

**Manuel Valdés Pizzini, Michael González Cruz, and José Eduardo Martínez Reyes. 2011. *La transformación del paisaje puertorriqueño y la disciplina del Cuerpo Civil de Conservación, 1933-1942*. San Juan: Centro de Investigaciones Sociales, Universidad de Puerto Rico. 335 pp. ISBN: 1-932992-08-1.**

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Social science research in Puerto Rico often values macro-historical analysis. Some scholars go as far as arguing that case studies of a particular government program are just limited contributions to a vast body of literature. In *La transformación del paisaje puertorriqueño y la disciplina del Cuerpo Civil de Conservación, 1933-1942*, Manuel Valdés Pizzini, Michael González Cruz, and José Martínez Reyes prove that the field of Puerto Rican history is still open to new theoretical analyses and a myriad of subjects previously ignored by historians. Using sociological and anthropological lenses and influenced by Foucauldian approaches, this study focuses on how the Conservation Civilian Corps (CCC) worked as technologies of power aimed at disciplining citizens and forests during the years of the Great Depression. Its premise is that landscape is not only a product of social transformations, but also a tool to discipline people. The authors explain how the CCC, a New Deal program, was another one of the colonial regime's strategies to modernize the rural population. In Puerto Rico, forests as state-sponsored recreational spaces emerged largely by the work done by the CCC. The authors' use of life histories, ethnographies, archaeological surveys, and historical documents offer readers several perspectives to understand how the forests, CCC labor camps, and social actors involved were part of ideas of conservation and historical processes during the 1930s.

The introduction and Chapter 1 explore the origin of the program, the literature on the subject, and the theoretical approaches used to analyze the program. The ideology of the wilderness as a space untouched by industrial and urban development was important to the CCC's designs of public forests. The CCC worked to preserve wilderness and make it available for consumption by citizens. Government officials attempted to incorporate local culture and the recreational expectations of visitors into their designs. These ideas led the CCC to create an infrastructure which included roads, paths, kiosks, pools, parking, and observation towers (p. 9). It began to transform Puerto Rico's countryside into a space of tourism for people from urban areas.

The CCC emerged as part of the New Deal policies implemented as a solution for the Great Depression. President Roosevelt's concerns about the conservation of the American wilderness and youth unemployment shaped the creation of the CCC (pp. 29-33). The CCC hired workers to build forest infrastructure as a strategy to alleviate unemployment. The U.S. Forest Service and U.S. National Parks implemented the program with funds administered by the Department of Interior, the Department of Agriculture and the Army. Resident Commissioner Santiago Iglesias Pantín lobbied in Congress for Puerto Rico to be included in the program and proposed the employment of 25,000 workers (pp. 49-50). The program initially concentrated its efforts on reforestation. Roads were built by hand without machinery. Later, the program worked in the production of commercial wood and charcoal. The CCC resettled many communities from lands acquired by the U.S. Forest Service.

Using political ecology, Chapter 2 focuses on the effects of the ideologies of wilderness conservation in the forests of El Yunque, Bosque Seco de Guánica and La Parguera. The authors explore how the ideologies of conservation and power relations shaped historical processes linked to the environment and nature. The work of the CCC increased the proletarianization of the rural population. The creation of public forests and resettling of its habitants closed the rural population's access to important economic resources. Landless workers used the forest to cultivate food crops. Limited access to the forests also meant the loss of local knowledge about its environment.

Chapters 3 and 4 discuss the camps and the political context in which the CCC was developed in Puerto Rico. The labor camps transformed the lives of many workers. Most of the participants were landless workers, some of whom worked in the properties that became part of the forests. Most of the program's participants in Puerto Rico were married, while single men predominated in the mainland U.S. States. In 1933, the government authorized 1,200 workers to be part of the program. By 1936, 2,400 workers were participating in the program every year. Governor Blanton C. Winship (1934-1939) lobbied intensively for the increase of recruits (pp. 102-103). A local committee formed by the police chief, school superintendent, and mayor recruited participants incorporating political patronage into the program. The critiques were so intense that this system eventually was discarded. At the same time, socialists and liberals were struggling against each other for the control of the New Deal programs in Puerto Rico.

