In a well-known lecture given several years ago, British cultural theorist Stuart Hall referred to race as “a floating signifier,” constantly subject to “redefinition and appropriation” (Jhally & Hall 1996).1 To the extent that scholars of race take this idea seriously, reflection upon all the work that has been done to construct and to mark races in the world since the era of colonial expansion raises a number of fundamental questions (Holt 1995) about the object of our study.

Just what, we may ask, is the business of race-making all about? What does it mean to “mark” someone racially? What do the patterns according to which race is marked say about different understandings of the social order? How has racial classification been implicated in struggles over access to power, wealth, rights, and respectability (Covington 1995; Ferrer 1999; Scott 2004; Zeuske 2002; Omi 2001; Harris & Sim 2002; Waters 1999)?

These broad theoretical questions inform the discussion found in this article. Here, I examine the politics of racialization in late-nineteenth- to mid-twentieth-century Cuba, through an analysis of the record-keeping practices of the Cuban Catholic Church. The study is largely based upon an analysis of a half-century of baptismal and marital records housed in Catholic parish archives and thus pertains to the intimate, racialized, and gendered domains of Cuban social life.

My examination of the documents begins in the period just after the achievement of full emancipation, as Cuba transitioned from a colony built solidly upon slavery to a nation that championed race-blindness as its ideal.

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1. The author wishes to thank Rebecca Scott, Sueann Caulfield, Julia Adams, Howard Kimeldorf, Robert McCaa, and Barbara Trepagnier for their comments on earlier versions of this article. “Each sheep with its mate” is a translation of the Spanish expression “cada oveja con su pareja,” meaning that like should marry like. In Cuba, the phrase is highly racialized and makes reference to a centuries-old social norm that formal unions should take place only between individuals of the same rank and race.
The transition from colony to republic brought about a series of conflicts over the terms of sovereignty, as nationalists struggled against both the authority of a Church that had sided with Spain during the wars of independence and against increasing North American incursions into the political, economic, and cultural life of the island (Logan 2008; Röig de Leuchsenring 1958; Ibarra 1992; Pérez 1999). The first decades of independence also brought about a major shift in the social construct of race. With the collapse of older, starker racial hierarchies built upon the difference between slave and free, others – buttressed by social science, public policy, and religion – were erected (Zeuske 2002; Bronfman 2004).

Men of color had participated extensively in the independence wars, making up at least half of the revolutionary army and 40 percent of its senior commissioned officers (Pérez 1986; Fermoselle-López 1972). This fact helped to open up enough space for Blacks and Mulattos to attain a level of recognition and political representation in the new nation – including universal manhood suffrage – that was closed to their counterparts elsewhere (Ferrer 1999; de la Fuente 2001). Furthermore, Cuban nationalist ideology, articulated by Jose Martí and Antonio Maceo, had championed racial inclusiveness and color-blindness as an ideal. Thus from the inauguration of the republic in 1902, overt expressions of racism and state-sponsored discrimination lacked both ideological legitimacy and the force of law.

Cuba’s “racial democracy” had its limits however. The ideology of race-blind nationalism that declared all Cubans to be equal regardless of color, also proscribed silences around race and condemned political mobilization along racial lines (Logan 1999; Helg 1995). Despite important advances, non-Whites found themselves shut out of private educational institutions and higher-status professions. Though segregation was illegal, Blacks and Mulattos were effectively banned from elite social clubs, hotels, and other public accommodations (Cole 1986; Arredondo 1939; de la Fuente 2001).

Immigration policy though the 1930s severely restricted the legal entrance of Haitians and Jamaicans, in favor of newcomers from Spain (Helg 1990). Cubans of color as well as Whites commonly expressed a desire for a whiter population (i.e., Castillo Bueno & Castillo 1996). The directive to adelantar la raza, or “take the race forward,” by marrying up the color hierarchy and giving birth to lighter-skinned children, is still heard on the island today. Furthermore, while unwed unions between white men and women of color were common and tolerated in the period under study, social prejudice against formal marriages between Whites and non-Whites was strong.

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2. Final abolition was not achieved in Cuba until 1886, and independence from Spain was accomplished only in 1898, after thirty years of anticolonial war. See Scott 1985 and Ferrer 1999.
Thus, as historian Alejandro de la Fuente writes, it is “neither unqualified racial integration nor linear exclusion [that] characterizes the history of Cuba as an independent nation.” It is “ambiguity,” he feels, that “best defines the evolution of race relations in [the] 20th century” (de la Fuente 2001:11). To a certain extent, this dynamic is reflected in the race-making practices of the Cuban Catholic Church as well. While certain policies adopted by religious authorities gestured towards inclusivism and egalitarianism, others served to reinforce hierarchies based upon race and rank.

**Situating the Study**

As the cites mentioned earlier clearly indicate, a vibrant body of scholarship on Cuban racial politics has appeared in recent years. Scholars such as Rebecca Scott (2005), Aline Helg (1995), Tomás Fernández Robaina (1990), Alejandro de la Fuente (2001), Ada Ferrer (1999), and Alejandra Bronfman (2004) have offered a wealth of information on the ways that race was implicated in electoral politics, labor struggles, and debates about science, immigration, and modernity. Issues of gender, family, and sexuality have not assumed an important place in this work, however, despite the clear centrality of gender to notions of race in Latin America. The first major contribution of my research, then, is to look at race relations in postemancipation Cuba in the context of a race-sex system.

Although constructs of race and sex are deeply intertwined in many societies, this is especially true in Iberian America. Take for example Cuba’s cultural and religious iconography. The classic work of Cuban literature, *Cecilia Valdés* (1882), takes as its subject the tragic nineteenth-century romance between a haughty mulata and her wealthy white half-brother Leonardo Gamboa. The Catholic patroness of Cuba, la Virgen de la Caridad, is herself figured as a mulata, as is Ochun, the virgin’s alter ego in the Afro-Cuban religious practice of santería. Furthermore, ideas about the sexual proclivities of different groups have long been pivotal to notions of race on the island and are widely found in novels, poetry, popular sayings, theater, song, and the visual arts (Morejón 1982; Kutzinski 1993; Moore 1997).

While the construct of race in the United States has been historically rooted in a rigid, dichotomous system of categorization, Latin Americans have long utilized a more “fluid” and “negotiable” process of racial ascription. In Cuba, individuals who fall between the “poles” of blanco and negro are viewed as members of “intermediary” racial groups. The dozens of color terms employed in everyday speech make reference to an array of hair textures, skin tones, and facial features, thus constantly calling attention to the nation’s hybrid racial heritage.

But color terms do more than reference differences in phenotype. In nineteenth-century Cuba, especially, white and black were seen as polar opposites on a continuum of kinds of human beings – whose quotients of social worth,
honor, shame, or respectability were imprinted to a highly significant degree in their very pedigree. The children that resulted from mixed-race unions were further viewed as “intermediary” or “in between” types of people. The kinds of racial markers that I discuss in this article therefore, never stood as “neutral” markers of physical characteristics, but were deeply laden with moral valuations and notions of hierarchy. Contests over the attribution of racial labels in Church records – as priests or parishioners sought to avoid certain terms or to employ others – therefore had profound symbolic, political, and cultural resonance.

Race and Sex in Cuban Catholic Parish Archives
The data upon which my research is based, Catholic baptismal and marital records, have not been systematically utilized by scholars of twentieth-century Cuba. One of the major challenges faced by historians interested in how race was lived “on the ground” in postemancipation Cuba is that racial labels largely disappeared from civil and military records after 1890 (Zeuske 2002; Ferrer 1999; Scott 2004). Twentieth-century civil registries employed color terms very infrequently. And in accordance with the ideal of race-blind nationalism, notaries, lawyers, and judges studiously avoided the use of explicit racial labels as well (Zeuske 2002; Scott 2004).

Not so for the Catholic clergy. Labels pertaining to race and to birth status were utilized consistently in sacramental documents through the year 1940, when the practice was banned by the constitution. It is likely, therefore, that Catholic parish archives contain the largest, most comprehensive system of racial classification available to scholars of the postemancipation era. The second major contribution of this work therefore lies in my use of Catholic parish archives to study the processes of racialization unfolding in Cuba during the first decades of independence.

As civil registries were not established in Cuba until 1885, prior to that, births, deaths, and marriages were recorded solely in Church archives. Historian Karen Morrison writes, “At a minimum, for a Catholic society such as colonial Cuba, baptism represented everyone’s formal inclusion in the community. One did not have a legal identity without it, and the vast majority of the population was baptized” (Morrison 2007:59). Centuries of 3. Rebecca Scott (2004:154-55) writes of working with lists of rebel soldiers: “Pains-taking scrutiny was necessary because racial labels almost never appear on lists of this kind. The strength of the trans-racial, or race-blind ideal of nationalism was such that Cuban separatists generally declined to record racial attributions when drawing up recruitment lists, and the victorious Cuban nationalists also refrained from including them when they compiled nominal records of rebel veterans. In effect, the written record was intentionally designed to ratify José Martí and Antonio Maceo’s principle of race-blindness. It thus erased evidence of racial distinctions.”
tradition meant that even decades after independence, Catholic baptismal records continued to be far more representative of the general population than civil registries. Cubans – even though not a particularly religious people – were more likely to take a newborn before the parish priest than before a notary. Thus, well into the twentieth century, Catholic sacramental documents were a primary means by which individuals established their identity and origins, publicly, officially, and in perpetuity.

During the era of Spanish rule, status distinctions pertaining to color and to birth status (or legitimacy) were fundamental to determining one’s place in the social hierarchy. The key dichotomy, between slave and free, was heavily racialized, and to be classified as *mulato* or *negro* was to be associated with the taint of slavery. A child’s birth status – as *legítimo*, *ilegítimo*, or *natural* – was linked to different legal entitlements and degrees of honor or stigma as well. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, legitimacy was a key signifier with which notions of race were co-articulated. Cubans of color were often born to unwed parents, and both illegitimacy and African descent were markers of dishonor.

The church played an important role in the maintenance and transformation of status hierarchies pertaining to color and to birth. As a gatekeeping institution, the Church held unparalleled authority to certify the ancestry and origins of members of the population and to weigh in on the politics of morality and respectability. The historical archive of the archdiocese of Havana contains hundreds of cases dating from the 1890s to 1940, testifying to the importance of Catholic sacramental documents to public and to private affairs on the island. In these documents, women, men, children and grandchildren, their lawyers and employers, school administrators, judges, and other priests solicited evidence of a formal marriage, baptism, or paternity; or requested that small changes, usually concerning birth status or surnames, be made to records that had often been established decades before. I supplement the data from the parish registers with evidence from these cases in order to help establish the moral, legal, and social context in which the documents were maintained.

**Into the Archives**

I began my work in the archives motivated by a strong interest in examining the relationships between race, gender, and sex. The lack of attention to gender in Cuban social histories – either in their own right, or in connection to the issue of race – was to me particularly glaring. To date there are no large-

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4. The diocese of Havana was elevated to an archdiocese in 1925, thus the terms employed in this article (diocese/archdiocese, bishop/archbishop) will vary based on the period in question.
scale studies of marriage, gender, or the family in Cuba between the end of Spanish sovereignty and the socialist revolution (1898-1959).5

Thus the original aim of the research was to provide demographic information on race and family in the Cuban republic. I also sought to use marriage and reproduction as lenses through which to elucidate the structure and dynamics of the social construct of race. Over the course of two years, I collected data from some 14,500 marital registers and 35,000 baptismal records seated in three historic parishes in the city of Havana.6

I carried out two kinds of analysis of the documents. The first entailed a quantitative study of trends in formal marriage and reproduction according to race, place of birth, socioeconomic status, and legitimacy. The basic questions that I asked of the data were who married whom, and under what conditions? The second-level analysis, which is the focus of this article, entailed a study of the ways that the documents themselves were constructed. Specifically, I examined the uses of different social ascriptors by priests and scribes to indicate race and legitimacy in parish records.

I became interested in thinking about the logic of social ascription in the documents following several months of research in the archives. After reading through a half-century of marital and baptismal records in a number of Cuban parishes, it seemed to me that the documents themselves begged to be analyzed. How had they been constructed? Why did priests and scribes choose certain terms to describe color and birth status over others? What kinds of data were included, and which seemed to be systematically omitted, and why? What clues might the ways that race and legitimacy were marked in the documents give us about the connections between race, gender, and sexuality in Cuban society? In the next sections of the article, I offer a discussion of the trends that I found, as well as my observations and working hypotheses about what they meant.

5. The existing studies focus either on the colonial period or on the Castro era. See Guanche 1987, 1999; de la Fuente 1990; Sierra Madero 2002; Barcia 2003; Morrison 2007; Vera Estrada 1997; Reca Moreira et al. 1990, Benitez Pérez 1999, 2003; Pérez Rojas 1979; and Catasús Cevera 1994. Lynn Stoner’s From the House to the Streets (1991) is an examination of the predominantly white, upper- and middle-class feminist movement of the 1920s and 1930s. While this detailed study provides a crucial starting point for discussions of women and politics in republican Cuba, it includes little discussion of day-to-day gender relations on the island and is largely silent on the issue of race.

6. The church of el Espíritu Santo in la Habana Vieja is Havana’s oldest surviving church, having been built in 1638 by free Blacks and Mulattos. Nuestra Señora de la Caridad in Centro Habana, formerly known as Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, was founded in 1739. Sagrado Corazón de Jesús in the Vedado neighborhood was founded in 1892, just before last war of independence (1895-1898).
The records I reviewed invoked a rich and shifting variety of terms to describe the race and birth status of the persons found therein, reflecting a preoccupation with color and rank that characterized Cuban society in general. Racial difference was signaled in nineteenth-century Church registries in a variety of ways. At the most basic level was the physical separation of the documents. Records of Whites were seated in libros de españoles or blancos, and those of non-Whites were found in libros de pardos y morenos.

The former set of books contained the registers of Cuban-born Whites, Spanish immigrants, and persons from other parts of Europe, Latin America, and Asia – in short, anyone not marked by African ancestry.7 Biracial baptisms (common) and interracial marriages (very uncommon) were seated in the registers of people of color. Nineteenth-century registers of blancos provided place of birth, birth status, and other details, but color terms were not used. In the registers for Blacks and Mulattos, however, it was a different story. Consider for example the 1890 marriage of José Simeón and Inés Francisca, celebrated at the Cathedral of Havana:

On the twenty-ninth day of May 1890, in the tabernacle of the Blessed Cathedral of this city … marriage was contracted by the pardo José Felipe Simeón, native of Santiago de las Vegas, single, thirty years old, and resident of this city and this parish, of Obispo street no. 45, son of the parda Silveria César, also native of Santiago de las Vegas, and resident of the same city; and the parda Inés María Francisca, native of this city, thirty years of age, single, dedicated to the work that pertains to her sex, and resident, for the last twenty-six days, of Obispo street no. 45, daughter of the morena Isabel Reyna, also native of this capital and resident of the parish of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe … Don Antonio Cavieses, native of Santander, resident of Obispo Street no. 45, and Don Manuel Lavo, native of Santander, resident of Obispo Street no. 15, were witnesses.8

The register is careful to indicate that the bride has been living with the groom for less than a month – implying that while she may no longer be

7. The exact sorting of records varied from parish to parish. De la Fuente, for example, found that in the parish of the Cathedral of Havana, the marriages of slaves and other free persons of color in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were found in the registros de españoles. The placement of the Chinese in the registros de blancos – while the census listed them as people of color – reflects the ambiguity that existed concerning the racial status of the Chinese in Cuban society. See also discussion in Martinez-Alier (1989:76-77).
8. Obispado de la Habana, Legajo 140, Expediente 99, October 5, 1908. Sobre enmienda en la partida de matrimonio de Agapito José Felipe Simeón Cesar con Inés María Francisca Reina.
a virgin, the marriage has taken place in a timely enough manner that her honor is not called into question (Socolow 2000). Note also that while the race of the bride, groom, and both mothers is listed, explicit color terms are not used for the Spanish-born witnesses. The race of the Spaniards was nevertheless indicated through the use of the title “Don” before their names, a courtesy not extended to the others who appear in the record. The governor of Havana ruled only in 1893 that Don and Doña could be applied to Blacks and Mulattos in official documents. Previously, the use of these titles was restricted to high-status Whites (Hevia 1996).

The marriage between José and Inés took place in the postabolition period. Under the regime of slavery, however, the law had stipulated that all slaves must be baptized (Perera Díaz & Mériño Fuentes 2006:64). Baptismal records served “as proof of the legal and economic bond between the enslaved and their owners” (Morrison 2007:60). Thus the registros of pardos and morenos further indicated whether the persons therein were slave or free. Consider the language found in the 1870 record of María Luisa Gutiérrez:

On Sunday, 20 November of 1870, I, Father Don José Martínez y Folgueras, solemnly baptized and applied holy oils to a párabra morena, who, as has been authorized by the Courts of the Nation, is free, and who was born on the thirtieth day of August, daughter of an unknown father, and of Lorenza Criolla, slave of Don Tomás Gutiérrez.9

See also the 1879 baptism of Domingo Crespo, which took place in the parish of Aguacate, Havana:

On June 11, 1879, I, D. Justo Alentado, parish priest, solemnly baptized a free-born párulo, son of an unknown father, and the pardagustina

9. Arzobispado de la Habana, Legajo 185, Expediente 31, February 11, 1941. Expediente de bautismo de María Luisa Gutiérrez. María Luisa’s baptismal record references the Moret Law of 1870, aka the “free womb” law. This law declared that though slavery was not abolished (it remained in place until 1886), all children born from September 1868 forward to women held in bondage were themselves free (Scott 1985). The use of surnames in documents pertaining to María Luisa’s case is also quite interesting. In 1941, at the age of 71, the parishioner wrote to the Archbishop of Havana requesting that her surname be modified in her baptismal record. She stated that Criolla was not her mother’s legal surname, but simply a term used to distinguish slaves born on the island (criollos, or Creoles) from those born in Africa (bozales). Upon receiving her freedom, María’s mother had adopted the surname of her master, Gutiérrez, and María Luisa had taken that surname as well. Thus she asked to be referred to not as Criolla, but as Gutiérrez in her baptismal record, and in “any future certifications pertaining to my birth” – presumably regarding a pension or inheritance. The Archbishop accepted María Luisa’s reasoning, on the grounds that it was costumbre reconocida (a known custom) for slaves to take the surnames of their masters.
Crespo, native and resident of this parish. . . . I named this párulo DOMINGO TOMÁS LEOPOLDO, and his godparents were the free pardos Tomás Hernández and his wife Adela Hernández.10

Fathers listed as “unknown” in baptismal records were often in fact well known to the mothers, and to others in the parish (Perera Díaz & Meriño Fuentes 2006).11 But there were many reasons that a father might be listed as “unknown.” First, of course, was genuine uncertainty on the part of the mother, or inconvenient circumstances of conception (such as adultery or incest). In many cases, Church officials simply refused to acknowledge the relationship between men and children born out of wedlock (Perera Díaz & Meriño Fuentes 2006). Though the Crown decreed in 1837 that men who admitted paternity of their natural children should be listed in the baptismal record (Morrison 2007), the colonial Church was slow to implement this policy. In some parishes, unwed fathers continued to be listed as incógnito or desconocido through the 1890s.

Once the names of natural fathers began to appear in baptismal records, however, Church policy was actually substantially ahead of the law. According to Castilian custom, legitimate children bore two surnames – the first being that of the father and the second, that of the mother. Prior to 1940, the use of a double surname was only legally sanctioned for those whose parents were married, or those whose fathers had officially recognized them before a notary.12 In early-twentieth-century Church records, however, natural children whose fathers admitted paternity were always inscribed with the surnames of both their parents. In the register of the parish of Regla, for example, is found the May 1904 baptism of José Ajón y Balloveras (no race provided). He is listed as the natural son of José Ajón, native of Canton, China, and Clara Balloveras y Rojas, White, age nineteen, and native of Regla. As his parents were unmarried, legally, the child was not entitled to carry his father’s name. This shift in Church policy, permitting natural children to carry the apellido of the father, was a decisive step towards deconstructing the hierarchies associated with birth status in the new republic.

11. Take the case of Lúz Parada y Barrio, baptized in 1898 in the parish of Santo Ángel Custodio in Habana Vieja. Though Lúz was inscribed as the daughter of a woman from Orense, Spain, and a padre desconocido, her father, also a Spaniard, legally recognized her when she turned sixteen. Obispado de la Habana, Legajo 150, Expediente 1, July 3, 1914, Parroquia del Santo Ángel Custodio. Sobre reconocimiento de hijo natural á favor de Luz Dolores Josefa Parada.
12. Rebecca Scott describes the use of double surnames as “the classic Iberian signal of legitimate descent” (Scott 2004:161).
But let us again consider the colonial-era baptisms of Domingo Crespo and María Gutiérrez, cited earlier. One very curious finding of my research, which I have not found reference to elsewhere in the literature, was that babies of color were sometimes referred to as *párvulos* (spelled with a “v” or a “b”), rather than as *niños*. In addition to numerous cases found in the archive of the archdiocese of Havana, this label was used in records from the parish of Sagrado Corazón del Vedado, for every baptism of a non-white baby through the year 1902. I also found references to *párvulos morenos* or *párvulos pardos* in a number of the late-nineteenth-century baptismal records from the Casa de la Maternidad which took in abandoned and orphaned children.

*párvulo* translates as infant or toddler, but also as small or “runty.” The term was applied to infants of color both slave and free, legitimate and natural, baptized at any age. In this case the word had clear racial connotations, as it always accompanied the color terms *pardo* or *moreno*. This discovery is similar to Michael Zeuske’s (2002) finding that in turn-of-the-century Cienfuegos, Cuba, notaries and judges used the phrase “*sin otro apellido*,” or “*s.o.a.*” (no other surname) to indicate the illegitimacy and African descent of the persons who came before them. The key difference is that “*s.o.a.*” was a “hidden marker” of status, used instead of an explicit racial label, while here, *párvulo* was used to emphasize an inferior condition.

Thus in late-colonial-era sacramental documentation, there were many ways that blackness and illegitimacy were marked. Records were placed in separate registers. Color terms were used consistently, but only for non-Whites. Fathers who may have been in long-term consensual unions (or even present at the baptism) were listed as “unknown.” A baby of color might be described as a *párvulo* rather than as a *niño*. And in records established prior to abolition, the condition of slave or free was carefully denoted by the priests. As Martínez-Alier (1989:72) writes of nineteenth-century Cuba, color and birth status “were conceived not as attributes conclusive in themselves but as mere outward ‘signs’ of a deeper condition.”

**Race, Legitimacy, and the Casa de la Maternidad**

In the city of Havana, second August 1895: I . . . acting chaplain of the Royal House of Maternity of the Blessed Mary and Saint John, solemnly baptized a baby girl, classified by Don José R. Montalvo, doctor at this Establishment, as belonging to the white race, who was left (*expuesta*) at the front door, and represented as having been born two months ago, on the twelfth day of June, at three in the afternoon, and I named her ANTONIA DE PADUA, and to her corresponds the surname Valdes.13

13. Casa de la Beneficencia y Maternidad, Libro de Bautismos 1885-1910, Record no. 675, Antonia de Padua Valdes.
Baptismal records from Cuba’s home for foundlings – the Casa de Beneficencia y Maternidad – offer a fascinating glimpse into the ways that ancestry and rank were marked for those whose origins were unknown. Founded in 1687 by Father Diego Evelio de Compostela, the Casa de Beneficencia y Maternidad was administered jointly by Church and Crown (Alfonso y García 1920). Babies might be sent to the institution by judges, police, or grandparents who could not care for them. The great majority of those taken into the Casa, however, were placed anonymously in a turnstile doorway (expuesto por el torno) at the front of the building, with a note pinned to their garments (see Figure 1).

The note contained details on the place and time of birth and the purported racial origins of the infant. Most offered a first name to the priest who would carry out the baptism. One function of the note was to allow for the possibility that babies might be reunited with family members who would later claim them, or placed with others whom the parents had designated as guardians. The famous mulatto poet known as Plácido, for example, was baptized at the Casa de la Maternidad in 1809, under the name Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés. Plácido had been abandoned at the Casa by his Spanish-born mother, the dancer Concepción Vázquez. Several months later, he was retrieved by his father, the free Mulatto Diego Ferrer Matoso, who raised and educated him (Buscaglia-Salgado 2003:220-21).

Like Cecilia, the mulatta protagonist of Cirilo Villaverde’s famous novel, and the poet Plácido, babies left anonymously at the Casa were given the single surname of Valdés (without an accent over the “e”), after the Cuban Bishop Fray Geronimo Valdés. Though priestly in origin, this surname, ironically, branded its recipients with an open marker of dishonor. Both canon and civil law recognized various degrees of illegitimacy (discussed later on), and in the eyes of colonial-era elites, those whose ancestry was entirely unknown were profoundly inferior. The Cuban National Archives contains the records of numerous parents from elite families objecting to marriages between their children and others bearing the surname Valdés. As one nineteenth-century official remarked, children abandoned at the Casa de la Maternidad were generally presumed to be “the result of a punishable and wicked union, or of obscure quality and contaminated origin.” They were thus “treated with the

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14. The institution carried various names throughout the colonial period – La Casa Cuna, La Casa de Expósitos, La Casa Real de la Maternidad, and finally La Casa de Beneficencia y Maternidad. In 1852, the Casa was moved to San Lázaro and Belascoín streets in Centro Habana, the location currently occupied by the Hermanos Almeijeiras hospital.

15. In 1844, Plácido was assassinated by firing squad for his alleged participation in the slave revolt known as La Conspiración de la Escalera (Helg 1995:39-40).
greatest disdain and considered as bastards, spurious, incestuous, and adulterous” (quoted in Martinez-Alier 1989:84).

Despite the much higher rate of illegitimacy among Blacks and Mulattos, relatively few non-white babies were taken into the Casa. There are two explanations for this phenomenon. First, colonial-era Catholic charitable institutions were not particularly welcoming to Cubans of color. When the home for the indigent and orphaned (La Casa Real de Beneficencia) was founded in 1792, for example, the decision was made that the institution would serve only Whites. The reasoning was as follows:

As the class of free people of color is so numerous, to adequately shelter these individuals, to feed them, to educate them, and to put them to work, entirely separately from the whites, would be to incur excessive costs; and to mix the members of both races together in a single locale, and in the same professions, would make the Institution odious, and among the Whites it would be regarded as a permanent affront to have been educated in such a place, or to have resided in it for a time. (quoted in Alfonso y García 1920:15)

Perhaps just as important, however, was the social function of the Casa de la Maternidad. The anonymity offered by the institution aimed to protect the honor of families from the higher rungs of society. For women in the lowest social classes, relinquishing unwed children to the Casa would have had little social utility. This was especially true for women of color. In an age in which those with ancestral ties to Africa were considered to be “stained” or “tainted,” and “no hay tamarindo dulce ni mulata señorita” (there is no sweet tamarind nor virgin Mulatta) was a common proverb, mulatas and negras simply had less honor, or status, to lose in the first place (Martinez-Alier 1989:xv). Thus, most of the relatively few pardo babies taken into the Casa were – like Cecilia Valdes – likely the offspring of white men or women from the upper rungs of society.

Given the shadowy origins of infants left at the Casa, the issue of racial classification was a tricky one. Unlike the parishes, the Casa de la Maternidad placed all baptisms in single registers – presumably because there were very few babies whose whiteness was considered to be proven beyond a shadow of a doubt. In 1895, all 32 of the babies baptized were listed as al parecer pardo (pardo in appearance), al parecer de color (colored in appearance), or clasificado como blanco por el Doctor (classified as white by the doctor). By 1898 the judgment of the medical establishment was no longer employed, but priests continued to label babies as only “white in appearance” through

16. The Casa de Beneficencia and the Casa de Maternidad were joined in 1852.
1904. In one baptism from that year, the priest noted that the baby had been left “with a note that claimed he was the son of white parents.” And according to the text of the 1904 baptism of Felipe Jesús Alfredo Valdes, the priest did not know what race he belonged to (no sé especificar la raza). Soon after, racial labels began to disappear from these records, as the clergy at La Maternidad seemed to give up on the “science” of racial classification all together. The apellido, Valdes, however, remained the primary indelible marker of status.

Figure 1. Nuns receive a baby left in the torno (from Alfonso y García 1920, unnumbered page, located between pp. 44 & 45).

17. See also discussion of the racial classification of foundlings in nineteenth-century Cuba in Martínez-Alier (1989:72).
The transition from the era of Spanish domination to independence brought about important changes in the uses of race in ecclesiastical archives. In each of the parishes I visited, segregation in the recording of the sacraments ceased by 1904. In August of that year, Havana-born Bishop Pedro González de Estrada issued a circular to the churches under his authority, explaining that the dawning of a new era required the Church join Whites and non-Whites in single registers. He wrote:

Previous circumstances required the Church in this diocese to maintain double books due to the racial difference; but today, these circumstances have come to an end. . . . From this date forth, double books of Whites and others of color are abolished.

It is curious that the “circumstances” requiring the Church to maintain separate registers had not been declared to have come to an end earlier – either in 1880, when slavery was abolished, in 1881 when restrictions on interracial marriage were lifted, or in 1898 with the defeat of the Spanish empire. From 1899-1903, as the Church, now formally separated from Spain, underwent a phase of reorganization, the Boletín was not published. Therefore the decision to unite the books across the diocese could have come at any time between 1899 and 1904. It may, for example, have come in 1902, with the inauguration of the republic.

It should be noted that the Church did not declare in 1904 that racial terms should no longer be used in sacramental records. In fact, it was only once Whites and non-Whites were placed in the same registers that the term blanco began to appear in the documents. Previously “unmarked,” the use of racial labels for Whites became important only when clearer divides were eliminated.

The terminology used to describe Cubans of color in the republic shifted as well. In 1893, the Directorio Central de las Sociedades de la Raza de Color, a collective of black and mulatto civic organizations, succeeded in suppress-
ing the use of *pardo* and *moreno* in official documents (Zeuske 2002). At the Directorio’s request, the Spanish Governor decreed furthermore that the honorific titles of Don and Doña were no longer reserved only for Whites. Along with the ideology of race-blind nationalism, these decrees contributed to the removal of color labels from military records and other civil documents from the late nineteenth century forward.

Race-blind practices were not adopted by the Catholic Church however. As already mentioned, the implicit marker of whiteness – “Don” – was replaced by the open marker *blanco* in parish records. Furthermore, as colonial-era terms to mark Cubans of color were eliminated, they were replaced with others. *Pardo* and *moreno* gave way to *mestizo*, *negro*, or the blanket term *de color*. While the shift from one set of labels to another was sometimes fairly abrupt, there was no consistency across the diocese. In Sagrado Corazón del Vedado, for example, *moreno* continued to be used in marital registers, along with the term *negro* through the 1920s.

Sometimes more than one analogous racial term might be found in a single register. Take for example the December 1904 inscription of María Hortensia Valdes, in the parish of Regla. The note in the margin of her baptism lists Maria as *parda*, while the text of the register describes her as a *niña de color*. Her mother is Rosa Valdes y Valdes, described as *mestiza*. As indicated by her surnames, Rosa had been raised in the Casa de la Maternidad.22 *Pardo* and *moreno* lapsed entirely from usage in each of the parish registers I reviewed by the mid-1920s. In the books of the Casa de Beneficencia y Maternidad, for example, the final instance of *moreno* was found in September 1922.23

The use of the term *mestizo* in the documents merits discussion. By the early twentieth century, *mulato* was the more commonly used term to refer to mixed-race persons in the wider society, yet it was entirely absent from the thousands of baptismal and marital records that were reviewed.

There are no indications to be found in the *Boletín* of the diocese as to why this was the case. Like *pardo*, *moreno*, *Don* and *Doña*, however, *mestizo* was almost certainly an honorific appellation. Historian Rebecca Scott (2004:161) refers to *mestizo* as a “genteele” label in turn-of-the-century Cuban usage. Alejandro de la Fuente suggests that the particular magic of the label *mestizo* was that it made no allusion to African ancestry. He writes, “It was

22. Interesting is Rosa’s use of the double surname “Valdes y Valdes.” Most babies raised in the home for foundlings carried only a single surname. As the baptismal record lists Rosa’s father and mother as “La Casa de la Maternidad” she would have only been legally entitled to the use of one *apellidos*. See baptism of María Hortensia Valdes, Nuestra Señora de Regla, Libro 21 de Bautismos de Pardos y Morenos, Record no. 268, December 1904.

23. See Casa de la Beneficencia y Maternidad, Libro de Bautismos 1911-1932, Record no. 736.
precisely the ambiguity of the term that made it attractive. In opposition to other racial labels such as *negro* or *mulato*, deemed to be more precise in Cuban racial imagery, the denomination *mestizo* had the virtue of detaching a significant portion of the Cuban population from blackness” (de la Fuente 2001:32). Depending on the context then, the term *mulato* might be construed as offensive, as it implied an ancestral connection to Africa and to slavery. *Mestizo* was preferred because of its euphemistic imprecision.

I further suggest that for many of those considered to be *negro* in their daily lives, *mestizo* was often the “euphemism” used to describe them in sacramental documents as well. Sheer numbers would suggest that this was the case. In the parish of the Espíritu Santo, for example, 81 percent of babies of color baptized in every third year between 1901 and 1940 were recorded as *mestizo* (N = 939), whereas in the parish of la Caridad in Centro Habana, the figure soared to 91 percent (N = 2789).24 Population estimates from the censuses of 1907-1943, on the other hand, put “mixed race” Cubans in the city of Havana at just over 60 percent of Cubans of color – nowhere near the figures reflected in baptismal records.25

I do not mean to imply that the census is an “objective” or “neutral” indicator of racial status, while the parish registry is not. Like priests and scribes, census enumerators would have applied racial labels through a social process of attribution, influenced by culture, context, and individual assessments.26 However, I would argue that the census contains a more “accurate” count of

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24. While marital records were selected from each year, baptismal records were chosen at three-year intervals. Phase one of case selection entailed a complete count of the registers found in each of the selected years (P = 35,256 baptisms and 14,348 marriages). During phase one I collected data on the race, only, of every member of the population, as represented in Tables 1 and 2. Phase two of data collection involved gathering very detailed information from a racially stratified sample of the records, which employed an oversample of non-Whites (N = 3,680 baptisms and 906 marriages). Sample weights for each of the racial strata were calculated based upon their proportion in the full population and employed in statistical tests as was appropriate.

25. The proportion of Cubans of African descent residing in Havana listed as *mestizo* in each of the censuses for which data are available was as follows: 1907 (published in 1908), 58% (P = 42,753); 1919 (published in 1920), 63% (P = 48,423); 1931 (published in 1932), 63% (P = 76,280); and 1943 (published in 1945), 60% (P = 101,230). City-level data are not available for 1899, however nationally, census enumerators counted 270,805 “mixed-race” Cubans (54%) compared to 234,738 “Blacks.”

26. See Telles (2004) for an excellent discussion of the challenges inherent in using the color labels found in the modern Brazilian census to make claims about the changing racial composition of the population.
the race of the population and that the totals found in parish documents result from many individuals being “whitened.”

My reasoning is this. The census is an impersonal, largely anonymous measure of the aggregate characteristics of a population. Baptismal and marital records, on the other hand, were immediate, individual records of a person’s lineage and history. Ceremonies were performed in a context of family and neighborhood ties, in parishes where individuals and their families had often lived for generations (Perera Diaz & Meriño Fuentes 2006). Quite unlike the census, parish records would be referred to by individuals and their descendants for generations. And given the clear stigma associated with the label _negro_ in the period under study, many Cubans of color surely sought to avoid it. Thus, I suggest, racial labels in parish documents were often applied in such a way as to hide or diminish the African ancestry of darker-skinned babies and spouses – and to thereby _honor_ them in the process.

After the 1900s, parishes across the diocese of Havana also began to use the titles Don and Doña in reference to Blacks and Mulattos. This shift, as well as the joining of Whites and non-Whites in single registers, and getting rid of the labels _pardo_ and _negro_, but replacing them with others, may be seen as part of a dialectic of inclusion and exclusion characterizing race relations in the wider society during the first republic (de la Fuente 2001). Another aspect of this dialectic is discussed further.

**Counterpart to Race: Marking Legitimacy**

I found over ten different labels to indicate legitimacy in the parish records. Like race, birth status was understood to indicate something fundamental about the “quality” of one’s origins. In canon law, birth status was not binary, but rather a highly internally stratified concept. At the very top of the hierarchy were _hijos legítimos_, or children of couples married by the Catholic Church.

27. It is possible that the discrepancies were due to the fact that Blacks and Mulattos were not baptized in equal proportions – though the long-standing practice of baptizing slave babies (for reasons religious, legal, and economic) mitigates against the likelihood that the proportions would be skewed too dramatically (Morrison 2007). We might also expect figures from the census to vary from those based on baptismal records due to the simple fact that Catholic baptisms recorded only the births of babies in any given year, while the census enumerated all living residents of an area. These caveats aside, the extremely high proportion of babies of color labeled as _mestizo_ in parish documents, compared to much lower estimates based on the census is quite curious.

28. My research thus contradicts Aline Helg’s claim that in early-twentieth-century Catholic baptismal and marital registries “only whites’ names were preceded with the appellation Don or Doña” (Helg 1995:99).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1900s</th>
<th>1910s</th>
<th>1920s</th>
<th>1930s &amp; 1940</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blanco</strong></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>7377</td>
<td>5757</td>
<td>5861</td>
<td>20,996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60% baptisms</td>
<td>9.5% blancos</td>
<td>35.1% blancos</td>
<td>27.4% blancos</td>
<td>27.9% blancos</td>
<td>100% blancos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Libro de españoles</strong></td>
<td>1551</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5% baptisms</td>
<td>100% españoles</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100% españoles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pardo</strong></td>
<td>460</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3% baptisms</td>
<td>98.3% pardos</td>
<td>1.7% pardos</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100% pardos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moreno</strong></td>
<td>160</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5% baptisms</td>
<td>100% morenos</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100% morenos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mestizo</strong></td>
<td>272</td>
<td>1612</td>
<td>951</td>
<td>999</td>
<td>3834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11% baptisms</td>
<td>7.1% mestizos</td>
<td>42% mestizos</td>
<td>24.8% mestizos</td>
<td>26.1% mestizos</td>
<td>100% mestizos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negro</strong></td>
<td>87</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7% baptisms</td>
<td>14.7% negros</td>
<td>34.6% negros</td>
<td>18.9% negros</td>
<td>31.8% negros</td>
<td>100% negros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>De color</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>941</td>
<td>1537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3% baptisms</td>
<td>17.2% de color</td>
<td>21.6% de color</td>
<td>61.2% de color</td>
<td>100% de color</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amarillo</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.3% baptisms</td>
<td>10.7% amarillos</td>
<td>21.4% amarillos</td>
<td>45.6% amarillos</td>
<td>22.3% amarillos</td>
<td>100% amarillos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not listed</strong></td>
<td>1339</td>
<td>1555</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>2181</td>
<td>6025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.1% baptisms</td>
<td>22.2% not listed</td>
<td>25.8% not listed</td>
<td>15.8% not listed</td>
<td>36.2% not listed</td>
<td>100% not listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>5881</td>
<td>11043</td>
<td>8139</td>
<td>10193</td>
<td>35,256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.7% baptisms</td>
<td>31.3% baptisms</td>
<td>23.1% baptisms</td>
<td>28.9% baptisms</td>
<td>100% baptisms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Primary racial classification of all individuals baptized in every third year between 1901 and 1940, in the parishes of Sagrado Corazón de Jesús in el Vedado, el Espíritu Santo in la Habana Vieja, and Nuestra Señora de la Caridad, in Centro Havana (P = 35,256). Babies in the second category down were not categorized by race, but were found in registers reserved for the baptisms of Whites (libros de españoles) through 1904.
They were followed by *hijos de uniones civiles* (children of civil unions) whose parents had been married by the state. While the offspring of canon and civil marriages were equal before the law, they were not equal in the eyes of the Church. In the 1890s and 1900s, the *Boletín Eccleástico* condemned civil marriage as “a form of concubinage” (Logan 2008). In early-twentieth-century baptismal records, priests often inscribed children of civil marriage as *hijos de padres unidos tan solo por lo civil* (a child of parents who are only civilly united) – but never as *hijos legítimos*.

Just below babies born to civilly married parents in the ecclesiastical hierarchy were *hijos naturales*. An *hijo natural* was the child of a couple that *could have* been married at the time of birth, but was not. As stated earlier, after the mid-nineteenth century, natural children were baptized with the surnames of *both* parents, despite the fact that these children were not legally entitled to carry their father’s surnames. An *hijo natural reconocido* was a natural child that had been legally recognized by his/her father. The turn-of-the-century civil code stipulated that such children could use two surnames in legal documents and were entitled to one-half of the amount of any inheritance that legitimate children might receive (U.S. War Department 1900:118).29 There is little evidence, though, that the Church regarded them substantially differently than *hijos naturales*.

While the majority of parishioners in sacramental documents were described as *legítimo* or as *natural*, other terms were employed as well. Babies and spouses were sometimes listed as *hijos adoptivos* (adopted children), *hijos expósitos*, or *hijos de la Casa de Maternidad* (foundlings). In the last, most stigmatized category were *hijos ilegítimos*. “Illegitimate,” as opposed to “natural” children, were those whose parents could *not* have married at the time of conception, because they had faced a canonical impediment (i.e., one was married, or a member of the clergy, or the parents were related within three degrees of consanguinity). The highly pejorative label *ilegítimo* was very rarely found in parish records. For most truly “illegitimate” children, birth status was probably simply omitted from the register all together.

