Sandew Hira published a book that marked a turning point in the appraisal of *Wij slaven van Suriname*. Hira severely criticized Van Lier for his support of pluralism and for laying emphasis on ethnic heterogeneity and the importance of Dutch culture for the process of forging a common Surinamese identity. Hira instead favored the adoption of Marxism as a more suitable theoretical framework, indicated that anticolonialism had been the continuous thread in Surinamese history, and promulgated class solidarity as the proper instrument for arriving at a society based on social justice. In his book he called De Kom “the greatest revolutionary of our history” and *Wij slaven van Suriname* his “literary masterpiece,” not only because of its fierce anticolonialism, but particularly because for the first time the book demonstrated “that also our people have a history of resistance which can teach us a lot” (Hira 1982:vii-ix). It was phrases like these which in the early 1980s – the Republic of Suriname was still in its infancy – coincided with the need for a progressive Surinamer whose writings could give ideological support and inspiration and who could metaphorically direct society toward a more promising future. In the wake of Hira’s work, there were many other studies published bestowing upon De Kom the status of a true Surinamer who had operated ahead of his time and had given his life for the ideal of freedom.

4. Upholding this viewpoint, Van Mulier 2008 presents De Kom as a role model for young Surinamers.
Although an anticolonial stance and leftist notions certainly are main features of *Wij slaven van Suriname*, an uneven focus on these elements – specifically if this focus remains confined to the domain of political rhetoric – obscures the versatility of De Kom’s investigation and the complex and intriguing design of the book. In this article I disclose the views and convictions revealed in *Wij slaven van Suriname* and its innovations from the point of view of historiography. I argue that *Wij slaven van Suriname* marks a new stage in Surinamese history writing and a novel way of dealing with the Surinamese past. To determine the characteristics of the book and its contribution to Caribbean historiography I juxtapose *Wij slaven van Suriname* with two other groundbreaking works in Caribbean political thought: *Capitalism and Slavery* by Eric Williams (1911-1981) and *The Black Jacobins* by C.L.R. James (1901-1989).

It is not my aim to make an elaborate comparison of the three works. My intention is to trace and single out the particularities of *Wij slaven van Suriname*, contrasting De Kom’s work with the two intellectually adjacent *tours de force*. Although this implies a quick scan rather than an exhaustive analysis, a brief consideration allows for a more in-depth examination of the principal ideas of *Wij slaven van Suriname* and will lay bare more thoroughly its inherent qualities and historiographical significance. Consequently, I hope to demonstrate that De Kom’s hitherto surprisingly weak Caribbean profile is not justified given that his work represents the formative phase of Surinamese decolonization and therefore deserves a prominent place in twentieth-century Caribbean history writing.5

**Accuser’s Role and Surinamese Perspective**

*Wij slaven van Suriname* is an exceptional book. It is the first work on the history of Suriname written by a Surinamese author from a Surinamese perspective. Moreover, it is the first work presenting a critical view of contemporary Surinamese developments and promoting a model directed at a “reconstruction” of Surinamese society. Finally, it is the first work blending an account of major historical events in Suriname with a strong personal engagement, as testified by snapshots of the author’s youth in Suriname and the narrative of his short-lived activist career in his native country. It is this

5. Mainly due to language differences, studies on Caribbean intellectual history often disregard authors connected with the Dutch-speaking Caribbean. See for example Benn 2004, Bolland 2004 and Torres-Saillant 2006, although Torres-Saillant pays random and sketchy attention to Dutch-Caribbean literature, including De Kom’s *Wij slaven van Suriname*. 
combination of elements that lends *Wij slaven van Suriname* its particular quality and importance.

De Kom was not the first self-made historian of Suriname. In *Wij Slaven van Suriname* the author explicitly acknowledges that his predecessors provided him with substantial data and valuable insights. Among the publications fundamental to the creation of *Wij slaven van Suriname* three classic volumes stand out: *Geschiedenis van Suriname* (History of Suriname, 1861) by Julien Wolbers, a well-known abolitionist and reliable researcher; *Beschrijving van Guiana of de Wilde Kust in Zuid-Amerika* (Description of Guyana or the Wild Coast in South America, 1770) by Jan Jacob Hartsinck, son of a director of the metropolitan-based Society of Suriname and an accurate compiler of archival documents connected with the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century colonial government; and the world-famous *Narrative of a Five Years’ Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796) by John Gabriel Stedman, an uncompromisingly critical account of the inhuman treatment of the Surinamese slave population, written by a military volunteer of Scottish descent serving in the Dutch army in Suriname and contracted to chase runaway slaves. Apart from these works De Kom in *Wij slaven van Suriname* relied on other secondary literature, mainly written by Dutch authors, and on a tiny selection of Dutch government reports and Surinamese newspaper articles.

Chronicling Suriname’s history from the arrival of the Europeans in the days of Columbus until the sociopolitical crisis of the mid-1930s, De Kom aptly applies the findings presented by Wolbers, Hartsinck, and Stedman to his own work. Yet his working method and aim differ substantially from those of the other authors. Firstly, De Kom’s tale is a highly condensed and idiosyncratic version of the lengthy writings of the examples he so admires. In *Wij slaven van Suriname* many important events and developments are under-studied or simply left out. This is not a consequence of the scarcity of sources available at the time of writing, but a matter of deliberate selection. While preparing his publication, representativeness was not De Kom’s objective, and completeness even less. Nor did he intend his work to be a contribution to historical scholarship as he did not cherish any academic ambitions.

An additional difference from the works of his predecessors, Wolbers and Hartsinck in particular, is the tone De Kom uses to unfold the injustices people of his home country had been subject to for such a long time. This tone reflects the accuser’s role the author had adopted to make his points. Obviously De Kom in this respect was influenced and sparked by the sweeping catalogue of cruelties toward slaves and maroons by the colonial authorities in eighteenth-century Suriname that Stedman had compiled. The paragraphs dedicated to these abuses in *Narrative of a Five Years’ Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* had upset its contemporary readers, the more so because there were drawings accompanying the equally grue-
some and alarming text. The brutalities had also made an impression on De Kom, who wished to share Stedman’s observations with his associates.

In addition to *Narrative of a Five Years’ Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*, a little book called *Zuid-zuid-west* (South-south-west, 1923), written by the Surinamese writer and acclaimed *homo universalis* Albert Helman (pseudonym of Lou Lichtveld), was a source of inspiration for De Kom. This fine work of lyrical prose had caused a scandal in the Netherlands because it included several unyielding attacks on — what the author deemed to be — the hypocrisy of the Dutch. He argued that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Dutch had profited immensely from the exploitation of Suriname’s natural resources, but particularly following the abolition of slavery in 1863 had increasingly neglected the languishing colony. To Helman’s outrage the mother country only reluctantly accepted the obligation of supporting Suriname with financial aid and stubbornly refrained from offering the colony sustainable solutions to its pressing problems.

The echoes of both Stedman and Helman can easily be traced in *Wij slaven van Suriname*, which contains many a bitter and sarcastic remark as well as grave charges (repeatedly disguised as rhetorical questions) about the economic greed, religious bigotry, cultural barbarism, political unrelatability, moral irresponsibility, and legal indifference of the Dutch colonizer. In these paragraphs the author uninhibitedly throws accusations in the faces of those in power and vents his disbelief in the possibility of colonial reform to the benefit of his fellow-countrymen.6 De Kom in *Wij slaven van Suriname* resembles Helman in applying the latter’s impassioned and poetical style as demonstrated in *Zuid-zuid-west*. This is particularly evident from the inclusion in *Wij slaven van Suriname* of lyrical descriptions of *mama Sranan’s* (mother Suriname’s) interior and the incorporation of paragraphs almost imperceptibly crossing the boundaries of nonfiction.7

Although the accuser’s role De Kom adopted is a remarkable trait of *Wij slaven van Suriname* the most innovative aspect of the book is the author’s employment of a Surinamese perspective. Until the 1930s, the scant body of literature on Surinamese history was largely a reflection of the interest researchers in the metropolis took in the institutional aspects of Suriname’s political and economic advances. In their works the native population played a nondescript part. The nonwhite inhabitants of Suriname were portrayed as chance associates of amorphous groups of laborers, contributing to the colony’s gross national product, but lacking a distinct profile or features of

6. These lines prompted Oostindie & Hoefte (1999:612) to accurately label *Wij slaven van Suriname* a “pervasive and articulate *j’accuse* against Dutch colonialism and capitalism.”

7. For imaginative, but ultimately fictitious, sections, see De Kom 2003:31-32, 39-40, 69-70, 163-64.
individuality. De Kom should be credited for his zealous efforts to make up for this omission. Encouraged by the writings of Stedman, Wolbers, and notably Helman, he demonstrates a sincere concern for the common Surinamer and effectively brings this involvement to the forefront in *Wij slaven van Suriname*. Promoting previously subordinate figures to the level of protagonists, he bestows upon the invisible and powerless a sense of self-esteem and identity.

De Kom was well equipped to give them a new self-confidence, being a descendant of slaves himself. He possessed a natural sympathy for and – more importantly – a profound knowledge of the people he wrote about. His experiences as a child and schoolboy raised in a lower-class Afro-Surinamese family in Frimangron, and later as an adult trying to find a suitable occupation and make a decent living, combined with his immersion in communist ideals in the Netherlands, had made him extremely conscious of the subordination of lower-class Afro-Surinamese in Surinamese society. Thus, De Kom, who was an insider, differed markedly from the outsiders Stedman and Wolbers, the first an engaged but temporary visitor, the second an industrious investigator who never set foot on Surinamese soil. Although as Suriname-born writers both were insiders, De Kom and Helman did not share a common ethnic and class background. Helman’s ancestors came from the Para district (generally considered a “negro” district), but they were of mixed rather than of Afro-Surinamese descent. Helman was raised in Paramaribo, in a middle-class family that maintained personal and professional relations with the local elite. He identified with the world beyond his roots, obtained a pre-university education in the Netherlands, and at an early age endorsed a cosmopolitan view of life. As opposed to Helman, De Kom did not live in relative prosperity since his childhood, nor did he benefit from a stimulating intellectual environment. Besides, he would never be part of the establishment, neither in Suriname nor in the Netherlands.

In the first part of *Wij slaven van Suriname*, “The Era of Slavery,” De Kom’s perspective is mainly congruent with what can be labeled – using the vocabulary of that time – the “negro perspective.” Following some introductory sections on the “red slaves,” in which the author mindfully commemorates their horrible fate and pays tribute to the acts of resistance of “these courageous Surinamers,” De Kom tells at length of the cruelties of the Middle Passage, the hardships of the slaves (“our fathers”) on the plantations, the life of luxury and abundance their masters indulged in, and the excessive punishment the slaves were exposed to. Understandably his anger

8. Freeman’s ground, a neighborhood in Paramaribo originally designated for free colored people.
9. Indigenous people living in Suriname’s coastal areas who were enslaved with the onset of Dutch colonization.
and indignation were mainly aimed at the unjust and inhumane treatment the many enslaved men, women, and children suffered.

More specifically, De Kom’s criticism affects the deliberate deletion of the “negro past” in the educational programs prevalent in the colony at that time. In history classes in primary and secondary school Surinamese children were taught about the life and times of white metropolitan rulers and administrators in great detail, but information about and explanations of the merits and accomplishments of their ancestors were withheld. De Kom’s comment on the psychological effects of this tendentious version of history is unambiguous:

No better means to cultivate the inferiority complex of a race than these history lessons exclusively dedicated to the naming and praising of the sons of another people. It took a long time before I had freed myself completely from the obsession that a negro must always and unconditionally be the inferior of every white man … No people can fully mature that maintains an inferiority complex as a hereditary defect. For that reason this book attempts to raise the self-respect of the Surinamers and to prove the inaccuracy of the peace intentions of the Dutch at the time of slavery. (De Kom 2003:60)10

In Wij slaven van Suriname this quotation cleverly bridges the sections on slavery and marronage, the “peace intentions” serving as a reference to the successive negotiations the colonial authorities initiated to check the revolting maroons. In a number of instances these deliberations resulted in official peace treaties, rightly judged by De Kom as manifestations of divide and conquer, since the pacified maroons had to concede to backward positions in the Surinamese heartland and were compelled to ally with the local government to vanquish their nonpacified fellow maroons.

10. All translations from Wij slaven van Suriname are mine. Only some fragments of the book were previously published in English (see Van Neck-Yoder 1998:667-72). De Kom’s contemplation of the inferiority complex of the “negro race” is mirrored in Smulders 1944. Smulders (1911-92), a teacher of Surinamese origin who worked in Suriname and Curaçao (see Van Kempen 2003b:27-29), also denounced education as the chief source of the “negro’s” shame of his own race. In his book Smulders (1944:11), building on private information concerning pedagogical abuse in Suriname and Curaçao, unreservedly attacks his fellow-teachers for their color prejudices and acts of racial discrimination: “The majority of the teaching personnel, in other words those who must provide moral guidance, is standing on the wrong side” (my translation). Smulders advocated a gradual process leading toward full equality between colored and white people, in which education had to play a major role and “negro” role models from the United States had to play a prominent part. Although precocious and outspoken at the time of publication, references to De Kom are not included in Smulders’s work.
De Kom in his book notably prided himself in paying high tribute to what the colonial authorities deemed “scum,” but what he defined as “freedom fighters.” Appraising the guerrilla wars maroon leaders waged against the Dutch, De Kom emphasizes the courage, generosity, sense of justice, and art of war these commanders exhibited and takes into consideration their gains and losses in terms of territory, well-being, and quality of life. Furthermore, he commends their efforts to promote the feeling of freedom among their followers. In the 1930s, this respectful approaching of hitherto neglected, if not scorned population groups represented a novel way of dealing with the past. It paved the way for the inclusive and comprehensive version of Suriname’s history commonly endorsed in the Republic of Suriname today.

Swept away by his emancipation ideals, De Kom does not consistently resist the temptation of endowing his heroes with mythical proportions. However, at the same time he admits that marronage often lacked the guerrilla features depicted so vividly in his work. Hinting at forms of non-armed resistance centering on inventiveness and cunning, he refers to the well-known allegorical figure of Anansi, the trickster spider, who, sitting on the back of King Tiger, enrages his enemy, covering his body with tiny poisonous bites. Nevertheless, whether the opposition was drastic or subtle, De Kom’s message is clear: marronage served a serious cause, demonstrated an intrinsic need for freedom characteristic of mankind and in that sense foreshadowed modern anticolonialism. Its actual relevance, however, is largely symbolic. In Wij slaven van Suriname De Kom in no way wishes to imply that contemporary Surinamers had to use military means to resist colonialism.

In the second part of Wij slaven van Suriname, entitled “The Era of Freedom,” the Surinamese perspective includes the population groups composing society since the postemancipation decades. In addition to the attention he gives to the descendants of “negro slaves,” De Kom in this section reports on the movements of East Indians (called Hindustanis in Suriname) and Javanese (originating from Indonesia, but not solely from Java), who had entered Suriname as indentured laborers and who after their contract had expired tried to make a living in their new homeland, as a rule in subsistence farming and the production of foodstuffs for the local market.

Long before Tinker (1974) classified indentured labor “a new system of slavery,” De Kom devised a “slave” category in which he incorporated slaves, indentured laborers, and their descendants. It is this extended category he is referring to in the title of his magnum opus.11 In his opinion not only the “negro” population had suffered on the plantations, but their successors had

11. Present-day intellectuals relatively often emphasize the importance of Wij slaven van Suriname as a source of information on the Afro-Surinamese population group (Van Stipriaan et al. 2007:129-30) or, ideologically speaking, as a precursor of Black Power in Suriname (Helman 1995:31). This demonstrates not only the variety of interpretations the
also endured (and in the case of the Javanese, still endured) the hardship of exploitation and degeneration, notwithstanding the human traits these workers were given and the rights they enjoyed according to official regulations. De Kom held the view that not the ethnic differences between the Surinamese population groups, but their similarities in social status and economic well-being had to be considered a key element in creating a Surinamese society free of exploitation and subordination.12

**RECONSTRUCTION OF SURINAMESE SOCIETY**

Because “The era of freedom” deals with contemporary issues and developments, its emphasis is on politics rather than on history. In this second section De Kom shows his familiarity with the work of the nineteenth-century Dutch author Multatuli (pseudonym for Eduard Douwes Dekker), who, building on colonial service experiences in Indonesia, had severely criticized forced labor and the exploitation of the Javanese in his famous novel *Max Havelaar* (1860), but who later had also rejected free labor, branding it a system prone to abuse and maltreatment as well. In Suriname, De Kom asserted, free laborers had much in common with their “comrades” in the eastern part of the Dutch colonial empire. In both regions feelings of humiliation and distress were prevalent among working-class people.13

This was particularly evident in the 1930s. In response to the world economic crisis, the Dutch government launched a strict austerity policy, while substantial actions directed at relieving the misery of the poor and jobless seemed equally appropriate. From the Netherlands, where he had been residing since 1921, mainly working as an accountant and a business agent, De Kom observed in particular the efforts of Louis Doedel, who since early 1931 had organized the unemployed and had negotiated with the colonial administration in Suriname to enforce labor reforms and create jobs. On 28 October 1931, a mass meeting of Doedel’s Surinaamsche Volksbond (Surinamese People’s Association, SVB) got out of hand and ended in a hunger revolt. Police forces were called in to restore order. Their clashes with the raging crowd resulted in one dead, two wounded, and 56 arrests. To De Kom “red text of *Wij slaven van Suriname* allows for, but also the different meanings contemporary readers attach to the book.

12. Oostindie argues that De Kom attempted to “write away” the ethnic divisions distinctive of Surinamese society. I would say he at least underexposed and presumably also underestimated these differences, being too greatly absorbed by his endeavor to counterbalance the divide-and-rule strategies of the colonial government. See Oostindie 1990:6.

October” was a tragic extreme of colonial oppression, but also a promising manifestation of popular resistance.

Apart from the appalling reports he received about the effects of the economic crisis in his native country, De Kom’s networks also served to inspire action. In fact, De Kom collaborated with three groups of like-minded people. Firstly, he was influenced by Indonesian students in the Netherlands, who prepared for their country to be liberated from Dutch colonial rule. Their principal association was the nationalist Perhimpoenan Indonesia, led in the 1920s by Mohammed Hatta, future prime minister of the independent Republic of Indonesia. In addition, De Kom cooperated closely with Dutch organizations promoting (openly or covertly) communist ideals, such as the Liga tegen Imperialisme en voor Koloniale Onafhankelijkheid (League against Imperialism and in support of Colonial Independence) and the workers’ and artists’ collective Links Richten (Directing Left). In those days the Communistische Partij Holland (Dutch Communist Party, CPH) was the sole political party in the Netherlands to show a keen and positive interest in nationalist organizations in the Dutch colonies, and it assiduously urged the transfer of sovereignty to the colonized people. Finally, De Kom, since the early 1930s, maintained regular contacts with Surinamese working-class leaders, notably Louis Doedel and Theo de Sanders.14

Sailors employed with the Royal Dutch Steamboat Society acted as their couriers, passing on messages and distributing political writings. The local Surinamese labor leaders, who generally tended more toward the principles of the Dutch Sociaal Democratische Arbeiders Partij (Social Democratic Labor Party, SDAP),15 accommodated De Kom’s return to Suriname in 1933.

De Kom’s interlocking connections convinced him that lower-class Afro-Surinamese, Hindustanis, and Javanese were all proletarians betrayed by the false promises of free labor and in need of an organization that could stand up against hardship and oppression:

We want to prove only one thing: colored fellow countrymen, you are slaves, you will remain living in poverty and misery, as long as you do not trust your own proletarian unity. We cannot be saved with an incidental plot of land, a spade or a plough provided on credit. A great plan of national reconstruction is needed, a plan directed at collective enterprises

14. Kinshasa (2002:42, 46) – who does not provide ample evidence – believes that these relations went back to 1918, before De Kom left for the Netherlands.
15. In 1937, this political party – from its beginnings in 1894 an internationally oriented Marxist-based party and, as such, the most important moderate rival of the Dutch communist party – dropped class struggle from its political program and unconditionally adopted parliamentary democracy. From that moment on the SDAP presented itself as a national people’s party. In 1939, for the first time, the SDAP accepted cabinet posts in the Dutch government. De Kom renounced the reformist stance of the SDAP.
with modern equipment in the possession of the workers of Suriname. We will have to build up our welfare with our own hands. This plan requires a great effort from us as Surinamers. But firstly the proletarians in our country have to arrive at militant class-consciousness, firstly we have to shake off, together with the old slave chains, the old slave mentality. (De Kom 2003:164)

In the epilogue of *Wij slaven van Suriname*, “Reencounter and Goodbye,” De Kom provided a brief account of his 1933 experiences as an activist leader in Suriname (see next paragraph), in which he included references to “the comradeship of the proletarians and their love of freedom” and in which he repeated his wish to pass on to his comrades

the hope and courage embedded in that powerful word I learned abroad: organization. Maybe I will succeed in erasing the divisions which have been the weak spot of these colored people, will it not be entirely impossible to let negroes and Hindustanis, Javanese and indigenous people understand that only solidarity can unite all sons of mother Sranan in their struggle for a human existence. (De Kom 2003:167, 169-70)

There is no mention of a “revolutionary takeover,” “the dictatorship of the proletariat” or the establishment of a “classless society” in *Wij slaven van Suriname*. De Kom in his book also refrains from alluding to existing socialist models (for instance the one applied in the then Soviet Union) or to specific scenarios to put his ideals into effect. Apart from De Kom’s inclination to focus on practical action rather than on terminological correctness or theoretical debate this apparent lack of ideological elaboration is to a great extent due to the stance of the Dutch authorities. They forced the author to keep a low profile and to comply with the interbellum political regime in the Netherlands, which condemned communism and excluded members of the *Communistische Partij Holland* from posts in government agencies. In his book De Kom explicitly states that he has not been nor is a member of the Dutch communist party (De Kom 2003:189). Although there is no irrefutable evidence about the reliability of De Kom’s claim, it is safe to assume that his message partly served image-building purposes.

Many writers have pointed out that *Wij slaven van Suriname* was subject to censorship which brought about a number of changes in the original manuscript. The initial text being lost, investigations into the authenticity of the published work are difficult. However, prepublications of book fragments suggest the exclusion of several lines and paragraphs from the final version, such as the one on the prospects for liberation in Suriname when “great and conscious revolutionaries” like Baron, Boni, and Joli Coeur (well-known Maroon guerrilla leaders) would rise up once more. In the same passage
Dutch proletarians were encouraged to appreciate “our freedom fighters” and to carry with them images of these leaders together with Lenin’s portrait during their demonstrations on the day that the great liquidation of capitalism would take place.\(^\text{16}\) Whether a member of the Dutch communist party or not, this fragment indicates De Kom’s adoption of at least portions of the communist ideology propagated in the Netherlands in the 1930s.\(^\text{17}\)

It is commonly assumed that another testimony to De Kom’s radicalism is the text of a pamphlet – also not included in *Wij slaven van Suriname* – that circulated in Suriname in early 1933 when De Kom was there. The program disclosed in this leaflet called for “national liberation, complete self-determination, constitutional independence, Suriname and Curaçao cut off from Holland now,” “extermination of the privileges of foreign imperialists and nationalization of foreign concessions and plantations,” “unlimited freedom of organization and press for workers, small farmers, Maroons and other oppressed people,” “promotion of economic, political and cultural emancipation of the oppressed classes and races, and equal rights for man and woman” and “a unity organization for all workers and farmers and collaboration with the Dutch, Indonesian, Soviet and international movements” (Scholtens 1986:79-80).\(^\text{18}\) These sweeping demands, also expounded in a number of articles in the communist press,\(^\text{19}\) most likely reflect De Kom’s ultimate political agenda. However, data being scarce, we also have to proceed carefully here. It is impossible to overlook or disregard speculation intermingling with information when dealing with this particular subject.\(^\text{20}\)


\(^\text{17}\) Boots and Woortman hold the view that the key prepublication from which the quotations in this paragraph come most likely cannot be attributed to De Kom. One of their main arguments pertains to sources unused thus far. Reconstructing the genesis of *Wij slaven van Suriname* Boots and Woortman conclude that stylistic considerations on the part of the publisher rather than censorship methods applied by the metropolitan authorities underlay the many adjustments made to the initial manuscript of the book. In determining the authorship of the prepublication, however, these data can serve as circumstantial evidence only.

\(^\text{18}\) In 1910, Frans Pavel Killinger had voiced similar pro-independence demands, but because he failed to execute an intended coup d’état and because he was detained and expelled from Suriname, his ideas quickly faded from public memory.


\(^\text{20}\) According to Boots and Woortman it is doubtful whether the pamphlet bears the signature of De Kom. Their useful assessment, however, does not exclude the possibility that De Kom subscribed to the views expressed in the text.
De Kom’s fixation on a reconstruction of Surinamese society was definitely Marxist-inspired, but to term the author a student of Marxism or a Marxist thinker would not do justice to the essentially performative roles he took as an activist and a writer. Basically the ideas he endorsed were marked by simplicity. De Kom assumed that the economic foundations of the social order conditioned European, Asian, and New World societies. He considered the doctrine derived from this principle a philosophical “readymade,” which he eagerly adopted as his ideological compass and political code of conduct. But De Kom’s class-based convictions were as much rooted in Marxist theory as in everyday life experiences and private encounters with people. His passionate appeals to do away with inequalities and injustices and his engaging attempts to improve the living conditions of the have-nots and ill-fated revealed a sensitive and intuitively applied Marxism, disconnected from political discourse and scholarly analysis. Some of his contemporaries rightly observed that De Kom fought the class struggle with his heart rather than with elaborate concepts or fixed dogmas in mind. Without question De Kom’s drive was not targeted at the consideration, fleshing out, and sophistication of Marxist ideals, but at practical operations directed at egalitarianism and social justice.

**STRONG PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT**

The hybridity of *Wij slaven van Suriname*, which bears traces both of a scholarly work and a political treatise, is further confirmed by De Kom’s inclusion of scraps of autobiography throughout the text. Abiding by the socialist convention of submitting the personal to the collective, De Kom does not elaborate on his private experiences. Yet, the incorporation of personal interludes effectively allows the reader to identify with the fate of lower-class Surinamers. Furthermore, these anecdotes support and illuminate the more objective overall explanations the author puts forward.