The program sought to prepare workers for industrial manufacturing by regulating their lives with discipline and vocational education. The labor camps exposed participants to North Americans ideals of industrial work discipline in an urban society. The CCC helped to promote

loyalty to a colonial state threatened by economic and political crisis by providing workers with secure housing, food, education, and recreational activities. The first camps were similar to labor camps in sugar cane plantations. They were overcrowded with workers sleeping in hammocks. Later, the structure of the camps consisted of a building with sleeping quarters, dining room, and an office, as well as other buildings for storage and infirmary. In some cases, workers preferred to continue living in their homes for which they were better compensated.

Chapters 5 and 6 analyze the history of El Yunque and La Sierra de Luquillo. El Yunque is one of the principal forests transformed by the CCC. In Chapter 5, the authors look at the traces of history left in their landscape since Spanish colonialism. El Yunque and La Sierra de Luquillo are at the center of the myth of Puerto Rican nation building. The authors examine the mental maps of the interviewees in order to understand the political economy of the area before it became a public forest. Before the 1930s, the area was intensively exploited by landowners and the landless for its land, wood for charcoal and construction, and fishing in the creeks and rivers. Interviewees remember their ties to each other through parties or mutual self-aid. Not only were landless families displaced, but small farmers were also affected by the acquisition of lands by the U.S. Forests Service.

The authors describe how El Yunque is a central symbol in the narratives of Puerto Rican national culture, including popular myths, legends, and stories forged by the rural population. Since the nineteenth century, Puerto Ricans have held an image of El Yunque linked to pre-European indigenous populations in the islands. Authors such as Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, Eugenio María de Hostos, and José de Diego as well as Governor Rexford G. Tugwell wrote about El Yunque as a majestic and mysterious place. For local visitors and residents of surrounding communities, El Yunque has become a space of resistance and an embodiment of Puerto Rican identity and national culture (p. 208).

In Chapter 7 and the Epilogue, the authors assess the legacy of the CCC. While the rural population was suffering the devastating consequences of the Great Depression, the CCC and other New Deal programs were attempting to modernize the country and reform capitalism. In the 1930s, the CCC offered participants the best living and working conditions known despite the strict discipline and hard work in the camps (p. 232). The CCC built a recreational infrastructure and preserved the forests in a way not achieved by any other initiative in Puerto Rico. The failures of the program lie in its uneven and sometimes disorganized reforestation efforts, as well as the limited impact on unemployment because of the small numbers of workers hired. One needs to understand that this legacy is linked to the ordinary lives of CCC participants and

those who implemented the program.

The use of interviews provides a bottom-up approach to the study of history that most history books of the period ignore. One learns throughout the book about the dealings of the powerless and the powerful with the program. Subjects' accounts have been left out of the main narratives of this period which have concentrated on top-down studies of the emergence of the PPD, the New Deal, and the nationalist movement. Thus, the authors invite the readers to look at Puerto Rico's contemporary public forests as complex and socially constructed artifacts.

By picking up the fragments of modernization, Manuel Valdés Pizini, Michael González Cruz, and José Eduardo Martínez Reyes provide new lenses on the study of the New Deal in Puerto Rico. Although some parts of the book are repetitive, this book is not a mere analysis of discourses seeking to explain the social processes involved in the construction of forests and people. Rather, it is about how power is related to meanings, practices and institutions, and their connections to local, national and global processes. The authors make a valuable contribution to the intersection of history, culture, and political economy in the study of landscapes and environment. *La transformación del paisaje puertorriqueño y la disciplina del Cuerpo Civil de Conservación, 1933-1942* is an excellent start for anyone interested in the diversity of modernization projects in Puerto Rico during the 1930s through 1940s.