Rates of legitimacy varied dramatically by race. In Havana marital records from 1901-1940, 93 percent of white men and 92 percent of white women were classified as legitimate, compared to only 29 percent of men and 23 percent of women of color. The “alarmingly” high rate of unwed births was a major issue of concern for middle-class social reformers of color at the turn of the twentieth century (Castellanos & Castellanos 1990; de la Fuente 2001; Logan 2005). In Cuban society, the stigma associated with illegitimacy was greatest among those higher in social rank, thus explaining the

29. Even if the deceased person had no legitimate heirs, the natural children were entitled only to half of the estate.
preponderance of “apparently” white babies left at the steps of the Casa de la Maternidad through the 1910s.

Recorded birth status mattered tremendously to members of the archdiocese of Havana. From the 1900s onward, parishioners submitted hundreds of petitions requesting modifications to baptismal records, as paternity was confirmed or as couples married. In 1908, for example, the thirty-five-year-old laborer Juan Pérez and his wife Dolores Miranda, age twenty-four, wrote to the Bishop:

We were married on the fifteenth of this month, in this church, [but] because of our previous illicit relations, we have two children, one Antonio, born on the eighth of June 1903, whose baptism listed him as a natural child, and the other Felicia, who was born on the twenty-sixth of May of 1905, and whose baptismal record only recorded the name of her mother, and with this declaration of marriage that we have celebrated, we request that it be noted in the record of the baptism of our children that they have been recognized and legitimized by their father.31

In 1938, another father from el Vedado sought to legitimize the twins that had resulted from his union cuasi-matrimonial (“quasi-matrimonial union”) which was finally legalized when the children were nine.32 Though paternity or marriage may have been previously acknowledged by the state, many parishioners wished the ecclesiastical record to reflect the change as well. In her 1941 petition to the Archbishop, for example, Silvia Esther Avello y Gómez requested that her baptismal record be altered, “so that the perfect relationship (filiación perfecta)” of the woman to her father, “with all its religious effects, is in exact agreement with that which is stated in the Civil Registry.”33

30. Note that wives’ names did not change upon marriage, as they retained the surnames of their parent(s).
33. Arzobispado de la Habana, Legajo 185, Expediente 47. Expediente bautismal de Silvia Esther Avello y Gómez, September 15, 1941.
THE LOGIC OF CONCEALMENT AND COMPROMISE: OMITTING RACE FROM SACRAMENTAL DOCUMENTS

There is a last aspect of sacramental record keeping that will be explored in this article: instances where information on race was missing from the documents. While seeking to understand patterns of family formation among Blacks, Mulattos, and Whites at the turn of the century, I noted that a substantial proportion of Catholic parish records omitted information on color and birth status. After perusing more than 100,000 birth and marital records in the diocese of Havana over the course of two years of research, I became convinced that that omissions of data on race and legitimacy were often deliberate.

There were many reasons that I came to this conclusion. First, the richness and the depth with which labels pertaining to race and to birth status were applied in the vast majority of the sacramental documents I reviewed strongly suggested that for the Catholic clergy, color and legitimacy were basic features by which persons were individuated from one another, nearly as fundamental as their names. In such a status-conscious society, it seemed unlikely that priests would simply “forget” to record the race or birth status of 15 to 20 percent of the population, respectively.

After 1910, once parishes began to use printed forms to record sacramental information, omissions were particularly glaring, as they resulted in blank spaces being left in the registers. Information on color, legitimacy, and paternity was omitted far more often than other, less obviously political or stigmatizing data, such as age, place of residence, place of birth, or the date and location of the ceremony. Consider the case of Inés Hernández, baptized in Regla in 1931 (Figure 2). Her mother’s name is “reserved,” and the record contains no information on race or birth status. The silences here speak loudly, as they imply that she is the formally illegitimate child of her Spanish-born father.34 I began to think of these omissions as a sort of “race-making work” carried out by Church officials. Thus rather than excluding racially “unmarked” persons from my thinking about race, I decided to place them squarely at the center of analysis and to inquire into the patterns and processes according to which race was omitted.

At the 1940 Constitutional Convention, progressive social reformers would prevail upon delegates to declare discrimination by race or color a crime punishable by law (Bronfman 2004:174-78). Furthermore, Article 44

34. It is important to note that all the surrounding records contained information on birth status, ancestry, and color; thus making the omission of this data in this record particularly obvious. The fact that the baptism did not take place until Inés was almost thirteen also suggests that the circumstances of her birth were complicated and controversial — perhaps the father had been married to someone else at the time.
of the new constitution explicitly prohibited the listing of birth status in civil and ecclesiastical registers. In response to these changes, the archdiocese of Havana eliminated legitimacy and race from sacramental documentation in late 1940. In the first four decades of independence, however, I suggest that there were three main instances in which priests and scribes would have excluded racial ascriptions from certain sacramental documents.

Instance one involves a kind of “passing” based upon physical appearance. Racial attributions in Cuba were made based upon phenotype as well as ancestry. The fluidity of racial ascription in Cuba meant that individuals could be on the “margins” of one major group and the next, and that they could fall into one of the “in-between” or “intermediate” categories – such as trigueño, jabao, and blanconazo (all somewhere between blanco and mulato) – which were most common in everyday usage. In late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Cuba, racial terms that implied African ancestry also strongly implied dishonor. As baptismal and marital records established a permanent record of identity and origins, I believe that in some cases, race was omitted for very light-skinned individuals who were considered “almost” (but not quite) White.

Why not simply declare such persons to be white? In colonial Latin America, determinations of whiteness were not made lightly (Twinam 1999). Recall for example that babies abandoned at the doorstep of Cuba’s Casa de la Maternidad were recorded only as being “white in appearance” through the 1900s. Martinez-Alier notes that in late-colonial Cuba, white parents often “attempt[ed] to pass on their prerogatives to their mixed-race offspring … by omitting the coloured [parent’s] name in the registration” of their baptism (Martinez-Alier 1989:83). Many lighter-skinned Cubans, she also claims, themselves sought to avoid being classified as non-White in ecclesiastical and civil records.

I suggest that in twentieth-century sacramental documentation, for individuals who were “nearly white” in appearance, priests may simply have avoided affixing a racial label altogether. The rationale here is similar to the logic of “passing,” as this concept is understood in the scholarship on race in the American precivil rights era (i.e., Goffman 1963). Though unmarked

35. In September 1940, the archdiocese of Havana instructed priests to cease to qualify children as legitimate or natural. For purposes internal to the Church, however, they were permitted to state whether the parents had been married canonically or civilly. On the other hand, if information from a baptismal record were solicited for civil ends, scribes were only to provide a document certifying the date of the birth, date of the baptism, and names of the baby and parents. The 1940 decree did not state explicitly that race should be eliminated from parish records, yet color began to disappear about the same time. See Boletín de las Provincias Eclesiásticas de la República de Cuba, Enero-Febrero 1940, Nos. 1-2, Año XXIX, pp. 86-87.
individuals may not have passed fully into the realm of whiteness, by failing to pin down their racial origins, priests allowed for the possibility that their descendants might become white and escape association with slavery and with Africa entirely.

Almost as important as phenotype in determining race was social status. Thus the second logic of omission is “unmarking” in recognition of achievement or rank. A racial ascription system that is “fluid” and “imprecise” allows context and circumstance to determine which racial labels should be affixed (de la Fuente 2001; Fernandez 1996; Twinam 1999). As Telles (2004:80) writes of Brazil, “whitening centered on a relational system with tensions that were often situationally resolved about who would be classified as white or as whiter than others.” The common adage “money whitens” referred to the fact that those who managed to acquire substantial wealth might also be eligible to move up the racial hierarchy (Hanchard 1999; Hutchinson 1957).

In colonial Cuba, this process was codified into law. A 1795 order issued by the Spanish Crown allowed non-Whites to purchase whiteness – and thereby “become persons of honor” – for a fee which was determined in accordance with their degree of racial mixture (Twinam 1999:19).36 In twentieth-century Cuba, well-to-do light-skinned mulatos might acquire an identity as White, or, as I suggest occurred here, they might also “pass” into the nether zone between the races, entirely defying racial categorization.

The reader may wonder if many of the unmarked persons were individuals born outside of the island who did not fit easily into Cuba’s long-established racial classification system. As I discovered after running cross tabs of race against place of birth, the answer is no. Less than a third of the individuals missing racial information were foreign-born, and nearly all of these were Spanish. Inquiring into the reasons that information on race might have been excluded for individuals born in Spain takes me to a discussion of the third, and perhaps most interesting, theorized logic for the omission of race, pertaining to omissions in the marital records: the imperative of hiding a discrepancy in racial origins.37

**Interracial Unions, Social Prejudice, and the Catholic Church**

In colonial Cuba, long-term consensual unions between white men and women of color were fairly common and generally tolerated; but legal marriage was not. Marriage was a status symbol “reserved for social equals” (Martinez-Alier 1989:xv). In 1776 the Spanish Crown issued a Royal

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36. An even more significant practice than the purchasing of whiteness was the purchasing of legitimacy, around which Twinam’s 1999 study is largely based.

37. One other instance must be mentioned as well. It includes haphazard or accidental omissions of racial data, as well instances of omission that may not have been strictly “random,” but are not pertinent to my interest in the construction of racial difference.
Figure 2. Baptismal record of Inés Hernández, Parroquia de Nuestra Señora de Regla, August 20, 1932. Note that race and legitimacy are missing, and the mother’s name is “reserved.”
Pragmatic requiring parental consent for the marriages of individuals under twenty-five. The aim of the decree was to prevent legal unions between those unequal in rank, on the grounds that such marriages would result in “grave offenses against God the Father, family discord, scandals and other very serious disruptions to the moral and political order” (Konetzke 1962:406).

Over the next century, hundreds of cases were filed before the Cuban courts, as family members sought to prevent their relatives from marrying others considered to be inferior. Most cases involved white parents objecting to the union of their offspring with a lover known, believed, or suspected to have ancestral ties to Africa. For a white woman to be permitted to marry a man of color, she had to be “utterly miserable” in reputation or circumstances. One woman’s marriage was allowed because, as the daughter of a priest, her illegitimate origins “offset her suitor’s inferior color.” Another woman who was permitted to marry her más criada lover had lived openly with him for a decade. Far from imposing an ideology of racial exclusiveness from without, Martinez-Alier (1989) contends, the 1776 Pragmatic only crystallized sentiments deeply rooted within Cuban society. In a society organized around slavery, the “basic line of cleavage” and inequality was race (Martinez-Alier 1989:2-25). And even among mixed-race persons, distinctions of color and phenotype were employed as a means of social differentiation. Thus, the archives contain the records of a number of Cubans of color objecting to their child’s union with a darker-skinned spouse (Martinez-Alier 1989:93).

The interracial marriage restriction was lifted in 1881, a year after the formal abolition of slavery. But social prejudice against these unions remained strong. My review of some 14,500 marriages celebrated between 1901 and 1940 indicates that during the first decades of independence, formal marriages between Whites and non-Whites were very rare. At first glance, 96 percent of marriages appear to be endogamous with regard to race; meaning they took place between individuals who fell into the same racial stratum (see Table 2). Furthermore, the rate of racial endogamy appears to increase over time.

While it is clear that the overwhelming majority of marriages were endogamous, I believe that the apparent rate of racial in-marriage is exaggerated. In many cases, I contend, information on race may have been omitted from marital records in order to hide “inequality” in origins. As the litera-

38. In her study of interracial relationships in contemporary Cuba, Nadine Fernandez found that legal marriages between Whites and non-Whites remain exceptional today. She wrote, “Though laws do not prohibit interracial marriages, social norms continue to make them the minority. Concubinage and consensual unions are far more frequent” (Fernandez 1996:16). Furthermore, despite governmental claims that the problem of race has been “solved” in socialist Cuba, nonmarital relationships continue to provoke “a fury” in white families.
ture cited earlier has indicated, from the point of view of members of the elite classes, formal marriage between unequals was shameful and improper. Calling attention to disparate ancestry in a marital record might thus have been considered to be a pejorative act.

If the social logic of race in Cuba led priests to hide a discrepancy in origins, then there are implications for the composition of the population described as blanco, mestizo, or negro as well. In some instances, I suggest, a mulato engaged to a blanca may have been permitted to adopt his wife’s social race in the register of their marriage. It is much less likely that a person identified as White would have been “downgraded” to mulato. Migration up the hierarchy would have taken place among people of color as well. Darker-skinned negras were likely often characterized as mestiza, in accordance with the color of their spouse, in order to present an appearance of endogamy with regard to color. Alternately, they may have been permitted to move up the hierarchy as a recognition of distinguished status or merit.

Thus I theorize that a substantial number of cross-race or cross-color unions were hidden within the data, in one of three ways: (a) the race of one spouse was omitted (b) the race of both spouses was omitted, or (c) one spouse (generally the “darker” one) was allowed to “adopt” the race of the other.

To understand why Church officials would have gone to the lengths that are suggested in the preceding in order to conceal the ancestry of different individuals, we must consider the history of the colonial Church with regard to the issues of slavery and marriage. While the Catholic Church presented little organized opposition to the institution of slavery, it did, however, take a stronger stand when it came to the issue of interracial marriage. Church officials advocated marriage as a remedy for the widespread practice of concubinage between Whites and non-Whites, which was held to be a mortal sin. Havana Bishop Jacinto Martínez’s advocacy of interracial marriage in the late 1860s was partially responsible for his being expelled from the island.

39. I was first alerted to the possibility that this dynamic may have been at play in Catholic marital records during a conversation with Cuban historian Jorge Ibarra Sr. at his home in November 1999. In this conversation, Ibarra related to me his experience working as an enumerator for the 1953 census in the city of Santiago de Cuba. In numerous cases, he said, couples socially recognized as “interracial” prevailed upon census workers to list them both as being of the same race or color.

40. Most often priests bent to the demands of the planter class that religious duties towards enslaved persons not interrupt the harvest cycle, significantly cut into the workday, or place an undue financial burden upon planters (Maza Miquel 1995; Segreo Ricardo 2000). The Church found its most outspoken critics of slavery in Juan de Espada (Bishop of Havana from 1800-1832) and Padre Felix Varela who lived from 1782 to 1853. For more on the lives and work of Espada and Varela, see García Pons (1951), Figueroa y Miranda (1975), and Varela (1997).
(Martinez-Alier 1989). And when Antonio María de Claret married some 12,000 mostly mixed-race couples during his tenure as the Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba (1850-1859), he provoked the outrage of members of the planter class, who claimed that his actions threatened the equilibrium of society (Marrero 1986). Thus certain sectors of the colonial church evidenced a strong desire to consecrate unwed interracial unions, despite the conflicts that their actions provoked with civil authorities and landed elites.

After 1881, legal barriers to interracial marriages were abolished, but social prejudice against such marriages remained. I suggest that priests began to selectively omit data on race as a strategy of “compromise.” As Martinez-Alier (1989:4) writes of the Church in the nineteenth century, “The Catholic Church did not attack slavery as such, but in its zeal to promote marriage and combat such excrescences of slavery as interracial concubinage, it challenged the social order which produced it.”

Hints from the Archives
Examination of a contingency table constructed with the marital data may shed some light upon the issues discussed (see Table 2). The population consists of all marriages (P = 14,348) solemnized in every year between 1901 and 1940, in the parishes of Nuestra Señora de la Caridad in Centro Habana, Sagrado Corazón de Jesús in el Vedado, and el Espíritu Santo in la Habana Vieja.

Spouses were first grouped into racial strata. Whites were placed in stratum A. Stratum B included all people who were given a racial label but were not classified as White – namely, mestizos, los de color, negros, morenos, pardos, and amarillos. Those whose race was not listed – no matter what their origins – were placed into stratum C. Thus a Spaniard listed as blanco fell into stratum A, and one with no given race fell into stratum C. (As I was interested in the ways that racial labels were applied or omitted, imposing my own logic of race onto the population, by classifying a racially unmarked Spaniard as “White” would have defeated my purpose). Jointly, the three racial strata resulted in nine possible combinations of couples, as found in Table 2.

41. José María Martín de Herrera, Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba from 1875 to 1889, was another activist prelate. He was instrumental in bringing about the 1881 repeal of the ban on interracial marriage (Martinez-Alier 1989).
42. See footnote 24 above for discussion of sampling methodology.
43. The term amarillo was used to refer to men born in China (P = 12). There were no women labeled amarilla in the population. Furthermore, this racial term was never applied to persons of partial Chinese ancestry only. The decision to place amarillo grooms in stratum B with other people of color was based on the convention used in the censuses of 1899, 1907, 1919, 1931, and 1943.
Table 2. Race of Brides and Grooms Contracting Marriage in Havana, 1901-1940

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[A]</td>
<td>11450</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>11721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>98% white men</td>
<td>0.5% white men</td>
<td>2% white men</td>
<td>100% white men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>12% white women</td>
<td>0.5% total</td>
<td>1.5% total</td>
<td>82% all women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>80% total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[B]</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>3.5% men of color</td>
<td>95% men of color</td>
<td>2.5% men of color</td>
<td>100% men of color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Color</td>
<td>0.2% white women</td>
<td>86% women of color</td>
<td>1% women no race</td>
<td>4% all women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.1% total</td>
<td>4% total</td>
<td>0.1% total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[C]</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1746</td>
<td>2038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>13.5% men no race</td>
<td>1% men no race</td>
<td>86% men no race</td>
<td>100% men no race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Race</td>
<td>2.5% white women</td>
<td>2% women of color</td>
<td>89.5% women no race</td>
<td>14% all women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2% total</td>
<td>0.1% total</td>
<td>12% total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11748</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>14348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>82% all men</td>
<td>4.5% all men</td>
<td>13.5% all men</td>
<td>100% all men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% white women</td>
<td>100% women of color</td>
<td>100% women no race</td>
<td>100% all women</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100% total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All marriages taking place every year 1901-1940, in the parishes of Sagrado Corazón de Jesús in el Vedado, el Espíritu Santo in la Habana Vieja, and Nuestra Señora de la Caridad in Centro Havana (P = 14,348). Decimals greater than 0.5 are rounded up.

My basic finding was that the religious marital registration system was in fact overwhelmingly characterized by endogamy with regard to race. Only 4 percent of marriages took place between individuals who were not equally racially ascribed. If we consider only unions in which one partner was specifically labeled as White and the other was labeled mestizo, negro, or amarillo (marital strata AB and BA), then the number of such marriages drops to two-thirds of 1 percent.44

Even given the history of race and marriage in colonial Cuba, this finding is startling. Interracial couples appear to have almost never entered into formal marriage. Though I do believe that rates of interracial marriage were quite low, centuries of open miscegenation (acknowledged in the tripartite racial structure) lead me to view the rate of less than 1 percent with skepticism. In a society characterized by substantial fluidity and negotiability in racial ascription, taboos against interracial marriage would encourage priests

44. There were 76 recorded marriages of white men to women of color, and 20 recorded marriages of men of color to white women. Out of a total of 14,348 marriages between 1901 and 1940 in the three parishes, this is 0.67%.
to conceal discrepancies in the racial origins of spouses. In many cases, I have suggested, inequality in origins was hidden through the omission of data on race. In other cases, men and women of color may have been “whitened” to match the race of their partners.

Rates of in- and out-marriage varied considerably by group. Whites were 98 percent endogamous, with only a 2 percent apparent rate of out-marriage. People of color were 90 percent endogamous and therefore appear to have married out at five times the rate of Whites. Persons with no given race married to a spouse classified as White or non-White constituted 12.5 percent, thus their apparent rate of exogamy was over six times that of Whites. Exogamous pairings among this group, however, were almost surely much higher. In many cases of mixed-race pairings, I believe, the race of both partners would have been omitted; thus using the criterion employed in the current section, they would appear to be “endogamous.” The very large size of strata CC – at 12 percent of all marriages – would seem to strongly support a view that the primary imperative of racial ascription guiding priests and their scribes was to minimize or obfuscate any possible inequality in origins.

Other support for my hypotheses might be found in comparing the sizes of strata AC and CA (white men and women married to persons with no race) to strata AB and BA (white men and women married to persons described as mestizo, negro, or de color). The former strata are much larger than the latter. Such “half markings” involving Whites (listing one spouse as White and leaving out the race of the other) may have allowed for acknowledgement of the whiteness of one partner without overtly shaming their family by calling attention to the African ancestry of the other. Furthermore, such a practice would have made it easier for any of the couple’s offspring to claim the racial status of the white parent in the future (Martinez-Alier 1989:83).

The much larger size of CA (unmarked men and white women) compared to AC (white men and unmarked women) may suggest a gendered asymmetry to the value of whiteness, according to which it would have been a particularly valuable indicator of status for women. Given that in Iberian America, a white woman’s sexual and racial purity were long viewed as integral to the prestige of her family (Martinez-Alier 1989; Caulfield 2000; Fernandez 1996) this hypothesis seems especially plausible.

Lastly, the extremely tiny sizes of the groups CB and BC, unions between non-Whites and individuals with no given race (N = 28), suggest that this kind of marking had very little social utility. Why hide the racial origins of one spouse, if the other was already labeled as a member of a stained and tainted group?
CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding section, I have aimed only to offer suggestions as to the reasons why race may have been selectively omitted from certain sacramental documents. Researchers will be able to come to stronger conclusions by searching for clues outside of the data employed in this study. Approaches that would be fruitful include conducting genealogical studies of certain families to determine whether any of the unmarked or partially marked couples would have been socially considered “interracial,” or searching textual sources for clues concerning the gendered value of whiteness in early-twentieth-century Havana.

If it is true, however, that Church officials often deliberately avoided racial labels for any of the reasons already suggested, then a rich picture of the dynamics of race and marriage in Cuba’s first constitutional era emerges. By omitting information on race, priests would have, for example, allowed higher-status Cubans of color to escape the stigma of African origins, in a vital document certifying ancestry and lineage.

This is not the same as arguing that Cubans of color were provided with an “escape hatch” by which they could “pass” permanently from one side of the color-line to the other (i.e., Degler 1971). The person labeled as mestizo at birth, who became a dentist, and was therefore allowed to “transcend race” in his marital record, would likely nonetheless have been barred from membership in Havana’s elite social clubs, on the grounds that he was still considered to be inferior to others who were, in that arena of social interaction, considered to be “white.”

Thus the practice of “unmarking” race that I highlight here – in that it appears to be deliberate – is not so different from the practices of “marking” discussed by Thomas Holt (1995) and others; in fact I would submit that it is part of the same dynamic. It is also related to the subtle ways of marking race without using racial labels that have been documented by Michael Zeuske (2002) in his work using Cuban notarial archives.

But did “unmarking” race have a particular significance, beyond that understood by theorists who have emphasized that the attribution of racial labels is situational and negotiable? Were there particular settings or circumstances in which this practice might have had special social importance? Consideration of the institutional domain of marriage suggests that we might answer this question in the affirmative. For one, the omission of racial labels could have allowed a couple to formalize an interracial union without directly arousing social indignation. In sum, through its omissions of race, the Church may have permitted certain individuals to “transcend” race; without significantly transforming its meaning, or challenging the hierarchies around which it was built.
MARKING RACE AND LEGITIMACY IN CUBAN CATHOLIC PARISH ARCHIVES 35

REFERENCES


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Language and identity are irrevocably enmeshed. From within the infinitely complex quotidian chaos, language articulates, performs, and expresses experience. Each moment’s mayhem is tamed by the narrative solace of “beginning,” “middle,” and “end” and it is through the articulation of solitary and egoistic experience that isolated “I” becomes known to, and part of, the collective “We.” For Roy Harris, “language-making is … the essential process by which men construct a cultural identity for themselves, and for the communities to which they see themselves as belonging” (Harris 1980:Preface). This sense of “language community” inevitably displaces others beyond the borders of collective expression; shared readings of shared experiences are catalysts for community coalescence and narrative self-defense.

Through perspicacious exploration of the lexicographic landmarks of a language community, therefore, it is possible to map the topography of its collective consciousness and apprehend and analyze the limits of its world. This article is an exploration of the idiom-identity complex in Cuba in the first three decades of the twentieth century, concentrating on an emblematic catalogue of the idiomatic raw material of the Cuban language community: Fernando Ortiz’s vernacular dictionary, *Un catauro de cubanismos* (1923b).

I will analyze Ortiz’s attempt to map Cuba’s lexicographic territory and his exploration of the distance and difference from the metropolitan mother tongue and contested proximity to other etymological shores. The article takes as its antecedent Gustavo Pérez Firmat’s analysis of the *Catauro* as a paramount contribution to the “finding or founding a vernacular voz” (Pérez Firmat 1989:6). Departing from Pérez Firmat’s reading, this article goes on to consider the critical complex of history, geography, and identity within Ortiz’s dictionary. Employing an anthropological understanding of rites of passage as “limens,” I posit 1923 (the year the *Catauro* was published) as a transcendental turning point in Cuba’s history and a liminal moment in the island’s self-cognizance. Through the deployment of a distinctly psychoge-
graphic ontology, I seek to interrogate “the recurrent metaphor of landscape as the inscape of national identity” and to explore the physical and meta-physical frontiers of the Cuban language community (Bhabha 1994:143). Particularly, this article investigates Ortiz’s uprooting of the fixed and tel-luric foundations of identity in favor of the fluid antiessence of oceanic subjectivity. Through this approach, the Cuban coastline will emerge as the liminal location par excellence, “an in-between social space that prompts reflection on self and other” (Dening 1998:170), a fecund threshold from where Fernando Ortiz launches his bold manifesto for Cuba’s linguistic and cultural self-discovery.

**LEXICOGRAPHIC LIFE: AN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS**

A dictionary might seem an unlikely medium through which to deliver a manifesto for expressive autonomy. As Raymond Williams suggests, however, even the most seemingly dispassionate lexicons may have occult agendas:

> The air of massive impersonality which the Oxford Dictionary communicates is not so impersonal, so purely scholarly, or so free of active social and political values as might be supposed from its occasional use. Indeed, to work closely in it is at times to get a fascinating insight into what can be called the ideology of its editors. (Williams 1976:16)

Since 1713 the Real Academia de la Lengua Española (through its *Diccionario*) had charted the official frontiers of the Spanish language from the metropolitan core to the furthest reaches of Empire. Three hundred years on, independence struggles in Hispanic America had forced the edges of Imperial influence back around the peninsula, but the Academy persevered in its “great and ever more difficult labor to conserve and preserve the invaluable treasure of our common language” (Dihigo y López-Trigo 1974:8).

Cuba came late to independence. After two calamitous wars had killed a tenth of the island’s population the military victory over Spain was diluted by the eleventh-hour intervention of the United States. In December 1898, Spain and the United States made peace at the Treaty of Paris, to which the Cubans were only invited as observers, and on 1 January 1899 the U.S. Governor-General moved into the palace recently vacated by the Spanish Capitan-General. Over the next four years of occupation, Cuba was shep-

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1. Except for those quotations from Ortiz’s (1995) *Cuban Counterpoint* and the Catauro’s definition of *guayabo*, which is taken from Pérez Firmat’s (1989) *The Cuban Condition*, all translations from the Spanish are the author’s.
herded towards ever tighter relations with its northern neighbor: the legal system was recalibrated to the U.S. model, translations of U.S. textbooks were used in Cuban schools, and 13,000 U.S. investors bought up 15 percent of Cuban land (Kapcia 2000:60).

This creeping neocolonialism was ratified in the Platt Amendment to the 1901 Army Appropriations Act, subsequently incorporated into Cuba’s first constitution (also 1901). The Amendment gave the United States the constitutional right to intervene in Cuban affairs and on Cuban soil for the “maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property and individual liberty” (Pérez Jr. 1991:52). The economic, cultural, and psychological impact of the Platt Amendment cannot be underestimated. The hard-won distance from Madre España was replaced by stultifying proximity to Uncle Sam. For Louis Pérez Jr., the Amendment gave the United States an authority over Cuba “not unlike sovereignty” (Pérez Jr. 1991:vvii). For Cuban poet Rubén Martínez Villena, the island’s independence was simply stillborn:

Thus far this century, the takeover of this country has increased to such a degree that there is very little that is Cuban left in Cuba save the ridiculous symbols of a fictitious sovereignty: the national anthem and the flag. (Roa & Fernández Retamar 1972:170)

This mediated Cuban Republic was only twelve years old when the Real Academia published the fourteenth edition of its Diccionario. In the quest to forge a vernacular voice from within “the matrix of the mother tongue” (Pérez Firmat 1989:27), whilst simultaneously parrying the bombastic linguistic expansion of “the Americans” (who had semantically conquered both continents in anticipation of a more physical presence south of the Rio Grande, with the Spanish “e” silenced), Cuban lexicographers set about elaborating suplementos to el Diccionario to better express the insular idiosyncrasy and better articulate the peculiarities of Cuban Spanish.

Of course, Cuba was not alone in Hispanic America in seeking equilibrium between strident cultural autonomy and pragmatic acceptance of the linguistic and patrimonial legacy of Spanish colonialism. Other Spanish-speaking countries had produced their own vernacular dictionaries in an effort to add more meaningful lexicographic detail to the Academy’s topography of americanismos. This continental context is specifically alluded to in the introduction to the Catauro, which commends Argentinian, Puerto Rican, and Venezuelan philologists for their efforts to authorize the “indecent voices” heard in the region which, in Ortiz’s opinion, do not debase but rather “fertilize the language.” From the very beginning of his Catauro, Ortiz seems to be issuing an unequivocal warning against linguistic insularity, claiming that:
it is a task little short of impossible to elaborate a vocabulary of Cubanisms or Chilenisms, or Andalusianisms, etc., without an integral Hispano-American plan. Until this is undertaken … we Iberoamericans will continue to claim as specific to Cuba, for example, words that are also heard in Mexico, Quito, Tegucigalpa, Bogota, Lima, or Buenos Aires. (Ortiz 1923b:14)

I will argue, however, that this advocacy of Cuba as part of an Ibero-American cultural archipelago is more ambiguous than it first appears and that Ortiz’s manifesto often straddles the ontological divide between semblance and difference, universality and individuality, with centripetal and centrifugal forces pulling and pushing it towards archipelagic solidarity or insular singularity. In short, the *Catauro* occupies the limen between the open and closed dialectic approaches to archetypal Cuban identity or cubanía.

One of the most notable Cuban supplements to the 1914 *Diccionario* was Constantino Suárez’s *Vocabulario cubano* (1921). The author, who wrote under the pseudonym “Españolito” (Little Spaniard), sought not to undermine the official lexicon’s “supreme authority,” but only add his efforts to the Academy’s foresworn goal to “clean, set, and give splendor” to the Spanish language (Suárez 1921:viii). Ortiz responded to “el Españolito’s” book with his own *Catauro de cubanismos*. For Ortiz, “Cuba has the foul mouth of its hard life” and must staunchly resist any attempts to “clean” *el castellano* (Ortiz 1923b:10). Unlike Suárez, Ortiz does not offer a supplement to the Academy’s authoritative lexicography nor a re-reading of the Americanisms at the edge. Instead, the *Catauro* is a fundamental re-articulation of the Spanish language from within the idiomatic, idiosyncratic, and fundamentally archipelagic frontiers of the Cuban condition.

Despite Ortiz’s self-effacing assertion that his dictionary records nothing more than “a few fruits of this land, collected as we crossed the jungle of the creole tongue” (Ortiz 1923b:vii), it is hardly necessary to read between the *Catauro*’s lines to reveal an ideological approach to identity and its idiomatic articulation. With the title alone Ortiz makes it clear that his dictionary is designed to put carefully chosen and infinitely criollo words into the collective Cuban mouth. Instead of an encyclopaedia or lexicon, Ortiz has written a *catauro* (woven basket for collecting food), an Americanism redolent of aromatic tropical exuberance. A step further into this idiomatic jungle and we are told that the *Catauro* is a catalog, not of voces, frases, or refranes (as in Suárez), but “a tome of lexicographic ‘cubicherías’ [supreme Cuban slang]” (Ortiz 1923b:17). From the opening pages, therefore, it is clear that the *Catauro* offers a most enigmatic map through “the jungle of the Creole tongue” for those not already familiar with the expressive Cuban terrain.2

2. The fact that the first edition of *Un catauro de cubanismos* was not ordered alphabetically, but rather presented in “its naturally unraveled form,” “without any dressing” would not have helped (Ortiz 1923b:vii).
To take one of the most emblematic of Cuban fruits (both culturally and agriculturally) as our initial example, Ortiz’s definition of the guayabo, or guava tree is a neat synthesis of some of the Catauro’s ideological tenets:

\[ \text{Guayabo} – \text{The tree that produces the guayaba, according to the Dictionary of the Academy. Why does it add: In French: goyavier? Does it mean to suggest that it is a gallicism? Really? Well, does the Dictionary by any chance provide the French translation of every word? No? Then out with the goyavier! The etymology, if that is what is being proposed, is not worth a guayaba, as we say. Let’s recall, instead, some of the twenty-two acceptations and derivatives of guayaba, cited by Suárez, that, like guayabal, guayabera, guayabito, would look better in the Castilian dictionary than that inexplicable Frenchified etymology. This guayaba is just too hard to swallow!, and let us thus note, in passing, another cubanism. (Ortiz 1923b:43; translation taken from Pérez Firmat 1989:18) } \]

Not troubling to explain the idiosyncratic guayabas he contemptuously tosses at the academic interpretation of the word,:\(^3\) Ortiz unleashes his “exuberant, tendentious and even fruity” prose in defense of truly Cuban definitions for the fruits of Cuban soil (Pérez Firmat 1989:10). The most important thing for Ortiz is to “decirlo en criollo,” to say it in Creole, to wrest descriptive authority from the distant Academy and its insular acolytes, and consign appropriately “dirty” words to every facet of the island’s mala vida.

In this adherence to the viscerally vernacular lies the kernel of Ortiz’s understanding of Cuban identity. For him, cubanidad, or “the generic condition of being Cuban” (Ortiz, Revista bimestre cubana, cited in Suárez 1996:8), was an off-shore, Academy-driven, and bloodless definition of “Cubanness” to which he responded by nationalizing the semantics and coining cubania to encapsulate “that condition of the soul, that complex of feelings, ideas, and attitudes … that emerge from the island’s very innards” (Suárez 1996:6). Un catauro de cubanismos is Ortiz’s gutsy response to Suárez’s moderate and metropolitan catalogue of cubanidad and is as much an ideological as a lexicographic reflection on the frontiers around the criollo Cuban condition in the early years of the Republic. But before exploring Ortiz’s lexicon further, and in recognition of Peter Jackson’s assertion that “many important social and historical processes take place within language” (Jackson 1989:157), we must anchor the Catauro in the historical context of 1920s Cuba.

\(^3\) Pérez Firmat (1989:160) has the word as an Americanism meaning “lie” or “deceit.”
The *Cuba libre* for which so much had been sacrificed awoke in the early twentieth century to find its industry in the hands of foreigners, its monoculture economy calibrated to satisfy the exogenous sweet tooth, its autonomy infringed by an opprobrious amendment, and its elected representatives distracted from the task of governance by the fabulous fortunes to be pilfered through bogus public works contracts, juicy sinecures, and the national lottery racket. Of the first four Cuban Presidents, the second, General José Miguel Gómez (president from 1909 to 1913), in many ways encapsulated the sordid spirit of the age:

Large, easygoing, tolerant, loving the good life, he was to the Cubans the archetype of their own ideal personalities, the fulfilment of their expansive cigar-smoke daydreams…. Known as the Shark (*Tiburón*), of him the phrase was coined *Tiburón se baña pero salpica* (that is, he knew how to be a friend to friends, a Cuban virtue). (Thomas 2001:301)

Gómez belonged to the heroic generation whose feats in the Wars of Independence guaranteed some initial credibility, even when the empirical evidence suggested malignant moral bankruptcy. By the early 1920s, however, the fervent dream of a true *Cuba libre* had evaporated and many Cubans, particularly young Cubans, began to lose patience with their venerable but venal elder statesmen.

Over the first three decades of the twentieth century, 1923 stands out as a transcendental year in the island’s history, an *annus mirabilis* of radicalism and discontent. In January, the Federación Estudiantil Universitaria (FEU) was formed under firebrand Julio Antonio Mella. Inspired by the 1918 student reform movement in Córdoba, Argentina, the FEU’s first manifesto (10 January 1923) limited itself to educational reform, but Mella’s sanguine speeches spoke to the urge for more profound change on the island:

> I will let my words spill from my mouth, as blood spills from the wound, because my words are blood-soaked and my soul is wounded as I contemplate the University’s present malaise…. I only intended to speak in favor of the reorganization of this University, but perhaps this could become the catalyst for the reorganization of our Cuban homeland. (Mella 1975:41)

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4. The National City Bank estimated that between 40 percent and 50 percent of the sugar mills were owned by North Americans in 1919; the 1912 reciprocity treaty with the United States and the price increases during the First World War led to the last vast expansion of Cuban sugar, largely carried out by foreign mills, foreign capital, foreign managers, and foreign labor. Hugh Thomas (2001:325) remarks: “Cuba was thus a spectator in her own destiny. The great forests of Oriente did not burn for her own carnival.”
On 30 January, Ortiz, in his capacity as member of the House of Representatives (he was also a lecturer in the University’s Law Faculty), presented a bill to the legislature conceding complete autonomy to the University of Havana. After protracted negotiations, the government of Alfredo Zayas finally capitulated and over one hundred corrupt professors were sacked.

Beyond university hill, radicalism smouldered towards revolt. On 18 March, a group of fifteen intellectuals (led by twenty-three-year-old poet and propagandist Rubén Martínez Villena) walked out of an event at the Science Academy as Justice Minister Erasmo Regueiferos, who was implicated in one of the Zayas government’s most public financial scandals, was about to speak. Thirteen of the intellectuals later signed an anticorruption manifesto (known as “the Protest of the Thirteen”) against “our delinquent rulers’ utter lack of patriotism and civil decorum” (Cuba literaria online).

In April, Ortiz pushed further into the political fray by launching his Junta Cubana de Renovación Nacional to promote civil and moral regeneration and resuscitate the Cuba libre dream at what the founder called “one of the most critical moments” in the life of the young Republic (Academia de la Historia 1923:96).

Generational, intellectual, political, and economic conflicts and the never-ending oscillation of authority between Havana and Washington infused daily life and the collective consciousness with uncertainty, doubt, and a thirst for new direction. Cuban history entered a limen: a place “of thresholds, margins, boundaries … of ambivalence and unset definition” (Dening 1997:2). The terminology is borrowed from anthropology; for Victor Turner (following Arnold van Gennep’s example), the limen is the midpoint in a three-stage rite of passage often observed in societies ruled by ritual. Neophytes are separated from the normal “social structure,” undergo a cathartic and liminal transition, and are subsequently reincorporated within established social rhythms, although often at a higher or more integral level. The limen is an introspective interstice; “a time and place lodged between all times and spaces [where] the cognitive schemata that give sense to everyday life no longer apply, but are, as it were, suspended” (Turner 1982:84).

Cuba’s sociohistorical trajectory in the first three decades of the twentieth century was a rite of national passage punctuated, in 1923, by a liminal period within which society took “cognizance of itself” (Turner 1974:239). The venerated (but venal) vox patriae of the Independentista generals was challenged by the insurgent and vitriolic vox populi of young Cubans unsul-

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5. The sale and then repurchase of the Convento de Santa Clara at a grossly inflated price caused fierce public outcry.

6. Cuba was ruled by a U.S. Governor between 1898 and 1902 and between 1906 and 1909; through the provisions in the Platt Amendment, U.S. troops landed in Cuba on four occasions between 1902 and 1923.
lied by the indignity of the Platt Amendment and the malefashion of the new Republic. Mella’s inflammatory rhetoric to Havana students was a critical facet of this vernacular revolt. But equally imperative was Ortiz’s lexicographic battle for the right to describe Cuba in Cubanisms; the right to speak of, as, and to el pueblo cubano.

Liminal moments of intense introspection expose the ideological and historical axioms underpinning the national narrative to erosion and flux. History’s implacable momentum is halted and refracted “into various forms of discursive incoherence, thereby creating divisions within supposedly stable identities” (Giles 2000:33). But the limen is not simply a moment of ideological chaos or psychosocial angst during which the national narrative degenerates into a confused cacophony of voices. In the stead of all-pervasive ideology and momentous history a more contemplative psychosocial logic asserts itself: “In this no-place and no-time … the major classifications and categories of culture emerge within the integuments of myth” (Turner 1974:259). These myths (and the metaphors in which they are enunciated) transmit the cognitive codes for collective self-perception and projection, establish the “system of associated commonplaces” (Herbert & Johnston 1982:12) that forge “nations” within fractal frontiers, and evoke the shared and treasured images which transform scattered people into “imagined communities” (Anderson 1983).

Ortiz’s Catauro is as much a metaphoric as a lexicographic guide to cubania in the early 1920s. It seeks to supplant the stolid tones of vox patriae with the more vital and vibrant accents of a youthful vox populi, calls for pause in the errant national narrative, and enunciates the multivocal, multivalent, and fundamentally archipelagic ethos on the island: “a heterogeneous conglomerate of diverse races and cultures … that, bubble together, intermingle, and disaggregate in a single social coction” (Ortiz, Revista bimestre cubana, cited in Suárez 1996:11).

