In certain parts of the Americas colonized by the English and built with the labor of Africans and their descendants, the holiday season at the end of the year was once – and in some areas still is – celebrated by parading bands of masqueraders whose danced processions created an ambiguous, highly charged space of their own. These outdoor performances by enslaved Africans amused, mystified, and discomfited the Europeans who observed and wrote about them during the nineteenth century. The loud drumming and singing, “wild” dancing, and “extravagant” costumes topped with horned animal masks and towering headdresses overloaded the senses of these white onlookers, and suggested to them something inscrutably and dangerously African, even when certain European elements could be recognized within the unfamiliar mix. Unlike the pre-Lenten Catholic carnivals that were appropriated and refashioned by Africans in several parts of the Americas, this was a festival created by the enslaved themselves. Over time it was accepted by the ruling whites, who came to view it as a necessary evil – a kind of safety valve through which the simmering tensions on slave plantations could be periodi-

1. This article is based on comparative fieldwork and library research supported by a Rockefeller Fellowship at the Center for Black Music Research in Chicago and the Alton Augustus Adams Music Research Institute in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands (2003-4), as well as a subsequent Fellowship at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities in Charlottesville (2006). I am most grateful to these institutions. I would like to express special appreciation to Olivia Bowles, Sebastian Cayetano, Jerome Handler, John Mariano, Eris Moncur, Alson Titus, and Jerri Valentine for their contributions to the larger, ongoing project on Jankunu of which this research is a part. I would also like to thank Samuel Floyd for urging me to write this article in the first place, and Shannon Dudley for his insightful comments on an earlier draft. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the thoughtful comments and criticisms of an anonymous reviewer for this journal, which, owing to limitations of space, I am unable adequately to address herein, but which I intend to take up in future writings on the topic.
cally released and kept from exploding. In certain parts of the Caribbean and Central America, variants of this enigmatic festival are still practiced.

Indeed, this Christmas and New Year’s festival, known as Jankunu (John Canoe, Jonkonnu, Junkanoo, John Kuner) has, for some, become a powerful symbol of a surviving African “spirit” in the English-speaking Americas. In the words of the renowned Caribbean poet and historian Kamau Brathwaite (1990:90-91), “the [jon]konnu[s] that we know throughout Plantation America are the visible publicly permitted survival ikons of African religious culture.” Yet Jankunu today is characterized by most local commentators, including the majority of practitioners themselves, as a fundamentally “secular” tradition.

How could a tradition almost universally perceived as “secular,” and said by participants themselves to be devoid of spiritual significance, be interpreted by a leading scholar and cultural “insider” as an iconic embodiment of religiosity? What might explain this apparent contradiction? In this essay I offer some possible answers to this question and examine its broader implications.

In my view, Brathwaite is correct. His representation of Jankunu, I believe, captures a profound historical truth – one that can be clearly apprehended and verified only through a genuinely diachronic perspective that moves beyond one-sided modes of historiography that depend exclusively on written forms of documentation. Only by employing contemporary ethnography to overcome the limitations of written sources and help us bridge past and present in a more balanced way, I would argue, can we really arrive at such a perspective, enabling us to recover a crucial but previously inaccessible dimension in the history of an important, but poorly understood, Afro-Atlantic performance complex.

ABSENCE OR PRESENCE OF “SPIRIT” IN JANKUNU: VARYING PERSPECTIVES

In my very first interview with a Jamaican Jankunu practitioner, in 1974, when I gingerly raised the question of a possible spiritual dimension to his tradition, I was told flatly, “no man! ... Jankunu is only a pleasure.” Three

2. To suggest common origins and the continuing relatedness of all the traditions going by variants of this same name, I use a single spelling, “Jankunu,” throughout this essay. This spelling more accurately reflects the pronunciation of the word that I have heard practitioners almost everywhere use (/jángkunu/) than do the usual spellings of John Canoe, Jonkonnu, Junkanoo, etc. (see Cassidy 1966:47-51). (The exception is the Bahamas, where I most often heard /jángkanu/.) In quoted passages I retain the original spellings unless otherwise noted. I also use “Junkanoo” when referring specifically to the “official” version of the Bahamian festival that reigns in Nassau.

3. Interview with Simon Augustus Lewis, seventy-four-year-old leader of a Jankunu troupe, St. Ann’s Bay, Jamaica, January 26, 1974. It is of course possible that at least some
decades later, when I began comparative fieldwork on Jankunu in various other parts of the Caribbean, I heard many similar statements. A respected cultural authority in the Bahamas, who had himself experienced a local version of the Jankunu masquerade every Christmas season while growing up in a small village on Cat Island, told me that “Jankanu was totally separate from religion,” and insisted that there was “not a scintilla of spirituality in it.”

Some weeks later, in Belize, a Garifuna cultural activist and museum director used the term “secular” to describe to me the local version of Jankunu practiced by his own people. Such characterizations remain the norm almost everywhere that variants of the tradition continue to be found (in Jamaica, the Bahamas, and along the Atlantic coast of Central America).

It is hardly surprising, then, that most scholars who have had actual experience with contemporary performances and practitioners tend to represent Jankunu as being devoid of religious significance. In what remains probably the most comprehensive study of Jankunu as a pan-Caribbean phenomenon to date, the art historian Judith Bettelheim (1979:227) concludes that this tradition is “fundamentally secular in nature.” In a later publication, she maintains this position, arguing that “the evidence suggests ... that Jonkonnu is a secular festival. To say a festival is secular,” she continues, “means, above all, that it does not systematically address gods or spirits in a uniform or codified manner” (Bettelheim 1988:40).

Such statements may represent attempts to protect insider understandings from outside scrutiny, or forms of subterfuge motivated by the speaker’s discomfort with the idea of publicly admitting adherence to stigmatized African-derived religious concepts. However, subsequent conversations with Mr. Lewis and many other practitioners, as well as similar comments frequently encountered in the contemporary literature on Jankunu in Jamaica, eventually persuaded me that such statements usually represent candid expressions of the speaker’s actual views. When Martha Beckwith inquired into the possible religious significance of the tradition while carrying out fieldwork in Jamaica in the early 1920s, she was likewise told by most of the practitioners she encountered that “John Canoe was simply ‘to make fun’” (Beckwith 1928:11).

5. Interview with Sebastian Cayetano, Belize City, May 8, 2004. Mr. Cayetano, however, remained open to the possibility that Jankunu might have certain esoteric spiritual meanings for “leaders” in the tradition, of which casual participants and other Garifuna observers might not be aware; and he was strongly supportive of the idea of investigating this question further.
6. Bettelheims’s succinct statement about what is meant by “secular” in this context raises a number of important theoretical questions that are not directly treated in the present paper. What, after all, do “secular” and “religious” mean precisely? Is the dichotomous opposition between these terms not inherently problematic? Does this dichotomy, long embedded in Western thought, not in itself replicate structured relations of power (and fundamental assumptions associated with them) that ought continually to be thrown into ques-
Michael Craton (1995:14) similarly concludes that all the “differently named variants” of the Jankunu festival, like the Bahamian version, are “essentially secular.” Viewing the tradition from a Bahamian perspective, the ethnomusicologist Clement Bethel (1991:12-14) goes even further, denying not only any spiritual significance in the present, but also the possibility of a religious connection in the past. “However attractive the theory that John Canoe was the relic of some deeply religious African ritual,” he argues, “it must be discounted ... [The] suggestion of a religious origin of John Canoe must be laid aside.”

Religious origins had earlier been suggested by a number of scholars whose understandings had been shaped primarily, if not exclusively, by historical accounts of Jankunu during the slavery era, viewed alongside written accounts of West African festival traditions that provided evidence of striking parallels. For a scholar interested in long-term historical processes unfolding over time, statements made by present-day Jankunu practitioners, although not to be dismissed, need not carry much weight in attempts to determine what the tradition might have meant to participants during its heyday in the

---

7. The anthropologist Janet DeCosmo, writing specifically about Bahamian Junkanoo, disagrees with Bethel’s conclusion and acknowledges the African “religious roots of what is now a secular observance.” Though providing no documentation to back up her claim, she states that “in the early stage (1800-1899) Junkanoo still held close affinities to African religious ritual” (DeCosmo 2003:246, 248).
eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Meanings that held sway centuries ago could easily have been replaced by others in more recent times; original religious or spiritual meanings could have been lost or become submerged over time through a process of cultural erosion supported by hegemonic colonial ideologies that powerfully stigmatized any visible traces of the African past.

Given what was known of festival traditions in various parts of West Africa— which often included similar combinations of drumming, processional music, costuming, and masked dance— the hypothesis of a religious origin for Jankunu was bound to arise. Both masking and dance were pervaded by spiritual meanings across West Africa, where the European bifurcation of public life into separate “secular” and “religious” domains did not exist. Pointing out the similarities between Jamaican Jankunu and African masked dances, Orlando Patterson (1969:244-47) proposed that the origins of the Jamaican tradition could be found in three “clusters” of West African festival traditions: the yam festival of the Mmo secret society of the Igbo peoples; the Egungun masquerades of the Yoruba; and the Homowo yam festival of the Ga people. All three of these are filled with spiritual purpose and closely tied to rites venerating ancestors. Following Patterson’s lead, a number of other scholars working on Jamaican Jankunu, including Sylvia Wynter (1970:37-45), Sheila Barnett (1979:25-28), and Cheryl Ryman (1984), have similarly argued that its origins lie in West African harvest festivals or other religious rites. While pointing to a variety of possible sources, these authors have tended to privilege the Yoruba Egungun festival and/or the masked dances of the Poro societies spread across a large part of the region from which the enslaved were drawn. Discussing the cognate John Kuner festival of North Carolina, which is attested in several locations in that state during the nineteenth century but appears to have died out early in the twentieth century, Sterling Stuckey (1987:67-73) also notes very suggestive similarities with Yoruba Egungun observances, and concludes that such parallels clearly indicate that this North American version of Jankunu represented an African-derived religious expression of reverence for ancestors.

Far from being purely academic exercises, these investigations of possible origins may be seen as part of a larger search for meaning. They constitute, at least in part, attempts to recover deeper meanings that have presumably been lost, or only vaguely retained, among present-day Jankunu practitioners. In the context of larger societies where Jankunu has gradually come to be seen as an important cultural legacy and a symbol of identity, such research into origins often takes on an aspect of soul-searching. Bridging past and present in the pursuit of answers to these kinds of experiential questions, however, is no easy matter. In the absence of reliable oral evidence in the present speaking directly to this question, how are we to arrive at a historically grounded understanding of what Jankunu meant to practitioners when it flourished on slave plantations in the Caribbean and parts of the United States? The contemporaneous written accounts left by European and white American observ-
ers are decidedly inadequate in this regard. As the Jamaican musicologist Laura Murray (1972:109) noted in passing, when researching Jankunu as part of a larger study of “cult music” in Jamaica, “it is impossible to judge from early records whether the festivity had any religious significance in the negroes’ mind. So far as records go it was a mere social festivity without reference to the exorcising of evil spirits or care for the spirits of the dead.”

Murray’s passing remark brings us face to face with a perennial historiographical and epistemological dilemma – one familiar to all who have a stake in the interpretation of the past in places where plantation slavery reigned. How is one to access such pasts? Given that the vast majority of contemporaneous written documentation, particularly in the Anglophone Caribbean, was produced by authors who were not only hostile to the cultural worlds that interest us, but largely ignorant of them, where do we turn for our evidence? If we, like Michael Craton (1995:15), wish to reach “beyond the scarce and often purblind accounts of contemporary whites in an attempt to understand quite what Junkanoo was like and what it meant to British West Indian slaves,” what can we do, other than rely on our imaginations? As Erna Brobder (1983:7) asks, where “will we find the admissible data on the behaviour of people who left no memoirs?” And if we wish to extend our vision beyond observable behavior to the complex interior world of cultural meaning, by what means might we be able to (re)construct deeper “knowledge” of such people and the lives they created? Theorizing about the historical origins and possible spiritual foundations of Jankunu brings us squarely into this largely uncharted epistemological terrain.8

When we turn to the Bahamas, we are confronted with yet another apparent variation on this theme – in this case, one containing certain ironies. Of all the present-day outposts of Jankunu, the Bahamas is surely the society where the tradition (officially spelled “Junkanoo”) is most visible, most vigorous, and most ubiquitous; in short, this is where, in some respects, the tradition seems most alive. At the same time, it is here that the tradition appears to have strayed furthest from its historical roots, departing in startling ways from older forms while developing rapidly in new directions. In the Bahamas today, Junkanoo is an enormous national festival rivaling in energy and scale the famous pre-Lenten carnival of Trinidad and the numerous Eastern Caribbean festivals patterned after it, as well as a primary symbol of Bahamian identity. Associated with a complex structure of official and commercial patronage, codified and governed by a strict set of regulations, featuring ever more elaborate costumes and thematic displays designed and constructed by competing

8. This epistemological terrain has been explored in innovative ways in the work of Richard Price on the Saramaka Maroons of Suriname (e.g., Price 1983, 1990, 2008) – whose influence on my own thinking will be apparent here – and has also been a primary area of concern in some of my own work on Jamaican Maroons (e.g., Bilby 1995, 1997, 2005b).
Junkanoo bands with hundreds of members, this Bahamian festival mobilizes thousands of people and receives a great deal of media coverage. It has also become one of the main tourist attractions of the Bahamas and is by far the most commercialized of the surviving variants of Jankunu.\(^9\)

Though undoubtedly a vibrant and deeply meaningful expression of identity for many Bahamians, Junkanoo could easily be seen as the least “spiritual,” and the most evidently “secular,” existing form of the tradition. The degree of commodification, the close links with tourism, the cooptation by the state, and the decreasing grassroots control characterizing the contemporary tradition all work against a sense of sacredness. Although this appearance of “secularity” may have become particularly glaring in Bahamian Junkanoo of late, the idea that Junkanoo is devoid of religious meaning is not new there. Like their counterparts in Jamaica, most Bahamian practitioners in the 1970s – and probably their predecessors going back several decades – would likely have reacted negatively to the suggestion that their tradition might have religious or spiritual significance. Yet, as with the blues and jazz in the United States (Reed 2003; Stuckey 1995), there is evidence that at a deeply intuitive level many Bahamians have sensed, and continue to sense, something that could only be called “spiritual” in the music, dance, and costuming of Junkanoo.

In popular writings on Junkanoo produced for both local and tourist consumption, generalized invocations of “spirit” and “spirituality” are common, often in conjunction with references to the African past, the ancestral experience of slavery, and the deep and ineffable sense of shared identity many Bahamians feel when participating in the festival. In one such publication, Junkanoo is described as “a motivation to become one with the inner spirit,” and a “spirit touching experience” (Chipman 2001:26). “Junkanoo is tightly plaited into the Bahamian psyche,” according to another such publication, “yet seldom do we dwell on its roots, that have been within us since we first became aware of ourselves.” When Bahamians do take the time to listen to the stories of their elders, continues this author, “we are borne back through the years to understand the drum that beats always within us: the drum that is the spirit of our ancestors ... [whose] voices call out to us across the centuries” (Nash Ferguson 2000:3). Such statements suggest a tendency in the Bahamas, when expressing the symbolic associations of Junkanoo, to conflate a racialized national identity with vague notions of a surviving “African spirituality.” In the words of one anthropological observer, Junkanoo “allows [the Bahamian people] to gather pride and strength from their heritage and their spiritual roots in Africa” (DeCosmo 2003:254).

One outspoken local commentator, Patrick Rahming, writing at a time of noticeably mounting government involvement and intensifying institu-

---

9. A good discussion of how the Junkanoo festival of Nassau has entered Bahamian popular culture, spawned new genres of local popular music, and been integrated into nationalist discourse may be found in Rommen 1999.
tionalization of Junkanoo, clearly captured both the general uncertainty as to Junkanoo’s beginnings and original meanings, and the coexisting sense that it constituted an ancestral vehicle for deep feelings of a spiritual kind, the sanctity of which was threatened by increasing rationalization, routinization, and commercialization. At one point, he raises the soul-searching question, “what is Junkanoo?... what is the essence of this thing?” (Rahming 1992:31). He goes on to complain that

the experience of junkanoo is not one that can be easily filed into spectator-performer categories. The performers are not minstrels and acrobats providing entertainment for an audience. They are participants in a therapeutic ritual with important personal and natural implications. The fact that the cultural memory is so vague that the “original” basis for the ritual is foggy is no reason to disrespect the yearnings expressed. In other words, at least for the time being there is still validity in the spiritual “roots” aspect of the festival/ritual. (Rahming 1992:32)

Particularly noteworthy here are the allusion to “cultural memory” (an idea to which we will return in the last section of this essay) and the explicit acknowledgement of a “spiritual aspect” associated with the “roots” of Junkanoo. This ostensible spiritual dimension is made yet more explicit in another passage by the same author suggesting that the attempt to formulate an intellectualized, standardized aesthetic of Junkanoo for the purpose of judging performances in official, state-sponsored contests may constitute a kind of “sacrilege” (a passage that, it is worth noting, would likely resonate with many performers in the black American musical tradition as well):

Successful junkanoo evokes strong emotional response, which cannot be replaced by intellectual rationale, even concerning so-called “artistic excellence.” The judgement of strong emotional response is not easy ... If the commitment to judgement is made, then a concurrent commitment must be made to find a way to judge emotional response. “It scared the hell out of me” is a more successful response than “It was nice” or “I’m so excited I can’t breathe” is a higher score than “The costumes were very well done.” I query the need to judge in the first place. (Imagine determining the best church service every Sunday, and awarding prizes for “having the spirit”.) (Rahming 1992:32)

By the following decade, Rahming’s misgivings were apparently shared by many in the larger society, including some of the festival’s most prominent exponents and a number of public intellectuals interested in the question of cultural meaning in Junkanoo. In 2002 – partly, one suspects, in response to the growing recognition that Junkanoo was at risk of becoming permanently
Surviving Secularization

detached from its cultural moorings and losing its deeper meanings – a major symposium on “Junkanoo and Religion” was organized at the College of the Bahamas in Nassau. The resulting publication (Minnis 2003) contains eighteen contributions by scholars and Junkanoo practitioners sympathetically examining the possible religious or spiritual dimensions of the tradition. One might find some irony in the fact that the subtitle of this volume is “Christianity and Cultural Identity in the Bahamas,” given that agents of Christianity (perhaps detecting an underlying African religiosity in Junkanoo) have been among the most ardent opponents of the festival, both in the Bahamas and other parts of the Caribbean. Even today, there is considerable opposition to Junkanoo from some Christians in the Bahamas. Vivian Wood (1995:333) notes that “in 1994 religious leaders and Christians continued to denounce the Junkanoo parade and its music as being sensual and ‘of the devil.’” In response to these attacks, “listeners to Christian radio shows spent hours calling in for on-air discussions of the immorality of Junkanoo, Junkanoo music, and Showtime dancing.”

Despite this sometimes virulent opposition, other Bahamian Christians have in recent years enthusiastically embraced the festival, introducing Christian music and themes into the annual parades and incorporating elements of Junkanoo into church services (Wood 1995:332-35). The 2002 symposium on “Junkanoo and Religion” – clearly an example of the kind of scholarly soul-searching alluded to above – no doubt came about partly in response to this growing phenomenon. Several of the papers presented at the symposium raised the issue of Junkanoo’s compatibility with Christianity; some explored the implications of this controversial question in greater depth, and a few touted the festival’s positive potential as a means of indigenizing Christian theological praxis in the Bahamas. Breaking faith with the traditional Christian denigration of African religiosity, even some of the most committed Christians among the participants in the symposium were able to take the position that Junkanoo represents a surviving expression of a fundamentally African mode of worship, and should be welcomed as such. Kirkley Sands (2003a:10), an Anglican priest and canon of Nassau’s Christ Church Cathedral, for example, asserted that “the original life setting of Bahamian Junkanoo is Bahamian slave religiosity, i.e. the spirituality and religious culture of Bahamian slaves.” It is clear, in his view, that “Junkanoo is a New World slave religious cultural celebration whose antecedents are rooted in West African religious culture” (Sands 2003a:13). Indeed, Sands (2003a:15) contends, this cultural celebration “embodied the slaves’ prophetic voice,” and “constituted a demand for dialogue with their ancestral faith.” Junkanoo, he concludes, is “deeply rooted in Bahamian slave spirituality” and “West African religiosity” (Sands 2003a:17). In another paper delivered at the same symposium Sands (2003b:73) suggests that, even today, Junkanoo is “more than a secular cultural celebration. It is a unique embodiment of Bahamian slave spirituality which is itself Junkanoo’s immediate life setting.” A num-
ber of other authors represented in the collection express similar views. Yet, in the foreword to the volume, the historian Gail Saunders injects a note of uncertainty. While agreeing that “the spirit of Junkanoo is truly the soul of the Bahamian people,” she seems to require further proof of its religious pedigree, not to mention its impact on the development of Bahamian forms of spirituality. “Have we come any further in pinpointing the origins of Junkanoo in the Bahamas?” she asks, after having reviewed the collected papers. And “how much did early Junkanoo and slave spirituality affect the Christian Church in the Bahamas?” (Saunders 2003:4).

It was just this kind of unresolved ambiguity regarding origins, and the associated lack of consensus on the question of “secularity” versus “spirituality,” that some years earlier in Jamaica had led me to wonder whether the inherent difficulties of investigating this essentially historiographical problem might be addressed, and perhaps partly overcome, through ethnography. Could there be older forms of Jankunu or related festival traditions still existing in Jamaica – forms retaining more from the past than any of the varieties yet documented – whose living practitioners might speak more clearly to the question of spiritual meaning? In the absence of firm evidence one way or the other, I was not prepared to discount the intuitions of the many in Jamaica who seemed able to divine a surviving undercurrent of spirituality in the professedly secular “fun” of Jankunu. In 1991, relying in part on intuitions of my own, I found some answers to these questions in the rural parish of St. Elizabeth.10

COKER, ST. ELIZABETH, JAMAICA

In the country “district” of Coker, nestled in the Nassau Mountains of western Jamaica, public celebrations of Christmas have traditionally been held in and around two particular areas named after the community’s nineteenth-century founders. These sections of the community, known as Rhoden Town and Brown Town, are inhabited by Coker’s “old people.” So old are some of these members of the community that they require special care: Rhoden Town and Brown Town, in fact, are cemeteries. Here lie not only the original founders and apical ancestors of Coker, Benjamin Rhoden and Bob Brown, but many of their descendants as well, who are also remembered by name.

Near each of these ancestral “towns” is a sacred clearing consisting of a traditional “danceground” and a “healing ground.” Known as Big Yard and Brown Yard, these cleared areas have for generations served as sites for com-

10. The ethnographic “clues” that led me to the “discovery” of the surviving older variant of Jamaican Jankunu described below are discussed in Bilby (1999), which includes additional ethnographic background on this tradition, only a sketch of which is provided in the present essay. See also Bilby 2007.
Community ceremonies revolving around *myal* — a term of unknown derivation referring to possession by spirits, including those of departed ancestors. The ancestors of Coker, honored by their descendants, have on the whole shown benevolence toward the living. Until recently, they have returned regularly in the bodies of living dancers, known as *myal man* and *myal woman*, and in this form have used their knowledge of herbs and their special powers to tend to the needs of the living, healing spiritual afflictions and offering solutions to other problems. Throughout the years, as the need arises, they have continued to be drawn into the cares and concerns of their living descendants by the rhythms of the *gumbe* drum and the special *myal sing* (spirit-invoking songs) they have taught them, and in this way have remained a part of daily life.

In such a setting, how could the ancestors not be a part of the major holiday to which the entire community looks forward as every year draws to an end? After all, the single most important local celebration of the Christmas season, centering on the unveiling of the house headdress itself known as Jankunu and the accompanying music and dance, was passed on from these older people themselves. In addition to being myal specialists, Benjamin Rhoden and Bob Brown were also “masters,” or builders, of the Jankunu headdress, and renowned Jankunu dancers. They are revered as founders not only of the community of Coker, but of its Jankunu tradition as well. Buried alongside them are several of the successors they taught, most of whom also once served as spirit mediums in the local tradition, and who are remembered today as outstanding Jankunu builders, dancers, drummers, and singers in their own right.

The Coker variant of Jankunu performance differs conspicuously from the “standard” forms found elsewhere in Jamaica today. (The Coker version, for instance, has retained several characteristic features mentioned in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century descriptions of Jamaican Jankunu that appear to have been lost almost everywhere else, such as the square or rectangular gumbe drum played with the hands, a leading dancer who wears a house headdress, and female singers who play a prominent role.) But it also displays important similarities. For one thing, like other varieties, it occurs in

11. Maureen Warner-Lewis (2003:190) suggests a derivation from Kikongo *mayaala*, meaning “the physical representations of power.” The term *myal* is frequently mentioned in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century accounts of Jamaica in connection with spiritual beliefs and practices of the enslaved and their descendants, though never explicitly in connection with “John Canoe.” Warner-Lewis also proposes a new etymology for the word *Jankunu* — one which, in view of what is now known about older variants such as the one in Coker, I find more persuasive than any of those previously proposed. The derivation she suggests is from Kikongo *nza a nkunu*, which she glosses as “world of the ancestral spirits” (Warner-Lewis 2003:224).

12. Craton (1995:31) notes that “among the few features of [Jankunu] that were common [to all variants in previous centuries] and therefore essential were the gumbey drum music” and “the mysterious masked and fantastically head-dressed central figure.”
the context of street parades or processions. Yet, there is a significant difference here as well. For these processions, in the Coker tradition, represent but the tip of an iceberg, as it were. Traditionally, only after the break of day on Christmas did the Jankunu performers of Coker leave the ancestral confines of Big Yard and the immediate surrounding area to begin their procession through the wider community; and only after completing this circuit of their own community did they carry the festivities out to neighboring communities, entertaining crowds and soliciting donations as they went. Preceding these highly visible “Christmas sports” in outside locations was a series of “private” rites performed at home by the Coker celebrants for themselves and their ancestors. Few of the spectators amused by their exuberant “antics” as they paraded through towns and villages in this part of St. Elizabeth were aware of this hidden “back stage”; for this reason, most of those from other communities who witnessed the Jankunu bands of Coker – which continued to go outside to perform at Christmas throughout most of the twentieth century – would never gain a clear idea of the spiritual meanings the festival held for the participants themselves.

For those trained in the tradition, these deeper meanings are clear as day, flowing as they do from their “immediate life experience” (to borrow Kirkley Sands’s evocative phrase). Virtually every aspect of the Jankunu tradition in Coker is permeated with explicit spiritual meanings, from the building of the house headdress to the songs, dancing, and offerings of food and rum to the ancestors on Christmas and New Year’s Day. This seasonal tradition, after all, is part and parcel of the larger ancestor-focused community religion practiced year-round by the gumbe drummers and myal dancers of Coker.

The briefest account of a portion of the Christmas rites typically observed in Coker until very recently will leave no doubt as to the fundamentally spiritual nature of the local variant of the Jankunu festival that has survived here. Early on Christmas Eve, the entire community is summoned to a major “gumbe play” (myal dance) by the blowing of a conch shell. As one long-time participant told me, “you see, the conch shell deh, them blow it that everybody know seh them a go play tonight. From them hear it blow, them know seh them a go have the met [public gathering, dance] tonight. The living hear, and the dead hear.”13 As the night wears on, the time comes for the Jankunu headdress to “turn out” – to be unveiled and brought out for public display after weeks of concealment in a specially constructed shack guarded over by the watchful spirits of the ancestors. Down at the two main family graveyards of Rhoden Town and Brown Town, the ancestors are fed with white rice, the blood of a chicken, and a specially prepared concoction known as “egg punch” (a drink that was closely associated with Christmas festivities in Jamaica during the nineteenth century). Back up at the neigh-

boring dancing ground, the myal man and his assistants remove the sheet that has up to this point covered the Jankunu (as the house headdress itself is known), and carry the beautifully decorated object out into the open for all to see, placing it on a bench in the central performing space in Big Yard, known as the “ring.” Songs such as the following are sung to greet the arriving Jankunu and all who have come to join in the celebration:

You tek me out a house
And you put me out a open parade

Chorus: Mornin maam-oh
Mornin to you all-oh

Mornin, Grand Queen-oh [the name of one such Jankunu house headdress]
Mornin to you all-oh

The ancestors, too, are welcomed and honored with songs of their own. One might hear, for instance,

Oy-oh, eh-de-oy, eh-de
Roll de band a yard
Det a grong a me fren [literally, “the ancestral dead in the earth/cemetery are my friends”] 14
Seh duppy a me fren [“the spirits are my friends”]
Seh duppy a me fren
Roll de band a yard
Det a grong a me fren

Shortly before dawn, the leading myal man and Jankunu builder, with the help of his assistants, hoists the house headdress onto his head and proceeds down to the cemeteries of Rhoden Town and Brown Town, where he dances and displays his creation, so that its beauty can be enjoyed by the entire community of ancestors. In the words of one practitioner:

Christmas night, before day, them have fe dance, and carry it [the house headdress] to all of the cemetery dem. Kompini [the assembled people] tek off sheet off of it, and carry it to all of the cemetery, and lean it [toward the individual graves], show it to all spirit ... [letting them see] how beautiful it be. Them [the ancestors] see it still [i.e. have already seen it], you know,

14. In Coker, the term det (derived from English, “death”) is synonymous with the Jamaican Creole term duppy, used throughout the island to refer to the spirit of a deceased human being.
for them go and come weh-paat it a build [to the place where it is built].
But, you know, that is just a old-time original thing – them have fe carry it to the cemetery.15

After daybreak, the crowd moves out onto the road, marching along with the musicians and leading Jankunu dancer through the different sections of the community while singing yet other songs. Only after December 25 is the Jankunu ensemble allowed to venture out to perform in other communities. Finally, some time in January, when the Christmas spirit has begun to fade away, the ancestors provide indications that the time has come to “mash up” (destroy) the Jankunu. A last gumbe play is called and the “master” of the Jankunu – the myal man who built it – places the headdress on his head and carries it down to Rhoden Town and Brown Town, where he performs a final dance for the ancestors. Before daylight, the spirits of ancestors enter the bodies of younger dancers, who then tear the headdress to pieces, thus bringing the annual cycle to its proper end. Thoughts of the Jankunu need not occupy the community’s attention again until the next Christmas season approaches.

As I was later to find out, Coker is not the only place in Jamaica where ancestors regularly take part in the Christmas celebrations of the living, or have done so within living memory. I know of at least three different rural communities in other parts of St. Elizabeth and in the neighboring parish of Manchester where related Jankunu traditions tied to ancestral myal rites and family burial grounds have either survived in attenuated form, or are clearly remembered by older people. In yet another parish, St. Catherine, very similar, and still vibrant, rites for community ancestors take place in the context of the local Buru festival – a Christmas masquerade historically related to Jankunu, which today, in this particular community, still features African-derived drumming, dancing, singing, offerings of food and rum to the “ol’ sumaadi” (old people), and non-stop parading from dawn to dusk along a route carefully chosen by these same ancestors (Bilby 2005a). Nor am I the only researcher to have encountered Christmas festivities in Jamaica in which unambiguously spiritual gestures and meanings – clear expressions of African religiosity – remain alive. At least one other writer, Honor Ford-Smith, mentions the existence of similar rituals on the other side of the island in the parish of St. Thomas, where certain Jankunu performers still pay homage to the spirits of their predecessors by making offerings to them before appearing in public processions. “With its roots in the secret society rituals, Jonkonnu still invokes spirits and aims at social control,” she states. “In St. Thomas, for example, performers sometimes sprinkle rum on the graves of ancestors before going out on to the streets” (Ford-Smith 1995:153-54).

And what does this story of “masked spirituality” in Jamaican Jankunu – spirituality that has been submerged in “private” family contexts and rendered mostly invisible to the larger Jamaican public – tell us of the various traditions bearing the same name in other parts of the Caribbean? If we accept that all the far-flung Christmas festivals known by the name “Jankunu” (those, that is, whose practitioners did not recently borrow the name but have used it since time immemorial to refer to what they do) share common roots, or at least are historically related – as I believe the evidence suggests – then these revelations of an undeniable, actively maintained ancestral presence in the oldest surviving forms of Jamaican Jankunu gain in significance. Might traces of similar spiritual meanings be found in the Jankunu tradition across large stretches of time and space? As in the Jamaican case, the historical writings that describe cognate forms in the Bahamas and Belize are of little help in searching out the deeper cultural meanings that interest us. Once again, if we wish to achieve greater insight into this question, we must depend on the recollections of living practitioners, as well as the cultural “memories” passed on from previous generations “off the record.”

CAT ISLAND, BAHAMAS

Of the forty or so inhabited islands of the Bahamas, Cat Island has the reputation of being the one that has retained the strongest African cultural heritage. Tourist guides single it out as the island in which, more than any other, African-derived bush medicine and obeah have continued to thrive (Baker 2001:361; Dold, Folster & Vaitilingam 2003:277). Ironically, as I found shortly after arriving, the indigenous Jankunu festival of Cat Island died out several decades ago. Tourists who encountered “Junkanoo” performances there in the late 1990s had no way of knowing it, but what they were witnessing was a calculated attempt to “revive” the festival on the island; the colorful, competitive parades staged during this period, performed mostly by younger people who had never experienced the older varieties that had once flourished on Cat Island, were based on the contemporary Nassau model and were supported in part by the Bahamian government. Perhaps because this glossy, commercial-

16. My thesis that the varieties of Jankunu that exist today in Jamaica, the Bahamas, and Central America (and once existed in the southern United States) are cognate forms that spring from a common root tradition, which was originally practiced on eighteenth-century Jamaican slave plantations, cannot be further elaborated here but will be supported and discussed at length in a book I am in the process of writing. In this respect, I am in agreement with the two scholars who have conducted the most extensive pan-Caribbean surveys of Jankunu to date, Bettelheim (1979) and Craton (1995:34), who both see “Jamaica as a central crucible of the [Jankunu] complex.”
ized Nassau version was perceived to some extent as a “foreign” implant, it failed to take root, and after a few years was abandoned.17

In seeking after knowledge of “old-time” Jankunu on Cat Island – which appears to have faded away in the 1950s or early 1960s – one quickly discovers that there was a remarkable amount of variation for an island with a population that has probably never exceeded a few thousand.18 But there were also many commonalities from village to village. One thing that seems to have been shared from one end of the island to the other is that local forms of Jankunu were everywhere linked with religious spheres and activities through overlapping memberships and closely intertwined celebrations of the Christmas and New Year’s holidays. Yet, at the same time, actual Jankunu performance was carefully kept separate from formal (i.e. Christian) religious contexts – in theory, if not always in practice. As for connections with African-derived religious ideas, hints of some possible past relationship with spirits of the dead do exist here and there in vestigial elements of folklore that may represent “witnesses in spite of themselves” (Bloch 1953). In the community of Dumfries, for instance, children until relatively recently (1930s or 1940s) would annually take to the streets shortly after Christmas to join in play processions mimicking the “serious” Jankunu masquerading they had seen adults perform during the holiday season; the masks fashioned by these children from cardboard, with large holes for eyes, resembled human skulls. While imitating the performances of their elders, they sang songs such as the following:

Sperrit [spirit] walking on wire
Jook [poke] he foot in the fire19

To the north, in Orange Creek, instead of donning actual masks, Jankunu revelers would sometimes coat their faces with white powder20 – a widespread practice in Central and West Africa, as well as among the Maroon peoples of

17. Interview with Eris Moncur, Knowles, Cat Island, March 19, 2004; and conversations with Bradley Russell, New Bight, Cat Island, March 16, 2004, and Jason Russell, New Bight, March 20, 2004. The increasing influence of the newer evangelical Christian churches on Cat Island, most of which are opposed to dancing of any kind outside of church, also played a role in the demise of this recent version of Junkanoo imported from Nassau.
18. Eris Moncur (personal communication, March 19, 2004) estimates that the present population is around 1,600. Though the island is only one to four miles wide for most of its length, it is roughly forty-eight miles long. The population is widely scattered in a number of small villages spread across the entire length of the western coast. People living in the “North” (for example, in Orange Creek or Arthur’s Town) often speak of those in the “South” (say, McQueens or Old Bight) – and vice versa – as if they were noticeably different, with unfamiliar “customs” of their own.
20. Interview with Olivia Bowles, Orange Creek, Cat Island, March 16, 2004.
the Guianas, where it symbolizes, among other things, the ancestral dead and the spiritual power emanating from them.\textsuperscript{21}

Nonetheless, I was unable to find any evidence of an explicit ancestral presence in the accounts of “old-time” Jankunu given by Cat Island elders. Certainly nothing like the close, interactive relationship between living and dead that characterizes the older Jamaican variants of Jankunu discussed above, exemplified by institutionalized spirit possession and offerings to specific ancestors, can be gleaned from their recountings. Rather, what I found is a complex duality suggestive of a history of resistance and accommodation – a separation of performance contexts into two symbolic domains, one thought of as “inside” and explicitly “religious” or “spiritual,” and the other as “outside” and “worldly.”\textsuperscript{22} This division clearly reflects the impact, on an island with a long history of intensive Christian missionization, of Western theological principles. For those with whom I discussed “old-time” Jankunu festivities, music and dance performed “inside” the church is, by definition,

\textsuperscript{21} See Thompson (1984; 1993) for numerous mentions of the use of sacred white clay (kaolin) in the altars, artwork, and rituals of a number of peoples in Africa, as well as among African descendants in several different parts of the Americas. In Central Africa, and in Western hemisphere contexts influenced by Kongo culture, such use of powdered white clay (mpemba in Kikongo, pemba in the languages of the eastern Guianese [Ndyuka, Aluku, and Paramaka] Maroons) represents, among other things, “the powers of ‘the white realm,’ the kaolin-tinted world of the dead” (Thompson 1984:134). Similar meanings are attached to the use of hyire (white clay) among the Akan-speaking peoples of Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire (Thompson 1993:120). During my fieldwork among the Aluku Maroons of French Guiana and Suriname during the 1980s, I very frequently saw spirit mediums in a variety of religious contexts with faces coated in pemba doti (powdered white clay). (For a photograph of Ndyuka Maroon spirit mediums with pemba doti during a Papa Gadu rite in Suriname, see Price & Price 1980:176.) The use of “whiteface” masks in Jankunu and other Caribbean festivals, noted in a number of historical accounts from Jamaica and other parts of the region, has often been interpreted, with good reason, as a ritualistic form of “mockery” aimed at the European oppressors – in keeping with the larger significance of such festivals as “rites of rebellion.” (In some present-day versions of the Jankunu tradition, as among Garifuna performers in Belize and Honduras, wire-mesh masks – which are a relatively recent introduction – are painted white or pink and are explicitly thought of in this way, sometimes being given additional features, such as mustaches and goatees, meant to show that they represent “Europeans.”) By pointing out that African-derived spiritual meanings might have once underlay the whitening of the face (or the wearing of white masks) in Jankunu, I do not mean to contradict such interpretations. There is every reason to believe that Jankunu performances in the past, as in the present, contained complex, multiple layers of meaning; and both of the meanings suggested here could have come into play at different points and in different contexts, or even simultaneously.

\textsuperscript{22} See, for an interesting comparison, the discussion by Morton Marks (1974:67-75) of Brazilian carnival, which similarly “has a dual nature, indoor and outdoor, white and black” (Marks 1974).
“sacred”; in contrast, those varieties performed “outside” in street processions, such as Jankunu, are, by definition, not. As such, they should be kept apart. Yet, in these elders’ accounts, the boundaries between these opposed symbolic domains and the distinct physical spaces associated with them were revealed to be permeable in practice. Such was the degree of overlap in performance modes, musical qualities, movement style, and actual contexts and performers during Christmas and New Year’s celebrations that a strict division between the “sacred” and the “secular” could not always be sustained.

The underlying vision that is suggested by this interpenetration of opposed symbolic domains is a familiar one to those who have viewed diasporic arts from an African perspective. As Marta Moreno Vega (1999:48) – among a great many others – points out, “African Diasporan creative expressions continue to blend the boundaries between the sacred and secular, connecting divine aesthetic knowledge to worldly artistic endeavors.” For those African descendants in the West who share this profoundly holistic vision, the opposed categories denoted by the terms “secular” and “sacred,” even if firmly embedded in thought at the level of ordinary discourse, are regularly overruled in ritual contexts by the deep structures of an experiential universe in which spirituality and the sacred are omnipresent and inseparable from the “mundane.” There is much evidence (of the kind adduced by Brennan 2008, Reed 2003, Stuckey 1995, and Turner 2009 in connection with the blues, jazz, and other diasporic musics) to suggest that these experiential deep structures have survived in music, dance, and other aesthetic practices throughout the African diaspora, whether or not these are explicitly tied to “religious” contexts. The “old-time” Jankunu of Cat Island would seem to represent yet another example of the subsuming over time of imposed theological dichotomies separating the “spiritual” from the “material” within a larger, indivisible sense of the “sacred” – a process greatly favored by the inextricability, in much of the diaspora as in Africa, of musical sound and movement and the spiritual charge they carry. This process has also been helped along by the general tendency toward fluidity characterizing the musical cultures of Africa and the diaspora, leading to a constant flow of aesthetic forms and stylistic features across genres and contexts.