**Samuel Charters. 2009. *A Language of Song: Journeys in the Musical World of the African Diaspora*. Durham: Duke University Press. 352pp. ISBN: 978-0-8223-4380-6.**

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**A** *Language of Song: Journeys in the Musical World of the African Diaspora* es un cuaderno de bitácora íntimo e intenso, en donde lo sonoro y lo visual se complementan en vívidas descripciones que intentan dar cuenta de la compleja gama de expresiones musicales de la diáspora africana en las Américas. Samuel Charters comparte sus múltiples viajes desde el África Occidental hasta las tumultuosas y vivarachas calles del Carnaval del Salvador en Brasil. Entre estos dos puntos

geográfico-musicales Charters documenta y nos regala hermosos relatos de sus experiencias en Trinidad, Jamaica, Cuba, Las Islas Canarias, Las Bahamas, New Orleans, Louisiana, Harlem, las Georgia Sea Islands, Alabama y St. Louis, Missouri.

Los caminos andados, sin embargo, no fueron del todo fortuitos. Charters, nacido en Pittsburgh en la década del veinte, ha sido un prolífico escritor, coleccionista y productor de música desde mediados del siglo XX. Luego de culminar sus estudios en la Universidad de California, el autor emprendió un viaje en búsqueda de las raíces y fuentes de la música afro-americana que lo ha acompañado a lo largo de su vida. Su larga lista de publicaciones gira, principalmente, en torno a la música afro-americana, siendo su primer libro, *The Country Blues* (1959), uno de los pioneros estudios del *blues* en el sur de los Estados Unidos. Otros títulos de su autoría incluyen: *Jazz: A History of the New York Scene* (1962); *Jazz, New Orleans, 1885-1963: An Index to the Negro Musicians of New Orleans* (1963); *The Bluesmen: The Story and the Music of the Men Who Made the Blues* (1967); *The Roots of the Blues: An African Search* (1981); *The Blues Makers* (1991) y *A Trumpet around the Corner; The Story of New Orleans Jazz* (2008). En el 2011 fue inducido en el Salón de la Fama de la *Blues Foundation* en Memphis, Tennessee.

Aunque el libro carece de un marco teórico claro, el autor parte de la metáfora de la raíz, para proponer la idea de un lenguaje común a las expresiones musicales de la diáspora africana. Charters apunta, “in the story of the music that was part of the long African journey in the New World, there must be a beginning, and it must be a beginning in Africa itself...” (p. 1). La alusión a la raíz da inicio, entonces, a la jornada que Charters continúa en los restantes capítulos del libro en búsqueda de señales o rastros que demuestren la resiliencia de la cultura musical africana en las Américas.

En su primer capítulo Charters aborda los canarios, un género musical oriundo de las Islas Canarias. El archipiélago canario, a pesar de su cercanía a las costas de África, en raras ocasiones se considera parte de la experiencia de la diáspora africana. Sin embargo, éstas estuvieron estrechamente relacionadas a la producción de azúcar y su concomitante vínculo con la esclavitud africana. En este sentido, Charters no se limita a las manifestaciones musicales de las poblaciones de origen africano en las Américas únicamente, sino que apunta a una concepción mucho más amplia.

Una de las mayores fortalezas del libro son los capítulos dedicados a los géneros musicales afro-norteamericanos del *blues*, el *ragtime*, el *zydeco* de Luisiana, el jazz de New Orleans y los *spirituals* de las iglesias en Harlem. La mirada de Charters denota una mayor familiaridad y comodidad con los códigos culturales que nos facilita una mejor

comprensión del contexto social y cultural de cada género. En cambio, en los capítulos sobre las manifestaciones musicales en Jamaica, Trinidad, Cuba, Brasil y las Islas Bahamas su mirada se torna la de un observador acucioso pero en un contexto socio-cultural claramente ajeno. En Jamaica, el autor describe más su aprensión por un Kingston asediado por las drogas, la corrupción y la violencia que en vincular esta realidad con el surgimiento del reggae.