**ORTIZ’S ARCHIPELAGIC ISLAND**

Fernando Ortiz is the magnum scholar of Afro-Cuban culture and its axiomatic role in the island’s heterogeneity. Although his book *Los negros brujos* was influenced by Italian positivist criminology and regurgitated much of the racist discourse imported from Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century, over the next fifteen years Ortiz underwent an ethnographic epiphany. One of the *Catauro*’s most virulent criticisms of Suárez’s *Vocabulario*, for example, refers to its utter failure to recognize and accredit the African etymologies of many cubanismos “as if the large African population that

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came to our country had not imported, together with their bodies bent under servitude, their souls, their religions, their cultures, their languages” (Ortiz 1923b:12). Pérez Firmat suggests that Ortiz’s essays were the inspiration for some of the most important Afro-Antillean literature of the first half of the twentieth century, including Nicolás Guillén’s Motivos de son, Alejo Carpentier’s Écue-Yamba-Ó!, and Emilio Ballagas’s Cuaderno de poesia negra (1989:19-20).

But Ortiz’s nascent aphrophilia was not the norm in 1923; others observed Cuba’s ethnocultural heterogeneity with horror. Cuba had been an island of migrants (both eager and coerced) since the Arawaks caught ocean currents northwards from the mouth of the Orinoco. The arrival of the sea-sore Spaniards at the end of the fifteenth century initiated four hundred years of immigration “of the most varying origins, either in sporadic waves or a continuous flow, always exerting an influence and being influenced in turn” (Ortiz 1995:98).

The end of the slave trade and of colonial rule did not stem the tide of arrivals from overseas (not even from the ex-colonial core). In La crisis del patriotismo: Una teoría de las inmigraciones (1929), Alberto Lamar Schweyer blamed what he called Cuba’s “low patriotic level” on enervating ethnic and cultural diffusion caused by excessive “maritime influence” that threatened “the total disappearance of Cubanness” which would only be reversed by insular isolation from foreign immigrants and ideologies (Lamar Schweyer 1929:44). The discovery of a fossilized skeleton in a cave in Sancti Spiritus in 1914 provided a potent catalyst for feverish debate on the ethnogenesis of “proto-Cuban,” with some scholars seizing upon the skeleton as a propitious factual fossil around which to flesh a defensive mythology of resolute insularity, or what Rafael Rojas calls “a prehistoric epic of Cuban identity” (Rojas 2008:249). Some archaeologists went as far as to suggest that the indigenous people of Cuba had not arrived in the Americas after an epic trek over the frozen Behring Straits, but had always and forever inhabited their tropical island redoubt (Rojas 2008:250). For them, protocubano was a true child of the Cuban earth, an original islander, an authentic homo cubensis.

Much of Ortiz’s work from the 1920s onwards can be understood as an emphatic rejection of this notion of the insular autarky of the Cuban condition. In Historia de la arqueología indocubana (1923a), Ortiz defended Columbus’s stubborn insistence that he had discovered the westward passage to Cipango, arguing that the Tainos and Ciboneyes the Admiral encountered in Cuba were, in their ethnogenetic origins, actually Chinese (Rojas 2008:249). 

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8. Hugh Thomas (2001:295) notes that more Spaniards arrived on the island between 1900 and 1925 than during the 400 years of Spanish colonial rule.
This sarcastic swipe at the kind of romanticism (or siboneyismo) purveyed by some Cuban scholars developed into a consistent thesis of the fundamental plurality of the Cuban condition. For Ortiz, cubania was rooted in movement and flux over porous insular borders, in the interpenetration of ethnic groups, traditions, foods, and languages, and in the constant cultural give-and-take along the beaches of this fundamentally archipelagic island:

There was no more important human factor in the evolution of Cuba than these continuous, radical, contrasting geographic transmigrations, economic and social, of the first settlers, this perennial transitory nature of their objectives, and their unstable life in the land where they were living, in perpetual disharmony with the society from which they drew their living. Men, economies, cultures, ambitions were all foreign here, provisional, changing, “birds of passage” over the country, at its cost, against its wishes, and without its approval. (Ortiz 1995:101)

To the siboneyistas’ romantic mythology of autochthonous peculiarity, Ortiz countered with ethnographic evidence of cultural, culinary, and linguistic imports “of the most varying origins”; to the eugenicists’ horror of a descent into black barbarie, Ortiz retorted by dissecting the corpus cubanus and exposing “the ebony heart” that the slave trade had transplanted from the coast of Africa (Ortiz 1923b:viii). In short, “Ortiz’s whole career is nothing but a sustained examination of how the exogenous roots of Cuban culture took hold, grew, and changed in the island” (Pérez Firmat 1989:20).

I read Fernando Ortiz’s Catauro as a lexicographic manifesto of a liminal moment in national self-cognizance, as an assault on the myth of homo cubensis, and as a catalog of plural and many-mouthed cubanismos and the cubanias they articulate. Moreover, and critically, I read the Catauro as a vernacular manifestation of the metaphoric oscillation between protocubano as an isolated isleño standing belligerently behind autarkic frontiers, or as an archipelagic island-hopper with his mouth full of foreign tastes and taxonomies.

9. Siboneyismo was originally a movement born in the literary tertulias of Domingo del Monte in the 1840s in an attempt to “Cubanize” the Spanish poetic form of el romance and thus “propagate a tentative and derivative sense of their Cuban identity” (Kapcia 2005:52). The emblematic text of the movement is José Fornaris’s Cantos del siboney, which makes an oblique critique of the social stratification of colonial Cuba and evokes a utopian indigenous age of noble savagery.
Ortiz has as little lexicographic as anthropological patience with the notion of an autochthonous homo cubensis founding an original and originary Cuban condition to which all subsequent offshore contributions are undesirable appendages. Interrogating the etymology of the voces in the dictionaries of “el Españolito” and others, Ortiz is scathing of their ingenuousness:

Siboneyism in Cuba has engendered the habit of cataloging all words of doubtful origins, and even many words of well-known Castilian, Catalan, Galician, Andalusian, and Basque derivation, as authentic autochthonous voices…. English or American linguistic bastards are often transformed here into proud Siboneyes or Caribs, like any old Oriental street urchin being transformed into a direct descendant of Amadis of Gaul (Ortiz 1923b:9&12).

To other lexicons’ insistence on etymological immobility, Ortiz brings the immense complexity of living languages colliding and colluding over centuries of migration into and out of the island. To give an initial example, Ortiz scorns what he sees as endogenous myopia, disputing Suárez’s cataloging of the word jaba, or “basket, whose greatest dimension is its height,” as a “Carib voice,” a home-grown word for an indigenous object. Instead, “it was Andalusian sailors and conquistadors who deployed the extremely common Arab word, al-chaba, which the academy’s dictionary still preserves to signify the long basket for holding arrows, aljaba” (Ortiz 1923b:39). In this, Ortiz eschews any attempt to find or found an autochthonous and autarkic language community, positioning himself instead in the limen between origin and invention, between endogenous immobility and exogenous flux, from where to best appreciate and give authority to the multivalent voices that articulate the insular idiosyncrasy. Cubanismos, like the Cubans who use them, are creatively caught “in the crossroads of the Americas, where all peoples and civilizations come together in a kiss” (Ortiz, Revista bimestre cubana, cited in Suárez 1996:16).

Spurning the artificial simplicity of siboneyismo, Ortiz gives full and hearty voice to the chaos of hybridity which he sees, reads, and hears around him:

Guafe – small pier or platform over the sea. Zayas adds, giving it as an Indianism: “the letter F was probably introduced into this word in erroneous substitution of some other.” Not at all. Cuervo, several lustrums before Zayas’s text, had already asserted that it came from the English wharf, and … God help us, it was not Siboneyes, Taínos, nor Caribs that bequeathed us this word, but rather pirates and filibusters of very different lineage. (Ortiz 1923b:134)
For Ortiz, the encounter between exogenous and endogenous accents is super-syncretic;\(^{10}\) the Anglicism is unloaded onto the Cuban guafe but is not passively and acculturally accepted. Instead, it is creatively mauled and masticated, even acquiring a dubious indigenous genealogy along the way. Although scoffing at this latent desire to “naturalize” imported idioms, Ortiz may well have admired other lexicographers’ genealogical excesses as the height of syncretic irreverence and inventiveness: “he believed that whatever originality there was to achieve, it had to emerge from the judicious – and even malicious – manipulation of imports” (Pérez Firmat 1989:20).

We have already remarked that language offers landmarks for particular folds in the collective consciousness or for particular limits of idiomatic and idiosyncratic worlds. In the *Catauro* we see that geography can permeate lexicography with equal force as land and life embrace in intimate symbiosis, and landscape becomes the prevalent metaphor for the inscape of national identity (Bhabha 1994:143). Many of the *cubanismos* recorded by Ortiz emerge from a fundamentally spatial praxis and are suggestive of a national narrative inspired by the physical milieu within which it is inscribed. In the *Catauro*, topographies, flora, fauna, and even climatic conditions have all acquired metaphorical significance in the Cuban vernacular *voz*.

The *seboruco*, for example, is a “rocky, porous and spiny stone found just below the surface, particularly on the coast,” but is also a hard-headed, “rude, ignorant” person who stubbornly resists the tides of others’ opinions (Ortiz 1923b:126). *Sabina*, “an indigenous wild tree of broad flat leaves,” is applied with metaphorical malice to “a busybody who is always sticking his nose into others’ business” (Ortiz 1985:439). *Acana* is the name of a precious hardwood but is also used to scold those who are “stingy, miserable, despicable, and hard” (Ortiz 1985:35). The *bijirita* is “a migratory bird … that spends the autumn and winter in Cuba” (Ortiz 1985:64), but is also a Cuban born of a Spanish father (with “seasonal” affiliation to both shores).

Some climatic events are of such significance that *cubanismos* have been invented to describe them. The hurricanes that torment the island during the autumn months have been at the heart of insular mythology since well before *el castellano* conquered Cuba. Once more on the liminal threshold between origin and invention, Ortiz scorns spurious etymological *indigenismo*, but judiciously defends the Antillean origins of the word *juracán*, lamenting that

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10. The fecund fusion that characterizes Cuban cultural complexity and which Ortiz elaborated in *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y del azúcar* (1940) as “transculturation.” In defiant counterpoint to the then prevalent European interpretation of the collision of cultures as a process of deculturation (or shedding of original elements) and acculturation (assumption of new elements) towards the syncretic finale of neoculturation, Ortiz posited a more egalitarian exchange in which both sides of the cultural equation are altered in a fertile and symbiotic embrace.
the word “has fallen into disuse here, replaced by the Hellenistic cult to the
cyclone, imported by the English” (Ortiz 1923b:52). Louis Pérez Jr. goes as
far as to suggest that hurricanes are the tempestuous engines at the core of
the Cuban condition:

The hurricane entered the cosmology of Cuba as a fact of life, a spec-
tre against which people were obliged in the ordinary course of events to
mediate the possibility of potential catastrophe with the needs of daily life.
Because hurricanes were recurring phenomena, they played an important
role in forging a people into a nation. (Pérez Jr. 2001:11)

Ortiz claims that the horror of hurricanes, and particularly their unpredict-
ability, brought out the best in Cuban lexicographic inventiveness, much to
the chagrin of Academic orthodoxy: “Recurvar – curve back on itself. We
Cubans invented this unusual word to explain to ourselves the sudden sur-
prises of cyclones which, judging from their treacherous curves and recur-
vus, always travel by the most twisted paths” (Ortiz 1923b:30-31).

Domestic as well as savage spaces have also taken their place within the
national consciousness through the kind of metaphorical osmosis in which
Ortiz delights. In analyzing the exclamatory expression cierrapuertas (“close
the doors”), he distances the cubanismo from the antiquated Spanish war cry
“¡cierra espana!” (“close the doors to Spain”) used in the wars of reconquest
against the North Africans, describing instead:

The sound and action of suddenly closing all the doors in alarm at some
external disturbance or danger; it is said: there was an almighty “cierra-
puertas.” This word is related, both in composition and intent, with that
other Cubanism salpafuera; except that the latter gets everyone out whilst
the former lets no one in. In both cases, a tremendous correcorre [run
amok] in every direction is the usual result. (Ortiz 1923b:31)

In the first expression the domestic haven is secured against external men-
ace, whereas the second produces a chaotic correcorre to escape the enemy
within. In whichever direction the metaphoric travel takes us, the leitmotif is
the idiomatic innervation of mobility and flux. As a metaphor for the sanctity
and sanctuary of the island redoubt, cierrapuertas and salpafuera eloquently
capsulate the liminal indecision between resolute insularity and archi-
pelegic interaction. Cuba, it seems, is caught in a perennial correcorre between
the two.
The most notable land-life-language association in Ortiz’s lexicography is the perennial presence of the sea and the fundamental importance of the coast for the genesis of insular idioms and the idiosyncrasy they enunciate. Throughout the Catauro there is a proliferation of “nautical expressions” and “maritime meanings” that are “clear proof of the secular contact with maritime folk” (Ortiz 1923b:21, 23). What for the Real Academia’s dictionary are mere states of the sea become for cubania profound states of the soul. Calmachicha, which in the peninsular Diccionario describes maritime tranquillity, becomes in the vernacular voz a “phlegmatic” Cuban (Ortiz 1923b:21). Escarceo in Spain is “a ripple across the surface of the sea, with small blister-like waves arising where currents meet,” but on la isla the very intimate and interpersonal relations of el pueblo cubano seem ruled by the humors of the sea with the word being applied, “elegantly and appropriately …, to the oral collisions which, like small waves, tend to arise in debates: He had an escarceo with his mother-in-law” (Ortiz 1923b:51).

On an island of relatively recent arrivals, the originary ocean crossing has had a fulminating effect on the character of society and the collective consciousness within: “peoples and cultures were all exogenous and uprooted…. The mere crossing of the ocean had altered their very spirits” (Ortiz 1978:94-95). To the telluric rootedness of endogenous origins, Ortiz brings what Jessica Dubow calls an “anoriginal ontology” which is “always already a complex of the distant, the open, the unfixed” that “erodes the sedentary habitus of the modern subject” (Dubow 2004:219). To the siboneyistas’ homo cubensis, Ortiz counters with the antiessentialist homo maritimus, baptized in the liquid epiphany of the epic voyage and unable to forget the oceanic inscape and saltwater idioms of their beginnings.

But are the maritime voices that Ortiz hears restricted to the insular edge? Is it possible, perhaps, to chart an indelible border between coastal Cubans, or playeros (“beachers”) as Ortiz calls them, and the more settled, sedentary, and telluric communities of the Cuban interior? The Catauro suggests not and clearly catalogs the oceanic irrigation of land-locked language in even the most intractable inland terrain. The word aguada, for example, originally used to describe the coastal wells from where the fleet replenished its drinking water supplies, has “like so many other salty and brackish companions … become land-bound” and conquered the entire Cuban language community: “today we use it to refer to the place where cattle drink” (Ortiz 1923b:31-32).

The coastal frontier is typically perceived as an unambiguous terrestrial edge, the limit of earthly certainty and the beginning of the “barbaric vagueness and disorder out of which civilization has emerged and into which, unless saved by the efforts of gods and men, it is always liable to relapse” (Auden
But this apparent coherence of subjective land versus objective ocean can be disrupted through an optical (and concomitant conceptual) recalibration; as Wittgenstein leans over the map “it is not the coastline of the island which he is bent on surveying with such meticulous accuracy, but the boundary of the ocean” (Thrift 2000:231). This evocative image opens up an interpretative interstice in which the coast marks not one, but two borders; a discursive space “beyond the repetitive schisms of … history, a space – ‘all subtle and submarine’ – of new perspectives, fresh colors, and imaginative liberation” (Klein & Mackenthun 2004:1). The coast is a liminal space par excellence where collusion overcomes collision, dialog subverts diatribe, and the indelible frontier between inside and outside is blurred in tempestuous chaos along the bifurcated edge.

The coast is a permeable physical, metaphoric, and lexicographic frontier that permits the ingress of influential “birds of passage” and all the inflections of the vernacular voz that they bring on their wings. But, in keeping with the liminal logic of the coast, Ortiz does not advocate the total dissolution of the insular edges that encompass cubanía; alongside his impassioned acceptance of cultural currents from overseas, he also appeals to Cuba’s insularity as a sign of distance and difference from exogenous accents. The Catauro’s cardinal motivation is to right (and write) the idiomatic wrongs the author believes have been perpetrated by the Academy’s dictionary and its insular acolytes. It is a struggle for cubanía’s right to express itself, if not in authentically autochthonous idioms, then certainly in terms that are appropriate to the land-life-language complex that those idioms enunciate.

The Catauro is a manifesto for lexicographic liminality, betwixt Academic pusillanimity and Creole effusiveness, between insular uniqueness and maritime flux. And the Ortizean coast is charged with ambiguity. It is a site of ethnogenetic absorption of foreign bodies and the cultures they bring with them, whilst at the same time delineating between the fruity cubanismos of the periphery and the desiccated academe of the core. It is an entry point for syncretic interaction, but also a defensive margin from where to irreverently toss the Diccionario’s Frenchified goyaviers back in its face. It is a border from where Cubans and their cubanismos can democratically rebel against “the authority of the royal dictionary” (Ortiz 1923b:68-69). The coast is a betwixt and between place, a liminal frontier where language and the idiosyncratic territory it charts are opened up to heterodox re-definition and where indelible edges are erased and re-inscribed in novel metaphoric configurations.

Ortiz menaces both sides of this liminal divide with dissolution. The Academy’s bombastic claim to universal descriptive authority in the “mother tongue” loses its way in his lexicographic labyrinth for which the Catauro is an all-but-useless guide for the uninitiated. On the other hand, any sanctimonious siboneyista claims to autochthonous authenticity are equally assaulted
by the Ortizean “anoriginal ontology” of movement and flux and the subsequent irreverence of syncretic chaos.

As a metaphor for this liminal disaggregation, Ortiz offers *picar* (to chop), a sublime maritime *cubanismo* which shreds all etymologic and metaphoric surety:

*Picar* for Cubans, as for all Spanish speakers, is to cut into very small pieces, from whence we obtain *picadillo de carne* [mincemeat], *picadura de tabaco* [pipe tobacco] and the *picapedrero* [stonemason]; and perhaps even, begging your forgiveness, the *picapeños* [shyster] who, as a *pícaro* [rogue] after all, has the habit of chopping everything up, including his fellow men, through his *picadas* [mincing] or *picardías* [craftiness]. In nautical terms, it is not necessary to chop something into many pieces in order to *picar*; one can *picar* something in two, as an anchor chain with an axe. And it is perhaps because of the influence of these salty expressions, that we Cubans have also reduced the number of chops called for in order to *picar*; we are able to *picar* a piece of cloth with the scissors without reducing it to *picadura*, without resort to *picoteo*, which undoubtedly does require a countless number of scissor snips and scraps; we have heard that it is possible to *picar* a chicken in two and between two with great taste, and we are even able to *picar* a single slice of ham. In conclusion, this parsimony in the number of slices *picados*, a Cubanism despite its apparent sobriety, is another trait unloaded from the colonial fleets. (Ortiz 1923b:32)

Despite (or perhaps because of) the authorial abandon (more literary than lexicographic), the manifesto is clear: to chop “proper” Castilian up, to make mincemeat of the regal authority of the peninsular dictionary, and to recognize and respect the oceanic origins of the essence of *cubanía*. But to *picar* is not to imperil the integrity of Cuban Spanish nor the island life it strives to describe. This is a creative not destructive deployment of the syncretic scissors that accepts ingredients from “the most varying origins”: both the *picadura* of Antillean tobacco and tasty slices of Andalusian *jamón*. Liminal to the end, this *picadillo* is both raucous and frugal, “a cubanism despite its apparent sobriety,” an insular *pícaro* that should never forget that it came over with the colonial fleets.

On a more sober note, this lexicographic maceration points to a fundamental facet of the *cubanía* to which Fernando Ortiz is attempting to give voice: its indefinite uncertainty and cardinal contingency; the “not-ever-yet” complex of the Cuban condition (Ernesto Mayz Vallenilla, cited in Pérez Firmat 1989:25). The *Catauro* does not propose to map the definitive contours of *cubanía*, but rather recognize the poetics of perennial uncertainty at its heart and the ephemeral frontiers around its edge.

This notion of *cubanía* as a work in progress, a prayer towards not a sermon about the Cuban condition is manifest in the *Catauro* in two ways. First,
the author himself insists on the open-endedness of his “lexicographic tome” (Ortiz 1923b:vii); he is at his most conclusive insisting on the Catauro’s inconclusiveness:

We must insist that our notes are exactly that; a stockpile of material from which some future author will construct his edifice. Not all Cubanisms are recorded here, nor may the definitions be considered as definitive, nor the etymologies as cast in stone. (Ortiz 1923b:18)

Second, and in keeping with the Catauro’s fundamental liminality, Ortiz’s lexicon is posited as a dialogic rather than an antagonistic exercise; it welcomes contestation and contradiction, seeking coherence within, not Dogmatic cohesion to its inegration of the vernacular voz. And so we return to the Catauro’s principal counterpoint – “el Españolito’s” Vocabulario cubano. To take just one example of the lexicographic ebb and flow between the two (hearing the inescapable timbre of the Academy’s officialdom echoing in the background), in pararse, for “get to one’s feet,” Suárez seeks to distance himself from both the vulgus that inhabit the island and the Academy’s tolerance of their linguistic barbarity. Raising a voice for “those who take pleasure in speaking correctly,” “el Españolito” is defiant:

We add our disapproval to those protests against the cataloging of this definition in the official dictionary. We give little credence to the widespread use of that definition throughout America, especially considering the thousands of other words of this continent with a far greater claim to a warm welcome from the erudite Academy, which cleans, sets, and gives splendor to the speech of Cervantes, Granada, Calderón, and Lope. (Suárez 1921:400)

Although commending the Vocabulario as “oriented with skill and elaborated with good will” (Ortiz 1923b:9), Ortiz cannot resist rounding on Suárez’s attempt to cling to a purity of expression that even the Academy has abandoned. As we have already seen, Ortiz believed that any attempt to “give splendor” to Cuba’s filthy vernacular was futile. Instead, he exhorts peninsular receptivity to Cuba’s lexicographic license:

In defense of the Americanism, with what right can we be exhorted to renovate our language in concord with Spain? Is it not the case that by seeking to conserve certain Castilian words …, we actually advocate greater purism than the Spaniards themselves? Rather let them reinstate a word that has committed no crime against the laws of the language to justify this exile from its homeland, although it is getting along so well out here that one could even say that it has “got to its feet.” (Ortiz 1923b:58)
Ortiz sees the syncretic exchange between the Academy, the insular elite, and the mass of Cubans more intimately familiar with the island’s “hard life” as ongoing. He does not seek conclusion, it is enough that the vernacular voice has clambered to its feet; se ha parado.

CONCLUSION

Fernando Ortiz’s *Un catauro de cubanismos* is a critical contribution to the finding or founding of a vernacular voz from within the matrix of the mother tongue (Pérez Firmat 1989:26-27). It radically re-charts the frontiers of lexicographic authority on the island and reclaims the right to “explain *en criollo* what it means to speak *en criollo*” (Pérez Firmat 1989:18-19). It subverts both the metropolitan map of “proper” Academic expression and insular attempts to Cubanize el castellano within an autochthonous and autarkic edge. By doing so, the *Catauro* conjugates a transcendental turning point in the island’s history with the maritime archetype of cubanía. Against endogenous attempts to ossify the national consciousness around fossilized mythologies of proto-Cuban utopias, and against exogenous attempts to put ill-fitting words into the collective Cuban mouth, the *Catauro* takes an ideological stand on the national edge. The coast becomes the locus amoenus for a re-articulation of the vernacular voice and a re-calibration of the insular consciousness it inflects.

Cuba is the coast and the coast is Cuba: open, yet profoundly distinctive; multivalent, yet coherent; heterogeneous, yet harmonious. Above all, the coast is a site of never-ending experimentation; an anoriginal ontology of ebb and flow, ingress and egress, arrival and departure. The coast offers no conclusions; the liminal moment that inspired the *Catauro* did not ask for any. The year 1923 was an *annus mirabilis* in Cuba’s self-cognizance that called not for idiomatic answers, but for the defiant dissolution of pre-conceived and permanent solutions whether wholly imposed from overseas or emerging from the romantic fog of insular indigenismo. The *Catauro* is a subversive *picoteo* of metropolitan metaphors for life on the edge of the Hispanic world and a radical attack on the cubanía codes purveyed by a despoiled and despised generation. It seeks not to defend any definitive frontiers around the Cuban condition, but rather fight for the right to explore all cultural and linguistic possibilities, opening the frontiers to the most awkward Anglicism one minute and drawing in the next towards the archaic eye of the indigenous juracán.

The authentic edges of cubanía are metaphoric, anchored around “a system of associated commonplaces” but nevertheless remaining permeable to poetic incursions from inland and overseas (Herbert & Johnston 1982:12). In this sense, the metaphoric community that Ortiz simultaneously speaks
to and stimulates paradoxically surpasses the descriptive capabilities of his *Catauro* and straddles the border between the “limits of language” and “that whereof we cannot speak” (Herbert & Johnston 1982:25). But this is an inherent strength, not a fatal weakness of Ortiz’s lexicon. The *Catauro* seeks coherence within the vernacular *voz*, not cohesion to a singular collective mode of expression and its “simple notes … without any seasoning” (Ortiz 1923b:vii) lay the lexicographic, mythological, and ideological foundations for the future transcultural construction of the Cuban metaphoric community.

REFERENCES


CUBA LITERARIA. Protesta de los trece.


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During their annual meeting in early April 1766, the Heren Tien – the general board of directors of the Dutch West India Company (WIC, 1621-1791) – discussed a letter from Hubertus Coerman, fiscal (public prosecutor) of the colony of Curaçao. Coerman, who was a young professional lawyer and a stranger to Curaçaoan society when he arrived two years earlier, had questioned the way justice was administered in the colony and especially the customary judicial practice of distinguishing between Whites and non-Whites rather than between free and enslaved people. He also criticized the presumptuous attitude of Whites vis-à-vis the black and colored population, which in his view lay at the root of such an attitude. Showing off his academic background, Coerman informed his superiors that “The status seu conditio personarum is not divided quod homines sunt vel liberi vel servi, sed quod sunt vel albi vel negri; yes, this goes so far that all who are white arrogate a formal jurisdiction cum imperio over the negroes and Mulattoes, no matter whether they are slave or free.”¹ The fiscal did not see any legal ground for this, and he also established that this was much to the detriment of the free Blacks and Coloreds in the colony. The Company directors took his criticism seriously and it was decided that a copy of Coerman’s letter was to be sent to the island’s council with the request for elucidation.²

This decision might very well have been prompted by a case which was discussed by the Heren Tien in a meeting only a day earlier, and which seemed to confirm Coerman’s criticism. A free black woman from Curaçao, called Mariana Franko, had turned up in the United Provinces and had contacted the Amsterdam chamber of the WIC. She asserted that she had been

¹. All translations in English by the author. National Archive The Hague (NL-HaNA), Archive of the New or Second West India Company (NWIC), 1674-1791, inventory 1.05.01.02, 604, Hubertus Coerman to Amsterdam chamber, August 23, 1765, p. 1419.
². NL-HaNA, NWIC, 1.05.01.02, 14, minutes of the meetings of the Heren Tien, April 5, 1766, fol. 258r-v.
falsely accused of theft and receiving stolen goods and that, after a mock trial, she had been stripped of all her possessions and sentenced by the Curaçao council to eternal banishment from the territories of the West India Company. She had been put on a ship to Jamaica, but managed to travel from there to England and then to Holland, determined to have her trial revised, to have her good name and reputation restored, and to receive compensation for the material losses she suffered. After learning Mariana Franko’s story, the Amsterdam chamber of the WIC appeared willing to issue an order to the Curaçao council on her behalf to send over all the documents pertaining to her case. After the documents had been received, the case was discussed by the Heren Tien which decreed that copies of all the documents were to be supplied to Mariana Franko. This would enable her to bring her case before the States General which, within the organization of the Dutch administration of justice, acted as a court of review.

The two cases shed light not only on the daily practice of the administration of justice with regard to the free Blacks and Coloreds in Curaçao, but also on the functioning of the early modern Dutch legal system pertaining to colonial and slavery-related matters. Both cases also reveal that the application of the law, when free non-Whites were involved, was apparently open to interpretation and, as will be shown, there was a divergence in this respect between the colony and the metropolis; there seemed to be a conflict between the theory of the law and the practice of the administration of justice in the colonies involving free Blacks and Coloreds. How is this to be assessed? First the cases of fiscal Hubertus Coerman and Mariana Franko will be considered more closely. Then both cases will be discussed against the background of the formal organization of the administration of justice and legislation within the orbit of the WIC and the fabric of eighteenth-century colonial society in Curaçao. Finally the administration of justice in the Dutch American colonies will be looked at in a wider, comparative regional perspective.

FISCAL HUBERTUS COERMAN AND HIS CRITICISM ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE IN CURAÇAO

On 17 June 1763 fiscal Hubertus Coerman informed his superiors about his arrival in Curaçao five days earlier “at eight o’clock in the morning,” to which he added that obviously his stay in the colony was far too short to report about any questions relating to his office. But he promised to do so after having obtained some more experience. Thus, Coerman showed him-

3. Ibid., minutes of the meetings of the Heren Tien, April 4, 1766, fol. 239v.
4. NL-HaNA, NWIC, 1.05.01.02, 1163, copy of a letter from Coerman to Amsterdam chamber, June 17, 1763.
self to be a very precise and diligent man; it was precisely these traits of character that would bring him into conflict with the island’s council.

A few months later a more elaborate letter followed in which he advised the Company directors to give more authority to the fiscal’s office. The fiscal who, in the end represented the sovereign authority of the States General, should be given a higher rank within the colonial administrative hierarchy. This would make it easier for him to carry out his instructions and thus duly perform his office and, when necessary, to correct the other Company servants in the discharge of their duties. He also advised that criminal procedures be brought on the same footing as in the Dutch Republic and to staff the office of the sheriff (schout) with more officers in order to improve the maintenance of law and order.5

Coerman’s criticism and advice induced the Company directors to ask governor Jean Rodier (1758-1761; 1762-1782) to react to the fiscal’s letter.6 Rodier was not amused about this and he, in turn, started to complain about Coerman. The fiscal was criticized for the way in which he had handled a case regarding an alleged insult of the governor, accused of being absent without leave, and generally behaving as though he was not subordinated to the governor’s authority.7

But there was more. Complaints by the white inhabitants about the hostile and impertinent behavior of the “negroes and Mulattoes,” seemed to be ignored by the fiscal. He refused to chastise alleged non-white perpetrators only on the basis of accusations, as was customary. Instead he started an official lengthy procedure with the result, according to the governor and councillors, that the offenders managed to get away unpunished. Coerman’s opponents predicted that if the fiscal was allowed to continue with this practice of treating non-Whites as equals of Whites, while there were “twenty Blacks and Coloreds to one White,” this would have serious consequences for the maintenance of law and order. The fiscal was especially criticized by the militia captain who designated himself as the protector of the interests of the white citizens. It was not clear, according to the governor, whether the attitude of the fiscal was to be attributed to a fear of the non-Whites, premeditated misbehavior, or childish and foolish pride. The directors should not be surprised, the governor and councillors warned, that if things did not improve, the council would be forced to take extreme measures.8

5. Ibid., copy of a letter from Coerman to Amsterdam chamber, October 14, 1763.
6. Ibid., copy of a letter from Jean Rodier to Amsterdam chamber, June 1, 1764.
7. Ibid., copy of a letter from the Curacao council to Amsterdam chamber, July 3, 1765; copy of a letter from Rodier to Amsterdam chamber, July 4, 1765.
8. NL-HaNA, NWIc, 1.05.01.02, 604, governor and councillors to Amsterdam chamber, July 3, 1765, pp. 1104-8.
Coerman, at this point, was no longer invited to attend the meetings of the council and must have realized that the governor and councillors would try to incriminate him before his superiors. But instead of keeping a low profile he leveled even more criticism against the administration of justice in Curacao as well as the presumptuous behavior of the white inhabitants. In a letter written in August 1765, Coerman asserted that the white citizens assumed that they had a privilege that prevented the fiscal or the sheriff from searching their property or entering a house in order to arrest a White. This led to a situation, according to Coerman, where the maintenance of law and order became a mockery. Whites who had been punished with banishment openly appeared in public and when the sheriff came to arrest them, they simply entered the house of a fellow citizen where they could not be touched. The fiscal had had arguments regarding this question during the council meetings on various occasions, especially with the captain of the militia, whom he described as a man of little knowledge and a short temper, reflecting “the true character of most of the inhabitants of this island.” The captain of the militia had, according to Coerman, even stated openly that he would have no problem using violence against the fiscal in case he ever attempted to arrest a white person in his house. In this way the white inhabitants, according to Coerman, put themselves above the law while asserting their independence from the Company authorities.9

Coerman observed that it was especially the free black and colored population that suffered from this attitude of the Whites who had room to maneuver in the interpretation of assumed customary law in order to bend the course of justice to their advantage. When a charge was brought against a non-white person, the fiscal stated, this was usually preceded by a “narratio factio” without any proof and mostly consisting of lies. Next it was demanded that justice be administered immediately, or otherwise the plaintiff had no choice but to take the law into his own hands, if necessary with the assistance of his family. The fiscal confided to his superiors that on occasion he nearly had to use force to remove these plaintiffs from his office. This lopsided legal relation between Whites and non-Whites had even come to a point that when a white person killed a black or colored person, irrespective whether the latter was free or enslaved, punishment would usually only consist of a fine. The fiscal had brought this up in the council meetings which immediately led to severe clashes with the captain of the militia, who openly declared that he would never permit one of his citizens to receive any corporal punishment for any wrongdoing against “some negro or Mulatto,” a statement condoned by the governor. Roman law was applicable to slavery-related questions,

9. Ibid., Coerman to Amsterdam chamber, August 23, 1765, pp. 1422-25.
according to the instructions of the States General, but this happened only rarely.10

The integrity of justice, according to Coerman, suffered from the fact that court sessions were organized on a yearly basis with the consequence that a great number of cases had to be dealt with in a very short period of time; sometimes even up to 50 or 60 cases in one morning. There was little hope of improvement, unless the directors would send more capable administrators to the island. The fiscal also recommended that a body of formal laws for Curaçao be drawn up, to be approved by the States General, in order to counter the practice of referring to so-called tradition and customary law as one saw fit: “This, in my opinion, would be very beneficial work for this country, and all the assumed privileges of those being white and citizen would swiftly disappear.”11

After deciding to ask the council of Curaçao for a reaction to Coerman’s criticism, the Heren Tien entrusted the Amsterdam chamber with the responsibility of settling the matter.12 The receipt of the letter from the Company directors with the enclosed copy of Coerman’s letter of August 1765 exploded like a bomb at the meeting of the island’s council. After the documents were read the citizens that held a seat in the council, including the captain of the militia, immediately announced their resignation. Although governor Rodier prevented them from leaving right away, they still threatened to resign if they were not given an official apology for what was felt as a gross insult. Coerman was considered no less than a traitor. There was even talk of causing him bodily harm and Rodier reported that he had to seriously warn the militia captain to keep his fellow citizens under control.13

The council was now on the defensive. An extensive letter was drawn up to refute the fiscal’s accusations. It was stated that on “all continents” Blacks and their “bastard descendants” were considered a distinct group, although not in the way that the fiscal was suggesting. It was denied that Blacks and Coloreds were at the mercy of the arbitrariness of justice. It was just that “decent people” did not converse or put themselves on the same level with representatives of this group. But free non-Whites, according to the council, were treated nowhere better than on Curaçao. Associating too closely with

10. Ibid., pp. 1420-22.
11. Ibid., p. 1425.
12. NL-HaNA, NWIC, 1.05.01.02, 14, minutes of a meeting of the Heren Tien, April 5, 1766, fol. 258r-v.
13. NL-HaNA, NWIC, 1.05.01.02, 605, Rodier to Amsterdam chamber, October 24, 1766, pp. 441-45.
them was to be avoided in order to prevent them from becoming too self-assured.\textsuperscript{14}

In its letter the council discussed the various legal procedures applicable to Whites, slaves, and free non-Whites at length. A slave who had either beaten a white person or wounded or threatened him with a weapon would, depending on how serious the crime was, receive corporal punishment or the death penalty. These incidents were to be reported to the fiscal immediately. In instances where the opposite was the case, sometimes a fine was imposed or damages were claimed when another person’s slave was wounded. It has never happened that a white person received corporal punishment for an act of violence against a slave. In cases of slaves versus slaves, they were considered and punished as equals, but the possible damage for the slave owner was also considered. A criminal slave was sometimes sold abroad in order to limit the damage for the master. The most difficult cases, however, according to the governor and councillors, were issues involving Whites and free non-Whites. The testimony of a black or colored person against a White was not accepted. But the possibility was left open for a white person – provided that person enjoyed a good reputation – to intervene on behalf of a non-White. If a free person was beaten by a White and there were white witnesses who could state that the victim was innocent, the free person was free to lodge a complaint at the fiscal’s office. The fiscal was then in turn free to consider the case as he saw fit and if a white person could be found who was willing to give testimony in court on behalf of the colored victim, the white offender could be sentenced to pay a fine. Cases of verbal offense against non-Whites by Whites could only be brought before court in exceptional cases. In the past fiscals had always been very careful in handling these questions, weighing local circumstances and the interests of the government and the inhabitants against the “arrogant nature of the Blacks.” Since there were “twenty Blacks to one White,” it was stated, the former should be kept in check. When it was necessary to reprimand a white person, this had to be done quietly and in a “civil way” and not publicly, for otherwise “the negroes would be confirmed in their self-assuredness.”\textsuperscript{15}

When a White lodged a complaint against a non-White for physical abuse or an offense, provided the former was of blameless conduct, the white person was believed, especially when marks on the victim’s body were visible. But fiscal Coerman was of the opinion, according to the governor and councillors, that this was not enough evidence, “which is cause for much bitterness and gives ample opportunities to negroes and Mulattoes who encounter a White who is alone to abuse him.” But in general in these cases non-white

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., governor and councillors to Amsterdam chamber, December 30, 1766, pp. 470-72.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., pp. 472-76.
offenders were sentenced to corporal punishment or banishment. And when, as often happened, the white person had hit first, the colored person was nevertheless sentenced although “considering mitigating circumstances and especially the quality and conduct of the White in relation to that of the negro, for we must admit with shame that there are Whites here with black souls and vice versa, but in all other reasonable cases a free negro or Mulatto may file a case in court.”16

Coerman’s assertion – that a White who killed a non-White was only punished with a fine – was termed as “passionate and malicious.” If a case like that occurred, the first step would always be to establish the intention and to consider the effect of the crime. There was a difference between murder and manslaughter committed in a state of rage. There were examples of the latter, but in order not to make things worse these cases were treated quietly and with caution. But when fiscal Coerman had to deal with such a case, he openly discussed it with other “academic lawyers” which in turn prompted the Blacks to speak out and defy the Whites. The Blacks and Coloreds felt all the more supported since the fiscal had stated that to him “a negro or Mulatto was just as good as any white person.” The governor and councillors asserted that there were no known cases of free Blacks or Coloreds being murdered by Whites, but if such a case should occur the offender would probably be sentenced to a fine or banishment. There was on the other hand one example of a ship’s captain who had one of his colored crew members beaten up for theft, after which this man died. But according to the council it could not be determined whether the death of this sailor was caused by the trashing or by some other “accident.” Besides there had been only one white witness and two Mulattoes. The captain was to be sentenced to banishment, but the case awaited review by the States General.17

Curaçao had always been administered without directives or specific laws. There was no body of charters, by-laws, or resolutions, at least these could not be found at the secretary’s office. The few that did exist were isolated and random. So customary law had to be followed, which had always been effective, ensuring peace and stability on the island. The introduction of academic theories by learned lawyers, who did not understand or refused to understand daily practice and the nature of the colony and the people, just caused instability and commotion. This only led to complicated procedures and recurring complaints, the governor and councillors concluded, which were annoying both to the state and to the Company as the directors knew all too well.18

16. Ibid., pp. 476-77.
17. Ibid., pp. 477-81.
18. Ibid., pp. 491-93.
The council declared that it would gladly receive further instructions on the administration of justice from its superiors; it was easier to obey than to practice. It was left to the judgment of the Company directors whether the slaves in antiquity could, considering their morals and character, be compared to African slaves, on whom Roman law was applicable according to the instructions of the States General. If the non-Whites were to be treated as dictated by the law, according to the governor and councillors, the consequence would be that they should also be educated and instructed, which implied that schools were to be set up, to be paid for by the slave owners. The council was certainly willing to be taught but preferably not by “confused learned young men.” All of the other accusations by the fiscal regarding the administration of justice were dismissed as mere ignorance, slander, and contempt of the island’s council. Finally the directors were asked to mete out an exemplary punishment on Coerman.19

The militia captain reacted in a separate, equally extensive letter with many examples of conflicts and cases between Whites and non-Whites in which the fiscal, in his opinion, acted inadequately.20 He stressed the necessity of segregation between Whites and non-Whites and the submission of the latter. Although it proved necessary to issue special legislation to prevent non-Whites from engaging in impertinent behavior, the “free slaves,” as he called the free non-Whites, had never been treated unfairly in court. The fiscal on the other hand, according to the militia captain, actually oppressed the Whites while favoring the non-Whites, which was in conflict with the common law of “all America.” It was predicted that the Blacks and Coloreds would most certainly rise if they were not forced to pay proper respect towards the Whites for “this sort of people is always out to dominate the Whites … and in the end it will come to a situation where no white person will dare to go out in the streets for fear of being molested or attacked.”21

After receiving the letters from the council and the captain of the militia, the Amsterdam chamber decreed that Coerman was to be “relieved” of the “burden” of his session in the council and the related obligation to advise, in order to allow him to concentrate more fully on the fiscal’s office. The governor and councillors were informed that their account, together with that of the militia captain, was considered to be fully satisfactory. The fiscal was no longer to interfere with the affairs of the council and the council was to pay proper respect to the fiscal. Regarding any difficulties in the timely execution of the fiscal’s office, stemming either from real or imaginary inconsistencies, Curaçao’s customary law was to be followed and the accepted privileges of the citizens were to be respected. It was not judged “proper” to assign a jurist

19. Ibid., pp. 486-542.
20. Ibid., 605, Gerrit Specht to Amsterdam chamber, January 21, 1767, pp. 463-582.
Coerman’s reaction and the letters of the council and the militia captain were read and discussed in the meetings of the Heren Tien on 4 and 8 November 1768. The policy of the Amsterdam chamber in this matter was reported upon by its representative, which was fully approved by the board of directors. It was decided to inform the governor and councillors of Curaçao about this decision. The fiscal was to be ordered with immediate effect to concern himself only with carrying out of his duties as fiscal to the letter.