Let us briefly consider the manifestation of these tendencies in the case of Cat Island and its Jankunu tradition. The first thing that strikes one is a close connection between the forms of movement characterizing “secular” Jankunu performance and those associated with “spiritual” church music: in both traditions, Christmas and New Year’s were celebrated with processions. Although these occurred “outside” on the streets in the case of Jankunu and “inside,” within the walls of a house of worship, in the case of the church

surViving seculArizAtion

processions, the two varieties, tellingly, were referred to by the same term: “rushing.”24 People remember the two kinds of rushing as being stylistically distinct: rushing in church featured only vocals and handclapping, and was generally done at a faster tempo, while Jankunu rushing was accompanied by the rhythms of the “goatskin drums,” scraped saws, rattles, and occasionally other instruments such as the banjo. Some of the elders with whom I spoke made a distinction between “marching” and “dancing”; reflecting the traditional European Christian antagonism toward “dance” in sacred contexts, they categorized the sacred shuffling dance of those who rushed in church (a dance closely resembling the ring shout of the U.S. coastal Sea Islands to the north) as “marching” in opposition to the sometimes very similar “dancing” of those who rushed in Jankunu processions.25 The two processions were of necessity also quite different in terms of their use of space; rushing in the restricted “inside” space of the church involved lines of dancers moving up, down, and across aisles (or in some cases, I was told, in circles, when there was sufficient space inside the church); Jankunu processions, in contrast, traveled along streets and lanes, following linear paths and circuits that took them through whole villages or from one community to another, with periodic stops to perform at the gates of residents along the way. But despite these differences, there was a good deal of aesthetic and kinetic overlap between the two kinds of rushing. For example, according to a musician and singer who used to participate in both church rushing and Jankunu rushing, the two kinds of performances, despite the absence of drums in the former, sometimes used “the same beat – the same beat, but only singing different songs.”26

This is not at all surprising, since many individuals participated in both settings. Both, after all, were linked to the same seasonal calendar, and occurred at roughly the same time, in celebration of the same holidays. As might be expected, there was a considerable amount of movement back

24. This dual sense exists more widely in the Bahamas, as noted in the Dictionary of Bahamian English, which gives two definitions for the verb to rush: “1. to participate in a Junkanoo parade; 2. to march or strut up and down the aisle of a church to a lively spiritual, singing or clapping in rhythm” (Holm & Shilling 1982:173).


26. Interview with Olivia Bowles, Orange Creek, Cat Island, March 16, 2004. After witnessing both Junkanoo rushing in Nassau and church rushing on Andros Island in 1996, Jackson (2006:98) noted the similarities between the two: “the traditional movement [used in Junkanoo rushing] is a basic slide step in which the right foot slides up and the right hip goes down, the left hip goes up and out simultaneously. This is the exact movement used in the sacred Rushin’ ritual [on Andros Island] and it is the performance practice that connects one ritual to the other.”
and forth between the two contexts. Indeed, the Christmas and New Year’s church services with rushing and the Jankunu festivities might be seen as complementary facets of a single, larger community celebration. According to one elder who participated in these parallel observances in the community of New Bight in her younger days, “when you got tired of rushing in the church,” you could simply go out onto the street and “dance” Jankunu.27 Another former practitioner of both traditions describes this overlap as she experienced it in the community of Orange Creek:

Before-time [in the past], [at] Christmas time, you [go to church] like ten o’clock [at night] ... then you’ll march from twelve o’clock till high sun next morning. Till high sun. Big morning you coming home, sleepy and dragging on the side there. And you singing, rush out now. They’d rush, they’d rush. And see Christmas? When you come out Christmas morning out of the church, you rush right into the Jankanu.28 You go right into the Jankanu. You’re drumming out there, beating! Beating! Faithful must join them! [The Jankanu performers were] waiting, waiting for you to come out of the church! When you come out of the church, you go into the Jankanu, into the Jankanu rush. There used to be some good times those days.29

At another point, the same individual elaborated on this seamless movement of joint participants between “inside” and “outside” contexts:

You hear what I tell you? The Jankanu, when the Christmas, as morning’s getting on the eve of breaking, the Jankanus who are leading up the Jankanu, they’re gearing up, for just how the church come out. Yeah, they’re gearing up for just how the church out, they join with the Jankanu, you know. Some of them [Jankanu leaders] was in church before. They go out in time to get ready for that Jankanu. That’s right. Well, they go, some

27. Conversation with Rita Russell, New Bight, Cat Island, March 16, 2004. Similarly, a church elder on Andros Island, reminiscing in 1996, told Joyce Marie Jackson (2006:90) that “rushin’ was done in the church before the streets.” Some older people remember a similar overlap between church services and Junkanoo rushing on the streets of Nassau in the old days (before the main Christmas parade was changed from December 25 to Boxing Day [December 26]). For instance, a Nassau resident reminiscing about the 1930s says, “when I was growing up, Junkanoo was just cowbells and drums, no saxophones and stuff, not the modern stuff ... It used to be Christmas Day. You go out there after church. After church you go to Bay Street [the site of the main Junkanoo parade]” (Jenkins 2000:90-91).
28. In this and other passages directly quoting Bahamian speakers referring to older, non-official (i.e. pre-Junkanoo) forms, I use this slightly different spelling (Jankanu), since it more accurately reflects their pronunciation (/jâŋkanu/) than does “Jankunu.”
29. Interview with Olivia Bowles, Orange Creek, Cat Island, March 16, 2004.
of them get the drums heated, and get ready for that Jankanu, get dressed up, white up with skin powder and stuff.30

The boundaries between the “secular” and the “sacred” appear to have been particularly frangible during the “rolling out” of the old year (as it was called) and the passage into the new – a liminal time of heightened spiritual sensitivity. The “Watch Night” services of New Year’s Eve, with rushing and prayer that continued through the night and into the following morning, were held for the express purpose of “pushing out” the old year (again, as participants referred to it) and ushering the community safely into the new year, thus completing and rebirthing the annual cycle of ritual observances that mirrored the sacred cycle of life and death itself. Just before midnight, inside the church, the celebrants would go around shaking one another’s hands while singing a spiritual song:

Jesus spare we another year
Oh Lord, thank God
Jesus spare we another year
Oh Lord, thank God
For my Jesus love his children
Spare me another year, oh Lord
Bless my soul this morning31

At midnight the ringer would toll the church bell, and gun shots would be fired outside.32 “Glad to get over in another year” (in the words of one elder), the celebrants would begin rushing to “anthems,” some of them, such as the following, alluding to the thin line dividing life from death – and thus, the living from the dead:

Next year by this time
I may be gone
Into the lonesome graveyard
Oh Lord, I’m gone

30. Interview with Olivia Bowles, Orange Creek, Cat Island, March 16, 2004.
31. Interview with Matrid Armbrister, McQueens, Cat Island, March 20, 2004. Interestingly enough, this same song is still often heard in the Junkanoo festival of Nassau, where it is one of the very few spiritual songs thought to have been introduced to the festival in the distant past by the “forefathers” (as opposed to religious songs that have entered the Nassau tradition more recently as a result of the growing impact of Christianity over the last few years). It belongs to a handful of Junkanoo songs considered to be old-time “classics” in Nassau (Nash Ferguson 2000:9).
32. See Parsons (1928:456) for an interesting description of a New Year’s Eve “rushin’ meetin’” on Rum Cay in the Bahamas in 1927, which includes most of the features described here for Cat Island.
Next year by this time
We may be gone
Into the lonesome graveyard
We may be gone

Like the church services before and on Christmas Day, those on New Year’s Eve coincided with parallel Jankunu festivities held outside, and there was frequent movement by “the faithful” from the “sacred” setting to the “worldly” one. In fact, a number of older people recall that the flow could go in either direction, though the movement from “outside” to “inside” was not always entirely smooth. One elder, a member since childhood of the Zion Baptist church in the southern community of Old Bight, remembers that when she was younger the Jankunu performers would sometimes rush right into the church – in full costume, some with masks on – where they would join in the rushing already going on inside (although they would not play the drums or sing Jankunu songs in the church). Some members of the church were displeased by this, complaining that they should not “carry what they dance on the street in the church, because the church is a holy place.”

When I touched on this question again a few days later, the same veteran churchgoer confirmed her earlier account, stating that “when they [costumed Jankanu performers] come in the church, we used to rush, and the preacher used to say, ‘now, you all go out! You all go out!’ The Jankanu – they didn’t want them in the church.” Nonetheless, others in the church – according to this elder and a number of others – did not mind their presence; the masqueraders would remain for a while in the line, rushing, singing the same spiritual “anthems,” and clapping along with the others.

Nor was this musical interpenetration limited to the season with which Jankunu was normally associated. Another common performance context on Cat Island was that of the “society anniversary.” Each community had its “burial societies” – cooperative associations that helped members to pool their economic resources for various purposes, and in the event of a death, to ensure a dignified burial. These societies, which were linked through cross-cutting memberships to both local churches and networks of Jankunu per-

33. Interviews with Matrid Armbrister, McQueens, Cat Island, March 17 and March 20, 2004. A version of this song, recorded in Old Bight in 1935 by Alan Lomax and Mary Elizabeth Barnicle, may be heard on the compact disc Deep River of Song: Bahamas 1935 (Cambridge MA: Rounder Records, Rounder 11661-1822-2, 1999). The CD notes describe this anthem as “a favorite rushing song in Cat Island ... traditionally sung on New Year’s Eve to accompany ‘rushin’ in Baptist churches. After the evening service, the people of a settlement will march or ‘rush’ through the aisle of the church, clapping their hands and stomping their feet sometimes until daybreak” (Lomax, Droussart & Lomax Chairetakis 1999:23).
34. Interview with Matrid Armbrister, McQueens, Cat Island, March 17, 2004.
35. Interview with Matrid Armbrister, McQueens, Cat Island, March 20, 2004.
formers, were clearly based partly on African models. At different points throughout the year, each society would host its own anniversary celebration commemorating the date of its founding, to which the general public was invited. These celebrations often included “outside” street processions in which “spiritual” songs were sung; these were backed by the same rhythms used in Jankunu rushing, played on the same goatskin drums. The burial societies would usually have to hire Jankunu drummers for these anniversary processions. Thus, in this “outside” setting, “sacred” songs normally restricted to “inside” (i.e. church) contexts were combined with the African-based style of Jankunu drumming customarily excluded from “sacred” contexts, temporarily clouding, once again, the dichotomy between “spiritual” and “worldly.” A certain amount of “mixing up” could not be avoided in such circumstances. And, as a former participant remembers, sometimes even Jankunu songs made their way into the mix:

[In society street processions] they would sing spiritual songs – spiritual songs with those same goatskin drums. Now, the society would mix up the songs while down the road there. Right? You see, on the road, you had to get these men [Jankanu drummers] to beat these things, to beat these drums, most of the time, for the society and things. And they would sing, they would play what they wanted to play, you know? Well, that’s how they [the burial societies] got mixed up with the Jankanu dance. They [the Jankanu drummers] would play to make themselves feel good, playing their music.37

36. These cooperative associations, found in various parts of the Bahamas, are said to have been established by ex-slaves and/or indentured African immigrants shortly after the abolition of slavery, and closely resemble credit institutions and cooperative savings groups in various parts of West Africa and the Caribbean. That African-born individuals were among the founding members of these organizations on Cat Island is strongly suggested by the fact that one of the most prominent of the burial societies still existing in the northern part of the island is known as Congo No. 2. There are, to my knowledge, no in-depth studies of these institutions on Cat Island. For additional background on contemporary burial societies in the Bahamas (also known as “friendly societies,” and in some areas, as asues), see Jenkins (2000:83-86). For historical background, see Johnson (1991). 37. Interview with Olivia Bowles, Orange Creek, Cat Island, March 16, 2004. In the same interview, Mistress Bowles revealed that genre boundaries could be crossed in the other direction as well, with Jankunu drummers and singers sometimes choosing to perform the occasional “spiritual” anthem during their own Jankunu processions as well. Furthermore, Jankunu crossed over to a number of other performance contexts; for instance, Jankunu music and dance became an integral part of celebrations of Guy Fawkes Day (a British holiday observed in several parts of the Bahamas on November 5), including those in Nassau (Jenkins 2000:94) and Cat Island (Olivia Bowles, March 16, 2004). See also Crowley (1958).
But the ties between the burial societies and Jankunu went deeper than this, extending into the actual “proper” domain and season for Jankunu – Christmas. For it was the custom to cap off the last Jankunu procession of the Christmas season with a final “feast” sponsored by these very same burial societies as an offering for the Jankunu performers and the general public. These communal gatherings, which featured traditional Cat Island foods and refreshments such as flour cakes, johnny cakes, and drinks made from the logwood and braziletto trees, symbolized community ideals of sharing and reciprocity.38

We are confronted here with an ambiguously dual world – a world in which spatial and cosmological dichotomies imposed in the distant past (and constantly reinforced in the present by ongoing evangelical activity by both local and foreign religious organizations) are repeatedly collapsed by communal performances bringing together and mixing older and newer permutations of music and dance embodying a common African aesthetic and spiritual energy. In such a layered world, it would be difficult to cordon off the “sacred” from the “profane” in any definitive way. Cat Island Jankunu was an integral part of this social and cultural world and its ambiguous dualism. As such, it was, in the final analysis, neither more “secular” nor more “sacred” than any other part – which is to say that it too, at a deep level, constituted a reflection, alongside Cat Island’s Afro-Bahamian recastings of Christianity, of irreducible and indivisible spirituality. In this sense, perhaps, it masked, even while contributing to, the enduring presence of the ancestors.

Dangriga, Belize

The Garifuna (also known as Black Caribs) are famous for their Jankunu (usually rendered as John Canoe in English and Yancunú in Spanish, and known as Wanáragua in their own language).39 Scattered along the Atlantic coast of Central America, from Belize to Nicaragua, the Garifuna emerged through a remarkable history of struggle against various European colonial powers that culminated in their displacement from their original homeland on the Caribbean island of St. Vincent to the Honduran coast in 1797. Of mixed Amerindian and African descent, they have maintained a unique culture that represents a thoroughgoing fusion of elements from both sides of their ancestral past, but which has been strongly influenced as well by the cultures of the colonial societies with which they have interacted since their

38. Interview with Olivia Bowles, Orange Creek, Cat Island, March 16, 2004.
39. In their own language, Garifuna is a singular form, and Garinagu is the corresponding plural. In this paper, I follow the common convention in English-language publications of using the first form for all contexts, to denote either singular or plural.
beginnings as a people (Gonzalez 1988). While their distinctive language is an Amerindian one, belonging to the Arawakan group (Cayetano 1997:86; Taylor 1977:14-15), much of their expressive culture, and especially their music, is clearly derived in part from African sources.

In the literature on the Garifuna, there seems to be the same uncertainty regarding Jankunu’s origins and its spiritual significance (or lack thereof) that one finds in the accounts of Jankunu in Jamaica and the Bahamas.40 This ambiguity about both past and present meanings appears, for instance, in one of the first studies of Garifuna music. According to this work, “the dances of the Carib’s John Canoe festival are ... devoid of religious significance; in fact the Caribs themselves have no knowledge of their origin or significance” (Whipple 1971:114). Yet, earlier in the same study, we read that “lyrics for the John Canoe are characteristically ‘spooky’ in nature favoring supernatural themes” (Whipple 1971:48). As an example, the author provides the following Jankunu song, translated into English by the performer:

Nighttime catches me.
Nighttime catches me my dear.
I saw a spirit open its wings:
In front of me, my dear, at midnight.
Joy, joy, they shouted.
I saw a spirit open its wings.
In front of me, my dear, at midnight. (Whipple 1971:48)

Despite the suggestion of deeper meanings in such songs, most studies of Garifuna Jankunu, like those of the Jamaican and Bahamian versions, indicate that the performers themselves think of what they are doing as a mere form of amusement or entertainment with no deeper significance. As Dirks (1979a:103) noted, “none of the Caribs that I have talked to about John Canoe are willing to interpret its meaning. It is simply good fun.”

40. Among scholars, as among the Garifuna themselves, there is no consensus regarding the origins of Garifuna Jankunu (Wanaráagua). Some suggest that it was originally practiced by the Carib Indian ancestors of the Garifuna, and was indigenous to the island of St. Vincent. Others hypothesize that it reached the Garifuna directly from African sources. My own position is that it represents a complex amalgam that has drawn on various sources, but that its earliest forms were adopted by Garifuna who came into contact with immigrants from Jamaica (or others who had adopted the tradition after such contact themselves) some time after their arrival at Roatan off the coast of Honduras in 1797. Thus, in my view, Garifuna Jankunu must be considered a cognate of both Jamaican and Bahamian Jankunu. The same view is succinctly expressed by Dirks (1979b:487), who writes: “one might say [Garifuna] John Canoe was born and raised on eighteenth century Jamaican plantations.”
I know of only two or three published accounts of Jankunu in Central America contradicting this view. But these accounts speak so clearly of religious meaning and linkages with spiritually charged contexts that they would seem to suggest that the common representation of Jankunu in this part of the world, as in Jamaica and the Bahamas, as an unambiguously “secular” tradition needs to be reevaluated and researched further. In one of these sources, a prominent Garifuna Jankunu performer from Belize, discussing what he calls “the Wanáragua cycle,” says that in the view of the previous Jankunu leader who trained him and a number of other leading performers in the art, “wanaragua [Jankunu] had a very deep religious significance” (Valentine 2002:42). Another author states that on the Miskito Coast – an area spanning eastern Honduras and northern Nicaragua, known for a long history of social and cultural mixing between Garifunas, Afro-Amerindian Miskitos, and immigrants from Jamaica and other parts of the Anglophone Caribbean – “jaangkunu was formerly a dance performed at a memorial feast for the dead, later at Christmas” (Holm 1978:212, cited in Holm & Shilling 1982:117). There is also a nineteenth-century account – likely the original source on which the foregoing reference is based – in which a traditional feast “in memory of the departed” among Miskito Indians is depicted as including “John-Canoe, a particular kind of dance” (Young 1842:30-31, cited in Bettelheim 1979:241).

Clearly, the social conditions under which Jankunu took root and evolved in Central America were highly complex and fluid, involving much interethnic contact and cultural exchange. As a result, there is a good deal of variation in the Jankunu performed in this area today, with significant differences, for instance, between Belizean Garifuna and Honduran Garifuna versions (and internal variations within each of these as well). The country with the largest Garifuna population by far is Honduras, where local variants of Jankunu have received very little scholarly attention and remain largely undocumented. Further work in that country promises to lead to many new revelations. It should be borne in mind, therefore, that the Belizean variant discussed below represents but a small part of the larger picture of Garifuna Jankunu in Central America.

In the Belizean Garifuna capital of Dangriga, as I learned soon after arriving, Jankunu was traditionally directed by a number of trained specialists or “leaders” known as ábuti (a general term in the Garifuna language for “chief”

41. It is clear that some of this interethnic contact and exchange took place in the context of joint Christmas celebrations. Greene (2005:208), for instance, points to “Young’s [1842] account of Christmas at Fort Wellington on the Mosquitia coast of Honduras, in which Spanish, British, Mosquito, Caribs [Garifuna/Garinagu], Poyer and Wankee [local Amerindians] assemble, play skin drums and other percussive instruments, and dance wildly.”
or “person in charge”). Specialized knowledge of the tradition was passed on from one generation to the next by these leaders, who carefully selected younger individuals to follow in their footsteps. There were three main days on which Jankunu was performed each year (with scattered performances on some of the days in between): Christmas, New Year’s Day, and “Dia-Rey” (i.e. El Día de Reyes, “Day of the Kings” or Epiphany [January 6]). Each individual leader was given responsibility for one (or sometimes more) of these days. The three recognized leaders of the current generation were all trained by a single individual named Max Garcia, now deceased, who is revered as one of the last great authorities and truly knowledgeable practitioners of Wanáragua (Jankunu) in Belize. All of his three primary trainees acknowledge that the teaching they received from him differed individually, since each was assigned different responsibilities – as was normal in the Jankunu tradition. It would not be surprising, therefore, if their viewpoints on the question of Jankunu’s spiritual significance varied to some extent. And this, indeed, is what I found.

One of Garcia’s apprentices expressed a view similar to those of a number of other Garifuna with whom I had spoken about Jankunu, stating outright that the tradition had no religious or spiritual meaning (even while describing certain aspects suggesting spiritual significance, such as the wearing of black arm bands during particular segments of Jankunu performances as signs of “mourning” for deceased Jankunu practitioners of the past). A full understanding of the view expressed by this individual, however, may require a brief digression. After speaking with several others about the question of a possible spiritual dimension, I was led to wonder whether this man’s response, and similar ones, were as much as anything reflections of an implicit assumption that the only traditional Garifuna cultural practice properly deserving of the term “religious” or “spiritual” is the institution known as dügü (defined in The People’s Garifuna Dictionary as “the most important of the propitiation rites” held for Garifuna ancestors [Cayetano 1993:38]). The dügü – which is similar in many ways to the ancestor-focused neo-African religions found in various parts of the Caribbean, but also has much in common with circum-Caribbean Amerindian religions – is an institution

42. There were also three somewhat distinct segments of Jankunu performed at different points during the Wanáragua cycle: Wärini (or Wärin, an opening and closing rite done on December 24 and January 6); Wanáragua “proper” (done on Christmas Day, New Year’s Day, and at various other points); and Chárikári (related to an older dance called Pia Manadi, done on Boxing Day [December 26] and at various other points). There is not sufficient space to discuss these distinct segments further here, but they will be treated in more depth in a book on Jankunu in the Caribbean and the southern United States that I am currently preparing. See also Greene (2005:210-18) for further background on all three.
of central importance in traditional Garifuna society. Having survived the challenges of Catholic and Methodist missionaries for nearly two centuries, it now exists within a fractured theological zone in which “religion” has to some extent become compartmentalized, and what may “properly” be considered “religious” somewhat rigidly defined. Linguistic categories are also part of the problem I faced in trying to look under the surface of Garifuna Jankunu. Since all conversations and formal interviews took place in English, responses may have been influenced by the limitations imposed by English vocabulary and conceptual categories, which do not always fit neatly with those in the Garifuna language. (It may be significant that the only bilingual Garifuna-English dictionary includes no entries for “religion,” “religious,” or “spiritual” – although it does have “spirit,” “spirit-double,” “spiritualism,” and “spiritualist” [Cayetano 1993:148].) I began to sense that for some of the Garifuna with whom I spoke, any aspect of Garifuna culture that did not form an integral part of either the institution of the dügü or one of the recognized Christian churches in the area could not properly be represented (in English) as “religious” or “spiritual.” And, as I was repeatedly told, Wanáragua has no direct connection with the dügü (and certainly none with any of the established churches).

This linguistic ambiguity may well help to account for the differences in the views expressed by the three Jankunu leaders I interviewed. These differences of opinion, in any case, were very significant. While the somewhat ambiguous responses of the first leader, suggesting an absence of spiritual meaning, made me wonder why the ancestors who remain so important in traditional Garifuna life would never take an interest in Jankunu, the responses of the other two left no room for doubt. According to both of them, the spirits of ancestors were very much concerned with, and involved in, Jankunu performances.

One of these Jankunu leaders (now “retired” from this position), recognized by many as the single most knowledgeable practitioner of his generation, explained that his teacher, Max Garcia, and other elders in the Jankunu tradition thought of the purpose of Wanáragua or Jankunu as being “to lift up the world” (lurahon ubóu, in Garifuna). Garcia would sometimes tell him, when speaking of the deeper meaning of the tradition, that in performing Jankunu “we are lifting up the world” (lurahon niwa). What he meant by this was that the performers were “lifting up” or “raising up” the “spirits” of all those around them, helping to spread through the entire community a feeling of celebration and happiness. Nor was this celebration meant only

45. These renderings of Garifuna phrases (lurahon ubóu and lurahon niwa), as well as their English glosses, were provided by the speaker, Jerris Valentine.
for the living. As previous generations thought of it, according to this former Jankunu leader, the “spirits” that were “lifted” by these ritual performances most definitely included the áfurugu, or spirits, of the Garifuna ancestors, who were very much present at such times.  

46. In the Garifuna-English dictionary (Cayetano 1993:12, 40, 148), áfurugu is glossed as “spirit, ghost,” or “spirit-double,” while gubida (the term usually used in anthropological accounts to mean “ancestor spirit”) has a narrower sense: “spirit of deceased relatives.” Jerris Valentine (interview of May 24, 2004) explained that, for the Garifuna, every individual has both a physical body, and a “spirit” that can also be “seen.” One may know or recognize an individual not only by his physical body, but also his spiritual “body,” known as áfurugu, which constitutes something like what would be called his “personality” in English. After death, the áfurugu remains among the living, as an ancestor. As Valentine (2002:23) writes, “since the áfurugu continues to live after the body is dead, the Garifuna has no problem in offering food to the áfurugu of the dead.”

47. Interview with Jerris Valentine, Dangriga, Belize, May 24, 2004. In addition to being Max Garcia’s protégé, Rev. Valentine, a Garifuna who was born in Dangriga, is an Anglican priest. He is also known as a staunch defender of the right of his people to maintain their ancestral culture. It is he who authored the statement cited above regarding Max Garcia’s feeling that Jankunu “had a very deep religious significance.”

48. Interview with John Mariano, Dangriga, Belize, May 20, 2004. In addition to being a Jankunu ábuti, John Mariano is one of the most respected buyei (Garifuna shamans) in Belize, and regularly conducts healing services in the context of the dűgű.
appropriate point in the ritual cycle an offering would be left for them in
the “ring,” the central space where dancing took place. This ritual gesture
would be made right at the outset of the festivities, during the more “private”
part that took place at the yard of the presiding ábutí, where the participants
would assemble early in the morning and dance in preparation for their jour-
ney out into the more public spaces of the town:

With our ancestors, before the Jankunu would start to move house to house,
out there, [at] the yard where they are assembling – generally it’s the yard
of the boss [i.e. the ábutí] – that’s why they always take that white bottle,
white bottle of rum, place it in the middle of the ring. Because Jankunu use
ring, they dance in ring. [They] place it in the middle of that circle. And they
started to play and sing. That’s for the spirit of our ancestors. Because we
know and we believe that they will come and dance. So we do that first.49

For one who had traveled the particular research route that I had, seeking
clues that might lead me to “masked” forms of spirit presence in a perfor-
manace tradition long represented as essentially “African” yet somehow also
essentially devoid of religious or spiritual meaning, such clearly stated reve-
lations seemed almost “too good to be true.” And I began to wonder whether,
in fact, they were true – that is, whether they truly were what they appeared
to be. Could such explicitly spiritual associations, today expressed by only
a handful of Garifuna elders formerly apprenticed to older “experts,” actu-
ally reflect accurately an understanding of Jankunu that had once been more
broadly shared among participants and perhaps others in the wider commu-
nity – an understanding that had begun to fade away only in more recent
times? According to the two Jankunu leaders who speak of a spiritual pres-
ence above, the answer is yes. Both explained the disjuncture between past
and present in the same terms – as the result of a breakdown of “discipline,”
and a lack of respect among younger participants and the larger community.
According to both leaders, Jankunu had always been not only “entertain-
ment,” not just a “joke,” but a “serious” tradition, based on certain “rules,”
and requiring “discipline.” Faced with an increasing lack of commitment
and respect, the older leaders had begun to withdraw, and to withhold much
of their knowledge from those of younger generations. As a result, the tradi-
tion had lost, or only vaguely retained, some of its most important original
meanings. As Jerris Valentine – the ábuti chosen by Max Garcia to be his
primary successor – lamented, “you have to understand what Wanaráguá has
become. Wanaráguá has become something you laugh at. Wanaráguá has
lost its sacredness – its value. So it has no meaning, especially for the young
people.”50 The fact that the famous statue of a Jankunu performer that once

stood as a proud icon of Garifuna identity near the entrance to Dangriga’s main street is now gone would seem to bear out his assertion; repeatedly defaced by local vandals, the statue was finally torn down and removed a few decades ago, and is now remembered only by middle-aged or older people.

**MASKING THE SPIRIT AND SURVIVING SECULARIZATION THROUGH SACRED SOUNDS**

In a recent study of religion in Jamaica, Dianne Stewart uses the masquerading of Jankunu as a metaphor for the defensive cloaking of African modes of religiosity that made possible their survival in new guises. “The institution of masquerading,” she writes,

provided enslaved Africans in Jamaica with an aesthetic mode of concealment and protection that allowed them to preserve Obeah, Myal, and other African-derived religious traditions in variegated forms masked as Christian traditions. By the same token, Myal was also preserved literally within the Jonkunnu masking tradition. African religious practitioners who instituted the Native Baptist and Revival Zion traditions made a Jonkunnu out of Christianity – a performance mask that they could wear and control in their efforts to safeguard African religious culture. (Stewart 2005:221)

As she suggests, this masking metaphor can be applied to the Jankunu tradition itself, in which, as the present-day Jamaican community of Coker shows, the living ancestral presence could, under the right circumstances, be literally preserved through the practice of myal, or spirit possession, in the context of Christmas celebrations involving both material and aesthetic offerings and exchanges between the living and the dead.

But such literal preservation of the bond with ancestral spirits, in the case of Jankunu performances, most likely required a particular kind of disguise of its own. In order to survive as a clearly understood (among practitioners) expression of African religiosity in the context of plantation slavery, and especially in the period of continuing colonial domination and intense Christian missionization that followed, the Jankunu tradition had to mask (that is, pose) in public not as a form of Christianity (which would have been impossible given the centrality of African-style masked dance to it), but rather, as Christianity’s harmless opposite – a “secular” form of “play.” In this recontextualized, ostensibly “secular” form, it was given periodic license to roam the streets and spread holiday cheer precisely because it was perceived (or hoped) to be “mere fun” rather than an uncontrollable expression of a genuinely alternative worldview, or a still viable remnant of what the agents of colonialism thought of as a “savage” variety of religion.
(Christianity’s “opposite” in a different, and ontologically much more threatening, sense).\textsuperscript{51} The more African forms of masking and dancing associated with what was originally known as Jankunu were simply too far removed from what European Christians and their converts considered appropriate modes of behavior and appearance in “religious” contexts to be assimilated to them as such – that is, to take on certain aspects of a “Christian” appearance (as did some of the Native Baptist churches), or to “mask” as a form of Christianity, and then continue as before in this new guise. What most likely happened, rather, was that the practitioners of Jankunu, as part of the ongoing process of creolization, adapted to the harsh repression of visible or overt expressions of non-Christian religiosity by “masking” in a double sense, depending on context. In “outside” contexts, when parading in costume and “making capers” before a larger public in the streets of towns, or performing in the environs of the plantation great house, they “masked the spirit” in the sense of disguising its presence from crowds made up largely of uncomprehending spectators; in “inside” contexts, when performing only among family, co-religionists, and the ancestors themselves, they “masked the spirit” in the common African sense of \textit{embodying} it.\textsuperscript{52}

Just such a bifurcation of Christmas performances into “public” and “private,” “outside” and “inside,” contexts and spaces appears to have allowed Coker, and a few other relatively isolated rural communities in Jamaica, to maintain into the twenty-first century a Jankunu tradition that remains explicitly connected to the community’s ancestors and the religion practiced by the latter while they were alive. (And the division of “old-time” Christmas celebrations in the Bahamas into “outside/secular” and “inside/sacred” spheres, the

\textsuperscript{51} Even when understood as a “secular” form of “play,” Jankunu performances represented a potential threat to white authority during the slavery era – as did any large gathering of slaves – and the temporary period of “ritual license” typifying the Christmas holidays made them seem even more dangerous. This led the authorities to take extra precautions over the holidays – for instance, by placing the colonial militia on alert. After the final abolition of slavery in 1838, some authorities still viewed Jankunu processions, especially those in urban areas, as a dangerous form of public disorder, while others saw them as “degrading” throwbacks to “savagery,” and periodic attempts were made to suppress them. Attempts by the authorities to ban Jankunu performances in Kingston in the 1840s led to riots (Wilmot 1990). One can imagine how much more difficult it would have been for Jankunu performers throughout this period if they had regularly and overtly manifested unmistakable indications of African religiosity in public spaces (for instance, with spirit possession, sacrifices and offerings to ancestors, etc.). This would have been especially true from the 1840s on, when the presence and influence of Christian missions began to increase rapidly.

\textsuperscript{52} This is not to suggest, of course, that in the “public” world, including the spaces most clearly dominated by Europeans, they did not also embody the spirits at the same time that they concealed them from unknowledgeable onlookers; the two kinds of “masking” could conceivably occur simultaneously in “outside” contexts.
former given over to Jankunu processions and the latter to Christian church services, might be seen as a related permutation that resulted from a somewhat similar process of adaptation – one that, in the past, served in a similar way to enable Jankunu to survive through [apparent] “secularization,” even as it remained linked, at least during liminal periods, to the sacred. Most of those who witnessed the “public face” of Coker’s Jankunu performers when they “paraded” their masquerade, music, and dancing “outside” in other communities remained unaware of the inner meanings preserved in the “inside” spaces inhabited year-round by the performers and their ancestors. For the larger public, these bands of masqueraders were no more than what they appeared to be – amusing, even exciting, forms of “Christmas sport,” perhaps tinged with a vaguely alluring air of mystery (and, for children, fear), but essentially devoid of deeper meanings, and because of this, welcome during the holiday season for the contribution they made to the general merriment that was seen as appropriate to this special time of year. By doing nothing to overturn this “public face” – to “unmask” the private significance of Jankunu when performing it “outside” – the performers forestalled a clash of worldviews in which the balance of power (both material and ideological) was clearly not in their favor. Such a clash finally became unavoidable in the latter half of the twentieth century, when a number of Christian evangelical churches (and, more importantly, their local proxies) penetrated the “inside” spaces of Coker and became active right in the heart of the community, where the ancestral presence surviving under the “mask” of Jankunu could not be concealed. Although the final outcome of this contentious encounter is not yet known, it has created a situation in which the continuing existence of Coker’s Jankunu tradition is likely to depend on its increasing “secularization” via the ongoing incorporation of younger performers into touristic performance venues outside the community, official government-sponsored festivals, and the like – a process that has already begun. This process may be seen as a recapitulation of the actual “secularization” (or partial “secularization”) that gradually overtook Jankunu elsewhere in Jamaica as it adapted to a number of changes in the larger society that favored the dissimulation of an absence of spirit (a kind of “masking” in the sense of concealment) and, at the same time, made the actual embodying of spirit (“masking” in the other, more profound sense) increasingly untenable. Whether, and how, the kinds of spiritual meanings embodied in the ancestors’ version of Jankunu will survive this process in Coker remains to be seen.

Indeed, one may pose the question of whether, and how, similar spiritual meanings – meanings known only to the maskers themselves (or perhaps “sensed” by them at a subliminal rather than fully conscious level) – have been able to survive under the secular “mask” of the mainstream or “official” forms of Jankunu that now dominate in Jamaica, the Bahamas, and Belize. I would argue that even if the modern-day transformations effected by tourism, commercialization, nationalization, folklorization, festivalization, and other
such processes have left the better-known contemporary varieties of Jankunu (e.g., Nassau Junkanoo) with a purely “secular” appearance, we cannot discount the vague (if powerful) sense of the “spiritual” such modern “secular” performances seem to arouse in some participants. Nor can we deny the possibility that such perceptions might be rooted in “memories” of an actual cultural past that have been carried forth in various ways to the present. For the concept of “cultural memory” involves complexities and subtleties that have yet to be apprehended fully and may apply to a broader range of phenomena than previously thought. Particularly useful in thinking about Jankunu is the phenomenon that has been termed “nondiscursive memory.” One interesting example is provided in Rosalind Shaw’s recent study of previously unacknowledged memories of the slave trade among the Temne of Sierra Leone, which discusses the existence of nondiscursive forms of social memory that encode seemingly “forgotten” histories in ritual practices and sedimented “memoryscapes” rather than verbal narratives. Shaw (2002:22) characterizes these forms of cultural memory as histories of “moral imagination” that are “told primarily in the language of practical memory through places and practices, images and visions, rituals and rumors.” Another form of nondiscursive “memory” – one that is particularly relevant in discussions of Africa and the diaspora – is encoded in what Connerton (1989:74) refers to as a “mnemonics of the body.” By this he means a repository of performative symbols ritually expressed through kinetic practices such as dance. Such bodily practices may play an important role in the reproduction and

53. What I am suggesting here – that the vague and ineffable (but powerfully felt) sense of “spirit” often associated with ostensibly “secular” performances in the African diaspora may constitute the present-day reflection, or trace, of specific forms of (non-Christian) African religiosity or spirituality actually practiced in the past – seems also to be borne out in the case of the steelband (pan) tradition of Trinidad and Tobago. In his recent study, for instance, Shannon Dudley (2008:14-16, 44-45, 55) points out that there are good historical reasons for the common Trinidadian saying that “pan is a jumbie” (a spirit that possesses people). Dudley points to research by the Trinidadian playwright and scholar Rawle Gibbons showing that there was extensive overlap between the Orisha (then known as Shango) religious community and the steelband community at the very time when pan was coming into being, and that some of the early panmen (steelband players) “were also Orisha men … who brought to the steelband their drumming techniques, their song repertoire, and their understanding of music as a vehicle for the manifestation of divine power” (Dudley 2008:15). This helps to account for the fact that today, as Gibbons points out, “the pan is regarded by African-Trinidadians in particular as an instrument of ‘spirit’” – this despite the fact that the majority of present-day Trinidadians, including many pan performers themselves, seem to regard steelband music as essentially “secular” (except perhaps when Christian tunes are performed on the instrument). Using oral sources, Amon Saba Saakana (Sebastian Clarke) also documents the significant input Orisha drummers had in the development of steelband music in Trinidad (Saakana 2005:85-86).
transmission of a community’s cultural memory. In my own study of cultural memory in the Maroon communities of Jamaica, I found that such nondiscursive, performative forms of “memory,” concentrated in the ceremony known as Kromanti Play or Kromanti Dance, were crucial to the process of social “remembering,” complementing and lending a powerful affective charge to the verbal narratives through which consciousness of the past is transmitted across generations (Bilby 2005b). I also found that among Jamaican Maroons, as among many others in the African diaspora, musical sound serves as a particularly important and effective medium for nondiscursive “memories.”

It is precisely music (not to be separated from dance) that appears to have been key to the survival of a sense of spirituality in all variants of Jankunu – even those most thoroughly transformed by the process of “secularization.” In the Jankunu of Coker, Jamaica, which is the least secularized variety of this festival known to exist anywhere in the Americas today, ancestral spirits are literally summoned into the heads of mediums by the rhythms of the gumbe drum (struck in a special spirit-drawing manner known as myal box), and there is also a special category of songs for this purpose known as myal sing (“spirit invocation songs”) (Bilby 1999:56). On Cat Island in the Bahamas, as we have seen, the underlying spiritually charged commonalities in “sacred” and “secular” music and dance allowed Africanized Christian churches and the Jankunu masquerade temporarily to merge (in a sense, to “reunite”) at least once a year in common celebration of a sacred rite of transition and renewal. For at least some Garifuna Jankunu practitioners in Belize, not only the explicitly religious drumming and chanting of dügü spirit-possession ceremonies, but also the performance of Jankunu itself, has the power to attract the spirits of ancestors; for when it is done properly, in the words of the Jankunu leader cited above, “we know and we believe that they will come and dance.” This close connection between music and spirit, in fact, is present throughout the African diaspora, where generations of scholars working in different areas have repeatedly encountered “music, song, dances, and legends that have the power to attract, convey, dispel, honor, and celebrate the sacred energies of nature and the spirit world” (Vega 1999:49).