The deficiencies in the school curricula, particularly the lack of serious attention for Surinamese history, inspired De Kom to write down some of his most personal memories. An exemplary quotation: “Better than in the history books of the white, the maltreatment of our fathers has been recorded in our own hearts; never has the agony of slavery spoken more intensely to me than

22. In Johnson 1982 refined analytical tools are deployed to examine Marx’s working method as well as his philosophical premises. It is tempting to apply these tools to *Wij slaven van Suriname* to accurately establish the Marxist influences in the book. However, since De Kom is rather implicit and evasive about the rationale underlying his work this exercise would not make sense.
from the eyes of my grandmother when she told us children, in front of the cabin in Paramaribo, the tales of the old times” (De Kom 2003:46). Likewise, De Kom recalls the Maroon friends his father took home with him when he returned from the goldfields to the capital. The son, raised in a society that mimicked the prejudices of the colonial elite, shamefully admits that he and his schoolmates talked disdainfully about his father’s guests, regarding themselves as superior to those whose language and way of life they could not understand. “Our contempt was one of the strongest links of the chain with which we were bound to the western production system. Only when the old slave mentality has disappeared from our hearts will the Surinamer come to human dignity” (De Kom 2003:80).23

It is the epilogue outlining De Kom’s short-lived activist experiences in Suriname which stands out as the most intriguing piece of autobiography in Wij slaven van Suriname. Although many details concerning the 1933 events have remained obscure until today, the main story is clear.24 Late December 1932, De Kom traveled to Suriname, the first time since he had moved to the Netherlands. According to his commentary in Wij slaven van Suriname the chief motive for his return was his desire to visit his mother, who was gravely ill. Tragically, she died before he had reached his destination. But apparently De Kom intended to re-migrate altogether, since his wife, who was Dutch, and children, who were born in the Netherlands, accompanied him and so did many boxes of furniture. From the moment his feet touched Surinamese ground De Kom was shadowed by police officers. The authorities, alerted to his reputation as a “communist agitator,” were concerned that he would seize the opportunity to stir up the masses and upset the political status quo.

Since De Kom was denied the right to organize meetings, he set up an “advisory and information bureau” in his parents’ yard. He registered the names and addresses of the people who visited him and wrote down their

23. These words resemble Marcus Garvey’s celebrated statement “Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our mind” (popularized by Bob Marley in “Redemption Song”). De Kom might have become acquainted with Garvey’s thinking and actions in 1920, when, on his way to the Netherlands, he worked for two months with the Société Commerciale Hollandaise Transatlantique in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Garvey and De Kom both championed the emancipation of the lower strata in their societies, Garvey primarily on the basis of race, De Kom on the basis of class. Although his small oeuvre does not include explicit comments on Garvey, it is worth mentioning that De Kom (2003:25) admired the Dutch translation of Magdeleine Paz’s account of black emancipation in the United States. In this work, which was widely read at the time of publication, the author (Paz 1933:199-205) firmly rejects Garveyism as unfeasible and utopian, and stresses the need for crosscultural and multiracial collaboration in a unified labor movement. See also Kinshasa 2002:43-44.

complaints. Hundreds of people made their way to De Kom’s temporary residence, particularly those of Javanese and Hindustani descent who lived in the rural districts. They were attracted by the prospect of De Kom’s providing them with a free passage to Java or India. Because of the deplorable material and social circumstances in which they lived and their apparent lack of education they attributed mythical powers to De Kom, considering him a kinglike figure, a messiah, an incarnation of Gusti Amat (a legendary nineteenth-century prince who had been expelled from Java to Ambon and who was believed to have come to Suriname to save his people) and a disciple and representative of Gandhi. There is still dispute as to whether De Kom deliberately misled his followers, misusing his charisma and creating expectations he could not meet. Some important sources, however, assert that opponents of De Kom spread false rumors to discredit and outrival him. They are convinced that these adversaries deceitfully claimed that De Kom collected money from immigrants supposedly as a payment in advance for their repatriation, but basically to fill his own pockets. Unfortunately a shortage of factual testimony also precludes significant conclusions here (Breunissen 2001:17-21, 170-71, Verheij & Van Westerloo 1984:35, Wicart 1990:86).

On February 1, 1933, the authorities prohibited De Kom’s organizing a meeting near his parents’ home. This refusal, which he considered unfair, taking into account the needs of the people and the opportunity he had created to act as their solicitor, induced De Kom to go to the governor to protest. A large crowd of people followed him. That day the governor was unable to receive, officially for medical reasons. Thus De Kom dissociated himself from his supporters and accepted an offer to go by car to the police station. He was told that there, in place of the governor he could meet the attorney-general. However, at the location of the meeting police officials arrested him. His adherents, who in the meantime had tracked down De Kom and had rallied in front of the police station, were violently dispersed.

The following days the city of Paramaribo remained restless. There were riots and pleas to release De Kom which were rejected by the attorney-general on the ground that evidence had been found that De Kom had serious plans to overthrow the government. Despite his assurance that De Kom would remain in prison and even though public gatherings were prohibited, on February 4 the rumor that De Kom would be set free on February 7 rapidly spread and created great excitement. On that day a huge crowd, including vast numbers of Javanese, assembled on the main town square opposite

25. The longing for a charismatic guide and savior, capable of leading them out of their misery into a refuge resembling a promised land, has occupied the minds of the Javanese ever since the times of De Kom. Leading Surinamese-Javanese politicians willing to adopt the savior role were, in succession, Iding Soemita, Willy Soemita, and Paul Salam Somohardjo.
the governor’s palace and nearby Fort Zeelandia where De Kom was being detained in anticipation of his release. But instead of being allowed to reunite with their leader, the police cleaned the square, whereupon the people proceeded to the office of the attorney-general. They pushed their way forward attempting to break the police cordon guarding the building. The angry mass of people, determined to enforce the return of their leader and unwilling to obey orders to retreat, threatened and ridiculed the police officers, who at one point started to fire at the crowd. In the subsequent confrontation two demonstrators were killed and twenty-three injured. De Kom was expelled from the colony on May 10, after three-and-a-half months of detention, without a trial. Later the authorities acknowledged that there was insufficient proof to convict De Kom.

De Kom’s four-and-a-half month stay in Suriname, during which he effectively worked as an activist for only one month,26 prompted the authorities to announce anti-revolution laws, to improve the arms of the police forces, and to establish a citizens’ guard. These decisions practically silenced the actions of the Surinamese labor leaders in the remaining decade. Back in the Netherlands De Kom completed *Wij slaven van Suriname*, ending his work in calm anxiety: “Sranan my fatherland. One time I hope to see you again. On the day that all sorrow will be removed” (De Kom 2003:179).27 De Kom, however, would never return to Sranan.

His confidence in the spirit of progress unshaken, De Kom continued activist work in the Netherlands, but as a political exile he had great difficulties making a living. Basically he was unemployed and dependent on social welfare. Temporary, low-status jobs generated some irregular income. During the Second World War, De Kom joined the communist branch of the Dutch resistance movement against the Nazi occupier, remaining faithful to his ideals and consistent in his engagement with subordinate people, whether it was the Surinamese colonized or the Dutch colonizer. Betrayed in 1944, De Kom was imprisoned by the Nazis and deported to Germany. In early 1945, having suffered severe hardships in a number of concentration

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26. Historians Ben Scholtens and Hans Ramsoedh brought forward this fact to articulate that the importance of De Kom as a Surinamese labor leader has been seriously overrated as compared to that of Doedel. See Scholtens 1987:5, 25 and Brautigam 1999:25-29.
camps, De Kom died in camp Sandbostel, an annex to concentration camp Neuengamme.

In 1933, did De Kom return to Suriname on an assignment of the Dutch communist party? He may have, given his political connections and ideals. Yet there is no hard evidence supporting this assumption. Did De Kom wish to bring about a revolution in his native country? Obviously he wished to improve the living conditions of the lower-class people and to boost their fighting spirit and motivation to resist the colonial government. However, there is reliable testimony that in 1933 De Kom judged that Suriname was unprepared for revolution and on principle rejected the use of violence. This indicates that an immediate takeover of power in Suriname was not part of his program (De Kom 2003:168-70, 173-75). Moreover, for practical reasons De Kom preferred to behave as much as possible in accordance with the rules of the game set by the colonial authorities. This is why he confined himself to nonviolent methods of action such as mass mobilization and propaganda. Most likely De Kom’s activities in 1933 were meant to be the initial stage of a trajectory directed at setting up a large and stalwart labor organization that would give Surinamese workers substantial political power.

Why were so many Javanese and to a lesser extent Hindustanis attracted to De Kom’s ideals? Several explanations have been given. The fact that both groups were largely neglected by the colonial government compared with the Afro-Surinamese group and that they harbored deep feelings of nostalgia for their homeland seems to have made these workers more receptive to the acts and speeches of what they considered a messianic leader. Besides, the Afro-Surinamese already had their workers’ organizations, but were discouraged by the meager results of their leaders, particularly following the 1931 hunger revolt. Furthermore, they presumably had their reservations about De Kom because of his radicalism and the nimbus of authority and pedantry that seemingly surrounded him. Finally, De Kom’s focus on the Javanese and Hindustani workers seems to have been a matter of tactics and labor division as well. Leaving the Afro-Surinamese proletarians to fellow leaders like Doedel, De Kom, in addressing the main Asian groups, could foster his credibility as a bringer of an ethnically neutral, class-centered message. The fact that he was accustomed to associating with people of Indonesian descent probably served as an asset.

Particularly the active support of the Javanese for De Kom did alarm the authorities. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s the fear of a repeat of the 1933 disturbances – taking into account the interest many Javanese took in operations of the nationalist movement in Indonesia, the charisma of nationalist leader Sukarno, and the proclamation of independence in Indonesia in 1945 – kept the colonial administration alert and motivated them to let intelligence
services observe the movements of the Javanese population closely. Unlike the developments in the English-speaking Caribbean, where labor unrest peaked in the late 1930s, in Suriname following the expulsion of De Kom social and political disquiet was successfully curbed by the colonial government which strictly adhered to the anti-revolution laws (“muzzle decrees” as they were commonly referred to) and the established authoritarian way of dealing with undesirable opposition.

Comparison with Williams and James

Wij slaven van Suriname, Eric Williams’s Capitalism and Slavery, and C.L.R. James’s The Black Jacobins show definite similarities in aim, approach, and argumentation. Their common points can be classed under the headings “emancipation,” “race and class consciousness,” “identity politics,” and “nationalism.” The works center on Caribbean people and their struggle for liberation, self-respect, and dignity. As for their approach and analysis the authors rely on scholarly methods and literary techniques and offer a compelling line of reasoning directed at the creation of a new perspective on Caribbean history. Taking a decisive stand on ideological matters, the books reflect the spirit of interbellum Europe, which gave birth to fascism and communism as opposing political systems uncompromisingly aspiring for world hegemony.

At the same time the three works under discussion differ in ambition and scope. Besides divergences in their talent and aspirations, the authors also have diverse educational backgrounds. Eric Williams and C.L.R. James had ranked among the most talented pupils of their generation at Queen’s Royal College, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. His brilliant performance at Queen’s had resulted in Williams’s being awarded an Island Scholarship to advance a

28. Gouverneur van Suriname, Geheim Archief, 2.10.18, inv. no. 47, 53, 54, 55, 522, 524, 527, 538, 578, National Archives, The Hague. Simon Sanches, in 1947 instigator of a coup d’état that was prematurely betrayed by one of his fellow conspirators, considered the Afro-Surinamese and the Javanese the only population groups that stood to benefit from his planned takeover. A statue in honor of De Kom was part of his unrealized plans.

29. Broached in Meel 2001:228. In his brief review of these important studies Oostindie (2004:498-99) also includes Aimé Césaire’s Cahier d’un retour au pays natal. But it being a work of poetry, I consider it less self-evident to incorporate this book into the comparison presented here. Despite obvious similarities with Wij slaven van Suriname I also exclude Léon Damas’s Retour de Guyane, the principle reason being the obscurity of this work in historiographical and political debates in the Francophone Caribbean and beyond.
Having obtained a doctoral degree at Oxford University, Williams would embark on an extraordinary career, successfully pursuing scholarly and political goals. He built up a solid reputation as a Caribbean historian and would serve nineteen years as the prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago. James determinedly chose not to attend university, but to lead the life of an independent artist and revolutionary. Notably as a writer and journalist he demonstrated a zeal for contemporary issues connected with Africa and the Caribbean, critically examining the theoretical foundations and practical implications of self-governance, independence, Pan-Africanism, Marxism, and Trotskyism. James’s intellectual legacy is abundant, ranging from prose fiction and literary criticism to writings on politics, history, and sports (cricket).

Set against these exceptionally gifted and energetic characters, De Kom’s credentials turn out to be modest. Having finished the Roman Catholic Paulus School in Paramaribo, a type of school offering lower general secondary education, at that time the highest level of education one could get in the colony, De Kom took private courses in bookkeeping and accountancy. In the Netherlands, as a consequence of his low birth, corresponding financial constraints, and the unavailability of scholarships, he could not continue his studies on a regular basis. Instead, as an autodidact he trained himself to read scholarly books, discussing political issues and developing a way of thinking bearing the mark of substance and authenticity.

Apart from the absence of formal higher education experiences and qualifications, which forced him to find out things primarily by himself, De Kom had the bad luck of being raised in a colony and later living in a mother country of an empire that did not play a major role in world politics and was known for its rather inward-looking and complacent way of life. This affected the curricula Dutch students were offered and the intellectual make-up and level of ambition society required from its citizens. The schooling in the British educational system, which paid equal attention to knowledge acquisition and the development of analytical, creative, and oratory skills, together with the emphasis laid on the mastery of the English language and the cultivation of a mentality directed at competition and fair play, contributed to a more comprehensive intellectual basis and a more international orientation to the advantage of those who were eager to exploit their talents. No doubt Williams and James were among those who in their work made the most of their education. In this respect De Kom lagged behind.

What are the three books by these authors about? In *Capitalism and Slavery*, Williams vigorously explains that the slave trade and “negro slavery” were the core constituents of eighteenth-century commercial capitalism, which provided capital to finance the Industrial Revolution. Moreover, the author challenges the view that the termination of the slave trade and slavery were primarily the triumph of British humanitarianism, according to him
“one of the greatest propaganda movements of all time” (Williams 1994:178). Williams argues that instead the abolition of both institutions was a consequence of the development of nineteenth-century industrial capitalism, which led to the emergence of new manufacturing and industrial classes in Britain. These classes considered the maintenance of the West Indian monopoly and slavery incompatible with their economic interests; this would impede the making of profit. Despite Williams’s conviction that there does not exist a strict line of demarcation between historical and political judgment and that the roles of the historian and the politician cannot be adequately separated, *Capitalism and Slavery* is a scholarly work, to be more precise an economic study that has been the object of intense academic debate for sixty-five years now. As such it is a marked contribution to Caribbean scholarship.30

James in *The Black Jacobins* eloquently relates the complex story of the Haitian Revolution with special reference to the role played by its principal leader Toussaint L’Ouverture. His book is a stirring narrative of rare literary refinement, firmly grounded in the available primary sources. Appropriating a Marxist paradigm, James elucidates the nature of Caribbean society, pointing to the predominance of race and class31 and depicting slaves as “closer to a modern proletariat than any group of workers in existence at the time” (James 1989:86). Illuminating the contribution slavery made to the development of the modern world, James laid the basis for the Williams thesis (James 1989:51-54, Williams 1994:268).

A theoretical issue James embarks upon in *The Black Jacobins* is the relationship between societal forces and the impact of leading personalities like L’Ouverture in bringing off a revolution. The question of whether the revolution made Toussaint or Toussaint the revolution prompts James to take a middle position, however, adhering to historical determinism: “Great men make history, but only such history as it is possible for them to make. Their freedom of achievement is limited by the necessities of their environment” (James 1989:ix, 91). In the end, James indicates, human agency is determined by material context.32

30. Also compare Benn 2004:80-85. Solow & Engerman 1987 is a collection of specialist responses to the key arguments set out in *Capitalism and Slavery*.
31. Epitomized in James’s well-known aphorism: “The race question is subsidiary to the class question in politics, and to think of imperialism in terms of race is disastrous. But to neglect the racial factor as merely incidental [is] an error only less grave than to make it fundamental.” See James 1989:283.
32. It is difficult to assess whether James considered this a matter of rhetoric rather than of principle. Meeks (1996) discloses that the cultural and psychological explanations that James puts forward in the portrayal of Toussaint and Dessalines demonstrate that individuals do have room to act independently and autonomously, a line of argument that cannot be accommodated comfortably with Marxist orthodoxy.
In *The Black Jacobins* the role of the masses is another topic that receives ample attention. According to James, the French masses were a major factor in the success of the Haitian Revolution. In the Jacobin days, they had persuaded the National Convention to abolish slavery in all French colonies and to declare all men French citizens with equal rights. This decree, passed in early 1794, impelled L’Ouverture to pursue one of his most victorious military campaigns, which would eventually save the revolution (James 1989:137-44). To James, the interconnectedness of the French and the Saint-Domingue revolutions predominantly reflected international proletarian solidarity. The Paris masses had triumphantly demonstrated their support for the liberation struggle of their overseas compatriots. This “instinctive internationalism” of the working class, in James’s opinion, had to be the foundation of the “permanent revolution,” one of the credos of Trotskyism (Benn 2004:156-60).

In *The Black Jacobins* the Haitian Revolution serves as an example for communities on the brink of decolonization. According to the author the capacity of the Saint-Domingue slaves to defeat the most powerful European nations at the turn of the eighteenth century, to transform society and create an independent black state demonstrated the African people’s capability of self-government. James had written *The Black Jacobins* with Africa in mind as a result of his collaboration in the late 1930s with George Padmore, the then leading black communist and Pan-Africanist. Both actively participated in the management of the International African Service Bureau (IASB), which supported the democratic rights and liberties of African people. In 1963, James would add an appendix to *The Black Jacobins*, linking Toussaint L’Ouverture to Fidel Castro and acknowledging the importance of relating Caribbean history to developments within the region itself (James 1989:391-418).

*Wij slaven van Suriname* is not a scholarly achievement, although it bears some of the characteristics of a historical work, such as the use of primary and secondary sources and the employment of a Surinamese perspective. Yet De Kom never intended to address academia nor had as his prime motive to add to the existing body of scholarly literature on Suriname. It would therefore be beside the point to place *Wij slaven of Suriname* in the same category as *Capitalism and Slavery*, which was the elaboration of a PhD thesis defended in 1938 and was explicitly written to challenge and impress an academic audience. Owing to the efforts of historians, *Wij slaven van Suriname* continues to be included in scholarly debates, while the author himself never had these intentions. This remains a major source of confusion about De Kom’s book.

Neither can *Wij slaven van Suriname* satisfactorily be labeled a work of art and revolution if we compare it to *The Black Jacobins*. Admittedly, De Kom’s book is written in a most accurate and moving style and touches
on a number of significant ideological questions. Moreover, the author presumably\textsuperscript{33} would have agreed with James on a number of issues such as his findings on race and class, the historical role of revolutionary leaders, and international proletarian solidarity (except for the Trotskyist twist he would probably have objected to). From these points of view \textit{Wij slaven van Suriname} is more akin to \textit{The Black Jacobins} than to \textit{Capitalism and Slavery}. However, De Kom, in comparison with James, is not as adept at dealing with theory. In fact, his references to concepts and principles (mainly Marxist ones) are scarce and his corresponding reflections lack depth and sophistication (Scholten 1986:81).\textsuperscript{34}

Finally we have to take into account that \textit{Capitalism and Slavery} and \textit{The Black Jacobins} do not display the strong personal engagement of \textit{Wij slaven van Suriname}. Both James and Williams in their books refrain from letting private experiences interfere with the subject matter they examine. Differently from De Kom they consciously exclude references to autobiography and personal memory and stick to historical facts and scholarly argumentation as much as possible. Obviously for Williams this was part and parcel of the academic standards he as a PhD student had to meet. Most likely James made his choice on artistic as well as ideological grounds. Self-confidently drawing upon a variety of historical sources, theoretical presuppositions, and literary strategies, he shunned allusions to episodes and events that could distract from the “grand narrative” he wished to write.

The accuser’s role De Kom adopted in \textit{Wij slaven van Suriname}, the employment of a Surinamese perspective, the belief in a reconstruction of Surinamese society, and particularly the display of a strong personal engagement give his book the characteristics of a powerful political essay. De Kom wrote it to inspire, instruct, and encourage people to resist colonialism and to aim for national unity and social justice. Articulately written and containing many poignant anecdotes the text was meant to persuade its readers to embrace enlightened ideals and urge them to take action in concerted fashion.\textsuperscript{35} However, due to enduring colonial repression \textit{Wij slaven van Suriname}

33. Although this will remain a matter of speculation we have to assume that De Kom never read \textit{Capitalism and Slavery} nor \textit{The Black Jacobins}.
34. Hira (1982:vii-viii) aspires to make up for what he deems to be De Kom’s scholarly and theoretical deficiencies.
35. Interestingly Van Kempen (2003a:600-1), persuasively highlighting the essayical features of the book, poses the question of whether De Kom, in writing \textit{Wij slaven van Suriname}, intended to produce a work of literature on account of the many lyrical descriptions he inserted in the text (see also note 7). This fundamental question, which resembles attempts to label Karl Marx’s \textit{Das Kapital} a work of art (Wheen 2006:74-81), still awaits further examination. In my view De Kom was too much of a political activist to justify this assumption. He primarily considered his artistic gifts instruments to attain his socio-
remained underground for a considerable period. In Suriname it was only within a small circle of trade unionists and nationalists that its content was talked about.36

Following various clandestine editions and the 1971 official reprint of Wij slaven van Suriname the humanity of De Kom’s message and the integrity of his actions increasingly met with favorable reactions. The rediscovery of his book, together with wide publicity given to the author’s life of engagement and sacrifice, awakened a new generation of Surinamese students and encouraged them to adopt class-based views and to dissociate themselves from the ethnic stand of the established political parties. De Kom was posthumously heralded as a forerunner of Surinamese nationalism and commonly adopted as a symbol of anticolonial resistance.37 Consequently Wij slaven van Suriname became instrumental in stimulating debate on independence and social justice. It was the newly established Volkspartij (Peoples’ Party) and the Progressieve Arbeiders en Landbouwers Unie (Progressive Workers and Agrarians Union, PALU) – more than the Partij van de Nationalistische Republiek (Party of the Nationalistic Republic, PNR) which had existed since 1961 – which considered themselves the keepers and torchbearers of De Kom’s ideological legacy. However, both the Volkspartij and the PALU performed disappointingly in the parliamentary elections. In the 1970s they did not obtain a single seat in the Surinamese legislature.

Following the military takeover of 1980, representatives of a radical splinter group of the Peoples’ Party, named the Revolutionaire Volkspartij

36. Nationalist leader Eddy Bruma was one of the few Surinamese politicians of his generation who was demonstrably inspired by Wij slaven van Suriname. See Meel 1999:223-26 and Marshall 2003:23-24.

37. Otto Huiswoud (1893-1961), another illustrious Surinamer who identified with the black working class, did not appeal to this politically ambitious age group. In 1910, at the age of sixteen, the Surinamese-born Huiswoud emigrated to the United States, where he became one of the founding fathers of the U.S. Communist Party. An energetic organizer and accomplished networker, he built up an impressive record as a unionist, journalist, and agent, every inch a loyal contributor to the Communist International. Upon his first return to Suriname after his emigration, in 1941, he was arrested on the charge of communist agitation and kept imprisoned for nineteen months. In 1947 he moved to the Netherlands, where as a senior activist he held leading offices in the Surinamese nationalist movement, but lived in poor material conditions until his death. Although there are striking parallels between De Kom and Huiswoud – both blended nationalist and internationalist stances and fought for the well-being of their fellow countrymen – the latter did not publish a book, was a victim of American anticommunism rather than of Dutch colonialism, and did not suffer from the barbarity of the Nazis. On Huiswoud, see Van Enckevort 2000 and Moore Turner 2005.
(Revolutionary Peoples’ Party, RVP) and delegates of the PALU gained powerful positions in the Surinamese administration. It was on their initiative that De Kom was proclaimed a national hero by the military leadership who were increasingly harshly authoritarian. A tragic fate befell De Kom: never before was his inheritance publicly fostered and cultivated with such vigor, yet the intentions of his promoters were radically different from the ideals of the example they so admired. In search of a justification for their coup d’état, subsequent armed repression, human rights violations, and “anti-apanjath utopianism” (Dew 1993:67), the military paradoxically turned to an advocate of nonviolent resistance and an opponent of totalitarian control.

From these years on, but also after the restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1987, the image of De Kom was fixed in statues, his name linked to streets and squares, his life and works publicized in articles, books, and documentary films, both in Suriname and in the Netherlands. To date, the Nationale Democratische Partij (National Democratic Party, NDP), the civilian successor to a military-led mass movement in existence before 1987 which was chaired by the former commander of the Surinamese army, Desi Bouterse, has always declared itself the heir to De Kom’s ideas, notably those on nationalism, which according to the NDP are of an anticolonial and anti-ethnic nature. The anticolonial and multi-ethnic version of this nationalism particularly has supporters within the ranks of the Nieuw Front voor Democratie en Ontwikkeling (New Front for Democracy and Development, NWFO), a grand coalition of “old” political parties prominent before 1980. After 1987, these parties have ruled together, except for an NDP interlude between 1996 and 2000. In Front circles De Kom is well respected but unquestionably lacks the hero status he enjoys in the echelons of the NDP (Blanksma 2008:129-34).

Reading Meaningfully

According to David Scott a substantial number of works propagating anticolonialism manifest a distinctive narrative form: that of Romance. They are narratives of overcoming and vindication. Not only do they emphasize the glory of salvation and redemption, they also outline a utopian horizon toward which the emancipationist history is imagined to be moving. Over the

38. Apanjath refers to “the practice of ethnically based political parties playing upon prejudice, fear, and/or communal interests to gain support” (Dew 1993:65). The military set out to implement nationalist ideology in order to transcend ethnic parochialism. Primarily due to their Uzi-controlled absolutism they failed to connect with the interests and aspirations of the majority of the population.
years the story-form of Romance\textsuperscript{39} increasingly seems to have lost meaning. Undeniably in many former colonies the contemporary sociopolitical and socioeconomic configuration is radically at odds with the notions and expectations put forward by anticolonial intellectuals in previous decades.