It was clear that the main concern of the directors was to maintain law and order in the colony and that it was left to the judgment of the island’s council as to how this was to be done. Coerman was regarded as a troublemaker and his removal from the island’s council was intended to restore the peace within the island’s administration. He was to keep quiet and do his job.

22. NL-HaNA, NWIC, 1.05.01.02, 422, Resolutions Amsterdam chamber, May 12, 1767; NL-HaNA, NWIC, 1.05.01.02, 476, Amsterdam chamber to governor and councillors of Curaçao, May 12, 1767, pp. 12-14.
23. NL-HaNA, NWIC, 1.05.01.02, 606, Coerman to Amsterdam chamber, January 8, 1768, pp. 31-34.
25. NL-HaNA, NWIC, 1.05.01.02, 15, Minutes of the meeting of the Heren Tien, November 4, 1768, fol. 87r-v and November 8, 1768, fols. 119v-120.
THE CASE OF MARIANA FRANKO

It is ironic that only a few years later Hubertus Coerman would find himself as the defendant in the States General’s review of the case of the free black woman Mariana Franko, who asserted that she was sentenced by the Curacao council after a show trial for a crime which she did not commit. The case dated to before Coerman’s arrival at Curacao, so personally he was not to be blamed, but in his function as fiscal he had to account for the actions of his predecessors.

Mariana Franko in her initial petition to the States General dated April 1766, introduced herself as a “free negress,” originally born at St. Eustatius and a member of the Dutch Reformed Church. The latter must, in a sense, have made her an exception in church, since the Dutch Reformed Church in Curacao was almost exclusively white. Mariana Franko was employed at the Sorgvliet plantation, owned by the Lamont family, where she was entrusted with the supervision over the slave children and, since she was literate, with some administrative tasks: she was made responsible for the registration of the produce of the plantation that was taken to Willemstad to be sold by the slaves as well as registration of the goods that were brought back on their return. She also recorded the changes that took place among the plantation’s livestock.26

In early 1758 Mariana’s partner, a slave called Pedro Anthonij who was the factoor (foreman/overseer) of the plantation, was accused of theft and arrested. Several months later Mariana was also arrested under the charge of being Pedro Anthonij’s accomplice. Although she was imprisoned under harsh conditions and put under enormous pressure she kept denying the accusations.27

The interrogations of both Mariana and Pedro Anthonij, which were recorded, were intimidating and insulting in tone. Pedro Anthony is referred to as Mariana’s boel or pul, a derogatory old Dutch term for a man who cohabits with a woman out of wedlock, while Mariana was called Pedro Anthonij’s “whore,” with her “insolent face and flattering tongue.” Both were threatened with severe punishment if they kept refusing to tell the “truth.” There was in fact no incriminating evidence against Mariana, but there were a number of statements from some slaves and also from three white men who declared that Pedro Anthonij had confided to them that he had stolen goods from the plantation. When confronted with these statements Pedro Anthonij

26. NL-HaNA, Archive of the States General (SG), 1576-1796: The appendices to the resolutions, 1576-1796, inventory 1.01.04, 7878, petition from Mariana Franko handed over on April 17, 1766; 7884, petition from Mariana Franko handed over on December 9, 1767.
27. Ibid.
at first confessed, but in a subsequent interrogation withdrew this confession. Mariana, when confronted with Pedro Anthonij’s confession, however, remained adamant that she was completely innocent. No goods or money were found that could not be accounted for by Mariana or Pedro Anthonij.\footnote{NL-HaNA, NWIC, 1.05.01.02, 604, see for the documents regarding the case against Mariana Franko, pp. 769-806; documents regarding the case against Pedro Anthonij, pp. 815-85.} At the same time, according to Mariana, exculpatory evidence in the form of a written statement from the person in charge of the plantation’s store rooms was ignored by the council.\footnote{NL-HaNA, SG, 1.01.04, 7878, petition from Mariana Franko handed over on April 17, 1766; 7884, petition from Mariana Franko handed over on December 9, 1767.} Mariana from her prison cell turned for help to her former lover and protector, Moses Levij Maduro, but her note addressed to “Sjoor Mosa Maduro” ended up in the island’s government secretariat.\footnote{NL-HaNA, NWIC, 1.05.01.02, 604, copy of a note from Mariana Franko to Mozes Levij Maduro, August 30, 1758, pp. 785-86.}

In February 1760 the council finally came to a conclusion of the case. Pedro Anthonij was deemed guilty. There was no incriminating evidence against Mariana but, so the council reasoned, she of course had had ample time after Pedro Anthonij’s arrest to rid herself of any money that was received for the stolen goods. She was thought to have sent it to St. Eustatius, where she allegedly intended to marry a white man. Since Pedro Anthonij was guilty, and even had confessed his guilt, Mariana, according to the council, must be guilty too. Both defendants were sentenced to banishment, and Pedro Anthonij, since he was a slave, was to be sold abroad. He also had to undergo a humiliating public flogging.\footnote{Ibid., documents regarding the case against Mariana Franko, pp. 769-806; documents regarding the case against Pedro Anthonij, pp. 815-85.} The fiscal obtained permission from the island’s council to have all Mariana’s possessions – she was a well-to-do woman who possessed five slaves – confiscated and sold in a public auction, the proceeds of which would be used to recover the costs of her imprisonment and trial. On 28 November 1760 she was finally put on a ship to Jamaica.\footnote{NL-HaNA, SG, 1.01.04, 7878, petition from Mariana Franko handed over on April 17, 1766; 7884, petition from Mariana Franko handed over on December 9, 1767.}

It is not clear when exactly Mariana Franko arrived in Holland and managed to contact the Amsterdam chamber. But it was only in February 1765, after being urged by the Company directors several times, that the governor and councillors of Curacao dispatched the copies of the judicial documents regarding the criminal cases against both Mariana and Pedro Anthony: the interrogations, various depositions of witnesses, the sentences demanded by the fiscal, the sentences passed by the council, and the petition from Mariana, when confronted with Pedro Anthonij’s confession, however, remained adamant that she was completely innocent. No goods or money were found that could not be accounted for by Mariana or Pedro Anthonij. At the same time, according to Mariana, exculpatory evidence in the form of a written statement from the person in charge of the plantation’s store rooms was ignored by the council. Mariana from her prison cell turned for help to her former lover and protector, Moses Levij Maduro, but her note addressed to “Sjoor Mosa Maduro” ended up in the island’s government secretariat.

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the fiscal addressed to the council for permission to have Mariana’s possessions publicly auctioned as well as the subsequent permission obtained from the council. Other additional documents sent were: a statement dated 18 December 1764 from Mariana’s former lover Moses Levij Maduro, a copy of the already-mentioned intercepted note from Mariana to the same Moses Levij Maduro written from her prison cell, and a final concluding document drawn up by the council.33

It was only after Mariana had received the copies of these documents that she could petition the States General to review her case. Her solicitor stated in an address to the States General:

That the petitioner subsequently not only has the intention to have her good name and reputation restored (which to her, in spite of being born a negress, is just as dear as it is to a free Dutchman), to defend herself against the treatment received, and, when this is accomplished, will also try to get back her goods, money, and securities, which were taken from her in an outrageous manner, including her manumission deed, sealed with the grand seal of the West India Company.34

Mariana also intended to sue all those responsible for her misfortune for insult and to demand reparations as well as compensation of interest on her seized possessions. The States General were in the first instance requested to issue an order of review (mandament van revisie) of the sentence from the island’s council of 18 February 1760.35

A meticulous but also lengthy procedure was started. After receiving Mariana Franko’s petition, in May 1766 the States General sent a copy to the directors of the West India Company with a request for a reaction. After this was received, a copy of the petition was also sent to the governor and councillors of Curacao with a similar request.36 Governor Rodier answered exactly one year later by stating that in Curacao the plantations were always managed by the bombas or “negro officers.” In the case of the Sorgvliet plantation, it had been Pedro Anthonij who was in charge. “So,” Rodier argued, “Their High Mightinesses will very easily understand that for one exposed to similar cases daily, if one did not punish the receivers of goods or accom-

33. NL-HaNA, NWIC, 1.05.01.02, 604, pp. 758-898; copy of a note from Mariana Franko to Mozes Levij Maduro, August 30, 1758, pp. 785-86; copy of a sworn statement from Mozes Levij Maduro Aronzoon, December 18, 1764, pp. 809-10.
34. NL-HaNA, sG, 1.01.04, 7884, petition from Mariana Franko handed over on December 9, 1767.
35. Ibid.
36. NL-HaNA, sG, 1.01.04, 7884, Mariana Franko to States General, handed over on December 28, 1767.
plies to theft as severely as the thieves themselves, notwithstanding whether he is a slave or free, like in the case under consideration, for the negro officers on the plantations would be able, together with their kept women or concubines, to loot in a short time a complete plantation as can be seen from the attached documents and papers regarding this case of Pedro Anthonij and Mariana Franko.”  The fact that no stolen goods or money were ever found was again explained by the supposition that Mariana Franko, alarmed by the arrest of Pedro Anthony, had had ample time to dispose of these. The existence of any exculpatory statement, as mentioned in Mariana’s petition, was said to be unknown to the governor and councillors. Mariana’s sentence had been based on the evidence that was known at that time.

The States General by a resolution of 9 December 1767 ordered a review of the sentence. Mariana intended of course to dispatch this resolution to Curacao as soon as possible, but in the meantime, since all her possessions had been taken from her, she was left without any means of subsistence. She therefore again addressed the States General petitioning for a grant that would make it possible for her to meet the costs of living:

> Therefore the petitioner turns to Her High Mightinesses, humbly begging that Her High Mightinesses will feel compassion for her unhappy misfortune, roaming about in this country to complain about the injustice in an outer province under the jurisdiction of Her High Mightinesses done to her, petitioner, originating from the island of St. Eustatius and consequently a born subject of Her High Mightinesses, asking for such a gratuity as Her High Mightinesses in accordance with their usual charity and in relation to the degree of her unhappy situation will judge right.

Mariana also again turned to the WIC asking for the payment of an amount of 687 pesos, the proceeds of the public sale of her slaves. The Amsterdam chamber on her behalf ordered the council of Curacao to send over the requested sum, since it was already clear that the fiscal’s office owed her this money. But the council objected that it could not transfer the money since the case was still unresolved.

The procedure dragged on for another three years. Mariana in the end apparently did not content herself with a mere order of reversal of the sen-

37. NL-HaNA, SG, 1576-1796: Sequel to the appendices to the resolutions, 1576-1796, inventory 1.01.05, 9527, Rodier to States General, dated May 14, 1767.
38. Ibid.
39. NL-HaNA, SG, 1.01.04, 7884, Mariana Franko to States General, handed over on December 28, 1767.
40. NL-HaNA, NWIC, 1.05.01.02, 476, Amsterdam chamber to Curacao council, December 19, 1769.
tence, but demanded that the trial be declared invalid, to have all her possessions restored, and to be indemnified. Coerman had to account for the fact that his predecessors had never kept a proper administration of the costs of justice and that consequently it remained unclear what had happened to Mariana’s money, clothes, gold, and silver. Coerman was the first to admit that Mariana had suffered a gross injustice and that this was directly caused by his predecessors in officio. He was also most willing to do anything to have her rehabilitated immediately. But he was clearly not happy with a trial that could possibly award indemnity to Mariana Franko for her lost property.41

The States General finally decreed in September 1772 that Mariana’s conviction of February 1760 was to be considered null and void, that Mariana Franko was absolved of the sentence demanded by Coerman’s predecessor, and that she was to receive indemnity for her seized property. The defendant, Coerman, was ordered to see to it that the costs of Mariana’s imprisonment and trial, paid from the proceeds of her confiscated property were, as was explicitly stated, officially, so not at his own expense, reimbursed. The States General did not adjudicate her further demands for compensation of other losses. But she was free to sue the parties concerned in this matter and also to start judicial procedures for injury.42

It is improbable that Mariana ever undertook further legal action. After several more petitions and complaints on her part, the Amsterdam chamber in November 1777 again had to order the council of Curaçao to send over the money that Mariana was entitled to. With the sentence pronounced by the States General in September 1772 all grounds for further delay on the part of the Curaçao council had been removed. The Amsterdam Company directors by now clearly had become irritated by the council’s attitude and in strong words remarked that they had every reason to expect that the Curaçao administration would have done everything in its power to send to this “unfortunate human being” the amount of the proceeds of the wrongful sale of her slaves as soon as possible, especially since it was clear in what unfavorable light the criminal procedures undertaken against Mariana were considered by the States General. Mariana was at that time living in poverty in Amsterdam. She apparently had been forced to incur debts, for the money that she was entitled to had already been awarded to a creditor. In March 1778 the Curaçao council finally informed the Company directors that the money was shipped to Amsterdam.43 It is not clear if Mariana finally received any of it.

41. NL-HaNA, SG, 1.01.05, 9527, Thierij de Bije to States General, handed over on July 24, 1770.
42. NL-HaNA, SG, 7900, Mariana Franko to States General, handed over on September 22, 1772.
43. NL-HaNA, NWIC, 1.05.01.02, 476, Amsterdam chamber to Curaçao council, November 11, 1777; NL-HaNA, NWIC, 1.05.01.02, 211, Curaçao council to Heren Tien, March 18, 1778.
The cases of Hubertus Coerman and Mariana Franko make clear that the legal position of the free non-Whites in Curacao was vulnerable. Although Coerman’s opponents in the Curacao council denied this was the case, the fiscal without a doubt rightly assessed that free Blacks and Coloreds ran the risk of being at the mercy of arbitrary administration of justice. This is confirmed by the way the Mariana Franko case was handled. At the same time this treatment of free non-Whites did not seem to have a very solid judicial foundation. Coerman’s criticism on the different legal treatment of the free non-Whites and the curbing of their legal rights made clear that this could be disputed on legal grounds, and his arguments in turn were taken seriously by the authorities in the United Provinces. Mariana Franko as a free Black was similarly treated as her partner Pedro Anthonij who was a slave. Her rights as a defendant were ignored and she was sentenced without any convincing evidence. The directors of the West India Company and the States General, however, treated Mariana as a Dutch citizen, quashed her sentence, and criticized the Curacao council for its performance in her case. How is this difference between colony and mother country to be explained?

The foundation for the government, legislation, and administration of justice in the American colonies was laid by the “Order of Government, for Police as well as Justice, in the places captured or still to be captured in the West Indies” (Ordre van Regieringe, soo in Policie als Justitie, inde Plaetsen verovert, ende te veroveren in West-Indien), issued by the States General in 1629. One of the principal purposes of this document, containing only 69 articles, was to apply the same Dutch laws and legal institutions to all the colonies under the jurisdiction of the WIC. The Order contained stipulations not only regarding government, legislation, and civil and criminal administration of justice, but also on religion, military organization, and land-use policy, and so on. The Order dictated the application of large portions of law as practiced in the Dutch Republic (Schiltkamp 1964:21-24, 2003:320-22; Kunst 1981:57-58).

In the United Provinces, when applying the law in a certain case, first written law (privileges, regulations, proclamations, ordinances) was consulted. If no written laws could be found that were applicable to the case under consideration, unwritten (local) customs were to be followed. If customary law did not provide any solution, Roman law, emperor Justinian’s Corpus Juris Civilis, was to be followed. Roman law in the Dutch Republic was subsidiary law. In the colonies usually the laws of the province of Holland predominated. Besides, since the institution of slavery was unknown in the United Provinces and hence there was no existing legislation dealing with this subject, Roman law was to be used to fill this lacuna. For questions
related to slavery, Roman law was not so much subsidiary law but primary law (Schiltkamp 2003:322; Watson 1989:112, 129).

In addition, local laws could be issued in the colonies. The governor, who was entrusted with the highest authority, presided over a council of police which possessed (limited) legislative powers and could, according to article 62 of the Order of Government, issue local rules and regulations on matters such as public order, markets, trades, taverns, and so forth (Schiltkamp 1972:41). These by-laws could, however, at all times be replaced or supplemented by legislation issued by the superior authorities in the mother country, namely, the directors of the WIC and the States General (Schiltkamp 2003:326; Kunst 1981:224; Klooster 1998).

The directions for the procedures in criminal court cases, as formulated in the Order of Government, were not very clear. Only reference was made to the “ordinary practice in the United Provinces” and to the “common written law,” that is, Roman law. The merits of the case dictated what law was to be applied. Punishments were to be just, without being too harsh. And it was stated in article 51 of the Order of Government that all persons, irrespective of nation or condition, should be tried according to the “ordinary justice” applicable in the colony. The administration of justice in both criminal and civil cases was to be carried out without any hatred or prejudice. The discretionary power of judges left them much room to determine the punishments where these were not clearly defined. And this was the case in numerous examples of locally issued legislation. This consequently led to general arbitrariness and insecurity. The 1570 Criminal Ordinance regarding the Procedure in Criminal Cases (Ordonnantie op de stijl van procederen in criminele zaken) could be considered part of the “ordinary practice” in the Dutch Republic. This gave certain rights to the defendant, but it also allowed the use of torture (Kunst 1981:58-59, 218-19; Schiltkamp 1972:10, 52-53).

The fiscal, who acted as public prosecutor, played a prominent role in criminal cases. He was usually assisted by a sheriff and his deputies. In Curacao during the eighteenth century there was no separate court of justice; the same councillors who were in charge of police matters, also functioned as judges in both civil and criminal cases (Kunst 1981:219-20; Schiltkamp 1972:46-47). According to the second article of the 1674 charter of the WIC, the legal force of sentences pronounced by courts in the colonies was similar to those pronounced at the highest level of court in the United Provinces; the administration of justice in the colonies was seen as a predominantly local affair. There was, however, a possibility of review by the States General, which can be considered as a form of appeal (Kunst 1981:223; Schiltkamp 1972:55-57).

So basically the legal practice and legislature of the United Provinces were transplanted to the American colonies, supplemented with Roman law as primary law in slavery-related questions. But early modern Dutch legal practice left much room for interpretation and the possibility of implement-
ing local customary law. At the same time colonial administrations could also add local laws with a public character.

An important problem in the colonies was a general lack of legal knowledge and professionalism. The judicial libraries in the colonies were usually poorly equipped (Schiltkamp 1964:46-60), while the codification of locally issued legislation was not well organized. As a consequence, legislation was forgotten and fell into disuse. The same applied to the resolutions dispatched by the Company directors and by the States General. In Curacao this legislation was hardly accessible because a register was lacking (Kunst 1981:207-9, 218). At the same time fiscals were not always trained lawyers. According to Schiltkamp, at least until the 1780s the general lack of legal knowledge, among councillors and fiscals alike, almost certainly came home to roost in the administration of justice (Schiltkamp 1972:46-47). He concluded: “In the course of time one hardly knew what laws to apply. Perhaps not even the text of the Order of Government was available” (Schiltkamp 1972:64).

This is confirmed both by Coerman’s observations regarding the lack of professionalism of the administrators and the general legal obscurity, and also by the statement of the island’s council – in its response to the fiscal’s criticism – that there was no body of charters, by-laws, or resolutions to be found in the secretary’s office and that the few regulations that could be found were isolated and random. But where Coerman argued for the issuing of a formal body of law to counter the insecurity and arbitrariness of “assumed” customary law, according to his opponents following local customs had always been for the benefit of peace and stability on the island. The council feared that the introduction of “academic theories” by “learned lawyers” who did not understand the nature of the colony and its people only led to instability and commotion. This fear of the disturbance of public order and security (of Whites) in the colony and the related argument of the necessity to keep the numerically superior non-Whites under strict control was used repeatedly by Coerman’s opponents to counter his criticism. And also in the case against Mariana Franko and Pedro Anthonij, the governor defended the actions taken by the council as being necessary to protect the possessions of the citizens from the alleged thievish behavior of the Blacks, both freedmen and slaves. That there were twenty Blacks to a single White, as was contended time and again, was clearly an exaggeration. But the argument does show that the presence of a large number of Blacks and Coloreds, of which a relatively sizable proportion was free, was experienced by the white population as a threat. According to population figures dating from 1789, there were nearly 21,000 people living on Curacao: 12,864 slaves, 3,564 Whites (2,469 Christians and 1,095 Jews), and a more or less equivalent number of 3,714 free Blacks and Coloreds. A little over half of the total population at that time lived in Willemstad and its immediate surroundings; 42 percent of the slaves, 95 percent of the Whites, and nearly 90 percent of the free non-Whites were town
dwellers. Like many of the Whites, free Blacks and Coloreds as well as many slaves worked in the commercial and maritime branches of the Curaçaoan economy (Klooster 1994:286, 289).

Curaçao was not a typical Caribbean plantation colony since, due to its climate and geophysical circumstances, it was not suited for the cultivation of tropical cash crops; the plantations mainly concentrated on the production of food crops and on cattle ranching. The island’s favorable location close to the colonies on the Spanish main, its role as an important regional slave market during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, its excellent natural harbor, and its status as a free port, all contributed to its development into a busy trade hub.

The relatively large number of free Blacks and Coloreds may in part also be attributed to the economic characteristics of the colony. According to Hoetink, as a consequence of the mercantile character of Curaçaoan society, slaves were relatively easily liberated. Since slaves were in many cases “luxury servants” their masters were more apt to manumit them in times of economic depression to be free of feeding and clothing them (Hoetink 1972:67).

But equally important, or maybe even more important, was the fact that Roman law was applicable to slavery and consequently also to the act of manumission. Alan Watson in his analysis of slave law in the Americas, as it was issued by the major European powers in their colonies, makes clear that where, directly or indirectly, use was made of Roman law, such as in the Dutch, French, Spanish, and Portuguese colonies, there were generally fewer legal barriers to free slaves. This is to be attributed to the fact that in ancient Rome, slavery was not based on race, which is reflected in the law: slaveholding was strictly considered a matter between master and slave and manumission by the owner was relatively unrestricted. Citizenship was also relatively easily granted to a freed slave. Although in the Dutch, French, Spanish, and Portuguese American colonies slavery was based on race, each colony at the onset received a system of law based on Roman law and insofar as slave law remained unchanged or developed from its European tradition, the law remained nonracist in its rules. Law for the Latin American colonies was primarily made in the mother country, and hence nonracist by character. Lawmakers in the colonies, however, were in favor of more racist law. And in the course of time in the Spanish and French colonies, under the influence of local developments, the law became more racist: masters were allowed to punish more, manumission was made more difficult, as was giving financial support to free non-Whites; the treatment of free Blacks and Coloreds was closer to that of slaves (Watson 1989:128, 130-33).

In the English American colonies Roman law was never introduced, while the law was made on the spot. Consequently English American slave law was racist from the start and with the passage of time even became harsher on both slaves and free Blacks. According to Watson, in racist slave societies slave
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Law usually has a stronger public dimension. For example, in the English colonies this was revealed in regulations setting limits to the education of slaves, obliging the owners to punish slaves for certain behavior, and also in stringent restrictions on manumission. In the Dutch colonies, law was also made on the spot, but it was limited to relatively minor public regulations regarding law and order. However, the acceptance of nonracist Roman law as primary law exercised a mitigating effect on slavery-related matters; basically there were no legal barriers against manumission (Watson 1989:128, 130-33).

It is not inconceivable that from the earliest years of the Dutch settlement in Curaçao, slaves were manumitted. A small group of free Blacks and Coloreds probably already existed by the end of the seventeenth century. During the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713) slaves as well as freedmen, able to bear arms, were organized in military units. In 1710 there were three companies of free Blacks consisting of 15, 18, and 25 men respectively. At that time the group of free non-Whites as a whole, including women and children who were usually manumitted in larger numbers than men, may have comprised a few hundred people. Representatives from this group were already economically successful; during the first decades of the eighteenth century there was a small number of free Blacks that were wealthy enough to purchase slaves in the Curaçaoan slave market, while free Blacks and Coloreds were listed as taxpayers (Jordaan 2003:249; Visman 1981:39; Klooster 1994:287-88).

The majority of the free non-Whites, however, were probably paupers, some of whom were even worse off than the slaves. According to Hoetink, affective ties between the freedmen and other segments of society were weak. In a response to this, during the 1740s, when their numbers had significantly grown, freedmen organized themselves into gangs which regularly clashed. According to Klooster this tendency to hooliganism among the free Blacks and Coloreds can be explained from the peculiar nature of the Curaçaoan economy, which made it possible for both free and enslaved non-Whites to make a living in a fairly independent way. This resulted in conflicting demands of the “pattern of slave behavior” on the one hand and a lack of servitude in everyday life on the other (Hoetink 1972:67, 69; Klooster 1994:295).

Not only wanton behavior displayed by Blacks and Coloreds and fear of public disturbance, but also a presumed lack of respect shown to Whites by non-Whites paired with uneasiness about the growing number of free Blacks and Coloreds and the numerical superiority of the black and colored population as a whole were translated into a series of rules and regulations

44. NL-HaNA, NWIC, 1.05.01.02, 568, Jacob Beck to Amsterdam chamber, April 10, 1706, fol. 475; NL-HaNA, NWIC, 1.05.01.02, 203, Abraham Beck to Heren Tien, March 4, 1710, appendix no. 1, January 18, 1710, fols. 450r-52v; Abraham Beck to Heren Tien, March 4, 1710, appendix no. 1, January 10, 1710, fols. 454r-55v.
designed to keep the entire non-white population under strict control, usually
without distinction between slave and free. Local legislative authority was
used to issue a series of *placaten* with a racist bias: gatherings of Blacks and
Coloreds were forbidden; Blacks and Coloreds were not allowed to play loud
music or to carry sticks or any other weapons; non-Whites were not permit-
ted to be out in the street after dark – unless they carried a lantern – while
slaves also had to have a note from their masters explaining why they were
sent out. At the end of the eighteenth century Whites were allowed to punish
by wielding a single blow of a cane on black or colored persons for behavior
that they considered impertinent. Some of these regulations were repeated on
several occasions. In the 1750s attempts were made to reduce the number of
manumissions with a stipulation that an amount of money (50 to 100 pesos)
was to be paid for each slave that was officially freed. Legal measures spec-
cifically aimed at curbing the economic opportunities of the free non-Whites
were less common. The only known regulation dates from 1749 when free
Blacks and Coloreds were barred from keeping a shop in town (Klooster
1994:289). Also laws which for instance limited the amount of money that
free non-Whites could inherit (from their white fathers), as were issued in
the English colonies, were unknown in Curacao. This is not so much due
to a more liberal attitude, but to the fact that nonracist laws from the United
Provinces were in force on Curacao. The same goes for the institution of
matrimony.

Sections of the white elite at Curacao were worried about the frequent
occurrence of intermarriage between Whites and non-Whites. There were
complaints that the free people of color managed to “tempt” Whites into
marriage and that they were also becoming so self-assured that they even
imagined themselves “to be the equals of Whites” (Kunst 1974:56). Around
the middle of the eighteenth century, a number of white Curacaoans peti-
tioned the States General to issue a ban on the solemnization of marriages
between Whites and non-Whites. It was stated in the petition that under the
then prevailing marriage regulations it was more difficult to prevent mixed
marriages and it was feared that “pure white families, which until now are
free of such unions, are exposed daily to the danger of being contaminated
with this stain” (Schiltkamp 1972:66; Kunst 1981:205-6). A copy of the
petition was sent over to Curacao with a request for advice. It was there-
upon decided by the council to appoint a commission to investigate the con-
sequences of such a ban. The commission appeared to be no advocate of
any measures that could be taken as an insult by the free non-Whites and
would consequently lead to tensions within society, for “among the fami-
lies descending from blacks or liberated male or female slaves, or related

45. Hoetink 1972:68; Schiltkamp & de Smit 1978, vol. 1, nos. 67, 97, 143, 150, 223,
with these through blood ties, there are already some which are wealthy and powerful, originating from grandmothers and grandfathers who concluded lawful marriages and which are from time to time also related to many white families and are now considered or consider themselves … nearly white.\textsuperscript{46}

The States General decided to declare the marriage regulation of 18 March 1656 applicable to Curaçao, which extended the number of blood relatives (even to third- and fourth-degree relatives) whose explicit permission was needed before a marriage could be concluded. No doubt much to the disappointment of the petitioners, however, the States General did not distinguish between Whites and non-Whites; the regulation was applicable to all groups (Schiltkamp 1972:66; Kunst 1981:205-6).

The Curaçao council tried to preserve a delicate balance between control over the Blacks and Coloreds on the one hand, while avoiding alienating the group of free non-Whites at the same time. An important reason for this was that the government by the middle of the eighteenth century had become in large part dependent on the cooperation of the free Blacks and Coloreds for the island's defense and the maintenance of public order. Around 1740 there were two armed units of freedmen, one “Mulatto” and one “negro” company, serving under their own officers and directly under the command of the governor. Since the garrison of Company soldiers was usually weak, due to high mortality and frequent desertion, and the white militia was not always reliable, the two non-white companies occupied a key position in the military organization of the colony. The free black militia played an important role in crushing a slave rebellion in 1750. Its daily task, however, was to patrol the streets in the predominantly black neighborhood of Otrobanda after nightfall. They also controlled the shores south and west of Otrobanda to prevent slaves from escaping in small boats to the nearby Spanish mainland. Although white citizens were eager to incorporate the free non-white companies into the line of command of the militia, with the captain of the militia as its highest ranking officer, the governor was not willing to give up his command; he even sought and obtained support from his superiors in this matter. The military role of the free non-Whites was considered so important that they were even exempted from taxes for some time, which stressed their special position and was intended to bind them to the Company administration (Klooster 1994:288, 290, 294; Jordaan 2010).

\textsuperscript{46} NL-HaNA, NWIC, 1.05.01.02, 599, copy of a letter from Gerard Pax, Christiaan Raphoen, and Herman Rojer to governor Isaac Faesch, December 22, 1752, pp. 348-49.
The organization of the administration of justice in the Dutch Atlantic colonies was set up with the overarching goal to create a uniform judicial system that concurred with the situation in the Dutch Republic. Dutch law was basically nonracist as was Roman law which was applied to slavery. But the Order of Government, which was at the foundation of the legislature and administration of justice in the Dutch American colonies, left much room for interpretation and made the development of local customs into a major source of uncodified law. A general lack of legal professionalism and information in the colonies, where local authorities in this regard were also largely left to fend for their own, facilitated a situation where insecurity and arbitrariness regarding the legal position of free Blacks and Coloreds could thrive.

The threat to their dominant position, felt by the white population of Curacao, was at the root of an urge to keep both the enslaved and the free non-Whites under strict control, which in turn led not only to a growing body of restrictive locally issued legislature but which was also perpetuated in the daily practice of the administration of justice. The alleged dangers to social stability posed by a numerically superior non-white population constituted the recurrent argument used to defend oppressive and restrictive measures towards the free and enslaved non-Whites and to counter any criticism on this policy. This situation was condoned by the Company directors and the States General, both of which were also interested in the maintenance of law and order in the colonies.

There were, however, also limits to the possibilities for local authorities to translate a racist attitude into regulations restricting the freedom of behavior on the part of free non-Whites. Firstly, limits were set to local legislative powers; only by-laws with a public character could be issued. It was not possible for colonial administrators to fundamentally change for instance the regulation of manumission, law of inheritance, or the institution of matrimony to the disadvantage of free non-Whites. Secondly, the very existence of a relatively large number of free non-Whites, the economic and social importance of some of its representatives, existing blood ties between white and non-white families, and the military importance of the group as a whole forced the governor and councillors to be careful not to alienate the free Blacks and Coloreds. But the Dutch colonial legal system did allow an individual free Black, as in the case of Mariana Franko, to be treated in Curacao almost as a slave without a legal personality or rights – the use of the term “free slaves” to designate free non-Whites in Curacao speaks volumes in this regard – while the same person in the United Provinces was legally considered and treated no differently than any other Dutch subject of the States General.
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NOW YOU SEE IT, NOW YOU DON’T: SANTERÍA, ANTHROPOLOGY, AND THE SEMIOTICS OF “BELIEF” IN SANTIAGO DE CUBA


In recent years, the literature on Santería has grown by leaps and bounds. Check the call number BL2532.S3 in the Library of Congress online catalogue, and you will see that, as of January 2009, the number of acquisitions it includes has reached exactly one hundred, with thirty new additions since the beginning of the millennium! Of course, BL2532.S3 locates a somewhat heterogeneous array of publications – ranging, as they do, from full-fledged academic monographs to practitioners’ manuals and memoirs, or the type of flimsy booklet one is likely to encounter in dog-eared versions in the book market at Havana’s Plaza de Armas. But it is clear that even specialists are nowadays likely to throw up their hands in despair over the dwindling prospects of being able to keep up with this flood of representations of Santería.

What is less clear, perhaps, is what this literature is “all about.” This, obviously, is not of great concern to the bibliographers at the Library of Congress. But it is of concern for those of us who are not content with the kind of Aristotelian nominalism that suggests that if there is a word for something, then that something must (somehow) exist. When we go out into “the field” to study Santería, what exactly is it that we are studying? Practices? Beliefs? A religion? If so, what practices fall under this rubric, and which ones do not? When we watch White Sox Manager Ozzie Guillén (who is a practicing priest of the ifá oracle) giving tactical instructions to his team during a game, are we observing behavior that falls under the rubric Santería? Or take the
yearly divinatory readings known as the *letra del año*: if all Santeros believe in the infallibility of the *iṣẹ* oracle, why is it that the three major groups of *babalao* in Havana will (predictably) disagree over each other’s yearly prognostications? And what about all the statues of Catholic saints, Buddhas, Indians, Dr. Gregorio Hernándezes, or Masonic implements in the shrines of our interlocutors? What of Kardec’s *Oraciones escogidas* flowers and water on a shelf in their living room, the *nganga* power objects they keep hidden in a shed in the backyard, the Spanish translations of the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, Nostradamus’s prophecies, or Reiki manuals that we might find on their bookshelves, or the *abakuá* handshake that some of them might offer to a male ethnographer? Is all of this Santería? Where does it begin or end? According to whom? On what grounds? And most importantly: why have anthropologists so consistently dodged that question?

Part of the answer surely lies in the epistemological ethnocentrism that our discipline inherited from a larger discursive field within which “religion” began to emerge as a seemingly discrete sphere of human agency and experience in the aftermath of the Reformation and the rise of secular forms of political legitimation during the Enlightenment. Yet ignoring the perennial theoretical vexation of how to define “religion” – let alone even only “a religion” – most ethnographers of Santería have simply forged ahead empirically as if they would know it when they see it. This, surely, is one reason why the pseudo-problem of “syncretism” received so much attention. But as Kristina Wirtz shows in *Ritual, Discourse, and Community in Cuban Santería*, it is only the tip of an iceberg of unexamined background assumptions. “What,” Wirtz asks (p. xii), “allows an ethnographer or, for that matter, anyone in a given society, to recognize a religious community or even a religion as a distinct social entity?” “How,” her even more important question (p. 11) reads, “do people come to interpret some experiences as religious,” while relegating others to the realm of the mundane? What might an answer to such questions tell us about the role of principled skepticism in the constitution of inhabitable lifeworlds (an issue left hanging ever since Evans-Pritchard’s *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic*, some 70 years ago)? And what new insights might this afford us into the Durkheimian project of making sociality contingent upon the ritual reinforcement of “collective representations”?

As the reader will already have gathered, Wirtz’s book departs – quite radically – from the epistemological tenor of practically all previous studies of Afro-Cuban (and, I might add, Afro-Caribbean) religions. Indeed, Wirtz may well be the first ethnographer of Santería whose work has a theoretical bearing beyond the (need I say: burgeoning?) Caribeansist literature. In part, this may be so because her training in a branch of linguistic anthropology particularly attentive to issues of metapragmatic framing and communicative reflexivity leads her to questions that, by and large, have simply not been asked before. More importantly, however, her conceptualization of how
yearly divinatory readings known as the letra del año: if all Santeros believe in the infallibility of the ifá oracle, why is it that the three major groups of babalao{s} in Havana will (predictably) disagree over each other’s yearly prognostications? And what about all the statues of Catholic saints, Buddhas, Indians, Dr. Gregorio Hernándezes, or Masonic implements in the shrines of our interlocutors? What of Kardec’s Oraciones escogidas flowers and water on a shelf in their living room, the nganga power objects they keep hidden in a shed in the backyard, the Spanish translations of the Egyptian Book of the Dead, Nostradamus’s prophecies, or Reiki manuals that we might find on their bookshelves, or the abakuá handshake that some of them might offer to a male ethnographer? Is all of this Santería? Where does it begin or end? According to whom? On what grounds? And most importantly: why have anthropologists so consistently dodged that question?

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been asked before. More importantly, however, her conceptualization of how to answer such questions allows her to marshal her data from Santiago de Cuba (itself hardly the paradigmatic place for “Santería studies”) in a fashion that is worth applying elsewhere – and here I don’t just mean elsewhere in Cuba, or elsewhere in what one might call the global Afro-Cuban religious diaspora, but in other ethnographic scenarios as well.

Perhaps Wirtz’s key insight is that we should let go of the conceit that what we (along with practitioners) have come to call Santería enjoys any kind of prediscursive existence. Yet there is no silly “it’s all a social construction” mantra attached to this move. On the contrary, what Wirtz is after are the conditions of recognition – both for us, but more importantly for practitioners themselves – under which an instance of experience or collective praxis becomes frameable as conforming to the sense of “the religious” that Santeros tend to cultivate. As she tells us (p. 27), “Santería, as such,” simply isn’t something that could be objectified apart from the talk that constantly swirls around it. Instead, it “exists most tangibly as it is continually reinvented in the dialogical interactions among the discourses and other practices that frame it” – including, as she rightly adds, her own book. Even the most exuberant ritual fulminations, she argues, merely constitute a formal nucleus that becomes intelligible (not the least to Santeros themselves) in light of the informal cloud of evaluative discourse that begins to envelop it even while it unfolds, and will continue to build up in its aftermath in an often highly contentious, even cantankerous manner, until whatever happened is finally, retrospectively booked as a genuine instance of contact with the divine, or written off as a mistake or deliberate falsification or interested deception.

Taking this stance frees Wirtz from the entire array of authenticating desires that have seduced so much of Afro-Caribbean religious anthropology into strategic (or not so strategic) forms of ahistorical essentializations of “tradition” (“African” or otherwise). What her ethnography of specific ritual events vividly demonstrates instead, is the potential of a perspective that focuses on reflexive evaluations that make what Spanish speakers are able to call “lo tradicional” (or “lo africano” for that matter) a fundamentally emergent category – emergent, that is, from a long and ongoing conversation about what exactly it was that “just happened.” Yet the results of the processes – i.e. what both scholars and practitioners are nowadays wont to call “Santería” – isn’t simply an indeterminate interpretative free-for-all, held together by a commonly accepted name. Instead, what holds it all together is (pace Durkheim) not individual skepticism suppressed in the collective effervescence of ritual, but skepticism tempered by what Wirtz, following her mentor Greg Urban, calls shared metacultural interpretative stances (or semiotic ideologies, if you prefer Webb Keane’s version of the idea). Though mutating in the course of cumulative discursive encounters, these mutually shared agreements on what to agree (or disagree) about are what allows
Santeros to actually see themselves as a community of believers – and portray themselves as such, when they respond to our questions.