A pesar de que Charters alude a la idea de un lenguaje musical común en las experiencias musicales afrodiaspóricas, éste nunca llega a elaborar con nitidez cuáles son las características de este lenguaje. ¿A qué se refiere Charters cuando acuña la frase *A Language of Songs*? ¿Se refiere a características estrictamente musicales? ¿Cómo se desarrolló este supuesto lenguaje común? Aunque el autor advierte matices, las alusiones a este lenguaje común tienden a ser superficiales. El autor no utilizó, por ejemplo, conceptos como sincretismo, transculturación, y criollización, que hubiesen facilitado una mejor comprensión de la cultura musical africana en su diáspora.

No hay duda de que Samuel Charters ostenta una escritura afable y entretenida. Este es un libro para un público no especializado ávido de conocer las experiencias de un ser humano sensible que ha tenido el privilegio de viajar y adentrarse en un mundo fascinantemente creativo.

**Monique Bégot, Pascal Buléon, and Patrice Roth. 2009. *Emerging Caribbean: A Political Geography*. Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers. 80 pp. ISBN-10:97663373930; ISBN-13:978-9766373931.**

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This book is an interesting addition to the geographic literature of the Caribbean. It contains a good combination of maps, diagrams, and text. Its landscape format (12.5 x 10.25 inches) permits large areas of the pages to be used for displaying the maps, which for the most part are very well designed, informative, and attractive. The general design makes it almost a coffee table book intended to reach a general audience.

The book is organized in five sections, that are titled “Situation,” (pp. 4-11) “The Power of the Sea,” (pp. 13-28) “Mosaic,” (pp. 29-44) “Stirrings,” (pp. 45-59) and “From One Resource to Another” (pp. 61-75). In this review I will summarize the individual content of each section, followed by general comments about the book.

The first chapter titled “Situation” is a brief introduction to the Caribbean region. This chapter attempts to present the different geographical definitions of the Caribbean. The book does not limit itself to any one definition, as the maps in all chapters vary their scale to show the Caribbean. However many of the maps contain the greater Caribbean region from the archipelago of The Bahamas all the way South to Trinidad to the greater Caribbean region including coastal parts of North, Central, and South America. A quote shows the problem of defining the Caribbean: “the Caribbean at different times has appeared continuous/discontinuous, single/multiple, large/small; its boundaries are not clear cut but when one searches for them, their reality is confirmed” (p. 4).

The chapter shows a map of the relative geographic location of the Caribbean on a global scale as well by hemisphere. A second map shows the major mountain ranges in North America, the northern part of South America, as well as the deepest points in the ocean in the Caribbean region. Another map shows the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century French, British and Spanish possessions. It also presents maps dedicated to the languages currently spoken in the Greater and Lesser Antilles. The section concludes with various hand drawn diagrams/maps that visually explain different versions of what the Caribbean may be interpreted as; for example a double ford between the Americas, the island archipelago, and the greater Caribbean region.

The emphasis in Chapter Two is on the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea’s historical importance as trade lanes. Therefore chapter text and maps are tied with economic, political, and historical issues. There are five beautiful maps in this chapter. The first one shows the geographic shifting of the “Atlantic Mediterranean” over time beginning in the 9<sup>th</sup> and ending in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is a second map of ports and seaways in the greater Caribbean, as well as a map showing Exclusive Economic Zones. A fourth map titled “Backyard of the United States” shows the military presence and political influence of the United States in the Caribbean. A final map shows the geographic extent and the impact of regional economic organizations such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), as well as economic links to Europe and to the United States.

Chapter Three is mainly about cultural, socio-political and demographic aspects of the Caribbean. It addresses issues like diversity, divergence, independence and dependence, as well as demographic trends like

population growth and density in the region. The maps in this chapter show the process of achieving political independence, regime and status, and population. The final map of the section shows regional Human Development Index (HDI) for 2005. The HDI is a composite index that combines health, education, and economic indicators onto one number between 0 and 1. This is perhaps the only map in the book that requires reading the text to understand it due to its more technical nature.