Scott (2004:209-10) asserts that “after Bandung”\textsuperscript{40} people’s sense of time and prospects has altered significantly. There is no longer stable ground to consider the present a “mere transitory moment in an assured momentum from a wounded past to a future of salvation.” As anticolonial utopias in many societies have withered into postcolonial nightmares, “the mythos of Romance,” which celebrates “the epic momentum of successive historical events, the metaphysical movement from Darkness to Light, Bondage to Freedom, Despair to Triumph” (Scott 2004:70, 166), has unequivocally become obsolete. For Scott this ascertainment gives rise to an important question: how can we meaningfully deal with anticolonial works whose assumptions and predictions have failed to materialize?

A conscientious reading of C.L.R. James’s 1963 edition of The Black Jacobins leads Scott to distinguish a second narrative form: that of tragedy. He contends that this narrative enables scholars to reflect scrupulously upon subjectivity in moments of historical crisis, for instance Toussaint L’Ouverture’s ambivalent stand toward France during a crucial phase of the Haitian Revolution. His main argument is that for Toussaint, who denounced slavery, as well as a Saint-Domingue without France, modernity was a tragic condition, not a choice. It was a reality to which he was condemned and to which there were only tragic alternatives. In Scott’s opinion Toussaint, whose hesitancy and irresolution are considered to have eventually propelled his exile and early death in France, embodies the tragedy of colonial modernity, that is, the paradox, enigma, and illusiveness of colonial enlightenment.

Scott postulates that endorsing a tragic vision of freedom means questioning the teleological unfolding of history toward a determinate end, but also a history governed by a sovereign and omnisciently rational agent.

\textsuperscript{39} In an earlier study Scott dubbed this story-form the “Fanonian narrative of liberation” involving projects of anti-imperialist self-determination, political and economic nonalignment, and varieties of socialism aimed at the termination of colonial subordination and tutelage (see Scott 1999:197-208).

\textsuperscript{40} In Scott’s view (1999:221) “Bandung” represents “an historical form of the nation-statehood problematic that emerged as an ideological and political project with the nationalist movements for political independence across South Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, and for which the great conference at Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955, is iconic.” “After Bandung,” in the opinion of the author, largely converges with the end of the Cold War and the subsequent transformation of political relations from a bipolar into a unipolar world order under U.S. leadership. With respect to Jamaica, Scott (1999:196, 211, 221, 223) distinguishes different “After Bandung” moments.
For tragedy, history is not leading us anywhere in particular. And if the past is a wound, it is one that may not heal; it cannot be evaded or cleanly overcome. It doesn’t go away by an act of heroic agency. Nor is there a rational calculus that will guarantee the navigation of the contingencies that inevitably appear in the tragic hero’s path. History, in short, is not a series of neat resolutions; the future does not grow triumphantly out of the wicked turmoil of the past. (Scott 2004:166)

Alternatively, the narrative form of tragedy honors the contingent, paradoxical, unexpected, illogical, and unyielding in human affairs. Reading anti-colonial stories as tragedies of colonial enlightenment and as humanity’s struggles with the contingencies hampering social organization and nation creation offers elements of a critical view of the colonial past as well as of the postcolonial present. Tragedy implies the acknowledgment of the limitations of the human mind and the incompleteness of human action, but also the existence of a legacy that requires continuous renegotiation and readjustment in order to mold a viable future.

Relating *Wij slaven van Suriname* to the narrative forms of Romance and tragedy we can begin by affirming that De Kom’s work bears features of a story of vindication in that it addresses the accomplishments and capabilities of people neglected and treated as inferior for a considerable period. Reversing intellectual conventions, the author brings these individuals to the forefront of history and incorporates their thoughts, aspirations, and acts in the framework of their prolonged struggle for emancipation and justice. De Kom promotes a reconstruction of Surinamese society along the lines of class-consciousness, proletarian unity, and human solidarity, cautiously suggesting the redemption of his people to be the final stop on the one-way road to freedom.

Yet, despite this trust in a predestined future the tone and plot in *Wij slaven van Suriname* are neither victorious nor triumphant. The writer does not explicitly announce the demise of capitalism or the inescapable vanishing of colonialism. Nor can the reader – as might be expected in a work displaying the narrative form of Romance – trace corresponding predictions or anticipations presented in the form of a preponderant mantra, an “iron law,” or an alternative token of historical inevitability. At the same time it cannot be denied that De Kom longed for the dissolution of the then hegemonic world system. He assumed that this would pave the way for the “era of freedom.” But we deduce this particularly from supplementary sources, not so much from *Wij slaven van Suriname* itself. Summing up, we can infer that De Kom’s seminal work exposes traits of the narrative form of Romance, but only when we relate its core ideas to complementary documentary evidence.

Not unlike *The Black Jacobins*, however, *Wij slaven van Suriname* also contains elements of the narrative form of tragedy. In general this pertains
to the sad and dramatic history of the Surinamese people as delineated by the author. But more specifically, tragedy controlled De Kom’s personal life. If we focus on his activist career the epilogue of *Wij slaven van Suriname* is most telling. It accentuates De Kom’s failure to lay the foundations of a powerful labor organization in Suriname and to force the Dutch to take initiatives aiming at their retreat from the colony. In this sober tale of misfortune and distress the constraints are highlighted De Kom had to deal with. The final paragraph in particular moves the reader since he, contrary to the author at the time of writing, knows that De Kom’s ardent wish to return to his native country was in vain. He would never be offered a second chance to visit Suriname and take part in a remodeling of its society.

On the level of migrant experiences – not an inherent part of *Wij slaven van Suriname*, but an important biographical layer underlying it – we observe that the contingent and unexpected definitely entered De Kom’s life following his decision to move to the Netherlands in 1920. Most likely he wanted to extend his intellectual horizon and raise his standard of living. His arrival in the Netherlands marked the beginning of an onerous and sometimes outright confusing stay.41 Before World War II there were only few Surinamers of lower-class origins residing in the Netherlands. To perform as a political activist and make a living De Kom needed to accept jobs as a clerk, a bookkeeper, and a business agent. After his expulsion from Suriname he increasingly had to protect himself from the onslaught of political and racial prejudice, and he was cut off from regular means of subsistence. His overseas stay took another significant turn during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, when he resolved to join the Dutch resistance movement against the German oppressor. Notably this decision would seal his tragic fate.42

If we spotlight the theme of modernity we have to acknowledge that for De Kom modernity was a condition (as it was for the majority of his contemporaries) and a choice (he embraced ideals represented by Enlightenment-inspired philosophers like Marx and Engels). In *Wij slaven van Suriname* the tragedy of colonial enlightenment is chiefly manifest in De Kom’s commitment to class allegiance and his underestimation of the impact of ethnic cleavages on power relations. This stance, however, not only characterized De Kom, but the early pre-independence Caribbean Left in general (Mars 2003:68). There is some irony in De Kom’s association with this movement though. Mainly because of its lack of dated elaborations on basic beliefs *Wij slaven van Suriname*, like *The Black Jacobins*, is still as captivating, appealing, and thought-provoking today as it must have been seventy-five years ago.

41. Perceptively discussed in the documentary film *Wij slaven van Suriname*.
42. De Kom as a transnational hero is examined in Meel 2008:257-61.
CONCLUSION

*Wij slaven van Suriname* is an imaginative and persuasive work on resistance and a true specimen of “the empire writes back.” De Kom wrote it with two goals in mind: to denounce Dutch colonialism using historical sources and private experiences as references and to awaken his fellow countrymen to begin decolonization and nation building. He wished to impress on his metropolitan audience the wrongs imposed by the colonial authorities in Suriname and the prolonged effects of their rule on the mental predisposition of the colonized. To his Surinamese contemporaries, particularly to his political associates, he wanted to convey a message of hope and solidarity and to provide the ideological tools to establish a new society.

De Kom was a nationalist in the sense that he advocated political independence and economic self-reliance for Suriname. At the same time, he was an internationalist, favoring class allegiance, proletarian solidarity, and the crushing of imperialism across states and nations. Before De Kom both the nationalist and the internationalist option had not been dealt with seriously by a Surinamese author, activist, or politician. Accordingly, De Kom has to be linked with the formative phase of Surinamese decolonization. In his book he connects the contestation of the existing colonial model to the prudent opening up of postcolonial avenues.

Comparing *Wij slaven van Suriname* to *Capitalism and Slavery* and *The Black Jacobins* demonstrates, in particular, the uniqueness of De Kom’s forceful political essay. As a writer on Caribbean history De Kom is simply outclassed by Eric Williams and as a revolutionary and a man of letters he is no match for C.L.R. James. However, these qualifications too easily disregard the author’s intentions and unjustly obscure the complexity and versatility of this work. It is the combination of the accuser’s role De Kom adopted, the employment of a Surinamese perspective, the belief in a reconstruction of Surinamese society, and the display of a strong personal engagement that sets *Wij slaven van Suriname* apart from the classics produced by Williams and James. These features give the book its irrefutable significance, for Surinamese and Caribbean studies.

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Commenting on cultural imperialism under European colonialism, Frantz Fanon (1990:39) remarked that “The settler makes history; his life is an epoch, an Odyssey.” In Fanon’s analysis the settler’s sense of history derived from the history of the “mother country,” rather than the history of the colony that he or she inhabited. But history did not stop here: the reference to the Odyssey reminds us that behind the modern colonial metropolis was a fictional line of descent reaching back to a Greco-Roman cradle, such that the European settler could lay claim to an even more ancient cultural inheritance. The two books examined here make short work of these classical imperial fictions; O’Meally demonstrates how Romare Bearden’s collages of the Odyssey collaborate with Homer, jazz style, to produce an epic that Black America can recognize as its own. If the voyage of Odysseus is sometimes taken to symbolize the migration of ancient Greek civilization toward the West, Barbara Goff and Michael Simpson interject the troubled figure of Oedipus, who plays Poseidon to the settler’s Odyssey, disrupting the voyage and confusing the trajectory (p. 268).

Both studies are timely and speak to a wave of recent research on Black Classicism – an examination of the work to which the classical tradition has been put in Africa and the African diaspora, ranging from the hegemonic appropriation of Classics by colonizers and slave-owners to the use of Classics as an ironic counterdiscourse that writes back to racism and impe-
rialism, or as a source of mythopoiesis in the formation of modern black identity.1

The two works reviewed here propose different but complementary models of Black Classicism: Oedipal struggle and Odyssean improvised blues narrative. In *Crossroads in the Black Aegean*, Goff and Simpson examine the dramatization of postcolonial identity as it emerges through adaptations of the Theban plays (*Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*) by the Athenian tragedian Sophocles. Through an intricate discussion of six plays and one epic poem from Africa and the African diaspora, they argue that these works challenge European culture’s smooth colonial transmission of itself from classical antiquity to modernity by substituting a model of violent transmission (p. 4) based on the incestuous family ties of Oedipus and Antigone, at once father and daughter and brother and sister. In one of many arresting statements, they claim that, in the works surveyed, “the wretched of the earth have adopted Oedipus and Antigone to make a family and a working identity” (p. 19). Unpacking this counterintuitive claim will give readers a good sense of the scope and ambition of the work.

As his father’s killer, mother’s lover, and the genitor of his own siblings, Oedipus becomes, in Goff and Simpson’s study, a symbol of the complex relationships occasioned by colonialism. The incest and endogamy that haunt this myth serve as “a sign for the forced amalgamation of cultures” under plantation slavery in the Americas (p. 9), while this incestuous endogamy also speaks to the inextricably intimate relationship between colonial and postcolonial societies in Africa and the African diaspora (p. 6). Throughout the study the shorthand term “dramas of African descent” is used to refer to plays that originate in different locations in the African diaspora, but this term does double duty, since all plays use the myths of Oedipus and Antigone to reflect on how the violent incursions of slavery and colonialism interrupt literal lines of “descent” in Africa.

Goff and Simpson are aware that positing Oedipus and Antigone as explanatory figures for postcolonial identity is a provocative move. Both figures might appear to carry the risk of colonial regression, reaffirming a Western order of knowledge and trapping postcolonial productions in unequal dialogue with the classical past. The way in which they address and negate this objection is subtle and compelling and deserves to become an important discussion for all scholars engaged in thinking about the uses of Greco-Roman classical texts in postcolonial literature (pp. 19-77). First, they reject the idea that Greek tragedy, and ancient Greek civilization more generally, is a European possession. Instead, they argue that European imperialism deter-

ritorialized Greece as well as Africa (p. 49), and that African playwrights and playwrights of African descent recognize this distance from Europe in their postcolonial locations: “in proportion as Africa and ancient Greece are both distant from that modern metropolis, they are close to one another” (p. 31). What is more, Goff and Simpson remind us that, far from the exclusion of Africa and its diaspora from Greco-Roman civilization that was promulgated by colonial ideology, classical Greek drama was part of the inheritance of many of the playwrights whom they study (p. 35). What is more, evoking Wole Soyinka’s contention in *Myth, Literature and the African World*, they point out that in several of these plays the playwrights exploit the affinity between African ritual and the ritual of Greek drama, whether Yoruba ritual in Ola Rotimi’s *The Gods Are Not to Blame* (1974), or “Africa-derived traditions of the Pentecostal church” (p. 182) in Lee Breuer’s *The Gospel at Colonus* (1993).

The dramatic works discussed in this book are as follows: *The Gods Are Not to Blame* by the Nigerian playwright Ola Rotimi (Chapter 2); *The Darker Face of the Earth* by the African American playwright Rita Dove (Chapter 3); *The Gospel at Colonus* by American writer and director Lee Breuer (Chapter 4); *Odale’s Choice*, by the Barbadian poet, scholar, and playwright Kamau Brathwaite (Chapter 5); *The Island* by the South African playwrights Athol Fugard, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona (Chapter 6); and Nigerian playwright Femi Osofisan’s *Tegonni: An African Antigone* (Chapter 7). Each play is accorded a careful critical analysis that takes into account its performance history and issues of audience and reception as well as the circulation of published play-texts. Although the chapters stand as insightful studies of the respective plays in their own right, the concentration on the adaptation and transposition of the Oedipus myth in the theater of the African diaspora ensures a high degree of cohesion: two plays (Rotimi’s and Dove’s) are examined as adaptations of Sophocles’s *Oedipus Tyrannus* and Breuer’s play as an adaptation of *Oedipus at Colonus*, while *Odale’s Choice*, *The Island*, and *Tegonni* are analyzed as adaptations of *Antigone*.

This Oedipal schema is complicated by the fact that Goff and Simpson appeal to the concept of “the Black Aegean” as a parallel interpretive framework for their study. In fact, there are two separate theses here that cleave along the lines of title and subtitle. The title, “Crossroads in the Black Aegean,” hints at dialogue with Paul Gilroy’s model of the Black Atlantic (1993), while the subtitle, “Oedipus, Antigone, and Dramas of the African Diaspora,” designates a more specific enquiry into the appropriation of Sophocles’s plays in dramas of African descent. Both theses converge in the fifth chapter, which features a discussion of an adaptation of Sophocles’s *Antigone* by Kamau Brathwaite written and performed in Ghana in 1962 and subsequently re-performed in the Caribbean. This chapter juxtaposes *Odale’s Choice* with Derek Walcott’s epic poem *Omeros* (1990) and asks
how Brathwaite’s conception of the Caribbean as a locus of creolization might help to clarify processes of cultural transmission between Africa and the Caribbean, Africa and Europe, and the Caribbean and Europe. In contrast to the antagonistic model of Oedipal descent that features in the Oedipus and Antigone plays, Walcott’s model of Caribbean identity in *Omeros* is seen to involve a reworking of the Oedipus complex in which the son (the narrator of Walcott’s poem) adopts a multiplicity of fathers (p. 268). This argument is a welcome addition to scholarship on Walcott, enriching the Bloomian model of the anxiety of influence, recently applied to *Omeros* by Line Henriksen (2006).

Reconciling the complex, multidirectional geometry of the Black Aegean proposed here – itself a supplement to the Black Atlantic – with Goff and Simpson’s Oedipal framework requires considerable intellectual effort. As they explain, they envisage the Black Aegean as a further zone within the Black Atlantic (p. 38): “This we postulate as a triangle, projected from within the Black Atlantic and symmetrical with it, but with its third point radiating eastwards so that it links Africa to ancient Greece and Asia Minor as well as to the imperial West” (pp. 38-39). The advantage of hypothesizing the Black Aegean is that it provides a spatial metaphor for mapping “the trade in the representations of ancient Greece, undertaken by the colonizers … and by the formerly colonized” (p. 39). It is crucial to the argument of this work that readers accept not only the idea of the Black Aegean, but also the idea that the Oedipal paradigm is one of the dominant models of exchange within the cultural zone of the Black Aegean.

This is no mean interpretative and argumentative feat, and Goff and Simpson pull it off – for the most part extremely convincingly. However, it is of the nature of a complex and ambitious study like this, which is often densely argued, that the argument occasionally overwhelms with its complexity. There were a few passages that I read several times without ever feeling confident that I had fully grasped the point being made. An example is the complex argument about the vertices of the triangle of the Black Aegean (pp. 261-62). However, in spite of dense formulations like this I found the discussion immensely rewarding and frequently groundbreaking.

In terms of the work’s theoretical orientation, Goff and Simpson take their bearings from all over the Black Aegean. They are mindful of African scholarship, Caribbean scholarship, and European scholarship, while observing that these traditions are not exclusive and are often interrelated. In the course of their argument they bring Fanon’s Oedipus into dialogue with the Oedipuses of Harold Bloom (1973), and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1983), and they recognize Caribbean and African playwrights, poets, novelists, and scholars as an important source of theory. Nor is their Oedipal paradigm one-way, since the plays of African descent “project their own cultural
context into the Greek play,” leading to a role reversal in which any hierarchy between “original” and “adaptation” is obviated (p. 66).

By any standards this is a remarkable book that speaks powerfully to several different disciplines: (Anglophone) African literature and drama, African American literature and drama, (Anglophone) Caribbean literature and drama, Classics (both Greek tragedy and classical reception), theater studies, and cultural studies. In effect readers get two complementary and mutually reinforcing theses in one book; both theses represent vital contributions to the study of the Black Atlantic, Black Classicism, and the adaptation of the Oedipus myth in literature and drama of African descent.

If Oedipus is an ominous icon for traffic with the past, the hero of the second book under review would seem to be a much safer prospect. The Odyssey is a well-established motif in the literature of the Caribbean and North America, from Aimé Césaire’s Cahier d’un retour au pays natal and Ralph Ellington’s Invisible Man to Derek Walcott’s Omeros and The Odyssey: A Stage Version. And yet the figure of Odysseus also comes with its own complications. Not only is he a notorious trickster who was often portrayed negatively in subsequent Greek literature, but it is also hard to make the transition from the Greek culture hero of Homer’s epic to postcolonial cultural hero, since Homer’s Odysseus seems often to be on the side of the colonizer, not least in his encounter with the Cyclops in Book 9 of the Odyssey (see Hall 2008:89-100).

Robert O’Meally’s Romare Bearden: A Black Odyssey steps into the middle of this debate. The primary subject of the work are the twenty “Odysseus” collages by the African-American artist Romare Bearden, first displayed at the Cordier & Ekstrom Gallery in New York in 1977. The occasion for O’Meally’s book was a commemorative exhibition of the collages, “Romare Bearden: A Black Odyssey,” thirty years on, at the DC Moore Gallery in New York (November 13, 2007-January 5, 2008). This exquisitely produced book, which features high-quality illustrations of Bearden’s collages, watercolors, and other art works, is at once a coffee-table piece and a serious contribution to both the study of Bearden’s work and the field of black classicism. As the first book-length, critical study of Bearden’s “Odysseus” collages, it is no exaggeration to say that O’Meally’s book is an important landmark in the critical literature on Bearden and the reception of the Odyssey in the Americas.

The book steers an even course between the expectations of specialist readers and the needs of general readers. The introductory essay provides important contextual information about Bearden’s background, situating him in the artistic and intellectual milieu of the Harlem Renaissance and explaining the influence of Picasso and Matisse on his development as an artist. Here O’Meally also relates Bearden’s engagement with Homer’s Odyssey to Black Classicism and the works of Frank Snowden and Martin Bernal (Bernal
There follow short essays on each of the 20 “Odysseus” collages and their corresponding watercolors, including three watercolors for which no collages exist. O’Meally explains that, following the success of the exhibition of the collages in 1977, Bearden reproduced them as watercolors (p. 11). Each essay is accompanied by a reproduction of the collage and watercolor in question and draws the reader’s attention to points of aesthetic interest, the Homeric context, pertinent African-American contexts, and other interpretative avenues. In his analysis of each individual collage, O’Meally breaks down Bearden’s method, explaining the division of the canvases into quadrants, inspired by cubism, and demonstrating the symbolism of the scissored silhouettes as “figures in black.” In addition, O’Meally shows how color is part of the collages’ aesthetic meaning, with “dissonant combinations” contributing to surface tension and depth of field (p. 32). Reading O’Meally’s work in conjunction with Bearden’s illustrations is akin to strolling through a virtual exhibition with an enchanting guide.

O’Meally brings his background as an authority on jazz to his interpretation of Bearden’s dialogue with Homer, and gives us Bearden collaborating with Homer “like section-mates in a jazz band” (p. 23). Homer’s *Odyssey* was undoubtedly a rich source of tropes for African American artists in the Harlem Renaissance, but O’Meally’s analysis also throws up plenty of Black tropes that Homeric scholars might profitably take back to their study of the *Odyssey*. For instance, I found O’Meally’s statement about Bearden’s conception of Homer as “a now-sad and now-funny blues narrative: a tale of loss and renewal wherein the improvising hero struggles to prevail against life’s rush of changes” (p. 56) a valuable and thought-provoking contribution to the play of genres and moods in Homer’s *Odyssey.* Nor in my view has anyone diagnosed the condition of the women abandoned by Odysseus better: “in Bearden’s hands, she [Nausicaa], like Circe, is also one of the epic’s women left behind with the blues” (p. 86). Then there are the insightful explanations of Poseidon’s role in the poem, as envisioned by Bearden, in terms of the phenomenon of “antagonistic cooperation” in jazz: “the Sea-God’s insatiable anger and power press Odysseus to new levels of improvisation such that, paradoxically, the god who gives him the deepest blues is the very one without whom Odysseus’ greatest acts of heroic valor could never have occurred” (p. 14).

In Walcott’s *Omeros*, when the narrator quips to Omeros that “Master, I was the freshest of all your readers” (1990:283), one feels like adding “after Bearden” – a point that Walcott would probably concede, given his admission that Bearden’s *Odyssey* collages may have been one of the influences behind *Omeros* (1997:229). Oddly, Walcott does not feature in O’Meally’s discussion, in spite of the fact that Walcott has spoken passionately about the Odysseus collages. In fact, “the Caribbean dimension” of Bearden’s poetry, to borrow the phrase from Sally Price and Richard Price, is not at all clear in O’Meally’s discussion (Price & Price 2006). Granted, the extent to which
the Caribbean is a significant context for the “Odysseus” collages is an open question. O’Meally suggests that in most of the collages the landscapes resemble images of Africa. It is only in his discussion of the last collage (in terms of narrative chronology), “Odysseus and Penelope Reunited,” that O’Meally appeals to the Caribbean as a cultural crossroads that helps to make sense of the “hodge-podge” of styles in Bearden’s depiction of Odysseus and Penelope enthroned in one panel, alongside the port, city walls, and palace of Ithaca:

Nor should we forget that when Bearden made these collages he frequently flew to his home in St. Martin; indeed, the Ithaca of these collages – with its tropical trees and airy mix of European, African, and Amerindian influences, ancient and modern – has the air of a contemporary Caribbean port (p. 104).

Arguably the Caribbean is a more pervasive presence in the Odysseus collages, which may even be construed as being set in the Caribbean (see Price & Price 2006:24). In this context it is instructive to compare the Prices’ discussion of the collage “The Sea Nymph” (1977) with O’Meally’s. O’Meally pursues the idea that Bearden’s “Odysseus” collages are a “sort of parable of black America (as well as a universal statement),” and suggests that this particular collage, which treats Odysseus’s rescue from the ocean floor by the sea nymph Ino (based on Odyssee Book 5 ll. 333-53), “may ask us to consider where the black communities of the United States would be without the selfless rescuers like Ino – mothers, grandmothers, … all those who make it their business to dive in after the ones who are sinking down” (pp. 82-84). Conversely, citing Walcott, the Prices use this collage to exemplify the influence of the Caribbean on Bearden’s art, particularly the colors of the Caribbean archipelago (Price & Price 2006:96-97). Both can be right, providing we allow an enlargement of the African American or black American experience to include African and black experience in the Caribbean, as part of the broader geographical region of the Americas.

In fact, building on O’Meally’s excellent study, future studies would gain from using Caribbean tropes to further illuminate Bearden’s approach to the Odyssey. For example, in fifteen of the twenty collages the sea, depicted in various shades of blue, is a powerful narrative thread. Even in those collages where the sea is not obviously present, the blue of the sky acts as a memory cue reminding the viewer of the ever-present sea – “the oncoming cobalt sea” in the words of the Jamaican poet John Figueroa (1976:81). It would be extremely fruitful to apply Kamau Brathwaite’s dictum, referring to the cultural unity of a geographically scattered and culturally diverse Caribbean, that “the unity is submarine” to Bearden’s “Odysseus” collages (Brathwaite 1975:1; see Dash 2001 and Jones 1995).
For Goff and Simpson’s study the way out of the Oedipal nightmare of postcolonial history is to adopt lots of different fathers, rather than fighting them. This is not so different from the methodology of Bearden’s collages, in which Oedipus and Odysseus, Africa, Europe, and the Americas are different layers in the same story.