It is with this background in mind that one should interpret comments such as the following, about the present-day “secular” Junkanoo festival of Nassau:

everyone knows that the music is the soul of Junkanoo. If the music is right, the costumes look better, and the performance becomes totally animated. Without the music, there is no emotional response from the public or the judges. The music must be able to make the body move involuntarily. It is the music that is the essence of the parade. (Nash Ferguson 2000:32)
The very “magic” and mysterious power that still resides in this contemporary national festival is often expressed through metaphors of musical sound and motion, as when this same author states that “the mere mention of the word ‘Junkanoo’ evokes strange and inexplicable emotions and compulsions. At the very core of your being, your ‘Bahamianness,’ the rhythm of a drum begins to pulsate, the beat vibrating through every pore of your body. A feeling of intense excitement slowly fills your soul” (Nash Ferguson 2000:2). The state of mind evoked by this passage resembles the transcendent experience that some performers call “running hot,” when the music locks into a groove that triggers a powerful, if brief, altered state of consciousness. As Vivian Wood (1995:410) describes it, “when the Junkanooer runs hot she/he enters a very brief, trance-like state in which she/he experiences a feeling of ecstasy and intensity.” “In the run hot stage,” she continues, “the Junkanooer’s performance is heightened and becomes more intense, and the Junkanooer has a sense of being outside the realm of the event” (Wood 1995:411). Michael P. Smith (1992:106), writing of the ostensibly “secular” performances of the Mardi Gras Indians in New Orleans, speaks in a comparable way of “the use of native African/West Indian rhythms and percussion to establish the spirit.” During the more intense segments of their practices, according to Smith (1992:93), “the rhythm and energy gradually build into a transcendent, throbbing, primal spiritual presence.” As Daniel Avorgbedor (2003:30) points out, this ability of musical sound (and movement) to summon and channel the divine is not entirely dependent on sensory stimulation or the physiological reactions music may trigger (though these can certainly play a critical role), for spirit possession and trance also often occur in the absence of music and dance; rather, in a much deeper sense, this perception of music as spiritually potent must be seen as a cultural principle – a cognitive predisposition transmitted, sometimes at an unconscious level, across generations – that is widely shared across Africa and the diaspora, and constitutes yet another form of “cultural memory.”

The understanding that this inherently sacred quality of music links the living with an ancestral past would also seem to be widely shared in the cultural memory of people of African descent in the Americas. It is among what Samuel Floyd (1995:9) calls the “imperatives of the cultural memory” to which black musicians have always been highly sensitive. Indeed, in confirming that the lingering spiritual presence in all varieties of Jankunu almost certainly reflects, however indirectly, an actual and not just a mythic or recently reimagined past, the present study would seem to bear out Floyd’s observation, following Jason Berry (1988), that “the musical retentions and

54. Spencer (1996:44-45) takes a position very close to this when he asserts that “black music itself is, from an Afro-conceptual viewpoint, theological sound,” going on to suggest that “perhaps what music is from such an Afro-conceptual viewpoint is sound (rhythm) that is unconsciously perceived of as being religious.”
performance practices of African-American music helped and still help to preserve this [cultural] memory, recalling the mysteries of myth and the trappings of ritual long after they are no longer functional” (Floyd 1995:9). It also lends support to the insights of Rosita Sands, when she generalizes from Bahamian Junkanoo and the Mardi Gras Indians to other African-derived forms of masking and processional music and dance, noting that

these celebrations speak to the deep spirituality embedded in the wearing of a mask and the assuming of another character, perhaps an ancestor or a person or people revered and admired. These are aspects of African thinking and qualities of African life, strong enough to have survived in the memories of the people and important enough to have served as the inspiration for the carnival celebrations created by peoples of African descent in their New World environments. (Sands 1991:91)\(^55\)

In closing, I return to the observation by Kamau Brathwaite (1990:90-91) with which I opened this essay: “the [jon]konnu that we know throughout Plantation America are the visible publicly permitted survival ikons of African religious culture.” This summation neatly, and I believe accurately, encapsulates both the historical reality of Jankunu, and what it has become. Jankunu emerged in the Americas as an aspect of African religious culture that survived, remained visible, and was publicly permitted only because it succeeded in “masking” the African spiritual presence it embodied with an appearance of secularity; eventually overtaken by a gradual process of actual secularization (or partial secularization), it then survived as an “icon” of the African spirituality it had once both embodied and concealed.\(^56\)

55. Interesting for comparison with the case of Jankunu (as well as the celebrations of the New Orleans Mardi Gras Indians cited by Sands) is another Afro-Caribbean festival tradition in which masking plays a prominent role – the festival of Santiago Apóstol in Loíza, Puerto Rico. For some interesting recent writings on this tradition that touch on a number of issues related to those at the center of the present paper (e.g., forms of cultural memory, and hidden expressions of “African spirituality”), see Fiet (2006-7; 2007).

56. This notion of surviving “iconicity” in the aftermath of secularization invites further analysis along the lines of Gerard Aching’s examination of both real and figurative masks as “devices [that may] maintain forms of (self)-knowledge in abeyance,” and his exploration of masking as a process that sometimes “does not conceal the ‘truth’ but embodies … ‘ideological distortion.’” Building upon the work of Fanon (1967) and others, Aching discusses masking practices in the context of postcolonial Caribbean carnivals not as techniques for hiding or disguising reality, but rather, as oppositional forms of “identity reaffirmation” that sometimes force viewers (through exaggeration, provocative juxtaposition, and the like) to “see” uncomfortable social, economic, and political “truths” that normally remain “invisible” (Aching 2002:4-5, 19-31). If, as Brathwaite suggests, Jankunu masquerades, despite their ostensible secularity, are still widely understood or
cally grounded poetic imagination, Brathwaite (1990:101) goes on to sketch out, in his inimitable way, the outlines of this historical process: “since these forms [of Afro-Caribbean festival behavior] ... were from another world, as it were; they under pressure of the State & Princes of the Church (the old process of seasoning/cultural brain washing & buying or bribing out) began to lose their old African [jon]konnu connection, materializing & – successfully – secularizing themselves.” This took place in somewhat different ways in Jamaica, the Bahamas, and Belize, different colonial settings and varying cultural input giving a unique stamp to Jankunu in each place; but gradual secularization appears to have occurred in all three places.

Yet, as we have seen, this complex process of secularization, whether in Jankunu or other originally sacred arts of the African diaspora, is far from definitive, and traces of the spirit remain alive today in an almost infinite variety of new “secular” expressions. Viewed from this perspective, we can better understand how practitioners of certain music and dance traditions might speak (and at some level, think) of their performances as “secular” – indeed, might firmly insist on such a characterization – and at the same time might feel (and, at another level of thought, intuit and recognize) something profoundly (or, in Brathwaite’s terms, iconically) “spiritual” in these same performances. The apparent contradiction vanishes – or rather, becomes transparent – once we allow for the continuing operation of forms of consciousness, of cultural memory, embodying long histories of ideological struggle, cultural suppression, and cultural reassertion. Not only were the outcomes of the confrontations and conflicts over meaning and morality that typified the process of creolization in the Caribbean extremely complex, but they were never truly conclusive; and in the end, even where Eurocentric cultural hegemony appears to have been strongest, they left powerful, though often submerged and sometimes “masked,” traces of an African worldview in which the “sacred” and the “secular” were indivisible, and spirits of ancestors and other manifestations of the divine were ever present.

In the case of Jankunu, it is still possible, by using ethnographic methods to circumvent the limitations of the written record, to follow the traces of “spirit” even now present in ostensibly “secular” performances back to an undeniably religious (or “spiritual”) foundation (in which spirits of ancestors once actively and openly participated, and were explicitly acknowledged through material and symbolic exchanges). This endeavor has value not only because it allows sensed by those who view such performances today as “survival ikons of African religious culture,” it is not difficult to see how, as symbolic embodiments of something supposedly gone yet still visibly present, they might operate in a similar oppositional fashion in a society such as Jamaica, where surviving expressions of African spirituality coexist uneasily with dominant forms of Christianity and, though they remain important to many, continue to be stigmatized, suppressed, and concealed.
us to enrich our understanding of one of the most important and widespread cultural institutions created by enslaved Africans in the English-speaking Americas (Burton 1997:65; Fabre 1994:55), but also because it reminds us that for its creators and early practitioners Jankunu was not simply the temporary “rite of rebellion” it appears (to present-day scholars who filter the past solely through historical documents written by uncomprehending European observers) to have been; more important than this, it was an expression of an alternative worldview maintained through an ongoing dialogue with the ancestors. Such evidence of relative cultural and existential autonomy among the enslaved says much more about the ways they were able to resist the condition imposed upon them than does the “rebellious” playacting sporadically observed by European writers (who understood and sanctioned this behavior as an aspect of their own custom of “Saturnalia”) in public spaces during the period of ritual license with which Jankunu performances coincided. The continuing presence of an underlying sense of spirituality in Jankunu even today suggests that what the enslaved kept “behind the mask” of this “Black Saturnalia” (Dirks 1987) was far more significant than what was displayed for all to see. Today, in the transformed Jankunu that has survived and is still with us, there is still more than meets the eye, encoded and carried down to us in “secular” yet sacred sounds to which, “masked” as ever, the spirit still dances.

REFERENCES


KENNETH BILBY  
Center for Black Music Research  
Columbia College Chicago  
Chicago IL, U.S.A.  
<kbilby@colum.edu>
On July 25, 1898, U.S. troops invaded Puerto Rico during the Spanish-Cuban-American War and have retained a strong presence there ever since. In 1901, the U.S. Supreme Court paradoxically defined the Island as “foreign to the United States in a domestic sense,” neither a state of the American union nor an independent country (Burnett & Marshall 2001). The Court later ruled that Puerto Rico was an “unincorporated territory” “belonging to but not a part of” the United States, meaning that the U.S. Congress would determine which parts of the U.S. Constitution applied to the Island. In 1904, the Court declared that Puerto Ricans were not “aliens” for immigration purposes and could not be denied entry into the U.S. mainland (Erman 2008). In 1917, Congress granted U.S. citizenship to all persons born on the Island, but did not extend them all constitutional rights and obligations, such as having Congressional representation or paying federal income taxes.

In 1952, Puerto Rico became a U.S. Commonwealth (or Estado Libre Asociado, in Spanish) with limited autonomy over local matters, such as taxation, education, health, housing, culture, and language. Still, the federal government retained jurisdiction in most state affairs, including citizenship, immigration, customs, defense, currency, transportation, communications, foreign trade, and diplomacy. By most accounts, Puerto Rico remains a colony because it lacks sovereignty and effective representation in the federal government.

1. Portions of this article will appear in “The Puerto Rican Diaspora: A Postcolonial Migration?” in Postcolonial Immigration and Identity Formation in Europe since 1945: Towards a Comparative Perspective, edited by Ulbe Bosma, Jan Lucassen, and Gert Oostindie (forthcoming). I gratefully acknowledge the support of the Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños at Hunter College, which offered me a research grant through the CUNY-Caribbean Exchange Program during the summer of 2008. Centro archivist Pedro Juan Hernández and former reference librarian Jorge Matos provided substantial assistance. Edwin Meléndez, Centro’s Director, invited me to present a summary of this article as part of Centro’s Lecture Series during the spring of 2009. Ulbe Bosma, Jan Lucassen, Gert Oostindie, Eileen Findlay, and Edgardo Meléndez commented on the manuscript.

Jorge Duany

A TRANSNATIONAL COLONIAL MIGRATION:
PUERTO RICO’S FARM LABOR PROGRAM
Today, Puerto Rico is still an “unincorporated territory” that “belongs to but is not a part of” the United States. From the standpoint of international law, the Island’s inhabitants are subject to U.S. sovereignty; within the United States, they are often treated as “legal aliens.” Because all Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens by birth, they have the right of abode in the continental United States, Hawaii, and other overseas possessions of the United States. When they move to one of the fifty states of the American union, Puerto Ricans are fully protected by the U.S. Constitution. This territorially grounded distinction in citizenship rights remains a defining characteristic of U.S. colonialism on the Island.

As a result, Puerto Ricans in the United States have been dubbed “colonial immigrants.” Colonial immigrants move abroad primarily for economic reasons, tend to live in segregated quarters, work in low-status jobs, and attend inferior schools in their metropolitan countries. As Ramón Grosfoguel (2004) has argued, Puerto Rico has much in common with other Caribbean dependencies that have sent large numbers of people to their European “mother countries.” For instance, colonial immigrants need not apply for a visa or change their legal status to vote in metropolitan elections. Although colonial immigrants hold metropolitan passports and are entitled to metropolitan subsidies, they often experience discrimination because of their physical and cultural characteristics. In particular, both Puerto Ricans in the United States and Antilleans in France and the Netherlands occupy subordinate positions within metropolitan societies, largely as a consequence of colonial racism, despite conditions of legal equality.

For some analysts, Puerto Rico resembles a “postcolonial colony,” combining elements of classical colonial rule with political autonomy, a relatively high standard of living, and a strong national culture (Duany 2002, Flores 2000, 2008). The Island’s political status is largely based on majority will rather than sheer external imposition. Puerto Rican voters (some 95 percent) are now split between supporting Commonwealth and the Island’s annexation as the fifty-first state of the American union, with less than 5 percent favoring independence. Most value their U.S. citizenship, the freedom of movement that it entails, and “permanent union” with the United States. Even the president of the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), Rubén Berríos, has advocated the unrestricted entry of Puerto Ricans to the United States, should the Island become a sovereign republic (Rodríguez 1997). At the same time, Puerto Ricans of all political ideologies, not just independence supporters, define and assert their cultural identities in intensely nationalistic terms. At any rate, Puerto Rico occupies a marginal space within the U.S. academy and particularly within postcolonial and transnational studies, partly because

it is recognized neither as a colony nor as a nation in its own right. Yet, as I argue, the Island’s government was one of the first modern states, colonial or postcolonial, to organize migration transnationally.

In this article, I approach the Puerto Rican diaspora as a transnational colonial migration. In so doing, I define Puerto Rico as a nation, an imagined community with its own territory, history, language, and culture. Nevertheless, the Island lacks a sovereign state, an independent government that represents the population of that territory (see Duany 2002). This unsovereign state has long sponsored population displacements from Puerto Rico to the United States. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, colonial officials embraced migration as a safety valve for the Island’s overpopulation. During the 1950s and 1960s, the Commonwealth government spurred the “Great Migration” to the U.S. mainland. In particular, the Farm Labor Program, overseen by the Migration Division of Puerto Rico’s Department of Labor, illustrates the complicated negotiations required by a transnational colonial state. In many ways, Puerto Rico’s postwar migration policies anticipated those of contemporary transnational nation-states, such as the Dominican Republic.

Following Migrant Citizens to “Ethnologically Alien Environments”

Soon after the U.S. occupation of Puerto Rico, the colonial government encouraged migration to the United States (Lapp 1990). This public policy was based on the widespread perception that Puerto Rico was a small, poor, and overcrowded country with few natural resources. According to the first civilian U.S. governor, Charles Allen, “Porto Rico has plenty of laborers and poor people generally. What the island needs is men with capital, energy, and enterprise.”4 In 1912, Governor Arthur Yager held that “the only really effective remedy [to the problem of overpopulation] is the transfer of large numbers of Porto Ricans to another region.”5 In 1917, General Frank

4. Charles H. Allen, First Annual Report of Charles H. Allen, Governor of Porto Rico, Covering the Period from May 1, 1900, to May 1, 1901 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1902), p. 75. Although the Island’s name was the object of public controversy after the Spanish-Cuban-American War of 1898, most U.S. government and journalistic reports on the Island retained the American spelling of “Porto Rico” until 1932, when the U.S. Congress passed a resolution accepting the official name of Puerto Rico. As one of the reviewers of this manuscript noted, the common use of the terms “Porto Rico” and “Porto Ricans” reflects the colonial habit of removing foreign-sounding diphthongs from place names in order to Americanize them.

McIntyre, Chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, favored “the colonizing of several hundred thousand of the Porto Rican people in Santo Domingo.”\(^6\) A 1919 report for the U.S. Department of Labor pondered migration to the Dominican Republic and Cuba, but concluded that “it falls short of its purpose when submitted to careful analysis.”\(^7\) Instead, the report recommended establishing an office of the U.S. Employment Service in Puerto Rico to facilitate the relocation of Puerto Ricans to the United States. Three decades later, the Committee on Insular Affairs of the U.S. House of Representatives endorsed “a wise and prudent program of emigration” to alleviate the Island’s “lack of natural resources” and “congestion of population.”\(^8\)

The earliest recruitment of labor on the Island under U.S. rule (especially between 1900 and 1930) was geared toward the sugar plantations of Hawaii, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, particularly St. Croix. Smaller groups of Puerto Ricans built railroads in Ecuador, cut cane in Mexico, grew coffee in Colombia, and worked in a clothing factory in Venezuela. A few thousand picked cotton in Arizona during the 1920s.\(^9\) However, the Puerto Rican exodus gained impetus during the 1940s, when it was largely reoriented toward the U.S. mainland. After World War II, thousands found jobs in seasonal agriculture, manufacturing, domestic service, and other service industries in the United States.

Notwithstanding its lack of sovereignty, Puerto Rico’s government acted as a “transnational” intermediary for its migrant citizens for most of the twentieth century.\(^10\) Thus, the Island’s government set up several agencies in the United States under different guises: the Bureau of Employment and Identification (1930-48), the Office of Information for Puerto Rico (1945-49), the Employment and Migration Bureau (1947-51), the Migration Division of the Department of Labor (1951-89), and the Department of Puerto Rican Community Affairs in the United States (1989-93). Among other initiatives, these agencies issued identification cards for Puerto Ricans as U.S. citizens;

---

A Transnational Colonial Migration

promoted employment opportunities for Puerto Ricans abroad; oversaw the recruitment of workers; negotiated cheap airfares between the Island and the U.S. mainland; registered thousands of Puerto Rican voters in the United States; helped organize overseas Puerto Rican communities; and fostered Puerto Rican culture in the mainland.\(^{11}\) To my knowledge, no modern state, colonial or otherwise, has engaged in more extensive and longstanding activities concerning its expatriates than the Puerto Rican government.\(^{12}\)

U.S. sociologist Clarence Senior, who later directed the Migration Division (1951-60), first elaborated the project of organizing and supervising Puerto Rican migration. In an influential monograph, Senior (1947) proposed an emigration office attached to the governor’s executive staff and working closely with the Island’s Department of Labor. The main function of this office would be to facilitate the recruitment of workers to the United States and Latin America, especially Venezuela. The agency would provide migrants with information about job openings, training, transportation, settlement, and insurance, as well as promote further emigration from the Island. Although the plan to relocate Puerto Ricans in Latin America proved too expensive, the idea of finding jobs for them in the United States later crystallized in the Migration Division. As Senior (1947:119) surmised, “migration to the continental United States seems to offer the best immediate opportunities.”

Luis Muñoz Marín, then president of the Senate (1941-48) and later the first elected governor (1949-64) of Puerto Rico, accepted Senior’s blueprint for planned emigration. Muñoz Marín agreed that it was “necessary to resort to emigration as a measure for the immediate relief to the problem posed by our surplus population, while we seek permanent solutions in the long run.”\(^{13}\)

The chief economist of the Office of Puerto Rico in Washington DC, Donald


\(^{12}\) The best case for historical comparison with the Migration Division is the Bureau for the Development of Migrations Concerning the Overseas Departments, or BUMIDOM (Bureau pour le Développement des Migrations Intéressant les Départements d’Outre-Mer), operated by the French metropolitan government between 1963 and 1982. According to Monique Milia-Marie-Lucie (2002, 2007), Puerto Rico’s Migration Division served as a model for the BUMIDOM, especially its efforts to encourage mass migration, recruit workers, and facilitate their adjustment to the metropolitan country. Similar labor recruitment schemes were established in the British colonies of the Caribbean, particularly in Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad, and in the Netherlands Antilles and Suriname, after World War II (Cervantes-Rodríguez et al. 2009:5)

\(^{13}\) Memorandum from Luis Muñoz Marín to Max Egloff, “Foro público sobre el problema poblacional de Puerto Rico. Resumen de las soluciones ofrecidas por los ponentes en la sesión de julio 19, 1946,” September 28, 1946; section IV: President of the Senate, 1941-1948; series 2: Insular Government; sub-series I: Fortaleza; box 1B: Office of Information; folder 16; Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín (hereafter FLMM), Trujillo Alto, PR. All translations from Spanish to English are mine.
J. O’Connor, also urged the resettlement of Puerto Ricans in the United States and other countries such as Venezuela and the Dominican Republic. According to O’Connor, “migration can accomplish what economic programs on the island cannot do quickly”\(^{14}\) – that is, create jobs and sources of income, while reducing population growth. In particular, O’Connor advocated the relocation of young unmarried women as domestic workers in the United States, especially in Chicago. High-ranking members of the ruling Popular Democratic Party (PDP), such as Antonio Fernós-Isern, Teodoro Moscoso, Rafael Picó, and Salvador Tió, concurred with O’Connor’s optimistic assessment. Thus began a state-supported project of emigration as a safety valve for Puerto Rico’s socioeconomic problems.

On December 5, 1947, the Island’s legislature passed Law 25, establishing Puerto Rico’s migration policy and creating the Employment and Migration Bureau. According to this law, “the Government of Puerto Rico neither encourages nor discourages the migration of Puerto Rican workmen [sic] to the United States or any foreign country; but it considers its duty to provide the proper guidance with respect to opportunities for employment and the problems of adjustment usually encountered in environments which are ethnologically alien.”\(^{15}\) From its inception, the Bureau (and its heirs, the Migration Division and the Department of Puerto Rican Community Affairs in the United States) sought “to follow its migrant citizens to facilitate their adjustment and adaptation in the communities in which they chose to live.”\(^{16}\) The policy of “following migrant citizens,” while officially “neither encouraging nor discouraging” their departure, paid off in the short run. The growth of the Island’s labor force slowed down, as living standards rose substantially between the 1940s and 1960s. Population control was a key tenet of the PDP’s development strategy throughout this period (Pantojas-García 1990).

The PDP, which controlled the Island’s government between 1941 and 1968, crafted the Migration Division as an informal “consulate” in the United States. For decades, the agency’s basic mission was “giving voice [emphasis added]... to the needs and interests of Puerto Ricans” in the United States.\(^{17}\)

\(^{14}\) Memorandum from Donald J. O’Connor to Jesús T. Piñero and others, “Mainland Labor Force Needs in 1948-1949 and Puerto Rico’s Opportunities to Exploit Them,” August 10, 1948; section IV: President of the Senate, 1941-1948; series 2: Insular Government; sub-series 1: Fortaleza; 1C: Office of Puerto Rico in Washington; folder 18; FLMM.

\(^{15}\) Asamblea Legislativa de Puerto Rico, “Para fijar la política pública del gobierno de Puerto Rico sobre migración a Estados Unidos y otros países,” in Leyes de la Cuarta y Quinta Legislaturas Extraordinarias (San Juan: Administración General de Suministros, 1947), p. 386.

A TRANSNATIONAL COLONIAL MIGRATION

sis in the original] to the thousands of Puerto Ricans who come to reside in the cities and towns of the United States.” Throughout the 1950s, the Division attempted to articulate the interests of Puerto Rican migrants to the American public and government officials. As Law 25 stated, “the efforts of the Government of Puerto Rico in this connection should constitute a liaison at all times and under all circumstances between the Puerto Ricans who are going to reside in the city of New York and other cities of the United States, and the governments of such cities, states, and the United States.” In turn, U.S. public authorities often relied on the agency as the official mouthpiece of the overseas Puerto Rican population. Michael Lapp (1990) has criticized the Division’s attempt to co-opt the diaspora to further the interests of the Commonwealth government. Representatives of mainland Puerto Rican communities did not participate in formulating the agency’s policies, which depended exclusively on the PDP during the period under consideration.

In 1960, Muñoz Marín thus summarized his party’s migration policy:

The government of Puerto Rico is the first that establishes offices here [in the United States], outside its own territory, to help its compatriots. The offices of our Department of Labor in New York, and in ten other cities, are devoted to this purpose of helping our fellow citizens adapt themselves to life in the new places of residence they have chosen, as quickly as possible. We constantly strive to combat the lack of information, the prejudices that, unfortunately, always tend to accompany the reception of the newly arrived, from all countries, regardless of what country they come from.

Representatives of the prolonged PDP administration explicitly connected economic development and sponsored migration. As a Division report stated bluntly, “it is obvious that migration, although voluntary, is an integral part of the program of economic and social development that is being carried on by the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. It is so because migration helps to maintain the population index at a more or less stable level with the corresponding effects on employment and unemployment, education, housing, health, and all the other factors that affect the development of Puerto Rico’s government programs.”

19. Luis Muñoz Marín, “Discurso a los puertorriqueños en Nueva York pronunciado por el Gobernador Muñoz Marín el 10 de abril de 1960,” manuscript, p. 9; section V: Governor of Puerto Rico, 1949-1964; series 9: Speeches; box 16: Status; folder 7; FLMM.
20. ELA, Departamento del Trabajo, División de Migración, “Informe anual,” 1966-67, pp. 8-9, microfilm reel 53: Annual Reports; box 2736, folder 1, OGPRUS.
Operation Bootstrap and Fomento’s programs [promoting the Island’s industrialization] have always had a senior silent partner—the Puerto Rican migration to the United States. This migration, of which migrant agricultural workers formed an important segment, is and has been an intrinsic part and a basic factor in the economic growth and development of the island.”

Another report asserted: “the Office of Services to Migrant Agricultural Workers has contributed greatly to the mobility of Puerto Rico’s population, thus providing a powerful escape valve to our great problem of overpopulation and high chronic unemployment.” The metaphor of migration as an “escape valve” is a recurring theme in the official discourse of the period. When the pro-statehood New Progressive Party (NPP) gained power in 1969 and again in 1977 and 1985, it restructured the Migration Division to advance the Island’s annexation into the United States. Apparently, the NPP did not advocate the same migration policies as the PDP, particularly the Farm Labor Program. In 1969, the agency’s staff was downsized, together with its orientation and educational programs for seasonal farm workers. In 1979, NPP Governor Carlos Romero Barceló eliminated the Division’s Cultural Affairs Program, only to have it reinstated by PDP Governor Rafael Hernández Colón in 1985. Finally, in 1993, NPP Governor Pedro Rosselló and other pro-statehood leaders, then a majority in the Island’s legislature, abolished the Department of Puerto Rican Community Affairs in the United States because they believed that the agency represented an unwarranted instance of applying public policy in another jurisdiction. Still, the Commonwealth government retains a formal presence in the mainland through the Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration (PRFAA). Nowadays, this agency has greatly reduced its budget and influence over the diaspora.

“SURPLUS HANDS”: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE FARM LABOR PROGRAM

Postwar Puerto Rican migration has ebbed and flowed according to various stages of Operation Bootstrap (Manos a la Obra, in Spanish), the Island’s pro-

22. ELA, Departamento del Trabajo, División de Migración, Programa de Trabajadores Agrícolas Migrantes, “Informe anual,” 1974-75, p. 1; microfilm reel 43: Reports; box 881, folder 4-box 882, folder 11, OGPRUS.
23. ELA, Departamento del Trabajo, División de Migración, Programa de Trabajadores Agrícolas Migrantes, “Informe anual,” 1972-73; microfilm reel 43: Reports; box 881, folder 4-box 882, folder 11, OGPRUS.
gram of “industrialization by invitation” (largely of U.S. manufacturing capital), as well as to the changing demands of the U.S. economy, particularly in the large urban centers of the northeast (Rivera-Batiz & Santiago 1996, Rodríguez 1989, Whalen 2001). Although Operation Bootstrap created thousands of factory jobs, it could not absorb many more thousands of unskilled workers displaced by a swift agricultural decline. In 1940, agriculture employed 44.9 percent of the Island’s labor force; by 1970, that sector only employed 9.9 percent.24 During this period, Puerto Rico’s development strategy expelled a large share of its rural population, both on and off the Island. As Frank Bonilla (1994) once quipped, Manos a la Obra (literally meaning “putting hands to work”) could be renamed Manos que Sobran (“surplus hands”).

The Farm Labor Program provides a fascinating case study of how Commonwealth officials navigated the “colonial” and “transnational” intricacies of Puerto Rico’s political status. Between 1948 and 1990, the program recruited 421,238 Puerto Ricans to work in the U.S. mainland (see Figure 1). This was the second-largest organized movement of temporary laborers in the United States, after the Mexican bracero program (1942-64) in the southwest. Indeed, Senior (1947:52) regarded the negotiations between the Mexican and U.S. governments as a model for the Migration Division. These agreements included recruitment, transportation, housing, wages, food, working conditions, hours, savings funds, and repatriation of agricultural laborers.

Although Puerto Rican farm workers traveled to many states, they concentrated in the northeast, especially in New Jersey, Connecticut, New York, Delaware, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania (see Figure 2). The vast majority were young men with little schooling and proficiency in the English language. Most had been landless rural laborers in the sugar, coffee, and tobacco industries on the Island.25 They were popularly known as los tomateros (“the tomato pickers”), because that was one of the main crops they harvested. Puerto Ricans also planted and cut shade tobacco in the Connecticut River Valley; picked corn, blueberries, asparagus, broccoli, and onions in the Delaware River Valley; strawberries, cabbages, and carrots in New York; apples in New England and Washington; potatoes in Maine; peaches in South Carolina; avocados and lettuce in South Florida; and other crops like cranberries, oranges, and mushrooms in various places.

On May 9, 1947, the Puerto Rican government created the Farm Labor Program through Law 89. The main purpose of this law was to regulate the recruitment of workers in Puerto Rico and to make the Island’s

24. Junta de Planificación de Puerto Rico, Estadísticas socioeconómicas (San Juan: Junta de Planificación de Puerto Rico, 1983).
Figure 1. Number of Puerto Ricans Referred by the Farm Labor Program in the United States, 1948-90 (Thousands)

Figure 2. Destination of Puerto Rican Farm Workers in the United States, 1963-87
Commissioner of Labor responsible for this process. In 1948, nearly 5,000 Puerto Ricans traveled to the U.S. mainland under the Farm Labor Program. In 1951, the Wagner-Peyser Act, which established the Bureau of Employment Security within the U.S. Department of Labor, was extended to Puerto Rico. Thereafter, the federal government recognized the Island as part of the domestic labor supply in the United States. In effect, U.S. officials treated Puerto Rico as a state of the American union concerning seasonal agricultural workers. Henceforth, the Island’s Farm Labor Program processed thousands of interstate clearance orders from mainland employers requesting farm workers through the U.S. Department of Labor.

The arrangement between the Commonwealth and federal governments worked reasonably well between the 1950s and 1970s. It produced the peculiar situation of a “colonial” state “giving voice” to its “migrant citizens” within a complex metropolitan legal structure and labor market. According to a lawsuit against the Migration Division, “the operation of the Department of Labor of Puerto Rico relating to migrant farm workers is completely integrated in, and interdependent with, a comprehensive federal scheme established by the Wagner-Peyser Act.” Thus, Commonwealth representatives insisted that Puerto Ricans were legally “domestic” in the United States. However, according to Petroamérica Pagán de Colón, who directed the Bureau of Employment and Migration, “within official circles in Washington and in all states, the Puerto Rican worker was considered a foreigner who was going to displace other workers from their jobs.” Because most of the workers could not speak English, U.S. employers and journalists often referred to them as “aliens” and “semi-foreigners.” In addition, Commonwealth officials admitted that “cultural differences ... represented some of the problems faced by Puerto Ricans in the United States, which

30. “What Makes Martinez Run and Smile,” Courier-Post, September 11, 1965; microfilm reel 7: Growers Association Files; box 516, folder 4-box 517, folder 19, OGPRUS.
make their adjustment to the new environment difficult.” In a strange twist of the legal doctrine, Puerto Ricans were “foreign in a domestic sense.”

The Migration Division developed into a formidable bureaucratic structure. By 1958, it had a staff of 130 persons and a budget of one million U.S. dollars. At its peak in 1968, the agency had thirteen offices throughout the U.S. mainland. Many of its resources were geared toward seasonal agricultural workers. The Director of the Farm Labor Program supervised field operations near farm areas where the workers clustered, including Camden and Keyport, New Jersey; Newburgh and Rochester, New York; Middletown, Delaware; Hamburg, Pennsylvania; Hartford, Connecticut; Boston, Massachusetts; and Cleveland, Ohio. The Division signed contracts with numerous agricultural employers, especially the Glassboro Service Association in New Jersey, the Curtis Burns Corporation and the Apple Growers Association in New York, and the Shade Tobacco Growers Association in Connecticut.

The Farm Labor Program sought to meet the cyclical demand for workers in such tasks as weeding, planting, fertilizing, picking, packing, loading, and unloading fruits and vegetables. Employers usually covered the cost of air transportation between Puerto Rico and the United States, to be repaid by the workers in weekly installments. Housing was provided at no cost to the workers. Working hours were typically from seven in the morning to six in the evening. Wages ranged from eighty cents to one dollar per hour in 1960 and from US$ 2.61 to three dollars in the late 1970s. The period of employment lasted from several weeks to three months, often coinciding with the dead season of the Island’s sugar harvest (from May through August). The program extended Puerto Rico’s labor market to the U.S. mainland, just as the Island was transformed from an agricultural to an industrial economy.

The field representatives of Puerto Rico’s Farm Labor Program had multiple duties. First, they oversaw the workers’ transportation from the Island and often welcomed them at U.S. airports. Second, they oriented the migrants about their rights as U.S. citizens. Third, they inspected housing and eating arrangements at labor camps to ensure their compliance with the Commonwealth’s contract with employers. Fourth, they investigated health, accident, salary, and unemployment claims by disgruntled workers (and they were many). Fifth, they mediated disputes between workers and employers, usually organized through growers’ associations. Finally, they coordinated the services offered by state, federal, and private agencies, including

insurance, health care, English language classes, and recreational activities. A fictional character in a promotional film commissioned by Puerto Rico’s Department of Labor, *Los beneficiarios* ("The Beneficiaries"), quips that the field representative of the Migration Division played the roles of “father confessor, nurse, psychologist, chauffeur, translator, teacher, defense lawyer—and everything for the worker.” Another character adds, “he’s a friend of the worker. Someone who fixes everything [arreglalotodo].”34

Puerto Rico’s Farm Labor Program waned during the 1970s, until it practically faded away during the 1990s (see Figure 1). To begin, the demand for seasonal agricultural workers in the U.S. northeast decreased because of crop mechanization and increasing availability of local labor. In addition, the growing number of unauthorized immigrants from Mexico and Central America diminished the need for Puerto Rican agricultural labor. Furthermore, as U.S. citizens, Puerto Ricans usually earned higher wages and had better working and living conditions than temporary foreign laborers, such as Jamaicans or Mexicans. Puerto Rican farm workers also organized labor unions to defend their collective rights, a role formerly played by the Migration Division (Bonilla-Santiago 1988). In 1968, the election of an NPP government on the Island weakened the thrust for recruiting migrant workers. By this time, Puerto Rico itself had become largely urbanized and fewer Puerto Ricans sought agricultural work. Most migrants drifted toward cities, where wages tended to be higher than in rural areas. Lastly, two legal controversies undermined the Division’s capacity to recruit farm labor.

During the 1970s, Puerto Rico’s secretary of labor complained that U.S. apple growers preferred to hire West Indians over Puerto Ricans. In 1979, a class action suit, *Rios v. Marshall*, contended that temporary foreign laborers, especially Jamaicans, were recruited for the New York apple harvest, without first guaranteeing jobs for Puerto Ricans and other “domestic” workers. The U.S. secretary of labor at the time had certified that “no domestic workers were available” because Law 89 eliminated Puerto Ricans from the labor supply. As the under-secretary of labor, Robert Aders, wrote to the chairman of the Subcommittee on Agricultural Labor of the U.S. House of Representatives, “it is our hope that the regulations under Puerto Rican Public Law 89 can be adjusted to make these workers more effectively available for employment on the mainland.”35 In 1978, Law 89 was amended to allow exceptions to the Commonwealth’s contract, which many mainland growers disliked, particularly the jurisdiction of Puerto Rican courts over


35. Letter from Robert O. Aders to William D. Ford, Chairman, Subcommittee on Agricultural Labor, January 26, 1976; microfilm reel 145: Apple Harvest; box 2487, folders 1-19, OGPRUS.
labor disputes. This amendment hampered the Island’s bargaining position vis-à-vis U.S. agricultural employers.

Perhaps more damaging to the Farm Labor Program was the protracted litigation surrounding *Vázquez v. Ferre* (1973). This lawsuit accused former NPP Governor Luis Ferré, Secretary of Labor Julia Rivera de Vincenty, National Director of the Migration Division Nick Lugo, and other public authorities of allowing unsafe, unsanitary, and unhealthy conditions in the agricultural labor camps. The main plaintiff, David Vázquez, was a twenty-five-year-old Puerto Rican farm worker from Arecibo, employed by the Glassboro Service Association in New Jersey in 1972. Among other grievances, Vázquez alleged that the camp where he toiled had inadequate living quarters, unhygienic cooking facilities, no heating, insufficient sleeping space, and unclean bathing and toilet facilities. Attorneys employed by the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (PRLDEF), which filed the suit on behalf of Vázquez and other migrant workers, charged that the farm’s housing conditions violated the Wagner-Peyser Act, Commonwealth laws and regulations, and the contract with the Glassboro Service Association. After years of negotiations, the Commonwealth government settled the case in 1977, agreeing to inspect farms before assigning them workers.³⁶ By then, U.S. farms had recruited less than 4,200 Island workers (Figure 1).

**DOCUMENTING TRANSNATIONALISM FROM BELOW**

Most of the extant documents on Puerto Rico’s Farm Labor Program, deposited at the Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños at Hunter College in New York, voice the perspectives of Commonwealth officials. Nonetheless, the archives sometimes provide glimpses into the mundane concerns, practices, and social relations of the workers and their families. These primary sources, including unpublished correspondence, annual and monthly reports, memoranda, and newspaper clippings, help reconstruct the everyday experiences of transnationalism from below (Smith & Guarnizo 1998), from the standpoint of the migrants themselves.³⁷ (When translating the Spanish texts, I retain their original punctuation and syntax.)

To begin, Puerto Rican farm workers faced difficult working conditions. By far their most common grievance involved breaches of contracts by employers. Many workers claimed that employers treated them unfairly, including withholding their wages until the end of their contracts and not giving them enough work. A letter signed by “Federico Gaspal. Alcadio Serafin” was addressed to the migration specialist in Hamburg, Pennsylvania:

³⁷. For an earlier study of the farm workers’ correspondence at the General Archive of Puerto Rico, see Stinson-Fernández 1996.
Dear Mr. Mendosa [sic].
The present [purpose] of these short line [sic] is to let you know that you could come here because at this time this farmer during the week he gives us two or three days of work during the week and we turn to you also five weeks have passed and they haven’t changed the bed linen and we’d like you to come see where we take baths which is a ranch where there are bulls ducks hens et setera [sic] these is [un]hygienic for our health. And we’ve carried out our work also look we haven’t been able to send much [money] to P.R. [Puerto Rico]. Because these people are really bad. Look I’d still like you to see where we live, in a shack [chihó?] where things barely fit. Look I’d also like you to see the kitchenware. Look here there were some emigrant people and they fled, I think it was because of the bad service they give here and they don’t agree with what the law requires.38

Ten years later, Puerto Ricans employed by Comstock-Greenwood Foods in New York denounced similar working conditions:

My very esteemed Jorge Colón: the Present [purpose] of this [letter] is to [offer] new information we’d like not to bother you again But it’s our duty to let you know that at Curtis Burns they still [treat] us with cruelty us Puerto Ricans and I’ll tell you that we expected that when the corn [season] came we’d do something and time is growing shorter and we suffer the same scarcity of work this company adds blacks [moyetos] and Americans to work and many of us are still looking at each other’s faces and we complain to you Because you’re the man called to solve our Problem We Pay for our meals and those from here don’t pay anything and besides you told us that if anything happened we should let you know so we’re sincere We hope you’ll visit us if it’s agreeable to you and you can and we can be corresponded, by duty these people should share with everyone and if they want us to come later to work for them. We hope you’ll answer and visit us.
Yours truly,
Workers at Curtis Burns39

The above letter suggests that many migrants indeed perceived the field representative as a fixit-all.