The fourth chapter, "Stirrings," starts with a note about one of the English-speaking Caribbean's most notable writers, Nobel laureate V.S. Naipaul. It is written in such a way that, for those with literary curiosity, almost invites them to go pick up a book by this master of letters. The chapter itself is a collage that connects via both cartography and text, the physical geography of the region with its population, emigration patterns, and economics. The maps by themselves tell the story, but the reading is engaging and ties well with the maps. This chapter's maps begin with illustrations representing three dimensional views of the physical Caribbean as in viewed from space. In my opinion, these 3D representations are not presented with the best resolution, which makes the four illustrations hard to interpret as well as not very useful to the reader. A second map shows in vivid colors the various kinds of natural hazards to which the region is exposed including major hurricanes, volcanoes, as well as tectonic activity in the region until 2006. The third map in this section presents the location and relative size of the major cities in the greater Caribbean region. It describes the migrations from the Caribbean to the United States and to Europe. Finally a fourth map shows the air transportation patterns both passengers and freight for the region.

Chapter Five directs the reader's attention to the economic history of the region. From the "Age precious metals" referring to the time at the beginning of colonization when the islands were primarily mined for gold, and silver, to "Age of spatial" which refers to the importance of the region for both the North American and European space programs, in Florida and in French Guiana respectively. The text of this section explains the history and transitions between these two ages. The first map shows sugar production along with bananas and coffee. The second map presents the primary hydrocarbon and mineral production areas as well as their transport routes. A third map presents the tourism industry (total tourist numbers per country, in cruise lines as well as expenditures). The fourth map in this section shows free port zones, fiscal havens, and illicit trafficking routes. A fifth map is a collection of six maps that show the historical growth and location of Universities, starting in 1538 to the present. The final map of this section (and the final of the book) shows the communication technologies interconnection that the region has with the rest of the world.

The final part of the book includes a glossary of the more technical terms found in the text, followed with a list of books, websites and journals that may be of interest to the lay reader. The list however is not comprehensive enough for academics.

Design-wise, the cartography of the maps shown in the book is generally very good. Most of the maps are located in two pages therefore they are split by the hinge of the book. Depending on the area covered by the map this may or may not impede proper reading of some of the maps. This is a decidedly non-academic book. The texts are written without direct references, in an essay fashion which makes them easy to read and understand. As the book “epilogue” (located in the back cover of the book) expresses, it was conceived as, “accessible to a family readership, as well as providing a handbook for curious travelers, secondary school and university students.” I would recommend this book to “Caribbeanists” as well, given the general lack of a current atlas for the region as it provides a good visual reference.

**B.W. Higman and Kathleen E.A. Monteith, eds. 2010. *West Indian Business History: Enterprise and Entrepreneurship*. Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press. 236 pp. ISBN: 976640240X.**

**Eric Armstrong. 2010. *A History of Money and Banking in Barbados, 1627-1973*. Kingston, Jamaica: University of West Indies Press. 160pp. ISBN: 1461906849.**

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**B**usiness and banking history are relatively underdeveloped fields within the English-speaking Caribbean and many of the books published on particular business and banking institutions are of dubious merit. A good number of these monographs are little more than vanity publications issued to commemorate a marketing milestone or a corporate birthday. Often, these texts are lavishly illustrated, expensively bound, and, given their privileged access to archives, well sourced. Generally published to serve an audience of shareholders and staff

members, they are rarely critical. Similarly, histories of foreign business and banking institutions operating in the West Indies often have the veneer of academic legitimacy (established scholars are commissioned to write them, reputable university presses are enlisted to publish them) but their authors are constrained by the needs of their patrons and the histories they recount are often deployed for the strategic aims of the institution. With little work to constitute a scholarly tradition of business and banking history in the English-speaking Caribbean, it is no wonder that two recent texts—*West Indian Business History: Enterprise and Entrepreneurship*, edited by historians Barry Higman and Kathleen E.A. Monteith, and *A History of Money and Banking in Barbados, 1627-1973*, authored by economist Eric Armstrong—both begin by noting that the field is neglected. Both works are attempts at redressing this neglect and developing a tradition of scholarship on Caribbean business and banking history.