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Although an important debate continues about the concept itself, the use of “the Atlantic” has embedded itself in scholarly vernacular. The scholarly output directly spawned by an engagement with the concept continues apace. That ocean, and the peoples who lived and traded along its edges, and who finally moved across it, have provided an important geographical focus for some major reconsiderations of modern history. Prompted by the Macinnes/Williamson volume, I returned to my own undergraduate and graduate notes and essays from courses on Stuart Britain: the Atlantic was totally absent – not even present as a distant speck on our intellectual map. We studied, and debated, the formal histories of migrations to the Americas (i.e. European migrations) but there was no mention of Africa or Africans. And no sense was conveyed that the European engagement with the Americas (in their totality – as opposed to North America) was a two-way, mutual force: that the European world was influenced, indeed shaped in many critical regards, by the Americas: by the land, the products, the peoples, and by the markets of that hemisphere. At its most obvious in the ebb and flow of peoples, even that eluded the historians I encountered as a student. It was as if we were talking about a different cosmos; few moved beyond the conventions of European migrations westwards and little attention was paid to that most dominant of migrations – the enforced African migrations to the Americas.

Today, it all looks so different. Moreover it looks all the more important the more we know about it. Nor is it any longer satisfactory merely to think of this as a matter of demography. The cultural patterns – ideas, imagin-
ings, aspirations, and its writing – that flowed from the engagement with the Americas were varied and profound. This collection of essays confirms and advances that simple point. It was, as the editors state early on, an impact that was pervasive as well as material. The ambition and achievement of this volume is that it rejects an older insularity of approach and outlook to produce an integrated collection that provides a genuine re-evaluation of the shaping of the Stuart World.

Its range is impressive – from visionaries, schooled in new, distinctive Scottish learning, and anxious to create a new civility and learning on both sides of the Atlantic, through to the more mundane mechanics of British intrusions into the Spanish Americas. There are, en route, a string of subtle, revisionary essays, none more interesting than the one by Steve Pincus on the Revolution of 1688 in the context of European Catholicism. But it is the ebb and flow of ideas and cultural influences, east and west, across the Atlantic, that emerges as a dominant theme in the overall collection (and spelled out here in Section Two, “Transferring Texts and Traditions”). On the back of the more obvious commercial and demographic movements, there was a less immediately obvious, but no less influential, transfer of books and learning, religious debate and philosophical speculations. And in the ferment of political and biblical debate at the heart of the British seventeenth-century revolution there lay a growing awareness, argued most forcefully by North American thinkers, that America had its place in what the editors call a “divine master plan.”

Yet it remains true that the clearest and most obvious model of transatlantic influence was the commercial and economic. The lands of the Americas, tapped by local or imported, free or enslaved labor yielded commercial bounty that seduced people who were inclined to trade and venture overseas. The celebrated Scottish commercial presence of the eighteenth century emerged from the example of (and in collaboration with) the Dutch pioneering trading systems in the seventeenth century. The diversity of commercial and trading settlements (and the range of European settlements) varied greatly, and the degree to which geophysical circumstances determined those differences needs to be explored further. We know that Boston developed a very different polity and commerce from Barbados. But what is interesting is the manner in which these, and other, nodal points of seventeenth-century development interacted with each other, and came, in time, to sustain and need each other: the flow of goods and produce between and within the settlements of the Americas was as striking and important as the better-known movements east and west across the Atlantic.

Running through the riches on display in these essays, major themes emerge, such as the nature of relations (which differed across time) between European settlers (or traders) and the indigenous people throughout the Americas. Attitudes to the indigenous peoples ranged from the violently
aggressive to the benign and humane. But what happened to those people became the stuff of national propaganda by the end of the period, as each country boasted its own colonial virtues over the vices and shortcomings of its European rivals in the Americas. Nevertheless, whatever theories and ideals flowed from European intellectual debate, the reality, on the ground, in the islands or on the American mainland, soon differed sharply. It is true that disease accounted for the worst onslaughts on the peoples of the Americas, but it is hard to avoid the brutality visited on them by Europeans of all stripes and religions.

Among the most assertive sections of this collection is the engagement with Ireland, and Ireland’s role in the broader Atlantic story. The editors are especially at pains to challenge what they see to be dominant trends in the modern historiography – particularly the sense that Ireland was a laboratory for subsequent British colonialism. I remain unsure how far it is possible, as they see it, “to disengage colonialism as a feature of governance from plantations as a form of settlement” (p. 20). Still, their caution – supported by the essays – about the study of Ireland in the broader history of Atlantic settlement is important and well made.

Here, and elsewhere, the volume addresses specific issues within the broader study of colonial settlement and trade. Time and again I was struck by the influence of climate and geophysical conditions as a critical determining factor in the nature of colonial settlement and government. The harsher (more tropical) the setting, the harsher the nature of work (and survival) and the greater the reliance on enslaved (rather than free or indentured) labor. Yet even that model has exceptions (the early days in Barbados, for example). But whenever major tropical or semitropical export staples were developed, the nature of production shifted towards the plantation – and to Africa for labor. The rise of tobacco and sugar swiftly relegated ideals of moderate treatment (of labor), of considerate governance – and indeed of humane sensibility. When brutal exploitation of land and peoples yielded such well-being to the colonizers, who, until the late eighteenth century, cared too much? Worries about the grim stories from the enslaved Americas (and from the slave ships) seemed merely incidental when set against the thriving economies of the colonial powers. Nonetheless, the caution, regularly repeated by the editors, about the recent over-emphasis on a restricted view of plantation settlement is important.

And so too is their reminder of the continuing power and influence of both Spain and the Netherlands. Although it has been customary to think of Spain as a greatly reduced power by, say, the mid-seventeenth century (compared to the emergence of British power in the Americas), that view has serious flaws. It is no accident for example that, on the eve of abolition in 1807, the British were shipping substantial numbers of their enslaved Africans via their own islands and onto Spanish settlements in the Americas. Similarly,
the Netherlands cast a long shadow across the history of Atlantic trade and settlement (and much further afield as well of course). Here, however, we have an important assertion of the role of cooperation and mutual benefits between the Dutch and the British (and others as well). Though rivals (and at times enemies), the British and Dutch often helped and benefited from each others’ experience in trade and finance.

One important group to emerge from these scholarly contributions is the Scots. Their networks, theologies, education, and intellectual traditions infiltrated the world of the seventeenth-century Atlantic. A century later, they had formed a critical elite on both sides of that ocean. Long before the Act of Union, the Scots had infiltrated the wider European and Atlantic trading systems with their own commercial and personal networks, which effectively formed a web linking the Caribbean to the Baltic. Here was a particular version of the Stuart world – appropriate enough when we recall who the Stuarts were and where they came from.

Kenneth Morgan had established himself as a major historian of Britain’s Atlantic empire. His earlier work on the history of British trade, on Bristol and on Quakers, in books and seminal articles has provided rich material for all scholars of the Atlantic community and economy. Here, in Slavery and the British Empire, he deploys his usual skills – of precise exposition based on a deep understanding of the arguments (themselves located in his mastery of archives on both sides of the Atlantic). The end result is an excellent volume – and not one easily managed. It is concise (on topics that are not easily presented in concise form), and well-written, and it has something new to say on all his chosen themes. It is an unusual book in that it is important both for scholars in the field and especially the students trying to make sense of the history of British slavery. Morgan has given shape and coherence to material that has expanded at an extraordinary rate over the past twenty years, and yet he never trivializes in the process of writing a compact study. It is a book which manages to be both a survey of the wider scholarly field, and an original argument in itself. It confirms, yet again, the centrality of slavery and the slave trade in the shaping of the history of the Atlantic world.

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As one might expect from David Brion Davis, a foremost historian of slavery whose works have always been characterized by enormous erudition and a capacious awareness of the varieties of slavery over space and time, *Inhuman Bondage* is a superb summary of a vast body of literature in one of the most dynamic fields in all of historical scholarship. Beginning with slavery in antiquity, Davis adeptly summarizes principal trends in the historiography of slavery and antislavery (the abolition of slavery forms almost as important a theme in this work as the operations of slavery itself) until the end of the American Civil War.

Readers of his previous works will not be surprised at his particular emphases. He stresses the cultural origins of slavery as beginning in ancient attempts to consider some categories of people not fully human. He takes issue with Orlando Patterson’s idea of slavery as a form of social death insofar as Davis considers that defining people as property, akin to how animals are defined as property, is of central rather than secondary importance in what makes slavery a distinctive social and legal institution. The dehumanization of slaves and the ensuing equation of slaves with property is thus a consequence of enslavement more than a cause. Throughout this book, Davis insists upon the close relationship between bestialization and enslavement. For Davis, what is central about slaves is not that they are people without honor but that they are people whose humanity is never recognized fully. In this respect, he takes an Aristotelian view of the constitution of enslavement. He locates much of the ideological justification for slavery within religion, paying more attention than one might expect to the curious story of the curse of Ham and to the role both Judaism and Islam played in the ideological jus-
tification of slavery. Culture rather than economics is at the forefront of his explanations for how enslavement in the Americas came to be in its historically recognizable form.

The origins of this book lie in a summer lecture series Davis gave to New York secondary teachers. Its gestation explains the organization of the book and its purpose. Davis is concerned throughout Inhuman Bondage not only with providing teachers and general readers with a first-rate survey of slavery but also with means whereby teachers can show students the continuing relevance of the history of slavery for understanding contemporary issues, mainly in the United States. Davis’s linkages between past enslavement and contemporary concerns is adroit and well balanced but does give a somewhat didactic tone to the work, which is not surprising given that each chapter is clearly an expanded written-down version of a spoken lecture. Occasionally, for example, Davis takes readers aside for the sort of digression, drawn from his own experiences from 1945 onwards, common in the classroom but not often employed in academic writing. These digressions, however, are extremely effective in placing slavery in a global perspective.

The origins of the book also explain the disproportionate focus in the book that is given to slavery in colonial North America and the United States. Davis is concerned with the way in which slavery became a problem, and remains a problem, in that country. For readers of this journal, the attention given to slavery and its abolition in the United States makes the subtitle of the book somewhat misleading. Slavery in the West Indies is hardly ignored (it takes up half of two chapters, with the Haitian Revolution getting due prominence) and Davis is at pains to insist that slavery not only has deep roots in antiquity, making it important to evaluate the variety of slavery over time, but was also crucial in the development of Atlantic societies, making it vital to examine slavery over space. But the heart of the book is concerned with slavery in the United States and the references to the West Indies tend to point up either ways in which slavery in the United States was similar to slavery elsewhere or, more often, to demonstrate the exceptional nature of American enslavement. The purpose is less to treat slavery in the New World in its entirety (which would necessitate both more attention to the British and French West Indies and also more material on slavery in its distinctly African phase) than to place slavery in the mid-nineteenth-century South in larger context. The book is temporally and spatially limited, with the slave culture of the antebellum South treated as normative and West Indian slave culture as largely exceptional rather than, as we might have it, the other way around.

One can see why this approach would work as a text for upper-level high school and freshman university students in the United States – indeed, Inhuman Bondage is a perfect text for introductory classes on North American slavery. But the American focus of the book makes it not work so well as a
textbook on slavery in general and on slavery in the West Indies in particular. Certainly, the French and Haitian revolutions and Latin American independence might get more attention than the American Revolution as transformative events in the history of New World slavery if all areas of the New World were treated equally. The political implosion of Cuba in the 1860s which helped precipitate abolition in that island might also draw the sort of attention that Davis devotes to the American Civil War. Finally, more attention to the West Indies and especially to slave revolts in the region would draw attention away from the nineteenth century, where slaves were Creoles and Christian, to the eighteenth century, when enslaved people were African and seldom Christian. Tackey’s revolt in Jamaica in 1760 is not mentioned in the text, despite being far more serious in its implications than any revolt in the United States, and the bloody Berbice rebellion of 1762-1764, the first instance of a slave rebellion in the New World meeting with any degree of success, is noted only in passing. In short, while this is, as one would expect, an indispensable guide to American slavery, it is not quite the survey of slavery in the New World, especially the West Indies, that we need.


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In the United States, the Civil War, Jim Crow segregation, and a lengthy Civil Rights movement ensured race and slavery a prominent place in historical investigation. This was not so for France, where geographic separation from its slave plantations and the silencing effect of French republicanism on race more generally, coupled with a narrow conception of the boundaries of French history, rendered these issues out of sight and out of mind. French historians looking beyond the Hexagon have given far greater attention to France’s Second Empire and the trauma of decolonization than to its slave-holding past (Sepinwall forthcoming). Since the 1990s, a modest but grow-
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ing literature on race and slavery has begun to disrupt the silence on these issues in the French national narrative.1

In the wake of France’s 1989 bicentennial, political philosopher Louis Sala-Molins, a Catalonian-born professor emeritus at the University of Toulouse and Paris-Sorbonne, was one of a small number of French scholars to challenge the narrow perspective on the Revolution and Enlightenment that informed commemorations in France and abroad. His 1992 book, Les Misères des lumières: Sous la raison, l’outrage, now translated into English as The Dark Side of the Light: Slavery and the French Enlightenment, is the sequel to his better-known work on the French slave code, published in 1987 as Le Code noir, ou le calvaire de Canaan. Repealed only during the Second Republic, the Code noir remained the institutional basis of French slavery for some 163 years, and few scholars have examined its provisions as deeply as Sala-Molins.

Compared to this earlier book, The Dark Side of the Light is less a traditional work of scholarship than a riposte in the public struggle over the substance, meaning, and memory of the French past. A product of its historical moment, it is a biting critique of the refusal of the bicentennial’s organizers to confront the legacies of slavery and colonialism in France and its former colonies or to recognize existing knowledge about the philosophes and their Colonial Enlightenment. Here Sala-Molins begins with the work of Michèle Duchet (1971), though he might have pointed to the same willful dismissal that William Cohen’s 1980 French Encounter with Africans received when it was translated into French the following year and contemptuously reviewed in Le Monde.

In delivering this volley, Sala-Molins’s presentist narrative devices may jar some readers upon first reading. At their core, however, the three essays pose basic questions that have yet to be adequately addressed by French scholars.

“Condorcet, ‘Lamenting’” is simultaneously a critique of the marquis de Condorcet’s Réflexions de l’esclavage des nègres (1788) and a protest of Condorcet’s “Pantheonization” in December 1989. The argument is clearly put: all of France’s Enlightenment thinkers, “the major as well as the minor ones, Raynal and Diderot included – failed to interrogate colonial conquest and domination” (p. 11). Adopting the voice of the enslaved, Sala-Molins asks what, in the end, did the “rhetoric and anathemas” of Condorcet or Raynal yield? Whereas celebrants pointed to the philosophes’ laudable and numerous condemnations of slavery, Sala-Molins saw only lamenting, for none of the philosophes had proposed significant modifications to or abrogation of the Code noir as a legal institution. In the end, he concludes, the

philosophes’ “struggle for the Negro as a human being […] smacks too much of sugar” (p. 52).

In “The Market of Equals,” Sala-Molins reads the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen “with the Code noir in hand” and notices another basic truth hidden in the bicentennial’s misremembering. As the words “All French men” became “All men,” and “free and equal in rights” became “free and equal” in the bicentennial’s reading of Article 1, public memory invested the Declaration with a universalism wholly absent from the original. Yet, as Sala-Molins explains, the slave did not become the citizen of the Republic, because the slave was never a subject of the king, but only what the Code noir had stipulated a century before – chattel. Slaves were indeed present in the Declaration – in Articles 2 and 17, as the property of the colonists. Through the voice of the slave, Sala-Molins concedes that Condorcet at least conceived of Africans in the Caribbean as once “a people.” Yet, wondering just how long it will take “to recover our capacity to exercise political sovereignty,” the slave adds, “nobody wants this experiment” (p. 109).

The final essay, “Of Men and (Under) Dogs,” returns to the core issue: the refusal of bicentennial organizers to investigate the Revolution’s colonialist assumptions. How could it be otherwise, Sala-Molins suggests, when this so-called “universalist” philosophy equivocated and dithered as it did – and “thinks it has examined the problem when it has dealt with the imperial interests of a metropole that has since become a republic.” French scholars were also to blame – especially those who continued to quote Condorcet denouncing slavery or Raynal “predicting” the emergence of a Toussaint-Louverture – as if, without them, Toussaint could not have thought to free himself: “How did he manage to snatch from the Enlightenment what the Enlightenment never dreamt of?” (p. 124). Similarly at issue was the uncritical presentation of the Friends of Blacks (Société des Amis des Noirs), whose members included Condorcet, the Abbé Grégoire, and the free-colored planter, Julien Raimond, as sentinels of a liberationist Enlightenment. In the bicentennial narrative (to the degree that France’s outre-mer entered bicentennial discussions at all), these were the “good guys,” even though, as Sala-Molins reminds us, their mission always presumed control of the slaves and colonial domination. Above all, failing to acknowledge the slaves’ revolution of 1793-94 in Saint-Domingue, the bicentennial “simply erased revolution from the Revolution.” For Sala-Molins, surveying the landscape of French public memory in 1989, it seemed the colonialist assumptions embedded in the Declaration of 1789 had changed but little: Then it was the “Negroes.” Now it was the immigrants: “They need to wait; their day will come” (p. 138).

As one expression of France’s contested bicentennial commemoration, it is too early to judge what impact The Dark Side of the Light will have on future examinations of French public memory. But through his writings and public activities, Sala-Molins has earned a place in that history. He was, for
example, the only academic to give testimony before the French Senate in the passage of the Taubira-Delannon law of May 2001 by the French National Assembly, which declared French involvement in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean slave trade and slavery a crime against humanity.

The narratives told in national commemorations reveal much about ongoing struggles over the limits of the possible in the present and future. The uneasy relationship between public or “official” memory and pressing issues in contemporary French society that impelled Sala-Molins to write has not abated. The debates over undocumented immigrants that culminated in the sans-papiers movement of the 1990s, the short-lived Article 4 of the February 23, 2005 French law on colonialism (repealed in 2006) that mandated high school (lycée) curricula to address the “positive” role of French colonialism, especially in North Africa, and the riots of November 2005, all suggest what is at stake in France’s struggle to view its past more fully. In his concluding epilogue, Sala-Molins ends with a vision and a question. The year is 2089, and it is the Pantheonization of Toussaint-Louverture. The question is: will 100 years be enough?

REFERENCES


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In the early years of this century publishers eagerly sought monographs to publish to coincide with the 2007 anniversary of the abolition of the British and U.S. slave trades. One such work was Stephanie Smallwood’s 1999 Duke University Ph.D. dissertation, “Saltwater Slavery,” now rewritten partially by Smallwood and published by Harvard University Press. The book contains an introduction, seven chapters (the last functioning as a conclusion), three frontispiece maps, and four photographs of slave trade documents. There is no bibliography. It studies the British slave trade ca.1675-1725 and makes extensive use of Royal African Company (RAC) documents housed in the National Archives, London and the Rawlinson manuscripts kept at the Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

Whereas the dissertation focused on 1660-1700 and spotlighted slaving voyages from the Gold Coast to the British West Indies, *Saltwater Slavery* begins with a story from York River, Virginia in 1721, when twelve British slaving vessels arrived between April 6 and October 30. On these Guineamen were “1,735 people whose lives, having eventuated in voyages of captivity from Senegambia, the Gold Coast, Calabar and Madagascar, converged in Virginia, where they were funneled into the burgeoning institution of chattel slavery” (pp. 2-3). Smallwood’s aim is to bring “the people aboard slave ships to life as subjects in American social history” (p. 3), and readers learn that in upcoming pages they will be following “the tributary representing the forced dispersal of some 300,000 captives who departed from the Gold
Coast (present-day Ghana) between 1675 and 1725 aboard ships bound for the English American colonies” (p. 3).

Unfortunately, readers do not learn much about the lives of enslaved Africans forced on board British Guineamen. The problem, of course, is that extant source material, written by Europeans interested only in Africans as slaves, reveals little about their history in Africa, on the Middle Passage, or in the Americas. The four representative RAC slave-trading documents included in the book – two from the Gold Coast (1677, 1712), one on the Passage (1675-76), and one in Barbados (1676) – illustrate the problem: all four enumerate Africans as men, women, boys, or girls. Thus we read: “We cannot know how communities made sense of the loss of family members to the slave trade” (p. 61), “the anonymous thousands who came aboard slave ships” (p. 109), or the flowery “on the ocean’s horizon the captives encountered only the social world of the slave ship, a similarly mutilated assemblage that was not a functioning whole but rather an arbitrary collective of isolated and alienated persons” (p. 121).

The book also includes very little that is not already known about the British or other transatlantic slave trades. It is not a major insight to inform readers that European slaving traders transformed Africans into “commodities” (pp. 6, 8, 33-35, 43, 61-63, 82, 101, 153, 157, 204) or that there were “stages in the commodification of African captives” (p. 156). It is no surprise that African peoples were displaced by their forced migration (p. 131, 134) or that they suffered “social death” (p. 52, 59-61, 196) – a well-traveled idea. Specialist readers already know that most American planters preferred creole slaves to those from Africa – the “saltwater slaves” of the book’s title.

The information about the British slave trade that is new is not placed fully in historical or historiographical context. Citing Captain Peter Blake’s journal from 1676, Smallwood finds evidence that the RAC used wooden platforms to decrease between-deck space and hence increase the number of enslaved Africans imprisoned (p. 74). This grim innovation enabled the British to load more captives than French or Dutch rivals (p. 71). Readers do not learn that Blake’s January 8, 1676 journal entry2 is the earliest evidence about platforms or that the first scholar to use Blake does not transcribe this information (Donnan 1930:202). Similarly, we find out that in 1706 the RAC paid captains a gratuity of four slaves out of each 104 people transported alive (p. 70). Is this the first evidence of the standard four percent coast commission (£4 in £104 or 3.85 percent) paid captains later in the eighteenth century?

One questions the decision to broaden the time frame to include 1701-1725. It seems that the press wanted the book, marketed in the United States,

to contain material on Virginia and indeed to launch the book with a story about slaving vessels arriving in the colony. This narrative from York River in 1721 does not work, though, since readers will assume that its importance is to demonstrate the heterogeneity of African peoples forced into Virginian slavery, and hence that Smallwood will engage the historiographical debate about African cultural carryovers. The “plurality of ethnicities” forced into the slave trade is mentioned later (p. 104), but the fact that Africans from Senegambia, the Gold Coast, Calabar, and Madagascar arrived in Virginia is irrelevant to the book. In the last chapter we learn that only in 1720s tide-water Virginia “did a population of American-born descendants of saltwater slaves finally win the battle to put down stable roots to anchor a sustainable web of community and kinship” (p. 199). One suspects that some manuscript readers wanted more from the term “saltwater slaves.”

To my mind, the main value of Saltwater Slavery is that it includes transcriptions of lengthier extracts from slaving captains’ journals than did Donnan seventy-nine years ago. Captain Blake’s journal, 1675-76 (Donnan 1930:199-209; Saltwater Slavery, pp. 40, 72-76, 137-47, 169), is particularly important. The cited Rawlinson material (eighty-six notes in Chapters 2 and 3) is less valuable, as it now may be found in Robin Law’s three-volume set (Law 1997-2006). Surprisingly, Smallwood’s Ph.D. dissertation includes more useful historical information than that contained in this published monograph. Saltwater Slavery is for general readers who want to contemplate the horrors of transatlantic slavery.

REFERENCES


Ruben Gowricharn’s edited collection comes out of a conference entitled “Globalisation, Diaspora and Identity Formation,” and is divided into four sections: conceptual issues, regional transnational communities, global transnationalism, and transnationalism and social cohesion.

In the first of these, Michelle Reis sets the stage for the case-studies by making a clear argument for considering the Caribbean’s contribution to theoretical discussions of transnational and diasporic processes. Kelvin Santiago-Valles highlights circuits of globalization and transnational networks that supply both context and impetus for two organizational efforts in Trinidad and Guyana in a chapter that would probably have worked better in the section on global transnationalism. Fernando Rosa Ribeiro’s attempt to demarcate the Guianas as a coherent conceptual space is most compelling, for he notes that scholarly discussions of the Caribbean have failed to keep up with the complexity and fluidity of hinterland border spaces that connect French Guiana, Suriname, Guyana, Brazil, and Venezuela. (This point is even more significant if we consider that it allows us to bring indigenous populations, long absent from such discussions, into the frame of transnationalism.) Ribeiro’s discussion is given empirical explication in several of the later chapters that assess Brazilian migrants in French Guiana and Paramaribo. (Interestingly, in Chapters 7 and 10 there appear to be different opinions on the degree to which Brazilians have “taken their place in Suriname” or continue to be set apart by language and continuing ties and desires to return to Brazil.) Discussions of Caribbean diaspora and transnationalism seem predominantly obsessed with extraregional migration flows (but see Puri 2003). What is therefore most refreshing about this collection is a discussion of Caribbean transnationalism that is geographically situated in the region itself. It also decenters the usual Anglophone Caribbean focus, in the process bringing into clear view some elements that tend not to be considered in other studies, such as navigating questions of language and multilingualism as part of Caribbean migrant experiences in the region or...
thinking about cross-border interactions when territorial boundaries are so clearly permeable (see especially Chapters 6 and 7).

The second section, on regional transnationalism, is the most tightly integrated and comes at the question of transnationalism in a number of ways. Chapter 5, for example, addresses the transnational underpinnings of national identity through a discussion of the effect of migration of its own nationals on the evolution of what it means to be Curaçaoan. Chapter 7 looks at investing in a transnational public sphere as a way of making claims on the host society. And in Chapters 6 and 7 we are shown the varying levels of vulnerability that not only set migrants apart from “citizens” but that differentiate migrant communities themselves.

In the section on global transnationalism, the contributions of Brinsley Samaroo, on Mahatma in the Caribbean, and Alex van Stipriaan, on the commemoration of Afro-Surinamese Emancipation Day, complement each other nicely, offering rich historical and ethnographic insight into the transnational processes through which identifications and practices are forged. Suggestive too – and explored more fully in van Stipriaan’s account of the changing symbolic significance of Emancipation Day – are the ways in which diasporic affiliations enter and alter a local terrain where a variety of other interlocutors exist, stabilizing notions of cultural differentiation in response to felt exclusion or offering routes to forms of solidarity that cut across divisions.