As Evans-Pritchard might have appreciated, there is thus ample room for both circumstantial skepticism and no less circumstantial corroboration. “Was that ritual well performed?” – “Nah, it was a travesty of correct procedure.” “Did Yemaya really descend into Mario’s body?” – “Come on, didn’t you see him open his eyes?” “Did the oracle really foretell what happened?” – “Of course it did! Haven’t I just told you my story?” ... crafted, as it would be in the inevitable post-hoc manner that shapes autobiographical narrative in most Western societies (and Cuba, let’s not forget, is a Western society). What counts is that certain minimal assumptions about the workings of the world do not come up for debate. And here Wirtz’s case even trumps E.P.’s: different from the Azande, Cuban Santeros are not born into the conceptual order of the world in which they live. Given Cuba’s current age structure, one would assume that the majority of people identifying as Santeros in Santiago de Cuba today grew up under the Revolution, went through atheistic education in school, and were encouraged (until at least the early 1990s) to express anything but a religious identification. Clearly, one doesn’t have to inhabit a “closed system” to believe in the truths revealed by oracles.

If there is one single flaw in Wirtz’s amazing book, then it is that one might want to know more about precisely how the “metadiscursive” stances that have kept reproducing “Santería” in Santiago de Cuba ever since the matancero émigré Reyniero Pérez brought it there in the 1930s were – and are – themselves subject to history. Of course, the kind of historical sociology of the transfer, in time and social space, of modes of interpretative framing that might throw light on this question would be a hard one to empirically elicit and document (a problem Wirtz’s approach shares with others that focus on the semiotics of microsociological encounters). But even if so, Wirtz has provided us with a set of fresh and illuminating perspectives that will have an impact, or so I strongly hope, on at least some of the next thirty books shelved under BL2532.S3 – and perhaps elsewhere as well.

Though very different in form and content, Claire Garoutte and Anneke Wambau’s beautifully illustrated Crossing the Waters complements Wirtz’s book in intriguing ways – and not just because the setting for both is Santiago de Cuba. For one thing, their book vividly documents the complexity and heterogeneous nature of the practices, ideologies, and aesthetics that go into the making of what practitioners nowadays tend to call “la religión” – and so illustrates and underscores Wirtz’s questions about what makes “Afro-Cuban religion” cohere. More importantly, however, reading the two books in tandem is likely to induce a sense of mild epistemological vertigo. If, in Wirtz’s case, the phenomenological “reality” of deities and spirits emerges (cumulatively, as it were) from an ongoing process of metadiscursive reflexivity among her interlocutors, Garoutte and Wambaugh’s book presents a
different, but equally interesting conceptual challenge. In their case it is not
discourse, but – as the subtitle of their book indicates – photography that
provides a “path to the Afro-Cuban spirit world.” Thus while the phrase “ver
para creer” (seeing is believing) is mobilized in both books, it serves dis-
tinctly different purposes. For Wirtz, it functions as a metaphor for a central
analytical question (“how are the metacultural interpretative frames allowing
Santeros to experience the reality of spirits and deities collectively estab-
lished and reproduced?”); for Garoutte and Wambaugh, it prods the sug-
gestion, however underplayed in the text, of visual metonymy. In part, this
surely is an effect of the beautifully nuanced, vibrant, and – shall we say
“hauntingly”? – evocative character of the more than 150 photographs in
Garoutte and Wambaugh’s book, giving the impression that what we behold
in these images might well be what the participants in the rituals at the home
of Santiago Castañeda Vera (a retired Santiaguense retail sales employee)
would “have seen” as well.

Of course, such an interpretation hinges on a folk theory of photo-
graphy as a transparently “realistic,” indexical rather than iconic, medium. Still,
onece taken seriously, the notion that indexicality might be involved here –
that is, an involvement of representations in the world they represent – raises
thorny issues. This is so because once we admit this possibility in the case
at hand, we arrive at a rather unusual question of “mediation” (in both the
straightforward and extended sense of the word) where the object of photo-
graphic mediation/representation is itself a medium in which a spiritual entity
objectifies/re-presents itself. For what, after all, do we see in Garoutte’s and
Wambaugh’s amazing photographs of the central protagonist of the book,
Santiago Castañeda Vera, when, in the midst of ritual, he has given his body
over to the presence of the oricha Yemayá, the mpungu Sarabanda, or the
spirit of a dead slave named Pa Francisco? Are we seeing Santiago “presente
solo en su materia” (only in his material form) as practitioners of Afro-Cuban
religions might put it, his physical body the vehicle of an alien subjectivity
acting itself into being through a characteristic (and characteristically “dif-
ferent”) divine hexis that becomes recognizable as such for his fellow practitio-
ners (cf. Irvine 1982)? Are we seeing the photographically frozen visual “raw
material” that might drive reflexive post facto analyses among practitioners
like those that Wirtz has documented (was it genuine spirit possession or
faked)? Or are we facing the contemporary equivalent of what nineteenth-
century observers took to be the products of a technology of visualization
that afforded users of Crookes’s cathode-ray tubes, Röntgen’s radiographic
devices, Edison’s vitascope, or indeed spirit photographers the opportunity
to capture the unseen? Though none of these interpretations are intrinsically
incompatible, we still might want to ask what the photographic evidence of
spirit possession that Garoutte and Wambaugh have so beautifully captured is really evidence of.\(^1\)

To phrase matters in such a way is likely to push beyond Garoutte and Wambush’s original intentions. But aside from simply presenting a visually stunning, ethnographically rich, and sensitively presented document of the ritual life of Castañeda Vera and his cult group, *Crossing the Waters* raises questions akin to, while at the same time significantly different from, the ones Wirtz has in mind when she probes the interface between an anthropology of Afro-Cuban religion and its elusive “object.” In the first case, the question is “(how) does one know it when one sees it?” In the second, it might be “what does one see when one sees it?” If Wirtz’s book revolves around the question of the conditions of possibility for such an “object” to credibly attain discernible form among the practitioners themselves, then Garoutte and Wambush’s would seem to return that question to the point where, in all fairness, one would have to concede that it originates: an epistemology that, by definition, remains beholden to a semiotic ideology in which imputations of “transcendent” referential value to material signs (such as human bodies) are as much of a scandalous hybrid (in Latour’s sense) as the notion that a single body might, at different times, be inhabited by different agentive selves. Pushing the analytical gaze beyond the limits of properly disenchanted readings of the photographic record and towards a spectrographic diagnostics of numinous presence, what Garoutte and Wambaugh’s images seem to ask of us is to make up our minds about who or what is looking at us from the eyes of the entranced bodies they so strikingly capture.

Of course, there is a time-honored and well-known way to evade the issue: from Evans-Pritchard’s famous abdication of analytical terrain to the theologians at the end of *Nuer Religion* (1956) to M.G. Smith’s *Dark Puritan* (1963), Vincent Crapanzano’s *Tuhami* (1980), James Wafer’s *The Taste of Blood* (1991), my own *Wizards and Scientists* (2002), Richard Price’s *Travels with Tooy* (2008), or Wirtz herself (e.g., pp. 8-11), most anthropologists unwilling to “cross the waters” have simply bracketed their ability to judge just what exactly is going on, remaining uncommitted when it comes to “belief” (cf. Ewing 1994) in the occult phenomena populating the life-worlds of our interlocutors – and sometimes bursting in upon our own (as

\(^1\) That photography and modern spiritism emerged virtually in tandem (and, arguably, both under the impact of positivistic theories of knowledge and evidence) makes this question even more productively troubling (see Stiegler 2006:87-136 for a particularly lucid treatment of these issues). Compare Mnookin (1998) on the history of photography as forensic evidence (in which spirit photography played a brief but significant role), and Holbraad (2008) on some of the logical problems involved in conventional anthropological uses of ethnographic evidence concerning statements such as “spirits cause headaches” (or “take possession of people’s bodies,” for that matter).
when otherwise “perfectly normal” friends of ours suddenly go into trance and speak to us with the voices of spirits or gods). But this is exactly the point that Garoutte and Wambaugh’s “spirited” photographs might force us to reconsider. If Wirtz shows us that the reality of the “work of the gods” (to use Raymond Firth’s phrase) in the lives of her interlocutors demands plenty of discursive labor for them to get to the point where “seeing is believing,” then coming to terms with what we see on the pages of Crossing the Waters may demand considerable theoretical labor of us. Given that part of the problem evidently arises out of the very historical processes which led to the conceptualization of “religion” and the “religious” as finite provinces of meaning, such work might well take its start from a reflexive analysis of those academic “clouds of discourse” and “swirls of talk” that constitute (or “fetishize,” if you will) both “Santería” and “anthropology” as ontologically separate “objects” and intrinsically incommensurable ways of knowing the world.

Paraphrasing myself, perhaps Afro-Cuban “wizardry” and anthropological “science” have been entangled ever since “we” began writing about “them.” Perhaps there’s nothing to be done about it. Still, this does not absolve us from scrutinizing our own knowledge practices and the semiotic ideologies underwriting them. Going down such a “path” may not lead us “into the Afro-Cuban spirit world” (if that, indeed, is where we would even want to wind up!). But it might lead us beyond ethnographic evasions of the embarrassment of a (suspiciously “transcendent”) surplus of signification, and so help counteract the proliferation of hybrids (so strikingly visualized in Garoutte and Wambaugh’s book) that such evasions evidently encourage. If we did so, it would likely not force the good bibliographers at the Library of Congress to rethink the utility (intellectual or other) of call number BL2532.S3. But it might help do away with some of the rather less than stringent logic underpinning our efforts (Holbraad 2008), and make the anthropology of Afro-Cuban religion a more honest, and perhaps more interesting pursuit.

2. There are, of course, significant counterexamples ranging from Evans-Pritchard seeing witchcraft fly through the night in 1920s Azandelând, Maya Deren reporting on her own becoming possessed by the deity Erzulie in Haiti, or Paul Stoller telling us about succumbing to Songhai spells. Still, even if the authors refrain from rationalizing such experiences, the anthropologist “under the influence” remains a troubling hybrid. Deren (1970:322-24) perhaps most clearly formulated the epistemological issues involved in a long footnote on her own episodes of possession trance (which she apparently even tried to record). She concludes that even though there was no way of knowing whether she was “authentically” possessed, this neither mattered to her Haitian interlocutors, nor forced herself to concede “belief”: “In effect,” she writes (Deren 1970:324, emphasis in the original), “and regardless of what I might think or believe, I served the loa and, in so doing, I learned … that the effect of the ritual service is on the doer.”
REFERENCES


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The very great majority of our book reviewers do a terrific job and get their reviews in more or less on time. Each year, we receive several letters asking for a ten-day or two-week extension from a review’s due date – which we’re always happy to grant. To all these reviewers, we offer our heartfelt thanks. But there are always a few reviewers who, despite multiple reminders, cannot seem to get the job done. Therefore, it is once again our solemn duty to induct this select group of scholars into the Caribbeanist Hall of Shame. Despite cordial reminders over a period of many months, these colleagues have neither produced the reviews that they promised nor returned the books so that someone else could take on the task. As is our custom, and in an attempt to exercise discretion and protect the reputation of innocent Caribbeanists, we follow the eighteenth-century convention in identifying delinquent reviewers by first and last initials.

- Sugarlandia Revisited: Sugar and Colonialism in Asia and the Americas, 1800-1940, edited by Ulbe Bosma, Juan A. Giusti-Cordero & G. Roger Knight (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007. 233 pp., cloth US$ 75.00) (F—o A. S—o)
- Vulnerable States: Bodies of Memory in Contemporary Caribbean Fiction, by Guillermina De Ferrari (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007. x + 255 pp., cloth US$ 69.50) (I—e R—o)
Sacred Waters: Arts for Mami Wata and Other Divinities in Africa and the Diaspora, edited by Henry John Drewal (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008. xxxi + 681 pp., cloth US$ 75.00) (S—e B—r)

The remainder of this year’s “Bookshelf” will be briefer than usual because we are on sabbatical and in Martinique, far from the many books that have arrived in our office at the College of William & Mary during our absence. (We review here only arrivals in Martinique.) Next year at this time, we’ll be forced to play catch-up.

As always, we begin our yearly roundup with works of Caribbean literature – fiction and poetry (neither of which are otherwise reviewed in the journal). First, novels, new and old.

Brenda Flanagan’s Allah in the Islands (Leeds, U.K.: Peepal Tree Press, 2009, paper £8.99), the Trinidadian-born author’s second novel, is a story of corruption and Muslim radicalism on the fictional island of Santabella, carrying reflections of the July 1990 takeover of Trinidad by Yasin Abu Bakr. For Kamau Brathwaite, the prose is “swimming in nation-language & Trini tang as sweet as plankton,” and indeed, the narrative runs on many of the evocative expressions explored in Lise Winer’s dictionary (see below). The five stories (novellas) in The Island Quintet: A Sequence, by Trinidadian journalist and cultural critic Raymond Ramcharitar (Leeds, U.K.: Peepal Tree Press, 2009, paper £8.99), are told in a rather different voice, with the Trini tang limited to characters’ dialogue, but they confront the realities of people who live in the contemporary island world of migration and return, the divides of race and class, and the dark legacies of colonial – and postindependence – history.

Two by that indomitable self-proclaimed “word scratcher” and “warrior of the imaginaire,” Martinique’s Patrick Chamoiseau. The first, Un dimanche au cachot (Paris: Gallimard, 2007, paper €17.90), has Chamoiseau, in his social-worker mode, called in to help cajole a troubled girl out of her refuge in a slavery-days punishment cell, leading to dream-like Faulknerian voyages between past and present. The second, Les neuf consciences du Malfini (Paris: Gallimard, 2009, paper €16.90), has Chamoiseau serving as amanuensis for a large raptor who recounts his life and, especially, his transformational encounter with a hummingbird. As l’Oiseau de Cham (as he sometimes calls himself) writes on the jacket, “It consists at once of an ethnological chronicle, a philosophical meditation, a fable, a folktale, a legend, a saga, or simply a bildungsroman, nourished by the marvels now permitted in literature – a poetic of the everyday full of tenderness and love and humor and imbued with an ecological consciousness.”

2008 saw the publication of two French translations of Aphra Behn’s pioneering 1688 novel about Suriname, Oroonoko, or, The Royal Slave,


Several books of poetry, all from the House of Nehisi in Philipsburg, St. Martin, and all published in 2009, in paper, for US$ 15.00. *Guanahini, My Love*, by Marion Bethel, is a welcome new edition of these strong Bahamian poems that won the 1994 Casa de las Américas Prize and were published at that time in a bilingual edition in Cuba. *Eva/Sión/Es*, by well-known Dominican poet Chiqui Vicioso, brings together a series of original Spanish-language poems followed by their English and then French versions. *I Believe* collects mature poems of Sir Howard A. Fergus that combine his classical erudition and Montserratian roots. And the House of Nehisi has also brought out Lasana M. Sekou’s *The Salt Reaper: Selected Poems from the Flats*, mentioned in an earlier iteration of Bookshelf, here performed with a hot music mix by Angelo Rombley on an audio CD (US$ 15.00).

Three books about art. *La Peinture en Martinique*, a lavishly illustrated volume edited by Gerry L’Étang (Paris: HC Éditions, 2007, cloth €50.00), offers an excellent entrée into the art history of Martinique. Following a general history of painting, a chapter on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century artists, portraits of other twentieth-century pioneers, and an essay on Amerindian artistic expression, the book introduces thirty contemporary painters, each via a personal statement, full-color illustrations of their art, and a reading (often poetic) of one of their works by writers such as Patrick Chamoiseau, Maryse Condé, Monchouachi, and Raphaël Confiant.

*Hosselen: Een diachronische roman in achttwintig gitzwarte facetten over beeldende kunst in identiteitsdenkend Nederland anno 2009*, by Michael Tedja (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2009, cloth €19.50), is a multimedia work that comes with a DVD of his (and his friends’) music, poetry, and images and includes photos of his installation art, stills from his videos and films, a number of drawings and sketches, numerous poems and short essays,
Out of the Fogg: Dibujos y pinturas de Antonio Martorell (San Juan: Museo de las Américas, 2009, paper n.p., texts by Antonio T. Díaz-Royo and Antonio Martorell) is the full-color catalogue of a Puerto Rican exhibition of work inspired by the artist’s 2008 semester as a visiting professor at Harvard University’s Fogg Museum (see also Martorell: La aventura de la creación, reviewed in this issue).

One photo book. Curaçao: Religions, Rituals & Traditions (Amsterdam: KIT Press, 2009, cloth US$ 65.00) presents Sinaya R. Wolfert’s coffee-table-sized color images of various Christian, Hindu, Muslim, and Jewish congregations, intended to “show how beautiful and important the different religions are in peoples’ lives.” And an intimate history of Curaçao’s Ashkenazim by journalist Jeannete van Ditzhuijzen, Een sjiel in de tropen: De asjkenazische gemeenschap op Curaçao (Amsterdam: KIT Press, 2010, cloth €24.50), traces the community from its arrival (mainly from Poland and Romania) in the 1920s to the present.

A number of the books we’ve received focus on Suriname.

On November 29, 1986, in the Cottica Ndyuka village of Moiwana, the Suriname military perpetrated the most notorious mass killing of the civil war. In this systematic massacre, at least thirty-nine unarmed civilians – mostly small children (four of them infants) and girls, but also several pregnant women and elderly people – were killed in cold blood, some hacked to pieces with machetes, many others were wounded, and all the houses were burned to the ground. In Moiwana zoekt gerechtigheid: De strijd van een marrondorp tegen de staat Suriname (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2006, paper €17.50), attorney Fergus MacKay presents essential background plus the text of the 2005 judgment of the Inter-American Court for Human Rights, before which he argued the case on behalf of the surviving Maroons. This ruling, which found that the State of Suriname had violated various rights of the inhabitants of Moiwana guaranteed by the American Convention on Human Rights, called for the legal and collective titling of the inhabitants’ territory, reparations for damages incurred, prosecution of the perpetrators, and other measures – only some (and none of the more important) of which have been effected to date by the State.

In Saramaka: De strijd om het bos (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2010, paper €17.50), Fergus MacKay presents the landmark 2007 judgment of the Inter-American Court for Human Rights in the case of the Saramaka People v. Suriname (as well as the Court’s 2008 Interpretive Judgment). Since the 1990s, the Saramakas have been struggling to protect their traditional territory from the depredations of multinational logging and mining companies, to which the State had granted exploitation concessions without consultation of the Saramakas. The Court’s path-breaking judgment recognized that the
Saramakas had a judicial personality and found that they were a tribal people whose rights to their traditional and collective territory had been violated by the State of Suriname and that the State must now grant them collective legal title to this territory as well as the right to the resources within it. Henceforth, any development project proposed by the State within Saramaka territory must have the Saramaka People’s free, prior, and informed consent. MacKay, who pleaded the case on behalf of the Saramakas before the international tribunal, provides an introduction to the case and follows it with a Dutch translation of the landmark decision itself.

The lavishly illustrated *Kunst van overleven: Marroncultuur uit Suriname*, edited by Alex van Stipriaan & Thomas Polimé (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2009, paper €29.50), was published to coincide with the opening of an ambitious exhibition at Amsterdam’s Tropenmuseum. Eastern Maroons hold pride of place in this volume (in illustrations, ethnographic information, and linguistic terms), at the expense of Central Maroons (Saramakas and Matawais). Dealing primarily with the present and future of young Maroons, especially the question of how Maroon culture is surviving in an era of increasing globalization, the book includes essays on changing patterns in kinship, religion, marriage, music, education, gold mining, land rights, out-migration, and more. The book’s weakness is visual art. Illustrated artworks are not identified by specific origins (Ndyuka, Saramaka, Aluku, etc.); the lack of dimensions makes a food paddle seem as long as a canoe paddle (p. 91); pieces of clothing are mis-identified or shown upside-down (p. 93); and artists of even twenty-first-century works are not credited.

*Architectuur en bouwcultuur in Suriname*, by Olga van der Klooster & Michel Bakker (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2009, paper €49.50), with hundreds of (often color) illustrations, is too heavy to peruse except on a sturdy desk. It’s the sort of book that makes it hard for a reader who’s spent time in Suriname not to feel a wave of nostalgia, or for one who’s contemplating a visit not to feel eager to walk the streets of the UNESCO World Heritage cityscape of Paramaribo. But it’s about buildings (usually their exteriors) rather than about the people who built and inhabit(ed) them – no images evoking the smells or sounds of pictured places. Emphasis is on masters rather than slaves and on the city rather than the hinterlands. Scholars of Maroons or Amerindians (or Suriname slavery) will be disappointed with the sources used and the commonsense received wisdom often expressed. But as a record of often-remarkable physical buildings, the volume joins those of Temminck Groll and Volders of half a century ago in bearing a certain kind of witness.

*The Riverbones: Stumbling after Eden in the Jungles of Suriname*, by Andrew Westoll (Toronto: Emblem Editions, 2008, paper US$ 24.99), chronicles a five-months’ journey through “the most surreal country in South America,” with eye-popping descriptions of, among many other scenes,
Peace Corps volunteers in Saramaka villages and a rave party on an island in Alcoa’s artificial lake, as well as a dour assessment of the kind of ecotourism proposed by Conservation International: “Ecotourism here looks like a new form of imperialism. The new visitor’s centre [at Raleigh Falls], financed by money from Wal-Mart and Intel, will dwarf the very forest it was built to promote. Soon, it will host an internet café, crowds of Dutch tourists drinking Coca-Cola, hordes of European teenagers performing cannonballs into the water and getting high on the rocks, gaggles of young women on vacation looking to bed a wild, primitive Maroon.”

Two books in which photos predominate. Marrons van Suriname, by Toon Fey (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2009, paper €22.50), is a well-meaning nonscholarly introduction to Maroons (no notes, no sources given even though it is based entirely on secondary sources) with photos that outshine the text. In contrast, Eithne B. Carlin’s In the Shadow of the Tiger: The Amerindians of Suriname, with excellent photos by Diederik van Goethem (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2009, paper €29.50), is a scholarly introduction, informed by serious fieldwork, to the present Amerindian inhabitants of Suriname, eight different groups who speak languages of either the Cariban or Arawakan families.

Shortly before her death in 2009, the grande dame of Suriname Maroon historiography, Silvia W. de Groot, gathered together a selection of her previously published essays as Agents of Their Own Emancipation: Topics in the History of Surinam Maroons (Amsterdam: By the author, 2009, paper n.p.). They may serve as a fitting reminder of her half-century of historical writings.

Several reference books, beginning with a real gem, the Dictionary of the English Creole of Trinidad and Tobago: On Historical Principles, edited by Lise Winer (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2009, cloth US$ 85.00). With well over a thousand pages of tight-packed information, this impressive volume reflects a serious, multiyear commitment by a long-time student of Trinidad & Tobago and its verbal expression. Linguistically and culturally sophisticated, its entries often run several hundred words, offering contextualization, etymologies, quotes from literary and historical sources, indication of differences between Trinidad and Tobago, and more. In addition to defining words (e.g., “advantageous” as “ungrateful” – “You are tormenting me. Why are you so advantageous?”), the dictionary covers T&T culture via entries on plants and animals (over 4500!), culinary dishes, kinship categories, items of clothing, musical forms and instruments, folktale and Carnival characters, religious holidays and rituals, sexual practices, bodily ailments, sugar cane processing, crab-catching techniques, ethnic categories, rhetorical devices, ... the list goes on and on – some 12, 200 entries in all. Dipping at random into this rich cultural introduction to the two islands reveals the malleability of the English language
and its responsiveness to local creativity. This is a resource that should be made available to students everywhere (every university library should be encouraged to buy a copy), and any Caribbeanist who buys it for personal use will be opening the door to a detailed display of cultural vitality that will provide many years of entertainment and edification.

Another window onto local culture in the Caribbean is provided by *Jamaican Placenames*, by B.W. Higman & B.J. Hudson (Mona, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2009, paper US$ 25.00). Tapping into the range of terms for mountains, rivers, settlements, coastlines, and more for clues to Jamaica’s social, cultural, and economic history, it introduces readers to the planters who determined many of the names, but also explores creole origins and associations. As in Winer’s dictionary, we’re treated to the kind of detail that contributes to the fun of getting to know a Caribbean island. If, for example, you’re curious about the difference between a hill, a bump, and a hillock, this book will answer your question and introduce you to other equally interesting distinctions in the Jamaican landscape, past and present.

Finally, *Dictionaire culturelle des Caraïbes*, by Jean-Paul Duviols & Pedro Ureña-Rib (Paris: Éditions Ellipses, 2009, paper €24.00), is an eclectic smorgasbord of cultural tidbits intended to introduce students and general readers to artists, musicians, writers, politicians, and historical figures and events in the Caribbean. There are also entries on religions, local festivals, cuisines, musical forms, and more. Checking out subjects of special interest to us, we note that there’s no entry on Antonio Martorell and that the entries dealing with Maroons focus overly on French Guiana (at the expense of the more important groups in Suriname and Jamaica) and on the Aluku/Boni people (at the expense of the much larger Saramaka and Ndyuka populations). But certainly any attempt to cover Caribbean culture between two covers is bound to fall short. This one is particularly weak on Anglophone and Dutch territories.

Several books on Guyane/French Guiana have come our way this year.


*L’enjeu migratoire en Guyane française: Une géographie politique*, by geographer Frédéric Piantoni (Matoury, Guyane: Ibis Rouge, paper €40.00), is a massive, rather traditional history of immigration (heavy on facts, short on theory, and depending almost wholly on French-language sources), from
the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries, with a focus on the Maroni River basin.

*Les indiens Palikur et leurs voisins*, by Curt Nimuendaju (Orléans: Éditions du comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, Presses Universitaires d’Orléans, 2009, paper €45.00), represents the first installment of *L’Encyclopédie palikur*, itself part of an ambitious broader project to create three encyclopedias dedicated to three Amerindian peoples of French Guiana – the Palikur, the Wayana, and the Wayápi. Under the general direction of Françoise Grenand, the project chose Pierre Grenand to introduce and annotate this excellent first French translation of Nimuendaju’s classic, originally published in German in Göteborg in 1926.

*Mana, Guyane*, by Katia Katawka, Jean-Paul Leclercq et al. (Matoury, Guyane: Ibis Rouge, paper €10.00), is intended as a guide for “cultural tourism,” but is much more than that – a seriously researched, fact-filled history of the town, and a must-read for any visitor.

Two on language in Guyane. *Langues de Guyane*, edited by Odile Renault-Lescure & Laurence Goury (La Roque d’Anthéron: Vents d’ailleurs, 2009, paper €17.00), is an introduction for the general public to those languages spoken in Guyane that are officially classified as “langues de France” – various creoles (including Guyanese Creole, Saramaccan, Aluku, Ndyuka, several Amerindian languages, and Hmong – but not the widely spoken Haitian Creole or Brazilian Portuguese), presented in an attractive, standardized format. And *Pratiques et représentations linguistiques en Guyane: Regards croisés*, edited by Isabelle Léglise & Bettina Migge (Paris: IRD Éditions, 2007, paper €42.00), is a nearly 500-page collection of scientific articles (twenty-three in all) stressing the complex sociolinguistic situation in French Guiana, within the context of everyday life and, particularly, the needs of the public education system.

Finally, two on Caribbean politics, ethnicity, and identity.

*Sovereignty of the Imagination: Conversations III* (Philipsburg, St. Martin: House of Nehisi, 2009, paper US$ 15.00) gathers two of George Lamming’s recent public lectures, the first (“Sovereignty of the Imagination”) given at the UWI, Jamaica, conference in his honor in 2003, the second (“Language and the Politics of Ethnicity”) at UWI, St. Augustine, in 2004 – soaring thoughts and language reflecting many of the master’s familiar themes: the wonders of cricket, the West Indies Federation that might have been, the Guyana that might have been, the relationship in the Caribbean between labor, politics, and belonging, the toxicity of the colonial legacy, and the humanity of the oppressed.

We welcome the publication of Gert Oostindie’s *Postkoloniaal Nederland: Vijfenzestig jaar vergeten, herdenken, verdringen* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2010, cloth €25.00), a highly readable, insightful tour through the complex world of Dutch multiculturalism, arranged thematically in such a way that
fascinating comparisons emerge among the experiences of various immigrant groups, enhanced by excursions into the ways that other postcolonial powers, such as France, England, and Portugal, handle their own comparable realities.

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Philip Boucher notes in his contribution to this volume (“French Proprietary Colonies in the Greater Caribbean, 1620s-1670s”) that proprietary ventures are “a most unfashionable topic” (p. 163). Yet as the book’s essays make clear, the topic of how European governments transferred and transplanted institutions overseas is gaining attention, and though it likely will never be a mainstream pursuit, scholars are acknowledging that understanding the political and institutional structures of Atlantic empires is critical to understanding migration patterns, social relations, settlement persistence, investment strategies, and a range of other developments. *Constructing Early Modern Empires* is an important contribution and will surely be consulted by historians in many areas of Atlantic history.

The collection is particularly useful for scholars of the West Indies, because the political history of the region is understudied and nearly half of the essays have some bearing on the region. Two of them – Boucher’s and the one by Sarah Barber on the English Caribbean – deal specifically with the island colonies. Boucher’s is an extremely helpful primer on the seven different French companies that operated in the Caribbean in the seventeenth century, which he categorized as one of two types and analyzed in terms of their purpose and reasons for their eclipse. Barber’s, which focuses on Lord Willoughby’s claims in the Leeward Islands, Barbados, and Suriname, captures the complexity of personalities, transatlantic politics, and proprietary power in the English Caribbean where more colonists went in the early seventeenth century than any other parts of English America. Kenneth Banks offers a provocative essay on two French companies operating in West Africa, defining them as proprietary in contrast to “private trade companies” (p. 81)
such as the English and Dutch had. He argues that they were “organized ... as tax-farming ventures in France” (p. 82), thus underscoring the close linkages between metropolitan concerns and overseas proprietary ventures.

Two more chapters on French proprietary ventures, one by Leslie Choquette (“Proprietorships in French North America”) and another by Cécile Vidal on Louisiana (“French Louisiana in the Age of the Companies, 1712-1731”), testify to a growing interest in early modern French expansion. Choquette’s chapter follows on her earlier work on the relation between French enterprises and transatlantic migration, a theme also addressed by Vidal. All of the essays on the French emphasize the need both to question the function of these proprietary ventures and to assess whether they were for commerce, colonization, a metropolitan concern, or a strategic interest of the French state, and the balance among them.

Two contributions emphasize the early and persistent challenge of finding adequate institutional mechanisms for projecting power across the Atlantic, keeping subjects tied to their monarch, providing sufficient governance and personnel to secure territory, and doing it all without excessive violence toward the indigenous population. Mickaël Augeron and Laurent Vidal, writing on the sixteenth-century Portuguese donatary captaincies in Brazil, argue that the use of captaincies helped secure the Portuguese settlement of Brazil because the crown would not have been able to provide the long-term involvement that elite men and their families provided. “Adelantados and Encomenderos in Spanish America,” by Olivier Caporossi, emphasizes how the malleability of the adelantamiento and especially the encomienda allowed the Spanish to impose control, albeit imperfectly, over people and territory.

The adaptation of European systems of social organization to the Americas is a theme Jaap Jacobs analyzes in his discussion of patroonships in New Netherland. He makes it clear that rather than an atavistic replication of feudal institutions, as an older scholarship argued, they were instead attempts to privatize colonization by shifting the costs of recruiting settlers to merchants in exchange for other benefits, most particularly land, but also commercial concessions. Patroonships also had devolved governmental powers, but ones consistent with changing practices in the Netherlands. Maxine Lurie’s analysis of the New Jersey proprietorship shows how contested the meaning of proprietary enterprises could be. New Jersey’s proprietors received their grant from the Duke of York and therefore not through a royal charter, leaving unclear whether they had received only the land or governing powers as well. The royalization of the colony in 1702 definitively separated land from governance and effectively created two land companies that survived through the twentieth century.

David Dewar’s essay on the claims of John Mason and his heir Robert in New Hampshire is similar to that of Barber’s in his detailing of how access to land in the Americas became entangled with English politics and personali-
ties, though New England did not have the wealth of the Caribbean. The ambiguities over land and legitimate government kept settlement unstable through most of the seventeenth century. No proprietorship had more devolved power than Maryland, as Debra Meyers demonstrates, but the Calverts’ commitment to religious toleration encouraged Protestant settlers, who resisted the powers of their Catholic proprietor. L.H. Roper’s essay on the Carolina proprietorship emphasizes the difficulties of weighing the importance of articulated vision, as with the Fundamental Constitutions, applications on the ground, and the verdict of history. In a close analysis of orphanages in early Georgia, James O’Neil Spady persuasively argues that they affirmed the proprietary vision for the colony, even as detractors agitated for an end to proprietary strictures and the allowance of slavery and fee simple landownership.

In the introduction, the editors attempt to make sense of the prevalence of proprietary ventures, their diverse functions, the meanings of success and failure in the Atlantic world, and what these enterprises can tell us about early modern political developments, both within Europe and in the Americas. They are self-consciously provocative and suggestive, and problematic in their invocation of modernization. But the issues they raise deserve further consideration, and this book will assure a significant place for their ideas in future scholarship.


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Eight decades ago historian Irene A. Wright published two books in Spanish on early colonial Cuba – one covering the sixteenth century, and the other the first half of the seventeenth century (Wright 1927, 1930). As unbelievable as it may sound, no comprehensive history of early Cuban colonial history had been published since then. In fact, there is a noticeable dearth of studies focusing on colonial Cuba’s formative centuries. Alejandro de la Fuente’s...
Havana and the Atlantic in the Sixteenth Century thus fills an enormous gap in Cuban historiography. The book is an in-depth study of Havana and its relations with the broader Atlantic world. While the title states that it covers the sixteenth century, it actually examines the second half of the sixteenth century and the first decade of the seventeenth century.

De la Fuente pays attention to multiple aspects of Havana’s social, economic, and physical development. He devotes the first chapter to Havana as a port city. This is important because one of the book’s overarching arguments is that Havana was shaped by its privileged geographic location which, in turn, led to a host of economic activities. Cuba’s capital was settled and built in a location favorable to the development of large-scale naval commercial activities. It possessed a splendid, large, well-protected bay, strategically situated at the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico, where the Gulf Stream squeezed through on its way to Europe’s shores. Aware of this, Spanish colonial officials selected Havana as an obligatory port-of-call for all trade fleets returning to Spain. The fleets and their sizable crews required numerous services which led to the creation of a broad service sector, ranging from providing water and repairing vessels to storing large amounts of precious metals mined from Peru and New Spain. Crews and passengers, which often spent months in Havana, also required a host of personal services such as boarding, laundering, cooking, and in some cases, female companionship. Havana’s role as fleet hub also spurred the development of a variety of economic linkages, including shipbuilding, foundries, and tile works. Havana’s shipyards were the most important in all of the Americas, and among the best in the world. Because defending the fleets and navigation routes was of such paramount importance, Havana also became a military bastion with an impressive fortifications complex and a large military population.

The book rests on an impressive base of primary documentation, including the types of sources that historians of colonial Latin American history have put to good use for decades: parish, notary, and cabildo records, along with land allotments and census materials. De la Fuente and his collaborators engaged in an extensive, thorough, and painstaking research process that allowed them to shed documentary light on many major themes of early Cuban history, including the extent and complexity of Havana’s naval and commercial activities. Besides being the major port in the transatlantic fleet system, Havana was also the center of a vast insular and intercolonial trade network, which was intricately woven and carefully coordinated for optimal efficiency.

Thorough analysis and quantification of data also provide a sound documentary base for the understanding of a wide range of historical questions. Land allotment records and land sale contracts shed light on the process of land consolidation by sugar planters; slave marriage records provide clues regarding patterns of endogamy among various African ethnic groups; wills and dowries demonstrate the extent of wealth accumulated by Havana’s rich-
Havana and the Atlantic is a masterpiece of historical writing, ambitious in its conception and comprehensive in its research, well written, and jargon-free. A most important contribution to early Cuban history, it is also a model for the rapidly growing field of Atlantic History.

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When Benerson Little published *The Sea Rover’s Practice: Pirate Tactics and Techniques, 1630-1730* (2005), what had long been a gaping hole in the literature of piracy was admirably rectified. Now Little has provided another welcome addition to pirate lore with the publication of *The Buccaneer’s Realm*. It examines a remarkable period of Caribbean piracy, the last flourish of the buccaneers before the turn of the century. These resourceful adventurers comprised a multinational assortment of floating frontiersmen who embodied the colorful and dramatic transformation of earlier privateering into blatant piracy. The buccaneers of this period are perhaps not as well known as their piratical predecessors (Francis Drake or the associates of Henry Morgan immortalized in Exquemelin’s *Buccaneers of America* in 1678). Nor are they as remembered as their nefarious successors (Blackbeard, Black Bart, et al. as described in *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates* by Captain Johnson (Daniel Defoe?) in 1724). They are however, remarkable in their own right, and they played a pivotal role in Caribbean politics and warfare between the sack of Panama (1671) and the Bloodless Revolution (1688). In Little’s words, “The buccaneer and filibuster pirates of 1674-88 differed from the pirates who followed a generation later in that they saw themselves as adventurers, as soldiers as well as buccaneers and filibusters, as men who fought on sea and land, and as men who had little if any tangible support of the state even while they claimed nominal allegiance to it” (p. 220). Moreover, they left extensive, detailed journals which provide by far the richest extant documentation of pirate life. While this era and its luminaries have been thoroughly described by a host of narratives and histories over the past few centuries, Little’s contribution is unique and worthwhile for a number of reasons.

Above all it is holistic. Beyond plunder and political intrigue, Little’s work emphasizes the importance of understanding the physical environment and colonial cultural milieu in which the buccaneers operated. In the spirit of William Dampier, the naturalist buccaneer who keenly observed and recorded every aspect of his travels and adventures, Little’s book begins with
the less-than-glorified business of buccaneers cutting logwood on the swampy shores of Campeche. The ensuing approach is primarily topical with chapters devoted to maritime matters, colonial production and cargoes, slavery, smuggling, manatee hunting, weaponry, health, sex, and so on. These capsules of everyday life are skillfully linked by and to narratives of piratical doings. Highlighted are the exploits of Dampier, Lionel Wafer, Nicolas Van Horn, Bartholomew Sharp, Basil Ringrose, Laurens de Graff, Sieur de Grammont, and Ravenneau de Lussan, whose detailed accounts became widely published. While these buccaneers and their associates were primarily of British, French, and Dutch origin, Little describes as well the involvement of Native Americans, Africans, and various European and Mediterranean peoples. Careful attention is paid to the workings of Spanish colonial life and efforts of the Spaniards to defend their empire. In addition to the people involved in the struggle for the Spanish Main, Little emphasizes the importance of places. Spanish colonial centers as well as pirate ports, especially Petit Goave (Hispaniola) and Port Royal (Jamaica), are described in colorful detail and with respect to strategic importance. Likewise discussed are the various cays, isles, and inlets that served as buccaneer hideaways and rendezvous. Eight maps, redrawn from historical renderings from Dampier and others, lend a period feel to the book, though more modern, detailed maps, especially of Petit Goave, would have been most welcome.

The Buccaneer’s Realm is well written and scholarly, laced with interesting particulars and a bit of humor. It would appeal to a wide readership, especially anyone interested in the Caribbean and Spanish America, as well as those fascinated by piracy. It even includes a chapter on buccaneer language to prepare readers for “Talk Like a Pirate Day” (September 19). Useful appendices include a chasse-partie compiled from multiple sources, a list of buccaneer captains and their vessels, a chronology of buccaneer journals, a list with dates of buccaneer raids and Spanish reprisals, and a glossary of sea terms. The work is well documented from a wide variety of period and modern sources.

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This volume, impressive for its range, originality, and scholarly level, is the result of the conference “Creolization and Diaspora: Historical, Ethnographic, and Theoretical Approaches” convened at University College London in 2002. Its twelve essays bring compelling evidence for the cross-cultural and diachronic trajectories of “creole,” “creolization,” and “mestiçagem,” as well as the cultural politics that have transformed their significance within nationalistic, artistic, and academic projects. Seeking to probe the analytical (rather than merely descriptive) usefulness of these concepts (as “models of” reality and “models for” shaping reality), the book offers a set of interdisciplinary voices that problematize their theoretical applicability and shortcomings.

The introduction by Charles Stewart even-handedly maps the larger frameworks that inform the essays, drawing their connection to issues of race, diaspora, and the body. It also problematizes the use of “creole” and “creolization” in contemporary social theory, asking whether they differ from related terms such as “syncretism,” “hybridity,” and “mixture” and if the Caribbean should continue to hold the “copyright” over their meaning (p. 5). The contrasting significance of “creole” in the Spanish and British colonies and its divergent role in shaping their different nationalist ideologies are made evident in the historical chapters by Jorge Cañizares Esguerra and Joyce E. Chaplin. Esguerra examines the ambivalence toward Amerindian elites in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century clerical discourses in the Spanish colonies. Based on a predominantly feudal-Catholic imaginary, these discourses generated a patriotic epistemology that anchored the cosmic rights of Spanish Creoles to land in equally ancient indigenous and Hispanic dynastic roots. In contrast, Chaplin’s essay unravels the reasons for the refusal of North American patriots to be labeled “creole” and their insistence in remaining English at all cost. It shows that even though colonists began, after 1773, to call themselves Americans, comparing themselves opportunistically to Indians, the “displacement of Indians, not appropriation of their culture, was the basis of American identity” (p. 62). A learned discussion by Stephan Palmié further problematizes the divergent historical semantics of the term “creole” within colonial and postcolonial state projects. He
rightly points to problems in the one-sided recruitment of the attributes of “creole” and “creolization” in recent social theory, particularly when used to connote the “fluidity, fragmentation, and fusion of the heterogeneous,” associated with transcultural, global “worlds in creolization,” omitting additional attributes they have gathered within exclusionary state-sponsored racial tactics. A different kind of critique follows, based on the partial treatment of linguistic models of creolization in social theory. After surveying the study of creole languages from the eighteenth century to the present day, Philip Baker and Peter Mühlhäusler show that by overemphasizing *la langue* over *la parole*, as well as “borrowing” over “restructuring,” some social theories have regretfully neglected the performative aspects of creolization processes. Also drawing on linguistic models, Palmié’s second chapter launches a historical-methodological critique, typifying the theoretical muddle of creolization as “a strange cross-disciplinary feedback loop” where anthropologists and historians recycle as theory “the speculations that linguists generate from anthropological and historical data increasingly produced and organized on the basis of linguistic hypotheses” (p. 182).