*West Indian Business History* is a collection of ten essays, most of them reprinted from historical journals, bookended by a concise introductory chapter by Higman and Monteith and a useful bibliography for further reading. In the introductory chapter, the editors stake a claim for the development of business history as a distinct historical subfield within the Anglophone Caribbean, outline its origins, and provide an overview of its approaches and concerns. They acknowledge the overlaps between business history and economic, political and social history but distinguish it from the applied investigations of management and entrepreneurialism of “business studies,” popular amongst students at the University of the West Indies, and from labor history, which has had, they note, a cantankerous and querulous relation with business history.

In part, the vexed association of business history with labor history emerges from the genealogy of business history itself. As a discipline, business history first emerged from Harvard’s Center for Research and Entrepreneurial History, founded in 1948 to defend the activities of “big business and financial capitalism” (p. 1). While the editors offer no conjectures concerning whether or not that defensive imperative has persisted, its ideological imprint has certainly remained in business history’s normalization of the market as part of its work-a-day concerns. Higman and Monteith note that at its heart, business history centers business enterprises, no matter the size or scale, and analyzes its historical formations, its role in production, distribution, and exchange, its managerial systems and organization, and its relation to the state and society at large. They favorably cite the work of Harvard business historian Alfred Chandler—their chapter’s subtitle, “Scale and Scope,” draws from a Chandlerian vocabulary—arguing his approach to the managerial transformations of United States business, though rarely applied

in the West Indies, offers a generative theoretical model for analyzing Caribbean business history. In a somewhat perfunctory fashion, they also suggest that the “plantation economy” model pioneered by Lloyd Best and George Beckford contains an autochthonous tradition of West Indian business history, one that comes closest in approach to the work of Chandler.

Higman and Monteith also identify an archival paradox at the heart of business history. In business, failure is more common than success but it is those businesses that survive that provide the raw archival material from which business history is written. “The evidentiary record of success is always greater than that of failure, even though spectacular examples of the collapse of big business may be prominent in the history,” they write. “The failure of an enterprise, particularly in its early life, is often the trigger for the destruction of its archive” (p. 6). There is the danger, then, of business history becoming the history of exceptions—though making exceptions the rule goes some way to entrench business history’s sense of capitalism’s invariable success. The essays compiled in *West Indian Business History* also suggest another form of exceptionalism. The common theme running throughout the collection is that in the Caribbean context, entrepreneurs and enterprises have more often than not labored on the outskirts of the traditional and traditionally-legitimate realms of economic activity—and they have existed on the margins of both the suppositions of neoclassical economic theory and of business history.

*West Indian Business History* is arranged chronologically and divided into three sections, “Merchants, Privateers and Planters,” “Bankers and Financiers,” and “Traders, Transporters and Retailers.” However, these groupings and distinctions appear as somewhat arbitrary as throughout Caribbean history the merchant was often a banker, the privateer often a financier, and the planter occasionally a trader. But just as there is slippage between entrepreneurial identities, *West Indian Business History* suggests that the lines governing what separates legitimate from illegitimate entrepreneurial activities in the Caribbean are blurred. This is demonstrated in Nuala Zahedieh’s essay on privateering in Jamaica. Zahedieh strips away the popular romantic aura surrounding piracy and shows that it was an activity of high risks and low returns. But she also convincingly argues that the plundering and looting of Spain’s Caribbean territories by Port Royal’s buccaneers was not only often condoned by England, but it served as “an ideal start-up trade” (p. 12). Piracy’s means of capital accumulation challenged the assumptions of neo-classical economics while affirming the historical validity of Marx’s accounts of the necessity of “primitive” or “primary” accumulation to the growth of capitalism. In a similar fashion, Douglas Hall’s essay demonstrates the