In addition to work-related issues, migrants complained about daily disturbances at the camps:

38. Letter to Roberto Mendoza, October 9, 1959; microfilm reel 48: Reports; boxes 889-890, OGPRUS.
39. Letter to Jorge Colón, September 19, 1969; microfilm reel 3: Growers Association Files; box 509, folder 14-box 511, folder 14, OGPRUS.
So we want to inform you that most of these laborers [in Windsor, Connecticut] are young men who go to these camps to smoke marijuana and sniff coke and other drugs, and then when they’re under the drug’s effects they start to laugh, tell jokes, and turn on the radio, and [listen to] Radio Picat all night, and if you tell them you want to sleep because you have to work the next day to fulfill your contract duties.

They respond that you were in Puerto Rico before if you don’t like it move back, and if you took [the job], you have to put up with it now, and there are also many individuals who take loose women [mujeres de la vida alegre] to these camps to sell them to the workers and then many of them get sick putting at risk the others’ health, and also these same women together with those who bring them coax many of the workers, hitting and assaulting them.40

Health problems were commonplace. In Chester County, Pennsylvania, Puerto Ricans were susceptible to a respiratory disease caused by a substance used in growing mushrooms.41 In Massachusetts, the Division tried to inform Bernardo Avilés Ramos’s closest relatives that he had been hospitalized at Northampton State Hospital for ten days because of “mental disturbances.”42 In Hartford, a few months later, Jesús Aponte Figueroa wrote:

Mr. Rafael Muñoz

Amidst the disturbance in which I find myself I take the pen to notify you of my state of health. And my working conditions, I Jesús Aponte Figueroa write this letter to request your help and that of other collaborators of the labor office because here where I’m at what you find is an injustice toward agricultural workers mainly Puerto Rican I should manifest now, this is my case [sic]. Which may seem of no importance if it’s declared by Mr. [Gilberto] Camacho [the field representative], I Jesús am a worker at the Imperial Nurseries, where many of us risk our necks that weed makes fun of us because we don’t speak English. It’s been two weeks since I was working when unfortunately some dirt fell on my right eye which I got when I went to put down a tree in a brook ...

I wish you can help me get a ticket back to PR since I don’t think I’ll work any more because I feel bad from the heart and from an eye I’ve

40. Letter to Gilberto Camacho, July 5, 1974; microfilm reel 14: Growers Association Files; box 652, folder 5-box 654, folder 12, OGPRUS.
41. Louis S. Bringhurst and Jacob Gershon-Cohen, “Respiratory Disease of Mushroom Workers: Farmer’s Lung,” 1959; microfilm reel 34: Regional and Field Office Farm Labor Files; box 863, folder 8-box 865, folder 4, OGPRUS.
42. Letter from Gilberto Camacho to José J. Maysonet, June 11, 1971; microfilm reel 44: Reports; boxes 882-883, OGPRUS.
Almost lost which I know that not even my island has a cure and my sickness appears to be internal.43

Upon visiting the camps, field representatives frequently found substandard housing conditions. Their inspection report included an assessment of sleeping quarters, sanitary conditions, kitchen and laundry facilities, and recreational grounds. A Commonwealth official in Hartford wrote about “a family of 9 living in a cottage without hot water, toilet, showers, and without proper ventilation. Another group of 5 men living in a dirty small barrack not big enough for 1 person.” The owner of the apple orchard declared that “the Puerto Ricans do not deserve any better.”44 Puerto Rican workers often described the camps as filthy (in one case, calling them un corral de puerco, a pigs’ pen). Some compared them to “concentration camps” because “the worker cannot go out unless he has a special permission from the guards ... and where the guards carry clubs and use them fearlessly.”45

Aside from the camps’ overcrowded, unkempt, and Spartan conditions, many Puerto Ricans were dissatisfied with the food they ate there. Although the Commonwealth contract stipulated that employers should provide three hot meals per day, this requirement was rarely met. A field representative in Camden was told that “we Puerto Ricans do not eat soup that way [in thermos flasks brought to the labor camps] and much less beans for lunch.”46 At a Windsor camp, “the men showed a desire for more variety [in their lunches] ... [T]hey feel that the fish and chicken cooked for the evening meals are not highly seasoned enough.”47 Similarly, workers criticized the menu at the Green Giant Company in Middletown, Delaware: “breakfast a loaf of bread and (two small slices) of bread and coffee and milk that tasted like a rusty nail. For lunch they gave us a sticky rice, marota (?), always beans and chickpeas that looked like stones. For seven days rice and beans and chickpeas. In the afternoons they gave us the same food.”48

43. Letter from Jesús Aponte Figueroa to Rafael Muñoz, September 23, 1971; microfilm reel 44: Reports; boxes 882-883, OGPRUS.
44. “Activity Report” from Gilberto Camacho to Francisca Bou, July 15, 1965; microfilm reel 145: Apple Harvest File; box 2487, folders 1-19, OGPRUS.
45. Letter from Anthony Vega to Eulalio Torres, January 27, 1960; microfilm reel 32: Regional and Field Office Farm Labor Files; box 859, folder 1-box 860, folder 11, OGPRUS.
46. Letter to Jorge Colón, September 19, 1969; microfilm reel 3: Growers Association Files; box 509, folder 14-box 511, folder 14, OGPRUS.
47. “Minutes of the Consumer Participation Meeting of the Camp Windsor Council,” June 22, 1972; microfilm reel 35: Regional and Field Office Farm Labor Files; box 865, folder 5-box 868, folder 4, OGPRUS.
48. “Declaración de los trabajadores bajo contrato [sic] con Green Giant Co.,” undated; microfilm reel 11: Growers Association Files; box 647, folder 1-box 648, folder 15, OGPRUS.
Another report from Hartford dwelt on the cultural differences between Puerto Ricans and Americans regarding food:

The problem lies in that what “solid food” [emphasis in the original] [means] for the Shade [Tobacco Growers Association] are soups for the worker. Soups for Americans are broth; soups for Puerto Ricans are boiled rice with chicken, much softer than solid. They allege that’s not solid food. Because of the enormous quantity prepared at Shade, it can’t be tasty.

Most of them don’t eat chili con carne, which comes in a one-gallon container.

They don’t like the various types of spaghetti and macaroni, also heated from gallon containers.

All of the food for lunch, except for sandwiches, is semi-solid or semi-liquid. The workers expected a solid lunch with rice and beans.49

The Migration Division’s representatives constantly pleaded with the employers to offer meals that better reflected the workers’ cultural tastes.

In at least one documented case, an enterprising Puerto Rican named Carlos Arroyo established a clandestine food retailing business at the Curtis Burns camp. According to a field representative, Arroyo had smuggled numerous groceries into his barracks, including ten boxes of pig’s tripe (mondongo criollo); ten boxes of Corona Malt beverage; twenty-two boxes of guava, orange, soursop (guanábana), pear, peach, and apricot juice; two boxes of sausages; two boxes of rice and chicken soup (asopado); and fourteen boxes of Rico cookies.50

TRAVELLING TO “LAS AMÉRICAS”:
THE DILEMMAS OF EMOTIONAL TRANSMATIONALISM

In this section, I focus on the subjective impacts of uprooting farm workers from their home communities. I build on Elizabeth Aranda’s (2007) work on emotional transnationalism, highlighting how migrants sustain affective attachments to their places of origin. In particular, Aranda calls attention to the personal challenges posed by physical separation, “the empty spaces of migration,” and cultural alienation. In its own way, the Migration Division recognized the emotional dimensions of migration, using the nationalistic rhetoric typical of the 1970s:

49. Letter from Gilberto Camacho to Aurelio Segundo, March 27, 1973; microfilm reel 14: Growers Association Files; box 652, folder 5-box 654, folder 12, OGPRUS.
50. Letter to Harry Vazquez Gallardo, December 12, 1967; microfilm reel 3: Growers Association Files; box 509, folder 14-box 511, folder 14, OGPRUS.
the Puerto Rican people are composed of two parts: almost halves, divided between those who reside in the island-motherland and those who live in the continental United States ... both communities maintain affective and material ties, which are constant: they worry about each other; they share joys and tragedies; they feel affected by the political and social currents on both sides of the sea. In sum, they feel like a single people, a single identity, Puerto Ricans all.51

Several letters written by farm workers and their families in Puerto Rico articulate the emotional strains on separated couples and households. Inquiries about estranged relatives in the United States were common. Lidia Esther Berríos, a resident of Villa Palmeras in Santurce, was concerned about Rafael López Berríos, a worker for the Glassboro Growers Association in New Jersey: “the writer of this letter is his mother, who wants to find out why they treat him so badly over there ... [H]is employer has something against him, he treats him like a slave they treat him like a thief and like a nobody.”52

One letter reflects family tensions concerning the decision to migrate. Daniel Medina Cruz was a sixteen-year-old migrant worker in New Jersey: “I came to work on my own with a contract with the Labor Department of Puerto Rico. My dad and mom called to ask me to go back to P.R. I won’t go back to P.R. because I want to work and fulfill my contract and make money this is my decision and nobody has forced me to do it.”53

Some migrants lost touch with their loved ones. As part of its many duties, the Migration Division served as a transnational liaison between farm workers and their families in Puerto Rico. During the 1970s, the agency even advertised in New York’s newspaper El Diario/La Prensa, to relay messages to migrants from their relatives. Several letters attempted to reestablish rapport with departed workers, such as one penned by Edna Luz Arriaga, from Cataño, which began: “Baby: The present [purpose] of this little letter is to know about you and how it’s going over there I as for me and your son I’ll tell you that we’re both down with a cold.”54

Other correspondents reported serious illnesses and deaths in the family:

51. ELA, Departamento del Trabajo, División de Migración, “Informe anual,” 1975-76, pp. 2-3; microfilm reel 54: Annual Reports; box 2737, folder 6, OGPRUS.
52. Letter from Lidia Esther Berríos, July 7, 1969; microfilm reel 17: Growers Association Files; box 658, folder 1-box 658, folder 22, OGPRUS.
53. Letter from Daniel Medina Cruz, September 30, 1971; microfilm reel 32: Regional and Field Office Farm Labor Files; box 859, folder 1-box 860, folder 11, OGPRUS.
54. Letter from Edna Luz Arriaga to Horacio Rodríguez, October 11, 1973; microfilm reel 4: Growers Association Files; box 511, folder 15-box 513, folder 5, OGPRUS.
Mr. Daniel Torres  
Brother this letter has the goal of greeting you and at the same time give you some bad news from our mother on the 15th of this month she died which was yesterday. Agustín Paco Chee and Rafi are already in Puerto Rico today Toña Pedro arrives. So if you want to see Picto well I think when you receive this letter and it’s too late you won’t be able to see her. With no other news your sister Yuly who loves you and take it easy don’t do anything silly.  
Your sister Yuly  
Oh and Pito is also gravely ill he’s in the hospital he was throwing up blood through his nose and mouth.55

The most heartbreaking messages involved abandoned wives and children. Lydia Acosta Estrada, from Gurabo, was searching for her husband, Iluminado Acosta Jiménez:

My painted lips  
My dearest husband:  
I wrote this [letter] without receiving any [response]. where I’ll tell you that your children they’re fine in health. Thank God and I wish the same to you together with your fellow workers. As to myself I’ll tell you that I’ve been nervous and [in]tranquil because I haven’t heard from you. Look daddy you know I suffer a lot because of you because I don’t know [about your life?] I’m your wife I want to know about you since I don’t know your whereabouts tell me what’s happened to you since I received a single letter from you and I haven’t received anything else from you ... When you come back you’ll find me losing weight and thinking about your trip I hope you won’t make me suffer anymore my sweetheart you know that I’m crazy about you and I please you in every way My beautiful sweetheart I think I’m the only woman who has understood you ... Look I went to the State Fund and they had the address of the owners of the farms and I got this one from over there so that’s why I wrote to this director of the farm who’s trying to look for this gentleman who works in the state of Indiana, named Iluminado Acosta Jimenez ... I look for you everywhere. That’s so you know that I love you, kisses and hugs, from your children my kisses and hugs from your wife Lydia who loves you forever. Who won’t ever forget you Answer soon by all means I await your response.56

55. Letter to Daniel Torres, April 16, 1974; microfilm reel 12: Growers Association Files; box 649, folder 1-box 650, folder 16, OGPRUS.  
56. Letter from Lydia Acosta Estrada to Iluminado Acosta Jiménez, September 12, 1975; microfilm reel 4:Growers Association Files; box 511, folder 15-box 513, folder 5, OGPRUS.
The Commonwealth office located the husband at the Curtis Burns camp in Rochester, New York.

The Migration Division even acted as a bilingual social service agency. In one instance, a migration specialist served as translator for four Puerto Rican workers accused of molesting three girls in Moorestown, New Jersey. The judge dismissed the charges after hearing the girls’ testimony. The Commonwealth official commented: “not every person who speaks Spanish and English can act as interpreter in court in the best interest of our workers. It takes a person with a thorough knowledge of both languages plus a full understanding of how our workers think [sic], act and react.”

Another case involved a dysfunctional family, referred to the Division by Catholic Charities in Reading, Pennsylvania. According to the migration specialist in Hamburg, Eugenia Galán threatened to “sleep in the street with my six children rather than keep on living with this old man [the husband]. Last night he was about to strangle himself with a string of rope tied to the bed, with a tight knot around the neck, and I think that someone who dares to do that, is capable of killing anyone. When the son cut the string, he said he was going to buy a revolver to kill me. I want to leave here right away.” The woman insisted on going back to Puerto Rico, because “I don’t like las Américas.” The Commonwealth official took her to the Salvation Army Women’s Lodge. Galán later changed her mind about returning to the Island.

One of the most poignant examples of the human toll of transnational migration is the case of Carlos Torres, who worked in a tomato farm in Greshville, Pennsylvania. On August 20, 1959, Luis Rivera Hernández, another Puerto Rican worker, shot and killed Torres, after arguing over a prostitute in their barracks. The migration specialist in Hamburg served as interpreter for the accused. Rivera Hernández pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter and was sentenced to six to twelve years of imprisonment. The deceased man’s sister, Georgina Hernández, claimed the body and his meager personal belongings:

- A jacket
- A shirt
- A black suit
- A pair of brown shoes
- A red hat
- A belt
- A can of hair ointment

58. Letter from Roberto Mendoza to E. Torres, March 2, 1959; microfilm reel 48: Reports; boxes 889-890, OGPRUS.
The postwar Puerto Rican experience of government-sponsored migration prefigured what are now known as “transnational nation-states.” Georges Fouron and Nina Glick Schiller (2001:19-20) define a transnational nation-state as “the reconstitution of the concept of the state so that both the nation and the authority of the government it represents extend beyond the state’s territorial boundaries and incorporate dispersed populations.” Transnational nation-states claim “that [their] emigrants and their descendants remain an integral and intimate part of their ancestral homeland, even if they are legal citizens of another state” (Fouron & Glick Schiller 2001:19).

As Luis Guarnizo (1998) has shown, many contemporary migrant-sending states, including the Dominican Republic and Mexico, have redefined the meaning of citizenship and nationality to integrate diasporas into their countries of origin (see also Itzigsohn & Villacrés 2008). Among other measures, transnational nation-states have restructured their ministerial and consular bureaucracies, recognized dual citizenship, extended the right to vote abroad, permitted candidates to run for public office from overseas, provided state services to nationals living abroad, and reinforced expatriates’ sense of membership in the sending countries. Peggy Levitt and Rafael de la Dehesa (2003) argue that transnational-nation states follow such policies because of the growing significance of remittances as well as changing norms of governance across state boundaries. In addition, migrants often organize themselves to participate in homeland politics and press for the sending state’s recognition of their citizenship rights.

After World War II, the Puerto Rican government adopted several transnational migration policies, though it did not grant voting rights to Puerto Ricans in the United States. (As noted before, Puerto Ricans on and off the Island share U.S. citizenship, albeit with different rights and obligations.) Since 1947, the Island’s bureaucracy “followed its migrant citizens” to the U.S. mainland and promoted their adjustment to an “ethnologically alien” setting. In particular, the Farm Labor Program walked a tightrope between defining Puerto Ricans as “domestic labor” and preserving their “foreign” culture and language in the United States.

59. Testimony of Georgina Hernández, August 25, 1959; microfilm reel 48: Reports; boxes 889-890, OGPRUS.
After 1952, the Commonwealth government expanded its “transnational” reach, from promoting job opportunities and enforcing labor contracts, to providing legal defense and health insurance, as well as translation and education services. As Ismael García-Colón (2008:285) observes, the Migration Division “acted contradictorily as a labor organization and, at the same time, as a hindrance to independent labor organizing efforts.” Moreover, the agency had a vested interest in maintaining a regular labor flow to the mainland because of its economic benefits for the Island. At a time when remittances were not as carefully monitored as they are today, farm workers sent nearly US$ 292 million to the Island between 1947 and 1959. Finally, the Migration Division operated as a liaison between the Puerto Rican government and city, state, and federal agencies in the United States.

Compared to transnational nation-states such as the Dominican Republic, the Puerto Rican government has not fully incorporated its émigrés into homeland politics. Perhaps the most controversial issue is how the diaspora can contribute to solving Puerto Rico’s “colonial” status. Until now, all local elections, referenda, and plebiscites have been restricted to U.S. citizens who reside on the Island. Nonetheless, Puerto Ricans in the United States have reiterated their wish to participate in defining the Island’s political future (Falcón 1993, 2007). On April 29, 2010, the U.S. House of Representatives approved a bill to celebrate a new plebiscite on Puerto Rico’s status. The Puerto Rico Democracy Act of 2009 (H.R. 2499), sponsored by Resident Commissioner Pedro Pierluisi, would grant the right to vote in the plebiscite to all U.S. citizens born in Puerto Rico, regardless of their current residence. If approved by the Senate, this proposal would allow stateside Puerto Ricans to take part for the first time in the status debate. As of October 2010, however, the Senate’s Committee on Energy and Natural Resources had virtually paralyzed the bill.

“FOREIGN IN A DOMESTIC SENSE”:
THE RISE OF A TRANSNATIONAL COLONIAL STATE

In this article, I have elaborated the concept of a “transnational colonial state.” This category includes dependent territories with large migrant populations in metropolitan countries and which continue to regard them as part

60. Monserrat, “Suggestions for a New Approach to Migration. Confidential Memorandum to Luis Muñoz Marín,” February 9, 1961, p. 35; section V: Governor of Puerto Rico, 1949-64; series 1: General Correspondence; box 137: Departments; folder 9: Labor – Migration Division; FLMM.
61. See also José Delgado, Voto puertorriqueño podría ser decisivo, El Nuevo Día, October 13, 2008, pp. 46-47.
of the colonial nation. Although residents of the dependent territory and its metropole share the same citizenship, the former are often treated as foreigners in the “mother country.” In this scenario, the legal boundaries between sending and receiving countries are blurred, while their cultural borders remain intractable to those who move back and forth. Puerto Ricans in the United States and Antilleans in the Netherlands are cases in point.

Although a transnational colonial state lacks sovereignty, it extends its reach to the metropolitan state. At the same time, it must follow metropolitan laws and regulations about immigration, citizenship rights, social benefits, and other public policies. This insider/outsider logic differentiates transnational colonial states such as Puerto Rico from independent ones such as the Dominican Republic. It also underlines the basic analogies among the overseas territories of the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, and the United States. For example, all citizens of the dependent Caribbean share the right of abode, as well as access to welfare and social rights, in their metropolitan countries. Not surprisingly, migration rates from nonsovereign territories are much higher than from independent states (see Cervantes-Rodríguez et al. 2009, Clegg & Pantojas-García 2009, De Jong & Kruijt 2005).

Clearly, the *Estado Libre Asociado* did not end Puerto Rico’s colonial dependence on the United States, although it did provide greater local autonomy. On the one hand, Commonwealth status allowed – perhaps even required – the Island’s public authorities to intervene on behalf of migrants to the mainland. On the other hand, the Island’s government must comply with all applicable federal laws and regulations. The Farm Labor Program best exemplifies the Island’s “transnational” migration policies, which facilitated the transfer of “surplus hands” to the mainland after World War II. The large-scale displacement of agricultural workers established the earliest settlement patterns of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. Northeast as well as the circulation of labor that persists today. To promote the recruitment of Puerto Rican farm workers, Commonwealth officials argued that they should be given preference over foreigners in the United States. Still, many U.S. employers considered Puerto Ricans “alien workers,” especially because they spoke little English and practiced a “foreign” culture, including their eating habits. According to a Commonwealth official in Hamburg, “the language barrier” was “the number one problem” for Puerto Rico’s migrant workers.62

In sum, Puerto Ricans illustrate one of the main dilemmas of colonial subjects in their metropolitan countries: although legally domestic, they are often viewed as culturally foreign. Thus, the Puerto Rican diaspora is both transnational, because it involves crossing the cultural borders between the Island and the U.S. mainland, and colonial, because it does not entail traveling across

62. Speech by Roberto Mendoza, October 13, 1959; microfilm reel 48: Reports; boxes 889-890, OGPRUS.
the legal boundaries between independent states. This ambiguity is the long-term consequence of the oxymoronic legal doctrine that Puerto Rico “belongs to but is not a part of” the United States. Such a doctrine, established at the beginning of the twentieth century, laid the ground for a massive transnational colonial migration during the second half of the century.

REFERENCES


MUSTELIER AYALA, SANDRA, 2006. Ecos boricuas en el Oriente cubano: La diáspora de un ala. San Juan: Makarios.


JORGE DUANY
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
University of Puerto Rico
San Juan PR 00931-3345
<jduany@gmail.com>
CONVENTION, CONTEXT, AND CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS
“JIM THE BOATMAN” (1846) AND THE EARLY FICTION OF TRINIDAD

INTRODUCTION

In a survey of emerging nineteenth-century black literature in Trinidad, Selwyn Cudjoe (2003:93) links “Jim the Boatman” to a colored1 writer in Port of Spain, Trinidad, around 1810. This story was originally published as an anonymous work in the *Trinidad Spectator* on January 24, 1846. In their attempts to distill a literary canon from early anonymous texts like “Jim the Boatman,” scholars should consider those cultural influences which informed both “black” and “white” literary traditions in the Anglophone Caribbean. In other words, analyzing the texts within a critical discourse framework can lead researchers to discover who the unknown authors are. The idea is that the unknown writers betray aspects of their class and/or ethnic identity through the discourse conventions to which they adhere. Such conventions might include how they reproduced Creole speech or what terms they used to refer to skin color. Approaching the language in texts through the lens of critical discourse analysis leads to a focus on the ways in which people’s discursive behavior inadvertently shows the influence of external sociopolitical pressures (Johnstone 2002:234). Fairclough’s model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) considers the interaction between social context, the discourse context, and the linguistic context. Reading “Jim the Boatman” with these domains in mind can lead to an alternative view of the unknown author’s ethnicity and identity.

THE SOCIAL AND DISCOURSE CONTEXTS: TRINIDAD AND THE ANGLOPHONE COLONIES

Kevin Yelvington (1993:1) suggests that “ethnicity permeates all social, cultural, political, and economic institutions and practices of Trinidad soci-

1. I use “colored” interchangeably with “nonwhite.”
ety and is therefore implicated in the power struggles of everyday life.” Likewise, ethnicity impacts the social practice of literary discourse formation in the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries and is, therefore, of paramount importance to interpreting the early literature of Trinidad.

Unlike other Anglophone island colonies in the early nineteenth century, Trinidad had very significant free-colored and free black populations, both of which had not experienced slavery (Brereton 1983:69). This characteristic of the society can be explained by the arrival of French Catholics, white and colored, in Trinidad under the Cedula of Population in 1783. As a result, when Trinidad was formally ceded to Britain by the Treaty of Amiens in 1802, intercultural relations were complex, as the population comprised 5,275 free coloreds, 2,261 whites (Brereton 1989:49), and 19,709 slaves (Brereton 1989:45). Comparable figures for 1803 by H.O.B. Wooding (1960:146) detail 20,464 slaves, 1,154 of original native Indian stock, 7,636 whites and coloreds combined, which included 4,018 French, 2,356 Spanish, and 1,262 English inhabitants. Many Irish families were also assimilated by marriage into the French Creole elite. Additionally, Brereton (1989:99) documents the arrival of 899 French and German immigrants between 1839 and 1840. The arrival of Portuguese and East Indian immigrants was only just beginning by 1845. These demographic circumstances were further complicated by an English administration which was conscious of the numerical and cultural dominance of the French, at the time of cessation. Those of French ancestry continued to be owners of the larger sugar plantations until the mid-nineteenth century. However, after 1838 an increased number of British and Scottish immigrants began to arrive who were appointed to the highest official posts in the colony, and in positions as managers, overseers, doctors, and lawyers, thereby becoming the dominant administrative group politically, if not numerically.

Related to this ethnically complex society, an editorial in the Trinidad Spectator records that in spite of being directed by “some of the most respectable gentlemen of the island, still it [was] a fact not to be denied that [the

2. The Cedula of Population was a decree which offered generous terms to wealthy planters who were Catholics and allies of Spain. These terms included approximately 30 acres of land and approximately 15 acres for each slave introduced by a white emigrant, and 15 acres of land and proportionate grant for each slave introduced by a nonwhite emigrant (Brereton 1989:13-14).
3. Bridget Brereton (1998:33) makes further distinctions between French and English Creoles. The French Creoles were established Catholic families of French, Spanish, Irish, and Corsican descent at the time of British conquest in 1797. English Creoles in contrast, were of English and Scottish descent and born in Trinidad and were Protestant (either Anglican or Presbyterian).
4. See also Brereton (1998:32-34) for a full discussion of the origin of the white elite in Trinidad, after Emancipation.
Spectator’s] principal friends and supporters [were] the working classes.” In this context, the theme of slavery and the presence of a colored protagonist in “Jim the Boatman” should not be automatically associated with the work of a colored writer. Indeed, it was the formidable presence of free-colored inhabitants within the social landscape of Trinidad, even before Emancipation, which undergirded their significance in the literature of Trinidad by both whites and nonwhites in the nineteenth century.

White novelists and “suspected” white novelists of the Anglo-Caribbean portrayed characters of mixed European and African heritage as “tragic-mulattos” existing in a chasm between color and race. This convention is evident in nineteenth-century novels from Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad, and Antigua, such as Marly or A Planter’s Life (1816, see Anonymous 2005), Hamel the Obeah Man (1827, see Anonymous 2008), Creoleana (1842, see Orderson 2002), Slave Son (1854, in Winer 2003), and With Silent Tread (1890, see Cassin 2002). In Trinidad, whenever white writers represented nonwhites in short narratives, these were usually tall tales, humorous narratives, exempla, or slave biographies, sometimes embedded within novels. For instance, the historical novel Warner Arundell (1838, see Joseph 2001) embeds a recontextualized tall tale, originally written as the play “Post-Mortem Will,” by Edward Lanza Joseph. Humorous narratives include “The Spectator Texts,” (1845, in Winer 1984), the ballad of “Quaco and Mimba,” (1827, in Winer 1993), and “Ballad of the Downfall of the Fish-House” (1836, in “Robbing Hood” 1814-39). “How a Widow Spent the Season” is an exemplum in the tradition of white-authored texts. Examples of slave biographies are found embedded in chapters sixteen to eighteen of Slave Son and in Domestic Manners and Social Condition of the White, Coloured and Negro Population of the West Indies (Carmichael 1833).

Similar to “Jim the Boatman,” narratives of the nineteenth century which portrayed a child protagonist can be found in the British tradition. Specific examples include Amelia Opie’s poem “A Negro’s Tale” (1806:51-69) and Thomas Day’s History of Sanford and Merton (1874:519-30). In the Trinidad Standard/West India Journal, there were examples of “Original Poetry” under the pseudonyms of Alpha and H.N. (1841) which seemed to emulate Opie’s style, with the familiar child-character type. Ostensibly, the story of “Jim the Boatman” also forms part of this white-authored legacy of short fiction, as it recounts the kidnapping of a “dark mulatto boy.”

Jim was kidnapped by a Bermudian pirate at King’s Wharf when he was approximately six years old, and at the end of the story, the narrator flashes forward to Jim’s retelling of his story as an adult. When Jim was fourteen, the pirate assumed that his victim would no longer be recognized and returned

to Trinidad. One night, when the Captain was selling or receiving goods, the onshore assistant recognized that Jim looked like a woman named Rosette and her children Louise and Fred. Jim’s identity was confirmed by interrogation, and the Captain’s assistant informed Rosette of his discovery late that night. The following day, his mother boarded the vessel with her children and some friends, since the Captain assumed that the nature of their business was to purchase contraband. She persisted that Jim was her son and attempted to negotiate his release. Failing to get support from relevant authorities, Rosette appealed to the governor and a chase ensued on the high seas. The governor launched an investigation which led to Jim being reunited with his mother. However, the Captain’s crime could not be proven, based on “his bungling and false account of how he got possession of Jim.”

Fearing further investigation, the Captain departed with haste and it was alleged that he never returned to Trinidad.

The theme of enslavement found in the story generally contradicts the conventions of narratives produced by the black and mixed-race middle class of Trinidad in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While not limiting his assessment to fiction, Selwyn Ryan states that “their narratives are different from the ones that one normally hears from planters and their accomplices.” One outstanding convention of nonwhite fiction was the notable absence of issues such as the social condition of slaves, enslaved mulattos, and virtuous liberated servants, as represented in “Jim the Boatman.” Instead, their works were vehemently counterdiscursive, redefining the black and mixed-race middle class of Trinidad as educated, self-determined, and “respectable.” This ideological stance was part of a trajectory shaped by Jean Baptiste Phillipe’s Free Mulatto (see Phillipe 1996), and a feeling of black consciousness engendered by the local Pan-Africanist movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This differentiation is further owed to gradual class formation by the late nineteenth century according to Bridget Brereton (1993:274), beginning with the size of the free mulatto and free black population in Trinidad before Emancipation, and culminating with public education policies which benefitted ex-slaves, their descendants, and mixed-race citizens alike during post-Emancipation.

7. Trinidad Spectator, January 30, 1846.
8. After Emancipation, the colored group became more complex than it was, consisting, in addition to mulattos, of other ethnically mixed individuals such as Afro-Chinese and Indo-Africans. Indo-African unions were generally not legitimized within the Indian community, and from evidence in two works by colored authors from Trinidad, “Fahdheen” (1896) and Rupert Gray (see Winer 2006), these groups seemed to identify with the African dimension of their ethnicities in these specific cases.
10. The Education Ordinance of 1851 established a system of ward schools under Lord Harris. See Brereton 1989.
The work of recovering the early literature of Trinidad is ongoing, and the earliest novel by a colored writer in Trinidad seems to be Emmanuel Appadocca (1853, see Phillip 1997). Other works by nonwhite writers include Adolphus a Tale (1854, in Wilkins 2003) and Rupert Gray (1907, see Cobham 2006). Lesser-known examples which are part of my own research include an incomplete novel by John Jacob Thomas entitled “Spokes in His Wheel,”11 and an unpublished frame novel, “Fahdheen” (1896) by the presumed author Alice Sebastian. Indeed, Trinidad was the only Anglophone colony with a prolific representation of homegrown “black” literature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Regarding the other Anglophone territories, John Gilmore readily admits that the early literature is very much an elite literature, nearly all of which was produced by whites (Jenkins 2003:vii). In contrast, “black”12 writing between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries comprised a few autobiographies, of slaves or free citizens, including the narratives of Olaudah Equiano, Mary Prince, and Mary Seacole. These works were not published in the Caribbean; and later in the twentieth century, there were isolated examples of black and mixed-race individuals who began writing fiction toward the end of World War I. Among these authors were Chenell Wickham in Barbados, A.R.F. Webber, a Tobagonian resident in Guyana, and Claude McKay, a Jamaican living in New York.

A salient characteristic placing “Jim the Boatman” outside of the foregoing tradition of “black” writing is the story’s unique editorial quality, with its subtextual criticism of the British government in Trinidad, except for one British governor. At the end of the story, the author observes that “the vigilant and vigorous Governor that then ruled the destinies of this important Colony, soon found a grave in the Ocean; and his successors have been men neither fitted nor inclined, promptly and fearlessly to unveil villainy.”13 No colored writer would have given such an accolade to Sir Ralph J. Woodford, the governor of Trinidad between 1813 and 1828, who died at sea. According to Jean Baptiste Phillipe (1996:69), Woodford “[had] apparently shown a rooted antipathy to every thing having the semblance of, or pertaining to the class of the colored people; and by the effect of his conduct, both public and private, it would appear that no opportunity had been lost by which that class could be insulted or degraded.” A more plausible explanation for the author’s praise of Woodford in the story is that “the colonists saw in him the only civilian placed at the head of government since the conquest [in 1802]. They had seen inclinations of their military governors leaning to the

12. “Black” is equivalent to nonwhite when referring to literature, as a relational opposite to “white” literature.
arbitrary rules of martial law, accustomed as they were to the passive submission of disciplined automats, now from a civilian, calculated on a milder and more rational administration” (Philippe 1996:71). Evidently, the author of “Jim the Boatman” was from among the class of white professionals in the public service who identified with Governor Woodford as a civilian leader. As Carl Campbell (1983:66) suggests, political discontentment would have been vocalized by white liberals coming into the limelight after the failure of a radical brand of politics for representative government in 1845. This failure could have fueled the writing of “Jim the Boatman” in the Trinidad Spectator in 1846.

THE TRINIDAD SPECTATOR: A LIBERAL NEWSPAPER

In the period after Emancipation, the Spectator (1845-48) seemed to be the most liberal of the newspapers, as other contemporary newspapers such as the Port of Spain Gazette (1825-1956) and the Trinidad Standard/The West Indian Journal (1837-1947) were all owned and run by ex-government printers. An anti-loyalist ideology might not be considered unusual for the owner of the Spectator, Charles Legge, who was the son of an English hatter. Since Legge was an English expatriate of the merchant class, his newspaper did not represent the traditional, land-owning upper class, but the business community, “our Cocoa friends,” “the foreign portion of the community,” and “those who have felt the iron ore of oppression … although now exalted to the rights of man.” Some editorials were written in French; however, for the most part, the paper did not represent the entrenched planter interests of old French families, or the loyalist position of entrenched upper-class English expatriates. While alluding to the nationalistic ideology of the Spectator, a subscriber described the newspaper as “the only mediator between us and the Government; the only paper which has sincerely espoused the cause of Trinidad.”

15. Trinidad Spectator, September 30, 1846.
16. Trinidad Spectator, December 12, 1846.
17. Trinidad Spectator, December 26, 1846.
the *Spectator* became allied to the Trinidad Literary Association, founded by a group of mostly white men with legal training, except for Gustave Savary, a solicitor and a mulatto of French descent.

The author of “Jim the Boatman” might be the editor himself, Charles Sutherland Legge, or one of the executive members of the Trinidad Literary Association, who adopted resolutions to incorporate the association. The executive members were Daniel Hart, the Keeper of the Royal Gaol and a magistrate; Sylvester Devenish, a land surveyor, poet, and artist; Thornton Warner was a justice of the peace, Alexander Anderson was a barrister, and Charles Samuel was an auctioneer. Mr. T. Bunting’s occupation is unknown, but he operated from King’s Wharf, Port of Spain, adjoining the office of the harbor master. James Hobson, Edmond S. Hobson, Samuel Greenidge were all solicitors. N.W. Pollard was a superintendent of works, while Henry Scott, Jr. was a merchant/proprietor at South Quay, Port of Spain. Indeed, the Trinidad Literary Association was the first successful literary society of its kind in Trinidad, whose executive members were of French, Scottish, Irish, and British descent, “some of the most respectable gentlemen of the island.”

By the 1880s, the Trinidad Literary Association grouped together ambitious, young colored and black lawyers, teachers, and civil servants (Brereton 1983:77).

**THE LINGUISTIC CONTEXT**

Apart from the social and discursive contexts surrounding the publication of “Jim the Boatman,” the linguistic context supports the conclusion that the writer of the story was white. A critical examination of the writer’s language use in narrating the story reveals how explicit and implicit narrative speech acts constitute social actions of distancing by linguistic means, which can be equated with the external perspective of a white writer. Roger Fowler (1996:170) defines externality in narrative as “a point of view which relates the events, and describes characters, from a position outside of any of the protagonists’ consciousness, with no privileged access to their private feelings and opinions, and in some cases actually stressing the limitations of authorial knowledge and the inaccessibility of the characters’ ideologies.” These acts of distancing or “externality” effectively point to a writer with limited knowledge of the subject of his story.

The main constituent in analyzing the author’s language use is the notion of *speech acts*. As a concept originating in pragmatics (Leech 1983, Levinson 1983), speech acts explain “the force of part of a text or, its actional component, part of its interpersonal meaning, or what it is being used to do socially.

---

or is being asked to perform” (Fairclough 2002:82). In this essay, I have reclassified precise speech acts as explicit and implicit acts of externality. In “Jim the Boatman,” examples of direct speech acts comprise rehearsal and evaluation, hedging, and speech imitation, while indirect or nonliteral speech acts include excluding voice, historicizing racism, and negative othering.

Explicit speech acts perform acts of distancing, directly rather than implicitly. Richard Bauman (1986:3) explains that “performance is a way of speaking, the essence of which resides in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative skill, highlighting the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content.” Implicit speech acts expand on limited aspects of Kristina Boréus’s (2006:408) typology of discursive discrimination or “unfavourable treatment of members of an (alleged) group carried out by linguistic means.” The findings of Rebecca Rogers and June Christian (2007), in their critical discourse analysis of the construction of race in selected children’s stories, also explore strategies of discursive exclusion.

**Explicit Speech Acts of Externality**

*Rehearsal and Evaluation.* In the opening and closing frames of “Jim the Boatman” the writer evokes externality through his use of performative frames of rehearsal and evaluation. Richard Bauman (1986) asserts that rehearsal is signaled where the writer draws attention to the act of performing/presenting a story, while William Labov (1999) suggests that evaluation refers to the narrator’s act of drawing the audience’s attention to the point of the narrative. Moreover, H.P. Grice’s (1975) maxims of relevance and quality are observed in negotiating the “tellability” of the story. For instance, the writer of “Jim the Boatman” rehearses his story with the opening caveat: [For the Spectator]. In doing so, he allows the audience the opportunity to appraise the value of his story as [+ relevant] to a matrix of other Spectator texts. By the end of the story, the writer evaluates that “Jim lately told the writer his story while rowing him from one of the Islands in the Gulph of Paria” (emphasis mine). At this point, readers can equate the writer’s story with a [+ truth quality]. This level of audience-consciousness points to material derived from outside the writer’s own experience.

*Hedging.* It is also plausible that “the act of qualifying or toning down one’s utterances or statements in order to resist the ‘riskiness’ of what one says ” (Wales 2001:185) should be an expected discursive behavior for someone who is experientially detached from the subject of “his” story. This strategy, which Katie Wales (2001) defines as hedging, demonstrates the writer’s use of postmodifying prepositional phrases [such as it then was] and [as he understood] to orient readers. This conscious deployment of postmodifying
strategies to explain events already presented in the text is more than likely the strategy of a conscientious, educated, white writer who feels obliged to negotiate acceptance among diverse members of his audience. Michael Hoey (2001:14) defines the writer’s audience as the imagined group whom the writer addresses and whose questions he tries to answer. Editorials and notices in the *Trinidad Spectator* of 1846 indicate a diverse audience. While the writer’s style of postqualification may be an act of negotiation with his audience, it might well be the pedantic style of a legal mind.

The writer also depends on parallel deitic markers to compensate for limited knowledge and/or experience in transcribing this overheard story. According to Katie Wales (2001:99), “deitics are features of language, which orientate or anchor … utterances in the context of space and time relevant to the speaker’s viewpoint.” These markers provide wide parameters of explanation and meaning, thereby avoiding ambiguity and misinterpretation, as seen in the underlined nominal phrases: [between twenty and thirty years ago], [little more than six years of age], and [about the landing place or wharf]. Equally, the speaker’s inexactitude in re-telling a story from aural memory, or from a recontextualized conversation is signaled by submodifiers “between,” “about,” and “little more than” preceding nominal groups in the phrases quoted above.

Another strategy, internal differentiation or stratification in language, also constitutes hedging, which Mikhail Bakhtin (1981:299-301) explains as heteroglossia. Such a differentiation is demonstrated in the example of [landing place or wharf], where the writer juxtaposes cohyponyms, [landing place] and [wharf]: one a legal lexical referent, and the other, a referent of generic usage. The writer also refers to Jim’s mother as “looking for [boys and stripplings] in the boats, belonging to the strange craft in the harbour, [wishing if not hoping], to discover her long lost Jim.”20 In addition, the writer is equally careful to indicate that the Bermudian captain [asked or ordered] Jim to give him a small [basket or parcel] which he had left behind as a ploy to lure him onto the ship. Such an accommodation of semantic relations between words is common in legal usage, and might reveal the author’s legal orientation as he reinterprets the details of Jim’s story.