In the final section, on social cohesion, Krishna Seunarinesingh looks at the way in which a national identity for Trinidad and Tobago is constituted and imagined through an internet newsletter. It is not clear in his discussions of a diasporic public sphere that all of the contributors are indeed living “outside their homeland,” or even what such a difference might make, and while we see what is emphasized (homogeneity and creolization), there is little discussion of the significance of what is left out for this discursive consistency to be maintained. Wim Hoogbergen and Dirk Kruijt, in keeping with the book’s theme, center movement and resettlement and consider the role of the state in their discussion of social cohesion and group relations between Maroons and garimpeiros in western French Guiana and eastern Suriname. Contemporary migrations and transnational social relations somehow elude Gowricharn’s attempts to fruitfully recast plural society debates in the region (a division that is also reproduced in his opening chapter, where the question of social cohesion seems more interested in addressing pluralism than in considering the relevance of contemporary flows), producing an unfortunate omission given some of the tensions that were made so evident in the second section of this book.

A somewhat surprising omission is the question of gender (with the exception of a few references to male and female migration streams), particularly given the wealth of feminist scholarship now available that discusses the centrality of women in maintaining transnational networks and in remittance
flows. The discussions of pluralism and social cohesion would also have benefited from some consideration of the ways in which women and men are positioned in relation to questions of difference, including how these are negotiated in diasporic settings. Santiago Valles’s chapter stands out in its discussion of Elma Francois and the NWCSA and Andaiye and Red Thread, but even here the significance of women playing such a central organizing role, and the analytical purchase that gender might offer to our understanding of social change, seem almost incidental to Gowricharn’s conceptual frame.

Overall, this is a very useful book, with some excellent case-studies for students of the region interested in the ways in which transnational social fields operate in the Caribbean itself. Especially welcome is the emphasis on South-South (intraregional) movement and connections that displace the usual preoccupation with extraregional links as the singular defining feature of Caribbean transnationalism.

REFERENCE


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Migrations into, out of, and within the Caribbean region have been going on since the first Amerindians entered the Greater Antilles about six thousand years ago. That is to be expected in a string of islands that link Florida, the Yucatan Peninsula, and the northeast coast of South America. As the varieties, origins, and numbers of peoples entering the islands grew after 1492, migration became part of Caribbean ecologies and cultures. A history of the region can be shaped around the movement of peoples. Whether physically coerced, environmentally and economically necessitated, culturally encour-
aged, or in some degree voluntary, migration in and out has always been part of Caribbean adaptations and Caribbean societies.

Contemporary migration continues the outward movement that picked up after nineteenth-century slave emancipations, as freed people sought to escape plantocratic exploitation and to seek expanded opportunities in lands less constricted, less densely peopled, and less environmentally degraded. International emigration intensified in the twentieth century, especially after World War II, and by the twenty-first century it had become global, as employment opportunities lagged far behind population growth in the sending societies.

Studies of Caribbean migration and emigration have proliferated at least since the mid-1950s. They have moved from considerations of economic push and pull factors to a twenty-first-century focus on sprawling transnational kin and social networks, migrant identities, and individual and family experiences and narratives. Migration research since the 1990s has sought to understand individual identities and cultural allegiances in a period of mobility, globalization, and relationships across diasporas. Migration studies explore whether and how the individual sense of rootedness and home are related to transnational mobility and global dispersion. This emphasis replaces earlier research focused on integration and incorporation in migrants’ new homes, mostly from the point of view of receiving locations, and presents the migration phenomenon from the perspective of migrants.

*Survival of the Knitted* contributes to the literature on migrants’ social networks, emphasizing their role in individual migration decisions and analyzing how networks actually work. Bashi attempts a methodology that integrates a sociological understanding of the network as a set of relationships with a study of the way that individual persons in the network help individual migrants. As a person born and raised in a West Indian family in New York, she had personal experience of the phenomena she investigates. (She claims, though I find this hard to believe, that her graduate professors thought only of nuclear families and so did not understand her references to her “family” in the context of her research proposal.)

Bashi conducted her research both in the Caribbean and in two migrant destinations, London and the greater New York City region. She began in New York with two people, one from St. Vincent-Grenadines and one from Trinidad-Tobago, and followed the links of these two unrelated networks, interviewing ninety persons in all. Questions she investigates include the way in which migrants choose destinations, what structures of inequality they face when they arrive, how they come to fit into their new location despite the barriers of inequality, how they deal with housing and labor systems, and how the network helps them succeed. Every issue she discusses includes a review of the diverse theories that bear on it, exposition of the empirical ethnographic material she gained through her interviews, quota-
tions from immigrant narratives, and application of her own research to new analysis of the issue.

Bashi is particularly concerned with showing the operation and effects of anti-Black racism in the Caribbean migrant experience of racial hierarchy in receiving societies (Chapter 7). Migrants experience racial stereotyping and discrimination in jobs and housing. She rightly rejects cultural explanations of the differences in the way migrants cope with racism, and rightly emphasizes the organized inequality of political, economic, and racial structures in the societies they enter. Thus immigrant networks can assist migrants in handling the organized inequality they encounter, whereas, for example, native-born African-Americans in the United States do not have the immigrant experience and insulating networks to help them.

Bashi develops a model of Caribbean immigrant networks to explain exactly how migrants manage to escape from the economic limitations of their home islands, overcome the physical and economic challenges of migrating over distances, surmount the purposive barriers that receiving societies keep in place despite their need for immigrant labor, and find the jobs and housing they need within a discriminatory racial system (Chapter 3). This Hub-and-Spoke Module is wholly based on empirical research and is generally applicable to transnational migration from regions beyond the Caribbean. One experienced migrant becomes a central “hub” whose function is to aid migrants in entering the country and getting through the barriers to resettlement. The “spokes” are those who get the necessary help from the hub. Hubs help with travel arrangements and paperwork. When immigrants arrive, hubs offer immediate shelter and use their own networks to help them find housing and jobs. Importantly, show the newcomer how to become part of the support system in the immigrant community.

This ethnography of Caribbean migrants, their networks, their identity, and their ties to their place of origin is grounded in knowledge of theory and good empirical work. Like Olwig 2007, it is a fine example of multiple-sited transnational field research that links the individual and social in global migration.

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“The themes of travel, departure and return define much of Caribbean history and literature,” we are told in the foreword of this book (p. ix), and for this reason it is necessary to view migration – and with it return migration – as integral aspects of Caribbean life. The main purpose of Returning to the Source is therefore “to develop a broader and more encompassing approach to the study of return migration” (p. 19). The eleven chapters begin with Plaza and Henry’s introductory review of the literature on return migration to the English-speaking Caribbean and Dennis Brown’s overview of the history of Caribbean migration since the emancipation of the slaves, and continue with case studies of return migration, primarily from the United Kingdom and/or the United States, to various Caribbean islands. Seven of the chapters focus on return migration to individual islands – Trinidad (Roger-Mark de Souza), Tobago (Godfrey C. St. Bernard), St. Lucia (Francis K. Abenaty), Jamaica (Heather A. Horst, Elizabeth Thomas-Hope, John Small), and Barbados (George Gmelch). Two compare Jamaican and Barbadian return migration (Dwaine E. Plaza and Harry Goulbourne).

While the editors state that the book’s aim is to examine return migration by “locating it in the context of the transnational pursuit of mobility, happiness and success,” in the end the primary focus is on the difficulties experienced by migrants when they return to their place of origin. This seeming contradiction is illuminated by de Souza’s interesting insight that while many migrants manage to obtain the economic and/or educational resources necessary to return as successful migrants to the place of origin where they have a strong social attachment, it is this very social attachment that presents the returnees with the greatest problems (p. 75). De Souza notes that return migration traditionally has played a central role as a means of upward mobility in the Caribbean and that returnees, generally speaking, have been esteemed and respected in the local societies. To reinforce the impression of their success abroad return migrants are expected to “demonstrate foreign values and mannerisms,” thus giving the impression that they have had a “luxurious life abroad” (p. 79). This image of the easy life as a migrant is
far from the actual experiences of most, however, and those who return with limited economic resources find it stressful to live up to the local images of the successful returnee. At the same time, many returnees experience difficulty re-establishing social relationships because their notions of social conventions and proper interpersonal behavior have changed while abroad. Furthermore, those who think that their experiences abroad will lead to jobs and respect in the local community may be met with an “attitude of ‘returnee fatigue’” by local people who have come to resent the increasing numbers of returnees expecting to be favored because they have been abroad. As a result, returnees begin to view local people as jealous of their success, while local people start to question whether the returnees really belong in the local society. What should have been a glorious return back home becomes a cool reception in what migrants experience as an alien place.

Gmelch states that returnees’ disappointment wears off with time. Thus, whereas 53 percent in the sample of returnees he interviewed in Barbados expressed dissatisfaction during the first year of their return and believed that they would have been better off if they had stayed away, only 17 percent had this negative view of their return three years later. He concludes that the change occurs as “the dreams and fantasies of most returnees fade and they learn to cope with the inefficiency and petty annoyances of life at home” (p. 62). The chapters of *Returning to the Source* provide interesting insights into just what contributes to this adaptation. Thus several of the authors note that a common way of coping is to avoid the local stay-behinds and seek the company of other returnees with similar migration experiences who share the same social norms and ideas. The British returnees are especially apt to join returnee associations where they can socialize with like-minded people. Small shows that such associations may serve as pressure groups working to improve the condition of returnees in the island societies. Many returnees also opt to settle in returnee enclaves such as Mandeville, Jamaica, where, as Horst demonstrates, they can build “concrete castles” that both demonstrate their success abroad and shelter them from poverty, envy, violence, and crime in the surrounding society.

Another way of coping with life as a returnee involves adopting a transnational lifestyle. According to Thomas-Hope, the well-educated returnees that she studied in Jamaica were “working in one place and context, maintaining their families in another, and socializing, making purchases of goods and services, investing, and engaging in leisure pursuits that spanned at least two countries” (p. 169). This transnational lifestyle allowed for a “maximization of the return” (p. 171), meaning that the migrants could make the best of the social, economic, and cultural opportunities available to them in the different places involved. The second-generation returnees studied by Plaza expressed similar understandings and practices of return. Indeed, most of them were “making long-term plans to live a transnational lifestyle” (p. 164).
In sharp contrast to these privileged transnational returnees are the deportees who have returned involuntarily, primarily from the United States, because of criminal activity or the lack of legal documents. They rival the voluntary returnees in number, at least in Jamaica as Small shows (p. 227), yet they have been subject to little study and are mentioned only in passing in this book. Because their unplanned return is very far from “the dreams and fantasies” of return that many Caribbean migrants nourish, they constitute an aspect of Caribbean migration experiences that merits further exploration.

*Returning to the Source* is a useful presentation of the current state of research on return migration, an area of investigation that is still in its infancy. With its fascinating data on the complex notions and practices of return, it opens up new lines of investigation that can shed important light on migratory processes as well as Caribbean culture and society.


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In the historiography of Dutch colonial expansion there is traditionally a dichotomy between Asia and the Atlantic region. One group of historians concentrates on the sphere of influence of the former Dutch East India Company, which included the Cape Colony in South Africa, and another studies the settlements and commercial activities of the Dutch in West Africa and in the Americas. For a long time this latter group consisted of a handful of historians dividing the settlements in Africa, the Caribbean, and North and South America between them, and in most cases acquiring expertise on only a limited geographical area. Only recently has an all-encompassing Atlantic approach been developed. A first attempt at a comparative study including both the Eastern and Western hemisphere and concentrating on forced and
voluntary migratory patterns within the Dutch colonial empire appeared just last year (Oostindie 2008).

The publication of a book on the Netherlands and its settlements in Africa, Asia, and the Americas by a hitherto unknown author in this field comes, then, as a surprise. Who is Howard J. Wiarda? He is the Dean Rusk Professor of International Relations, founding head of the Department of International Affairs at the University of Georgia, and a senior scholar at the Center of Strategic and International Studies in Washington D.C. But more important for the subject of the book is that he is a third-generation Dutch immigrant to the United States. He grew up in a Dutch enclave in western Michigan which treasured its Dutch Calvinist heritage. An already existent interest in his roots increased during visits to Europe where he conducted various research projects and had an opportunity to travel to “the old country” (the Netherlands), and meet distant relatives living in the province of Friesland. His research travels also took him to various countries outside Europe where the Dutch had established settlements beginning in the seventeenth century. This combination of background, historical interest, and travel experiences inspired a project that was to be a scholarly analysis of the Dutch and their “Dutch-ness,” and their scattered fragments around the world – all enriched by autobiographical passages focused on his upbringing and travel experiences.

As a take-off point Wiarda introduces the so-called Hartz thesis, formulated by Harvard historian and political scientist Louis Hartz some fifty years ago, which sought to explain differences between the various colonial settlements overseas by pointing at specific institutional and cultural characteristics in the mother country at the time that each colony was founded. According to this approach, these characteristics became determinant in the social and cultural character of the colonial offshoot. In successive chapters Wiarda discusses the Dutch and their colonial empire in general, his own youth in western Michigan, the old (seventeenth-century) and more recent (nineteenth-century) Dutch settlements in North America, the present-day Netherlands, and various former Dutch settlements in South America, Asia, and Africa, pairing personal experiences during visits with historical information. In the end, Wiarda concludes that the Hartz thesis is inadequate for explaining the differences between the various Dutch offshoots. The relations between mother country and colony and the evolution of the colonies themselves are far more complicated and varied than Hartz’s approach would predict.

Wiarda is a political scientist, but he is clearly not a historian with expertise in the history of the Netherlands and its colonial past. The book is littered with mistakes and inaccuracies. For example, the Haarlem painter Frans Hals was never brought to Dutch Brazil by Governor Johan Maurits van Nassau-
Siegen (p. 90), he probably never travelled any further than Antwerp, and the creole language spoken in Suriname is not Papiamento (p. 106).

But it would not be fair to judge his work by such errors, for the book is less a serious study of the Netherlands and its former Dutch colonial settlements than a presentation of Howard J. Wiarda himself – his background, his experiences, his worldview, and most of all his Calvinist religion. For the actual leitmotiv of the book is Calvinism, which Wiarda takes as almost synonymous with Dutch culture and the original driving force behind the important role of the Dutch on the world stage in early modern times. That is why he also added a chapter on Geneva, John Calvin’s residence and the center from which this creed was spread, and another chapter on the struggling Protestant churches in the territories of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. In all the countries he visited Wiarda looked for a Protestant, preferably Calvinist church where he could attend the Sunday service. Wiarda observes that wherever the Calvinist religion survived, as in western Michigan and in some Protestant enclaves in Hungary, society is characterized by neatness, absence of crime, and work ethics. Wherever it disappeared, as in most of the modern Netherlands and present-day Geneva, these social characteristics also disappear, leading to a danger (he argues) that drug abuse, prostitution, euthanasia, and the like come to dominate society. Geneva, once his favorite city, lost its “Michelin star” since large numbers of immigrants (mainly Arabs according to Wiarda) settled in the old center: “Headscarves are everywhere; it’s mostly Arab women, smoking, drinking, and semi-liberated (including from their husbands) in the open culture of Geneva. Even the restaurants and sidewalk cafés here, we learn, are now owned by Arabs. That also helps account for the greater seediness of the city: Arabs have a different sense of the public space (it’s for trash disposal) than did those Calvinistic Genevans” (p. 180).

REFERENCE

Sleeping Rough in Port-au-Prince is an original contribution to the anthropology of Haiti. It is one of the few ethnographies that focus on Port-au-Prince. J. Christopher Kovats-Bernat completed his research during 1994-2004, one of the most politically violent periods in the country’s history when few social scientists were conducting fieldwork in Haiti. The book, which provides one of the very few descriptions of the most recent developments in Haitian political life, is framed in the context of contemporary state violence, international aid, and worldwide structural inequalities. It provides a rare detailed analysis of the competition for power among the state, the remnants of the military shut down by President Aristide in 1995, and civilian groups, within the context of international peace missions and U.S. and French interventions. Children’s trajectories from rural homes to the streets of the capital are part of the broader context of rural migrations to the city in the late 1980s due to the impoverishment of rural families under the pressure of structural adjustment policies and worldwide economic inequalities initiated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Kovats-Bernat argues against the common psychological approach to the life of street children, which tends to essentialize them as intrinsically isolated from their families and as being violent, lazy, and asocial. This approach denies their social interactions and ignores their economic activities, political awareness, and activism. The book is composed of six children’s biographies, each introducing an analytical chapter. Readers might regret not hearing more of the voices of the children, but Kovats-Bernat explains how difficult it was to take notes, make recordings, and meet with the children on a regular basis.

The book describes the social conditions that led the children to live in the streets of Port-au-Prince as well as their social organization once there. They had been sent to the streets by their families, who could not support them but expected them to send home their earnings. Street children belong to a broader category of poor children who survive through economic activities: prostitution, domestic work, or street work (watching cars, washing cars, car-
rying bags, and so on). Actually, they do visit their relatives from time to time and provide them with financial support. They all engage in different types of legal activities. Begging is rarely practiced, as it is considered by the older children to be humiliating. According to Kovats-Bernat, these street children are among the hardest working citizens of Haiti. They often earn three times the minimum wage of many Haitians. They define themselves in contrast to schooled children; many have schooled siblings who have the opportunity to learn to read and write and do not have to work to support themselves.

The book is an anthropology of urban space as it shows how the streets define the children’s personal and collective identities. Kovats-Bernat emphasizes the fact that the Creole term *timoun lari* (children in/of the streets) refers to an ontological understanding of the children’s identities and not merely a place that all poverty-stricken urban Haitians use for work, sleep, or socializing. Building upon the work of sociologists and Victor Turner’s analysis of rites of passage, Kovats-Bernat argues that the streets of Port-au-Prince are liminal spaces for the street children who manage to survive and to move on to other places (going back to their families, getting a shelter).

Port-au-Prince is an overpopulated city whose streets are contested spaces for people to live, work, or market. As both individuals and members of social groups, street children have to struggle to maintain their own space for work. During the day, work activities define territoriality, and groups are classified according to age, gender, and work, as well as social lifestyles such as sexuality or drug use. The groups offer support in terms of food sharing and protection against the street violence that breaks out in the competition for work territory and the settlement of disputes. The most dreaded aggressions are the so-called “sleeping wars” that occur at night: rocks thrown or plastic burns inflicted on a sleeping victim. The goal is to incapacitate the victim temporarily and make it clear that they could be killed if the dispute in question is not resolved in the aggressor’s favor. Kovats-Bernat analyzes these actions as ritualized ways of settling devastating long-term conflicts in a quick and efficient manner.

This book belongs to the anthropology of child-centered research that considers children as “actively involved in the construction of their lives and their worlds,” a perspective that Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Carolyn Sargent (1999) called for a decade ago. Kovats-Bernat offers not only a convincing analysis of children’s economic agency in the streets but also of their political agency. *Lafanmi selavi*, an orphanage created by Aristide in 1995, was a place where street children became human rights activists until it turned into a “nightmarish slum of childhood and adolescence” (p. 156) that Aristide closed in a violent way in 1999 after the children rebelled against the degradation of the place. The development of a political identity among street children is actually grounded in their genealogies, which consist of activist parents and grandparents. As such, the street children are political and moral
agents whose struggles for human dignity have been, as in the case of previous generations of Haitians, defeated by all Haitian governments.

This ethnography is an original addition to the anthropology of Haiti that is recommended to anyone interested in issues of social inequality, political agency, human development, and urbanism in the Caribbean. It provides insight into an important, and relatively unknown, aspect of current Haitian existence.

Reference


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In this book, Ginetta E.B. Candelario examines the negotiation of a Dominican identity in four related sites of representation: travel narratives, the museum, the beauty shop, and the female body. Based on extensive ethnographic and historical research, the book offers a comprehensive analysis of the way in which an Indo-Hispanic identity is constructed, represented, and contested against the backdrop of Dominican national building projects, a troubled relationship with Haiti, the impact of U.S. imperialism, and the glorification of the Hispanic heritage. Since Dominicans participate in their own construction, through words, images, icons, and body techniques, such representations are left open to interpretation. Indeed, for Candelario the issue is not whether Dominicans are “in fact” black, but rather the multiple strategies they deploy when confronted with the black behind the face of Dominican national politics (p. 2). To this end, she focuses on how ethno-
racial discourses are narrated, internalized, and displayed by actors and institutions in three historically connected geographic locations: Santo Domingo, Washington D.C., and New York City.

Candelario is aware that identities can be “situational, equivocal and ambiguous,” mediated by power relations and the ever-shifting boundaries of the nation (p. 7). Yet, in order to understand an ideological code that celebrates Hispanicity of a different hue and hair texture, she first delves into the racial politics of colonial bondage. In particular, she explores the role played by travel narratives in the construction of an imaginary “Indio.” Travel narratives of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries highlight the fact that European whiteness was always associated with social, political, and economic privilege, and blackness with both subordination and physical and moral inferiority. When confronted with this discourse, freedmen fought to distance themselves from slaves, for them the only “real” blacks. In the same vein, Creole intellectuals and the local elite engaged the narratives of an exotic other that fueled the ideological, economic, and political project of the empire, producing a counternarrative in which they portrayed themselves as indigenous and non-Black (pp. 49-60). After the failure of the Haitian unification effort, Dominicans invested all their efforts in proclaiming an Indian heritage. Indeed, Haiti would be then represented as “the other” of the nascent Dominican nation.

Candelario’s contribution lies in her close examination of how this ideological discourse became “the meta-narrative of Dominicanidad as fundamentally and historically non-black and Indo-Hispanic” (p. 83). Throughout the book, she pursues the permutations of this “Indio” myth in popular music, a variety of genres of fiction and non-fiction, and official identity discourses, from Trujillo to Balaguer. As examples of institutional displays of Dominican identity, she offers an analysis of two museum settings: the Museo del Hombre Dominicano in the Dominican Republic and an exhibition entitled *Black Mosaic* in Washington D.C. To illustrate how this Dominicanidad is embodied in the flesh as well as in social practice, she conducted an ethnographic study of a beauty shop in Washington Heights, a New York City neighborhood.

Given the complexity of the methodologies engaged – interviews, photo elicitation, ethnography, spatial, textual, and visual analysis – and the multiple sites of investigation, one can argue that Candelario has succeeded in proving that Dominican ethno-racial identities are constructed in partial collaboration with negrophobic and anti-Haitian ideologies. She demonstrates that objects and texts at the Museo del Hombre Dominicano do not innocently reflect “reality,” but conform to a system of meanings that naturalizes an Indio-Taíno identity (pp. 119-20). The myth works because it casts as innocent what is profoundly motivated. This is also true of the *Black Mosaic* exhibition in the Anacostia Museum in Washington D.C., except that what is
naturalized is an Afro-American identity. Dominicans in New York choose a different path. They identify themselves as Hispanic and non-Black.

The ethnography conducted at a beauty shop offers a clearer connection with the title of the book. Candelario’s insights on the contested nature of gender and racial identities complements the more mechanical analysis of previous chapters. Here she focuses on women’s hair culture to illustrate that Dominican indigenism is reliant on bodily techniques and practices. Since hair is at the root of a somatic norm that values features deemed “white,” clients and beauticians at Salon Lamadas make subtle distinctions among themselves (pp. 196-203). I find it fascinating how these women draw on ambiguous markers of blackness to contest both beauty and antibeauty ideologies. The negotiated nature of perceived racial types is more evident in photo-elicitation, an exercise that suggests that “the visible” is only so “in a given cultural and ideological context” (p. 263). Images and illustrations are critical in this part of the book.

Candelario values her informants’ strategic use of ambiguity, but is also aware that certain representations render Dominican women exotic and invisible. This last issue, however, is not pursued further. Readers are left to wonder in which ways Dominican racial identities are affected by the Hispanic marketing industry in the United States and its role in the making of new notions of belonging and entitlement (see Dávila 2001).

In spite of the fact that the book ignores the experiences of Dominicans living in Puerto Rico, Candelario succeeds in proving the central tenet of the book – that identities are neither natural nor accidental, but rather cultural constructs that rely on discourses and practices legitimated by diverse interest groups and institutions. These constructs are inscribed in the body and continue to feed the racialized politics of our time. But as with any regime of representation, meaning can never be fixed. Women at the beauty shop work with the shifting, unstable character of meaning, quite aware that there can never be any final victory.

Reference

Anthropologists have long been fascinated with Garifuna syncretic religious and cultural practices stemming from their African and Carib origins. Early ethnographers documented diverse Garifuna practices, often trying to determine whether their origins were African, Carib, or European. Douglas Taylor (1951), for example, made the oft-cited statement that the Garifuna are “a negro cake made of Amerindian ingredients,” while Mary Helms (1979) and Nancie Gonzalez (Solien 1959) debated about the Carib or West Indian origins of their kinship system. Whatever the origins of their cultural and religious practices may be, scholars have most recently noted the propensity of the Garifuna themselves to emphasize their African heritage over all others (Anderson & England 2004).

In Diaspora Conversions Paul Christopher Johnson provides a fascinating analysis of how this process of “Africanization” is proceeding in Garifuna religious practices. Already a syncretic mix, Garifuna religion is further transforming as Garifuna migrate to New York City where they encounter other religions of the African Diaspora such as Santeria and Palo Monte. He shows how the buyes (shamans) in New York are adopting many of the elements of those Caribbean religions in an effort to authenticate their place in the African Diaspora and to deepen their Africanness. Rather than seeing this as an inevitable “recovery” of “repressed” African elements (despite the phrasing of the book title) he argues that it is the conscious articulation of specific elements of “traditional” Garifuna religion with specific elements of certain Afro-Caribbean religions that the Garifuna encounter in New York City, and that together these produce performances of collective memory which are edited to fit their present circumstances and locations.

Johnson describes Garifuna religion as a type of “diasporic religion ... memory performances of place, staged in a space.” Rather than repeating “tradition,” he argues, “they create new identifications and social affiliations because the memory of the homeland is transformed as it is rebuilt, through bricolage, in the spaces of emigration” (p. 14). In the case of the Garifuna, there are three “diasporic horizons” to be remembered: Africa, St. Vincent,
and Central America. Through a comparison of buyei life histories and rituals in Honduras and New York City, Johnson shows how these homelands are recalled differently depending on the context. For example the dūgū, a month-long ceremony performed in Honduras to appease and communicate with an ancestor spirit (gubida), primarily performs the memory of the crossing of the Garifuna from St. Vincent to Honduras and connects them to the original ancestors. The ritual is indexical. That is, it refers to aspects of Garifuna culture that are ancestral and still a part of Garifuna lived experience in Honduras. The main audience for this ritual is the large extended family of the ancestor, the village as a whole, and the visiting buyeis and family members from New York. Thus its main function is to index tradition and to construct “a dense ancestral presence” through the artifacts associated with St. Vincent, spirit possessions by the ancestors, and physical proximity of the family members during the ritual.