Changing gears, four ethnographically based essays provide ample evidence for contesting the exclusivity of the Caribbean as the cradle of creolization processes. The chapter by Miguel Vale de Almeida compares the effects of Portuguese colonialism in Brazil and Cape Verde in shaping the racial and cultural significance of miscegenation (*mestiçagem*) in quotidian and political discourses of identity. Most intriguing are his discussions of the anthropological knowledge produced in Portugal (before and after Brazil’s independence) and the genealogies of Luso-Tropicalism in Portuguese, Brazilian, and Cape Verdean culturalist projects. Françoise Vergès’s essay stands out in this collection for poignantly capturing the suffering, fragility, conflict, and agency behind the uniquely gendered ethnohistory and phenomenology of creolization processes in Réunion. These are evidenced, for instance, in vernacular practices such as *maloya* (the melancholic music of slaves and indentured laborers) and tales that convey the experiences of living on the margins. The chapter by Thomas Hylland Eriksen provides ample ethnographic data from Mauritius on identity formation and language, showing that essentialism no less than mixing and fluidity inform the complex ways in which creolization and decreolization processes are played out among various self-defined creole and non-creole groups. Joshua Hotaka Roth applies “creolization” as a model to conceptualize forms of linguistic and cultural mixing (mostly sponsored by cultural centers, community centers, and NGOs) among Japanese-Brazilian returning migrants to Japan.

The last two chapters focus on elite discourses on creolization and their regimes of power. Mary Gallagher’s essay critically dismantles the “overarching, tentacular poetics” of the pan-Caribbean and even global program of culture suggested by the manifesto of the Martinican *creolité* movement,
In Praise of Creoleness. She keenly notes the subtle yet powerful attempts the Martinican authors make in welding “an aesthetics and an ethics to an epistemology and an ontology” (p. 221). Aisha Khan, in an adroit ethnographical and theoretical effort, brings to light the complex power issues of exclusion and inclusion informing creolization ideologies of identity in her examination of two “creolization moments” or empirical contexts – the first evidenced in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago during colonial and post-colonial times, and the second in academic studies of the Caribbean during the first half of the twentieth century.

In spite of, or perhaps due to, the essentially revisionist impetus of this collection, its reticence with regard to the limits set by the particular array and tenor of the essays is baffling, especially since it aims at testing the future theoretical life of creolization. For instance, most essays tend to focus on creole identity, mixture, and language (as langue, not parole) and are based on top-down, experience-distance research. If the basis for probing the analytical productivity of creolization depends mostly on “end products” divorced from the frictions inherent in meaning-making processes, what kind of limits does it set on this probing? The same could be suggested for mostly discourse-oriented research that excludes the voices of those who were and still are the objects of such elite discourses. Lastly, though the “dialogical struggle over meaning” associated with creolization processes is mentioned in the introduction, it is not further developed. Resistance and agency – not as romanticized ideological catch words in anthropological and nationalist discourses, but as conceptual opportunities to explore the world-making power of opposition and exclusion, no less than of adaptation – might have added another important strand to the conversations in this volume. In this regard, reference to some of the work produced by folklorists (especially in the 2003 special issue on creolization in the Journal of American Folklore) and by scholars such as Richard Burton might have added empirically grounded debates (beyond language, mixture, and identity) about and from the margins for testing the analytical vigor of “creolization.” My brief criticism aside, the intellectual tour de force of this exceptional volume will surely feed the next round of interdisciplinary discussions about creolization.

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VINCENT BROWN. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2008. xviii + 340 pp. (Cloth US$ 35.00)

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Good to know that the paradigm of slave resistance is alive and well. This first-rate book by Vincent Brown takes it to a higher level of sophistication, even though the term resistance is rarely used. The book is also about master class domination, of course, without which resistance makes little sense. Brown writes, “the analysis of power must survey the dominant and the subaltern within the same field of vision” (p. 9), a method that Eugene Genovese long ago was pretty insistent should be adopted by historians of slavery. The Reaper’s Garden discusses the politics of dying and death, of funerary rituals and representations in Jamaica from roughly the mid-eighteenth century to the end of slavery in 1838. “Mortuary politics” is the term, actually a concept, that Brown lays out with emphasis in his opening remarks to define his subject. This is, alternatively, a “political history of death” in Jamaica that revolves around attitudes toward death meant to promote group solidarity, to govern property rights (bequests and legacies), to animate social struggles and social control, to inform colonial, imperial, and abolitionist morals, and to represent the dead in monuments and other cultural artifacts of collective memory.

Brown also surveys the demography of death, which was, together with slavery, the material basis upon which mortuary politics took place. Both Whites and Blacks dedicated their thoughts and expressed their fears when confronting each other in the ports of the slave trade, during the Middle Passage, and in the Caribbean plantations and towns. This Atlantic circuit was a well-known grave for Europeans, who knew their chances of returning home were small but that the rewards would be big if they survived. They died proportionally more than enslaved Africans, but Africans were those who experienced the most numerous and the most desperate encounters with the Reaper, especially when transported in the hot, overcrowded, filthy, and generally unhealthy holds – the tragic “bottom-less pit” of slave ships in the powerful image of Bob Marley’s Redemption Song. Not surprisingly the slave ship was called tumbeiro (roughly, a carrier of tombs) in the Portuguese Atlantic world.
Slaves used funerary rituals to reconnect with severed ancestry but fundamentally to connect themselves with each other. West African rituals, such as the interrogation of the corpse, or customs such as burial next to home, were reconstituted whenever possible and given new meanings in the British islands, meanings that are, however, not entirely clear. They certainly served to promote group belonging, but Brown carefully avoids the concept of collective identity, which has lately been under attack for being too vague, too big, almost useless some argue. Following creolization theory, African ethnicity per se, even of the reconstituted, fluid, broad kind, is not subjected to close scrutiny. Africans do appear in the book here and there as Ibo, Coromantee, or more vaguely as originated in West or West-Central Africa, for example, but Brown’s main effort is not tracing death rituals to specific African origins, but rather decoding Afro-Jamaican cultural conundrums. Sometimes, however, he will accept Afrocentric views, for example when adopting the famous reading that Robert Farris Thompson made of the cross as an aspect of Bantu cosmological view. This and other references, reduced in their majority to authors cited in footnotes, suggest that Brown is a creolization historian open to negotiation with the other side.

Brown argues, however, that creolization went both directions, transforming Africans and Europeans alike, black and white Jamaicans. English funerary customs, like many other rituals of life, were mobilized to promote group solidarity and “white supremacy,” but they often included African slaves as a mortuary labor force that could infuse these ceremonies with Afro-Jamaican meanings. Personal negotiations between the dead and the living, which were also cultural negotiations, preceded funerals in the form of testaments by white masters and/or lovers that could benefit slaves, especially women, with freedom and property. The chapter dedicated to this subject shows in great detail how slow or completely disregarding executors of wills could be in fulfilling the last wishes of deceased white persons that favored enslaved persons. To cite one comparison, Brazilian executors did not have the power that they seem to have had in the English Caribbean.

Another question that begs comparison is why the Jamaican master class was so deadly brutal when punishing slave rebels, not only in terms of the number of suspects they summarily killed, but in the ways they killed and the treatment they gave to the rebels’ corpses. Only four years apart, the Baptist war in 1831-32 and the Malê rebellion in Bahia in 1835 are cases in point. The Bahian rebellion, which caused about a dozen deaths like the Jamaican insurrection, resulted in the execution by firing squad of four Africans, whose corpses were later dumped in a paupers’ cemetery; after winning the Baptist war, white Jamaicans executed more than three hundred slaves, many of whom were dismembered, with their heads stuck on poles for exemplary display in towns and on highways. We need to understand comparatively why master
classes and colonial and postcolonial states behaved so differently regarding their politics of death and terror against slaves engaged in slave resistance.

Brown’s treatment of Tacky’s revolt and the Baptist war is fascinating as a story of two different generations of slave rebels, one African-born, the other Creole, who deployed their considerably modified views of the spiritual world, their relationship with the dead, and the afterlife to overcome slavery. Slaves who had become Christians in the 1820s and 1830s seemed to have changed (or “creolized”) their confrontation strategies more than their masters had changed theirs of domination, despite pressures on the latter from the state and abolitionists in England, men and women who used as abolitionist propaganda their abhorrence of the license to kill wielded by masters and traffickers.

Still on the subject of slave resistance, some things are difficult to prove although we know they should be there somewhere. The Haitian Revolution clearly impacted with more or less force slavery in the Americas, and the Caribbean islands foremost. There were masters who escaped the French colony to Jamaica with slaves that they could still control, and that had been in one way or the other exposed to Catholicism, a religion which, in its then predominantly baroque version, included funerary rituals and eschatologies much closer to the Africans’ than those found in the various forms of Protestantism. Despite recommendations of the Council of Trent, for example, Catholics around the world cherished burials inside church buildings, which placed the dead in daily contact with the living, something to which Africans were familiar in their homelands and in the Americas. What do we know about Haitian Catholic slaves in Jamaica, or their input to the Jamaican creolization dynamics? One would imagine that immigré Haitian slaves had some impact on mortuary politics there, but the evidence is thin. Brown struggles with the matter and writes about the “powerful influence” of the Haitian Revolution on Jamaican slaves’ Christianity, but two pages later admits that the “‘French Negroes’” had only “some religious influence” about which he discovered only “hints.” Imprecisions such as these are rare in this wonderful book, however, which forcefully and definitely puts attitudes toward death on the map of the political and social history of slavery in the Americas, a much neglected theme.

*The Reaper’s Garden* is original and provides engaging reading, not only because of stylistic choices, but because it is delivered in the form of a passionate indictment of human exploitation and misery under slavery and beyond.
The post-emancipation experience in the Americas was complex, and its interpretation requires theoretical and methodological sophistication. One typical analytical pitfall would be to simplify it as a “binomial” of permanent continuity vs. radical change. Another would be to view it as a process that is either exclusively linked to local history or transformed into national history. It was, in many respects, an Atlantic movement with translocal meanings for a wide range of subjects, actors, structures, and dimensions. These, among others, are the main contributions of the excellent collection of essays on the postemancipation Caribbean organized and edited by David Trotman and Gad Heuman.

Focusing on the former British colonies (especially Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad & Tobago, and Guiana, although it also contains essays on Haiti, Cuba, and Suriname), this book covers the main issues involving conflicts, protests, control, and resistance that guided the postemancipation period. Although the numerous essays in this collection do not necessarily use a comparative perspective, they do localize dialogues without reflecting on homogeneous periods and processes. Therefore, the emphasis on making connections does not refer to a limited regional dimension for the Caribbean and the postemancipation era. On the contrary, there is a perspective of temporal expansion in which a variety of themes covers the period between the early nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth century. They range from the impact and power of Haiti’s example to the formation of political parties and liberal ideologies on criminality and the discourse of civilization. The analytical crux does not obscure the role of the elites – both metropolitan and colonial – but it does emphasize the agency of former slaves and other segments of society. The central themes of the essays, each of which makes a different contribution, include attempts to exert control, and the expectations of the former slaveowners and the freedmen and -women and their descendants. There is even room for reflection on the political and intellectual mobilization of the Caribbean elites.
The recurrent themes in these narratives – as the only historical processes of change – are interventions in daily life and cultural practices, including the ideologies of labor, ethics, and the family, such as the role of missionaries and the surrounding discourse on conversion. Going beyond the tension between preachers and African practices per se, the postemancipation Caribbean saw the expansion of Christian cultural synthesis based on the interpretations of former slaves; meanwhile, missionaries, politicians, and planters disagreed on the possibilities of combining conversion to Christianity with the education of the freedmen and -women’s children. Color, race, and racism were the constantly reconfigured landscapes, particularly in the broader aspects of forms of control, repressive laws, and the prison system. Order, work, conversion to Christianity, discipline, and progress engaged in dialogue with public policies on the police apparatus and criminalization in several Caribbean societies, as well as Brazil, in the first decades after emancipation. In this compendium, we see an emphasis on the interpretations of control mechanisms, forms of domination, and the former slaves’ responses, although each essay deals with them differently. Once again, the long-term perspective takes a prominent place in regard to the State, metropolitan policies, local governments, liberalism, immigrant workers, organized peasant groups, political parties, religious practices, jails, laws, access to land, and family strategies.

Bearing in mind the contrasts with the revolution in Haiti (1791-1804) and the connections with the anticolonial struggles in Cuba (1886), the end of slavery in the British Caribbean, which was not without its own struggles and mobilized efforts, resulted from new abolitionist laws and parliamentary measures taken overseas. Furthermore, although it took place decades before the abolition of slavery in Brazil (1888), Caribbean emancipation had an impact on the Brazilian slaveocracy. Between the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth, colonial and postcolonial societies in the Americas were more interconnected than ever. Different expectations and perceptions of political ideas, decolonization, independence, nation building, the slave trade, citizenship, forms of government, and work ethics circulated in that world. They were continually elaborated, transformed, and reconnected. Farm manuals, newspapers, pamphlets, sugar, tobacco, cotton, coffee, rice, cocoa, sailors, slave traders, scholars, ideas, literature, Africans, workers, naturalists, and, basically, experiences and cultures became merchandise in a transatlantic movement of incalculable historical magnitude. Happenings, circumstances, people, models, situations, and events were accompanied by countless forms, focuses, interests, and motivations. Diplomatic records could serve as a starting point to determine some of the expectations and perceptions of that time. Consular agents, trade representatives, and various kinds of diplomats were the readers/interpreters of these Atlantic situations. They produced images, concerns, and models regarding some issues, shed-
ding light on problems and indicating solutions of a magnitude that crossed transnational borders (moving back and forth).

The events that transpired at the end of the slave trade and the abolition of slavery were connected and perceived in international dialogues and expectations that ranged from diplomatic authorities and political elites to seafarers and slaves in plantations throughout the Americas. Regarding Brazil, we can keep abreast of the expectations of consular agents in Paris, London, New York, Caracas, Havana, Liverpool, Baltimore, Washington, Buenos Aires, Sierra Leone, Lisbon, and Madrid. What did they see? And how did they see it? They produced an itinerary of connections between the history of ideas and mentalities, cultures, and worlds of work. The diplomatic records produced in the 1830s and 40s are particularly interesting, especially those regarding the end of the Brazilian slave trade and emancipation in the Caribbean (British and French) and Venezuela. News arrived from Paris, annotated in detail and identified, in 1830 regarding “disorder” in several parts of Europe and explained that there was a “struggle with public opinion.” From Britain, word went out about the parliamentary debates in London, as well as incidents involving the “working classes” in Bristol. There was an intellectual movement aimed at gathering international news of interest to Brazil, while organizing information that was being disseminated about the Brazilian Empire. It was a veritable public opinion battle that required both intellectual effort and financial input.

One aspect that has been little explored in studies of abolition and the postemancipation period is the powerful role that the example of Caribbean emancipation played in Brazil. In this context, the main concern was whether, in Britain, there were “clubs or individuals occupied with plans contrary to the independence and prosperity of Brazil.” The main concern was with Parliamentary debates, diplomatic treatises, and public opinion regarding laws suppressing the slave trade. Guided by the officials of the Brazilian Empire, consular agents in London consumed and closely followed every detail of public debates and publications. Not infrequently, they sent home copies of laws on the improved treatment of slaves in the Caribbean, as well as newspaper clippings and assessments of international events. In 1832 and 1833, the main events were the slave rebellions in Jamaica and Cuba. As one consular agent warned, “for now, suffice it to say that the Imperial government must exert the greatest vigilance to ensure that the same doctrines that may have inevitably caused the ruin of most planters in the British colonies are not introduced in Brazil.”

Brazil’s consular agents were particularly interested in the events that ensued during the postemancipation period in the British Caribbean.

1. Arquivo Histórico do Itamarati, Códice 216-1-12, ofício de December 7, 1831.
2. Arquivo Histórico do Itamarati, Códice 216-1-14, ofício de June 5, 1833.
Regarding the news that was arriving on that subject in 1834, they observed, “the results are not promising in the course of the emancipation of their slaves, including many signs that they abandon their work once freed.” There were also constant reports from overseas about the contraband and illegal traffic in Africans. According to the consular agents’ assessment, the reports that most interested the British had to do with the mobilization of Brazilian officials to suppress the illegal slave trade, as well as the wave of popular revolts in Pernambuco and Pará. As the illegal slave trade grew in the 1840s, the connivance of the authorities and British pressure, from both Parliament and public opinion, only served to increase suspicions and the circulation of subversive political ideas and perceptions. In July 1840, this news came in from London: “The slave trade continues to be the target of considerations and efforts from all sides, both from the societies that advocate the emancipation of the Africans and the British Parliament and government.”

The fact is that numerous Brazilian officials feared that slaves from several parts of the Americas were planning revolts with the aid of British abolitionists and international emissaries. There is no way of proving whether those plots, or even the role of said emissaries and the propaganda being circulated, were likely or possible. However, the aim was clearly to create a climate of fear and subversion, and either increase or redirect it. In 1841, the Justice Ministry also received terrifying news from London regarding a “Club or Society of Abolitionists” that had sent dozens of Jamaican freedmen to Cuba to foment rebellion among the slaves. It was feared that they might also be sent to Brazil. In 1848, rumors of insurrection linked Rio Grande do Sul, Bahia, and Rio de Janeiro. It was even said that there was “the idea of the possibility of a conspiracy or the existence of a more or less widespread plan amongst the slaves in different places.” At the time, the report warned that “such a criminal conspiracy, if it should exist, could either be spontaneous or the result of suggestions from some sort of Gregorian Society or agents of the leading abolitionists, or some other foreign influence.”

In conclusion, the cries of freedom in the Caribbean echoed loudly in the ears of other slaveholding societies, including those in the South Atlantic. Among other things, the collection of essays organized by Heuman and Trotman provides interesting perspectives and encourages comparative analysis.

3. Arquivo Histórico do Itamarati, Códice 216-1-15, ofício de September 8, 1834.
4. Arquivo Histórico do Itamarati, Códice 216-2-2, ofício de July 8, 1840.
5. Arquivo Histórico do Itamarati, Códice 217-3-3, ofício de September 2, 1835.
Eighteenth-century Borbonic reforms have been touted as Spain’s belated but astute effort to rationalize Spanish American institutions before the onset of the age of revolutions. In no other area of colonial life did these distant interventions of the centralist state wreak more havoc and have less to show for the travail than in the ecclesiastical sphere. If the 1767 suppression and expulsion of the Jesuits from their colleges and mission outposts did not cripple Spanish America’s educational and intellectual life for the next two generations, it was because other religious orders stepped into the vacuum that was created. Less disastrous, but hardly better intentioned, were the ministerial tinkering with female religious houses in New Spain, Peru, and Cuba.

Historians have fumbled the subject of the Borbonic reforms in convents. The liberal approach was to appraise the state’s efforts to modernize and render rational female religious observance. The feminist approach has been to satirize and demonize men’s interference in religious women’s lives. Marxists preferred to see it as the demise of an aristocratic form of life under the scrutiny of a censorious bourgeoisie. Somehow it has always been a cause.

In Cuban Convents in the Age of Enlightened Reform, 1761-1807, John Clune avoids the obvious pitfalls in which others have so notably floundered. In a spare, all too terse exposition of the successive reports, appeals, and deliberations on the Cuban convents, he chooses to see the issue as a clash between the stubborn adherence to traditional practices and ways, even if contrary to Tridentine norms, and the reformers’ recourse to representing the nuns as recalcitrant and devious, in spite of their appeals to past royal privileges. Practices and representations are ever disparate. The state’s will to implement its policies is neither constant nor conscientious. The nuns’ resistance recalls James Scott’s Weapons of the Weak. Advances and retreats, achievements and frustrations mark the way of the reform. In the end it is economic and social change that devalues the whole struggle. The reform of the convents becomes a marginal issue once the age of revolutions rocks the foundations of Church and State.

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A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica 1655-1844 is the long-awaited publication of a celebrated, groundbreaking research effort in women’s history, the study of women in culture and society, and Caribbean women’s studies. It contributes much to our understanding of early Jamaica by the inclusion of people who may not have been lost in colonial records and documents but were totally unexplored in the interpretation of that history. Those were the women of colonial Jamaica examined by race and class, and by their status of being free or nonfree. Dr. Mathurin Mair’s study, originally a doctoral dissertation in history at the University of the West Indies, set the baseline for a gendered analysis and is exemplary of what we deem a classic text.

For almost thirty years, handwritten notes and photocopied pages were the only means of attributing and citing this incredible body of research. As the numerous works of scholarship, popular culture, fiction, and more relied on this masterpiece, the cry for publication became loud and clear. During this time, Mathurin Mair left the university to become a premier member of Jamaica’s diplomatic corps and served as Jamaica’s representative to Cuba and then to august international bodies, including the United Nations. Later on returning to the UWI, she was busy institution-building the Center for Gender and Development Studies as the first regional coordinator for this scholarly research unit. Of course, she produced articles, a popular version of just one portion of this instrumental manuscript, leaving the next step, the published volume, for another time. Unfortunately, ill health prevented her
from doing that. This is why _A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica 1655-1844_ begins with an introduction by its editors, leading Caribbean historians Hilary McD. Beckles and Verene A. Shepherd, who were two of the intellectual beneficiaries of Mathurin Mair’s work.

In their introduction Beckles and Shepherd examine the text in three important areas of inquiry. First, a biographical section introduces readers to Lucille Mathurin Mair (1924-2009) and her almost fifteen-year research project culminating in the dissertation. Next, the work is analyzed in terms of its monumental contribution to Caribbean history alongside other prominent texts and authors. Third, the editors discuss the methods they used to transform “this work from thesis to book” (p. xx), for example, renaming the “Abstract” as a “Preface,” adding subtitles where there had been none, and breaking up the text into a more publishable format than that found in the original document. They also provide a substantial bibliography featuring feminist research and scholarship and the work of other authors that focuses on the Caribbean.

_A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica 1655-1844_ begins with “the arrivants,” then turns to the establishment of creole society followed by developments set in the postemancipation period. Each section focuses on the different experiences of women based on their race (White, Black, and Mulatto) and class (elite, indentured, and poor White, free Black, and Mulatto and nonfree Black and Mulatto). The power of this comparative gendered analysis was absolutely groundbreaking in Caribbean history. It’s not just that women are at the center, but also that their recorded lives and experiences are thereby made critical to understanding the history of Jamaican society and culture. Here commonalities among women – for example, work, household arrangements, marriage, childbirth, social status, opportunity or lack thereof – are discussed and examined with extraordinary care and finesse. The interdependent relations of women, across their differences, are made most clear and supported by various charts and tables.

The telling of Caribbean history was never to be the same after the work of Mathurin Mair. The volume’s “Afterword” addresses her feelings about the imperative inclusion of women in the telling of history and culture. First given as a speech during a conference on Caribbean women writers, it was published as “Recollections into a Journey of a Rebel Past” in the anthology based on the conference proceedings. Here, Mathurin Mair positions herself as a “rebel” historian who broke the mold of male-dominated Caribbean history by concentrating on women as important subjects in interpretations of the past. “Wonderful things happened on the journey into that rebel past, of which Nanny (the eighteenth-century Jamaican Maroon leader) became the permanent, powerful icon. I can here only briefly indicate the personal process of self-growth it meant” (p. 326). Referring to the women of the past, Mathurin Mair goes on to say, “where did such women, the ‘subordinate’ sex, get this
nerve?” The answer to her rhetorical question comes from her own scholarship, decades of research and intellectual queries, her relations with her students and colleagues, the guidance of her own mentor, Dr. Elsa Goveia of the Department of History, UWI, Mona, and from Jamaica’s women, “who constituted one of the society’s most vital elements.” *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica 1655-1844* made history and as a classic has a legacy of its own.


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Sugar plantations in the twentieth-century Dominican Republic have a very bad reputation, due to the abhorrent labor conditions under which contract laborers from neighboring Haiti had to work. The Haitians were often “sold” to the plantations by state authorities during the governments of “Papa Doc” and “Baby Doc” to do the dirty work of cutting cane, which Dominican laborers refused to do. The Dominican authorities were implicated in subjecting the Haitian sugar laborers to inhuman treatment and depriving them of basic human rights. The presence of Haitian labor on the sugar plantations was tolerated, but in the rest of society Haitian immigrants were systematically persecuted and discriminated against. Different governments actively supported forced and often unlawful repatriation of the Haitian laborers after the sugar harvest.

Samuel Martínez’s *Peripheral Migrants* (1995), a meticulous study of the plight of Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic, established his reputation as one of the most important scholars in the field of Haitian-Dominican migration. Now, in *Decency and Excess*, he draws on both old and new fieldwork to focus on the life of Haitian laborers on one of the remaining Dominican sugar plantations, Consuelo in Monte Coca. His main purpose is to understand the logic of life in these “nowhere” places, to understand the perceptions and worldviews of those living in them, and ultimately to unravel the paradoxes of life on the margins of the global world. On the one hand, sugar
laborers lack any access to basic modern communication and have effectively even lost contact with their families in Haiti. On the other hand, they have been able to create new patterns of life and “decency” in which the consumption of modern, “global” goods plays an important role. As Martínez puts it, sugarcane workers in Monte Coca “seek to transcend deprivation, degradation, exploitation and violence, and try to realize their own visions of what it means to live decently, against tremendous material obstacles” (p. xi).

In this short and passionate book, Martínez takes readers along a complex road to a place where few academics have ventured – a place which, as he observes, “no one calls ‘home.’” His insider perspective allows him to present a wonderfully detailed and humanistic ethnography of a group of people who are often ignored. In doing so, he focuses especially on the issue of consumption which he views, following an increasingly influential school of anthropologists, as an important field of agency and identity. He begins by describing how all the residents of the batey wanted to be photographed with their most precious belongings, such as radios, motorcycles, or even refrigerators, reflecting the extent to which their material belongings were part of their existence as human beings. For Martínez, who sees consumption and property as clear symbols of power relations, habits of consumption are simultaneously part of people’s microsocial lives and a connection to power relations on a macrosocial and even global level. The Haitian workers are intricately linked to formal and informal plantation hierarchies that reflect not only class differences, but also nearly imperceptible differences between workers based on age, color, personal histories, and material possessions.

The power of this book is in the ethnographic detail, often supported by photographs, which brings readers close to a quite incomprehensible reality. In a long passage entitled “Home Improvement in Hell,” Martínez beautifully describes the way the Haitians try to improve their houses and to make the batey into a more livable environment, demarcating tiny gardens, installing makeshift benches, and decorating their kitchens. These private improvements stand in stark contrast to the neglect and filth in the public space. Other passages are devoted to the use of leisure (including sexual behavior), festivities, and religious expressions. These ethnographic vignettes provide varied and rich insights into the lives of sugarcane workers.

The present review cannot do justice to either the wealth of empirical data presented in this book or its varied theoretical excursions. Martínez does not shy away from taking clear positions. In a number of cases, he criticizes recent interpretations and goes back to the dons of Caribbean studies, Eric Wolf and Sidney Mintz. One could argue that the ambitiousness of Decency and Excess has resulted in a book that falls somewhere between a study of theories of modernity and globalization and a full-fledged ethnography of sugarcane workers in the Dominican Republic. It is possible that readers interested in the rich ethnographic material presented by Martínez may be
slightly put off by his dense theoretical reflections. If, however, they are patient, they will be amply rewarded by unique information and insights about this “nowhere” world in danger of being forgotten. It is the great merit of this book that it sheds light on the abhorrent reality and oppressed lives of the sugarcane workers in this part of the Caribbean without denying them their agency and humanity. Martínez has been able both to show the poverty and deprivation in which these workers have to live, and to make clear how they succeed in creating new forms of decency and providing their lives with material and immaterial meaning.

REFERENCE


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Despite complex global histories and the recurrence of vital social issues and solutions across multiple but distinctive cities, Caribbean urbanism has not yet gained the academic attention that has made other areas of Caribbean studies central to widespread debates. Although we have edited volumes by Robert Potter (e.g., The Urban Caribbean in an Era of Global Change) and a synthetic overview by Alejandro Portes, Carlos Dore-Cabral, and Patricia Landolt (The Urban Caribbean), most urban studies have been more local or national, dominated by academic production in the Anglophone and Hispanophone Caribbean.

This exciting collection edited by Rivke Jaffe, however, embraces the diversity of the wider Caribbean, from colonial times to the present, while drawing on multidisciplinary approaches. It provides a broad introduction for global urbanists, mapping out critical Caribbean issues including urban
spatiality and fragmentation, questions of race, ethnicity, and power, formal and informal economic adaptations, and cultural imagery – all of which suggest future comparative metropolitan studies within the region and beyond.

The book begins with an overview essay by Jaffe, Ad de Bruijne, and Aart Schalkwijk that reviews shared urban elements in Caribbean studies and sets an agenda for the volume in a wider comparative context. It covers colonialism and dependence, urban fragmentation, and local and global contexts familiar to Caribbeanists while underscoring the ways that these long-discussed themes must shape wider perspectives on cities. Although its notes on English-language sources will be useful for students, one wishes that this piece, like the general selected bibliography, had also included Spanish and French resources.

Next, Asad Mohammed’s chapter on urban form provides a recapitulation of urban evolution by reading centuries of colonialism in Port of Spain, from Spanish foundations to contemporary places. It also sets up topics of space and meaning that resonate across other essays. Here, the inclusion of another historical complement to deal with social as well as formal issues of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries that shape contemporary cities would have been useful.

Subsequent chapters move into the twentieth century, again underscoring comparative themes. Richard Harris’s wide overview of housing policy in the early twentieth-century British West Indies, for example, speaks directly to Marygrace Tyrrell’s examination of New Deal Housing in San Juan, Puerto Rico, as well as other works on space, class, and meaning across the wider Caribbean. These two essays also point to the importance of the United States in Caribbean urban imaginations.

Three other contributions address the variety of spaces and meanings that have evolved in different cities. Two statistically based chapters (one by Mark Figueroa, Anthony Harriott, and Nicola Satchell and another by Colin Clarke and David Howard) treat significant issues of class, space, labor, and violence in Jamaica. And a chapter by Jaffe directly compares spatial differentiation in Jamaica and Curacao. For teachers and students using the volume, this interdisciplinary concentration provides opportunities to explore relations of housing, livelihood, colonialism, and postcolonial life while posing questions for further research.

The book’s foundation in scholarship of the Dutch Caribbean also provides important studies of space and society within different social and cultural traditions. Jaffe’s piece and Hebe Verrest’s study of urban home work among low-income Trinidadians and Surinamers create bridges among scholarly traditions dealing with gender and household economics, and these are complemented by David Dodman’s look at metal smelting as a domestic strategy in Kingston. These chapters also explore social capital and cultural distinction in the fragmented city, linking ethnographies in Jamaica and Suriname with
Zaire Dinzey Flores’s provocative exploration of caché (“cachet, distinction”) and the more negative associations of caserio/casherio (referring to public housing) as cultural polarities in Ponce, Puerto Rico. This sensitivity to diverse interpretations of urban life resonates with cultural analysis by Francio Guadeloupe’s work in the binational island of St. Martin/St. Maarten, where he explores facets of local and global identity channeled through tropes of calypso and Christianity that also echo across the Caribbean.

While Guadeloupe’s essay combines textual and contextual studies, cultural issues drawn from the Francophone world focus on the textual. Liesbeth de Bleeker and Kathleen Gyssels read authors Raphaël Confiant and Patrick Chamoiseau within broader traditions of creolization, literature, and space. They suggest links to other urban literatures as well as Caribbean cultural, social, and spatial issues, but such connections remain incomplete within the larger volume. Again, however, we must understand this collection as a call to recognize and work on provocative issues rather than an answer to all questions of the urban Caribbean.

Despite the importance of this anthology in a global and comparative context, there are some troubling omissions, chiefly with regard to the Hispanophone Caribbean. Although it includes two interesting chapters on Puerto Rico, the lack of materials on Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and the circum-Caribbean cities of Spanish America means an incomplete dialogue of history and culture. These areas, in fact, have been central to wider urban debates on history, socialist transformations, race, and transnationalism that resonate with other chapters here and have brought Havana, Santo Domingo, Miami, and other cities into Caribbean and global discussions. While informed readers should have no trouble connecting such urban crucibles to the cases examined in this book, the authors should be encouraged to expand their framework as they move Caribbean cities into current debates of urban history, form, and futures. Still, such lacunae should not limit our recognition of the fundamental themes and possibilities that this anthology already poses for those within Caribbean studies and for those of us seeking to situate Caribbean cities within global dialogues.

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In a five-hour ceremony that began Saturday morning on the second day of November 1930, Ras Tafari Mäkonnen was enthroned as Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, King of Kings, Lion of Judah, and the 225th descendent in a genealogy of prophets, kings, and emperors that included David, Solomon, and Makeda. Half-a-world away a number of folk or itinerant preachers seized upon this event and proclaimed Selassie a messiah, laying the foundation for a community of acolytes known as Rastafarians. These itinerants have recently been applauded as the “founding brethren” and have been likened to Peter, Paul, and the apostles of early Christianity. The analogy is not unwarranted. Most were incarcerated at one time or another by the colonial and postcolonial state and persecution has become a key element in their worldview.

*From Garvey to Marley* is the latest in a series of accounts that have attempted to make sense of this worldview by formalizing religious tenets and relating them to actors, events, and figures in Jamaican history. While it was once accepted as conventional wisdom that devotees possessed no systematic theology beyond a quest for cannabis, this book has deconstructed tired and worn clichés (“lunatic fringe,” “social outcasts”) by situating beliefs and practices in their social and political context.

Noel Leo Erskine, a professor of theology at Emory University, is concerned less with grand schemes and master narratives and more with grounding seemingly bizarre tenets and principals in an Afro-Jamaican exegetical tradition, a task that he is uniquely qualified to do. He first encountered practitioners as a youth in St. Thomas, one of several venues associated with the early history of Rastafari, and he recalls being “lulled to sleep by their drumming and chanting” and swept by a “fear or dread” prompted by their “countenance.” He then tells us that his fear was misguided as this dread was directed at the colonial state (Babylon) rather than local communities. Although he did not “turn dread” as a result of this encounter, Erskine became a minister, pastoring a congregation in Westmoreland, and authoring a classic account of Afro-Jamaican religious history, *Decolonizing Theology: A Caribbean Perspective* (1998).
This account is a sequel in which Erskine focuses his attention on the period from the 1930s to the 1980s, epitomized by two prophet-like figures: Marcus Mosiah Garvey, elected to the pantheon of Jamaican national heroes, and Robert Nestor Marley, who disseminated Rastafarian beliefs worldwide through a songbook that includes “Exodus.” But *Garvey to Marley* is neither a life-and-times biographical approach looking at Rastafari through the lives of culture-heroes nor a text-centered exegesis in the orthodox sense. In the opening chapters Erskine draws upon a rich bibliography of social, historical, and ethnographic material that includes the scholarship of North Americans as well as a Rasta intelligentsia. He extrapolates seven basic propositions from one source (Ras Williams), borrows a chronology from another (Maureen Rowe), and relates these propositions to stages of development beginning with the “formative years” (1930-50), the “early years” (1951-72), and the “present” (post-1972).

The remaining chapters unpack the significance of these propositions and, as a corrective to the text-based reductionism of several recent accounts, engage in a form of cultural analysis, grounding them socially and historically. Although Erskine does not make note of this, his methodology closely approximates the “thick description” and “microhistory” advocated by Clifford Geertz, Natalie Davis, and Carlo Ginzberg. Along with Garvey and Leonard Howell, readers are introduced to black loyalists like George Liele and Moses Baker, iconoclasts such as “Shakespeare” (Harrison Woods), and the enigmatic Alexander Bedward. Given the weight these microstories assume in his narrative, Erskine might usefully have expanded his chronology to include a protoformative phase and adopted a diasporic rather than a lineal frame of reference. Liele migrated from British America, Bedward toiled in Central America, and both Garvey and Howell traveled to Harlem. Their hegira was not tangential or superfluous and contributed in no small way to the formation of Rastafari.

Overall, *From Garvey to Marley* is a welcome addition to a growing body of literature known as Rastafarian Studies.

**Reference**

In an attempt to better unpack the complex transnational Jamaican family, Elaine Bauer and Paul Thompson have collected life history interviews from people of Jamaican origin living in Britain, the United States, Canada, and Jamaica. They document the sources of strength and resilience that Jamaican families call upon in the international diaspora and highlight the host of structural constraints and conditions that Jamaican immigrants confront in their new environments, showing how these factors come to shape living arrangements, family structures, and transnational orientations. By the conclusion of the book, readers are well aware that Jamaican immigrants are not passive individuals acted upon by external forces, but rather that they use family and kin networks to overcome any circumstances that they confront in the international diaspora.

The end of the formal institution of slavery in Jamaica in 1838 set off a wave of migration chains that continues today. Both men and women left the island in pursuit of a better life for themselves and their family back in Jamaica. At the heart of the movement to migrate to far-off places has been the support role played by their family. Most families included a mixture of people who moved and others who stayed behind. In the countryside those without land were likely to remain in Jamaica. Movers were more likely to come from small farm, large farm, artisan, or professional families. This is not surprising because leaving Jamaica required substantial resources such as cash to travel and to survive on arrival, and networks of kin and friends abroad to help with adjustment and finding employment, all of which the poorest Jamaican families were less likely to have. It is notable that Jamaican women from the earliest period were more likely than men to be the activators of successive migration chains.

Life history interviews were conducted with forty-five families. Within each family up to four people were contacted and interviewed. Based on a study of 106 interviews conducted on four continents, with an equal number of women and men, the researchers found that the typical Jamaican family is not only transnational but also transgenerational. The life story methodology upon which this book is based is clearly one of its major strengths because
it allowed the researchers to capture the complexity of the Jamaican family which supported over time the movement of an estimated one million migrants.

This book is divided into ten chapters. The first two deal with the development of family stories of origin, memories of childhood, and relations of hardships within the family. The next two chapters examine the memories of lost community in terms of harmony or conflict, and memories of the Jamaican environment. The fifth chapter addresses the important differences between those who left and those who stayed behind, and it takes into account the importance of social resources and age.

The sixth chapter is by far the most interesting because it examines the welcome Jamaicans received in their new countries of settlement. Bauer and Thompson write in great detail about the major determinants of success and mobility that affected Jamaicans in the international diaspora. These factors include racial stratification, economic opportunities, spatial segregation, and such matters as financial and human capital upon arrival, family structure, community organization, and cultural patterns of social relations. This chapter also deals with the role of men and women in terms of migration, raising families, and maintaining transnational linkages, noting that migration abroad imposed special stresses and demands for adaptability in couple relationships. The immigrant couples who stayed together through these adverse conditions have usually had to find ways of openly working out their roles and balance power through negotiation.

The seventh chapter examines the role of faith and the church in the lives of Jamaican migrants in the diaspora. Spirituality becomes the backbone for helping many Jamaican migrants deal with issues of exclusion and racism in the communities they had settled. Other coping strategies include holding onto the dream of one day going back to Jamaica. The dream of return was intertwined with the longing to go back home to build a house, to be together again with family and childhood friends, and eventually to be buried on family land.

In the final chapters, Bauer and Thompson examine the complexities of the Jamaican family, noting that Jamaican families exist within a framework of reciprocal relationships. Caring in Jamaican households is multidirectional, flowing across and within the generations as well as countries. Jamaican migrants have been sustaining their family connections and providing collective and individual responsibility for care since the earliest migrants began leaving. Reciprocal caring exchanges are the foundation that underpins these Jamaican migrant personal networks which are transnational and transgenerational.

Five key features emerge from Bauer and Thompson’s research on contemporary Jamaican transnational family structures. First, a transnational family network which uses the global economy and modern technology as a
means to maintain contact and communication over vast distances has developed. Second, in many families even where men are present and significant, particularly women become dynamic activating figures around whom the kin system revolves. Third, like their parent(s), the second generation is seeking solutions to family issues by putting in place complex extended family solutions. Fourth, partnerships between black Caribbeans and Whites are of increasing frequency in both Britain and Canada, gradually making diasporic Jamaican families more transracial. And finally, despite the fact that Jamaican families embrace identities that cut across national boundaries, most Jamaicans continue to have a dream of return migration.