*Speech Imitation.* The writer’s imitation of Creole speech in “Jim the Boatman,” constitutes an almost caricatured speech style which would leave native speakers unconvinced that the story was the work of someone born in Trinidad or living in the colony for a significant period. Thus, imitation describes the author’s idiosyncratic representation of some phonological patterns (reflected in spelling) and syntactic patterns of Creole speech (the absence of the copula) in the story. There are marked inconsistencies which occur with the first person pronoun as subject. These are the most telling dis-

cursive and linguistic features of the writer’s Eurocentric perspective when compared to conventions of representing spoken Trinidad Creole English at that time. The following dialogue illustrates these inconsistencies.

J- De once call me Jim when little child, but de not call me so again – my name Prince.
TA- Where you born?
J- I not know for de go take me to Bermudas when I young too much to member
TA- When de go take you your mudder living?
J- Yes
TA- What de call her?
J- Rosette
TA- You member any sister or brodder?
J- Yes me member one sister one brodder.
TA- What de call dem?
J- One Louise and todder Fred. 21

Apart from flouting the varied syntactic structure of turn-taking sequences in natural conversation, the lexical referents used by the writer are markedly different from the syntactic and semantic usages of contemporary Creole speakers in the nineteenth century. A comparative view of these features is illustrated in the following table based on the findings of linguists who have worked on historical texts of the Caribbean (Lalla & D’Acosta 1990, Winer 1984).

Table 1. Features of the Creole Gloss in JTB (Jim the Boatman) Compared with Contemporary Creole Usage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexical Category</th>
<th>Gloss in JTB</th>
<th>Contemporary Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third Person Subject Pronoun</td>
<td>[De](^1)</td>
<td>Dem/Dey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitive Verb Form</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Sabbie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Tense Verb</td>
<td>De [go](^2) take] me</td>
<td>Take/Tek</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. This form does not appear in older traditional Creole Speech of Trinidad and may be confused with the locative copula or the definite article.
2. This is another unconventional form. Winer (1984:42) shows a limited use of [go] in serial verbs.

**Implicit Speech Acts of Externality**

*Excluding Voice.* Apart from Jim’s speech being inauthentic, he is further denied an opinion on the issue of injustice perpetrated against him through the illegal act of enslavement. Boréus (2006:411) cites exclusion of voice as an act of discursive discrimination. This is a clear deviation from the strident counterdiscursive voices of contemporary black and mixed-race protagonists in examples of “black” writing in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

*Historicizing Discrimination.* In “Jim the Boatman” the writer also externalizes discrimination against the colored community by distancing himself spatiotemporally from the injustices of slavery which took place “between twenty and thirty years ago.” By relating the act of kidnapping to the distant past, from the perspective of the narration which was in 1845, the writer makes discrimination appear to have ceased. This historicizing style reflects the opinion of Rogers and Christian (2007:35) that setting a story in the distant past alienates the reader from the lived reality of racism and its impact upon of people of color, in the contemporary context. In fact, the writer’s act of shifting the reader’s focus to the antiquity of discrimination in “Jim the Boatsman,” is unlike the theme of lived discrimination, which pervades the writings of all-black and mixed-race writers of Trinidad in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

*Negative Othering.* The writer’s reference to “a dark mulatto” in “Jim the Boatman” is an act of negative othering, an action which is also implied in the evaluations of white authors, and in the speech of white characters and social actors in the early literature of Trinidad. A narrow definition of Teun van Dijk’s (2002) and Kristina Boréus’s (2006) negative other presentation is the presentation of “others” as inferior to the members of the group one considers oneself a member of, or in relation to another prestige group. For instance, when comparing a mulatto to slaves in *Slave Son*, the narrator refers to Belafond’s “darker comrades” (Wilkins 2003:258). In *Adolphus*, the narrator quotes the speech of a cockney-speaking second mate, named Roughtide (Winer 2003:63), who refers to “a crowd of darkies” who came to see “one buckra wid him hand and foot tie.” In a similar case, the narrator in Cobham’s *Rupert Gray* (2006:100) quotes the speech of a white English child who refers to Rupert Gray as “the darkie what’s black all over.” Finally, Bridget Brereton’s (1989:50) account of a rumor about Governor Fullerton’s wife “seating a dark mulatto next to the Baron de Montalambert, [which] ‘dangerously excited’ the coloureds,” shows the potential for insult among people of color at that time, when negatively coded references were made to their skin color. Also, in the context of their struggle against dominant white hegemonies, the use of such labels by a member of the colored discourse community would have been unheard of. It is also well understood that “a
house divided against itself cannot stand.” This fact dispels the notion of colored authorship in “Jim the Boatman.”

In contrast, colored writers used different referents to describe characters of mixed European and African descent in the literature of Trinidad, which were stabilized across their discourses in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. “Afric,” “African,” and “of African descent” were common to Adolphus, Fahdheen, “Spokes in His Wheel,” and Rupert Gray. Occurrences of “colored” or “of color” appeared more frequently in early nineteenth-century novels – such as Emmanuel Appadocca and Adolphus – and less in the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century novels – for example, “Fahdheen” and Rupert Gray – indicating a later shift in cultural values to black consciousness in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century.

A PLACE IN THE FORMATION OF TRINIDADIAN LITERATURE

One may ask “Why was the tale of ‘Jim the Boatman’ significant at the time of its publication in 1846?” In response, Donald Wood (1986:185) alludes to the purpose of the story, in the context of Governor McLeod’s move to anglicize the laws of Trinidad between 1840 and 1846:

Only lawyers can realize to the full the technical problems involved in changing from one system of law to another, and they alone can appreciate properly the work of the legal officers of Trinidad during the 1840’s. The task of assimilating the criminal code to that of England was attempted first because that was the simpler of the two. The guilt of a person involved in a criminal act had to be established, a verdict reached, a sentence pronounced, and then the work of the judiciary is usually complete. A court action, on the other hand – on a question of probate, the custody of minors, or ownership of property, for instance – has often roots in the past and has implications for the future.

Indeed, when the laws of post-Emancipation Trinidad were still in flux, a tale such as “Jim the Boatman” drew attention simultaneously to the discontentment of white liberals with British colonial governance, and to areas of the law which threatened the rights of nonwhite citizens.

“Jim the Boatman” is also important to the development of fictional writing in Trinidad, by its association with the first successful literary and debating society of the nineteenth century – the Trinidad Literary Association. Even though the founding executive committee were almost exclusively white, it was within this very institution that the colored writer Michel Maxwell Phillipe later distinguished himself as a debater in 1850 preceding the publication of Emmanuel Appadocca (Selwyn Cudjoe 1997:ix). Above
all, “Jim the Boatman” is symbolic of an organized phase of literary discourse formation in Trinidad, headed by “only a few professional men [who] retained a trace of their European Education,” in the words of Charles Day (1852:59), who lived in Trinidad in the 1840s. This does not discount the work of Edward Lanza Joseph, a prolific writer, poet, and historian of an earlier period who was not of the professional or educated class.

Historical, literary, and linguistic evidence have provided an alternative view of the place of “Jim the Boatman” in the early literature of Trinidad. Under Fairclough’s model of critical discourse analysis, elements of the social context, the conventions of discourse practice, and linguistic context have been brought together to uncover the potential identity of the author, his ideology, and his ethnicity. At the social level, the sociohistorical and ideological orientation of the Spectator, as a comparably liberal paper, enabled the interpretation of the story’s antigovernmental rhetoric in relation to an outcry for political reform in 1845 among liberal whites and only very few coloreds. Further, by comparing the discursive conventions of contemporary fiction by white and black writers in nineteenth-century Trinidad and in other Anglophone territories, it is evident that the enslavement of coloreds was not a conventional theme among black or colored writers. At the textual level, the discourse strategies used by the writer in question point to the social action of distancing or externality by linguistic means through explicit and implicit speech acts. Through explicit speech acts of rehearsal and performance, hedging, and speech imitation, the writer exposes his sense of social distance from the subject of his story. Implicit speech acts of exclusion of voice, historicizing discrimination, and negative othering illustrate how the writer’s external ideology of discursive racism is subtly transferred to his readers. Scholars engaged in reconstructing the early literary discourse of the Anglophone Caribbean would do well to critically examine the context, conventions, and language use of early writers of Trinidad in the post-Emancipation era, rather than to rely solely on interpretations of black and white oppositional agendas without interdisciplinary verification. In relation to anonymous works, presumptions about existing “plantation power structures” risk to supersede the peculiar cultural conventions of literary discourse formation in complex Anglophone Caribbean societies like Trinidad.

REFERENCES


DAY, CHARLES WILLIAM, 1852. Five Years’ Residence in the West Indies. 2 Vols. London: Colburn and Co.


---

RENNÉE FIGUERA
Department of Liberal Arts
University of the West Indies
St. Augustine, Trinidad
<renee.figuera@sta.uwi.edu>
HEGEL AND DESSALINES: PHILOSOPHY AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA


These two books have relaunched universal history – not without controversy – as a dominant trope in the fields of colonial history and postcolonial theory. They have also highlighted tensions around the application of a Hegelian philosophical genealogy to Haiti, the first self-emancipated black postcolony, the state ghettoized as “the poorest country in the Western hemisphere,” and now the embattled zone of recovery from the catastrophic earthquake of January 2010.

The book-length reedition of Susan Buck-Morss’s extraordinarily influential 2000 Critical Inquiry essay, “Hegel and Haiti,” is a revelation, on both scholarly and performative levels. On a scholarly level, the essay that rocked the divisions between the most elite European philosophical traditions and the philosophical content of the most radical insurrection in New World modernity is now expanded with two lucid introductions and a compelling essay on universal history. These contributions outline some of the changes that have occurred in the humanities landscape in the decade since Buck-Morss’s original observation that “there is no place in the university in which the particular research constellation ‘Hegel and Haiti’ would have a home” (p. 23).

On a performative level, the book reframes the uncanny blind echo between Buck-Morss’s 2000 article and the 1992 essay by a scholar of Cape Verdean origins, Pierre-Franklin Tavarès, in the Haitian journal Chemins critiques, “Hegel et Haïti ou le silence de Hegel sur Saint-Domingue.” Buck-Morss had spoken of Tavarès’s other work and noted the essay’s existence in footnote 72 of the original article, foregrounding that “I have yet to see Tavarès’s original article,
‘Hegel et Haïtï, ou le silence de Hegel sur Saint Domingue,’ in the Port-au-Prince journal *Chemins critiques* 2 (May 1992): 113-31” (p. 843). Yet it seems plausible that few readers of her original essay noticed the oddity of entitling it with a direct translation into English of the first part of the title of a barely accessible article published earlier in Haiti. (In the book, which has a slightly different version of the “Hegel and Haiti” essay, footnote 81 is the corollary to the article’s footnote 72, and contains a brief assessment of Tavarès’s contributions in “Hegel et Haïtï.”) Problems of translation, of mutual recognition, and of the dialectic of Euro-American and Caribbean contributions on the Haitian Revolution, are all choreographed in this coincidence.

Although Buck-Morss had conceptualized her argument and research trajectory without knowledge of the contents of the Tavarès article, such latent dialogic relationality resonates with the question of why integration of the historical subtext of the Haitian Revolution into the Hegelian master/slave paradigm has been so crucial in drawing the attention of literary and theoretical scholars to the Haitian Revolution in the first place. Did we have to have Hegel to have Haiti in a certain philosophical sense? When Jean-Jacques Dessalines, in the January 1804 Haitian Declaration of Independence, proclaimed “We dared to be free when we were not free, by ourselves and for ourselves,” was it somehow through its prefiguration of a future Hegelian response that it eventually became manifest to theorists of a black Atlantic modernity? *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* is helpful not only for Buck-Morss’s frank assessment that “For raising the question of whether Hegel was inspired by events in Saint-Domingue, credit must go to Pierre-Franklin Tavarès” (p. 14), but also for her question, “Is it enough to have rescued the Haitian story from absorption into Eurocentricity?” (p. 138). This question rebounds upon itself. In effect, we will be able to assess whether it is enough to have “rescued the Haitian story from absorption into Eurocentricity” when we have done so – but we have not achieved that goal through recognition of the possibility that Hegel’s master-slave dialectic may have been inspired by black Atlantic rather than purely European events and sources. An area of the curriculum for Hegel and Haiti ideally would involve structurally bilateral educational processes, historicization of Eurocentric absorptions of Haitian and other anticolonial models, research on Afrocentric counterpoints of influence, universalized access to digital collections of Haitian literary and historical documents, and Creole (*Kreyòl*) Hegel. The poignancy of the question of the phenomenology of our critical perception is heightened by ongoing inquiry into the linguistic and hermeneutic viability of reading resistance to modern slavery into Hegel’s text.

At Nick Nesbitt’s farewell conference at the University of Aberdeen on the subject of “Haiti and Universal History” in March of 2010, philosopher Peter Hallward queried whether the notion of a Hegelian inscription of slaves’ achievement of subjective and historical autonomy might not be overly generous to Hegel. Of course, this problem of an unwonted privileging of Hegel on
racially encoded issues was carefully foregrounded in Buck-Morss’s original reading. Buck-Morss noted that Hegel, over the years, became increasingly blinded by at least a cultural racism against Africans, and that his philosophy of history has tended to buttress rather than undermine Eurocentrism. But this tension weighs more heavily if even in the *Phenomenology of Mind*, the institutionalization of freedom in the state takes precedence over active self-mobilization by individuals in the collectivity, emblematized by the agency seized by slaves. Buck-Morss’s essay on Hegel and Haiti continues to generate new imperatives to understand not only Hegel’s awareness of and reaction to the events of his time, but also the limits of his praise of collective agency. The universal history paradigm, as David Scott noted in Aberdeen, focuses on larger-than-life historical individuals who pursue a universal principle and around whose trajectory a world spirit of movement and change can be mapped. The very notion of “Hegel and Haiti” implicitly seems to harness the canonical author, the universal philosophical individual, Hegel, to the Afro-diasporic nation of Haiti. Does “Haiti” represent the state in this equation, or a nonstate in relation to the political identities of Euro-American states, or the masses, or the personification of a universal principle through the abstract figure of the slave and his or her pursuit of freedom?

Perhaps the above options should be rephrased through the pairing “Hegel and Dessalines” when one considers the journalistic accounts that brought Haiti to Hegel’s attention. Probing journalistic sources for Hegel’s possible referential fertilization of his philosophical paradigms was a brilliant innovation on Buck-Morss’s part; as she noted, journalism made the Haitian Revolution into “the crucible, the trial by fire for the ideals of the French Enlightenment” (p. 42) about which every member of the European bourgeois reading public knew. Hegel was particularly explicit about the influence of newspaper reading on his worldview, noting that over the newspaper, “‘One orients one’s attitude against the world and toward God [in one case], or toward that which the world is [in the other]’” (cited on p. 49). Buck-Morss believed that the paper *Minerva*, run by Archenholz, was particularly key in Hegel’s contemplation of slavery’s dynamics: “For a full year, from fall 1804 to the end of 1805, *Minerva* published a continuing series, totaling more than a hundred pages, including source documents, news summaries, and eyewitness accounts, that informed its readers not only of the final struggle for independence of this French colony – under the banner of Liberty or Death! – but of events over the previous ten years as well” (p. 42).

Since I personally have been inspired by Buck-Morss’s work to pursue the history of the U.S. publication of Haitian Revolutionary documents in detail, I was particularly curious about the nature of these documents, and what they might reveal about Hegel’s specific knowledge of Haiti and its thinkers.

With the help of a research assistant from Duke’s doctoral program in German, Chunjie Zhang, I ascertained that *Minerva*’s Haiti pieces were a
mixed bag, combining hostile and sometimes racist accounts with notable documents produced by the leader Jean-Jacques Dessalines and his secretaries. As Buck-Morss notes, Archenholz published a translation of excerpts from Marcus Rainsford’s 1805 Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti, which presents a stirring interpretation of the radical import of the Haitian Revolution and of the historical merit of Toussaint Louverture. Yet a very substantial chunk of the 100-plus pages noted by Buck-Morss came from a single text, Dessalines’s 1803 military field journal, which has eluded ideological and philosophical readings to date, as it concentrated primarily on military strategy and events. Other articles outlined massacres of the French, or the experiences of passengers on ships seized by the Blacks in the course of the hostilities. Minerva also featured a long excerpt from F.J. Dubroca’s defamatory rants against Toussaint Louverture and Dessalines. A widely published American article on a ball hosted by Lady Dessalines in Haiti included fascinating details about the new Haitian state, but also presented it as a curiosity or an object of mockery.

But Minerva unquestionably gave strong emphasis to the texts produced by Dessalines, whose name appears at least sixteen times in these documents. Examination of the texts by Dessalines in Minerva allows one to deepen the case first made by Buck-Morss not just between Hegel and Haiti, but also between Hegel and Dessalines’s worldview, and the ramifications of that worldview for universal history. The much-observed fact that Hegel was more open to the fundamental parity between the stakes of freedom for slaves or members of the African diaspora and for any other world citizen in his early texts than in his later writings (see Buck-Morss, pp. 73-74) can perhaps be credited to the brief influence of Dessalines as a striking political thinker and voice. Dessalines’s two most important texts – the Haitian Declaration of Independence and the April 28, 1804 text in which he triumphally asserted “Yes, I have avenged America” – appear in the February 1805 edition of Minerva, which is to say more than a half a year later than their publication in the United States. But contrary to their dissemination in the United States, they were published together, from pages 276 to 293, in a mini-Dessalinian anthology. This anthology-style presentation would have permitted the reader to explore Dessalines’s texts in a singularly sustained and literary manner. In the April 28 proclamation, Dessalines evoked the Europeans as the “plague of the New World,” in response to which, “the irritated genius of Hayti, arising from the bosom of the ocean, appears.” For the Europeans who would dare to try to reconquer Haiti, it would be a better fate for the ocean to simply “swallow them up in its deepest depths” than for them to be “devoured by the anger of the children of Hayti.” Consider the echoic relationship between the famous line in the Philosophy of Right, “Even if I am born a slave, … still I am free in the moment I will it” (cited in Buck-Morss, p. 61) and Dessalines’s assertion that the Haitians “had resuscitated freedom by infusing their own blood into
it,” that they were “proud to have recovered their freedom, jealous to maintain it, and determined to overcome anyone who would try to ravish it from them again.” As an example of the document’s ironically proto-Hegelian resonance, which we could more aptly read as the proto-Dessalinean resonance of the Hegelian master-slave dialectic, Dessalines claimed that the French had brought the qualifying epithet of “slave” on their own heads: “Slaves! ... Let us leave that qualifying epithet to the French themselves: they have conquered to the point of ceasing to be free.” To his people – in the German translation, the second part of the Haitian Declaration of Independence opens with the word “Bürger!” – Dessalines says that in working toward his people’s freedom, he had constructed his own happiness, and also that he was rich only in his people’s freedom. For these reasons, he claims that his name, Dessalines, had become a motif of horror for “all people who desire slavery.” Hegel scholars would do well to compare the Haitian Declaration of Independence in the British archives, http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline/haiti.asp#research, to the translation Hegel was reading in Minerva, Vol. I, pp. 276-93. Buck-Morss’s work makes palpable the eruption of Dessalines’s voice into Hegel’s contemporaneous worldview, above all in the phenomenon of self-consciousness comprehending itself as free. Ultimately it is hard not to agree with Buck-Morss that there is something of Haiti in Hegel – even, arguably, a lot of Dessalines in Hegel.

The new material in the second half of Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History begins with a nod toward Sibylle Fischer’s notion of “modernity disavowed” and a statement that “Present realities demand such historical remappings as an alternative to the fantasies of clashing civilizations and exclusionary redeemptions” (p. 79). It moves on to a fascinating continuation of Buck-Morss’s work on the relationship of freemasonry to Hegel and Haiti – inspired by the discussion of freemasonry in Tavarès’s work – set in a larger exploration of whether slavery could in fact have taken root in Europe, rather than being outsourced to far-off colonies. Buck-Morss argues for an understanding of slavery on a long continuum of labor practices, with a specifically capitalist modern form. The focus of this material is primarily cultural rather than theoretical. If there is a “big bang” in the interpretations in this section of the book, it is an evolving definition of universal history as something that emerges not in “the mediation of collective cultural identities,” but in “the historical event at the point of rupture” which gives expression to “a humanity that goes beyond cultural limits” (p. 133). Yet the appeal of the Haitian Revolution as universalizing “rupture” is undermined by the acuity of cultural mapping in Buck-Morss’s Haiti work, which ultimately confirms not a Romantic escape from hegemony, but a tissue of related conditions and strategies, and of the philosophies, institutions, and technologies that allow meaning to travel from one location to another.

In an ideal “Hegel and Haiti” area of the curriculum, the texts of European philosophers would be sounded for the influence of Haiti, and tested for the
viability of their emancipatory paradigms in relation to Haiti, and that is in effect what Nick Nesbitt adds to the field in his excellent new book, *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment*. In this book Nesbitt broadly develops, in masterful strokes, the project that germinated in his now famous essay, “The Idea of 1804” in the 2005 “Haiti Issue” of *Yale French Studies*. His stated resolution at the outset is to “seek to recover what 1804 might have become (or became only in the sheer exteriority to our world of the Haitian rural peasantry, the *moun andeyò*” [p. 4]. The book is motivated by a positive notion of human rights, in an era in which Nesbitt feels (following Gauchet) that human rights have “achieved hegemony over the concept of the political” (p. 10). If the underlying core of Buck-Morss’s work on universal history is culturalist, Nesbitt’s nexus of questions and models comes from political philosophy; this book is a sophisticated sounding of a vast field of political thinkers, including Spinoza and Habermas and Genovese, against the tensions of Haiti’s radical enlightenment. Readers looking for connective tissue between Haiti and Zizek, Laclau, and Butler will find their source here; other readers may realize that even if they had not sought those connections, they should start now with Nesbitt’s guidance.

Yet *Universal Emancipation* also has historicist depths and innovations. One of the most remarkable sections of the book, “Mali, 1222,” is a historicization of human rights discourses to the Mandé world and Soundiata Keïta’s “Mandé Charter.” The flexibility of a research methodology allowing the marshaling of such analogies and counterpoints to Haiti, in theoretical and historical terms, exemplifies some of the most worthy ambitions of universal history in its new millennial guise. As Nesbitt notes, Toussaint Louverture’s participation in Enlightenment debates as played out in the colonial field of human rights is simply a “key element in a variegated knowledge system spread across the entire Atlantic world, one that actively debated the nature of human freedom from Salamanca to St. Marc, Königsberg to Les Cayes, Timbuktu to Tiburon” (p. 60). *Ayibobo!* Nesbitt’s work is one of the first truly satisfying extensions of the work begun in Srinivas Aravamudan’s *Tropicopolitans*, except that rather than tropicalizing the Enlightenment, Nesbitt globalizes it.

Nesbitt takes on Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s challenge of the Haitian Revolution as “unthinkable history” in a chapter called “Penser la Révolution haitienne” (Thinking the Haitian Revolution), a complex navigation of Kantian and Hegelian universalism. This chapter presents a particularly provocative interface with Buck-Morss’s *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*, notably in the section called “Hegel and Haiti Reconsidered.” After analyzing the linguistic possibilities for evocations of slave, bondsman, and serf in Hegel, Nesbitt reads slave revolts in ontological and ethical terms, managing to bring Hegel to life as an imaginative and responsive philosopher of slavery in several instances, and in the process reconfirming the vitality of Buck-Morss’s project.
The notion of radical exteriority, radical potentiality, or rupture, arguably preoccupies Nesbitt’s book just as it does that of Buck-Morss, although it does not come through the front door of theory, but through the back door of a somewhat exoticized relationship to postrevolutionary Haitian cultural history. Just as not all readers will be comfortable with the notion of the Haitian Revolution as a “Miraculous Intervention” (p. 124), the category of the extreme exteriority of the Haitian rural peasantry is arguably more static and symbolic here than it need be, especially in light of such trends as the ever-increasing flux of rural populations in the capital, and the omnipresence of cell phones in even deeply rural spaces. The quest to imagine what 1804 might have become is on some level a minute failure to imagine what 1804 actually was, not philosophically or politically, but anthropologically and sociologically.

Nesbitt’s *Universal Emancipation* and Buck-Morss’ *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* are among the most innovative and stimulating critical assessments of the Haitian Revolution in a crowded field; aptly read in dialog, and yet for contrast, they will have the staying power of the works that change the contents of the larger bibliography of required readings to understand the Haitian Revolution and its European philosophical interlocutors.

REFERENCES


DEBORAH JENSON
Department of French Studies
Duke University
Durham NC 27708, U.S.A.
<deborah.jenson@duke.edu>
This collection of fifteen essays about the Atlantic world represents the latest in a number of recent endeavors to provide more conceptual insight into the still relatively new field of Atlantic history. The special calling of the book is to counter criticism of the Atlantic approach by recent proponents of global history and to investigate specifically Atlantic themes to the present, instead of ending the study in the mid-nineteenth century, or earlier, as many similar collections do. In taking such an approach it contributes to the now fruitful dialog that has arisen between global and Atlantic history. There are two important parts of the debate, and the collection addresses both with varying degrees of success. First, some global historians question whether the concept of Atlantic history from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries is even useful: Atlantic historians studying transnational or transimperial developments in this period should broaden their investigation to the global level, they say, because not all of the major developments in question—especially those connected to European trade and imperial efforts—were limited to the Atlantic region. Second, assuming the Atlantic historians are correct and there really was an Atlantic world from the fifteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries, what happened to it after that?

Falola and Roberts reject the first assertion categorically in the introduction, and a number of the essays in the volume make it clear why: most of what made the Atlantic world, as many historians study it, was quite distinct from developments in other regions. Aribidesi Usman and Douglas Chambers demonstrate this with their investigations of the Black Atlantic, supporting a recent historiographic trend on the subject that distinguishes the essays in this collection from previous African diaspora studies, which in
theory are global. The key here is the Atlantic slave trade, which shaped economic, political, and cultural developments on both sides of the Atlantic in unique ways, yet had no parallel elsewhere, even if American sugar was consumed outside of the Atlantic world or Europeans did trade Asian cloth for African slaves. Alison Games introduces her survey of African and European overseas migrations and Native American internal migrations by noting that these mass movements of people created and defined the Atlantic world. This simply did not happen elsewhere in the world – not like this anyway – even though migrations have always been an important aspect of world history. Michael Guasco’s description of the shift from European servant and Indian slave labor to African slave labor in the Americas in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is a major defining feature of the Atlantic world, which reached its high tide in this era. While slavery, forced migrations, contract servitude, and the long-distance trade of goods produced from resulting labor arrangements are also an important part of world history, the interplay of these developments did not have such a dramatic impact elsewhere and the causes and interests involved lay almost entirely within the Atlantic region. Lastly, David Cahill’s overview of the origins and development of independence movements in Iberian America in the early nineteenth century and the importance of these developments to indigenous inhabitants must be told in Atlantic terms (especially regarding developments in Spain and Portugal during the Napoleonic era). The rest of the world was hardly important to these independence movements, even though Indians provided the labor for mining silver and raising agricultural products that could be found in traces throughout the globe.

These essays and others in the volume are only part of the growing response by Atlantic historians to global historians’ critique of their field, and they have convincingly demonstrated its uniqueness and importance. In reality, there is no need for tension between Atlantic and global history. One can study aspects of conquest, transatlantic enslavement, resistance, and regional trade and interconnectedness in the Atlantic region during the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries under the rubric of Atlantic history, and one can also study trade patterns, empires, and the like in comparative and other ways on a global level. It is not an either/or proposition.

The second problem concerning Atlantic and global history that the collection highlights is how to view relationships among Africans, Europeans, and Americans from the end of the Atlantic slave trade in the 1860s to the present. Here, rather than contributing significantly to a solution as it does in the first case, the volume can only point toward the issues with mixed results. To date Atlantic historians have adopted three approaches to the post-1860 period. First, some historians, mainly early modernists or colonialists, simply do not deal with the latter period at all; many of them call it quits in 1800 or at the end of the era of American independence in 1825 or 1830. The second
approach has been to declare that the history of the Atlantic world was some kind of phase that ushered in globalization of the modern era and then faded away. The third approach has been to assert that the Atlantic world was transformed by events in the nineteenth century, but continues to exist to this very day, in spite of globalization. The first of these solutions is helpful for studying neither Atlantic nor global history, and the theoretical or conceptual basis for the second view has never been explained well, at least not by the many Atlantic historians who have asserted it. Although the editors reject both of these approaches, two of the essays support the second view. In spite of its title, “Reparation and Repair: Reform Movements in the Atlantic World,” Maxim Matusevich’s essay is really about globalization and global resistance against it, as he declares that the Atlantic world of the earlier period had been a laboratory that defined much of modern civilization. Similarly in her essay on gender, Amanda Warnock states point blank that there was no real Atlantic world after the early twentieth century. Joel Tishken’s survey of twentieth-century African independence movements could be understood in terms of the history of Africa or that of decolonization, which was global, but the key players against whom Africans struggled were Europeans and U.S. Americans, and the circumstances that created these relationships were born of Atlantic history.

Other essays in the collection directly address the difficult problem of distinguishing Atlantic from global history (or something else) in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. E.G. Iweriebor and Warnock describe a Caribbean “nationalism” that cut across national, imperial, and linguistic boundaries and was linked to international political and cultural movements like Pan Africanism, support of Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, and the U.S. civil rights movement. In spite of the assertion to the contrary in Warnock’s essay, these appear to be aspects of an Atlantic world in the twentieth century, as they continue prior political and cultural trends in ways that did not occur elsewhere in the world in this later period. Although Carol Anderson does not make the point explicitly, her essay on the Cold War describes an African diaspora at work that was similarly rooted in the history of Atlantic slavery. After World War II the U.S. government promoted global self-determination in theory, yet segregation at home still reigned, and many U.S. officials feared that African nationalist leaders struggling for independence against U.S. allies would turn Communist. Black Americans who were against segregation and for African independence were caught in a difficult situation, as they had to avoid the appearance of disloyalty. Although the Cold War was global and influenced decolonization throughout the world, this particular aspect of it was unique to the Atlantic world. Lastly Chambers shows in his historiographic overview of the Black Atlantic that specific ethnic connections mattered in the Atlantic world of the early modern and colonial era and still do. The Atlantic slave trade made ethnic and cultural
connections what they were (and still are), and they did not happen in the same way elsewhere in the global African diaspora.

The collection addresses all three historiographical views of how the Atlantic world ended, a feature that, more than anything else, makes it a successful volume. It reiterates the uselessness of the view that would end the Atlantic world in the early nineteenth century without explanation. More importantly it highlights the issues and debates of the views of the Atlantic world as a phase leading toward globalization, or as the continuation of the Atlantic world in a transformed state up to the present. But we still need much more clarity on the co-existence of Atlantic and global history in the period up to the mid-nineteenth century (not to mention more comparative work with other areas like the Indian Ocean region), and we need more clarity on what was “Atlantic” about the period thereafter. The current debate between Atlantic and global historians is taking us in this direction, and this volume contributes to it in useful ways.


JUSTIN ROBERTS
Department of History
Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3H 4P9
<justin.roberts@dal.ca>

The slave ship, Marcus Rediker tells us, was “a diabolical machine, one big pool of torture” (p. 348). Rediker, the preeminent historian of the maritime Atlantic world, has devoted his expertise to a study of the slave ship and the Middle Passage in a book that appears intended to bridge the gap between scholarly and popular histories of that subject. *The Slave Ship: A Human History* doesn’t offer any radical new insights into the slave trade or a story that will be at all new to specialists. Instead, it summarizes a rich body of secondary literature, utilizes the remarkable statistical evidence now available to specialists in the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, and draws from primary sources that have been well mined to give us a rich and often disturbing set of stories about the Middle Passage aboard ships in the British slave trade in the eighteenth century.
The Slave Ship has three main thrusts. First it seeks to tell the story of the Middle Passage aboard a British slave ship from multiple vantage points, from the captains to the slaves. Aside from a fascinating chapter on the structure of a slave ship and its design and a concluding chapter on abolition that focuses on the well-known image of the Brookes as a tool in the abolitionist movement, the chapters focus on the view of the trade from the perspective of a captain, a crewman, or a slave. In some cases, Rediker focuses on an individual and in others he paints a group portrait. His cast of characters will be well known to specialists. He offers chapters, for example, on Olaudah Equiano, who claimed to have been an African-born survivor of the Middle Passage, and John Newton, the slave ship captain turned abolitionist. In addition to these principal characters, who serve as case studies, Rediker offers a wide range of anecdotes to stress the lived experience of the people both above and below deck on the slave ship.

Second, Rediker wants to make clear, beyond mortality rates and the volume of the trade, the “terror” and brutality of life aboard a slave ship for both sailors and slaves. He offers a series of gruesome and horrific vignettes about onboard conditions and day-to-day life on a slave ship and, to drive home his point, he repeatedly highlights the ways in which the trade destroyed the bodies of sailors and slaves. He ends, in fact, with a description of the homeless and often disabled sailors left wandering the waterfroths after working aboard a guinea ship. In Rediker’s tale, the captains, who appear largely as agents of merchant capitalists, are for the most part the villains and the architects of onboard terror and violence.

Finally, as a driving thesis throughout, Rediker underscores the connection between the slave ship and global capitalism. The slave ship and the people aboard it, he tells us, “were part of a much larger drama, the rise and movement of capitalism around the world” (p. 352). By making these connections between the slave trade and the rise of capitalism, he positions himself, although never too explicitly, in longstanding historiographical debates about the relationship between slavery, industrialization, and the rise of capitalism.

The Slave Ship is as eloquently written and compelling as it is dark and disturbing. It will appeal to the wide audience Rediker targets. He offers some fascinating stories about the lived experience of the trade but his analysis is not particularly sophisticated. His presentation of a class consciousness and solidarity among sailors (a solidarity that he suggests sometimes extended to the slaves) and their unified opposition to the capitalist investors in the trade appears anachronistic and simplistic at times. Although the working environment created a common experience for sailors, one has to wonder whether there were more ethnic, sectarian, or regional divisions among sailors than Rediker allows. There were so many subtle gradations of hierarchy and dependency in the eighteenth century that the depiction of a single “class” of sailors in opposition to capitalist forces seems reductionist. Rediker goes
to great lengths to stress the horrors of a slave ship for both the crew and their human cargo and the horrors of the trade for both parties is important to emphasize but this thesis will not be new, even to nonspecialists. At times his emphasis on terror and brutality seems to fetishize violence without analyzing it or placing it in broader contexts. In telling this story from multiple vantage points, Rediker is sometimes repetitive and some of the central stories he tells, such as Equiano’s, turn on well-known narratives without modifying standard interpretations. In order to stress the horrors of the ship, Rediker draws heavily on abolitionist literature, quoting at length from his sources, but he fails to interrogate those sources sufficiently, especially when they support his point. He needed to consider more often how these stories were produced and what they were intended to achieve. Although this rise of capitalism is the backdrop for his story, he links the slave trade to capitalism by association and repeated assertion rather than offering any new economic evidence to longstanding arguments about the significance of slavery and the slave trade as factors in the rise of capitalism. The Slave Ship makes its principal points too broadly and bluntly, but it never shies away from the most nightmarish aspects of the Middle Passage. It underscores the horrors of the trade more powerfully than any book in recent decades.


JOSEPH C. MILLER
Department of History
University of Virginia
Charlottesville VA 22904, U.S.A.
<jcm7a@virginia.edu>

More than twenty years of extremely thorough research, compilation, and web design have recently culminated in the launch of the expanded, fully open-access, internet version of the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database (http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces). Its already renowned predecessor was available only in a limited and not-inexpensive CD-ROM format (Cambridge University Press, 1999). This new product of international collaboration among dozens of scholars on four continents makes available to the general public all known data on nearly 35,000 slaving voyages in
the Atlantic from 1514 to 1866. As the editors of this volume and the guiding lights of the entire project infer, these touch on ships carrying 77.2 percent of the probable total of people leaving Africa destined for slavery in the Americas. The web site is constructed to enable users to calculate, for themselves, an impressive range of more detailed estimates of specific components of an estimated overall flow of 12.5 million captive Africans across the Atlantic, differentiated by timing and by the origins and destinations of the ships carrying them, as well as by less precise indications of some of the personnel involved, mostly named captains, but also numbers of crew and – of primary interest to most users of the web site, and to the contributors to this volume – the ages, sexes, and deaths of the anonymous men, women, boys, and girls in the holds. *Extending the Frontiers* is meant to frame the parameters of the database, as it was launched in December 2008, to illustrate its potential for specific kinds of research and to display some of the contributions of its new content for understanding the Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans.

The book is thus primarily a volume for professionals and potential academic researchers, and as such it is easily up to the exquisite standards of the database itself. Editors Eltis and Richardson open the collection with a detailed and convincing comparison of the contents of the present database compared to the probable, not yet entirely documented, realities of the scale and shape of Atlantic slaving, as the Portuguese, Dutch, British, French, and others, belatedly including Spaniards, developed it over 350 years. Novice users of the web site will find similarly responsible accounting of methodology and comprehensiveness there in the large page entitled “Understanding the Database” under the section Voyages Database. The principal new material reflects systematic research on the Portuguese trade, the longest-lasting and ultimately largest of any of the national networks of slavers. This collection of essays accordingly offers António de Almeida Mendes’s reassessment of the *asiento* trade to the Spanish Americas by the Portuguese (and their successors), with a number of refinements not only to previous estimates of volumes and directions but also comments on commercial organization. Daniel Barros Domingues da Silva and Eltis offer the first systematic estimates of the slaving destined for the northeastern Brazilian sugar (and later cotton) plantations of Pernambuco. Alexandre Vieira Ribeiro provides a similarly comprehensive review of the better-known slaving centered at the city of Salvador da Bahia, just to the south.

Philip Misevich extends parallel work on enslaved Africans recaptured between 1823 and 1841 by Britain’s antislavery West Africa Squadron and landed at Freetown, Sierra Leone, to Havana, Cuba, where individuals were registered, name by name, with the international Court of Mixed Commission established there. The ethnolinguistic backgrounds claimed by nearly 1000 of these people provide a basis for assessing the geographical
sources of the trade of that time in the vicinity of Sierra Leone. The obscure origins of French slaving before the creation of comprehensive government records in France in 1716, used by previous scholars, are assessed by James Pritchard, Eltis, and Richardson; like the Misevich chapter, this assessment rests on sources extraneous to the database itself, including Antillean census estimates. As such, it is representative of the independent data on the trade, which allow Eltis and Richardson to assess how far the database might include the full realities of slaving. Jelmer Vos, Eltis, and Richardson return to the database to propose less significance for Dutch slavers in the seventeenth century than some previous work has credited them with. In a nearly unique assessment of minor north German slaving – Brandenburg, the Hanseatic towns – Andrea Weindl focuses on these merchants’ strategies of optimizing their own marginality.

The volume concludes with three related studies, two on the business organization of Portuguese/Brazilian slaving in the southern Atlantic, and one on the demography of death among the Africans enslaved in the Caribbean. Manolo Florentino presents aspects of his work on the merchants of Rio de Janeiro otherwise available only in Portuguese; additionally, probate inventories allow demographic analysis of the ages, sex ratios, and family structures of the people owned by slaveholders at the moment of their deaths. Roquinaldo Ferreira emphasizes the local dynamics of adjusting to – and largely managing to evade – British efforts to suppress this Brazilian slaving at Luanda, Angola, from the 1830s into the 1860s. Finally, Eltis and Paul LaChance – a vital contributor to the new database, to whom this volume is dedicated – suggest the promise of future research on intra-American further transfers of the captives carried on the transatlantic voyages included in the database; such estimates, suggesting the possibilities for future work built on the database, might reconcile apparent variations in the net demographic declines inferred for individual islands by combining information on arrivals direct from Africa with colonial estimates of surviving populations. Their premise is that the implied mortality levels tended toward uniformity throughout the region and that estimates of further local transfers of new Africans are within a range that would reduce variation in estimates made without this adjustment toward consistency.

The database, comprehensive as it is, is both a work still in progress and a platform for a generation of further studies moving in directions that research on ship movements – and their nameless human cargoes – alone are not meant to cover. The complexity of all of these chapters, liberally sprinkled with charts and graphs and rigorous logic, make clear both the enormous analytical power of the database and the great subtlety of method required to use its content responsibly to try to write history – about people, human experiences, motivations, courage, and strategizing rather than mere numbers. Editors Eltis and Richardson are clear on this vital distinction, and the
studies in this book constitute an exemplary extension of the existing frontiers of knowledge and a solid base from which to advance them even further.