Rituals performed in New York City, on the other hand, are carried out differently due to the logistics of having to rent a space for only a certain amount of time, and the needs of a diasporic population in a heavily multicultural environment. In New York City buyeis carry out rituals that include many of the same artifacts and symbolism of the dūgū, recalling both St. Vincent and Honduras as homelands. However, they also include some elements of Santeria and Palo Monte that New York buyeis have learned through relations with Afro-Cuban and Afro-Puerto Rican practitioners. Johnson argues that this mix makes sense in that there are already similarities between these three religious traditions, but that it is also a conscious choice on the part of the buyeis to emphasize these Yoruba-based religions over other possibilities due to their reputation as more authentically African. Thus the purpose of these rituals is not simply to recall and reconnect with the Honduran homeland but also to extend Garifuna religion and racial/ethnic identity to an even more obvious connection with the African Diaspora. This can be seen in that the rituals performed in New York City are heavily symbolic, theatrical, and doctrinal, and the audience includes Garifuna from all villages and sometimes non-Garifuna.

Aside from being a rich ethnographic description of Garifuna ritual, this book makes a valuable contribution to our thinking about diasporic cultures. Despite his ample use of binary oppositions such as indigenous/cosmopolitan, homeland/diaspora, and nostalgia/futurity, Johnson is careful to show that these tropes are not restricted to particular spaces but rather together “constitute a single diasporic religious system” (p. 6) where there is constant mutual influence, and that the binaries are not fixed in space or limited to certain practitioners. There is one binary, however, that seems to me is insufficiently problematized. That is the idea that Garifunaness is more of a given in Honduras and does not need to be actively asserted whereas in New York it must be more forcefully asserted in a sea of ethnic others. This distinction
may be exaggerated, as Garifuna in Honduras also have a great deal at stake in asserting connections to Africanness. Though the dügü may still be largely a family affair, many other aspects of Garifuna culture are carefully staged and Africanized in order to authenticate their status as an unassimilated “autochthonous” ethnic group. Thus the “racial reduction” to blackness that Garifuna encounter in New York also has its counterpart in Honduras. This does not take away from the value of the book but rather reinforces Johnson’s point that diasporic religions are highly creative and serve a crucial role in the construction of spacialized representations of peoplehood.

REFERENCES


As revealed in the first lines of the acknowledgments, *Just Below South* emerges from a 1995 graduate seminar taught at Tulane University by Joseph Roach when he was preparing the manuscript of his *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (1996). Most of the contributors were then either graduate students and/or early-career instructors at Tulane or in other New Orleans-area universities.

In a recent article, Karla Slocum and Deborah Thomas argued for a kind of Caribbean exceptionalism that would justify the maintenance of the Caribbean as an area of study to be defended against the growing influence of global studies which tend to displace or supersede area studies. They assert that “an analysis of the Caribbean and Caribbeaist anthropology allows [scholars] to trace the global in the local, thus illustrating the benefits of local area analyses for understanding global dynamics” (Slocum & Thomas 2003:553). The approach adopted by the editors of *Just Below South*, explained in Jessica Adams’s introduction, takes distance from Slocum and Thomas’s argument in that it interrogates the notion of region. The collection attempts to generate conversations and interactions among scholars working from different perspectives within what they see as being a cross-national, multilingual, regional “interculture of the circum-Caribbean.” They identify the latter following the exploration of material aspects of transhistorical and intergeographic relationships between what is usually understood to be the U.S. South and the Caribbean (“just below South”). Between them is a multiplicitous, decentered circulation of cultural elements that defines the “interculture,” “not so much by a shared set of geographical boundaries or by a single, common culture as by the weave of performances and identities moving across and throughout it” (p. 6). Indeed, “performance” and “performativity” are an important aspect of the collection’s project, particularly when the contributors discuss individuals’ negotiations of identities or when they write about social performances (theater, ritual, historical re-enactment, carnival, dance, and music). Circum-Caribbean performances complicate
generally held assumptions about cultural imperialism, neocolonialism, and creolization since they can “illuminate both the imposition and the subversion of dominance” (p. 7).

The eleven essays have been regrouped in three sections. The limited space of this review allows commentary on only a few of them. In “Impersonating the Creole: The American Family and its Lines of Flight,” Carolyn Vellenga Berman focuses on theatrical adaptations of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* which were quite popular in the nineteenth-century United States. In her study of the novel and its adaptation, Berman shows how certain characters, those who were associated with interracial sex (particularly Cassy) and who therefore existed outside of easily identifiable categories, defy uncomplicated analysis. She argues that Louisiana and its Creoles (French and Spanish gray areas) were represented as problematic outside areas in relation to the intact American nation and its racial binary, which Stowe worked hard (but unsuccessfully) to engrave.

In “Louisiana’s Translated Selves: The Poetry of Deborah Clifton and Sybil Kein,” Anne Malena discusses present-day representations of Creoles in Louisiana, where the definition of “Creole” and the decision about who is included in its scope and who is not has been at the center of passionate debates always informed by white supremacist claims of white superiority and black savagery. This was particularly the case during and after Reconstruction, when white Creoles (Whites of self-proclaimed French and Spanish descent) were preoccupied by the challenge of holding on to social power while facing accusations of not being “true Whites.” Creoles of color who had also been benefiting from the color-cast system struggled to maintain privilege while the Anglo-American binary racial dichotomy was becoming the rule of the day. Malena shows how Kein and Clifton embrace a Creole identity and celebrate the value they see as inherent to ambiguous origins.

Cécile Accilien discusses her experience as a teacher of Haitian Créole at Tulane University, establishing the historical links between Louisiana and Haiti and contrasting the different meaning each context gives to “Créole.” Her main argument illuminates how colonialism continues to give shape to many Haitians’ not-so-proud self-understanding despite Haiti’s notorious Independence more than 200 years ago.

Don Wlicek writes about the descendants of a group of freed slaves and free Blacks who migrated in the 1820s from the American South to Samaná, in the Dominican Republic. This migration followed the instigation of Jean-Pierre Boyer, who was then president of Haiti, which occupied at the time the entire island of Hispaniola, and reflected a feeling in the United States that descendants of slaves should not be incorporated within the body politic of the nation.
Julian Gerstin uncovers the critical influence that white colonial observers have had on twentieth-century dance and music history, and particularly on contemporary Martinican performance. He underscores the fact that distorting colonial descriptions of the kalenda dance made both in the U.S. South and in Martinique in terms of an homogeneous eroticism are taken today as authentic accounts of “the real thing” by Afro-Martinican dancers who perform for American and other tourists.

There are other essays on Trinidadian carnival and its connections to the U.S. South (Rawle Gibbons and Kathleen Gough) and on literary texts by Zora Neale Hurston, Truman Capote, Édouard Glissant, and Jamaica Kincaid, and their contributions to the circum-Caribbean interculture (Shirley Toland-Dix, Michael Bibler, and Jana Evans Braziel). This is an excellent collection that should be of interest to instructors of courses in a variety of fields of inquiry.

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In her new book, Tina Ramnarine looks at the role that music, dance, and public spectacle play in the formation of diasporic consciousness. The opening section, “Memories,” begins with a poignant vignette about being on board a docked ship moored on the Thames River in London to celebrate the “Windrush Years,” referring to the SS Empire Windrush, “the ship that has become a sym-
bol of post-Second World War Caribbean migration to the motherland” (p. 1). Along with some of her Caribbean friends, she is listening to the comedienne Angie le Mar’s sketch about her mother returning to Jamaica after twenty-five years. Le Mar is speaking with her mother from England and wishes to inform the mother of her upcoming performance commemorating the Windrush Years. The mother responds “Oh, memories!” (p. 2).

With this opening narrative, Ramnarine frames the theoretical angle that sets the tone for the rest of the book. Memories, she contends, are central to constructing and expressing the movements of people around the globe who are now classified as diasporic. Where is home, after all, when one leaves one’s place of birth at a young age, grows up elsewhere, and raises a family born in the newly adopted home? By posing this important question at the outset, she aims at challenging the traditional and much belabored notion that “diaspora” signifies a space of non-belonging. Instead, she argues that the movement back and forth from the place of origin to a newly adopted home becomes in and of itself a mode of dwelling, the very practice of which transforms both sites as well as the individual’s sense of self. It also implies a particular consciousness that is actively engaged in the politics of identity and belonging, since it suggests that the diasporic citizen who possesses multiple subjectivities can claim to belong to both the place left behind and the place inhabited. Both, insists Ramnarine, are “homelands” in the truest sense of the term, distinct yet inextricably interconnected.

By taking this particular stance, Ramnarine moves beyond numerous polarities, such as the opposition of “homeland” and “diaspora,” that have come to characterize much of the discourse on diasporas in both popular and academic literature. Instead of thinking about diaspora as a cause of dislocation, she urges us to think of it as having the capability to establish a home that may be multi-sited. Hence, there is no contradiction in being an inhabitant of more than one country. While not exactly a novel concept, the “diaspora as home” (p. 21) model serves Ramnarine’s purposes quite well.

To make her shared One World argument, Ramnarine provides an ethnography of musical performance forms rooted in the Caribbean but enacted around the globe, not only in such well-known diasporic cosmopolitan locations as New York, Toronto, and London, but also in less expected ones such as Helsinki and Dar es Salaam. Genres like calypso, reggae, and salsa may originate in the Caribbean and continue to be associated primarily with the region, but they have the capacity to transcend geographic location and challenge musical canons by creating new performance spaces that connect diaspora and nation. In Chapter 2, Ramnarine argues that calypso creates new relationships between diasporic, national, and postcolonial sensibilities. Using the recollections of a prominent British Calypsonian, she demonstrates how the genre has been historically transformed into a kind of British folk music, even while maintaining close ties to its Caribbean points of origin.
Chapter 3 explores musical fusion by looking at how steelband ensembles have become integral components of multicultural musical education, thus challenging the idea of discrete and tidy cultural groups living in isolated clusters within a given society. Here is where the book’s title, “beautiful cosmos,” comes into play, where the world becomes holistic, a fusion of forms and practices impossible to unravel completely.

Ramnarine then continues to explore and question hybridity discourses – basing her reflections on participant observation at dance clubs on salsa nights in Chapter 4 and on “chatting” on the impact of Bob Marley’s lyrics on the formation of global reggae around the world in Chapter 5. She shows how hybridity does not necessarily suggest a random collage of expressive traditions, but opens up the possibility for complex and contentious discussions of difference and sameness, self and other. Finally, in Chapter 6, she delves into musical spectacle by looking at the development and commoditization of carnival traditions in England and Canada, arguing that contestation naturally occurs when a geographically distinct tradition is grafted onto two new landscapes.

In her concluding chapter, Ramnarine summarizes by arguing for a move toward a “beautiful cosmos,” one in which the emphasis is on similarity instead of difference, but not by ignoring contradiction, which is inevitable in a rapidly moving world where remembering always involves forgetting and solidarity is reinforced by conflict. Her ethnography is not a romanticized rendering of a holistic world free of strife. Instead she is actively engaged in the political dimension of her subject – namely, the ways in which people bridge the gap between home and diaspora and make the periphery an unsailable part of the center.


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Structured by the history of the West Indies from colonialism to nationhood to present-day postcolonialism, this study concentrates on the representation of black female identity in the imaginative works of several male and
female authors and the extent to which this representation conforms to reality. In particular, it explores the ways in which race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender intersect with migration, exile, and repatriation. Though the book is not long, the scope of the discussion is vast as it rapidly moves from one era and one country to another. Readers looking for a large array of literary examples supporting the concepts put forth will be disappointed. On the other hand, references to postcolonial critics abound, Saunders working side-by-side with the critics as she guides readers into her selection of appropriate(d) texts.

Saunders begins with the Trinidad literary awakening, focusing on two short stories published in 1929 in one of the magazines that were so important to the development of local literature and nationhood: C.L.R. James’s “Triumph” and Alfred Mendes’s “Her Chinaman’s Way.” Like their counterparts in Guyana, Barbados, and Jamaica, these magazines went “against the grain of colonial culture,” creating “new yardsticks for defining aesthetics and politics” (p. 27). James’s and Mendes’s stories, among other “alter/native narratives,” “appropriated women’s sexuality as a trope for national resistance” (p. 29). Realistically portraying the lives of black barrack-yard (James) and mixed-minority storefront (Mendes) women, they offered metaphors for the larger society of colonized Trinidadians awakening to its own power. Saunders argues that as the nationalistic spirit grew, as evidenced in the 1937 riots, literature shifted from short stories depicting working-class women to novels depicting middle-class men, “the march toward independence necessitat[ing] the marginalization of these women in order to construct the image of a colonial subject more conventionally and institutionally suited for the responsibilities that self-government and national independence would bring” (p. 50).

Shifting from the genre of the short story to that of the novel, from Trinidad of the 1930s to England and the imaginary island of San Cristobal of the 1960s, and from literary history to literary myth, Saunders discusses George Lamming’s *Water With Berries* (1971). She begins with remarks on his nonfiction *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960a), which, she suggests, exemplified the pleasures of privilege for West Indian males. But Lamming’s novel of migration and exile depicts only misery. Saunders’s main focus is on Lamming’s use of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. Pointing out the “privilege of location for white female subjects” (p. 70) in both works, Saunders is left with the silent, self-sacrificing Randa as her subaltern subject. She rightly notes the scholarly neglect of *Water With Berries*, one of the most profound (and puzzling) fictional studies of the psychology of colonialism, and the rest of her book is to a great extent a study of the rejection of the idea of the absent or silent black female. But, given her emphasis on black female identity, she might have found another novel by Lamming more fruitful – *Season
of Adventure (1960b), whose central character, Fola, is vocal, self-fulfilling, and fully involved in her search for identity.

The rest of Saunders’s study focuses on female authors and their ways of treating identity, home, and nation, beginning with M. NourbeSe Philip, whose migration from Trinidad to Canada came about twenty years after Lamming’s journey to England. She presents Philip as an innovator who has completely broken with the past, even as she tries to reconstruct it. In “Dis Place – The Space Between” (1997), an image to which Saunders repeatedly returns, Philip rejects the genres and language of previous discourse and creates a new kind of writing appropriate to the liberation of black women’s lives from the violent oppression of the past. In her examination of She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks (1989), Saunders shows how in “pressing back the boundaries that restrain genre, structure, form, and voice” (p. 109) Philip negates the silence on the historical reality of black women’s lives.

With Erna Brodber’s Louisiana (1995), Saunders moves back to the genre of the novel, guiding the reader “to consider the precarious nature of those ‘unhoused’ (nearly selved) subjects of the Caribbean literary landscapes imagined by women writers,” who “tell very different stories about the conditions and possibilities of existence for black female subjects whose ‘unhomeliness,’ or alienation from ‘home,’ is the condition of a new generation for whom the experience of exile is lived in demonstrably different ways than their male counterparts” (p. 114). Saunders suggests that Brodber’s novel “proposes that we reconstruct how we exist and understand existence, the ‘real’ and history” (p. 115). Skeptical about science as an avenue to truth, Ella, the main character (who bears some resemblance to Zora Neale Hurston) turns to studying the psychic knowledge of females in the black diaspora and in the process finds her self at home, finds her own identity. Indeed, Saunders suggests, “both the reader and the novel’s protagonist are ... simultaneously transformed through their reading practices” (p. 124).

From Brodber’s 1995 novel on 1930s Louisiana, Saunders moves to Paule Marshall’s 1959 novel on 1940s Barbadian Brooklyn, which she compares with Elizabeth Nunez’s 1998 novel which begins in 1940s Trinidad and moves on to the 1960s United States. Both of these tales of migration and exile illustrate the struggle of a young woman to find or create home and identity within the context of race, class, and gender. Saunders suggests that, if anything, the anxiety produced by this effort rises even higher as time goes by. She notes that Marshall’s Brown Girl, Brownstones ends with her American-born protagonist independently rejecting a scholarship and freely leaving for the land of her parents’ birth with the possibility of finding home and identity, while Nunez’s Beyond the Limbo Silence concludes with her Trinidadian student in Wisconsin aborting a pregnancy, suffering in a psychiatric ward, and hanging on to both her visa and her St. Lucian friend’s voodoo dolls.
This idea of a downward spiral is further developed in Saunders’s conclusion, in which she looks at current conditions of aliens and repatriates and suggests that the focus on identity in West Indian literature is taking a new turn as it is confronted with the experiences of people returning to the nations from which they came. West Indian writers’ obsession with identity will continue, but displacement may now mean something different: “Current trends, especially the growing backlash against ‘male marginalization,’ suggest that a retrenchment of colonial ideologies about black female subjectivity is poised to force itself into the literary and political landscapes of the Caribbean region” (p. 155).

The book would have profited from the services of a careful editor, not only for such details as Ralph de Boissière’s migrating to England instead of Australia or the absence of original dates and even page numbers for some references, but also for clarity of sentence structure, as in “Silla’s struggle to acquire property is aimed at proving the limitations of ‘home’ prevented her from ‘making it’ in Barbados” (p. 137). Especially as part of Lexington Books’ Caribbean Studies Series, this volume deserved better care. Saunders set for herself an almost impossible task of weaving this collection of readings into a coherent narrative within the framework of both literary and political history and postcolonial discourse. Given the difficulty of the job she took on, she did amazingly well.

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Exploring space and place as metaphors of identity quest, Mildred Mortimer maps the process of empowerment in African and Caribbean women’s fiction. While initially proposing to determine whether “the structures that contain women [are] shelters or prisons” (p. 1) she ultimately tackles a more significant issue. Indeed, if women are “empowered by entering public space from which patriarchy and colonization have excluded her, is this the only path? Can private space, her home, serve the same purpose?” (p. 187). Through the lens of spatial poetics, Mortimer follows female characters negotiating complex and ambiguous relationships between domestic, public, and imaginative space in the achievement of self-realization.

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the work and stands as a valuable contribution to the field of gender studies. In this closely argued review of her interdisciplinary methodology, she analyzes concepts deriving from feminist geography and theory pertinent to the examination of public and private space. Drawing inspiration from “phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard” (p. 31), “humanist geographer Yi-Fu Tuan” (p. 31), “French historian Michel Foucault” (p. 2), and feminist geographers Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose (p. 5), Mortimer illuminates the distinct and intricate gender relationships in former French colonies of Africa and the Caribbean.

Chapter 2 juxtaposes Aoua Kéita’s autobiography, *Femme d’Afrique, La vie d’Aoua Kéta racontée par elle-même* and Maryse Condé’s “fictional autobiography of an African slave” (p. 53), *Moi, Tituba sorcière . . . noire de Salem*. Mortimer claims that escaping restrictive spaces and societal constraints allows protagonists Aoua and Tituba to secure their place in history. She explores how Kéita and Condé, both advocates for liberating women from the oppressions of patriarchy and colonialism, intertwine political activism and resistance with a promotion of the well-being of the individual and the community. This idea is particularly prominent in the well-contextualized historical study of Kéita’s book viewed as an “historical document” (p. 37) that Condé’s work complements.
Chapter 3 explores, in Mariama Bâ’s *Une si longue lettre* and Simone Schwarz-Bart’s *Pluie et vent sur Télumée-Miracle*, the nurturing home or hearth, both the real and the imagined, as an integral element in the process of empowerment. Mortimer argues that domestic space does not always symbolize a prison. She links ownership of a home to rooting, a concept particularly vital to a diasporic community seeking a sense of place. Her study of Télumé’s garden is an interesting example of this. Moreover, Mortimer discusses the danger of “unhousing,” which she defines as “the physical and psychological dissolution of one house [that] allows women ... to disengage from the house of patriarchy; a process which may cause exile and uprooting” (p. 166). Ultimately, her argument promotes varied conceptions of internal and intimate space.

Chapter 4 focuses on the lethal effects of not having a nurturing hearth in Calixthe Beyala’s *C’est le soleil qui m’a brûlée* and *La petite fille du réverbère* and Marie Chauvet’s *Amour, colère, folie*. The walls of unwelcoming homes narrow down on the female body and transform it into a prison and a place of abuse. Mortimer reveals how female violence is unleashed when protagonists are pushed to their physical and emotional limits because they have no place to call home. Their hope for survival rests in finding an alternative space in the inner world of their imagination, which then becomes a site of resistance.

Chapter 5 reveals, in Aminata Sow Fall’s *Douceurs du berceau* and Edwidge Danticat’s *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, the often-beneficial yet perilous aspects of migration. This study of traveling bodies damaged by domestic abuse and rape under the patriarchal and colonial order reaffirms the positive aspects of “unhousing.” In Danticat’s novel, Martine, as the mother of a child born of rape, invades her daughter’s private space and thereby reenacts her own sexual aggression. Through an examination of the ways in which female protagonists navigate between old places and new spaces, particularly imaginary ones, Mortimer carefully maps migratory characters’ successes and failures in dealing with abuse and in the reconstruction of self.

The stimulating introduction sets up great expectations, leading readers to anticipate a nuanced and well-balanced discussion of patriarchal/colonial order, gender roles, and space in the societies under study. However, ideas that pose challenges to such a discussion, such as male input in the political and social activism of female protagonists, the oppression of women by women, or the ways in which colonial power damages differently the relationships between colonized men and women in Africa and the Caribbean, are frequently dealt with too swiftly. Consequently, African and Caribbean women often appear as victims, rarely agents of their own life, and their men as their aggressors. Arranging the texts on an equal footing in an analytical dialogue rather than juxtaposing them would have revealed more critical and diverse notions of space and gender. A thorough historical and anthropo-
logical contextualization of fictions set in the Americas would have enlightened the distinct significance of spatial topoi. For example, Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1998) discusses the importance of the jardin creole as the cradle of creolization and as a site of resistance for slaves.

Mortimer has demonstrated that “home is where the hearth is.” By studying the ways that story-telling, often through imaginative expansion, liberates restricted space, Mortimer reveals that women’s marginal position in society emerges as a source of power. Her theoretical approach insists on the significance of space in social discourse, and each chapter successfully moves from different types of spaces and places and women’s relationships to them in validating her methodology. Her thought-provoking book makes a case for further study of the relationship of gender, space, and power.

REFERENCE


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“This book tells the story of the Golden Age of Piracy though the lives of four of its leading figures” (p. 7). Its focus is on Samuel Bellamy (known as Black Sam), Edward Thatch (better known as Blackbeard), Charles Vane, and Woodes Rogers (presented in this book as a hero, although this opinion wasn’t shared, especially by the victims of his depredations in the South Sea).

“The romantic myth of piracy didn’t follow the Golden Age, it helped create it” (p. 9). Woodard addresses the piracy myths as fabricated situations entangled in real historical events – myths that obscure the true history of
piracy in the so called “Golden Age” (1715-25). He criticizes representations of pirates that reinforced the romantic view of them as rebels and heroes, victims of marginalization, men and marines, persecuted by their own nations and almost forced to become pirates.

Samuel Bellamy called himself “the Robin Hood of the seas.” And there’s the “chivalrous behavior” of Henry Avery, a man forced to become a pirate, whose life story resembles more the story of Peter Blood (the protagonist of Captain Blood, the famous Hollywood creation). Woodes Roger is presented as an official charged with wiping out pirates in the Caribbean, but no mention is made of the fact that he was a pirate himself.

The book mainly focuses on the actions and some facts about individuals, myths, and legends. The story of these individuals, and the connecting ideas of a Republic of pirates or democracy among pirates’ ships, or maybe the perspective of piracy as almost an institution of rebellious fighters result in an extremely narrow analysis, lacking attention to the global context of the struggle among maritime and commercial powers during those centuries. Focusing on the actions of particular individuals fails to present a totally accurate historical view of the global context in which these actions developed.

There are many facts throughout the book, maybe too many, that from time to time drive the reader away from the main idea. Furthermore it would be much more accurate if Woodard had cited his research sources. Although there are some endnotes there are no reference numbers that connect quotes with their sources. For example, the list of prices and weights for the early eighteenth century on page 34 lacks a reference source.

This book is full of constructed, juicy details about the lives of certain individuals and their presence in the Caribbean. It should not be considered a history of piracy. As an historian, I believe that mixing fiction with historical facts will, in the end, confuse readers. If an author wishes to write a fictional narrative about pirates, it would have been better to use fictitious names and make clear from the beginning that the story is based only loosely upon historical fact.

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Barbados has a rich pre-Columbian Amerindian past that has often been overlooked in broader studies of Caribbean prehistory. In recent years, the professional archaeological research efforts of Peter L. Drewett and Mary Hill Harris have begun to shed new light on Barbados’s dynamic prehistory and elevate its Amerindian narrative to a prominent place in Caribbean archaeology. In *Above Sweet Waters*, they examine archaeological remains from the Port St. Charles site (formerly Heywoods Plantation) on the northwest coast of the island.

The Amerindian settlement at Port St. Charles began nearly 4,000 years ago and the site has been occupied almost continuously ever since. In the early twentieth century, avocational archaeologists recognized the importance of the site for its potential insights into Barbadian prehistory and identified and described the artifacts recovered from the property. In 1985, Drewett and Harris investigated the archaeological resources from Port St. Charles and began what would be the first of many successful field seasons at the site. While short-term, small-scale archaeological tests have been conducted on other prehistoric sites in Barbados, the Port St. Charles archaeological project has spanned three decades. The site is by far the most comprehensively recorded Amerindian settlement ever found in Barbados, an island better known archaeologically for its investigations into slavery and plantation life in the historic period.

For many years it was believed that Archaic Age foragers had bypassed Barbados along their route from the South American mainland through the Lesser Antilles. The presence of characteristic conch lip adzes at Port St. Charles, however, challenges that view and suggests that the earliest human occupation of the site began in the Archaic Age. One adze produced a radiocarbon date of nearly 4,000 years, which lends further support to this theory. Port St. Charles therefore provides some of the best evidence to date that Barbados had an Archaic Age population. Rising sea levels have probably
covered Archaic Age settlements and features at Port St. Charles, and this has limited our understanding of the island’s first inhabitants.