*Jamaican Hands Across the Atlantic* is an important contribution to Caribbean and migration studies, particularly with respect to documenting the important role the family plays in sustaining connections and providing collective care. These reciprocal caring exchanges are the foundation that underpins Jamaican migrants’ personal networks, both transnational and trans-generational. The book would be particularly relevant for undergraduate or graduate courses in Caribbean or migration studies, race and ethnic relations, or international development. It should also interest nonacademic audiences because of the jargon-free and easily understandable style of writing, helping nonacademic readers better understand the complex ways in which Jamaican immigrants and their families have continued to survive and excel despite the hardships they have faced both at home and in the international diaspora.


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*Constructing Vernacular Culture in the Trans-Caribbean* is an impressive collection of essays exploring issues of identity, expressive culture, ideas of “home,” family ties and relationships, religion, and new forms of hybridity. Several disciplines are represented from anthropology, sociology, political science, linguistics, and women’s and gender studies to cultural studies and
The book examines the idea of “vernacular culture,” which the editors define as “cultural expressions that are rooted within the sphere of the indigenous and popular, rather than the sphere of officially anointed ‘high’ culture” (p. xv). Here, the reference to “trans-Caribbean” pertains to Caribbean transmigrants and their descendants in several communities, such as Miami, New York, London, and Toronto. The term is used instead of “Caribbean Diaspora” in order to illuminate “new hybrid” encounters with other cultures, and emerging “vernacular cultural expressions” (p. xvi). Following the editors’ introduction, the fifteen essays are grouped into four parts.

In Part I, “(Re-)Creating Homes in the Vernacular,” Mies van Niekerk’s essay, “Premigration Legacies and Transnational Identities: Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese in the Netherlands,” suggests that premigration legacies in Suriname are important for understanding the experiences of Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese immigrants and their children in the Netherlands. Bettina E. Schmidt’s “The Many Voices of the Caribbean Culture in New York City” explores the different Caribbean religious communities in New York City in relation to the construction of identities. Constance R. Sutton’s “Family Reunion Rituals of African-Caribbean Transnational Families: Instilling a Historical and Diasporic Consciousness” describes the importance of family reunions in the lives of African-Caribbean transnational migrants looking specifically at Barbados, Grenada, and Trinidad and argues that the family reunion is important for different generations as they maintain ties to “home.” In combination, these three essays contemplate the issue of “home,” place, history, and memory in the lives of transmigrants as they recall memories of home, plan a family reunion, and (re)create a sense of home where they are.

Part II, “Performing Identities,” begins with Melvin L. Butler’s “Dancing around Dancehall: Popular Music and Pentecostal Identity in Transnational Jamaica and Haiti,” which explores the relationship between popular music and Pentecostalism among Jamaican and Haitian transmigrants with a focus on the cultural significance of popular music before religious conversion and the ways in which this music finds expression in Pentecostalism. “Rituals, Journeys, and Modernity: Caribbean Spiritual Baptists in New York,” by Maarit Forde, examines rituals and the idea of a Spiritual Baptist community in the Caribbean, North America, and Great Britain. Carol Bailey’s “Performing ‘Difference’: Gossip in Olive Senior’s Short Stories” takes a literary approach to discuss gossip in terms of class distinctions in postcolonial Caribbean societies. And “‘This Is My Vibes’: Legitimizing Vernacular Expressions in Caribana,” by Lyndon Phillip, explores the politics of hip hop in the Caribana carnival in Toronto and Trinidad and grapples with the issues of continuity and change and accommodation and resistance. Together, these essays illuminate the ways in which identities are performed over time and space and describe the contestation surrounding identity reconstruction in the trans-Caribbean.
Part III, “Writing Self, Other, and (Trans-)Nation in the Trans-Caribbean,” consists of five essays. In “Patrick Chamoiseau’s Seascapes and the Trans-Caribbean Imaginary,” Wendy Knepper examines Chamoiseau’s critique of the connection between globalization and creolization. In “‘A Local Habitation and a Name’: Travelers, Migrants, Nomads of ‘Caribbean New York,’ in Colin Channer’s Waiting in Vain,” Karl-Heinz Magister argues that increased ethnic dichotomies and racial segregation at the beginning of the twentieth century led to a reconceptualization of migration and that the “post-colonial traveler” lived in an “in-between space” within the global space of “transnational diasporic cultures” (p. 178). In “Playing Both Home and Away: National and Transnational Identities in the Work of Bruce St. John,” Elaine Savory explores the work of Barbadian poet Bruce St. John and suggests that, while referencing the national, it also considers the transnational (regional Caribbean or African diaspora). In “The Amerindian Transnational Experience in Pauline Melville’s The Ventriloquist’s Tale,” Tanya Shields continues with the literary approach by examining the writings of Pauline Melville and exploring what the novel suggests about globalization, transnationalism, and integration in the Anglophone Caribbean. Finally, “Readings from Aquí y Allá: Music, Commercialism, and the Latino-Caribbean Transnational Imaginary,” by Raphael Dalleo, combines literature with music to explore the 1970s in the Caribbean as a passage from a colonial framework of “binary separatism” and hierarchy to a postcolonial framework by globalization. These chapters use a literary perspective and reflexivity to contemplate colonial and postcolonial experiences “locally” and in a transnational or trans-Caribbean sense.

Part IV, “The (Trans-)Nation (Dis-)Embodied,” offers an interesting and timely discussion of gender, sexuality, and feminism. It begins with Patricia Mohammed’s “Like Sugar in Coffee: Third Wave Feminism and the Caribbean,” in which Mohammed draws on her own experiences and reflections on feminism in the Caribbean and Second Wave feminism to discuss her perception and “measured optimism” about feminism today, given an increase in gender consciousness following First and Second Wave feminism. Next, “Work That Body: Sexual Citizenship and Embodied Freedom,” by Mimi Sheller, examines sexual citizenship and what it means in the trans-Caribbean by considering sexual agency and “erotic autonomy” as a move toward an embodied freedom in postcolonial and transnational contexts. And Curwen Best’s “Caribbean Cyberculture: Towards an Understanding of Gender, Sexuality, and Identity within the Digital Culture Matrix” also explores sexuality, evaluating the impact of contemporary digital culture on identity, nationality, gender, sexuality, and power.

In sum, all of the authors advance the idea of a trans-Caribbean as an effective way of discussing new movements, migrations, and hybridities. In the process, however, the concept of diaspora loses some of its significance
and historical relevance. I would offer that diaspora does not refer to a singular migration or migratory flow but rather to a process that is ongoing, dynamic, and changing, allowing for “new hybridities” to form wherever Caribbean transmigrants and their children find themselves. Diaspora also suggests diaspora-homeland relations and circular migration over time and space (see Hamilton 2007). I do understand the authors’ use of the term trans-Caribbean in lieu of diaspora to emphasize the newness that emerges in these contexts, and they make this point very well in the book. I would highly recommend the book as a reader in courses focusing on Caribbean studies and the Caribbean and/or African diaspora.

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“A writer after a time carries his world with him, his own burden of experience, human experience and literary experience,” opines V.S. Naipaul in Finding the Centre (1985:10). A Writer’s People, a set of five essays, focuses primarily on aspects of his literary experience, “the writing to which I was exposed during my career,” as he characterizes it. “I say writing, but I mean more specifically vision, a way of seeing and feeling” (p. 41). The essays also include vignettes of his personal relationships with Derek Walcott, Edgar Mittelholzer, Sam Selvon, Seepersad Naipaul, and Anthony Burgess.

In praising parts of M.K. Gandhi’s An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments with Truth, Naipaul suggests that “the writer is sufficiently far away from the events he is describing for the matter to be well sifted in his own mind.” It is a distance that makes for a “narrative” that is “direct,” “won-
derfully simple,” and “ordered” (p. 98). A Writer’s People evinces Naipaul’s further sifting of topics on which he has written before: the limits of his milieu as an aspiring West Indian writer in the 1950s; his father Seepersad’s literary career; Gandhi; Nirad Chaudhuri; Vinoba Bhave; mimicry; inauthenticity. He ranges more widely to discuss Rahman Khan, a Pathan man who worked as an indentured laborer in Suriname and wrote an autobiography Jeevan Prakash, Gustave Flaubert, Polybius, Cicero, Julius Caesar, Virgil, and writing schools.

The least sifted material in A Writer’s People is the essay “An English Way of Looking,” which addresses Naipaul’s “horror” on finally reading the fiction of Anthony Powell whom he first met in 1957 (p. 40). “I cherished his friendship and generosity, delighted in his conversation, thought him well read and always intelligent, but kept on putting off a serious connected reading of his work,” Naipaul concedes (p. 36). Requests to commemorate his friend after his death in 2000 prompted him to remedy the gap in his reading. “I was appalled,” writes Naipaul, who tentatively suggests that “a little American success with one book … had corrupted” Powell’s attention to and care with narrative (p. 37). The writing is dealt with brusquely; of far more interest to Naipaul is an ostentatious exculpation of himself from the possibility of his friendship being thought to have been grounded even in part in admiration of Powell’s oeuvre.

Corruption, too, is the theme of Naipaul’s return to his beginnings as a writer, “A Worm in the Bud,” and a motif in other essays. The bud is both a nascent West Indian literature of the 1940s and 1950s and Naipaul’s own early literary and critical aspirations. The new sifting deals more fully with Naipaul’s experience of Derek Walcott, the other Nobel Laureate from the West Indies. Naipaul characterizes him as a “mulatto” who has “put himself on the black side” (p. 27). He recalls the excitement generated in Trinidad in 1949 by the news of the publication of Derek Walcott’s 25 Poems in Barbados. He first read the collection in London in 1955, and found it on the whole “quite wonderful … this eye, this sensitivity, this gift of language, ennobling many of the ordinary things we knew…. I was full of Walcott at this time” (pp. 14-15).

The praise, though, is qualified. Naipaul draws attention to his then limited competence as a reader of poetry. He records the reservations of more experienced critics David Piper and Terence Tiller about the Walcott poems he recited to them, and begins reassessing the early infatuation. He notices in “As John to Patmos” that an “idea of the physical glory of the islands” is “done with standard tropical properties” (p. 16). He pauses over the lines “For beauty has surrounded / These black children and freed them of homeless ditties.” The word “black,” he now finds, had “always been difficult,” “embarrassing to recite”: “This sentimental way of looking and feeling was not mine; ‘children’ would have been enough for me” (p. 16). His perception
of sentimentality in Walcott becomes the worm in the bud of his admiration of the poems: “without the black idea, the pool of distress, always available, in which the poet could refresh himself, the unpeopled landscape would be insupportable” (p. 23); he gives the “unhappiness” of his middle-class West Indian audience of the late 1940s “a racial twist which made it more manageable” (p. 26). Here, as elsewhere in the collection, Naipaul’s sense of his own singularity as a writer is fed by the sharpness of his reactions to what he sees as the creative limits imposed by regional cultural, political, and historical contexts, and by what Walcott terms the “the old Naipauline trauma – the genteel abhorrence of Negroes, the hatred of Trinidad, the idealization of History and Order” (Walcott 1998:126).

Naipaul is interested in the challenges to vision posed by cross-cultural encounters, including the effort of Flaubert to imagine a historical novel Salammbo. In “Looking and Not Seeing: The Indian Way” he admires the singularity of Gandhi’s piecing together of a social and political philosophy and identity, “step by step, personal experiment by personal experiment – in London, South Africa, and India – over thirty years” (p. 102). His observation is more acerbic in the final essay, “India Again: The Mahatma and After.” The political cause and mahatmahood produced the illusion of coherence, and Gandhi’s vision was “out of date” by 1950 (p. 168). Naipaul circles back to his own certitudes and ready idea of corruption: “India’s poverty and colonial past, the riddle of the two civilisations, continue to stand in the way of identity and strength and intellectual growth” (p. 189). The writers to whom Naipaul has been exposed are grist in this collection to a familiar interpretative mill.

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Sarah Phillips Casteel’s *Second Arrivals* is a welcome addition to the growing body of work on the significance of space and identity in the New World context. Although in recent years nature writing, natural history, environmentalism, postcolonialism, imperial gardens, botanical expeditions, landscapes, and plantations have had some presence in transatlantic literary and cultural studies, there are not many book-length projects on nonwhite and minority interventions in these distinct but also related fields. Casteel’s book brings together areas not generally perceived as having much to say to each other, diaspora studies and landscape (specifically rural and wilderness) writing, unsettling presumptions in both cases. Diaspora studies are generally characterized by a “hyperemphasis on movement” (p. 3) and urban displacement while rural and wilderness landscapes tend to signify the nation’s sedentary heartland. The former represents progressive errancy and globalized cosmopolitanism and the latter a generally conservative, narrowly nationalist if not imperialist (re)territorialization. Casteel investigates a number of diaspora writers “across the Americas who articulate alternative forms of emplacement” (p. 1) and “a more tensive and processual relationship” (p. 6) with genealogical narratives of place. Authors from challengingly diverse contexts – Caribbean, Jewish, Japanese, and Korean – are examined together in a surprisingly coherent manner thanks largely to the tight thematic focus and theoretical suppleness of the book.

The main title of Casteel’s book – borrowed from V.S. Naipaul’s phrase, “the second arrival,” in his autobiographical novel, *The Enigma of Arrival* – is a wistful reference to continuing diasporic movement and search for land and belonging. But it also implies “a second look,” “a new way of seeing” polarized discussions of place and homelessness, nation and diaspora, settlement and immigration, rural and urban spaces, origin and displacement (p. 6). Pastoral and sublime landscapes in the Americas are particularly fraught for the new migrants, torn as they are between a desire to claim a place in dominant white European settlement narratives and, by virtue of their history, an uneasy awareness of displaced and dispossessed native populations.
they run the traditional risk of erasing. Rather than simply repeat dominant discourses, what Casteel calls “a revised New World landscape poetics” dynamically challenges and revises them, although it is not exempt from some of the historical problems of its earlier models (p. 193).

The book is divided into two sections, “Critical Pastoralism” and “Marvelous Gardens and Gothic Wildernesses.” The first examines the pastoral mode through which Naipaul, Derek Walcott, Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth, and Joy Kogawa exemplify in different ways and to different degrees the revision of New World pastorals into unstable, complex modes “deeply implicated in a history of dispossession that both predates and includes the modern imperial age” (p. 36). Despite Walcott’s more explicit rejection of the European pastoral, both Naipaul and Walcott turn to this compromised mode since it provides conventional access to a sense of place, however embattled and provisional it becomes in the “second arrival” of diasporic migration. Malamud and Roth provide similarly ironic perspectives, rendered more so in the unusual but not impossible location of Jewish American narratives in rural rather than urban settings. Like the Caribbean writers, Malamud and Roth subscribe partially to the myths of the pastoral only to be brought up short by their historicized sense of exclusion. The section ends with a chapter on Joy Kogawa, included here in the spirit of more fully inclusive American hemispheric studies. Connecting the New Worlds of the Caribbean, the United States, and Canada through the pastoral involves one more revision, since Canadian literature is usually associated with harsh depictions of nature. Kogawa is sensitive to the distrust and isolation of Japanese Canadians during and after the Pearl Harbor attacks, but her portrayal of their banishment to rural areas carries its own stereotypes, claims Casteel. While Malamud and Roth seem unaware of the prior existence of the Native Americans, Kogawa aligns her community with the First Nations people to overcome social displacement, but she does so in problematically primitivist ways that naturalize and objectify the latter.

The second part of the book focuses more on garden writing. The nonfictional, autobiographical work of Jamaica Kincaid and Michael Pollan leads to other modes of the marvelous and gothic that Casteel investigates in a chapter on Shani Mootoo, Gisèle Pineau, and Maryse Condé. According to Casteel, the writers in the second part seem more self-aware in their narrative conventions and historical complexities than the previous writers she discusses. However dystopian and possibly more critical their narratives may be, Casteel may have overemphasized the parodic potential of the Anglophone and Francophone women writers. Particularly in the case of the always controversial Kincaid and Condé, exactly how self-critical the writers are about their own compromised positions is not always clear in their work. The final chapter moves to visual art, examining, among others, black
British artist Isaac Julien’s film installations and Jin-me Yoon’s photography in Canadian diasporic contexts.

Throughout Casteel emphasizes the provisional sense of place that “is never secure but instead must be continually renegotiated” in these works (p. 193). This particular thesis and the narrow focus on landscape poetics ultimately help the book connect a wide assortment of writers. The bibliography in the end is strong but selective given the formidably different contexts of these writers and the voluminous prose of landscape writing, ecocriticism, natural history, botanical gardens, and so on, with which they engage. The broad comparative structure of the volume prevents any sustained depth with its many complex fields but the selective lens grounds the wide range. The book’s largely literary emphasis, narrative coherence, and lucid prose make it an effortless reading experience.

The ‘Air of Liberty’: Narratives of the South Atlantic Past. INEKE PHAF-RHEINBERGER. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2008. xxii + 224 pp. (Cloth US$ 78.00, €50.00)

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The “Air of Liberty” draws together studies of a colonial region that has here-tofore been treated by specialists in individual language and culture areas. Phaf-Rheinberger’s linguistic skills afford her an extraordinary range. She masters the original documents in Portuguese, Dutch, Spanish, Papiamentu, and Sranan that pertain to her unusually synoptic approach to the South Atlantic. The golden thread that connects these essays – seven of which have been reworked from versions printed a decade earlier in Spanish (4) and English (3) – is the Dutch colonization of the region, from Pernambuco in the Southeast across the Wild Coast (Great Guyana) to the eastern region of Venezuela and Curaçao.

The “air of liberty” that provides the main title is the focus of Chapter 1, which is devoted to representations of Recife (Mauritssstad) by artist Frans Post during the brief Dutch period of colonization in the 1640s. The expression “air of liberty” comes from Karel van Mander’s training book for paint-
Phaf-Rheinberger applies it directly to the leisurely posture assumed by black slaves in Post’s 1653 painting “Mauritststad with a View of Recife” (private collection, São Paolo), where “different ethnic representations are positioned with relative equality” (p. 20). She concludes that Post’s “depiction of the slaves in postures of calculated relaxation and enjoying leisure time is thus, despite his allusions to European control, remarkable” (p. 21). Phaf-Rheinberger’s attention to historical detail is equally remarkable. Her second chapter is meant to fill in the ideological thrust of the “air of liberty.”

Chapter 2, “Amsterdam and the South Atlantic,” shifts the reader’s attention from Frans Post to Caspar Barlaeus, whose *Rerum per octennium in Brasilia* (1647) chronicled Count Johan Maurits’s eight-year colonization of Recife prior to the Treaty of Münster in 1648. The narrative progression from Post to Barlaeus is justified by Phaf-Rheinberger’s interest in the “colonization of space” (Mignolo 1995) in its relation to the Dutch dream of order. Within this broader framework one can move from the painterly representation by Post to Barlaeus’s historiography, understanding them as complementary parts of a rationalist enterprise of which slavery was the unfortunate consequence. By 1638 Johan Maurits had conquered Elmina, the Portuguese slave “castle,” and had argued that the colonial enterprise required African workers as a practical necessity. Barlaeus’s strictures concerning the new world system were unusually straightforward for the time:

> The desire for profit has grown stronger even among us Christians who embraced the pure teachings of the reformed church while we engaged in arms and warfare. In so doing we have returned to the custom of buying and selling human beings created in God’s likeness, saved by Christ, the Lord of Creation, who least of all presents an image of slavery due to a lack of natural ingenuity. (*Rerum…*, p. 185; trans. B. Ebeling-Koning)

Barlaeus had earlier demonstrated the sincerity of his convictions in a famous speech, known as the “Mercator sapiens” or Wise Merchant, which he delivered in his capacity as professor in the Athenaeum Illustre of Amsterdam in 1632. Phaf-Rheinberger’s analysis makes clear that Barlaeus was a classical humanist who envisaged an enlightened, Christian colonialism that would not have involved enslavement of workers, despite its reliance on the production and consumption of sugar. The internal conflict here is quite apparent. In Phaf-Rheinberger’s words, “Did the moral message apply only to the ‘dream of order,’ whereas reality was excluded from his Christian horizon?” (p. 44).

With Chapter 3 the book’s focus shifts to Suriname in the eighteenth century, where the Jewish planter David Nassy distinguished himself. His *Essai historique sur la colonie de Surinam* (1788) is both an important docu-
ment on the Portuguese Jewish “nation” and a significant contribution to Enlightenment literature. By 1792 David Nassy was a physician practicing in Philadelphia, then the capital of the new United States. There he authored Observations on the Cause, Nature, and Treatment of the Epidemic Disorder; Prevalent in Philadelphia (1793). He became a member of the American Philosophical Society founded by Benjamin Franklin a half-century earlier. Nonetheless, on his return to Suriname Nassy was not permitted to practice medicine. Phaf-Rheinberger relates Nassy’s treatment in the Essai of the declining fortunes of Jewish planters in Suriname between 1760 (115 estates owned) and 1788 (46 estates); their historical role in the Dutch colonization of Recife, then Cayenne, and finally Suriname; and the anti-Semitism that had distorted their role (as in Hartsinck 1770). Nassy also addressed in the Essai the question of the status of non-white Jews (black and Mulatto converts) in law and custom, both in Suriname and the Netherlands. He openly decried discrimination in that area as well.

Chapter 4 ventures still further into the fraught relations between the colony of Suriname and its non-white inhabitants by examining the life histories of Saramaka Paramount Chief Alabi (1743-1820) and the slave Joanna (1758-83), as represented in Richard Price’s Alabi’s World and two editions of Stedman’s Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes (1971, 1988). Phaf-Rheinberger usefully rehearses the narrative strategies of these histories and compares them in some detail. Readers unfamiliar with the particulars will find enough factual material to allow them to assess the nature, if not the ultimate value, of the comparison. She quotes Thomas Mitchell’s work on the interplay between text and image (1980) to justify her conclusion that “Riemer’s [the Moravian missionary’s] images display Price’s narrative authority as ethnographic observer [of Alabi’s world] and are needed to display his transcendental subjectivity and that of his fieldwork in contrast to the Moravian horizon, which he cannot express through his text alone” (p. 78). In her treatment of the two editions of John Gabriel Stedman’s Narrative ..., Phaf-Rheinberger finds a distinctly literary intent. “While writing his book, [Stedman] lived at Tiverton among writers and was very much aware of the contemporary literary taste favouring interracial love affairs, provided they had a satisfyingly dramatic resolution” (p. 80). She quotes Mary Louise Pratt in Imperial Eyes to the effect that, in such a plot, “the lovers are separated, the European is reabsorbed by Europe, and the non-European dies an early death” (p. 80). This literary perspective calls into question van Lier’s editorial approval of the “Surinamese marriage” between Stedman and Joanna as “an acceptable model of integration into Christian society” (p. 80). Phaf-Rheinberger sees the woman’s perspective on “Surinamese marriage” in terms of social mobility: “Women can opt for a Surinamese marriage and eventually obtain their freedom or that of their children through manumission, whereas men become free when they join the
corps of Rangers, the soldiers loyal to the whites” (p. 82). We see here Phaf-Rheinberger’s critical and theoretical stance deconstructing what she sees as the masculinist bias of the authors and editors whose work she examines.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 focus primarily on Curaçaoan history and literature, while showing their connections to Venezuela, the westernmost region of the Wild Coast, and Haiti. Manuel Piar supplies the narrative center of Chapter 5. Phaf-Rheinberger connects him to both the struggle for independence and the impetus to abolish slavery in Venezuela in the late eighteenth century. Piar served as a link between Pétion, the president of Haiti from 1809 to 1818, and Bolívar, whom the Haitians supported on condition that he free the slaves in Venezuela. Bolivar had Piar, a pardo or free colored man, executed in Angostura (future Ciudad Bolívar) in October 1817 at the conclusion of an extremely complicated revolutionary itinerary. Phaf-Rheinberger demonstrates how the memory of Piar has been obliterated in the history and literature of both Curaçao and Venezuela. Chapter 6 attempts to show how popular culture in Curaçao – in particular the tumba and tambù musical traditions – connect to the Papiamentu language, modernization, and the democratization of society. The argument, which I find less well articulated than those in other chapters, uses the research of Timothy Reiss (2005) to provide an enabling discourse. The seventh chapter treats “New Landscapes, Creole Belonging” in the fiction of Albert Helman and Frank Martinus Arion, Dutch-language writers from Suriname and Curaçao, respectively. Perhaps because its focus is sharper and the literary material more homogeneous, the argument is cogent and persuasive. Readers who have no Dutch will be especially grateful for the résumés of the novels discussed.

The eighth and final chapter serves as an epilog and is set off in a separate section entitled “Toward a Cultural History of the South Atlantic.” Here, Phaf-Rheinberger attempts to bring together the various strands of her historical and critical narrative. Ángel Rama’s lettered city (ciudad letrada), which one encounters episodically in the preceding chapters, serves to link Barlaeus’s seventeenth-century vision of an orderly and rational colonization to the Modernist movement in both Brazil and Angola, where she sees the Dutch presence hovering. The “invisible network” of illegal but tolerated transshipment of slaves between North and South America through such Caribbean ports as St. Eustatius and Curaçao provides an appropriately ambiguous note on which to conclude this unusually rich and wide-ranging study.

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After almost a year of procrastination, I finally found myself reading Christopher Miller’s nearly 600-page tour de force, *The French Atlantic Triangle*, on airplanes, in hotel rooms, and bistros on my own triangular voyage, from Washington state to Réunion, by way of Paris. (After 24 hours in the air each way, I am tempted to compare modern jet coach seating and that of the infamous slave ship holds – both created by the profit motive without regard for human comfort – but the glib jest rings sour.) This nimble, fascinating, historically infused work of literary criticism opened my eyes to many new, important connections within a diverse network of texts – literary, historical, and cinematic – from the past two centuries. It is a remarkable work of erudition that nevertheless reads lightly, with humor and insight. I can hardly imagine a better travel companion for such a voyage.

Miller’s *Triangle* works on multiple levels. Part I sets up the theoretical (or, perhaps more accurately, metaphorical) structures at play in his study and provides an accurate, engaging, and critical history of the triangular Atlantic slave trade linking France, Africa, and the Caribbean. Part II offers critical readings of three important French women writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries – Olympe de Gouges, Madame de Staël, and Claire de Duras – who imagined slavery and the slave trade through sentimental fiction and drama. Building on Margaret Cohen’s insights regarding the rejection of sentimentalism by the male founders of historical realism, Part III offers imaginative new readings of key nineteenth-century texts by Prosper Mérimée, Baron Roger, Eugène Sue, and Edouard Corbière. Part IV turns to more recent Caribbean writers (Aimé Césaire, Édouard Glissant, Maryse Condé) and contemporary filmmakers (Christian Richards, Roger Gnoan M’Bala, Guy Deslauriers, Patrick Chamoiseau) to ask how these artists interpret and engage with the historical legacy of the slave trade.

In his introduction and in a recent critical response to reviews of his book on *H-France*, Miller insists that the true subject of his analysis is the triangle formed by the Atlantic slave trade and the circulation of French and African people and ideas within that network: “It is all too easy to forget … the specificity of the slave trade (the subject of my book) as opposed to slavery itself (a closely related but not identical topic)” (Miller 2008:67). Miller does not explicitly justify this specific focus on the slave trade in his book, at least in terms recognizable to a historian; for example, a historian might have pleaded that “the study of all French fictive works relating to slavery would have posed a topic too enormous” or “such a study has already been done.”

One senses that Miller’s reasons for limiting the subject to the slave trade are not those of a historian, but rather those of a literary scholar (or poet?). By placing the triangle at the center of his study, Miller can do what he does best: disentangle, arrange … in a word, *play* with language and symbols. As Robert Darnton or Claude Lévi-Strauss might have said, triangles are good to think with.
One level of Miller’s play is to deconstruct the multiple meanings and surprising origins of words. In French *la traite*, literally “the trade,” is sufficient to denote slave trade itself but, according to Miller, *traite* derives not from *traiter* (to trade) but *traire* (to draw out or extract) (pp. 11-12). *Traiable* is related to the English word *tractable*, but with heavy overtones – someone compliant enough to be easily enslaved (pp. 232-33). *Retour* refers to a colonist’s or trader’s return trip to France but also the *return* on one’s investment: the profit (p. 55). In Miller’s illuminating reading of Aimé Césaire’s poem, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*, the *retour* is ambiguous: that of the poet’s return from France to Martinique or from there to Africa (pp. 331-34). For the trafficked slaves themselves and for later Caribbean writers (Glissant, Condé), the dream of a *retour* to Africa is unrealizable (pp. 50, 340-41, 357).

Another extended metaphor that informs the book is that of translation; here Miller is in dialogue with an earlier collection of literary criticism, Doris Kadish and Françoise Massardier-Kenney’s *Translating Slavery*, which Miller criticizes as “narrowly feminist, … creat[ing] a distorted impression of literary history and the role that gender plays in it” (p. 102). Yet Miller credits these critics’ attention to the broader, metaphoric meanings of translation with regard to gender: “gender, like any boundary, is a line of demarcation that can be crossed, tripped over, or even transcended through acts of translation” (p. 100). For Miller, however, “the slave trade … is itself *translation*” (p. 101). The original meaning of *translate*, in English or French (*traduire*), is to transfer *people* from one place to another. Miller’s linguistic riffs may not strike historian readers as exactly useful to our scholarship, but they are nimble and interesting. They deepen our appreciation for the language of our sources (and indeed the language we ourselves use to narrate history); we can go along with Miller on these etymological excursions for the ride.

More congenial to the historian’s *métier* are Miller’s many spot-on debunkings of historical chestnuts – assertions that somehow become crystallized as fact and linger on through generations of scholarship. And, true to historiographical form, Miller’s best such deconstructions generate lengthy endnotes that go on for paragraphs. I found myself reading with two bookmarks, one in the text and the other in the notes, so that I could follow Miller merrily down his rabbit holes. For example, Miller takes off from an earlier aside in my book (Peabody 1996:176, n. 71) to argue persuasively that the garrulous French missionary chronicler Père Labat invented the story that Louis XIII reluctantly authorized slavery in the French island colonies “as the only means available to inspire the worship of the true God in the Africans” (p. 19). Similarly, Miller challenges the oft-repeated story that Claire de Duras traveled to her mother’s Martinique plantation in 1794, at the age of sixteen, where she perhaps developed the sympathy for Blacks later
portrayed in her novel *Ourika* (pp. 160-61 and 456-57, n. 13). Another myth: novelist Edouard Corbière was likely never a slave trader himself (p. 302).

Miller’s vast knowledge of French literature and the slave trade is impressive. He deftly weaves people and texts into his text and notes, making fascinating connections between and amongst the many real historical figures and fictive characters that appear and disappear throughout the book. Eugene Sue, author of the maritime novel of the slave trade *Atar-Gull*, was lovers with Olympe Pelissier, who, in turn, received the Duc de Duras (the widower of *Ourika*’s author) in her salon (p. 275). Tamango, the eponymous character created by Mérimée (“perhaps the most important literary representation of the slave trade in French” [p. 179]), echoes Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko* but anticipates the self-liberating slaves of Aimé Césaire’s *Cahier* (pp. 219-22). To Miller’s great credit, these kaleidoscopic connections are sometimes surprising and often illuminating but so crisply conveyed that I never found the erudition overwhelming as a reader.

Miller’s readings of specific texts are nuanced and compelling. For example, his interpretation of *Ourika* – as a novel about racial prejudice that manages nevertheless not to be antislavery – rings true (pp. 170-71), as does his similar observation about Mérimée’s “Tamango” (p. 208). Miller argues that even as the second French abolition movement gathered steam in the 1820s and 1830s, very few authors directly attacked the slave trade head-on in fiction.

At the same time, I think Miller misreads the passage where Ourika bemoans the absence of “*un compagnon de ma vie*” (pp. 166-69). This is the fascinating monologue where the fictive Ourika imagines how her life might have been much happier as a slave on a plantation, surrounded by a loving family for whom color is not a barrier to love. Miller argues – correctly – that Duras uncritically reproduces the colonial discourse justifying slavery as a path to Christianity and happiness. But I do not believe that “*compagnon*” reflects Duras’s indirect knowledge of the rarity of Christian marriages amongst slaves in French colonies (p. 168). Rather, I think that the appropriate context for interpreting the word “*compagnon*” is the status of marital relations for the French aristocracy. After all, Duras and her peers did not marry for love; their marriages were arranged in accordance with parents’ political and economic designs. Instead, I think Duras’s fictive Ourika is truly lonely and fantasizes that she will find companionship in a rather bourgeois ideal of domestic bliss, here projected onto the enslaved peasantry of the island colonies. Miller is right to challenge this fantasy – and he does so brilliantly. However, I believe this is another case (as Miller demonstrates elsewhere) where French literary evocations of slavery are primarily metaphoric challenges to French social relations, not rooted in (or concerned with) the reality of colonial slavery itself.
Miller addresses head-on a question that has long vexed me: why are there no French slave narratives equivalent to those that form the Afro-Anglo-American genre from Olaudah Equiano to Frederick Douglass? Miller’s answer is straightforward: literacy rates amongst French slaves were low and French abolitionists did not seem inclined to collect and publish them (pp. 33-37). Miller is correct, as far as he goes, but there are deeper cultural issues at play. The U.S. slave narrative is closely related to another early American literary genre: the captivity narrative, by which New England colonists gave meaning to their experiences of being held captive by Indians and, well, French. Beginning with Mary Rowlandson (1682), these narratives embedded their authors’ life stories within an explicitly Judeo-Christian framework of exile and redemption, quoting heavily from relevant passages from the Bible. (Indeed, the confessional autobiography, in which a seeker is born again and saved, is central to many Protestant denominations, including the seventeenth-century French Huguenots [Lougee 1999].) Essential to the success of the early published captivity narratives was the fact that although fiction was banned as frivolous by the dour Puritans, these adventure stories were both true and “instructional.” Faithful readers could have their adventurous thrills and be good Christians too. The best British and American slave narratives fall squarely into this genre of exile and redemption (“I once was lost but now am found”) and were certainly read for “pleasure” as well as for their contribution to the abolitionist cause. (Equiano, whom Miller cites in several places in The French Atlantic Triangle, was a convert to Calvinist Methodism; see, for example, Potkay 1994). Secondly, as noted several times by Miller, the French abolitionist movement never had the grass-roots fervency of that in Great Britain or the United States. This is at least in part related to the fact that, except during the Revolution and later during the Restoration, participatory democracy was not the mainstay of French politics. There was no real place for the common people to put pressure on the government through petitions or voting. In effect, I would argue that the absence of a meaningful Protestant and democratic culture in the French Atlantic was decisive in inhibiting the development of French slave narratives.

Another play on the triangular theme (though this metaphorical meaning is never explicitly invoked) is Miller’s attention to homosocial and homoerotic themes in several of the texts. Miller is careful never to read too much into any given passage, but he makes a strong case for the ways that the male world of Atlantic sea-faring created sites for both affective consensual relationships (matelotage) and homosexual rape. For example, he points to the passage in Equiano’s Travels that describes a strong affective bond with the older boy, Daniel. Another passage in Equiano, not mentioned by Miller, concerns Equiano’s relationship with a man aboard the ship Ætna. There is some ambiguity about whether Equiano’s chief attraction was for a man named Daniel Queen, who “dressed and attended the captain,” or the cap-
tain himself. In any event, one of these two men “became very attached to [Equiano],” such that “many a time we … sat up the whole night together … he was like a father to me; and some used to call me after his name.” Yet it seems that this affection was not merely filial: “Many things I denied myself that he might have them…. He used to say that he and I should never part” (Equiano 2001:67-68, Chapter 4).

Let me close by praising two more aspects of Miller’s brilliant, fascinating, and very enjoyable book. First is his ironic sense of humor that appears on many a page; together with his remarkably clear prose, this lighter note made nearly 600 pages a real pleasure to read. Second, Miller shows exceeding generosity with regard to other scholars and fellow travelers. The text and notes are peppered with citations to colleagues who have shared observations, texts, and le mot juste. It is unfortunate that scholars of Miller’s caliber all too often absorb such insights and publish them without attribution. Miller’s warm recognitions build community in academic towers otherwise marked by competition and intellectual appropriation.

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Thirteen years have passed since Michel-Rolph Trouillot reminded us of how effectively the Haitian Revolution had been silenced in accounts of modernity and the so-called “Age of Revolution.” As Doris Garraway points out in her fine introduction to Tree of Liberty, we are now facing a remarkably different scenario thanks to the work of many eminent and committed scholars. Yet, there is still quite a lot of work to be undertaken, especially as far as the cultural legacies of the Haitian Revolution are concerned. The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World (2001), edited by David Geggus, and Reinterpreting the Haitian Revolution and Its Cultural Aftershocks (2006), edited by Martin Munro and Elizabeth Walcott-Hackshaw, are, of course, valuable precedents, but this edited collection is different from them in many respects, in particular for the attention that it pays to early assessments of the Revolution originating both in Haiti and in the rest of the world.

The contributors are all first-class scholars and this new collection is clearly destined to become a well-thumbed volume for those who are interested in continuing the process of unearthing the past advocated by Trouillot. Scholarly, informative, thought-provoking, and, above all, bold and exciting, Tree of Liberty is quite a book.

This neatly organized volume begins with “Reading the Revolution: Contemporary Discourse and Ideology,” Ada Ferrer’s illuminating reading of the reception of the Revolution in the hispanophone Atlantic from 1791 well into the nineteenth century. Her research enables us to reconfigure the archive not simply as a repository of dominant discourses but also as a place that contains alternative stories waiting to be discovered and circulated. Ferrer’s piece is followed by Deborah Jenson’s stimulating study of Toussaint’s contributions to French newspapers between 1797 and 1802 and their effect on the French reading public. Presenting Toussaint as a wise leader and cunning spin doctor, she shows how his articles are intriguing acts of self-representation and testify to his profound understanding of the crucial importance of the media. Garraway concludes this section with a provocative and nuanced analysis of what she calls “universalist nationalism,”
which maps the tumultuous relationship of the insurgents with France and the dramatic transformation of assimilationist nationalism into the separatism which undergirds the 1804 Declaration at Gonaïves. Garraway’s study prepares us well for the contribution by Ifeoma C.K. Nwankwo on black cosmopolitanism and on the possibilities of transnational racial imaginings that the Revolution stimulated throughout the Atlantic world.

Informative and lucid, Nwanko’s essay introduces us into the next section, “After the Revolution: Rethinking Emancipation, Postcolonialism, and Transnationalism.” This section offers three more contributions focused on particular authors: the Martiniquan Aimé Césaire, the Haitian Marie Chauvet, and the French Régis Debray. E. Anthony Hurley highlights how Césaire’s 1962 essay on Toussaint Louverture’s different, at times conflicting, strategies for emancipation offered to Césaire-the-politician the possibility of reflecting on his own anticolonialism and his advocacy of assimilationism. Valerie Kaussen’s essay on Chauvet’s *Amour, colère et folie* recasts the novel as a compelling revisitation of Alexandre Kojève’s and Frantz Fanon’s engagement with Hegelian master-slave dialectic which brings to the fore the violence and sadomasochistic desire so central to Saint-Domingue and Haiti’s history of racial and political oppression. The fourth contribution in this section offers an analysis of the Debray Report of 2004, a document meant to assess the state of Franco-Haitian relations after President Aristide’s controversial demand for compensation for the indemnity that Haiti had to pay to France in 1825 as a condition for the recognition of its independence. The document was commissioned by the French government and, as Chris Bongie painstakingly demonstrates with characteristic brilliance, it is not only biased but a callous attempt at silencing material requests and avoiding concrete action by substituting them with symbolic gestures of solidarity and cooperation such as foreign aid and cultural missions focused on the revitalization of the role of the French language in Haiti.

The third and last section is devoted to literary representations of the Haitian Revolution. James Arnold’s wide-ranging contribution, “Recuperating the Haitian Revolution in Literature: From Victor Hugo to Derek Walcott,” gives an insight into the different ways in which the Revolution and its leaders have been revisited and recreated according to the different cultural and ideological templates of Negritude, Marxism, anticolonialism, and postcolonialism. Jean Jonassaint’s essay boldly posits the Haitian revolution at the origin of Haitian literature and literary imagination, focusing in particular on the 1804 Declaration of Independence by Dessalines and Boisrond-Tonnere, the first written text by a Haitian. Paul Breslin’s “The First Epic of the New World: But How Shall It Be Written?” both complements and provides a powerful counterpoint to Arnold’s essay as it highlights how the Haitian Revolution has always questioned and exploded the conventions of genres such as epic, tragedy, romance, and farce which are shown to be
far too narrow to adequately represent such an iconic, complex, and dense event.

The purpose and value of this collection partly resides in making accessible material that had not been available before or in reading it in unprecedented ways, so it does not matter too much if one is not entirely persuaded by all the assertions made by the contributors; readers cannot help but be extremely grateful to these scholars’ willingness to take risks in order to offer new and inspiring directions for further research.

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Madison Smartt Bell is a novelist best known for a three-volume evocation of the Haitian Revolution that has enjoyed critical acclaim and popular success (Bell 1995, 2000, 2004). Focusing on the revolution’s central figure,
Toussaint Louverture, the novels are notable for hewing close to the historical record and for their plausibility when filling in the blank spots. In this new book, Bell switches genre and serves up a formal biography of the slave who became a general and statesman that, in tone and format, lies somewhere between the popular and the scholarly. I found the change of genre less than successful, for the factual accuracy that is the bedrock of historical analysis but merely a bonus in a historical novel is too often compromised in this work. Errors pile up fast, especially in the book’s first half: Some are commonly found in histories of the revolution; others appear to be the author’s creation. Many are inconsequential but some are major.