REFERENCE


NICOLETTE BETHEL
School of Social Sciences
College of The Bahamas
Nassau, Bahamas
<nico@nicobethel.com>

For Caribbean scholars, the tale of the African in the New World is the tale of slavery and its aftermath: the plantation, the Middle Passage, manumission, oral histories, cultural survivals, syncretism, postplantation psychoses, the whole nine yards. These have been cataloged and inscribed on behalf of the entire New World – so much so that the plantation and slavery dominate our thinking about our selves.

But not all Africans who arrived in the Americas came as slaves. What has long been missing from the record is a comprehensive account of the place of another group of Africans – the more than 40,000 people rescued by the Royal Navy from illegal slavers after the 1807 abolition of the slave trade and settled throughout the British New World colonies.

In “New Negroes from Africa,” Roseanne Adderley seeks to address this lack. Taking as her field The Bahamas and Trinidad, two British colonies that together received well over a third of the total Liberated African settlement, she investigates the impact of this population of Africans on their host territories, examining their labor and settlement patterns, their contribution to social life, their religions and supernatural practices, and their particular
kinship patterns. In so doing, she attempts to uncover their impact on the formation of the respective cultures.

And she achieves much. She begins her discussion with an examination of the field itself: the two territories in question and their particular social landscapes: The Bahamas, a failed agricultural colony, conveniently placed at the entrance to the Caribbean, a useful waystop for the refugees; and Trinidad, for whom the need for adequate labor would trouble sugar-producing landowners throughout the postabolition and postemancipation periods. By comparing the reception and deployment of the Liberated Africans in each territory, she sketches out a landscape that demonstrates the varying adaptations made by these refugees, adaptations affected as much by the responses of the Africans themselves as by the individual and collective actions of the bureaucrats and policymakers whose job it was to implement Britain’s newfound commitment to the liberty of all peoples.

Adderley is at her strongest when she is extrapolating from the hard facts enshrined in the historical record – when she is drawing meaning, for example, from the catalogs of the Liberated African arrivals and the resettlement of the refugees, or decoding the underlying philosophies of the bureaucrats responsible for their settlement. She draws convincing comparisons between the Bahamian and the Trinidadian experience, making a strong case for the unique and influential position of the Africans in the societies and cultures of the two colonies.

Perhaps most fascinating in this regard is her ability to demonstrate the varied and often conflicting currents of the age. The nineteenth-century repudiation of the institution of slavery, of which abolition was the first step and full emancipation the second, was essentially a metropolitan movement, emanating from Great Britain out to her colonies, and left to be implemented by public servants who may or may not have been in agreement with their orders. Adderley is faithful in noting the different applications of this policy by the bureaucrats on the ground, and she is able to demonstrate the impact that different officials with varied positions had on the settlement and deployment of the Africans. She further presents the changes in the policy that occurred over time, from the pragmatism of the early days to the ideological fervor that appeared as the British grew more and more sure of the morality of their position.

Once she has accounted for the settlement of the new arrivals in her selected colonies, she goes on to examine their separate adaptations to their new countries. In this, she shows how the different economies and societies of The Bahamas and Trinidad affected the adaptations and practices of the Africans. The author uses differences of origins of the African resettlement (the Havana court for The Bahamas, Sierra Leone for Trinidad), economy (commerce and subsistence in The Bahamas, cash crop agriculture in Trinidad), religion (Protestant in The Bahamas, Catholic in Trinidad), and
general settlement patterns (primarily suburban in The Bahamas, rural in Trinidad) to account for the different manifestations of Liberated African culture, and in so doing makes a convincing case for the place of these Africans in the historical literature of the region.

Where Adderley’s work falls short is in her persistent refusal to make any solid generalization about these African populations. She is acutely aware of the potential unreliability of her sources, and once she has left behind the solidity of the lists of arrivals and the very complete and explicit correspondence among the various imperial administrators and turns to more narrative primary sources, her observations grow more conditional. Her conclusions are so dependent on documentary evidence and so amply qualified that in the end one’s curiosity about this nineteenth-century population is piqued, but left tantalizingly bereft of concrete conclusion.

For the student of Caribbean culture, Adderley’s work fills a gap in the available scholarship. Her study offers strong evidence that the creolization process in the Caribbean was neither a simple nor a unidirectional affair and leads to the conclusion that the presence of some 40,000 Liberated Africans in the Americas must have had a significant impact on the subsequent development of those ex-slave societies. In this regard, Adderley’s book is an important addition to any Caribbean library.


JONATHAN SCHORSCH
Department of Religion
Columbia University
New York NY 10027, U.S.A.
<js1167@columbia.edu>

Gathering the papers from a 2005 colloquium and adding some new entries to round things out, the editors of this sophisticated anthology offer a glimpse of several disciplines meeting at the cutting edge. Economic history, Atlantic studies, Jewish studies, and study of the African diaspora, among other fields, come together in these ten chapters, revisiting and revising our understanding of the place of Sephardic (Spanish and Portuguese) Jews and their
converso kin in the formation of the Atlantic world. As we see more clearly from this volume, while yet victims of exclusion and discrimination, they comprised active players in European overseas expansion and early colonialism, even if in relatively small numbers.

*Atlantic Diasporas* opens with a swift overview by Jonathan Israel of the converso/Sephardic transoceanic trade networks and their shifting political contexts. Adam Sutcliffe offers a second high-level sweep of the Sephardic Atlantic, focusing more on cultural factors. The book then offers two main sections: one on mercantilism, the other on identity and religion.

The first section opens with Wim Klooster’s survey of a handful of mid-seventeenth-century Dutch Sephardic merchants and their efforts at colonial settlement-building in various territories in the Americas. Most of these men had already spent time in the short-lived Jewish haven of Dutch Brazil. They won grants to create new communities in difficult and undeveloped territories, rustled up settlers in Europe (in some cases non-Jews), provisioned supplies including slaves, and set sail. Though the majority of these settlements failed due to hardship or opposition by colonial authorities (who did not always agree with policies set by leaders back in the metropole), they led to the Sephardic communities of Curaçao and Suriname.

Holly Snyder treats merchants, mostly Sephardic, operating within the English colonial orbit, tracing their efforts to negotiate state regulation, which saw Jews as at best resident aliens, and to gain privileges or rights of residence and trade. Moving from the relatively anarchic seventeenth century to the more ordered eighteenth century, Jewish merchants continued to face legal and attitudinal discrimination and hence felt greater pressure than their non-Jewish competitors to cultivate a strong and loyal customer base. Those who thrived in consumer retail trade, such as Aaron Lopez of Newport, knew how to comport themselves with the necessary social graces and sold to their customers the gentility and respectability that they sought for themselves and which to some degree could now be had for purchase through goods like stylish textiles, Portuguese wine, tea, snuff, or spermaceti candles.

In the next essay, Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert offers a comparative survey of Sephardic/converso trading networks of the Portuguese nation, the *Naçaõ*, alongside other Atlantic diasporic trading networks – the Huguenots, Basques, and Genoese, among others. This sophisticated synthetic portrait shows that most of the particularities attributed to Jewish (or “Jewish”) commercial culture actually comprise features of all such trading networks. Endogamy, intense family orientation, clannishness, law-stretching or -breaking – often laid at the feet of Judaism or Jewishness – really derive from structural determinants. Studnicki-Gizbert shows us once again how the remarkable Sephardic/converso trading diaspora featured a tight overlap between social and economic relations in two senses: people traded with
family and kin foremost, while cultural and religious ways aided and paralleled commercial needs and structures.

Asking about similar matters in a similarly comparative context, Francesca Trivellato challenges some of the stereotyping and essentializations of Sephardic/converso trading networks. She argues against the notion that trading with family and kin necessarily engendered trust and cooperation (or entailed a “progressive” trait), calling attention to the internal divisions within Sephardic/converso trading diaspora, such as revolved around class, ethnicity, gender, or religion. Among other problems, family businesses and networks often fell apart, fractured, descended into squabbling. Trivellato brings to bear her expertise regarding the Mediterranean commerce of Livornese Sephardim in probing for detailed but more nuanced ways of depicting and explaining the tricks of the Sephardic/converso trade.

In the anthology’s second main section, “Identity and Religion,” Bruno Feitler takes us to northeast Brazil, conquered by the Dutch for nearly three decades, a unique land from the perspective of the Jewish question in the Iberian world. Here, as Feitler, discusses, Portuguese New Christians lived under Calvinists who tolerated open Judaism. With rich examples he outlines the complicated religious life of the colonists, able to explore and experiment with an “enemy” faith, pressured to choose between faiths, and sometimes uncertain how. Many individuals ultimately made their choice based on “the sentimental bonds that tied them to local community groups and material concerns in lieu of racial identity and religious convictions” (p. 150).

Aviva Ben-Ur recounts the situation of slaves and freed individuals of African origin, women in particular, within the unique Sephardic plantation community of Suriname between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Based on tantalizing bits in archival sources, she traces the complicated ways Eurafricans became a significant part of the community, both demographically and in terms of communal organization and the construction of the local meanings of Jewishness. Some slave or free women used their relationships with Sephardic planters and the children they bore them as a means of upward mobility, while segments of the community saw fit to adapt to local necessities and welcome these initiates who among other things served to bolster their tenuous numbers.

Peter Mark and José da Silva Horta present an account of a few small communities consisting of Portuguese New Jews from Amsterdam who moved in the early seventeenth century to Muslim West Africa. Enjoying the same protection local Muslim leaders granted to all foreign merchants, these traders and opportunist/entrepreneurs practiced Judaism openly, attracted Portuguese New Christians to their midst, and converted some of the Africans they married and employed and birthed. These short-lived endeavors, showing signs of the pragmatic “going native” that characterized merchant interlopers and intermediaries throughout colonization, reflect
a bold assertiveness that swept Portuguese Sephardim and conversos alike with the rise of the independence movement against Spain after 1580 and the founding of Sephardic Amsterdam just before 1600.

The final episode pertains to the Portuguese converso Antonio de Montezinos, who claimed in the 1640s to have encountered in Nueva Granada Indians related to the lost ten tribes. As retold and analyzed by Ronnie Perelis, Montezinos’s widely circulated narrative describes the solidification of his identity as a Jew in the face of the parallel suffering of Native Americans under the Spanish. His discovery/invention of Jewish Indians who will overthrow the Spanish and all anti-Jewish oppression becomes a projection of converso fears and dreams onto the “new” world of the Americas, sympathetic but instrumental.

A brief summation by Natalie Zemon Davis highlights some of the significant and recurring themes of the collected pieces. The editors have effectively lived up to their desire to “complicate prior historiographical notions of the early modern Jewish experience” (p. vii). Though not an easy place for beginners to access Sephardic/converso history, Atlantic Diasporas will inform even experts in a diversity of fields.


CHARLIE WHITHAM
Department of Humanities
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff
Cardiff CF23 6XD, U.K.
<cwhitham@uwic.ac.uk>

This monograph is a rare synthesis of complementary themes in a “watershed” period in West Indian history, and especially rare for affirming the more neglected role of “West Indian agency in shaping Anglo-American-Caribbean affairs” (p. 164). As Jason Parker ably demonstrates, the Caribbean occupies “a unique position astride Anglo-American, inter-American, African-diasporan, and Third World relations” (p. 67). Any one of these elements would be a scholarly handful, but to attempt to represent the complex interweaving of these often disparate and conflicting elements over such a complex and disparate historical period in one volume is a challenge indeed.
Happily, *Brother’s Keeper* is a successful effort and constitutes a welcome contribution to the field.

The opening chapters, based on Parker’s earlier articles on the subject, set the scene during the late 1930s of a troubled West Indies in need of radical political, social, and economic refurbishment. Colonial policy was dominated by “Allied geopolitics” in the run-up to war (p. 18), and “national-security” concerns naturally dominated Anglo-American attitudes to the region. Parker correctly asserts that American policy toward the Caribbean during the war was made up of the “three R’s” of realism, race, and reform (p. 40), but for me he does not sufficiently highlight the importance of the *economic* element of Washington’s approach, which sprang from a core tenet of U.S. war and postwar policy, especially toward Britain: economic liberalization. In the early 1940s Washington, primarily through the Anglo-American Caribbean Commission (AACC), sought to “restructure” the economy of the BWI so that it would be more conducive not only to American commercial penetration but also broader U.S. postwar economic objectives for worldwide – and specifically Imperial – liberalized trade. In this way the BWI was a “rehearsal” or showcase of American postwar objectives. While race and reform were certainly ingredients in the overall approach (remember that treatment of “political” issues was forbidden on the AACC at the insistence of the British) there is much evidence to suggest that it was the overarching principle of economic liberalization, not narrow commercial interest (p. 59), that dominated U.S. policy towards the BWI during the 1940s, with the other elements constituting the “background noise.” This analysis would be more consistent with Parker’s concluding (and indisputable) statement that overall U.S. policy toward the BWI was inextricable from relations with Britain – or “the fruit of strategic choices about Anglo-American relations” (p. 164).

Still, American policy came to little as the war ended, and in the interregnum between war and Cold War the Caribbean, as Parker depicted it, “mostly vanished from Washington’s radar” (p. 67). During the Cold War U.S. economic and political ambitions in the BWI took a backseat in the struggle to “contain” communism, also relieving Washington of its anticolonial pretensions – which Parker rightly asserts as being largely driven in any case by national-security priorities (p. 163) – and shifting the policy initiative back to the Caribbean’s Imperial masters. In this regard the United States was gifted a ready assistant in policing its backyard, and perhaps a more able one: Washington was compelled to intervene only in Caribbean “hotspots” that were under its own tutelage.

It is in the treatment of the cold-war period that this work excels and supplies its most original offering. Here Parker effectively deals with tracing the complicated interaction of the more evenly balanced elements of realism, race, and reform in Caribbean policy that prevailed in the shadow of the Cold War. Utilizing an impressive array of archival material and recent secondary
works, he convincingly demonstrates how the profile of race as a “wild card” was heightened in the fight against communism (p. 79) as the British experimented with modes of political and social reform and the Americans experienced a growing civil rights movement and blundered their way through one postcolonial crisis after another. Parker’s neatly entitled chapter “Building a Bulwark” (pp. 93-118) is fascinating in dealing with the uneven efforts of an energized Eisenhower administration to peddle Western-style reforms as a means of incorporating Latin America and the Caribbean into an anticommunist bloc, only to fall foul of profound social turbulence and political upheaval. In this regard the precipitous revolution in Cuba played a central role, and Parker skillfully incorporates the dense fallout from the Cuban debacle – which he argues “punctured American hegemony in the Caribbean” (p. 158) – into his account of Anglo-American-West Indian relations. The rise of Castro dovetailed uncomfortably with the collapse of the London-sponsored West Indian Federation, bringing new urgency to Anglo-American attempts at reform in the region (p. 144). These overarching metropolitan considerations are carefully married with grass-roots efforts to better the lot of West Indians which, fortunately for London and Washington, never threatened the delicate equilibrium of the Caribbean in the way that Castro had managed. Indeed, it was thanks to “sufficiently pro-western leadership in the federation’s remnants” that the Anglo-Americans could rest assured that the “Cuban contagion” would not spread as feared (p. 158).

In all, this is an engrossing tale with something for everyone, or very nearly. As the abstract on the back cover suggests, the book really does offer an “original rethinking of the relationship between the Cold War and Third World decolonization.” The British Caribbean is worthy of scholarly attention, not only for the way it illuminates our understanding of Anglo-American-West Indian relations, but for its value in the telling of decolonization. Or, as Parker more eloquently puts it in his introduction, “the story is not strictly an ‘east-west’ problem of war, power, and empire, but also a ‘north-south’ phenomenon of race, nation, and freedom, with ramifications all around the compass” (p. 15).

DOUGLAS MIDGETT
Department of Anthropology
University of Iowa
Iowa City IA 52242, U.S.A.
<douglas-midgett@uiowa.edu>

In this study Sara Abraham eschews conflict approaches (pluralism, Marxism) in favor of examining how, at different junctures, multiracial formations, discourses, and strategies emerged as actors in Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana dealt with problems of fragmentation in late- and postcolonial periods. She examines in detail four periods. Chapter 2 explores the 1930s’ period of labor struggles, especially with respect to Trinidad and Tobago. Chapter 3 examines the early attempts to define a biracial political movement in late-colonial British Guiana. Chapter 4 offers a lengthy discussion of various movements, some labor-based and others seeking alternate forms of racial solidarity that often emerged from the masses in both nations in the first three decades of their postcolonial eras. And Chapter 5 traces the development of the National Alliance for Reconstruction in Trinidad and Tobago in the wake of thirty years of rule by the People’s National Movement of Eric Williams. These four discussions are presented under the rubric of “types” of multiracialism – “popular,” “nationalist,” “solidaristic,” and “strategic.”

The use of the four types appears to have little theoretical utility, except as labels for the periods of struggle on which Abraham has chosen to focus. The ordering of the discussions is somewhat curious in that the third topic – “solidaristic” – spans a period of some three decades and comprises a number of linked and separate impulses that had expression in the two states. This is also the longest chapter in the book and it is clearly the examination that most concerns her – “The heart of the book lies in exploring these movements of solidarity” (p. 14). This discussion is not only the most extensive, it is also the most interesting and contains material and analysis not elaborated in numerous other treatments of political fragmentation in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago. Its importance cannot be stressed enough at a time when the search for commonalities that might ground a truly nationalist political expression in both countries continues to be the focus of political and cultural discourse in a globalizing world where we are sometimes advised that nationalism is becoming increasingly irrelevant.

The other significant contribution of the book is found in the penultimate chapter, “Tales from the Streets and Fields,” which consists of three docu-
ments from participants in the ground-level struggles for racial unity in the emergence of the movements described in Chapter 4. Here Abraham allows us a glimpse of the voluminous interview material she collected during more than a decade of study. This is augmented in the book’s appendix by a ten-page interview with Eusi Kwayana in which he describes the organization, goals, and struggles of the Working People’s Alliance in Guyana, the party formed in 1974 to challenge the two parties that had directed the country’s path since the 1950s and to provide a socialist, multiracial alternative.

*Labour and the Mutiracial Project* is an ambitious and novel approach to the issues that have plagued the political, social, and cultural development of Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana throughout most of their modern histories. It is not, however, without problems. It is clear from the author’s acknowledgements that the book had a lengthy gestation, and this shows in the writing, some of which is prolix and in need of an editorial hand. Moreover, there are inaccurate and missing references in the bibliography and the index is completely inadequate.

The structure of the book is curious, with the critical chapter on solidarity approaches inserted between those that give accounts of party politics at various junctures. One cannot escape the impression that Chapters 2, 3, and 5, all containing material described at length in other sources, were constructed to fit around the centerpiece chapter of the book. We are presented with an assemblage of evidence in service of a premise – the continuing struggle to forge multiracial nationalism that has been frustrated, subverted, and suppressed by both a colonial enterprise and postcolonial state sector actors set on maintaining their privilege. Here we might question the attention paid to statements of those whose past (and future?) agendas – most of which failed – depend on the politics of multiracial unity. Ought we to consider these pronouncements with the same skepticism we employ when approaching other ethnographic and quantitative data sources?

This brings me to the question of where and when these conflicted political identities originated. At the outset Abraham opts for the formulations of Mahmood Mamdani, who argues for the determinative role of colonial rule and the postcolonial state in the creation and sustaining of ethnic political conflict. Aside from the invocation of Mamdani in the introduction, the book gives little attention to his ideas. The notion that political identities appearing to be rooted in ethnic differences are better examined with reference to the imperatives of state formation is not systematically addressed.

A final criticism of the book concerns the theoretical approaches that are accepted and rejected from the outset. Although an emphasis would seem to be on the role of labor in interrogating the history of struggles in Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana – an orientation that would privilege class over ethnicity as a central social feature – labor and class struggle is only occasionally invoked in framing the arguments. I would suggest that rather than rejecting
the pluralism literature Abraham might have pursued more thoroughly the work of M.G. Smith, whose position she bowdlerizes beyond recognition. A consideration of his work on differential incorporation of groups within the societies in question might have yielded greater insight into the resulting political and social factionalism that has emerged.


GINA ATHENA ULYSSE
Anthropology and African-American Studies
Wesleyan University
Middletown CT 06459, U.S.A.
<gulyssse@wesleyan.edu>

In *Envisioning Caribbean Futures,* Brian Meeks sets out to prove that another theoretical and methodological world is actually possible in Caribbean social science studies. Early in the introduction, he positions his manifesto as a direct riposte to Margaret Thatcher’s assertion that “there is no alternative” (p. 2). He makes a bold plea for Caribbean social studies, which has been caught in a disciplinary time warp, to be more interdisciplinary. Bold, because with this call Meeks rightly points to “the failure on the part of many philosophically inclined thinkers to engage with the seemingly dirty details of political economy” (p. 3) as well as an “equally serious failure on the part of political economists to engage with contemporary theory and philosophy” (p. 3). Since social life as Meeks writes knows no disciplinary boundaries, he aims to “stimulate a conversation that looks beyond the horizon of policy confines, yet is not so far removed as to appear hopelessly utopian” (p. 3). To do so in three chapters and a brief conclusion, he engages the works of several contemporary scholars, focuses on Jamaica as a case study, and then proposes a substantive alternative.

In the first chapter, “Explorations in New Caribbean Thought,” Meeks engages with what he calls “new avenues in Caribbean thought” from an array of interdisciplinary fields (feminist, development, philosophy, anthropology, and political science) that theorize the post-Cold-War moment. In his interrogation of the works of Eudine Barriteau, Davin Ramphal, Paget Henry, David Scott, and Hilbourne Watson, he argues for the continuous relevance
of Marxism and theories of capital vis-à-vis the deconstructive, postmodern, and historical materialist leanings of his interlocutors. Recognizing the shortcomings of their approaches, he proposes a middle-ground “Caribbean subaltern” that assumes progress is possible and does not deny the centrality of capital, but recognizes popular resistance (p. 48).

In the second chapter, “Jamaica in a Time of Neo-liberal Infatuation,” Meeks denounces the simple failed state narrative to point to the paradoxical impact of neoliberal consolidation that creates an “atmosphere for enhanced profit taking” in conjunction with “a state of virtual collapse in other areas of the society” (p. 65). He revisits and delineates the key dimensions of the concept of hegemonic dissolution, which he had proposed a decade earlier. He ascribes this state of social collapse to the “withdrawal of the middle class from the centre of life in Jamaica” in part due to the brain drain caused by mass migration abroad (pp. 72-73) and competing ideological movements that have eroded “Creole nationalism” and the “nationalist project” that once embraced a “romanticized peasant culture” (p. 73). In their place are “autonomous Jamaican gangs” who “are no longer beholden to the local party structures and leaders in the same way,” (pp. 69-70) and “popular social forces are on the cultural offensive” (p. 78) contesting notions of what Jamaica is, thus leaving the island in a state of “uncertainty and of aimless meandering…. In the breakdown of firm moral codes, all segments of society look for ways to circumvent the law” (p. 78). This, Meeks stresses, is occurring within a broader social political context characterized by implosion of the U.S. imperial project and a global economic crisis in capital accumulation – thus the look south to Barbados for another way.

To avoid “international marginalization,” Meeks proposes a much-needed alternative. In the last chapter, “Imagining the Future,” he “suspended the political in order to imagine the future” (p. 172) and suggests “the basis for a new political compromise [in Jamaica] would have to begin with a profound historical act of good faith that would indicate the foundation for a new beginning, a genuine social contract” (p. 117). He insists this would require: (1) a process of national reconciliation to address, discuss, and exorcise the national cataclysm of 1976-1980, (2) an extensive land reform measure, and (3) a Constituent Assembly of Jamaican People at Home and Abroad that would convene “not only [to] consider and address matters of constitutional reform but would debate broad questions about the political and economic direction of the country” (p. 128), engage in conversations around notions of a deeper democracy, linking the economy to popular culture and the environment and the pursuit of a single Caribbean market. Finally, given the primacy of concepts of freedom in popular imaginary, Meeks concludes that for this future to be democratic, it cannot be imagined without an articulated ethos. For this he turns to Sylvia Wynter and calls for an epistemic breakthrough to banish the repressive notion of man with its signifiers of racial, gender, and social dominance and build a new open, egalitarian epistemic order of the human (p. 159).
Meeks’s prescriptive project is not without limits. It is noticeable that his selected set of interlocutors are Anglophone scholars. Thinkers from the wider circum-Caribbean were either amiss or not deeply engaged. Have any not made applicable contributions to “new Caribbean thought?” Another lacuna is the gender of his theory. Meeks rightly and forcefully argues that in the new modality of Caribbean thought, intellectuals are no longer privileged with the superiority of insight (p. 58). Throughout the book, he muses on the lyrics of singers and DJs (all male) as theoretical reflections. This elevation of the writers to the status of organic intellectuals is a necessary feat if Caribbean social studies is to embrace an interdisciplinary model that considers the ontological and epistemological agency as well as what Michel-Rolph Trouillot would call the historicity of its subjects. To that end, and cautious of recreating gender binaries, where are the female subalterns? If “people construct forms of resistance” out of “their own foundations of knowing and understanding” (p. 50), then whose Caribbean futures are we envisioning with singular gendered insights?

Still, I highly recommend this work to anyone with interest in Caribbean intellectual development and Jamaica’s place at the forefront of movements in the region. With rigorous rethinking of macrolevel analysis that seriously engages issues of agency and subjectivity, Meeks makes it abundantly clear that henceforth Caribbean social studies needs to eschew compartmentalization and move towards synthesis. Crossing disciplinary boundaries, Meeks shows is no longer optional. Caribbean intellectuals, ought to take heed.


Jon Sensbach
Department of History
University of Florida
Gainesville FL 32611-7320, U.S.A.
<jsensbach@ufl.edu>

Few among the millions of Africans snared in the Atlantic slave trade had the means or opportunity to record their autobiographies. Of those who did, Olaudah Equiano is the most famous, and others such as Venture Smith, James Albert Gronniasaw, Ottabah Cuguano, Ayuba Suleiman Diallo have
gained greater recognition as scholars have sought to retrieve authentic voices from the African Atlantic. Still, among those narratives anthologized in such collections as Philip D. Curtin’s *Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade* (1967) and Vincent Carretta’s more recent *Unchained Voices: An Anthology of Black Authors in the English-Speaking World of the Eighteenth Century* (2004), almost none features a Caribbean setting. This absence is surprising, since at least 40 percent of all enslaved Africans sent to the Americas ended up in West Indian destinations. Mary Prince wrote one of the best-known West Indian slave narratives, but as a Creole author her account figures little in studies of the slave trade itself. In *Archibald Monteath*, Maureen Warner-Lewis partly fills this gap by using the unusual autobiography of an Igbo man enslaved in nineteenth-century Jamaica as the basis for a thoroughly researched and convincingly rendered reconstruction of one African’s life in captivity and freedom.

Archibald John Monteath, born Aniaso sometime in the 1790s in what is now southeastern Nigeria, was captured as a child, traded out of a port on the Bight of Biafra such as Bonny or Calabar, and sent via the slave trade to Jamaica in 1802. There he was purchased by John Monteath, a Scottish-born planter, whose estate, Kep, was principally a stockyard in St. Elizabeth Parish in the southwest corner of the island. The boy was given the name Toby, which he gave up upon his christening as Archibald John Monteath in the parish church in 1821. The region around Kep Estate had been the base for the Moravian Church’s mission in Jamaica since 1757, and Archibald Monteath, who had become attracted to Christianity against the wishes of his master, joined the New Carmel mission in 1827. In time he became a “helper” or prominent assistant in the congregation, rose to plantation overseer, bought his freedom a year ahead of Emancipation in 1838, and became a small landowner himself. His life can be seen in many ways as representative of profound forces shaping global history, for upon his death in 1864 he had experienced many of the essential features of the Atlantic slave system – African captivity and the Middle Passage, Caribbean slavery, religious revelation, rebellion (witnessing but not participating in the famous Christmas uprising of 1821-32), and transition to freedom.

Monteath described many of these details in an autobiography he composed through the auspices of the Moravian Church in 1853. The Church had emerged in early eighteenth-century Germany as an outgrowth of the Pietist movement and as an energetic missionary organization to indigenous and enslaved people around the world. An important Church practice was to collect and disseminate in its worldwide mission newsletter the life narratives of mission helpers and other leading converts as evidence of God’s unfolding plan to bring light to the heathen. Accordingly, an essential element in
these accounts was a sense of spiritual dislocation and a dawning awareness of sin, resolved through Christ’s grace. Monteath was literate and composed his autobiography in conjunction with a white amanuensis. Various versions in both German and English with relatively minor differences in style and content circulated for more than a century in Moravian publications and several scholarly venues, but no modern scholar had subjected it to the kind of rigorous inquiry that Warner-Lewis has.

Monteath’s narrative, which runs to some sixteen printed pages, furnished enough details to allow Warner-Lewis to conduct dogged detective work in legal documents, church records, and oral testimony from African informants, filling in narrative silences about his personal and spiritual life. She presents an unusually well-detailed and plausible portrait of the West African cultural and religious milieu that shaped the boy Aniaso and which, she suggests, bore strong parallels to his later Christian life. She also analyzes the plantation society and enslaved population into which he was violently thrust. She takes us through his rise in the plantation hierarchy and fervent embrace of Christianity, which, he wrote, made him “outwardly bound but inwardly free.” And she depicts his immersion in the expansive spiritual kinship networks of Moravian Church fellowship as a buffer against the perils of secular life. Unlike authors such as Mary Prince, Warner-Lewis argues, Monteath did not portray himself as a wounded victim of slavery’s physical and psychic ravages. Instead, she concludes, the autobiography represents the “reclamation of a moral sense, of dignity and of personal identity” (p. 250). Ultimately, the narrative reveals “the personhood of the enslaved: vital lives, intelligent thinkers, perceptive social actors and resourceful characters, individuals too often hidden under the anonymity” of enslavement and historical erasure (p. 266).

This is a powerful argument because it demonstrates the value of studying black Atlantic narratives by authors not named Equiano, Monteath’s Igbo countryman. Equiano’s literary skill and evocative rendition of the Middle Passage, his parable of maritime life as a passage to freedom, and his moral condemnation of the slave trade – all aided by the recent controversy over his birth origins – have made him the archetypal figure of the African Atlantic, from whose shadow lesser-known figures struggle to emerge. As Warner-Lewis shows, other narratives can demonstrate how Africans negotiated the challenges of enslavement at different times in different places. Archibald Monteath is a striking example of how thoroughly a determined scholar can resurrect an African life in America from documentary fragments. It is a tour de force of scholarship and historical imagination that should take a prominent place among books on Caribbean slavery and on Africans in the New World.
REFERENCES


LINDEN LEWIS
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Bucknell University
Lewisburg PA 17837, U.S.A.
<linden.lewis@bucknell.edu>

At the 2007 Caribbean Studies Association meetings in San Andres, Colombia, I asked Carole Boyce Davies about the title of her new book, Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones, and suggested that situating Jones to the left of Marx depended on where you stood. Her quick-witted reply was, “True! So you have to stand with Marx.”

In the book Davies moves beyond merely pointing to the fact that Jones was buried to the left of Karl Marx, to arguing that she was also ideologically to Marx’s left in her politics. Situating Jones in this way implies a particularly radical, extreme position, perhaps even a dogmatic stance. Davies is not at her most persuasive in this claim, especially since she is at pains throughout the book to note Jones’s commitment to Marxism-Leninism.

Davies indicates clearly that the book is not a work of biography but a study of one of the most important black radical thinkers of the mid-twentieth century. She acknowledged that her initial encounter with Claudia Jones’s contribution came from a chance audience with Buzz Johnson, who at the time was advocating the need for more work to be done on this Trinidadian-born woman. Over the years, Johnson’s effort to rescue Jones’s political contribution from obscurity (see, for example, Johnson 1985) has been essentially vilified as intellectually underdeveloped.
Davies sees Claudia Jones as a “sister outsider” in the sense in which Audre Lorde used that term. “The fact is that she is not well known in the Caribbean, just as she is also not remembered in the United States” (p. 25). Though this may be true, the same can be said about such people as Oliver C. Cox, Richard B. Moore, W.A. Domingo, or Hubert Harrison, none of whom features prominently on any of the undergraduate syllabi of courses at the University of the West Indies. One of the purposes of Davies’s book is “to challenge the status quo in which Claudia Jones escapes a certain belonging in Caribbean feminist history and the larger Caribbean intellectual and political genealogy as well” (p. 25).

According to a memorandum to the Director of the FBI in 1947, Jones was “a member of the National Committee, of CP USA; Secretary of the Women’s Commission, CP USA, and Negro affairs editor of the ‘Daily Worker’” (p. 197). She was one of the most prominent of the younger leading Negro Communists. She was no doubt a very important theoretician for the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA), but to argue that “if the party made Jones, she also made it, at this time” (p. 31) is to stretch her contribution just a bit beyond reason.

In addition to her work within the CPUSA, Jones was also a journalist of long standing not only in the United States but also later in the United Kingdom where she settled after being deported from the former. Some have credited Jones with having established a radical, black journalism tradition in the United Kingdom.

Given Jones’s activism, her linking of women’s rights and anti-imperialism, her opposition to Jim Crow segregation, and her explicit communist connections, it was no surprise that she caught the attention of the U.S. government in the heyday of the McCarthy witch-hunts. She was first arrested in 1948 and threatened with deportation. In 1953 she was convicted under the Smith and McCarran-Walter Act, sentenced to one year and a day in prison (in Alderson, West Virginia), and fined US$ 200. By the time she was released, deportation was already ordered, and she was forced to leave the country she had known as home since she was nine years old. Jones was sent to London, where according to Davies, the British authorities felt that they were in a better position to control her and her political ideas, than if she had returned to her native Trinidad.

In contrast to her U.S. experience, Jones received an unenthusiastic reception from the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). Given her difficulties with the party, she turned her attention to addressing the problems of immigration and racism facing the African, Asian, and Caribbean communities. She is generally credited with establishing the Notting Hill carnival, in response to “the riots and intimidation of Caribbean people in Notting Hill and Nottingham and in particular to the murder of Kelso Cochrane” (p.
Jones believed that “a people’s art is the genesis of their own freedom” (p. 125). She did not separate the political from the aesthetic. Deportation from the United States therefore did not dampen her political activism; it simply broadened the scope of her work, reconfiguring it according to the specific cultural peculiarities of England.

Davies makes an important contribution to the history of Caribbean, communist, feminist women, such as Hermie Huiswoud and Grace Campbell, who have tended to figure only at the margins of their male counterparts’ political profiles. Her book is especially compelling in the chapters that discuss Jones’s deportation, her carnival and diaspora activism, and her work in the interest of peace.

In 1964 Jones died of heart failure in London, but there are areas of her life still in need of exploration. For example, Paul Robeson’s telephone call at Jones’s funeral was no ordinary intervention; for some, it was one of the highlights of the entire service. The confusion surrounding the funeral arrangements and the choices of who were asked to speak about her also make an interesting story. And the CPGB’s attempt to bury her quickly is yet another tale of intrigue. However the clash between the CPGB’s atheistic orientation to such matters and the desire to have a religiously oriented service complete with church hymns selected by the Caribbean community of which she had been a significant part, and who related to her in quite different political terms, all need to be aired fully in a future biography. *Left of Karl Marx* is, nevertheless, essential reading for students of the broader Caribbean community.

**REFERENCE**


1. Kelso Cochrane was the victim of gang violence meted out by white British youths in 1959, the year after the race riots in Notting Hill.
The main themes of this marvelous edited collection run through each contribution. Geography, narrative, and displacement define a “global Caribbean” (p. 3) characterized by historical and spatial disjunctures, fissures, and dislocations. Treating topics ranging from historical and natural landscapes, memories of trauma, environmental degradation, slavery, and violence, the authors consider the Caribbean as a problematic more than a region, a set of questions about the ever-shifting qualities of place, perspective, and transformation that have dogged Caribbean peoples and those who study them ever since Columbus’s fateful “discovery.”

Most of the authors adopt a literary or historical approach to their topics, and the chapters follow one another roughly in historical sequence based on the texts and themes under investigation. Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert’s chapter on Caribbean ecologies and nationalisms, “Endangered Species: Caribbean Ecology and the Discourse of the Nation,” is perhaps the exception to this rule, though in tracking discourses of natural history alongside environmental destruction, it offers a metahistorical account of the Caribbean’s endangered spaces and species. She provides examples from Puerto Rico, St. Lucia, and Haiti and thus does what Caribbeanists always talk about but few ever achieve: attending to insular linguistic and national distinctiveness without losing sight of archipelagic commonalities. (Indeed, the collection as a whole succeeds admirably on this score.) Particularly noteworthy is her discussion of the Hilton Corporation’s failed Jalousie Plantation Resort in the Pitons of St. Lucia, and her analysis of Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott’s poignant challenges to the “blasphemy” (p. 17) of this development. The “endangered species” of Paravisini-Gebert’s title may turn out to be West Indian peoples themselves, though Walcott’s “Adamic” idea, which holds open the possibility of a rechristening, resacralization, of “grass that emerges from the ruins” (p. 18), offers a glimmer of hope, about which, more below.

Jalil Sued-Badillo’s chapter literalizes the endangered species metaphor, discussing the enslavement of indigenous populations during the Columbian expeditions. He chronicles Columbus’s four shipments of Amerindian slaves
to Spain, two thousand in all, where they were regarded as prisoners of war. The “conquest-subjection-enslavement” model (p. 37) is found to have been inaugurated by Columbus himself. Sued-Badillo’s chapter forms a pair with Peter Hulme’s analysis of the surprising presence of a fictional Cuban indigenous community in a popular 1897 American novel. Hulme places this presence in the context of the United States’ nineteenth-century wars with its own indigenous population and Teddy Roosevelt’s imperial ambitions. The novel’s indigenous community, avenged by U.S. forces, displaces American culpability for the massacre at Wounded Knee (p. 60). Hulme’s chapter also contains a fascinating postscript on the relationship between the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski and Fernando Ortiz in the latter’s development of the concept of transculturation, which Hulme sees as the antecedent of various strands of postcolonial criticism and which points to a more complex understanding of cultural “survival” and its modalities for indigenous communities and identities today.

Moving into the twentieth century, yet carrying forward the preceding chapter’s concern with methods of historical understanding and cultural assertion, Kevin Meehan’s essay documents C.L.R. James’s peregrinations through the United States in the 1930s and 1940s, from Harlem to the West Coast and, importantly for Meehan’s analysis, to Missouri, where James was involved in labor organizing. Treating this as a period of “radical fieldwork,” Meehan argues that it provided James a sense of the “existential destiny” (p. 80) of the African-American struggle for freedom. Meehan also finds here a “political and philosophical optimism” (p. 94) necessary to “the practical challenges posed by globalization” (p. 95). This reader heard resonances with the political and philosophical pragmatism of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century American figures like Peirce, James, and Dewey, as well as the rhetoric of the United States’ first African-American president, leading me to think about the connections between radical fieldwork and pragmatism as a politically hopeful project.

The next two chapters focus on the artistic expression of trauma. Ivette Romero-Cesareo explores literary and visual representations of AIDS, lingering over the repeating image of the occupied and then emptied bed. Paravisini-Gebert and Martha Daisy Kelehan look at representations of Haitian botpippel, undocumented migrants making dangerous passage through rough seas to uncertain shores. In these two richly illustrated chapters, the authors present a Caribbean art criticism that stresses the themes of displacement and transformation that give this collection its title. Readers find here the (often forgotten) history of Guantanamo, which in the 1980s served as a detention center for Haitian refugees, many of whom were HIV-positive and thus barred from entry into the United States. Artists’ representations of stigma, detention, disease, and despair evoke the Middle Passage and the chains of slavery, yet also, that same sense of ambiguous and uncer-
tain hope that Meehan found in James’s radical fieldwork. In the artist Rejin Leys’s “Wherever there’s someone fighting” (Fig. 6.11, p. 157), a boat with human feet takes wing and is framed by the iconography of the U.S. dollar bill. Flight, solidarity, and hope come together to rehumanize boat people as taking wing over the backgrounded barbed wire that fences them in, even as they are enframed – imprisoned anew? – by the U.S. dollar.