While the evidence for Archaic Age peoples is scant, Port St. Charles has provided a wealth of information about Barbados’s Ceramic Age populations. Radiocarbon dates indicate the possibility that ceramic-using horticulturalists, known to archaeologists as Saladoid, inhabited this area of Barbados’s northwest shoreline as early as AD 200. However, most of the evidence points to a Late Saladoid presence beginning around AD 600. The Saladoid evidence includes at least one human burial, an oval-shaped post structure, and numerous wood-lined and pot-lined waterholes. Pottery types also indicate a sizeable Late Saladoid presence. Dating and identifying pottery types is based largely on the measurement of wall thickness from various ceramic vessels, a method that Drewett and Harris helped advance.

The Saladoid tradition in the Lesser Antilles is followed by the Troumassoid, which is also well represented at Port St. Charles. In fact, the majority of archaeological materials recovered from Port St. Charles seem to reflect a concentrated settlement during the transitional phase from Late Saladoid to Troumassoid. The evidence includes at least three round house structures and numerous ceramic vessel forms, including incense burners, shallow bowls, and cassava griddles. In addition, there is clear evidence of Suazoid settlement, which began around AD 1,000 and continued perhaps as late as the time of European presence in the Caribbean. Drewett and Harris discuss historic period materials found at the site as well. They discovered, for example, a substantial post-in-ground structure dating to the late seventeenth century. The structure, which may have been a barn or cart shed, represents one of the few historic-period post-in-ground structures identified archaeologically in Barbados. Finally, a nineteenth-century burial was discovered, and the presence of an Amerindian grave good situated with the historic-period skeleton raises questions about the ethnic identity of the individual buried in that context.

Perhaps the most interesting discovery made at Port St. Charles was the presence of waterholes and the large bottomless ceramic pots used to line them. Drewett and Harris found numerous pot-lined wells. Such wells were necessary on coral islands, like Barbados, which lacked sizeable rivers and easily accessible fresh water sources. The bottomless pots used to line the wells, known as stack pots, date primarily to the late Saladoid / Troumassoid phase of settlement. Drewett and Harris speculate that the elaborate designs on some of the pots represent the spiritual importance of water in pre-Columbian Amerindian societies in the Caribbean and the ritualized nature of constructing waterholes. Human skeletal remains representing the burials of at least 32 Amerindians were also recovered from the site. Drewett and Harris speculate that one “special” burial containing grave goods may represent the remains of a village cacique.
Above Sweet Waters is, for the most part, a highly technical report that outlines the field methodologies and key discoveries made at Port St. Charles. The book will no doubt be a valuable resource for Caribbean archaeologists. Perhaps its greatest contribution is that it serves as a model for collaborative research between developers, Caribbean scholars, and foreign researchers. The success of the Port St. Charles archaeological project highlights the cooperative spirit of archaeological research and the knowledge that can be gained when various groups with shared interests in preserving and protecting national and cultural resources work together for a common goal.

From Rainforest to Cane Field in Cuba: An Environmental History since 1492. REINALDO FUNES MONZOTE. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008. xv + 357 pp. (Cloth US$ 65.00)

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Several colonial botanical gardens were established in the British West Indies in the late 1800s. Founded in 1872, the garden in Trinidad housed early forestry reports written by the island’s former Spanish rulers, men thought to be more environmentally responsible than their British or French peers. Accordingly, Trinidadians at the turn of the century considered themselves blessed by a Spanish-influenced environmental sensitivity absent in neighboring islands. Yet this historically induced smugness would have been hard to justify in light of the environmental transformation in Cuba at the time where forests were giving way to sugar cane. Of course these changes had little to do with Cuba’s Spanish heritage and much to do with its becoming an economic appendage of the United States.

The American-influenced deforestation of the Cuban countryside marks the culmination of the fine environmental history written by Cuban historian Reinaldo Funes Monzote and translated by Alex Martin. Originally published in Mexico in 2004, the study received a UNESCO book prize. Funes Monzote has since reworked his material for the English edition, adding a glossary and conclusion. His primary source material is from Cuban and Spanish archives, and he has augmented this archival material with secondary sources in Spanish and English. In his preface he thanks a number of
American and Canadian scholars, as well as Cuban and Spanish colleagues, for advice and suggestions.

The book’s thesis is best captured by a statement at the end: “In this book I have sought ... to show the great transformation of the island’s landscapes from the point where sugar production began to take shape in the last third of the eighteenth century until the cane plantations completed their occupation of most of the flat and gently rolling natural regions in the 1920s” (p. 274). Funes Monzote mentions and discusses only briefly the environmentally oriented academic work describing postrevolutionary Cuba in a useful bibliographic essay (pp. 333-41). The book itself consists of seven chronological chapters. Throughout, photos and diagrams of sugar cane, forest devastation, railroad engines, teams of oxen, and enormous central sugar grinding mills help to bring the story to life. The several historic maps are less useful, a number being faint and nearly indecipherable. Magnitudes discussed in the study are not readily appreciated by the non-Cuban reader; land areas, for example, are given in caballerías, a unit somewhat over 33 acres in size and derived from Cuba’s colonial period.

Funes Monzote shows effectively how, from almost the earliest Spanish colonization of Cuba, rivalries between sugar cane planters and shipbuilding authorities played themselves out within the contexts of fluctuating international events, feuding political personalities, and changing resource needs. These influences and others could often be read in the local landscape. The early deforestation around Havana for fuel and building supplies was overshadowed by shipbuilding needs. Havana was Spain’s principal shipyard not only for the Americas but also for the empire as a whole at various times in the eighteenth century. In 1789 broad legal authority was conferred upon the local director of the Royal Forest Reserves, marking the culmination of the Spanish navy’s efforts to control Cuban forest exploitation. But fortunes soon shifted, leading to a royal edict in 1815 allowing private property owners freedom to fell trees, a watershed event in Funes Monzote’s eyes: “The royal edict of August 30, 1815 left the expanding sugar industry completely free to invade Cuba’s wooded areas” (p. 127).

In the next century, as the Cuban forests were removed at varying rates to make way for sugar cane, estate owners and other observers noted the environmental consequences. The absence of protective forest covers reduced stream flows in the dry seasons and led to soil erosion in rainy periods. The coming of the railroad, the first line proceeding south from Havana in 1837(!), was the “decisive element” in the forest’s demise (p. 183). After that, sugar cane planters could extend cultivation into seemingly endless stretches of previously untilled land, especially into the central and eastern parts of the island. It was simply a matter of clearing the forest, planting cane, and realizing bumper crops with little thought to husbanding areas left behind. Paralleling these wasteful cultivation practices, meetings were held warning
of soil depletion, papers were published enumerating disappearing mammal and bird species, and various warnings, decrees, and even laws were passed to curb rampant deforestation, all with limited or no results. In 1876 for instance the Woodlands Ordinances for Cuba and Puerto Rico were enacted. Funes Monzote suggests that the law was hardly noticed in the former place because the forests were being destroyed so quickly (p. 206)!

*From Rainforest to Cane Field* could be improved upon. The writing is dense, and suffers from an excess of overly lengthy sentences and impenetrable paragraphs. When Funes Monzote concludes the book by proclaiming that Cuban sugar cane cultivation from 1815 to 1926 was “dazzling but unsustainable,” one wonders where similarly pleasing turns of phrase were earlier in the study. And the story cries out for firsthand recollections, which are almost certainly available through oral history. The first quarter of the twentieth century is sufficiently recent that a few old people there still remember from their childhoods the smells of smoke from cane fires, the sounds of train engine whistles, and the sights of workers leaving at dawn and returning at dusk, the memories that can truly enliven environmental history.

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The traumatic global food crisis of the twenty-first century brings again into sharp relief questions related to development policy and its impact on agriculture. The question of land use in this context demands urgent reconsideration and critical rethinking by scholars, policy makers, and activists. Carefully crafted interdisciplinary texts on this issue and related subjects are particularly welcome at this time.

*Caribbean Land and Development Revisited* (*CLD Revisited*) is a general text that, as its title suggests, seeks to revisit the land question in the Caribbean and to extend the editors’ earlier ten-chapter volume, *Land and*
Development in the Caribbean (1987). In that earlier work the issues of the food crisis loomed, as the editors pointed out the “food deficit” profile of the Caribbean, while noting the increase in “uncultivated farm land” and arguing that the “key to a reversal of this depressed agricultural situation lies in a clearer understanding of contemporary attitudes of land” (Besson & Momsen 1987:1). This first volume set out to challenge “Eurocentric ‘outsider’ models of development and the significance of Creole ‘insider’ perspectives” (Besson & Momsen 1987:1).

Unlike the earlier volume, which focused exclusively on the Anglophone Caribbean, five of the eighteen chapters of CLD Revisited deal with other areas of the Caribbean – Martinique, Guadeloupe, the Dominican Republic, Suriname, and Cuba. In CLD Revisited, the editors also seek to deepen the earlier book’s views by framing their offerings under four new headings – “Historical Perspectives on Land and Crop Production,” “Policy, Planning, and Management,” “Land for the Peasantry?” and “Landscape, Migration, and Development.” The chapters grouped in this way provide readers with a general sense of broader issues regarding land and development and disrupt the earlier text’s reliance on binaries such as “insider/outsider” and “Eurocentric/local” (the latter invariably read as “peasants”) as analytical frames. CLD Revisited wrestles to break from earlier binarisms expressed in and around a romanticization of peasantry, but elements of these, central to the earlier text, are still present. This attention to complexity, not provided in every essay, is especially evident when the text is read in an interdisciplinary fashion in an attempt to bring disparate pieces from different parts of the book together.

This ambitious book touches on a variety of issues, ranging from land use to the reorganization of agriculture in Cuba’s special period. It also offers analyses of squatting, land policies, migration, Montserratians’ dynamic virtual landedness, or landlessness, reinterpretations of Martinique’s historiography, and depeasantization in Barbados.

Elements of this rethinking project are clearly present in the essays by Bonham C. Richardson and Lawrence S. Grossman, whose arguments are provocative of a certain rethinking of the politics of change. Richardson’s “The importance of the 1897 British Royal Commission” suggests that it might be better viewed as a response to the agency of plantation workers rather than as simply a colonial imposition. Moreover, for these workers the Commission was an opportunity to indict their employers. Planters, too, pressed their political advantage in this moment to castigate colonial policy, thus fracturing the interests connecting “Eurocentric” populations, and to some extent the colonial state itself. These developments, combined with natural disasters in the form of hurricanes, hastened the demise of plantations and opened a window of opportunity for the sale of land to workers.
In “Colonial Office and Soil Conservation in the British Caribbean 1938-1950,” Grossman argues that the colonial preoccupation with conservation, while not necessarily emanating from “local” demands but rather from global fears, had the effect of introducing (with a sort of missionary zeal) concerns for the environment into the development policy of the day. Grossman also notes the disconnect between resident colonials and the Colonial Office, pointing out the policy zeal of the latter. If his essay is read along with “Agrobiodiversity as an Environmental Management Tool in Small-Scale Farming Landscapes” by Balfour Spence and Elizabeth Thomas-Hope, or even Mimi Sheller’s “Arboreal Landscapes of Power and Resistance,” one might ask how and in what ways earlier colonial policy of conservation might have influenced the agricultural practices of small farmers, including their arboreal sensibilities. And how might these refashioned practices and beliefs throw light on a different understanding of creolization, for instance, not as insider/processes or biological mixtures, but rather as a dynamic condition/experience and process and practice expressive of contested, hybrid, and mutual agendas (see Crichlow 2009). From such a perspective it would be possible to rethink the notion of postcoloniality beyond the linear temporality offered in this text – i.e. (after) colonialism – and bring it in sync with the term’s more productive use. That is when it is concerned with the folding of temporalities through particular strategies, or alternatively the ways in which the colonial/postcolonial experience constituted “sedimented histories” (Moore 2005) or “times of entanglement” (Mbembe 2001), within the various practices of development narratives. These “stitches on time” (to borrow a phrase from Dube 2004) and correlated strategies inhere in the struggles of indigenous and maroon peoples in Suriname who have set the state against itself by appealing to transnational agencies like the United Nations in their struggles for territory, as Ellen-Rose Kambel chronicles in “Land, Development, and Indigenous Rights in Suriname: The Role of International Human Rights Law.” This and other practices noted by various contributors certainly beg the question of what we mean by “the Caribbean,” a term that warrants a dynamic engagement, especially for those writing on transnationalisms.

Many of the essays in CLD Revisited extend the thinking of its predecessor, but several also succeed in going beyond those constricted binary perspectives, for an interrogation of the sorts of assumptions that underlie analyses, policies, and constructs. This provides material for scholars to wonder productively about the kinds of governmentality (to use a well-known Foucauldian construct generically described as the conduct of conduct) that emerged through social relationships produced in, and made by, “landscapes,” and about states co-existing in complex relations with their “subjects” of power, in the Caribbean projects of “Land and Development” (Crichlow 2007).
Ayala and Bernabe have written an admirable history of Puerto Rico. An extensive array of endnotes, covering some forty pages, identify the secondary materials, newspaper accounts, and decisions of the courts that sustain this research. The breadth of the sources consulted is impressive as it ranges from periodicals such as *American Banker* to Piri Thomas’s “Puerto Rican Obituary.”

The book has a sustained theoretical approach throughout, probably on account of the similar academic and ideological experiences of its two authors, both of whom graduated from the prestigious Jesuit-run school in San Juan, earned undergraduate degrees in Princeton (Bernabe in 1981 and Ayala in 1982), and obtained their Ph.D.s (in 1989 and 1990) at the Department of Sociology of SUNY Binghamton. Currently, Bernabe is a researcher of...
Spanish literature at the University of Puerto Rico in Río Piedras and Ayala teaches sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Their career specialties complement each other in an uncommon, yet refreshing, way for a book of history. For instance, when discussing the fate of tobacco farming and manufacturing, they refer (as any reader would expect from a history book) to the expansion of the Tobacco Trust, the plight of tobacco growers that eventually led to a 1931-32 boycott. However, they refer to two short stories by Miguel Meléndez Muñoz about Portalatin Aponte, a farmer who embodied the vicissitudes, pains, and glories of a small farmer in the shift from coffee to tobacco growing (p. 43). They accomplish the same feat with coffee by intertwining Manuel Zeno Gandía’s La charca with their narrative on the coffee industry (p. 46). A section entitled “Enter Muñoz Marín” represents an excellent use of literature to illustrate and document the political. Its analysis of future governor Luis Muñoz Marín as a young poet considers that he did not abandon “the topic of despair and future deliverance” of the downtrodden (p. 99). In a consistent manner, literature has complete chapters of its own.

The book’s organization generally follows Belgian economist Ernest Mandel’s long waves. Accordingly, the twentieth century had two long waves separated by World War II and each wave had an initial phase of economic expansion (1898-1930, 1950-75) followed by one of retrenchment (1930-50 and 1975 to the present). Chapters 1-8 cover the first wave and 9-15 the latter half of the century.

Complementing the Mandelian organization of the book, the political status question and Puerto Rican identity loom large, constituting powerful threads that weave the tapestry of the book. More specifically, a good part of the text rests on an ongoing debate with national identity issues raised by Antonio S. Pedreira’s Insularismo (1934) which Ayala and Bernabe hold to be “the most debated essay in Puerto Rican literary history” (p. 391).

The book is not an aseptic narrative nor does it pretend to be a value-free (p. 1) recounting of events. It is written by intellectuals with a historical perspective accompanied by social and political commitments to the betterment of Puerto Ricans. The “imperatives of capitalist accumulation and of survival in a competitive market” (p. 332) are two forces that work against their commitment to a radical democratic imagery. Consequently, Ayala and Bernabe engage scholars of differing views, such as Carmen Luisa González who concluded “that the Foraker Act was not the ‘result of a unilateral imposition’ but rather ‘a dispositive produced within the space of negotiation that opened in 1898’” (p. 40). They argue that the fact that some groups prospered under the Act does not deny colonialism, but rather qualifies it. Another engagement refers to the critical endorsement that several local intellectuals gave to the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan after the September 11 attacks. Ayala and Bernabe hold no sympathy for Islamic fundamentalism but explicitly
disapprove of the support of U.S. policies in the Central Asian country (p. 329).

The book’s plan explicitly privileges a discussion of politics, economics, and culture. It is a pity that Ayala and Bernabe deliberately chose not to discuss religion. They miss the enormous impact of the Protestant missionaries after the Invasion in 1898, the Catholic Cheo – in the lay missionaries with the gift of tongues known as the Hermanos Cheos – response that followed, and the colossal upswing of Pentecostalism following World War I, up to the sizable influence of religious leaders in present-day politics. Fortunately for those interested in these themes, Samuel Silva Gotay and Reinaldo Román have addressed the issue (see Gotay 1997, 2005; Román 2007).

For a text aimed at an English-speaking readership, the book might usefully have cited the translations of several important works well discussed in the text. These include Antonio S. Pedreira’s *Insularismo*, José Luis González’s *The Four-Storeyed Country*, and Luis Rafael Sánchez’s *Macho Camacho’s Beat*, to cite just a few. Fortunately for English-speaking readers, the *Memoirs of Bernardo Vega* are cited in translation.

The discussion of the agricultural sector of the economy during the first half of the twentieth century center on the very important orientation of sugar and tobacco exports to the United States and the ensuing loss of markets by coffee exporters to be followed, during the thirties, by the sugar crisis. Although the book states that about one third of the total cultivated land was dedicated to “food crops for local consumption” (p. 35), there is no recognition of the relevance, changes, or breakdown of the minor fruits. A map (p. 34) graphically reproduces the schema when it divides the land use into the three major crops: sugar cane, coffee, and tobacco, with no mention of minor fruits. Thus, according to the 1935 census, municipalities as Trujillo Alto, Isabela, Corozal with more land dedicated to minor fruits (45.7, 43.3, and 31.9 percent, respectively) than any of the major crops are considered to be either sugar or coffee municipalities. The downplaying of the mixed-crop farmer has repercussions in the cultural realm. Ramón Frade’s iconic painting “El Pan Nuestro” centers on a minor-fruit farmer carrying a large bunch of plantains. *A jíbaro* or peasant who packs a mare with a load of his produce for the city’s market is the main character of Rafael Hernández’s still-popular song “Lamento Borincano.”

In spite of these minor shortcomings, I agree with Francisco Scarano’s statement, on the book jacket, that this book is the standard against which any other about twentieth-century Puerto Rico will be judged.
In 1991, Trinidad and Tobago became the first Caribbean country to pass a domestic violence act. *Everyday Harm*, focused on this act, analyzes data Lazarus-Black collected between 1997 and 1999, primarily in a northern Trinidad town. Chapter 1 presents views of coalitions and debates, with general reference to the economic, political, and social factors that made passage of the act possible. Chapter 2 tabulates applications and their disposition (for women against men, men against women, and male and female homosexuals against each other), parties filing cross-complaints, mandated offenses, case duration, causes for dismissal, and comparison to other locations in Trinidad and Tobago and countries having enacted similar statutes.

Because the tables do not cross-tabulate socioeconomic variables, they provide little assistance in understanding social variations among litigants glimpsed in the qualitative analysis of cases presented in Chapters 3 and 4. Superficial historical, economic, and political summaries poorly contextualize the complexity of the cases described, especially in Chapter 6, “Being Family, Doing Gender, and Making a Living in the Caribbean.” The lack of systematic attention to systemic socioeconomic factors within and across households also makes superficial the quantitative and qualitative comparison of Trinidad and Tobago with other countries in her brief discussion, “Cultures of Reconciliation, East and West” (pp. 142-56).
Lazarus-Black restricts her attention primarily to what domestic violence law can and cannot do to help in “regendering the state,” defined as a process that should bring to public attention and legal consideration categories and activities that were formerly unnamed. These categories, she contends, “constituted harm to women, denied them rights, silenced them, or limited their capacity to engage in actions available to men” (pp. 21-22). The analysis proceeds as if all men are equal heirs to patriarchal dominance, and therefore underanalyzes power differences among men and their consequences for powers that women, children, and elders (of both sexes) have to instigate or perpetrate violence in domestic units.

Finding that the courts dismissed applications for half of most categories and nearly half of the remaining by-gender categories, though the sample is highly skewed for women against men (of 550 filing, only 74 involved men filing against women), and includes few homosexual conflicts, the protections of which the act at best nominally applies, Lazarus-Black accepts her skewed dataset as consistent with studies demonstrating that women are the overwhelming targets of domestic violence. From the statistical consistency, she tries to explain the outcomes as adverse consequences for women’s empowerment. Lazarus-Black found that, when added together, three causes (failure to show, withdrawal, and accepting reconciliation agreement) accounted for the largest percentage of dismissed cases. She concludes that the prevalence of these three causes demonstrates how cultural and legal practices combine to produce structural deflection. By structural deflection she means that the act offers women illusory power because the way it is implemented maintains and reinforces male hegemony. Lazarus-Black claims to be building on Paulette Pierce’s use of structural deflection, by pushing its implications beyond “elite” male conduct, but she fails to note that Pierce’s reference to elite men does not identify an economic class. Instead, Pierce focuses on a racially subordinated population in a racially subordinated organization in which elite means those males with a capacity to subordinate other male and female organization members who knew less about revolutionary texts and could not speak street-savvy language. The primary weapon for Pierce’s elite men was the verbal abuse these skills allowed them to deploy against weak men and impoverished love-starved women. The abuse was effective largely because the members who lacked these skills accepted that for the sake of racial loyalty and subordinated national pride these elite men were best able to project a positive image of “civilized Black masculinity” to a world beyond the organization. While Pierce views the nationalist ideology as “suicidal,” Lazarus-Black points to a rise in nationalist pride as a factor that aided the passage of an act to civilize men in domestic relations.

Having homogenized male power and female powerlessness, after presenting cases that “beat the odds” imposed by structural deflection (Chapter 3), Chapters 4 through 6 describe how masculine-devised “court rites” “color
law’s efficacy as a form of protest and protection” for women seeking redress from domestic violence (p. 157), aided by the way professionals manipulate time and a “culture of reconciliation,” operating in and outside the courts, to assure that persons who file and persist are made to feel guilty of violating cultural norms. Lazarus-Black concludes that studying the outcomes of the act’s implementation helps us understand why “Discerning the complexities of how law works reveals the real work that is necessary to address everyday harm, to implement the domestic violence law and to make a future free of violence against women” (p. 176).

Domestic violence law, on which Trinidad and Tobago modeled its 1991 act, increasingly includes verbal as well as physical assault. Women, children, and elders have capacities, different, but not necessarily less, than men, as the “stronger sex,” to perpetrate verbal and status violence. The 1999 act that replaced it followed the general pattern of legal efforts to balance or make inclusive forms of violence. The effort should, but in Lazarus-Black’s analysis does not, raise questions about whether reference to statistics for women as overwhelming targets of domestic violence properly captures gendered roles in instigating and perpetrating violence in short- and long-term conflicts. Instead, uncritically accepting the “overwhelming target” view, she explains as exceptions (bad apples in the barrel of female powerlessness) cases of women abusing the power granted in the act’s provisions, by underestimating their use of verbal and physical violence in altercations or by misrepresenting male violence to gain custody of children or control over men’s property, even as the next version of the act (1999) tried to cure the infirmities that permitted the abuse.

The current politics of victimhood and related values that shape legal provisions encourage Lazarus-Black’s negative stance on the act’s “reconciliatory provisions” – merely a means to maintain and reinforce male hegemony – even as countries that for the past three decades have tried solving problems with more laws, now facing economic and social consequences of high rates of incarceration, search for combinations of reconciliatory and compensatory processes to reduce the reliance on retributive law. Most importantly, this work demonstrates the difficulty of devising methods and analyses that do not silence attention to complex interplays of forms of violence and the powers all parties bring differently and unequally to manipulating legal provisions to aid them in producing and deploying “everyday harm” rather than merely seeking the protection of the law. It leaves unaddressed how to analyze what regendering a state would entail were it more than a call to law to substitute one (heterosexual) gender’s power for another’s.
This book is timely and topical. The forced union of Trinidad with Tobago was dodged by tension, as each side was suspicious and resentful of the other. At the present time, the question of the relationship between the two islands is center-stage, as there is an accepted need for a revision of both the constitution of Trinidad and Tobago and the Tobago House of Assembly Act (1996). Luke’s book provides important details on the saga of the union and the circumstances around which the relationship was forged, which can inform the very important process of constitutional changes that are currently under consideration.

The book makes an important contribution to the historiography of the Caribbean. By its focus on the experiences of one of the smaller Caribbean islands, it serves to reduce the generalized perception of historical uniformity in the region. Many of the smaller islands of the Caribbean remain underrepresented in the existing histories of the region, as they have been dwarfed by the larger more prominent units. Luke has removed the shroud of secrecy over the history of this small island, rescued Tobago from its present invisibility in Caribbean history, and thus widened the scope and extent of Caribbean history. It is hoped that this publication will stimulate further research on these under-researched areas.

The book provides a wealth of knowledge on the history of Tobago. It details the complex story of the island’s development as a colony under
British rule and later, by sub-contract, under the colonial administration of Trinidad. It identifies the problems stimulated by this latter arrangement and the factors that dominated the history of the island across the period under study and provides information on the colonial officials and representatives of the people. Luke captures the mood of the people of Tobago, as they responded to the challenges they faced, with marked accuracy. The text is forcefully written, very analytical, and easy to read.

The eleven chapters span approximately the 100-year period from about 1889 to 1980, from just before union to self-government and discuss the significant issues which emerged across the period and led to the demand for self-government by the disenchanted people of Tobago. These are centered around identity and autonomy. The book attains its objectives, which are to show that identity was the main buttress of the autonomy movement, that the problems which beset Tobago were longstanding, and that the charges of neglect and underdevelopment made by Tobago against Trinidad were well founded.