Like most Louverture biographies, this one is based on a sampling of relevant secondary works supplemented by a small quantity of archival material. The book exploits to good effect a rarely used manuscript history by Pélage-Marie Duboys, and this is one of its strongest features. But it also relies on historically worthless sources like Wenda Parkinson’s biography (1978) or Roger Dorsinville’s novel (1980), and it overlooks to its cost much recent research on Toussaint’s life and the Haitian Revolution. To his credit, Bell gives attention to certain texts ignored by most non-Haitian historians, but the results are unfortunate. For example, he devotes three pages to analyzing the “Médecin Général” letters on the assumption they were written by Toussaint (pp. 24-26), when they really had nothing to do with him. He also devotes pages to discussing documents that are fairly certainly forgeries (pp. 38-44, 254-55). Wrong dates, faulty geography, and translation errors crop up a lot. We are told that a tall gallows built on Jamaica could be seen from Saint-Domingue (p. 183).

The revelation in the 1970s that Toussaint was no longer a slave when the revolution began and that he had been a slaveowner and landowner ranks as perhaps the most startling discovery in Haitian Revolution research and one with which recent historians have had to grapple. No longer the trusted slave that even his contemporaries generally thought him to be, Toussaint became in two rather jaundiced biographies by Pierre Pluchon (1979, 1989) a “man of the old regime,” a sort of conservative black planter. Bell’s politics and sympathy with his subject matter have nothing in common with Pluchon’s, but he basically extends this revisionist thrust to lengths that are truly absurd. He imagines Toussaint to have been a commandeur (slave-driver) who was able to make shrewd investments in land before he was freed in 1776. Confusing the acquisitions Toussaint made during and before the revolution, he depicts him as not only a wealthy planter but also a Freemason “of a very high degree” who hobnobbed with the island elite. At some point along the way, Bell states, he also helped out with surgical operations in a Jesuit hospital. These are flights of fancy. The available evidence shows the prerevolutionary Toussaint as owning merely three acres of undeveloped land, and only one slave, whom he freed in 1776 (which means that Toussaint was certainly freed earlier). He also briefly rented thirteen slaves but canceled his lease to
be able to buy the three acres. Toussaint indeed claimed, when he was dying in a French jail cell in 1802, that he had once possessed a large fortune, but there is every reason to disbelieve him.

Madison Bell is one of very few to have noticed that, on the eve of the revolution, Toussaint’s wife and sons were still listed in the inventory of the plantation where he was born (along with various other family members he overlooks). Yet he fails to draw the obvious conclusion. At the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution, Toussaint was a typical black freedman of very modest condition. He was not a planter, perhaps not even a slaveowner, and he still lived very close to the slave population. His wife was not the educated woman of property many have claimed, but a plantation laundress; it is unlikely they married in church. Despite Bell’s assertion that “Toussaint’s invisible presence is felt” in various places (pp. 43, 64, 65, 82), there is no evidence that he belonged to a masonic lodge, or that any person of African descent did so before the revolution.

As in his novels, Bell supports the thesis that Toussaint launched the great slave uprising of 1791 as an intermediary for a group of white royalist counter-revolutionaries. The thesis has long been popular with Haitian historians but most others have concluded that Toussaint was initially not involved in the insurrection. The slave revolt’s origins are likely to remain obscure. There are Spanish sources that shed further light on the matter, but in this retelling neither the causes nor development of the uprising are adequately dealt with. The content is thin and the grasp of events and of Toussaint’s evolving politics is confused.

The book’s second half is stronger. It lucidly explores tensions between African and creole ex-slaves and the freeborn, and it rightly argues that Toussaint sought autonomy not independence, although somewhat misjudging the international context. There is a lively account of the final campaign against the French army supported by several maps. And the book ends with musings on the humane and violent aspects of Toussaint’s persona, their relation to Vodou theology, and the fashioning of the leader’s public image.

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This pioneer anthology of scientific and literary pieces of writing in the Haitian language marks a turning point in the long-awaited recognition of Haiti’s national tongue.

The 1987 constitutional adoption of Creole beside the previously hegemonic French has suffered countless difficulties in its implementation, and now, over twenty years later, an indisputable dearth of teaching material continues to exist (especially beyond the primary school level), adding to many authors’ reluctance to produce in this internationally secondary tongue. The problem is particularly acute given the academic context greatly affected by Haiti’s chronically unstable political and socioeconomic situation. The result is a continued marginalization of Creole at the written level, despite its gradual adoption by certain authors (Jan Mapou, in particular) and an increase in the number of Haitian university students (particularly those enrolled in the social sciences) who compose in their native tongue.

In this context, the volume by Savain and Woodson is a particularly welcome initiative. The Research Vice-Rector of the State University of Haiti, Mr. Fritz Deshommes, has hailed the publication as important, an experiment to be pursued.

*Mozayik* features articles from such prominent authors as the late Pradel Pompilus, Pauris Jean-Batiste, Bryant Freeman, and Jan Mapou; historical figures such as Justin Lhérisson and Marcel Sylvain; contemporary academ-
ics François Sérerin, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Maximilien Laroche, Guerdes Fleurant, Karen Richman, and Drexel G. Woodson; and more recently published writers (at least for the Haitian audience) Hervé Florival, Katia and Gina Ulysse, and Fritz Fontus. The collection is thus stimulating simultaneously in terms of authors, genres, and themes. Historical analyses and scientific thought blend with poetry and letters. Contemporary nostalgia flirts with the modern issues addressed.

Some editorial decisions are certainly debatable. The choice of using “Haitian” instead of “Creole” as the name of our language distances us from our regional neighbors (an issue addressed by Hugh Saint-Fort, in his preface). Spelling the contributors’ names in Haitian is a potentially major reference handicap, for many will likely neglect researching works by recognized authors in this alternate orthography.

While the writers’ very serious concern with studied creole wording is notable, the fact of publishing from within the United States occasionally results in unfortunate translation options. I mention just a few. “Mozayik ak deskripsyon sa yo montre yon riches ransèyman sibstansyèl,” from Woodson and Savain’s introduction, is an awkward formulation, to say the least. Other examples include “Sansibilité estétique,” “estandadizasyon ekrīt,” “ima-jrī evokatif,” “fè efō ekri Ayisyen an avèk konsistans,” and “kadans distenkif.” Or again, Ulysse’s “tout moun ki vle ekri sou Ayiti gen pou yo rakonte men ‘naratif’ la” (p. 59). Certainly, creole continues to be enriched by the addition of academic words, but where is the limit of elitism – particularly for a volume destined to distribute works in the vernacular? “Ayisyen bon nan envante” instead of “Ayisyen fò nan envante” is also regrettable, and “diskou oblik” is totally unintelligible in Creole (Richman, pp. 90-91). So, too, is “nan tan lontan atis te konn fè bèl oneman” (Fleurant, p. 80).

A fair number of typos may well be attributable to this same cause, such as “Ti Djo” being written “Tijo” in Freeman’s contributions, “Malèn” being “Malen” in Mapou’s “Vyolans Ratkay” (without counting Malèn being a “menmaj” instead of a “menaj”).

At the level of content, the late Pompilus’s reflections on efforts to implement Creole are precious, a truly historical and critical contemplation of the numerous difficulties encountered in imposing its written usage since the 1970s, particularly with the personal tone adopted. As an opening article, however, it communicates presently obsolete attitudes that may alienate modern readers. Similarly, the editors’ presentation of Florival is heartwarming, particularly for those not fortunate enough to have known his work. The opening poetry is striking (“It rains ... and I remember my childhood”), whereas Florival’s second piece (“Vakans lakay pa gen parey”) comes across as rather moldy and folkloric. And Freeman’s wonderful contribution of folklore tales appears similarly quaint, especially in its outlook. However, Maximilien Laroche’s adaptation of Mao’s work “Si ou pa fè ankèt pe bouch
“ou” is a tremendously important addition to Haitian epistemology, despite several places that may appear to local Haitians as rather strange neologisms, for example, “Nèks estôp la, se ki kote?”(!). Trouillot’s Ti Dife Boule selections are excellent and well chosen, especially in these times of debate concerning populism.

Woodson’s correspondence with his friends of the Haitian North may lead some to worry; signing letters to his “beautiful black woman,” in letters to others indicating that “explaining all this in Creole isn’t easy,” or signing off with “the blind don’t play dominos” are unusual ambiguities perhaps only acceptable in the permissive Creole setting.

At times, editorial slips produce surprises. For example, Fleurant’s statement that “naturally, numerous extraordinary and even criminal acts happening in Haiti are attributed to Vodou” is startling. What, here, is “natural”(!), particularly in scientific terms?

At a more general level, the Haitian reading audience residing within the country may regret an overall choice of subjects distinctly bearing the “diaspora” mark – a selection made by those living abroad. Referring to the lexicological, Raphaël Confiant’s Dictionnaire des néologismes créoles (2001) is resolutely more progressive in its approach and Carlos Esteban Deive’s Diccionario de Dominicanismos (1977) was innovative and fresh for all Creolists. In this sense, inside Haitians will regret the absence of both Castera’s poetry and the abundant prose available in the political pamphlets of recent decades.

Despite these few shortcomings, Mozayik is a pioneering volume that is, and will remain, a necessary reading of Haitian Creole academia.

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Since the onset of the Special Period, Cuban cultural production has been the subject of a number of groundbreaking books. José Quiroga’s *Cuban Palimpsests*, Sujatha Fernandes’s *Cuba Represent!*, and Ariana Hernández-Reguant’s *Cuba in the Special Period: Culture and Ideology in the 1990s* are examples of new studies being carried out by a generation of scholars trained in sociocultural theory who are influenced by the framework of cultural studies and by theories that take into account such considerations as gender, ethnicity, race, and sexualities, as well as practices such as leisure and consumption. These studies offer provocative insights into the uses of art as a form of political protest and individual expression and promote a qualitative shift away from the Cold War critical discourses about Cuba, a change that has benefited from physical access to primary sources and face-to-face contact with Cuban intellectuals. These books are theoretical in nature, and their discussions have been successful in opening up the scope of research about Cuba in the context of globalized networks and circuits of transnational culture and exchanges. They have also helped establish a much-needed qualitative dialogue about all things Cuban, especially in the United States.

It was against the background of this emerging scholarship that I read Esther Whitfield’s *Cuban Currency*. This carefully researched and well-argued book views the impact that the economic dollarization of Cuba has had on its cultural production – mainly literature, but also visual culture and music. It has been well documented that as the island’s economy plunged into what was called the “Special Period” in 1994 and was teetering on the brink of collapse, Cuba legalized the U.S. dollar, turned to tourism, and encouraged the transfer of remittances in U.S. dollars from Cubans living in the United States to their relatives on the island. The impact this move had on the life of Cubans was immeasurable, especially for those without access to dollars. Whitfield addresses the effect that this opening to the market had on Cuban artistic creations, posing important questions regarding cultural production, ideology, publishing, marketing, and the commodification of art. She explores “textual figures and scenes, reading them in their context and..."
tracing the formal innovations that define them as special period fiction” (p. 33). She also synthesizes the most important cultural debates from the 1990s to the present about Cuba, both at home and abroad, offering informed and critical background for the works discussed.

The book is divided into five chapters and an afterword. Whitfield establishes from the outset five questions central to her inquiry: “How does the partial dollarization, if not complete globalization, of Cuban society and literature shape fiction of the subsequent years? How do Cuban writers, implicated in the dynamics of international publishing whether they live in Cuba or abroad, acknowledge a readership whose expectations are vastly different from those of the domestic and noncommercial markets in which their work would have previously circulated? How do they respond to the demand for authentic Cuban experience that pervades outsiders’ investment in tourism and art? Do their fictional renderings of life in Havana sustain the nostalgic readings that Cuba inspires in other media? How does fiction address the dramatic vendibility of things Cuban?” (p. 33).

For Whitfield, the international success of the Buena Vista Social Club sound recording (1997) and film (1999) represents the height of a boom in Cuban cultural exports across the globe during this period that allowed Cuban-authored books to rise on the lists of powerful international publishing houses in Europe, the United States, and Latin America. Published roughly between 1990 and 2005 (the dollar began circulating in Cuba in 1993 and was withdrawn in 2004), the texts discussed in the book under the rubric of special period fiction are seen as a subset of this broader special period production, “thematically attuned with the turmoil they presented and structured as an implicit critique of the relationship they engendered” (p. 2). Whitfield discusses the work of several Cuban authors, some living in Cuba and others abroad, among them the controversial Cuban-born Paris resident Zoé Valdés (viewed by Whitfield as a pioneer of this corpus), Ronaldo Menéndez, Anna Lidia Vega Serova, Daina Chaviano, Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, and Antonio José Ponte, with passing mention of several others. The texts discussed explore and complicate the changing market demands to which Cuban literature was suddenly subjected in the 1990s and beyond, the changes in the value of literature, the ideological tensions underlying special period fiction, and the value and transcendence of this corpus of texts. Whitfield demonstrates how these writers have both questioned and taken advantage of this transnational interest in their work. She also carefully, and critically, weighs the implications this has had on their writing, their ideologies (political and otherwise), the cultural policies supported by the state since 1959, and the relationship of the authors to their country and to their readers.

As Whitfield reminds readers in her afterword, the dollar no longer circulates in Cuba, but the “troublesome commodification of Cuban identity”
that she addresses still does. Her book will be important in discussing these changes for years to come.

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Reinaldo Román offers specialists of Caribbean and Latin American religions a historical analysis of the spectacles that surrounded the numerous healers, mediums, seers, and “inspired ones” who populated the vernacular religious landscape of early to mid-twentieth-century Cuba and Puerto Rico. Extending the investigation of Cuban popular religions beyond its near-exclusive focus upon Santería, Governing Spirits narrates the comparatively understated history of the diffusion of Spiritism (spirit mediumship practices that are some of Latin America’s most widespread, yet least examined vernacular religions) in Cuba and Puerto Rico, as well as popular Catholic movements, and the competition between religious devotions.

By historicizing the relationships between devotees, their followers, the journalists who variously promoted or decried these devotions, and the church and government officials who attempted to categorize and regulate these activities, Román accounts for the shifting dynamics that gave rise to a “man-
ngerous approach to the ... disciplining of religious deviants” in these nascent Caribbean states’ new legal regimes of constitutionally protected freedom of religion (p. 13). Román’s contribution is his interpretation of published media accounts and primary source materials gleaned from government and Catholic Church archives to render a journalistic history of the treatment of “superstitious” religious spectacles in both Puerto Rico and Cuba.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the Cuban press fretted that the “superstition” of a gullible public and its popular religious leaders, such as Hilario Mustelier Garzón, an Afro-Cuban healer known as San Hilarión to the many pilgrims gathered around his humble coffee farm in rural Oriente, was undermining the new nation’s modernist visions of “progress.” By locating the beginning of his study in Cuba’s eastern region, Román remedies a significant imbalance in Cuban Studies literature, in which Havana is too often a synecdoche for “Cuba,” while interior provinces, such as important Afro-Cuban strongholds in Oriente, are largely ignored. In 1901, Rural Guardsmen alleged that the makeshift treatment compound that had developed around Mustelier’s house might contribute to the banditry then plaguing Oriente’s countryside, and they arrested the man-god for disturbing the peace. In the first of many efforts to apply burgeoning categories of science and professionalization against practitioners of suspect religions, the authorities tried to have Mustelier declared insane or, alternately, an unlicensed practitioner of medical or pastoral duties. Ultimately, the very hybridity of Mustelier’s healing regimen – his use of Spiritist “magnetic passes,” or hand motions said to manipulate universal fluids, and the utterance of his own prayers, none of which could be categorized as usurping a medical or religious function recognized by the state (nor impugned as brujería) – allowed Mustelier to escape conviction. But in a requirement that presaged the Cuban state’s increasing administrative reach over its citizenry, The Fraternal San Hilarión and its members were made to officially register their society with the state, thus subjecting themselves, and further rural recesses of Cuba, to the government’s growing managerial oversight.

By unearthing the influence that Mustelier exerted upon Juan Manso, a contemporary white itinerant healer who subsequently enjoyed the acclaim of the Cuban press, Román reveals that the allegedly original “white table” Kardecan spiritism that prevailed in Cuba’s polite urban enclaves where Manso was so well received also has a rural “black” genealogy (p. 48). Thus a previously hidden “mestizo logic” challenges the standard narrative of Spiritist devolution from pure/urban to black/rural versions of mediumship (p. 26).

Indeed, religious definitions may embed discord over race. Román’s examination of the conflicts surrounding a healer in 1920s Puerto Rico known as La Samaritana illustrates how categorizations of legitimate Spiritist versus suspect “spirit-monger” practices often hinged upon the perceived “race” of spirits and their mediums (pp. 111, 118). This illiterate woman of color
treated the afflicted with water said to be “magnetized” by the deceased parish priest who served as her spirit guide. But La Samaritana’s critics questioned, “What will be of science if it is superseded by the quackery of a black nobody?” (p. 123). Detractors intimated that the spirit of La Samaritana’s communications was actually a debased, dangerous, and presumably “un-evolved” black spirit, and thus an unsuitable vehicle of “progress.”

Not all members of contemporaneous popular religious movements approved of dominant notions of “progress,” as Román demonstrates in his analysis of the Hermanos Cheos and Elenita. These self-proclaimed inspirados roamed the Puerto Rican countryside in the early 1900s, establishing rural chapels and preaching against secularizing changes, such as civil marriage, that resulted from the newly established separation of church and state. The Cheos and Elenita militantly opposed Spiritism and effectively advocated a return to the Catholic Church (whose clerical ranks had been decimated by the War of 1898) and to its liturgy and sacraments. For all their insistence upon orthodoxy, however, the charismatic lay preachers presented a challenge to clerical authority; some Catholic clerics remained skeptical, seeing the claim of the inspirados to speak for popular saints and virgins as evidence of possible Spiritist influences. Román’s nuanced account avoids simple “popular” versus “official” polarizations which too often frame discussions of Latin American religions.

While deftly weaving together an analysis of race, gender, vernacular religion, and governance, Román’s contention – that spectral spectacles reveal debates about governance and citizenship in multiracial polities – at times undercuts his general eschewal of neofunctionalist explanations (p. 4). But Román also includes nuanced discussions of how devotees evaluated these episodes for their religious content. For instance, his account of how the Puerto Rican devout used models provided by 1950s Hollywood cinema to bolster claims about the veracity of Marian apparitions in Sabana Grande complicates conventional laments about the “Americanization” of Puerto Rico. Creative responses by an allegedly credulous public revealed “state officials and journalists as the most literal-minded parties involved in the constitution of the occult” (p. 197). The managers of spectacles were often politically inclined, concerned for their own reputations, and preoccupied to train or divert the public gaze which might determine dominant notions of decorum. But ultimately officials and journalists could not exclusively steer the public’s interpretation of these religious events.

Román is careful not to flatten out divergences in his accounts, noting how different sectors of “the public” – whether members or leaders of competing religious communions, curious onlookers, the afflicted seeking healing, or government officials and journalists – offered at times conflicting appraisals. Román has set a new standard for historical research on Caribbean religions.
Martorell: La aventura de la creación. ANTONIO DÍAZ-ROYO. San Juan: La Editorial, Universidad de Puerto Rico. 423 pp. (Cloth US$ 89.95)

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It’s hard to know where to begin in writing about the creativity of Antonio Martorell, or how to contain it between two covers, even in a work as copious as this monumentally sized volume. Antonio Díaz-Royo is uniquely positioned to meet the challenge, having known el Maestro for a half century, and having spent his own life engaged in many of the same struggles concerning the culture and political status of Puerto Rico. His text is the fruit of a deep friendship with Martorell and a keen gift for the analysis of human relations, political dilemmas, and the power of creative expression.

Martorell’s “aventura,” Díaz-Royo explains, centers on a play between tradition and innovation, respect and disobedience – always with a kind of lucidity that forces Martorell to assume an intellectual position and vertebrates his role as an uncompromising rebel and political dissident in the most constructive sense of the word.

Díaz-Royo launches the book with a discursive starter list that he’ll develop over the course of more than 400 exquisitely designed pages. There is, of course, the artist’s well-known graphic work in wood, metal, linoleum, mixed media, and silk screen, but also an impressive range of drawings, oil paintings, acrylics, ironwork, murals, posters, installations, stage sets, costumes, lighting, and masks, without forgetting his energetic involvement in theater, radio, television, and newspapers (as writer, actor, promoter, moderator, and cultural critic), his substantial career as teacher, workshop leader, and political activist, and even his considerable culinary skills and talent as a dancer of bomba and plena. Before we’re done, we’ve seen hints, as well, of his green thumb as a gardener.

Beginning with the opening pages, readers are introduced to Martorell’s generous contributions to Puerto Rican public spaces (a table-and-chair set for domino games in a San Juan park, a mosaic-studded staircase leading to the sea at a beach in Ponce), his abiding fascination with the play between word and image (ironwork sculptures whose filigree designs convey the names of birds native to Puerto Rico, a delicate aluminum-and-plexiglass mobile of “en-lettered rain” for a fine-arts center in Caguas formed from the words of a popular writer native to that city), his involvement in performance...
arts (from theater posters to TV appearances), his concern with social causes (
_Sementerio_, an installation protesting the treatment of AIDS patients), and
his energetic commitment to political activism (whether in the form of silk-
screened posters, graphics for local newspapers, or other communicative
media). This first chapter, then, begins to scratch the surface of a remarkably
eclectic output. As one critic commented (Ríos Ávila, cited on p. 12), the
most astounding thing about Martorell is his voraciousness.¹

A biographical essay (Chapter 2) is then followed by “Letra, Palabra e
Imagen,” an exploration of the uniquely Martorellian art of integrating text
and image. Martorell’s fascination with letters, which he traces back to his
mother’s love of reading, blossomed during his apprenticeship with the
graphic artist Lorenzo Homar, grew through his study of books both ancient
and contemporary in San Juan’s Casa del Libro, and debuted as an art form
in his illustrations for _El ABC de Puerto Rico_, an alphabet book for children
that celebrated the island through text and images. Skipping ahead, through
an abundance of equally imaginative projects, we come to his production of
_Loas_ – a portrait of three mythical beings (Erzuli, Atiébón-Legbá, and Ogú)
written by Díaz-Royo – in one of Martorell’s signature formats, a boxed
_portafolio_ made up of fold-outs far too complex to describe in this review,
with images in which, for example, Atiébón-Legba’s chains of slavery are
gradually transformed into the rattan and maguey he uses to weave baskets.
The chapter includes an extended essay on Martorell’s most important pub-
lication to date, _La piel de la memoria_ – a memoir, but also a melding of
image and word in which often-illegible and oversized cursive scrawls and
drawings of the stuff of daily life – a shoe, a sewing machine, a Quaker Oats
can, a belt buckle, a bottle of Chanel No. 5, a cash register – work together
with typeset (even justified!) essays to evoke the people, places, things, and
intangibles of a mid-twentieth-century childhood.

Chapter 4 is devoted to Martorell’s involvement in theatrical productions
and his many installation pieces. Here again, ordinary objects are an impor-
tant component, from passports, tableware, and commercial dressmaking
patterns to books, beds, and barber chairs.

In Chapter 5, Diaz-Royo allows himself a selection of personal favor-
ites, including the oversized deck of cards of the 1960s (with Puerto Rican
public figures as king, queen, and jack, and Lyndon Johnson as joker), vari-
ous mixed media works, collages based on torn newsprint, and a series of
portraits from the 1990s (Martorell’s friends, relatives, and colleagues, as
well as self-portraits) in charcoal, pencil, pastel, pen-and-ink, woodcut, silk
screen, acrylics, and oil.

Then comes the Coda. In 2006, several months after Diaz-Royo completed the book’s text, Martorell’s house was reduced to smoldering ashes. The loss of photographs, books, and artworks of every description that had turned this house into a richly jumbled archive of Puerto Rican culture was beyond description. Puerto Ricans responded as if a national hero had fallen, with editorials, protests, and public commemorations. Within two months, in true Martorellian fashion, the tragedy was transformed into an artistic/theatrical happening, *Cenizas quedan* (enduring ashes). As we finish the book and turn back to the three several-page sections inserted between chapters (“Casa 1, 2 and 3”), we re-read the mini-essays on such subjects as home, neighborhood, and objects, gaze at the photos of Martorell’s cluttered home, and begin to understand the magnitude of Puerto Rico’s loss on that day in 2006.

Is there any other book on an individual Caribbean artist that begins to compare with this one? I can’t think of a single one. Studies of Wifredo Lam might be contenders, but none comes at all close to the comprehensiveness and sensitivity that Diaz-Royo has poured into his text/image biography/portrait of Antonio Martorell’s life and art.

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*Performing the Caribbean Experience* is a remarkable achievement of interdisciplinary regional studies. It offers readers a strikingly diverse collection of essays by musicologists, folklorists, anthropologists, ethnomusicologists, and historians, and balances these with chapters contributed by museum curators, librarians, and arts administrators. The second volume in a series of four, it focuses specifically on Caribbean musical contexts and practices. The complete text of Derek Walcott’s Nobel Lecture (“Fragments of Epic Memory”) serves as a fitting opening reflection to a collection that strikes a particularly good balance between retrospective, historical explorations, and critical analyses of contemporary practices. A general essay by Malena
Kuss, offering a social and political history of the region, along with an essay, entitled “Music in the Life of Africans and Their Descendants in the New World,” completes the introductory material.

The volume is organized somewhat traditionally according to language and location, with a bit more attention paid to the Spanish-speaking Caribbean than to the rest of the region. Fully ten essays (and almost half of the pages) are concerned with Cuba (7), Puerto Rico (1), and the Dominican Republic (2). The Anglophone Caribbean is treated in eight chapters – Jamaica (2), Barbados (1), The Bahamas (1), St. Lucia (1), St. Kitts and Nevis (1), and Trinidad (2), respectively. There are four chapters on the Francophone Caribbean – three on Haiti and one on Martinique. The remaining five chapters explore performing traditions in the Netherlands Antilles, Venezuela, and Colombia.

Although it is clear from the introductory material that Malena Kuss is interested in a broadly circum-Caribbean approach, only three of the essays explicitly address musical practices that extend beyond the Caribbean basin. This imbalance is perhaps due to the editorial challenges of managing content across multiple volumes, but it misses an opportunity to incorporate in more sustained and direct fashion the musical histories of coastal Central and South America in a broad understanding of the Caribbean experience. Another question raised by the book’s overall organization is the fact that only Cuba and Haiti are awarded more than two chapters. While I am sympathetic to the idea that Cuba and Haiti offer exceedingly rich musical landscapes and warrant more extended attention in order to adequately address these complexities, I am less convinced that the musics of Barbados or St. Lucia are sufficiently addressed through one short chapter. Just by way of comparison, fully 121 pages are devoted to exploring Cuba whereas Barbados is covered in 13 pages. Haiti is allotted 43 pages whereas St. Lucia a mere 9. These imbalances are clearly partially caused by the fact that Cuba and Haiti have historically generated more scholarly interest than have Barbados or St. Lucia, but the proportions of the collection highlight this state of affairs in the starkest of terms, thereby reinforcing these patterns of scholarship rather than suggesting possible ways forward.

That said, the content of the volume is quite excellent. The section on Cuba includes three excellent essays concerning subjects related to santería – ocha-ifa, regla de ocha, and batá – as well as chapters on oral traditions, comparsas, and the Chinese presence in Cuba. These more specific chapters are combined with a general historical sketch of Cuba. Most other entries take on a similarly general tone, but several stand out for their more circumscribed subject material. These include Gerdès Fleurant’s exploration of Haitian vodou, Max Brandt’s analysis of African-Venezuelan percussion ensembles, Susana Friedmann’s essay on cumbia, and Peter Manuel’s on East Indian musical traditions in Trinidad, Guyana, and Suriname.
One of the most intriguing entries, “A Life Story from Curacao,” is condensed from a series of interviews conducted in 1984 with an eighty-five-year-old man. Only six pages long, it is arguably the single most important chapter in the volume, partly because it highlights – through the explicitly ethnographic quality of its form from the ground up – the editorial decision to craft a diverse, interdisciplinary volume. The multiplicity of voices and the diversity of perspectives that make up this collection, like the musical life of the Caribbean itself, are crystallized here and made meaningful through the singularity and specificity of one individual’s concrete life story.

*Performing the Caribbean Experience* is an excellent volume that will be broadly useful to Caribbeanists of varying disciplinary backgrounds. Its inclusion in English of the work of contemporary Cuban scholars makes it a welcome addition to the bookshelves of anyone who believes, as Derek Walcott does, that “there is a territory wider than this – wider than the limits made by the map of an island – which is the illimitable sea and what it remembers” (p. 7). Malena Kuss has produced a volume that strives to interrogate this wider territory at every turn.


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The term “salsa” floats on a cloud of hot air over some of the world’s most sublime music. Is salsa basically Cuban music, as the late King (Tito Puente) and Queen (Celia Cruz) repeatedly stated? If salsa is not a genre per se, but incorporates many Caribbean genres and rhythms such as chachachá, guaguancó, mambo, bolero, cumbia, plena, bomba, etc., then why not include kindred genres of the regional African diaspora such as merengue, bachata, calypso, or reggae (not to mention reggaetón)? If the basic template of salsa is Cuban son then how did salsa become associated primarily with Puerto Rico, even when it’s arguably more popular in the *barrios* of Venezuela and
Colombia? César Miguel Rondón made a valiant attempt to answer these thorny questions in the original 1980 publication of *El libro de la salsa*. This book quickly became a collector’s item among aficionados and remains difficult to find today. In the 2008 publication of *The Book of Salsa*, Rondón has a chance to address a global English-speaking world now that salsa has become fully internationalized.

The first two chapters excavate the roots of salsa in the late 1940s to early 1960s. During this time, the principal architects of Latin popular music came together in Havana and New York: Arsenio Rodríguez, Mario Bauzá, Frank “Machito” Grillo, Tito Puente, Tito Rodríguez, and others. The “Mambo Craze” of the 1950s was one name given to this particular constellation, but the musicians themselves were exceedingly versatile, playing guarachas, son montunos, and other genres in addition to the mambos that made them famous. With the 1959 Cuban Revolution, New York displaced Havana as the mecca of Latin pop and the music took on flavors of that metropolis. Due to the Cold War, the music was no longer specifically described as Cuban in national terms, but experienced and produced as increasingly pan-Latino. New York-based Puerto Ricans provided a large talent pool for these emerging trends in Latin music. The sounds that developed during the early 1960s in New York were louder, faster, more aggressive, and “heavier” (*afincao*, lit. “grounded”). What had been Cuban music became transnational as well as increasingly stamped by a New York Puerto Rican sensibility.

In chapters 3 through 5, Rondón traces the transitions from big band Latin jazz to boogaloo to salsa, showing especially how Cuban son became the musical foundation of salsa. He also poses and answers a most provocative question: why “Willie Colón is better than Machito”! (p. 23). How can this unlettered upstart outperform the kings of mambo and Latin jazz? Rondón pokes fun at the arrogance of musical purists who value technical competence over *sabor* (“flavor”). The new salsa musicians have learned by ear, are less competent on their instruments, and yet “one of the worst ensembles in the history of Latin music” swings like crazy. Rondón argues that salsa is more than just old Cuban music with a few innovations – it is a cultural-political “response to displacement” (p. 56). Something new had been created, with several old ingredients at the base, but taking on its own flavor. The food metaphor recurs throughout the book: salsa is a protest against a tasteless, unsavory world created by Anglo-U.S. hegemony. Salsa is “our (Latin) thing,” nourished by a smorgasbord of musical kiosks “where tourists do not visit” (p. 60).

In Chapters 6 and 7, Rondón describes the salsa boom and asks, “why not Caracas?” How did New York get to be the origin point and epicenter of the Salsa Boom? Chapter 7 is a tome by itself: 145 pages worth of rich material on how salsa went from being “barrio music” to the most widely recognized sound of Latin music. It recounts how salsa crossed over to middle class
appeal and to mass appeal, including how it went global. Rondón celebrates the achievements of Celia Cruz (Cuba) and Oscar D’Leon (Venezuela), among other salsa greats. In this chapter he is especially attentive to the way that Puerto Ricans coauthored the development of salsa. On this theme, he tracks Hector Lavoe, Rafael Cortijo and Ismael Rivera, El Gran Combo, as well as composer Tite Curet Alonso. While Rondón has covered the salsa beat as a reporter, deejay, and aficionado, he also provides a touching anecdote from personal experience (pp. 151-52) about how great musicians can be marginalized and relatively unknown during their lifetimes.

Chapters 8 and 9 highlight the boldest and most bittersweet developments in salsa since the 1970s, as well as providing additional commentary to the 1980 edition. Rondón adds new material about how Venezuela and Colombia have taken up the salsa banner even as it has faded in New York and San Juan. He also adds some appropriate eulogies to salsa legends who have died in the interim.

Since 1990, scholarly literature on salsa has proliferated, especially in English (e.g., Boggs 1992; Aparicio 1998; Waxer 2002; Washburne 2008). Rondón’s work is an oft-cited touchstone in this literature, and the translation by Aparicio and White makes an inviting contribution. For many years, the Spanish original was like a family Bible among salsa fans replete with dozens of photos of album covers and personal photos from the author’s collection. While the new version has no photos, and is still not scholarly in the traditional sense (with neither references, bibliography, endnotes, nor footnotes), it is nevertheless a powerful and enduring testimony. For decades now, Rondón has been the most fervent guide to the ways in which salsa inspires feverish devotion around the world. For salsa lovers, the book is required reading.

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Understanding the complexity of the modern world’s interconnections, including the global exchange of people, objects, and ideas between the Americas, Africa, and Europe, has long been the central project of Atlantic history scholars. In particular, the extent to which Old World identities were transported and preserved in the Americas has been widely discussed and argued over. Two contrasting interpretive models have ultimately come to dominate these debates. One draws on the continuity of Old World influences to explain the nature of societies and cultures in the Americas, while the other privileges cultural creativity and the New World environment. Into the fray now enters archaeologist Christopher C. Fennell’s Crossroads and Cosmologies.

Fennell draws together theories concerning symbolic representation, the creation and preservation of social networks, and the role of individual agency to explore the significance of Old World continuities in North America, the Caribbean, and South America. Most of the book focuses on BaKongo culture and the ways in which elements of that culture developed in the New World, but Fennell points out how his analysis is also applicable to the history of others. Forewords by series editor Paul Shackel and renowned art historian Robert Farris Thompson introduce the book. Shackel contextualizes Crossroads and Cosmologies via a useful overview of the contributions of historical archaeologists to African diaspora studies since the late 1960s. Meanwhile, Thompson’s piece commends the book for its thoughtful presentation on the Kongo and endorses its reading of artifacts and symbols in the archaeological record as elements of an ongoing BaKongo tradition, a perspective that clearly derives from Thompson’s own work.

Fennell’s engagement with understanding the process of the transmission of Old World cultures to the Americas arose when an unusual clay skull figure with incised cross markings was unearthed on a farm site in rural Virginia. The marks were superficially consistent with the folk religions of both African Americans and German Americans, both of whom were documented as living at the site. The challenge was to determine who was
responsible for the unique artifact’s production and the meaning of the cross marks.

Fennell’s analytic method focuses on the expression of core symbols of a group’s cosmology and sense of identity. Using the African experience in the Americas as a case study, Fennell illustrates how significant geographic variation existed in the ways that core symbols of Old World cultures materialized in the New World. At one end of the spectrum, archaeological evidence from Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, South Carolina, and Texas reflecting the continuity of elements of BaKongo and Yoruba religious beliefs is interpreted as testimony of a distinctly West-Central African identity in North America. These are contrasted with case studies of the ethnogenesis of new culture groups in the Caribbean and South America as evidenced by the emergence of Haitian Vodun, Brazilian Macumba, and Cuban Santería. It would have been constructive, in addition, to include archaeological examples of ethnogenesis (or continuity) to compare with the North American examples. Fennell considers the existing uses of the idea of creolization inadequate to explain the complexity of ethnogenesis and proposes instead the concept of “ethnogenic bricolage” – “a creative process in which individuals raised in different cultures interact in new settings, often at the geographic crossroads of multiple diasporas” (p. 9). This, he argues, represents an alternative mechanism by which multiple cultural traditions were reconfigured to form new culture groups. In applying his analysis to the clay skull figure from Virginia, however, Fennell finds the artifact’s markings inconsistent with logic of the African-derived symbolism observed elsewhere in North America. Thus, he attributes the markings to the German American folk religion of hexeroi which he in turn reads as evidence of the continuity of a Palatinate identity among German Americans in rural Virginia.

Fennell’s efforts to produce a nuanced understanding of the diversity of African and European experiences in the Americas are well appreciated, and his careful attention to context is an especially welcome contribution. Less convincing, however, is his interpretation of the North American archaeological evidence as retentions of African and European identities, and his consequent exclusion of North America as a locus of ethnogenesis. Without a doubt, Old World survivals played an important part in the ways in which free and enslaved people forged identities and created communities in all parts of the New World, a fact that has only recently begun to be sufficiently contextualized and historicized. But as Matory (2005) and others have convincingly demonstrated, the identities and communities forged in the New World were ultimately products of local circumstances and a continuing transatlantic dialogue. In this view, the variation between North America, the Caribbean, and South America might be better characterized as the result of local expressions of ethnogenesis, not its restriction to only one region.
These reservations aside, *Crossroads and Cosmologies* is a well-ordered and clearly written contribution on the complexity of identity formation in the Americas. Fennell’s idea of “ethnogenic bricolage” provides a useful model of ethnogenesis with which to explore the effect of the New World experience upon all populations, not just enslaved Africans. More generally, his emphasis on archaeology and the potential of archaeologists as stakeholders in the development of anthropological theory are important points. Overall, *Crossroads and Cosmologies* is a significant contribution to the dynamic field of diaspora studies.

**Reference**


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Archaeology, both in the United States and abroad, remains a field that draws on developments in a variety of disciplines. *Archaeology and Geoinformatics* is an example of archaeology’s interdisciplinary nature by providing a collection of essays that show how archaeologists are borrowing ideas and technology from the geosciences and applying them to their own research in the Caribbean.

Geoinformatics, “an interdisciplinary field that develops and uses information science and science infrastructure to address the problems of geosciences” (p. 1), includes a diverse range of analytical techniques largely developed within the geosciences. This volume explores a wide array of geoinformatic techniques utilized by archaeologists working in the Caribbean, including geographic information systems (GIS) and global positioning sys-
tems (GPS), as well as aerial photography, cartography, and geophysical surveys that employ magnetometers, gradiometers, resistivity meters, and soil thermography. The range of techniques discussed provides an excellent overview for researchers thinking about utilizing these methods in their own research by demonstrating their potential in archaeological studies.

The book is split into four sections with a good introductory essay by Basil A. Reid that both explains the basics of geoinformatics and outlines the rest of the volume. The chapters are organized thematically and methodologically. Although the one by Joshua M. Torres and Reniel Rodriguez Ramos is given its own unique section title, its placement immediately after the introduction is ideal because it considers the Caribbean at a regional level and provides a useful lead-in for the following essays which focus on particular islands. The remaining essays highlight seven different islands and demonstrate the expansion of archaeology throughout the Caribbean and the region’s place as a source for innovative archaeological techniques.

Given the book’s geographical range, it is hardly surprising that the contributions represent a cross-section of current problems within archaeology. Many are inspired by emerging cultural resource management plans on the islands. From developing weights-of-evidence predictive modeling using geographic information systems to creating databases incorporating textual as well as visible data, they demonstrate the usefulness of geoinformatics in culture resource management. As the Caribbean continues to be developed, more and more archaeological sites are coming under threat of destruction and the essays show how researchers are utilizing geoinformatics to create effective and inexpensive ways to record and preserve archaeological sites.

The application of geoinformatics in the Caribbean is not limited to culture resource management concerns as several of the chapters employ it in more traditional academic studies. Douglas V. Armstrong, Mark W. Hauser, David W. Knight, and Stephan Lenik utilize documentary records (maps and tax records) along with satellite imagery to show the changing spatial dynamics of several plantations on St. Johns in the U.S. Virgin Islands. They are able to connect this spatial research with the changing social dynamics for the free colored population on the island during the late eighteenth century. The essay by Roger Leech also provides a good example of the merging of historical maps with current mapping technologies. R. Grant Gilmore III shows how geophysical surveys aided in his research design for exploring the lives of enslaved peoples on two plantations on St. Eustatius. These essays have well-developed arguments that bring geoinformatic evidence alongside more traditional archaeological evidence to create cogent arguments.

One of the most intriguing aspects of *Archaeology and Geoinformatics* is the inclusion of several projects that are at early phases, where their success or failure remains to be seen. These glimpses into the development of projects coupled with reports on finished projects provide insights into the plan-
ning and reasoning that are involved in incorporating geoinformatics into all stages of research projects from project formulation to data analysis.

Ultimately, *Archaeology and Geoinformatics* remains focused on its intended purpose. This makes it valuable for researchers considering incorporating geoinformatics into their archaeological study. However, readers with a general interest in archaeology or the Caribbean will find it technical and narrow in scope. The majority of the essays focus on geoinformatics in archaeology and it is methods and procedures that are highlighted as opposed to theory and conclusions. Overall, it represents a significant contribution to the use of geoinformatics in archaeology, particularly in the Caribbean.