Michael Aronna’s chapter explores the testimonial genre in two books by Miguel Barnet. Like the owners of the feet in Leys’s painting, the informants of these two testimonials are “complex social figures who contradict themselves and frustrate those who seek redemption through a pure subaltern subject” (p. 165). Aronna significantly complicates some postcolonial critics’ assertion that the testimonial genre upends old relations of power and presumably creates solidarity. Instead of seeing testimonial as providing a window into a reality and thereby raising consciousness, Aronna quotes Barnet on the genre’s ability to “unravel reality” (p. 165), throwing into question the documentary impulse of narrative nonfiction.

Yolanda Martinez San Miguel’s essay explores the expression of displacement and migration in Hispanic Caribbean music. If Caribbean peoples are distinguished by their own journeys and migrations, music as a form travels, and often makes travel – geographic, metaphysical, interpersonal – a core theme. Yet this chapter also insists on local and rooted interpretations of these traveling themes and the multiple significations of music even by those sharing a social space of displacement.

The volume is accompanied by a posthumous afterword by Antonio Benitez Rojo, entitled “The New Atlantis: The Ultimate Caribbean Archipelago.” A manifesto for a new meta-archipelagic collaboration, it imagines an expansive and nonterritorially bound “ocean territory.” It also outlines what a history book of this New Atlantis might comprise. Benitez Rojo’s intellectual legacy is clear in this volume, an elegant contribution to Caribbean discourse. Like Benitez Rojo’s corpus, this fine book strives toward a remapping of disciplinary, linguistic, and historical resources that may ultimately make his “ultimate archipelago” a space of continual transformation. It is a space in which, “in order not to exile ourselves” despite our displacements, we hold onto the towline that affirms that “we are not sailing alone” (p. 224).
Migration has been pivotal to Caribbean history and has remained a central feature of the contemporary Caribbean. An avalanche of monographs and edited volumes on migration and transnationalism has been published over the past decades, far more than any interested reader can really keep up with. It seems reasonable therefore to expect new titles to offer something special, be it a convincing innovative approach, an elegant synthesis, exciting comparative perspectives, or preferably all of these. Unfortunately, Caribbean Migration to Western Europe and the United States offers little in this regard. Nor do its eleven assorted contributions display much internal consistency. The book is the belated result of a 2002 colloquium in Paris, and it confirms the rule that workshop papers seldom result in coherent books. This is not to say that the collection is redundant. There are several fine contributions here which can be appreciated on their own terms.

The volume is organized in four sections. The first begins with the editors’ introduction, meant to set the stage for the book. Cervantes-Rodríguez, Grosfoguel, and Mielants provide a theoretical framework inspired by the Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano’s concept of the “coloniality of power.” It seemed to me that their excursions resulted in much idiosyncratic jargon with little explanatory power – a tendency that did not seep into the rest of the book (to my relief, but possibly to the disappointment of other readers). Several of the “empirical” observations in the introduction are simply wrong, or incomplete. Thus the editors make accurate observations on problems of nonsovereign territories in the region and of citizens from these places in the metropolis, but skip lightly over the arguably greater disadvantages of nonsovereignty. Likewise they overestimate the role of labor recruitment in explaining migration from the nonsovereign Caribbean and carry their abhorrence of cultural explanations to the point of refusing to seriously consider the role of culture in integration and mobility. All of this, one presumes, is aimed at undermining “one of the most pervasive myths of Eurocentric social science: that of a neutral, universalist, objective point of view” (p. 13). Following the editors’ introduction, Nina Glick Schiller offers some new
reflections on the concept of transnationalism, of which she is a pioneering theorist.

The second section provides three contributions on state policies and migrants’ strategies. Michel Giraud discusses migrations from the départements d’outre-mer to France and points to the growing disenchantment of Caribbean citizens with enduring, perhaps increasing racism in the metropolis. Eric Mielants’s overview of Caribbean migration to the Netherlands stands out for the apparently apodictic conviction that Dutch society is racist to the core and that empirical research pointing to improvement over time only serves to conceal these hard “facts.” If that is the light shone by a “coloniality of power” paradigm, I could well do without it. The third contribution in this section, by Monique Milia-Marie-Luce, is a rather superficial comparison between Puerto Ricans in the United States and, again, Antilleans in France. Strangely, there is no chapter in this section on Caribbean migrants in the United Kingdom or the United States.

The next part deals with “identities, countercultures, and ethnic resilience.” The choice of contributions is arbitrary. The good news is that the three chapters are all interesting. Elizabeth Aranda discusses the southward migration of American Puerto Ricans to Florida, where they find a more culturally and ethnically welcoming environment. Lisa Maya Knauer compares the trajectories of Cuban rumba in New York and Havana, demonstrating how participants in both places not only find joy in rumba (and santería), but also use it to affirm their identity in both places, seldom to the enthusiasm of the authorities. Livio Sansone reports on the emergence of a transnational Afro-Surinamese popular culture. For those who are familiar with his work, there is not much new here, but otherwise the chapter, mainly based on his research in the early 1990s, is insightful.

The final section is presented under the heading “Incorporation, Entrepreneurship, and Household Strategies” and includes three contributions, again all of interest but arbitrarily chosen. John R. Logan and Wenquan Zhang’s demographic and socioeconomic profiling of the Cuban and Dominican communities in New York and Miami, set against some general statistics of the increasingly heterogeneous U.S. Latino population, contrasts with the editors’ contribution in its ample use of hard empirical data. Laura Oso Casas presents a case study of Dominican female migrants in Spain and their struggle to maintain families back home at high personal cost. The book ends with an elegant chapter by Mary Chamberlain on the central place of kinship in West Indian transnational narratives. It struck me that the functioning of kinship is consistently discussed as an asset, even as the high incidence of female-headed households all over the Black Atlantic may suggest otherwise.

Caribbean Migration to Western Europe and the United States presents a mixed bag of articles, most of them of interest, but as an ensemble it has an arbitrary character. One would have liked the reviewers to worry a bit
less about their preferred paradigm and more about bringing coherence to this volume which as it is only provides partial insights into the fascinating complexity of Caribbean migrations.


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

*Home Cooking in the Global Village: Caribbean Food from Buccaneers to Ecotourists* is about Belize – its foodways and its experiences during its time as a colony and after its belated independence from Britain in 1981. Particular attention is paid to class, ethnic, and national identities expressed in food choices and consumption patterns. This clarification is necessary at the outset because Belize is mentioned nowhere in the book’s title. And although the subtitle refers to “Caribbean food,” both of the book’s maps omit most island nations of the Caribbean. Also, the book’s focus is not comparative but chronological, proceeding from the premise that an examination of Belize will be revealing for all readers: “My goal here is to show that the Caribbean is also like every other part of the world – simultaneously local, distinct and individual, and typical, global and anonymous” (p. 11).

Wilk excels as a raconteur – consistency of argument is not the strong point of the book. Many points are made, always with effusive enthusiasm. The personal anecdotes are particularly effective at setting the tone of inquiry. The humorous fruitlessness of Wilk’s attempt to find “Belizean food” upon his arrival in Belize in 1973 should probably be treated as an ur-story that largely motivates the ruminations driving the narrative. By the 1990s, the attitude of many Belizeans had changed, and the presentation of genuinely local foods, showcasing the uniqueness of Belizean tastes, was openly valued. This is one topic of the book. Another memorable vignette entails the difficulty of stimulating local agricultural production by means of foreign aid and imported expertise.
The book can best be described as a number of snapshots that highlight issues surrounding food consumption and production in Belize. While each of the sections is compelling on its own, the chronological framework seemed to be used primarily as a device to order the chapters. This reader wished that more attention had been placed on the way that historical processes detailed in earlier chapters shaped subsequent periods. The complexities and contradictions attending colonialism, extractivism, class and ethnic group formation, and underdevelopment were often discussed as if all could be encompassed by the concept of globalization, conceived primarily as “the entangling of local and global, specific and general” (p. 69) rather than as a historical process.

The historical narrative begins in Chapter 3 with the early years of European extractive industries, including piracy, on the eastern side of the Yucatan and the Bay of Honduras in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although the buccaneers gained fame as pirates, hunting was of paramount interest among them. Wilk points out that they actually grew some local vegetable foods and upheld standards of taste learned in Europe as they forged a working fellowship based on male bonding. Stored starch and meats, often imported or prepared for long storage through preserving or pickling, formed the privileged portion of their diet, while local foods were downplayed.

Chapter 4, “Slaves, Masters and Mahogany,” convincingly argues that storable food, including canned goods imported from the metropole, constituted the first “global diet.” While such goods were consumed by many people around the world, they were absolutely essential for logging and mining enterprises. Although superficially backward and rustic, extractivist enterprises that furnished natural resources essential to the industrial machine were themselves powered by mass production in the form of the food items consumed by their workers.

Chapters 5 and 6 are largely devoted to detailing the structure of social class in the colony, including strategies of merchants and importers during the colonial period. Here a reading of newspapers, especially advertisements, forms the backbone of the material that Wilk unearthed, but he also introduces other sources of interest, such as trade statistics and restaurant menus. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Belizean society had assumed a recognizable profile in which the alignments of slaves, Whites, and free Coloreds overrode other existing identities and became reflected through the prism of consumption. In this case Creole foods could have become a kind of “lingua franca,” consumed by all in the colony – only Wilk wants to contest this in favor of a view that sees the cuisine of all Belizeans of whatever class as being formed through a process of creolization (p. 125).

Chapter 7 takes a step back and uses the case of Belize to reflect on the difficulties and pitfalls of developing food autonomy within a colonial context and also considers the inevitable entanglements of culture and tastes
in the agitation for political independence. The book’s historical overview concludes, in Chapter 8, with a look at the way that outmigration and black nationalism, in particular, have helped to provide angles of vision from which the uniqueness of Belize is appealingly portrayed by a Belizean community that increasingly resides outside the country, particularly in the United States. As a discourse of cultural pride takes hold at home and abroad it serves as a basis for both nostalgia among migrants and the marketing of Belize as a tourist destination, as well as a stimulus for the production of a greater variety of local Belizean brands. Wilk says that increasingly Belizeans refer to their land as “The Jewel.” The idea of a Belizean restaurant is no longer an anomaly.

The material covered in this book is extensive and illustrative rather than exhaustive. In order to provide a framework for the material, different aspects of experience are stressed, so that at times the arguments appear to be a bit ad hoc. For instance, on page 43, in arguing for taste as a powerful conveyor of European values in the New World, the case is made that “Taste is visceral, embedded in bodily experiences from childhood. While people have some control over it and can cultivate new tastes, they are more often subject to being ruled by their preferences and pleasures” (p. 43). Later, in arguing for the changes wrought within colonial society, Wilk takes the opposite tack: “the connection between culture and food, while deep, is very malleable and changeable. It is not fixed by biology, or even early upbringing. Through our lives we can change our tastes, and give up one diet for another” (p. 71). From the foregoing, it is not clear just what role could not be ascribed to taste if the author so chose.

The book will appeal to readers looking for a range of intriguing insights on the political economy of food and development, the meanings of food and its changing interconnection with national, class, and ethnic identities, as well as the implications that food has for other aspects of existence, which we can broadly call “foodways.” There are entertaining footnotes about a range of subjects, from the origin of the “slow food movement” to parrot-tongue pie and snipe hunting, all penned in what might be called vintage Wilk style. Belize is a small place: the official web site of its national government estimates the country’s population at 300,000.1 This book, then, serves as brief that small size is no barrier to intricacy and interest as far as food is concerned.


EDWARD PAULINO
Department of History/Interdisciplinary Studies Program
CUNY/John Jay College
New York NY 10019, U.S.A.
<edpaulino@jjay.cuny.edu>

At the beginning of Dead Man in Paradise, J.B. Mackinnon, who is in the Dominican Republic to learn who murdered his uncle Father James Arthur (Arturo) MacKinnon in 1965, interviews a Father Joe McGuckin and makes an insightful observation. Like Arturo, Father Joe is an elderly Canadian, and like the murdered priest he was a member of the Scarboro Missions. In referring to the unsolved murder of his friend and the society that witnessed his friend’s death, he says, “All these people who died, and all these killers still alive. There must be neighborhoods where informers live next door to the families of their victims, or the old Trujillistas live next door to the old rebels. How can people live like that?” (p. 64). This transgenerational indifference to justice confounded Mackinnon, but the truth behind his uncle’s death lay in answering two important questions: Who killed Arturo in the town of Monte Plata, which lies north of the capital city of Santo Domingo? And why was he murdered?

To be in the Dominican Republic in the summer of 1965 was to experience the culmination of nearly sixty years of American influence. For thirty years the dictator Rafael L. Trujillo ruled the country as his personal fiefdom with the support of the U.S. government. His assassination in May 1961 set off a series of events: a short-lived democratic government, its overthrow by a military coup d’état, and then a popular uprising which plunged the capital into civil war four years later. Fear of another Cuba at the height of the Cold War motivated President Johnson to send 40,000 U.S. Marines into the Dominican Republic to “save American lives.” Add to this picture Arturo, a passionate working-class Canadian priest-for-the-poor outraged at the poverty and injustice he witnessed; a town whose elites not only had connections with senior conservative military leaders governing the country at the time, but also considered the defense and empowerment of poor people subversive (which during those days was code for communism); and finally, a Dominican officer who was given a Mafiosi order he couldn’t refuse. The result: the making of a political conspiracy worthy of a Grisham novel. Thus, in his journalistic quest to find his uncle’s murderer(s), Mackinnon comes face-to-face with a culture and legacy of impunity and discovers along the
way just how difficult it is to find the truth, which in the Dominican Republic “travels the way of the serpent” (p. 62). Although the truth turns out to be more complex than he originally thought, Mackinnon has (thankfully for us) written a riveting and compelling account – a combination Caribbean who-dunit, memoir, and travelogue. His quest to discover the real story behind his uncle’s murder, his travels in the Dominican Republic, and his keen eye for observation combine to give readers a fresh account of an otherwise relatively obscure event in Dominican history.

Some readers might be asking: “But why should we care about this dead priest? So many other people lost their lives during the tumultuous years preceding, during, and following the 1965 U.S. invasion – why is he so important?” What Arturo represents is a voice that speaks beyond the grave, underscoring perhaps the most jarring aspect of this memoir of memory: the lack of soul cleansing in Dominican society in the aftermath of these events. Not just with this murder, but with a string of crimes that have not been solved and for which its perpetrators have not been brought to justice. From the crimes of Trujillo, such as the 1937 Haitian Massacre, to the little “Dirty War” under the Balaguer regime (the so-called semidictatorship) in the 1970s, perpetrators, like those who ordered the murder of Father Arturo, were never punished for their actions. Even more disturbing, many went on to hold positions of political and economic power, even to this day.

As with any good piece of journalistic writing that utilizes ethnography, the Dominican voices in this story illuminate and anchor the narrative. For example, the account of the house-to-house fighting and savagery that took place during the 1965 U.S. invasion by Narciso Isa Conde, perhaps the most famous living Dominican leftist of that era, is as timely as ever. In light of the current American battlefronts in Iraq and Afghanistan, these interviews remind us of a long-neglected history of insurgency and counterinsurgency that lies outside the romanticized and mainstream American perception of the Dominican Republic.

The book does have minor flaws. For example, the national meal (known as the “flag,” la bandera nacional) is rice, beans, and meat, not “stew with rice and salad” (p. 15). And the current political party in office is the Partido de la Liberación Dominicana, not the “Democratic Liberation Party” (p. 108).

Father Joe McGuckin, the Scarboro priest who knew Arturo, told Mackinnon (p. 64), “That’s the tendency of the rich, the powerful – to kill a person, and to think they’ll become irrelevant. Spill some blood. But if the people keep it alive, the blood never dries. It never dries.” Thanks to J.B. Mackinnon the searing blood of those forgotten continues to run liquefied like a mighty lava stream from innumerable active volcanoes.

MICHAEL R. HALL
Department of History
Armstrong Atlantic State University
Savannah GA 31419, U.S.A.
<michael.hall@armstrong.edu>

The relocation of 757 European Jews to Sosúa, an agrarian settlement on the northern coast of the Dominican Republic, during World War II is a “little-known chapter in the history of the Holocaust” (p. xii). In Tropical Zion, historian Allen Wells provides students and scholars with a well-written, keenly researched account that documents not only the successful struggle of those Jews to survive and adapt to a new lifestyle in the tropics, but also the motives of U.S. and Dominican government officials, specifically U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt and Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, to support the venture. The book also highlights the efforts of Jewish relief agencies, namely the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and the Dominican Republic Resettlement Association (DORSA), to facilitate the venture. Although the salvation of 757 Jews pales in comparison to the thousands of Jews who fled to the Americas and the millions of Jews exterminated by Nazi Germany during World War II, for those Jews who escaped the Holocaust and made their way to the Dominican Republic it represented salvation. Joe Benjamin, one of Sosúa’s Jews interviewed by Wells, unequivocally stated that the project served its purpose: “It saved lives” (p. 354).

Wells, a professor at Bowdoin College, began his interest in the Jewish community in the Dominican Republic at an early age. His father, Heinrich Wasservogel (who subsequently changed his name to Henry Wells after getting married in the United States because his wife contended that his name was “ridiculous”) was an Austrian Jew who lived in Sosúa from 1940 to 1947 (p. 340). Wells began to seriously contemplate a study of the Jewish community in Sosúa after visiting the Dominican Republic with his parents in 1999. His seven-year-long research project included numerous interviews of the Jews who relocated to the Dominican Republic, including his father, and extensive research in Dominican and American archives. The result is a highly readable study that should be of interest to scholars of U.S. foreign relations, Jewish history, Latin American history, immigration studies, and the Holocaust.

The motivation for the European Jews and Jewish relief agencies in Europe and the United States to seek a refuge for European Jews in the period...
leading up to World War II and during the war is obvious. Less obvious, however, are the motives that led the American and Dominican governments to back the plan. Wells provides a competent analysis of the motives behind support of the project by Trujillo and Roosevelt.

Trujillo, by most accounts a brutal and corrupt authoritarian dictator, was infamous for his intolerance of political opposition in the Dominican Republic. The extent of his “ruthless mistreatment” of the thousands of Haitian cane cutters living in the Dominican Republic was fully revealed in 1937 when he allowed the butchering of 12,000 Haitians within his borders (p. xx). Trujillo’s support of the Jewish resettlement plan was partially an attempt to portray himself as a benevolent leader and to reestablish good relations with the United States. It was also, Wells contends, a plan to “whiten the Dominican race” and dilute the African footprint on Dominican society (p. xxii). Thus, although the dictator’s motives were less than altruistic, they did benefit Jews fleeing the Holocaust. In addition, Trujillo donated 26,000 hectares of land (which he had purchased from the United Fruit Company for $50,000 in 1938) to establish the settlement. Significantly, “only a small portion of the land proved suitable for agriculture” (p. 157).

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of Wells’s study is the evaluation of Roosevelt’s motives for supporting the resettlement program. In 1880, there were 250,000 Jews in the United States; by 1925, the number was over 4 million. During the 1930s, bowing to public pressure, the Roosevelt administration refused to increase the immigration quota for European Jews. Therefore, in July 1938, to deflect criticism of restrictive U.S. immigration policies, Roosevelt convened a conference in Évian, France, on the plight of refugees from Nazi Germany. Of the thirty-two nations that sent representatives, the Dominican Republic was the only one that “agreed to open its doors to those fleeing Nazism” (p. xxii). The Dominican Republic, a nation of 1.5 million people at the time, promised to receive up to 100,000 European refugees. Wells argues that Roosevelt “understood that a successful Sosúa would deflect attention away from America’s restrictive immigration policy” (p. xxiv).

After the war, more than half of the Jewish settlers, including Wells’s father, took advantage of easier American immigration requirements and relocated to the United States. The remaining Jews in Sosúa nevertheless were able to establish a viable agricultural community and continued to expand production of dairy products that were marketed throughout the Dominican Republic. The highest quality cheese and butter on the island was sold under the Productos Sosúa label. According to Wells, the small agricultural settlement in the Dominican Republic represented a “Zion in the tropics for Jews who yearned for places they could call and make their own” (p. xxxi).
As the title promises, and as Catharine Stimpson’s foreword and Gina Ulysse’s introduction underline, this book is an auto-ethnography that combines a study of Informal Commercial Importers (ICIs) in Jamaica’s capital city with reflections on the positionality of the American-trained black Haitian female ethnographer and the self-making strategies of both author and informants. The analysis deconstructs the derogatory stereotype of ICIs and the category of “native” ethnographer and highlights ICIs as socioeconomic players in a global market, going through cracks in the capitalist world-system.

Following Stimpson’s foreword and Ulysse’s acknowledgments, the book comprises an introduction, seven chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction scopes the study, based on fieldwork in the 1990s for an actor-oriented doctoral thesis, “from a reflexive feminist perspective” (p. 5), at the University of Michigan. Chapter 1 explores the dichotomy of uptown elite white “ladies” and downtown lower-class black “women” in Kingston, rooted in the history of racialized colonial plantation slavery. ICIs, though stereotyped as lower-class black women, cross-cut these categories and are “Downtown Ladies” and “class trouble” (p. 15). Chapter 2 looks at the history of the Jamaican internal marketing system, originating in the trading of provision-ground produce by slaves and continuing after emancipation through female higgler (intermediaries). Informal commercial importing grew out of this background in the context of a global economic recession and local political constraints in the 1970s and regulation of ICIs in the 1980s.

Chapter 3 is an “auto-ethnographic quilt” telling “a nonlinear, polyrhythmic story” that “will de-essentialize the black female subject,” “pluralize the native,” and deconstruct the “savage slot” by positioning the author in relation to ICIs (pp. 98-99) in terms of color, class, and gender. In Chapter 4, this perspective nuances the differences among ICIs. Chapter 5 focuses on the market arcade in relation to ethnicities, gang violence, male public space, and class-specific territories in the city. Chapter 6 takes the reader, along with the author and ICIs, on a shopping trip to Miami and examines the impact on ICIs of the drugs trafficking that is an outcome of neoliberal
globalization. This chapter also shows ICIs as “black females maneuvering in a ‘fragmented globality’ that historically favored the North” (p. 210) and as actors in a moral economy with a personal sense of history. Chapter 7 explores self-making through style, dress, shoes, and hair in relation to ICIs, dancehall, and the ethnographer in contexts of color, class, and gender. The concluding “Brawta,” a concept borrowed from higgler indicating a “little extra something” (p. 251), wraps up the story of ICIs as “lower-class females confronting and outmaneuvering the state, big business, and civil society to make a life for themselves” (p. 251) and reflects on their futures in Jamaica.

However, having myself worked with higglers and ICIs as part of a wider ethnography of Jamaican culture (Besson 1974, 1998, 2002, 2003, 2007) and having written a reflexive preface to my monograph (2002: xxi-xxxi), I found several disconnections with the ethnography of Jamaica. Despite ICIs and their “bend down” plazas (p. 80) evolving from higglering, there is little in the book about the links among ICIs and higglers (who contrary to Ulysse’s contention are not disappearing), or between the urban arcade and the enduring network of rural marketplaces throughout Jamaica. As I have studied (1969-2009) the Falmouth marketplace, Jamaica’s largest rural market established by slaves that has burgeoned as a “bend down market” attracting ICIs since the 1980s, I was puzzled to find only brief reference to this market which is nevertheless significant to ICIs (pp. 137-38). I was also surprised to read the oversimplified description of Falmouth market (which Ulysse apparently did not visit) as a “wholesale market” (p. 138). The statement that Falmouth market closed in 1997 (p. 137) is puzzling, since it was thriving when I revisited it up to 2009. Likewise the map of Jamaica showing a single road from Kingston to Falmouth (p. 161) evokes no comment by Ulysse. My own long-term study of Jamaican marketing is not mentioned despite her long, uncontextualized quotation from my book (2002) on “partners” in a footnote (pp. 277-78, note 15).

The prominence of females among higglers and ICIs needs more rigorous exploration (see Besson 1998, 2002, 2003), given Ulysse’s contradictory assertions that this role results from African retention and socioeconomic change in Jamaica (pp. 66-67), and there is no mention of the links between slave marketing and gendered cognatic descent. In addition, despite Sidney Mintz’s extensive pioneering research on the Jamaican (and Haitian) marketing system since 1955, there is little reference to his research; instead, works by Margaret Fisher Katzin (1959) and Victoria Durant-Gonzalez (1976) are portrayed as the pioneering studies. There is no reference to Huon Wardle’s ethnography of street life, dislocation, globalization, and gender in the same area of Kingston (Wardle 2000, 2005, 2006) and the significance of the cell phone (p. 176) for social networking (Horst & Miller 2005) is overlooked.

As Ulysse highlights her own positionality and asserts that “Generally, reflexivity is not a common practice among Caribbean ethnographers” (p.
I found it puzzling that she makes no reference to my own reflexive preface (Besson 2002) which addresses this as a U.K.-trained Jamaican anthropologist. Likewise, given her repeated positioning of other anthropologists as black or white, I was mystified to be referred to simply as “anthropologist Jean Besson” (p. 278, note 20) as I emphasized my own positional identity as a Colored Jamaican in my preface. In addition, Ulysse’s discussion of Whites and White Jamaicans in contrast to Jamaica Whites is unclear (p. 35).

REFERENCES


At first glance, the title of Natacha Giafferi’s book Une ethnologue à Port-au-Prince (An anthropologist in Port-au-Prince) seems to suggest a reflexive analysis of the author’s fieldwork in the capital of Haiti. Actually, as indicated by the subtitle, the book provides an analysis of the question of color and the competition for socioracial ranking in Port-au-Prince. The book is a welcome contribution to an anthropology of Haiti which lately has become more and more focused on the capital city in contrast to the anthropological tradition of studying the Haitian countryside (see, for example, Kovats-Bernat 2006). Given Giafferi’s research goals, the choice of the capital was primary, Port-au-Prince being par excellence a place of social competition. Moreover, in the countryside, apart from the southern regions of the country where mixed-race peasants try to maintain their “racial heritage,” the phenotypical differences are not meaningful. According to Giafferi, color differences are relevant there only for aesthetic or spiritual reasons. Land management and control of genealogies are primary in the social and economic organization of the rural communities. In addition to the analysis of the question of color in the capital, the book proposes an anthropological perspective, though an overly cursory one, on the evolution of the occupation of urban public space due to the rural migrations following the fall of Jean-Claude Duvalier. It describes how Port-au-Prince became “an immense human quagmire where equality is accomplished at a bottom level” (p. 109) where Haitians belonging to different social class backgrounds now live though in different neighborhoods.
Giafferi’s central thesis is that despite a political history that encouraged the promotion and access to political power of either Mulattos or black groups, there has been no change over time in the racial perceptions of each other that Port-au-Princians have today. In that sense Giafferi argues against the idea that the political question of color had disappeared in 1986 with the fall of Jean-Claude Duvalier and continued to survive only at the level of private relationships. On a theoretical level she defends a cultural position in opposition to the racial or social approaches that prevailed in the analysis of, first, the prejudice of color (colorisme in French) and second, the ideology of color (the political use of the prejudice of color) in Haiti. The persistence of the prejudice of color conceals a powerful symbolic system that the usual historical classist approaches have not evaluated.

The book analyzes the history of the prejudice of color starting with the edifying classification and nomenclature of Moreau de Saint-Méry who designed a racial classification based on the percentage of “black” and “white” blood an individual has, all Haitians having 128 units of “black” and/or “white” blood depending on their origins. In this classification, a pure white person has 128 units of “white blood” while a pure black person has 128 units of “black blood,” and any mixed-race individual is defined by a term which refers to the percentage of “black blood.” Giafferi argues that if changes in political organization from slavery to republicanism, dictatorship, and democracy have not affected racial perceptions, the current classification and terminology refer less to a biological reality than to a social and cultural one. The category of color no longer indicates a supposed biological percentage of “white” and “black” blood but refers rather to one’s physical characteristics, moral qualities, and social and cultural position. Drawing on analyses of Jean Baudrillard and Pierre Bourdieu regarding the social perception and construction of the body (p. 139), Giafferi argues that the postcolonial Haitian body belongs to what Baudrillard has called “a functional aesthetics” according to which “the skin [becomes] the transparent film which vitrifies the body” (Baudrillard 1976:155, 162). The body is, as Bourdieu framed it so well, “a language by which one is spoken to rather than one which we speak about” (Bourdieu 1977:51).

The current nomenclature is thus a “forest of signs” that puts on stage the history of Haiti. It includes the categories of Mulatto – light, red, white, or yellow – grimauds, chabins, Blacks, albinos, Whites, and Orientals. Giafferi analyzes the history of each category, the physical characteristics it defines, the positive or negative moral values associated with it, and its gender connotation. She stresses the subtleties and differences in the terminology according to the social and cultural position of the interlocutor. Each category of color refers to the biological, cultural, and social history of the individual which binds within it the social, religious, and political history of Haiti. For all these reasons the prejudice of color can only endure.

SUSAN KWOSEK
Department of History
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb IL 60115, U.S.A.
<skwosek@niu.edu>

Haitian Vodou: Spirit, Myth, and Reality is notable for containing essays written solely by Haitian academics, some of whom, as practitioners of Vodou, are able to offer an insider’s perspective on the role of the religion in Haitian daily life and culture. Included in the volume are a discussion of the concept of personhood as it is understood in the Vodou worldview by Guerin Montilus; the application of the principles of quantum physics as a lens through which to view Vodou ontology by Reginald Crosley; an exploration of the influence of Vodou on Haitian collective memory and history by Patrick Bellegarde-Smith; a discussion of the roles of teacher and student within the informal structure of Vodou pedagogy by Claudine Michel; an overview of the genres and customary functions of Vodou music by Gerdes Fleurant; the influence of Vodou ideology on peasant protest music by Renald Clerisme; insights from ten female priests of Vodou on spirituality, sexuality, and gender by Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, Claudine Michel, and Marlene Racine-Toussaint; a discussion of Vodou aesthetics by Marc Christophe; an exegesis of Marasa (twin) symbolism in Lilas Desquiron’s 1990 novel, Les chemins de Loco-Miroir, by Florence Bellande-Robertson; and a discussion of methods of holistic medicine and herbalism in Vodou culture by Max Beauvoir. While some of the essays are invaluable for their...
insights and/or fresh perspectives – Michel’s discussion of the educational ethos of Vodou, Beauvoir’s explication of medicinal herbalism in Vodou, the exposition of women’s voices in Vodou by Bellegarde-Smith, Michel, and Racine-Toussaint – others appear fundamentally flawed or underdeveloped.

Montilus’s credibility is undermined in his examination of personhood in Vodou by his written approach which effectively denies the personhood of his research participants. He “addresses the question of personhood based on his personal experience” (p. 6) in a number of West African and Haitian societies, yet never acknowledges any individual or group by name, location, or date, leaving readers only a bland composite (“they”) that is apparently the product of his own experiences unsubstantiated and unaffirmed by any of the individuals on which he based his understanding of Vodou personhood. Additionally, he derives much of his analysis from linguistic comparisons between Haitian Creole, inherited French phrases still in use in Haiti, and a number of West African languages, yet he fails to cite the sources of his linguistic conclusions or, if the linguistic deductions are his own, to explicate his methods.

Other essays demonstrate a similar lack of citation and evidentiary support. Bellegarde-Smith makes a number of unsubstantiated assertions such as “Haiti remains the most Africanized country in the Caribbean” (p. 21) apparently based on the number of slaves in Saint-Domingue born in Africa at the time of the Haitian Revolution, but with no basis for the claim that the country is highly “Africanized” today. He also states that “the evidence surrounding the role of Vodou in the Haitian Revolution and in the history of the nation’s early years is incontrovertible” (p. 25) and that “historians are slowly recognizing the ideological significance of Vodou in the war of liberation at the end of the eighteenth century, in the guerilla warfare against the United States Marine Corps during the years of the American occupation of Haiti in the 1920s, and in the overthrow of the Duvalier dynastic dictatorship in the mid-1980s” (p. 29), yet fails to explain what evidence exists and which historians have been swayed by it. His statements that Vodou is a “creole religion” while Santería and Candomblé are “clearly more syncretic” (p. 26) are not only unexplicated but also inconsistent with the lament that he and his co-editor Michel made earlier that a “devastating blow came with the imposition of the concept of syncretism, as if not all human systems demonstrated borrowing and adaptations and as if Africans were unable to produce an original thought” (p. xxiv). That he should apply this same “devastating” analytical concept to two other Afro-Caribbean religions is extremely capricious.

In addition to a paucity of evidence for certain claims, a major issue throughout the volume is the conflation of a number of West and Central African ethnic groups into a mythical “African” identity. Michel asserts that Vodou, with its focus on conflict resolution within the family, uses “African spirituality” (p. 35) to help assure the family’s survival. She also maintains that religious and moral principles in Haiti “are still transmitted in the African
style” (p. 36) and that the Vodou family is “immersed in the values emanating from the African ethos” (pp. 41-42). Michel, Bellegarde-Smith, and Racine-Toussaint likewise state that Vodou is “deeply rooted in traditional African systems” (p. 73). Given the number of indigenous ethnic groups in Africa and the diversity between them, these scholars would have been better served by naming the particular groups and the specific aspects of their sociospiritual systems that were disseminated to Haitian Vodou and which remain observable today. Significantly missing from this invented “African” identity is any acknowledgement of the Central African societies which were already Catholic by the time of the Atlantic slave trade and from which a segment of the slave population arrived in Haiti having converted to Catholicism by choice in their homelands. By the omission of data such as this, several authors are able to create fictitious adversarial dichotomies between the categories of African/European, good/evil, and authentic/imposed.

Although Haitian Vodou contains valuable information and fresh insight into many aspects of a much-maligned religion, this is nearly obfuscated beneath the blatant sociopolitical agenda of several of the volume’s authors. Although the contributions of various African ethnic groups to Vodou have, in the past, been subordinated to its Catholic/European components, in many ways the scholars included in this collection of essays go too far in the opposite direction in their attempts to rectify the incorrect assertions of earlier academics. By ignoring these European-derived contributions to Vodou and overprivileging a romantic “African” ethos, their analyses of Vodou remain unbalanced and provide a view of Haitians and Haitian Vodou that is not necessarily any more accurate than the Eurocentric analyses of the past.


NADINE FERNANDEZ
Central New York Center
SUNY Empire State College
East Syracuse NY 13057-1058, U.S.A.
<Nadine.Fernandez@esc.edu>

In this clear and concisely written ethnography, Adrian Hearn examines grass-roots community-based initiatives in Cuba and their relationship to the Cuban state and international development agencies. His work speaks...
to both anthropology and development studies, as he explores how the economic crisis of the 1990s forced the Cuban state to become more open to community-based groups and projects. Furthermore, the state has attempted to incorporate community efforts into official state-sponsored programs through urban planning institutions. Hearn argues that over the last decade community groups have strengthened their ability to represent themselves, and he argues that understanding their broadening capacities is key to grasping the character and potentials of civil society in Cuba. Theoretically he positions his work within the debate about whether or not social capital, as a resource, can help disadvantaged communities generate new opportunities. His work extends this discussion by exploring how local initiatives are dependent on the integration of different dimensions of social capital. In some of the community projects he analyzes, the partnerships with the state brought the groups recognition and empowerment, while in others the state-community engagements transformed “locally respected participatory associations into socially disconnected platforms for accomplishing instrumental, short-term objectives with little administrative autonomy” (p. 11). Hearn’s balanced account of the possibilities and limitations of these state-grass-roots collaborations and foreign NGO partnerships is among the book’s strengths.

Many of the local grass-roots initiatives he explores are by community-based Afro-Cuban religious associations. Interestingly, while Afro-Cuban religions figure prominently within the structure of his argument, he provides little background information on these religious practices. Readers should be clear that the book is not about Afro-Cuban religions as belief systems, but rather about religious groups as an expression of civil society and a vehicle for grass-roots community development. That said, Hearn does provide an excellent examination of the often problematic relationship between Afro-Cuban religions and the growing tourism market. Foreign tourists are drawn to the “exotic” religious traditions and many people both on and off the island have criticized the tendency to commercialize these religious practices. Some of the community groups Hearn discusses struggle with the tensions between, on the one hand, protecting and serving local interests and community needs, and on the other catering to foreign tourists as a means of earning much-needed hard currency. As tourism continues to fuel the Cuban economy, the marketing of Afro-Cuban culture is an essential issue. Hearn’s book provides a nuanced perspective on difficulties of maintaining the integrity of these religious practices while meeting the interests of tourists.

While Hearn reflects on the commercialization of these religious practices, he might have done more to problematize the “exotic” appeal that these traditions have for foreign tourists in the context of global imaginings of blackness. The relationship of some of these projects to the growing tourism market on the island could have been more fully explored. It is fascinating that these still “marginal” barrios can now draw on their “blackness” as
a source of authenticity which can attract foreign attention and potentially money. The symbolic connotations of blackness as constructed both locally and globally and the strong appeal the Afro-Cuban cultural practices have for international audiences present a rich confluence of issues only hinted at in this book.

With his prominent focus on community-based projects involving Afro-Cuban religions, it is interesting that Hearn only very briefly touches on issues of race relations and racism on the island (pp. 54-56). In one sense tourism has brought a positive re-engagement with Afro-Cuban traditions that have at times in Cuban history been banned and perceived as atavistic, yet in another sense this growing marketability is very much based on the “otherness” of these practices. Hearn’s work leaves us wondering about the implications these new dynamics may have for race relations as a lived reality on the island, as well as for constructions of national identity and Cubanness (cubanidad). Many of the community projects he discusses are based in poor and socially marginal, predominantly black barrios. By not directly addressing the racial component, we lose some of the richness and complexity of these projects and the larger implications they may have for community development and potentially for civic mobilizations by racial groups on the island.

The book also provides an insider’s perspective on the challenges foreign NGOs face in dealing with complex, bureaucratic state agencies. Again, in this regard Hearn explores successful partnerships and others that were more problematic. His even-handed presentation provides insights into how clashing interpretations of civil society and the role of the state can create obstacles for foreign NGOs working in Cuba, while he also highlights successful strategies used by some development agencies.

Overall, the strength of the book lies in Hearn’s thorough and balanced account of numerous grass-roots initiatives on the island, and their relationship to the state and to foreign NGOs. Readers interested in development issues will be well served by the clarity of his argument about civil society and community-based projects. Even readers with little background knowledge of the island will find Hearn’s work accessible and engaging.
“Mek Some Noise”: Gospel Music and the Ethics of Style in Trinidad.

DANIEL A. SEGAL
Center for Social Inquiry
Pitzer College
Claremont CA 91711, U.S.A.
<dan_segal@pitzer.edu>

“Mek Some Noise” examines the relationship between a particular segment of Protestantism in Trinidad and various musics that are performed in Trinidad to profess and promote the Christian Gospel.

The segment of Protestantism that is of concern to Rommen is known in Trinidad as “Full Gospel” Christianity. This term refers to Pentecostal and Baptist churches that are loosely affiliated with each other by virtue of membership in a common association. Membership in this association entails, in effect, a mutual recognition of legitimacy among member churches. Trinidad’s Spiritual Baptists, Rommen reports, are seen as too syncretic to belong (due to perceived connections to African religious traditions), while Presbyterians, Anglicans, and Roman Catholics are seen as too “lax” (pp. 17-18).

Two musics are of concern to Rommen.

The first are the “staples” of worship services at Full Gospel churches (p. 19). These are drawn from a range of Protestant musical traditions, including both nineteenth-century Wesleyan hymns and post-1970s North American gospel musics. What is significant for his analysis is that, with few exceptions, these musics share a nonlocal identity – and more specifically, an identity that is broadly metropolitan, whether English or U.S. American.

The second are those that are performed primarily in concert settings, rather than worship services. These include gospelypso, gospel dancehall, and the Jehovah’s music (or jamoo) of the Trinidadian composer and performer Ras Shorty I (who performed as Lord Shorty, prior to his spiritual conversion). All bear an identity that is nonmetropolitan and local (whether of Trinidad or the Caribbean). More specifically, gospelypso represents the project of using the musics associated with Trinidadian Carnival to extol the Gospel, while gospel dancehall represents a parallel use of Jamaican dancehall music, and Ras Shorty’s jamoo represents what might best be described as an insistent do-it-yourself localism, in regard to proclaiming the Gospel.

Rommens speaks of all of these musics, of both the nonlocal and local groupings, as instances of “gospel music,” in the sense that they all proclaim the Gospel. The interpretive project is to make sense of the complementary
distribution of the two broad groupings of gospel musics, between the two social contexts of worship services and concerts.