Luke analyzes the island’s history by tracing the development of Tobago’s identity through responses to constitutional change. In particular, he identifies the bitter pill of union and its backlash, and the poor relations of the people of the two islands, as the factors which provided the context for the development of the “we/they” antipathies, the essential ingredient in the identity-formation process in Tobago. The basic tool for his analysis is the autonomy continuum, which classifies peoples’ views of the relationship between the islands. The integrationists saw the union as indivisible, the centrists stood on the middle ground veering to the left or right from time to time, the separatists/autonomists were left of center, and the secessionists were on the extreme left. This continuum permits Luke to realistically chart the variation of sentiments expressed in relation to particular issues, at different points in time and of course in relation to personal and class interests.

Luke utilizes a wide range of sources and provides an exhaustive bibliography which adds to the book’s value. The book accurately presents the concerns of the people of Tobago and their reactions to the problems that faced them in the union. While its theoretical approach is interesting and useful, there are instances where the argument is clouded. Luke’s reference to Tobago as the minor partner in the union (p. 102) is not in keeping with either his representation of the proud Tobagonian (p. 29) or the way Tobagonians viewed themselves. There are also some contradictions in his assessment of the role of colonial officials and the resident planter class in the process of identity formation. For example, he credits the racist commissioner, William Low, with both a strong sense of Tobagonian identity, which affected his responses to the issue of wardship for the island (pp. 103-4), and a “genuine interest in the welfare of Tobago” (p. 105). It is difficult to accept that a colonial official had become so affianced with the island as to develop
identity responses similar to those of his charges. Similarly, the positioning of the Tobago Planters Association on the autonomy continuum is of dubious value given that they were serving their specific class interests (pp. 117-24). Perhaps a concentration on the variations of the views on the matter expressed by the lower classes and those who were resident in Trinidad would have been of greater value. These drawbacks notwithstanding, this book is a significant addition to the historiography of the Caribbean and a must-read for anyone interested in the history of Tobago and in Caribbean history more generally.


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In this history of dub music, Michael Veal presents “the half that never been told” – the story of how sound engineers and DJs in Jamaica developed a way of reconfiguring and “versioning” popular songs that in the long run had as much global impact as the recordings of Bob Marley. The book is a primer for cultural literacy in Jamaican music of the 1970s and its offshoots in Europe and the United States, and also a theoretical/philosophical consideration of that music’s significance. Veal is above all a keen listener, and a good deal of space is devoted to brief (page-long) exegeses of specific recordings. (There is no CD with the book, but many of the recordings he describes are available on iTunes.)

After an introduction, Chapters 1 and 2 describe the relationship between Jamaican studios and the competitive sound systems that generated demand for their records. Faced with a relatively small market, Jamaican studios made money by selling the same recordings in multiple “versions” for DJs who wanted to play something distinctive and customized. Studios supplied remixes on demand, using an acetate machine that could make single copies of a record on a metal plate coated with wax. These “dub plates” degraded quickly, but they avoided the delay of pressing records at a factory. Veal
argues that sound engineers who applied their real-time mixing skills to these remixes became improvising performers themselves, catching the vibe and dancing as they worked the mixing board in musical time, sometimes creating a whole new version in the three minutes it took to play the master tape.

The distinctive techniques and aesthetics that emerged from this remixing practice came to be known as “dub.” Veal shows how dub versions represented an alternative concept of authorship that favored the sound engineer over the composer, prefiguring “the digital age of popular music production, in which reconfiguration has become more important as a compositional strategy than traditional conceptions of composition” (p. 93). In this view “a song” can only be understood through the aggregate of its versions, each of which plays upon the popularity and meanings of earlier versions. This effect of “accumulation” is one of several aesthetic principles Veal identifies, as he develops a vocabulary appropriate to dub, including such terms as “dropping out,” “fragmentation,” “incompletion,” “drum and bass,” and “riddim.” He also describes the innovative use of existing electronic equipment and technologies like filtering, equalization, echo, and reverb.

These aesthetics and techniques themselves become clear through their accumulated illustration in the middle chapters of the book, where Veal reviews the careers of influential sound engineers. Chapter 3 focuses on Sylvan Morris, who recorded Bob Marley’s first albums at Coxsone Dodd’s Studio One. Chapter 4 describes the work of King Tubby (Osbourne Ruddock), who honed the art of remixing, and created a sound that reflected the tensions of ghetto life during the increasingly violent decade of the 1970s. Chapter 5 describes the work of Lee “Scratch” Perry, the most performative of the leading dub engineers, whose Black Ark studio produced recordings in the late 1970s that Veal portrays as an “organically” Jamaican sound infused with African spirituality, wed to the image of a “mad scientist.” Chapter 6 focuses on Errol Thompson, who went beyond the practice of reconfiguring original recordings, adding many new sounds to create dense and varied textures. Chapter 7 describes the end of the dub era, marked by Prince Jammy’s hit song, “Under me Sleng Teng,” which used a riddim created on a Casio keyboard, and ushered in the era of digital studio production and the new style of “ragga” or dancehall music.

The book takes a strong philosophical turn in Chapter 8, where Veal relates dub to the postcolonial predicament, and specifically to the disruption of slavery and the project of reclaiming African cultural memory in reconfigured fragments and echoes. Veal argues that the Caribbean was a logical breeding ground for dub’s “afro-futurist” vision, underscoring his argument with a beautiful quote by Guyanese poet David Dabydeen: “We were freed of certain traditions, knowledges and so on, and while we have sorrow about the loss of those, nevertheless, we are always on the threshold of originality” (p. 218). He also makes links between sound production and language, and
points out that dub first developed in the sound systems as a platform for the DJs’ speech, making it an important site for political discourse (although Veal does not describe DJ uses of dub in much detail – his own experience as a listener and researcher after the fact favors a focus on records rather than live sound system performances).

The last chapter follows dub music across the ocean to England where it was taken up by both Jamaican expatriate and native English producers, with links to the punk music scene. Veal also reviews the influence of dub on German and American electronic music producers. And in hip hop he describes the “revolution of the soundscape over the song” as an outgrowth of Jamaican remix techniques (p. 246). Finally he illustrates the influence of dub aesthetics and meanings in the writing of black intellectuals like Paul D. Miller, Louis Chude-Soquei, and Paul Gilroy, arguing that the black modernity of these writers shares with dub its impulse to reclaim the past, in contrast to European definitions of modernity as a break with the past.

Veal draws on a variety of oral and written sources to reconstruct the stories, the techniques, and the ethos of Jamaican recording studios in the 1970s. His knowledge of dub recordings is especially impressive, and his inspired and imaginative writing relates their sounds to social turmoil and diasporic consciousness. This is an important book about an extraordinary and influential moment of musical innovation.


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Since 1956 when Caribbean Quarterly brought out a special issue on Carnival, scholarly research into the Trinidad Carnival has been uneven. Errol Hill’s The Trinidad Carnival, Mandate for a National Theatre was published in 1972, after which we have seen excellent studies of the calypso and of steelband. But the masquerade has been less well served (Hill 1972). In 1984 two papers were presented at a conference at the University of the West
Indies and some others were presented at a conference in Trinity College, Hartford in 1998 (published in The Drama Review and republished as Culture in Action – The Trinidad Experience). Now Garth L. Green and Philip W. Scher have added to the literature another anthology: Trinidad Carnival, The Cultural Politics of a Transnational Festival.

The Trinidad Carnival is certainly transnational. It has given birth to huge carnivals in many countries in the Caribbean, North America, and Europe. Keith Nurse (2004) counts thirty diasporic carnivals in Britain, twenty in the United States, seven in Canada, and four in Europe. Green and Scher’s “cultural politics” is more questionable, however:

We see Carnival as integral to the cultural politics of Trinidad and Tobago. It is this centrality that places it at the core of efforts of West Indian migrants to draw upon the carnival form and its history in emerging local cultural politics of identity. The idea of cultural politics we develop in this introduction relies upon political economy approaches within anthropology that compel one to consider the place of “class, capitalism, and power” in the constitution of localized subjects, yet can also account for subjects who may occupy multiple localities, as can be argued in the case of the transnational communities considered in these essays. (p. 3)

One can see Carnival as being integral to whatever one chooses but it seems more insightful to view Carnival as a celebration of, among other things, highly rhythmic Africa-derived music and dance, which have long been the cement of exiled communities. After all, African-derived music has consolidated various groups, ranging from basement parties, through neighbourhood gangs, to entire nations. (Actually, in New York, whose puritan environment is quite inhospitable to the bacchanalian anarchism of the Trinidad Carnival, the Brooklyn labour Day carnival has become less a song-and-dance affair and more a celebration of a different cornerstone of community: food. Recall that the word festival comes from feast.)

Consisting of ten essays, plus an editors’ introduction and an afterword by Roger Abrahams, Trinidad Carnival was intended as a celebration of the special 1956 Caribbean Quarterly issue devoted to Carnival. Alas, the essays anthologized by Green and Scher owe less to the straightforward empiricism of the 1956 writers than to recent fashions in cultural studies.

Three essays, for instance, discuss a sideshow of traditional mas, Vie La Cou, which is small-scale and peripheral to Carnival, even if it is enjoyable for kids. Pamela Franco claims that that revival of “traditional” mas was a response to the dominance of women in the modern Carnival, but the so-called traditions were actually a black nationalist male invention of the 1956 Caribbean Quarterly group. Garth Green dismisses the same revival for being commercially inspired, and stresses its inauthenticity in comparison with Leighton James’s large sculpture of a 1959 mas band Flowers and
Fruits. Philip Scher argues that Vie la Cou and other traditional revivals were a product of the nostalgia of returning migrants. Patricia De Freitas, one such returning migrant, makes no mention of nostalgia but rather wrings her “theoretical” musing from the experience of playing mas back home after studying anthropology in the United States.

Exhibiting the most extreme symptoms of empirical malnutrition and theoretical obesity is Robin Balliger’s paper on “The politics of cultural value and the value of cultural politics.” Balliger looks at the pros and cons of intellectual property legislation, which producers local and foreign favor, and cassette pirates and consumers are against. He concludes that “Popular expression in Trinidad has always required resources and has been involved in the circuit of global capitalism – which negates teleological narratives of a pure culture of resistance becoming a purely commodified popular culture” (p. 214).

Fortunately, other papers provide more useful empirical knowledge. While Lyndon Phillip dismisses the calls for a return to tradition, he also gives the interesting story of Caribana’s history, including its forgotten origins in the Emancipation Day Calypso Carnivals of the 1950s. Victoria Razak tells a similarly unknown story of carnival in Aruba and the ethnic and class conflicts that fuel its history. Nowhere, however, is there a description of the mas.

Shannon Dudley recounts how Starlift Steel Orchestra performed a composition by their arranger Ray Hollman in 1972 in the Panorama steelband competition in Trinidad, and the ensuing furore caused by Starlift’s break with the tradition of arranging a song by a calypsonian. Ray Funk and Donald Hill describe the few crazy months in 1956-57 when calypso’s popularity in the United States briefly skyrocketed before falling back to earth: “An incredible number of calypso records were rushed to the market, nightclubs around the country switched to an all-calypso policy, and many in the industry came to believe that rock’n’roll was dead and that calypso was taking over” (p. 178).

Fifty years after its publication, the Caribbean Quarterly issue is still necessary reading for anyone interested in Carnival. It would be surprising, on the other hand, if Trinidad Carnival: The Cultural Politics of a Transnational Festival is read by anyone after five years.

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Governing Sound: The Cultural Politics of Trinidad’s Carnival Musics.

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Calypso has been viewed as open-air folkloric performance, as theater, through the eyes of literary critics and, from the points of view of performer-scholars and through exegesis of politically oriented lyrics, as unfolding in various forms depending upon the era and the venue. Most recently, concepts of power, identity, and history (Foucauldian “genealogy”) are central ideas in humanistic academe, including Caribbean studies. In this work, Jocelyne Guilbault has created a grand blend of Trinidad’s fulsome Carnival scholarship in a masterful manner. She has seamlessly woven together Foucauldian theory and ethnomusicological practice. By incorporating a variety of Carnivalesque statements of identity by selected “players,” she has created a calypso “genealogy” that does not deny a sense of historical chronology. Furthermore, her explication of an ethnography of discourse does not deny but enhances her own objective ethnography. Through it all are the usual issues of power through creation and performance and the ever-transforming personal and national conception of calypso, which is always in a state of becoming, just as it establishes an identity of being.

For Guilbault, “governing sound” is more than governmental power over calypso venues and expressive and verbal contents, and includes the acts of “governing technologies” by performers and musical entrepreneurs. She reads calypso in a wide framework; she not only examines traditional calypso as it is performed in Carnival season in the tents and other venues but she also notes genres that have a family resemblance to calypso, which she rightly sees as spin-offs of calypso. Rather than focusing on the resultant list of calypso genres or examining the sounds of calypso per se, she is interested
in technologies used to produce and disseminate sound and in people and institutional frameworks that control those technologies.

Guilbault explores three periods of calypso—“colonial, anticolonial/nationalist, and neoliberal” (p. 270). Part One of her study (Chapters 1-5) deals with the first two eras while Part Two concerns the current, neoliberal era. In Chapter 1, Guilbault sees the mantra that Trinidad is “the Land of Calypso” (p. 22) as a process of the centrality of Trinidad in the political economy of the region rather than as a historical fact of a particular musical style or related styles. Perhaps Trinidad is the Land of Calypso only in some hegemonic sense. This calls to mind something that Dan Crowley, one of my mentors, once told me; he said he was not sure that calypso originated in Trinidad. Dan, whose spouse was born and raised on the island, had wide experience in the Eastern Caribbean. Indeed, he was once listed in the Guinness Book of Records as the most traveled paraplegic in the world and he undoubtedly observed and participated in Latinate Carnivals in more countries than soucouyant. In his modernist, colonial-era scholarship, a case for calypso’s birth could be made for Martinique, St. Lucia, or some other place as easily as for Trinidad. And John Cowley, historian of all things carnival and antichrist to postmodernism (fellow historian Kim Johnson praised his approach by calling it “British empiricism”) also thinks that calypso, as a genre, did not originate in Trinidad, separate from similar genres in the area.

In Chapter 2 Guilbault applies Foucault’s notion of “genealogy” to Carnival and views calypso as a “problem-space” wherein the “technologies” of the setting as well as the performer’s intentions provide an opportunity for “consequential effects” (p. 40). The history of calypso is not a linear march of important events set in a “cause-comes-before-effect” chronology. The history of calypso is a broad ancestry of bits and pieces of calypso whenever it may insinuate itself into Carnival, even if it occurs outside of chronological time. In other words, genealogical time deals with events analyzed as “colonial, anticolonial/nationalist, and neoliberal” that may not precisely exist as discrete chronological epochs. Chapter 3, “Power, Practice, and Competitions,” takes up several issues, especially the effects of presentation and technology in calypsonians’ quest for stardom. Chapter 4 deals with the contemporary calypso performance itself by tracing the careers of Black Stalin, Calypso Rose, Denyse Plummer, Crazy, and De Mighty Trini. The next chapter focuses on how, post-independence, “the sound(ing)s of calypso became an important site in which to articulate received notions of modernity, authenticity, originality, and ‘cultural’ dependence” (pp. 135-36).

Chapter 6 covers the post-independence era, especially the 1990s, and presents extra-textual exegesis of various contemporary styles such as “soca, rapso, chutney soca, and raga soca” (p. 17). As Guilbault puts it, “This chapter examines how the new Carnival musics, making audible the presence of
heterogeneous constituencies, have redefined the terrain on which national culture is debated” (p. 169). In Chapter 7, she focuses on the styles and neoliberal economic/political/social milieu of the music of Afro-Trinidadian Machel Montano and Indo-Trinidadian Rikki Jai. She sees a disjunction between the centripetal, integrationist force of their musical stylings (good) and the centrifugal, neo-segregationist (my word) tendencies of their audiences (bad). The final chapter examines neoliberal commercial entrepreneurship as government retreated somewhat from sponsoring musical extravaganzas and as performers, entrepreneurs, and corporate sponsors within the music industry have moved in to utilize “the tactics of management and methods” to create a “new style of governing dealing with Carnival musical activities (p. 240).” Guilbault closes the book with a “Coda” set in 2005, which nicely ties together her strains of analysis for the entire volume.

Extending Guilbault’s Foucauldian argument to the scholarship of calypso and Carnival, one can see that scholars, especially local scholars, are themselves players in the expansive unfolding of “governing sound” on the island and in the region. It is therefore appropriate that local intellectuals continue critical analysis of calypso and Carnival. However, for those of us who are foreigners, in addition to like-minded Trinidadian academics, Guilbault has wrapped up Trinidad’s Carnival in an impressive package, tying together many of the contentious issues of contemporary scholarship. At this point, at least for a time when so many important musical settings in the region are receiving much less attention, I suggest that researchers turn elsewhere, to other times and other islands, to other carnivals, to other performances both new and traditional in smaller spaces. What Jocelyne Guilbault has given us here in this critique of “Trinidad’s gift,” is a model that may be adjusted to fit that large body of culture out there in the Caribbean and Atlantic region that could use informed analysis.
In terms of sheer magnitude, there are few musical events anywhere quite like Trinidad and Tobago’s Panorama, the multi-round steelband competition that takes place during the weeks preceding the pre-Lenten carnival. At the competition finals, the eight best orchestras in the land (with approximately 100 members each) perform intricate 10-minute arrangements of calypsos for the adjudicators and the thousands of steelband aficionados, community supporters, general revelers, and tourists. Shannon Dudley’s major contribution in his new book is a cogent analysis of the musicianship and social contexts of Panorama from its founding in 1963 (a few months after independence) through the present. By marshaling a range of historical and ethnographic evidence, he argues that Panorama has been shaped as much by the agency and experiences of musicians and audiences as by the efforts of middle-class reformers and promoters. Thus, the competition can be seen as an expression of “popular nationalism” that merges both popular and elite interests and street participatory and staged presentational modes of performance.

Dudley begins his book with background chapters on the emergence of pan (steelband music) around 1940 and its development into the 1960s. After a review of several pan origin stories, he outlines some of the musical principles of early steelbands, such as the use of polyrhythmic textures and cyclical forms rooted in Afro-Trinidadian tamboo bamboo and Orisha drum ensembles and, by the late 1940s, the division of bands into frontline pans for melodies and background pans for harmonic accompaniment. Particularly useful are his profiles of Neville Jules, Ellie Mannette, and Anthony Williams – three pioneering pan tuners who, along with others, created an ensemble of chromatic instruments with greatly improved timbre. Dudley also discusses Rudolph Charles (a later tuner) and complements these profiles with an appendix that includes helpful diagrams of pans from various eras. By the 1950s, panmen were using their instruments to perform highly eclectic repertoires. Dudley devotes a chapter to “Bombs,” European classical or other foreign tunes that were arranged in calypso style for performance on the road during Carnival. Though Bombs remained immensely popular
into the 1960s, they were condemned in a nationalist discourse that advocated calypso as the music of Carnival. Dudley demonstrates how government organizers of Carnival and their allies essentially marginalized Bombs by creating Panorama as a new showcase for pan and the performance of calypso.

Dudley’s chapter on the rise of music arrangers in Panorama is particularly strong. Drawing on personal interviews, he outlines how several major arrangers developed distinct approaches to creating music for the new competition. Anthony Williams of North Stars was the first to grasp the opportunities offered by this staged performance setting: he won the 1963 and 1964 Panoramas with calypso arrangements that featured introductions and codas, themes and variations, modulations and counterpoint (all concepts that have remained standard up to the present). Then Bobby Mohammed (Cavaliers) generated tremendous excitement with sudden rhythmic breaks and dramatic changes of texture, such as dropping out bass pans and returning them with a roar. Clive Bradley (Desperadoes) achieved a high level of clarity in arrangements by grouping different sections of pans into functional “envelopes,” while building excitement in cyclical, polyrhythmic jam sections. Earl Rodney (Harmonites) and Ray Holman (Starlift) also experimented with jam sections and incorporated Latin and jazz idioms in their phrasings and harmonizations. Drawing on his love of both Kitchener calypsos and Bach, Jit Samaroo (Renegades) wove long, complex runs into dense contrapuntal textures.

Equally informative is Dudley’s chapter on arrangers’ composition of their “own tunes” for Panorama. In 1972 Starlift entered Panorama with Ray Holman’s “Pan on the Move.” Holman went on to arrange his own tunes for several other bands, and a number of arrangers followed suit during the 1980s and 1990s. Certainly the most successful has been Phase II’s Len “Boogsie” Sharpe, who developed a unique musical style involving such elements as dissonance, complex sound effects, and funk-inspired rhythms. Dudley offers a comparison of Sharpe’s 1993 composition, “Birthday Party,” with Jit Samaroo’s arrangement of Kitchener’s “Mystery Band” from the same year. While “Mystery Band” consists of a linear structure of themes and variations (with all of Samaroo’s usual inventiveness), “Birthday Party” extends themes and variations in call-and-response jam sections that are based on African concepts of musical time.

Along with his discussion of leading arrangers, Dudley examines Panorama performance practices between 1989 and 2000, a period during which he played with major bands. Among the many topics that he considers are the dynamics of rivalry and competition, the expectations of players and supporters, the construction of dramatic performances, and the sense of spirit, play, and excitement that are central to the Panorama experience. He also gives much attention to the way in which structures, expectations, and
musical formulas in the competition have constrained creativity to the extent that some pannists have sought alternative paths of musicianship, such as working in small ensembles or exploring opportunities outside of Trinidad.

My only criticism of this book is that I wish Dudley had included more of the type of musical analysis presented in the two chapters on arrangers. His overview of the styles of various arrangers could have been illustrated with more details on specific Panorama tunes. Also, the substantial archive of steelband recordings from the 1950s and early 1960s would have allowed for a more in-depth examination of musical practices that provided a foundation for Panorama arranging. Finally, Dudley might have further explored similarities and differences between Panorama arrangements and arrangements of popular and classical music for other settings. But perhaps these are all topics for another study. The material that Dudley does cover is handled with great skill and insight. This book is strongly recommended to scholars and students in music and Caribbean studies and to anyone with an interest in artistic achievements in pan.


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Kevin Birth’s Bacchanalian Sentiments offers an innovative approach to the ethnographic study of music in a Caribbean setting. Working in a community in Trinidad with which he has had a long relationship, Birth aptly adopts a political-aesthetic theory that tends to eschew a strictly ethnomusicological approach in favor of a theoretical perspective derived both from Caribbean scholarly sources and the experiences of the musicians with whom he has worked and played. Although the complexities of this approach resist quick summary, one might generalize that it explores the idea of an aesthetic that is political almost by virtue of its emphasis on the experiential nature of music and by extension its collective nature. That is, from a kind of formal perspective, Caribbean musical genres resist strict objectification because they are
structurally in flux, but also because (and this seems especially true of the musical forms Birth is dealing with) at the level of content they are linked to important moments in the lives of community members which may be fleeting, but are still vital. Historically the nature of Caribbean musical forms such as calypso is linked to the political and expressive needs of the community – needs that existed in a colonial or postcolonial setting of extreme duress, exploitation, and oppression. As such, it has been observed widely in Caribbean studies that aesthetic forms such as music, folk narrative, festive behavior, and so forth have been both creolized and changeable. Indeed, the structure of such forms reflects a system of values that uses flexibility and adaptation as political strategies in themselves as well as aesthetic principles to be emulated and admired. Furthermore, as much of African-Caribbean music was labeled “noise” by colonial observers, the concept that it could be music at all reflects Jacques Attali’s observation that “Listening to music is listening to all noise, realizing that its appropriation and control is a reflection of power, that it is essentially political” (Attali 1987:6).

To this end Birth has made a conscious decision to reject traditional metaphors of theoretical description to focus on a new vocabulary that derives from musicological ideas themselves – hence the notions of counterpoint, polyrhythm, polyphony, etc. In this way, one might say it reflects a commonality with Bakhtin’s use of “heteroglossia.” However, Bakhtin was drawing on linguistic insights. By using musical concepts Birth not only allows for a multiplicity of voices and the idea of performance (included in linguistic anthropology) but leaves room for the generic qualities of the forms themselves to help shape his theoretical perspective.

The book consists of six chapters and an introduction. The first two chapters address head-on, as it were, the role that official bodies such as the state play in management of music and culture in Trinidad. Looking at the development of the state’s involvement in culture through the independence movement, Birth contextualizes musical performances while being careful to remind us that such contexts are not only never completely deterministic, but often have little to do with the role that specific musical performances play in the lives of the community of Anamat (pseudonym) in which he conducted fieldwork. However, the importance of their presence, Birth indicates, is that they are part of the contrapuntal movement of songs and meanings as they circulate within Trinidad. As he writes, “these competitions and related institutions are sites of counterpoint between the people’s participation in festivals and music and the government’s policies” (p. 68). The following two chapters then examine closely the ways in which acts of “spontaneity” are exercised by community members. If the state is ambivalent about losing “management” to spontaneity and vice versa, the community seems less so. Here, as Birth indicates, their own structures of behavior, performance, and community building create opportunities for individual acts of creativity
correlating the rhythm of seasonal activities with the irregularity of conflicts and disruptions that potentially threaten that sense of wholeness. Indeed, in Trinidad the recognition that one lives in a diversified community, with potential conflicts of interest, seems to necessitate forms of expression that account for, allow, and process looming discord. It is an additional bonus that Birth uses the musical form of Parang as his example, as there has been precious little written about this music compared to calypso, soca, steel band, and other forms.

This concept of discord, or in local parlance bacchanal, is well explicated in Chapter 4, where the attempted political coup of 1990 is discussed in detail. Here, music may create a sense of belonging, of stability in a moment of crisis and potential dissolution, but as Birth reminds his readers, the aesthetic quality most valued in performance – and indeed, in listening – is not one of uniformity, but change. Although the calypsos played on the road to accompany festive masqueraders in Trinidad have traditionally been called “Road Marches” it is not marching that is required. There may be some imperative on the part of the state to seek the regulation of performances, but Trinidadians will neither resist nor capitulate to such attempts in any kind of linear way. This has been frustrating for state initiatives to harness Trinidadian creativity in the service of the economy (a fact reflected in the way politicians of Trinidad sometimes make scornful allusions to a “carnival mentality”). But this is a narrow-sighted way of seeing what Birth calls “coordinated movements ... not aimed at creating conformity ... but at creating experiences of relation and permitting spontaneity” (p. 224).

REFERENCE