Rommen argues – persuasively, in my judgment – that the gospel musics that bear a nonlocal and metropolitan identity are sound-symbols of both the unity of all believers and other-worldly purity. These musics represent all believers because their sociogeographic identities index the large supplement of believers beyond the local. By standing for the absent, they stand for the whole; and by standing for the whole, they stand, as well, for its unity – that is, for the unity of the church understood as the totality of all believers. These musics thus represent the unity and harmony that believers expect from the church, even as they experience discord both within and between Full Gospel congregations locally – as they inevitably do. In addition, as musics identified with sites both distant from and antithetical to the local, these musics are heard as antitheses to local musics, which are associated with sinful “bacchanal” (specifically, licentiousness and the use of both alcohol and drugs). These nonlocal gospel musics thus represent the ideal of other-worldly purity, as well as the ideal of unity and harmony. For this cluster of reasons, these nonlocal gospel musics are embraced as the appropriate ones for worship services, that is, as the appropriate musics to be performed and heard inside Full Gospel churches.

The meanings of the second broad grouping of gospel musics – gospelpsyso, dancehall gospel, and jamoo – are in many ways the mirror image of the meanings of musics of worship services. The former are local in identity and are registered, more specifically, as variants of established local and secular musical genres. As a result, the leaders and stalwarts of Full Gospel churches hear these local-identified gospel musics as too sinful and worldly to be performed inside their churches, even though their lyrics proclaim the Gospel and preach against sinful conduct. Yet, despite being barred from Full Gospel churches, these local gospel musics are heard – to the consternation of the strictest Full Gospel ears – as doing the important work of reaching outward to promote the Gospel among those who have not yet been brought into the church. So too, these musics are at once heard and valued as repudiations of the derogation of the local by dominant, “colonialist” discourses.

Rommen shows, in short, that the division and distribution of gospel musics is structured by an interplay of two semiotic distinctions: local/nonlocal and worldly/other-worldly. Fused together, these distinctions produce two broad groupings of gospel musics, each of which is valued by believers, albeit in different and irreconcilable ways (p. 151). In the absence of any synthesis of the different values they represent, the two groupings are performed in complementary contexts: worship services and concerts.

Generally speaking, ethnomusicology as a field of inquiry attracts people who are themselves accomplished musicians, and on this basis, many ethno-
musicologists end up as participants in the musical activities they study. This is the case for Rommen, who reports that he performed on guitar at many of the events he discusses in his text. Importantly, however, these events were religious as well as musical, and while such insider-participation by an ethnographer is a commonplace in studies of music, it is anything but common in studies of religion. This is in part because the secular character of modern scholarship limits scholars from assuming the subject position of a believer, even if they are religious; and it is in part because entering another religion is a highly constrained act in our world, while entering another music is, by contrast, a widely encouraged mode of “cultural appreciation.”

The relevant point here is that as an ethnographic study of religion, Rommen’s book is unusual for how much it speaks from an insider’s vantage. The pay-off is that Rommen’s accounts are unusually fine-grained, even intimate. At the same time, a prominent weakness of the book is that Rommen sticks too exclusively to an insider’s vantage and does not do enough to communicate across difference. In discussing the musical staples of Full Gospel worship services, for instance, Rommen speaks of “hymns” and “choruses” as the two main musical elements of Protestant worship services. Yet at no point does he unpack this transnational distinction of Protestant musics. Here, and in many other places, Rommen’s text speaks to readers as if they were already immersed in Protestant Christianities. Rommen similarly bypasses perspectives that are fully within Trinidad but outside of the Full Gospel community. It is characteristic of this book, for example, that it tells us how Full Gospel Christians perceive Spiritual Baptists, Presbyterians, Anglicans, and Catholics in Trinidad – but says not a word about the vice versa.

An additional problem is that its most theoretical passages are not completely clear. This is particularly true in regard to the phrase “the ethics of style,” which Rommen features in his subtitle. At times, the phrase seems to be used to identify something to be studied (e.g., the ethical dimensions of musical styles); yet at other times, Rommen speaks of “the ethics of style” as “an analytic paradigm,” which is to say as a mode of analysis rather than a topic (p. 27). Even after reading all of the relevant passages several times, I was unable to pin down just how the phrase is used in this book.

Two elements of the book’s production – its haphazard index and the absence of a CD with musical examples – are also disappointing. In the end, then, this is a worthwhile book that one wishes were even better.
Elizabeth DeLoughrey’s first monograph is a landmark study of postcolonial Caribbean and Pacific literatures. Masterfully researched, fluently written, and demonstrating deep knowledge of insular histories and topographies, it shows the importance of interdisciplinary island studies in understanding colonial legacies and constructions of globalized modernity. Borrowing its title from James Clifford’s well-known exploration of these homonyms and building throughout on his work, it offers a comparative methodology for approaching island cultures and epistemologies that is attentive to “the complex relationship between geography and history, the insular and the global, and routes and roots” (p. 1). In the process, it makes a vital and innovative contribution to a number of intersecting fields, including diaspora studies, indigenous studies, and postcolonialism.

DeLoughrey opens by engaging with Kamau Brathwaite’s notion of the “tidalectic” – “an ‘alter/native’ historiography to linear models of colonial progress” (p. 2) that captures the cyclical relationship between land and sea. She compares this to the navigational system of “moving islands” known as etak in Micronesia. In contrast to the flattening of nautical space associated with European cartography, this represents a polydimensional understanding of space and time which renders islands dynamic, moving entities in relation to maritime travelers (p. 3). By placing these complementary epistemologies in dialogue, DeLoughrey provides a way of analyzing how Pacific and Caribbean island literatures present “a paradigm of rooted routes” (p. 3), countering Western colonial constructions of islands as bounded, isolated spaces.

One of DeLoughrey’s key arguments concerns what she sees as an artificial division between diaspora and indigenous studies. Given that the former has “increasingly become a stand-in for the postcolonial predicament,” she insists on the importance of “tracing its points of erasure,” particularly when critics valorize its often problematically gendered “grammar” of fluid mobility over localized place attachments (p. 5). Following Clifford’s notion that indigeneity and diasporism form a continuum of “routed” and “rooted” experiences, the study foregrounds how both Pacific and Caribbean “regions
share a complex history of migration patterns before and after colonization” (p. 6). One of the challenges DeLoughrey grapples with in reading island literatures via a “tidalectic” of land and sea, “ex-isle” and settlement, centers on negotiating a number of overlapping discourses. In order to find points of connection or “translation” between hugely varied regions, she attends to the role language plays in constructing island identity. This leads her to navigate between an array of discursive ensembles as she refers variously to “the grammar of empire” (p. 8), “the grammar of diaspora” (pp. 8, 125), “the grammar of indigenous ontology” (p. 125), “the grammar of sexual fluids and exchange” (p. 143), and “the maritime grammar of ‘peoples of the sea’” (p. 30). While these linguistic codes are not always commensurate, DeLoughrey explores how they collectively contribute to an overarching “grammar of the transoceanic imaginary” (p. 270), highlighting the ways in which “tropical island cultures have helped constitute the very metropoles that have deemed them peripheral to modernity” (p. 4).

The book begins with an extensive Introduction in which DeLoughrey considers key cultural and ecological changes experienced in both Caribbean and Pacific regions as a result of globalization and oceanic territorialization. Chapters 1 and 2 are then grouped under the heading “The Sea Is History: Transoceanic Diasporas.” They focus independently on the Atlantic Middle Passage, which introduces “the sea as a dynamic space of cultural, ontological, and historical origins” (p. 42) through a reading of John Hearne’s *The Sure Salvation* (1981), and on how Pacific voyaging traditions have been “engaged in different ways by the military, anthropology, and indigenous literatures” (p. 97), making reference to works by Thor Heyerdahl, Vincent Eri, and Tom Davis. Part II, “Indigenous Landscapes and National Settlements,” begins by focusing on writing produced in Aotearoa/New Zealand, with Chapters 3 and 4 addressing representations of genealogy or *whakapapa* in texts by June Mitchell and Keri Hulme, and urban indigeneity and globalization in Albert Wendt’s *Black Rainbow* (1992). Chapter 5 returns to the Caribbean, discussing how Michelle Cliff and Merle Collins interweave the indigenous presence of Carib and Arawak peoples in the region with black nationalist discourse.

While poetry appears throughout *Routes and Roots*, novels constitute the main focus of DeLoughrey’s meticulous close readings. One of the most rewarding aspects of the book’s Introduction is the way in which DeLoughrey enacts her rationale for cross-regional comparison by assimilating a wealth of evidence from Caribbean and Pacific prose, poetry, and theory. Her primary focus on creative manipulations of prose form in the subsequent five chapters might therefore have been enhanced by exploring comparable innovations in poetry or within dramatic productions. The fact that DeLoughrey’s study makes no mention of drama seems a significant omission given the rich performance cultures of both island regions. Readers may also find it
strange that despite the Introduction’s impressive navigation of cross-regional epistemologies, the book’s structure tends to separate the Caribbean and the Pacific, alluding to points of commensurability rather than achieving sustained dialogue. As postcolonial islands experience similar pressures in the form of globalized development, militarization, tourism, and climate change, there seems to be ample scope for drawing bolder connections across regions in terms of literary analysis as well as epistemology.

Such criticisms highlight the difficulty of achieving the ambitious project DeLoughrey pursues in Routes and Roots. However, they do not detract from the consistent sense of illumination provided by her original methodological approach. Neither do they mar the study’s expansive contribution to a burgeoning notion of postcolonial literary geography. DeLoughrey’s work speaks clearly to a number of exciting developments in postcolonial studies and island research, extending interdisciplinary considerations of entwined social and natural histories. In so doing, it sets a benchmark for comparative scholarship of this type.

REFERENCES


BRENT HAYES EDWARDS
Department of English and Comparative Literature
Center for Jazz Studies
Columbia University
New York NY 10027, U.S.A.
<bhe2@columbia.edu>

In the past decade, there has been a remarkable stream of scholarly attention devoted to the work of the great Jamaican writer Claude McKay. It is perhaps not surprising that the oeuvre of a self-professed “vagabond poet,” an indefatigable traveler who was deeply attracted to the heady currents of radical
internationalism that animated global politics after World War I, has become central in recent discussions both of the transnational contours of interwar black culture and of the history of black radicalism. A number of works have taken up the complex relationship between McKay’s itinerant career and his committed radicalism from various angles. William J. Maxwell touches on McKay’s links to the literary communist scene in New York in New Negro, Old Left: African-American Writing and Communism between the Wars (1999), while Winston James’s A Fierce Hatred of Injustice: Claude McKay’s Jamaican Poetry of Rebellion (2000) argues that McKay’s early dialect poetry can be read for clues to his emerging radical consciousness. McKay’s place in the vibrant Caribbean intelligentsia in the 1920s is considered in Michelle Stephens’s Black Empire: The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States, 1914-1962 (2005); Kate Baldwin takes up McKay’s visit to Moscow in 1922 for the Fourth Congress of the Comintern in her Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters between Black and Red, 1922-1963 (2002); and I consider his interactions with Francophone writers and labor organizers in Marseilles in the late 1920s in The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism (2003). Just as the publication in 1994 of the collected poetry of Langston Hughes has slowly expanded the range of criticism on Hughes’s work, the appearance a few years ago of Maxwell’s authoritative and densely annotated Complete Poems should provoke more scholars to follow the model of Josh Gosciak’s The Shadowed Country: Claude McKay and the Romance of the Victorians (2006) in offering considerations of the contours of McKay’s poetics.

Gary Edward Holcomb’s eye-opening Claude McKay, Code Name Sasha is a provocative contribution to this scholarly dialog. Like Barbara Foley’s work on Jean Toomer and Ralph Ellison, Holcomb’s book reasserts the primacy and depth of McKay’s early Marxism, which cannot be dismissed or overlooked simply because McKay repudiated communism at the end of his life (p. 8). Although Holcomb does not investigate the available Russian-language sources (as Baldwin, for example, does), his book is the first literary study of McKay to consider in detail McKay’s FBI files, which until now had been known primarily through the work of historians of American antiradicalism such as Theodore Kornweibel. His title is culled from an elliptical reference in one 1923 letter in the files concerning a “delegate to the Fourth Congress of the International, Sasha or Sayesh,” who “spoke about the necessity for propaganda among the American negroes” (quoted on p. 20). Holcomb’s monograph is significant first of all in the way it uses the FBI files to question the accuracy and reliability of McKay’s autobiography, A Long Way from Home (1937). Although McKay there claims that “Sasha” was the code name of an American who was also in Moscow for the Comintern Congress, Holcomb suggests that it may have been McKay’s own
secret moniker, and indeed that he may have had good reasons in the late 1930s to conceal his earlier affiliation, if not with the American Communist Party itself then with left-leaning organizations like the African Blood Brotherhood and the Industrial Workers of the World.

This is a rather delicate enterprise because it risks taking the sometimes fanciful conjectures in the FBI files as documented “fact” against the putative dissimulation in *A Long Way from Home*. Moreover, Holcomb accredits the autobiography with insight and honesty when it suits his purposes, as in his smart and intriguing discussion of McKay’s intimate relationship with a small-time criminal in New York named Michael (pp. 78-90). At the same time, Holcomb’s caution does draw our attention to some of the formal peculiarities of McKay’s impressionistic narrative, which indeed displays a fascination with spy-craft on a number of levels. *A Long Way from Home*, Holcomb convincingly argues (p. 43),

is composed of looping narratives of spying and secrecy, subterfuge and surveillance, denouncing and divulging, being renounced and being revealed. The narrative presents such scenes as illuminating, as moments in the text where the narrator demonstrates candor and implies imposing order over chaos. Ultimately, however, these passages, as isolated moments accumulate over the terrain of 350-plus pages, accrue to create a form of extensive obscurity.

Holcomb suggests that McKay was writing his autobiography in full awareness of government surveillance and suspicion that would culminate in his being brought before Martin Dies’s House Committee on Un-American Activities in 1939 to discuss his subversive leanings. This is a reminder that McKay’s autobiography – like the black autobiographies written two decades later under the pressures of McCarthy era, such as Hughes’s 1956 *I Wonder as I Wander* – must be approached with circumspection rather than assumed to be transparent.

The other key contribution of Holcomb’s study is his final chapter on McKay’s unpublished novel *Romance in Marseilles*, written between 1929 and 1932, which goes beyond *Banjo*, McKay’s better-known 1929 book, in its depictions of same-sex relationships and labor organizing among the ephemeral communities of black and brown dockers, sailors, musicians, and sex workers who gravitated to the Southern French port city. Holcomb may overstate matters in his claim that McKay’s novels *Home to Harlem* (1928), *Banjo*, and *Romance in Marseilles* must be read as a “queer black Marxist prolegomena, a three-volume manifesto” (p. 19). (Enthralled with this notion, he calls the books a “queer black Marxist novel ménage a trois” [p. 19] on one page and “three brotherly novels” [p. 20] on the next.) Holcomb contends that “McKay was drawn to the idea of generating cycles of works in
related sets of three” (p. 17), but he offers no evidence either of this proposition or of the suggestion that McKay himself ever described these books as a “trilogy.”

Nevertheless, Holcomb’s reading of Romance in Marseilles, a short manuscript based in part on the tragic story of an African seaman McKay knew, is significant in that it demonstrates the centrality of nonnormative sexuality in his radical sensibility. This is an issue that no other scholar has considered with such ardor and commitment. (Indeed, as Holcomb points out, there are a number of influential works on McKay where sexuality is not even discussed.) The point is not so much the precise range of McKay’s sexual preference – although there is evidence that he had affairs with both men and women – as it is the degree to which for McKay a queer sensibility, like black nationalism and Marxism, is a “force against reactionary imperialist hegemony” (p. 12). McKay is a queer writer, Holcomb explains, in the sense that “the transgressive idiom of queer resists succumbing to an interrogation that would make the primary focus on a literary artist unambiguous – understandable, redactable, attainable – according to clinical or sociological taxonomies. Queer does not merely articulate a sexual orientation or preference or even a social identity or classification,” but instead the resistance to normative classification and the status quo on every level (p. 12).

Another word that McKay employed habitually in something like this sense is “vagabond,” and certainly his errancy – his flight from any security of location or belonging – is one of his more striking characteristics. But Holcomb, reading a succession of what seem at first to be minor moments in Home to Harlem, Banjo, and Romance in Marseilles, proves that McKay’s unsettled wandering is as much a matter of desire as of national borders and literary genres. Holcomb reminds us that part of McKay’s attraction to Morocco when he lived there in the early 1930s had to do with Tangier’s status as a sort of “queer refuge” that drew any number of gay artists (including the novelists Charles Henri Ford and Paul Bowles). At the same time, if we are indeed meant to read Romance in Marseilles as a sort of postscript to or revisiting of the themes of Banjo, it is interesting that McKay doesn’t ever seem to have tried to write a novel set in North Africa; for whatever reason, Marseilles remained the paradigmatic setting for his imaginings of black “international romance.”

Holcomb frames his project by noting the difficulty of classifying McKay in the received terms of literary or cultural history (p. 3):

He is the politically trailblazing black nationalist poet, yet a little mystifying and unacceptable because of his dedication to Communism. Although he is an unquestionably essential New Negro figure, he is perplexing and difficult to classify within the Harlem Renaissance historical chronotope.

Unlike Langston Hughes and Sterling Brown, he did not generate folk ver-
nacluar verse pieces during the 1920s. His celebration of black ‘primitivism,’ moreover, understandably discomfits contemporary views of black essentialism. Furthermore, his lengthy residence abroad still complicates his credentials as a Harlem Renaissance author. Generally speaking, the McKay currently familiar to the world is an anomalous pastiche of frequently incompatible identities.

This bewildering mix of elements is one of the main difficulties in confronting McKay’s life and work. Although Holcomb’s book is useful in offering new strategies for navigating this treacherous issue, particularly with regard to queerness, *Claude McKay, Code Name Sasha* is sometimes overly accumulative, tending simply to add classifications, one after another, instead of working through the complex ways they are interwoven. Holcomb repeatedly resorts to lists – “Communism, anarchism, anticolonialism, queer struggle, and related forms of dangerous dissidence” (p. 56) – without always taking the time to discuss how forms of dissidence might be very different, and even contradictory, especially in the ways they are practiced and institutionalized.

For instance, Holcomb rather perplexingly calls McKay both a “Trotskyist” and an “anarchist,” sometimes in the same sentence. He writes bluntly that “from the mid-1920s to the early 1930s, McKay pursued a Trotskyist dedication to the proposition of ‘permanent revolution’ and anarchism, though dialectically translated in such a way that ethnic nationalism and Marxist internationalism do not when paired up become mutually absolutist” (p. 169). The men did meet when McKay was in Moscow in 1922, and Trotsky even published an article titled “Answers to Comrade Claude MacKay” in *Izvestia* in February 1923. But aside from the warm description of the encounter in *A Long Way from Home*, where is the evidence that McKay called himself a follower of Trotsky, especially after the latter’s exile? Even if McKay were an adherent of the Fourth International, how would it be possible to be an “anarchist” at the same time? Holcomb only cites one passage from *Banjo* that uses the word: the Haitian writer Ray, contemplating “the rude anarchy of the lives of the black boys – loafing, singing, bumming, dancing, loving, working,” realizes “how close-linked he was to them in spirit” (*Banjo*, p. 324). But how can this be described as a programmatic call for what Holcomb terms “anarchist revolution” (p. 158)?

Sometimes this accumulative fervor results in a welter of intrigue, as when Holcomb opines that “McKay almost certainly used Morocco to duck American surveillance, if not worse” (p. 40) and then, a few pages later, makes the Jamaican sound like a priority of the Stalinist purges as well: “it is likely that McKay, the black Trotskyist, was holing up in remote Fez, Marrakesh, and Tangier, lying low in an effort to stay below the Stalinist radar – anxious that if exposed he would experience the same deadly fate that his idol Trotsky was destined to suffer in exile” (p. 58). Sometimes it
results in incomprehensible interpretative slips, as when Holcomb, describing McKay’s best-known poem, “If We Must Die” (1919) says that “the poem’s first-person subjectivity swings pendulously between black and radical voices” – even though the poem never refers explicitly to blackness or to race. (Thus Winston Churchill would famously use it two decades later in a speech urging the United States to enter the war against the Nazi threat.)

When he is discussing Banjo in the context of Francophone black intellectual circles in the early 1930s, Holcomb is ill-served by his appropriation of the term négritude. First, whether applied to the 1929 Banjo or employed in confusing phrases about “McKay’s black-red-black (that is, négritude anarchist) nomadic wanderings” (p. 14), the use of the term is anachronistic, since it would not be coined by Aimé Césaire until 1935 (according to scholar Christian Filostrat, Césaire first employed the word in an essay in the rare third issue of the journal L’Etudiant noir), and it was not popularized as the name of a movement until the full version of Césaire’s poem Cahier d’un retour au pays natal was published after World War II. Moreover, although there were black communists in France between the wars – and although some of the Antillean students, especially those linked to the 1932 journal Légitime Défense, considered themselves Communist – the Négritude movement as it developed later that decade through the work of Césaire and Léopold Senghor had a complicated relationship to organized Marxism. Césaire was a member of the Communist Party, but Senghor was not. Certainly it is not true that in any general sense “the négritude writers were committed members of the Communist Party” (p. 144). Jane and Paulette Nardal, the demure, reformist, devout Catholic sisters from Martinique who were pivotal in the milieu that led to Négritude, would be startled to come across Holcomb’s description of them as “passionate Communists”!

Nevertheless, Holcomb’s characterization of McKay’s “queer black Marxism” is salutary, first and foremost as an interpretative provocation rather than a stable or consistent political stance discernable in McKay’s work. Above all, it is necessary to confront the contention of Claude McKay, Code Name Sasha that literature can serve as a vehicle of political action – or as Holcomb puts it, as “manifesto” or as “primer for insurrection” (p. 19). What does it mean to say that McKay’s novels were designed to “incite acts of radical black proletarian agency” (p. 40)? What does this imply for our understanding of novelistic form, of audience, of the relation between readerly practice and political organization? To answer these difficult questions is to begin to theorize African diasporic literature as a realm of radical politics.
The title of the new critical work on French Caribbean literature by Celia Britton may seem surprising. A “sense of community” is the least likely attribute that one would ascribe to the imperiled communities that comprise the French Caribbean. Indeed, only two of the novels analyzed in this study, *Gouverneurs de la rosée* and *Texaco*, emphasize qualities one would associate with a sense of community – “unity of purpose, collective work and strong immanent leadership willing social change” (p. 159). The other five novels – by Édouard Glissant, Simone Schwarz-Bart, Vincent Placoly, Daniel Maximin, and Maryse Condé – demonstrate a lack of these qualities as they reveal various degrees of fatalism, accommodation, or ambivalence regarding collective political action. Nevertheless, this literature is haunted by the question of group identity. Over a decade ago, in an assessment of “French West Indian Writing since 1970,” Beverley Ormerod noticed the importance of community as a literary subject when she wrote, “A further shift in emphasis, away from the novel of the individual towards that of the group or collectivity, has been apparent in recent years” (Ormerod 1995:167).

The problematic quest for a sense of community is related to a sense of historic loss and an uncertain future felt strongly in the Overseas Departments of Martinique and Guadeloupe, which essentially constitute the French Caribbean in Britton’s work. French Guiana and Haiti are anomalies because of their isolation and location. The more developed and populous islands suffer more obviously than French Guiana from the impact of departmentalization and the lack of a collective identity. The other anomaly in this treatment of threatened communities is Haiti which has been independent for two centuries and whose culture has a surprising resilience to the extent that it reproduces itself in diasporic communities in Montreal, New York, Miami, and Paris. Britton treats only one Haitian novel, *Gouverneurs de la rosée*, and Roumain is reacting to the impact of the American occupation on peasant society in particular and the Haitian nation as a whole. The novel offers us a re-imagined Haitian community, capable of incorporating tradition with the new reality of dispersion and domination brought on by U.S. imperialism. Arguably, the external threat of U.S. imperialism in the early twentieth
The absence of a sociopolitical context in Britton’s study means that the choice of novels that form her corpus of texts seems at times arbitrary. Why for instance are contemporary novels from Haiti not included while Roumain’s 1944 novel, published decades before the majority of works from Martinique and Guadeloupe, is the first to be analyzed? These are also not the titles that leap to mind when we think of the treatment of community in the French Caribbean. For instance, why not discuss Glissant’s *La case du commandeur*, Condé’s *La traversée de la mangrove*, and Chamoiseau’s *Solibo Magnifique* instead of *Le quatrième siècle*, Desirada, and Texaco? Britton should, however, be given credit for including the unjustly forgotten novel *L’Eau-de-mort guildive* by Vincent Placoly. The strength of her approach lies in its application of Jean-Luc Nancy’s rethinking of community and myth to the French Caribbean (1991, 2000). Instead of seeing community as a “secondary attribute of individual being,” Nancy proposes “being-in-common” as the “very matrix of our existence” (p. 8). This does not mean reverting to a fusional unity or the ideal of a closed, homogeneous, organic community which Nancy labels “common being.” Being-in-common implies, rather, a relationality and plurality that is different from common identity. Individual identity is not self-generated but the consequence of being “exposed to the outside.” Nancy hereby transcends the usual oppositions between self and other and inside and outside. Furthermore, community is seen as always unfinished, always a work in progress, an “endless circulation and sharing of singular beings” (p. 12).

Britton draws a parallel between a general condition that afflicts all societies in the twenty-first century and the French Caribbean in that the transcendental systems of belief that once made sense of the word have crumbled and “we have lost the ability to believe naively in myths” (p. 15) in which common being was rooted. Myths of foundation and origin are then replaced by a concept of origin as “the indefinitely unfolding and variously multiplied intimacy of the world” (p. 130). The temptation of a myth of common being is, to use Nancy’s term, “interrupted” by literature that has “to do with the fragmentary, the incomplete, the suspension rather than the institution of meanings” (p. 14). We can see how this applies to a novel like *Gouverneurs de la rosée* and its treatment of the myth of origin and heroic sacrifice. In this regard, it is tempting to see Chamoiseau’s *Solibo Magnifique* as a rewriting of this salvation myth in terms a new rhizomatic group identity, not a revitalized ritual of the *coumbite*.

Nancy’s ideas are explained with predictable clarity and elegance by Britton but the question immediately arises as to why these ideas are not in any way related to those of Édouard Glissant with which, Britton admits, there are “striking similarities.” This is particularly surprising given that
Britton has written a superb book on Glissant. The problematization of community, the rethinking of myths of origin, and a general poetics of loss are central to Glissant’s theories of digenesis and relationality. Some of this is compensated for in the chapter on *Le quatrième siècle* but Nancy’s formulations deserve to be placed more squarely in a Caribbean context. Ultimately, Britton’s thoughtful reading of seven variations on what Glissant calls the *roman du nous* does tease out interesting new aspects of these largely canonical works, but it may risk telling us more about Nancy’s theories than about the literature to which they are applied.

**REFERENCES**


STEPHEN WILKINSON
Centre for Caribbean and Latin American Research and Consultancy
London Metropolitan University
London EC3N 2EY, U.K.
<s.wilkinson@londonmet.org>

This is a book whose ambitions are perhaps too great. To set about an interpretation of the cultural production by and about the Sino-Cuban community in only 163 pages is a huge challenge. Inevitably some things will be overlooked and others will be given short attention. So, in spite of entitling the book *Imaging the Chinese*, and dedicating entire chapters to the topics of “Cuban Sinophobia” and “Orientalism,” López-Calvo fails to make any mention of the gross caricature of the Chinese detective radio character Chan
Li Po, whose popularity during the 1930s was so great that cinemas would interrupt their programs to broadcast the latest episodes live to their audiences. The absence of any reference to this phenomenon, let alone discussion of it, is all the more irritating because Chan Li Po was the protagonist in the first feature-length talking movie produced in Cuba, *La serpiente roja*. This is the film that inspired the title of Leonardo Padura Fuentes’s novel, *La cola de la serpiente*, which is analyzed by López-Calvo.

It is a pity that lacunae such as these should mar an otherwise intriguing and well-written treatise, albeit one by an author who openly admits his limitations. Citing Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, López-Calvo recognizes that as a European living in the United States he has had to be conscious of the dangers inherent in discussing the Orient in order to cover the subject in a manner that is not ultimately hegemonic. He says he has tried “to avoid romanticizing, fetishizing, commodifying, or exoticizing” the Chinese Cubans (p. 153), but one feels that his project comes at times dangerously close to doing all of these. Nonetheless, as he well documents, the Chinese community in Cuba has suffered such marginalization, genocide, racism, and misrepresentation that by emphasizing the cultural contribution that this community has made to Cuban life the book goes some way to redressing a longstanding imbalance.

López-Calvo’s introduction is particularly rewarding, concisely conveying the history of the Cuban Chinese community in an accessible manner. It can be recommended as a starting point for any student interested in the topic. What follows is an expansive sweep that focuses on different approaches and cultural or literary productions. Chapter 2, for example, covers the biographies and testimonies of Cubans and the topic of Chinese slavery on the island. Chapters 3 and 4 deal with Sinophobia and Orientalism and examine discourses produced both on the island and in the diaspora. The fifth chapter focuses on the depiction of Chinese women and particularly Chinese Mulattas as exoticized and fetishized objects. Chapter 7 deals with syncreticism, hybridity, and witchcraft, and Chapter 8 with transculturation. Finally, not even Martí escapes, as López-Calvo discusses his erasure and misrepresentation of the Chinese subject.

This book paints a very broad canvas (as López-Calvo puts it a “cultural mapping”) of the development of the Chinese community in Cuba. It dwells heavily on the multiple wrongs the community has suffered but ends on an optimistic note, commenting favorably on the recent Sinicization as a consequence of, and testimony to, the resistance its members have shown (along with the somewhat ironic observation that the community has become so small that it no longer represents a threat to the revolutionary project and can therefore now be safely celebrated rather than oppressed).

This is not to say that López-Calvo is wholly uncritical of the community. He points out that hybridization and misrepresentation have also been self-inflicted and that being Cuban Chinese has implied a negotiated identity,
taking in various self-Orientalizing and de-Orientalizing strategies. As an example of this, his epilogue relates the stories and views of the families of two Cuban-Chinese, one a revolutionary veteran journalist still on the island and the other an emigré professor emeritus at a university in Minnesota. The reason for “complementing” these two stories is not made absolutely clear, but one gets the impression that it is to illustrate that, after all, the great U.S.-Cuba divide transcends even the issue of “Chineseness.”

REFERENCE


William F. Keegan
Florida Museum of Natural History
University of Florida
Gainesville FL 32611-2710, U.S.A.
<keegan@flmnh.ufl.edu>

Caribbean archaeology has tended to focus on two main issues. First is the arrival of Ceramic Age peoples in the Antilles (Saladoid, circa 500 B.C.), which encompasses the Lesser Antilles and Puerto Rico. The second is the development of the ethnohistoric Taíno peoples, which emphasizes developments in Puerto Rico and Hispaniola. Islands to the north and west – Jamaica, the Bahama archipelago, and to some extent Cuba – were relegated to “sub-Taíno” status. Jamaica was viewed as peripheral and therefore not worthy of particular attention except to fill out the time-space framework.

Pre-Columbian Jamaica solves that problem, benefitting from the fact that a substantial number of professional and avocational archaeologists have, fortunately, ignored the mainstream trend. Of special usefulness is the inclusion of “Aboriginal Remains in Jamaica,” written by J.E. Duerden for the Journal of the Institute of Jamaica in 1897 (Appendix D). Duerden’s almost 200-page account, until now the most comprehensive synthesis for the island, has (like most other publications on Jamaican archaeology) often been difficult to find, further contributing to a lack of mainstream interest in the island.
Philip Allsworth-Jones has written an excellent, descriptive overview that covers all aspects of archaeological investigations. This monumental volume demonstrates the importance of Jamaican archaeology to the interpretation of general trends in the region, and it provides ready access to scholars and the general public. It is clearly written and contains an impressive number of maps, photographs, and illustrations of artifacts, tables, and figures, as well as an extensive bibliography. But most impressive is the CD-ROM that is included with the book.

Following a brief introduction (Chapter 1), the rich history of Jamaican archaeology is recounted from antiquarians up to research conducted over the past five years (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 reviews the culture-historical framework for the Caribbean and serves to define Jamaica’s place in the region, highlighting some of the issues that Jamaican archaeology raises for that framework. Recognizing that any culture history is a work in progress, Allsworth-Jones discusses many of the alternative perspectives that have come forth in the past decade, even those that he does not agree with.

Chapter 4 provides the environmental background for the island. The geography, geology (including its historical development), fauna, and flora are presented in general terms that set the stage for interpreting the distribution and composition of the sites. Allsworth-Jones then turns to the cultural contexts.

One of the most important figures in Jamaican archaeology was James Lee, a professional geologist. Lee founded the Archaeology Club of Jamaica in 1965 (now the Jamaican Archaeological Society). Developing a project to map all known Arawak sites in Jamaica, Lee succeeded in precisely recording 265 midden and cave sites, and noted 77 others that he was unable to locate (p. 20). During the course of his investigations he amassed a large and extremely valuable collection of artifacts, most of which have specific site locations. Just prior to his death he donated his collection to the University of the West Indies, Mona campus, Kingston. This donation served as the basis for this book.

Allsworth-Jones assembled an outstanding team to study the Lee collection. In the course of their work documenting, photographing, cataloging, and curating these artifacts the team also consulted Lee’s notes and mapped the sites that he recorded. The nature of the collection is discussed in Chapter 5. The categories used to record the artifacts and organize them in the CD-ROM are also discussed, as are instructions for using it. All of the chapters that follow are tied directly to the CD-ROM.

Chapter 6 describes the criteria used to map the sites. A complete list of sites by parish is included in Appendix B. Chapter 9 is a very brief overview of the sites that have been excavated and the faunal remains identified from these excavations. A more comprehensive summary for each of the excavated sites is provided in Appendix A. Petroglyphs and pictographs are the subject of Chapter 8, and burials and human remains receive similar treatment in Chapter 10. These chapters provide a wider context to the information contained on the CD-ROM.
Pottery styles are discussed in Chapter 7, “Cultural Variants.” Allsworth-Jones recognizes that two of the styles have affinities with those described for the rest of the Greater Antilles (Redware and White Marl). Perhaps more important is the third style, Montego Bay, a variant of the White Marl style that is found primarily in western Jamaica. The timing, distribution, and relationships among these styles have important implications for future research concerning the characteristics of the possibly distinct cultural groups that lived on the island.

Pre-Columbian Jamaica is the most comprehensive overview of archaeological research on the island to date. The CD-ROM is spectacular. Although the core of the book is the Lee collection, the discussion goes well beyond to summarize the substantial contributions made by others, including recent investigators. This extremely important book, which should make Jamaican archaeology more accessible to scholars and the general public, is especially significant as Caribbean archaeologists move away from broad regional frameworks and pay increasing attention to the specifics of more local areas. More comprehensive descriptions of local developments, interactions, and mobility should provide a better understanding of cultural dynamics in the pre-Columbian Caribbean.

REFERENCE


*Underwater and Maritime Archaeology in Latin America and the Caribbean.* MARGARET E. LESHIKAR-DENTON & PILAR LUNA ERREGUERENA (eds.). Walnut Creek CA: Left Coast Press, 2008. 316 pp. (Cloth US$ 79.00)

ERIKA LAANELA
Department of Anthropology
College of William & Mary
Williamsburg VA 23187, U.S.A.
<eelaaan@wm.edu>

Perhaps even more than elsewhere, underwater archaeology has had a difficult inception in Latin America and the Caribbean, in part due to the ongo-
ing struggle to combat the aggressive exploitation of “treasure ships” by
commercial salvors. The nineteen chapters in this publication, which were
originally papers presented at the 2003 World Archaeological Congress in
Washington D.C., show that maritime archaeology has gained a foothold as
a significant field of historical and anthropological inquiry in the region and
that substantial progress toward protecting fragile underwater cultural heri-
tage resources has been made in a number of countries.

Although the editors assert that the volume provides a review of maritime
archaeology in Latin America and the Caribbean (p. 27), the book cannot
be considered to constitute a comprehensive overview as it omits important
work in countries not represented at the conference. Instead, it is best
regarded as a series of case studies that illustrate the problems and potential
of the field in diverse circumstances. The introduction by editors Margaret
Leshikar-Denton and Pilar Luna Erreguerena highlights several themes that
permeate the chapters. These include the development of legal measures to
protect marine archaeological resources from treasure hunters, the establish-
ment of resource management and research programs, efforts to engage des-
cendant communities and other audiences, and the future of the field.

The individual contributions cover a range of methodological, theoret-
ical, and historical ground. Specific articles will appeal to specialists with
such diverse interests as colonial and maritime history, navigation, Mayan
archaeology, archaeological site formation processes, artifact conservation,
cultural resource management, historic preservation, public archaeology,
cultural tourism, speleology, and marine biology. Geographically, the papers
stretch from the North Atlantic to Patagonia, and include areas colonized
primarily by the British (Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, Jamaica, and Turks
and Caicos), Dutch (Bonaire and Curacao), and Spanish (Argentina, Mexico,
and Uruguay). The archaeological sites discussed are located in environ-
ments ranging from the cenotes of the Yucatan jungle to the offshore reefs
of Jamaica, and encompass dates from the Late Pleistocene to the late nine-
teenth century. This diversity is both a strength and a weakness, reflecting the
lack of cohesion common in published conference proceedings.

The largest group of contributions focuses on research in Mexico. Two
discuss aspects of the archaeological search for the seventeenth-century ship-
reck Nuestra Señora del Juncal. Patricia Meehan and Flor Trejo Rivera
outline historical research into the vessel, while Carmen Rojas Sandoval
explains the challenges of examining contemporary nautical charts. Surveys
in the Gulf of Mexico led to the discovery of an undisturbed sixteenth-cen-
tury Spanish shipwreck and an eighteenth-century British vessel described,
respectively, by Vera Moya Sordo and Roberto Galindo Dominguez. Arturo
González González et al. discuss a project to scientifically record possi-
bile evidence for early human habitation preserved in submerged caves
near Tulum, while Carmen Rojas Sandoval et al. describe Mayan mortuary deposits observed in cenotes across the Yucatan Peninsula.

The contributors exhibit a variety of academic approaches to marine archaeological research. Antonio Lezama analyzes the potential for research into the history of navigation on the Río de la Plata in Uruguay, asserting that underwater archaeology is a branch of naval history (p. 187). Nigel Sadler exhibits a more anthropological style in his examination of the significance of a mid-nineteenth-century slave ship to a local community in the Turks and Caicos. Donny Hamilton combines archaeological investigations with historic accounts in his examination of the sinking of the town of Port Royal, Jamaica, in 1692. Several chapters use a scientific approach. Ricardo Bastida et al. use the wreck of the eighteenth-century British warship HMS Swift in Argentina as a case study to investigate the role of biological agents in the formation of underwater sites. An innovative approach to the conservation of waterlogged archaeological glass is outlined by Wayne Smith.

Other authors consider the challenges of managing underwater cultural heritage. Wil Nagelkerken et al. discuss a project combining in situ preservation of a shipwreck in Curacao with maritime archaeological tourism. Dolores Elkin (Argentina), Dorrick Gray (Jamaica), Edward Harris (Bermuda), Margaret Leshikar-Denton and Della Scott-Ireton (Cayman Islands), and Pilar Luna Erreguerena (Mexico) provide overviews of the development of policy and legislation to protect underwater cultural heritage and current maritime archaeological research in their respective countries.

The proceedings will be of interest to both terrestrial and marine archaeologists around the world because of the universality of the themes presented. Although non-archaeologists will find much of interest, the volume is not principally directed at the general reader. A certain level of familiarity with ongoing archaeological conversations is presumed at times; for example, discussions of efforts to curb the commercial salvage of underwater cultural heritage assume that the reader is familiar with the specific ethical and practical reasons for which archaeologists are opposed to the practice.

The editors are to be applauded for organizing the session and producing this volume. The principal value of publishing conference proceedings is to preserve a permanent account of the research presented and to provide access to an audience that was not in attendance. As a record of the maturation of an emerging subfield of archaeology, this volume represents an important step forward in the practice of underwater archaeology in Latin America and the Caribbean. Consistent with the World Archaeological Congress’s policy of promoting considerations of political power in archaeological research, Leshikar-Denton and Luna Erreguerena make a convincing call for local control over underwater cultural heritage and for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to join forces in order to realize the potential contributions of maritime archaeology to understanding the histories and cultures of the region.