awkward fit between real-life Caribbean economies and European economic theory. Hall tests Max Weber's principles of "calculability"—the ability to rationally calculate accounts in advance—on the management of an eighteenth century Grenada sugar estate. Finding that no matter how well managed an estate was, inefficiencies, uncertainties, and what he terms "incalculability" determined success and profitability while raising the costs and risks of doing business, Hall suggests that the history of Caribbean business forces a rethink of the normative terms of business history.

A number of essays in *West Indian Business History* examine both the activities of figures that have traditionally been on the margins of business history and the institutions that these figures founded. Jerome Handler contributes a largely descriptive biography of shopkeeper Joseph Rachell and tavern keeper Rachel Pringle-Polgreen, two of that rare caste of free Black entrepreneurs in seventeenth century Barbados. In the only essay to foreground the role of female entrepreneurs in the Caribbean—and to explicitly approach the ways in which gender shaped economic activity—Kathleen Phillips Lewis examines the labor and lives of women in Trinidad's cocoa industry between 1870 and 1945. Lewis stresses that the work of women in agriculture cannot be simply measured by their direct contributions to the labor process. She points out that their lives, of which she provides a detailed account, can not be understood through the received and bifurcated analytical frames of "private or political; domestic or public; formal or informal; peasant or wage labourer" (p. 74). Henderson Carter contributes a narrative history of Black business in Barbados between 1900 and 1966 that is largely of a non-analytical and vindicationist nature. It is also underwritten with a baffling tenor of racial paternalism as Carter praises the "intelligence" (p. 217) and "courage" (p. 221) of Black entrepreneurs while doing little to inquire into the structural determinants of race and class that shaped the Barbadian business context. On the other hand, Aviston Downes' "Black Economic Empowerment in Barbados, 1937-1970: The Role of the Non-Bank Financial Intermediaries" begins with not only a critique of such structural determinants, but with an analysis of the theoretical suppositions through which Black economic actors are often evoked. He dismisses both a paternalist anthropological theory that suggests a turn to rotating credit associations and other non-official forms of credit organization are an early evolutionary stage in Black economic development—or a sign of the pathological behavior of the poor. Downes begins with an assumption of Black economic rationality. Through his fine capsule histories of the "meeting-turn," an indigenous rotating credit association, local friendly societies, and institutions including the Barbados Savings Bank and the Barbados Co-operative Bank, he shows

that non-market and non-accumulative values—community, friendship, fraternalism, collective good—were central to their organization. These same qualities, however, also contributed to their failure as they promoted insularity and stymied growth.

Downes essay complements those of Richard A. Lobdell and Kathleen E.A. Monteith, both of whom look at the history of formal credit organization in the Caribbean. Lobdell analyses the sources of credit in the sugar industry during the massive economic transformation of the post-emancipation period. Monteith's essay, excerpted from her pioneering history of Barclays Bank (DCO), sutures questions of finance to those of racism through the machinery of credit—and in so doing, foregrounds an issue that is rare in business history as it is traditionally constituted (See Monteith 2008). Monteith inquiries into the nature of discrimination in Barclay's lending practices in the West Indies and, after comparing it with their practices in Palestine and Cyprus, concludes, "even if there was no official bank policy of discrimination on racial grounds, racial stereotyping was practiced by bank employees and was apparently an important factor in determining an individual's credit-worthiness" (p. 144).

In compiling the essays making up *West Indian Business History* Higman and Monteith wanted to provide a snapshot of the state of the field. In this, they are successful. *West Indian Business History* is an excellent survey that provides an intriguing opening to future research and scholarship. So too Eric Armstrong's *A History of Money and Banking in Barbados, 1627-1973*, a work that both charts the transformations of coinage and currency in Barbados while plotting the development and growth of local banks of issue. As the only monograph on the subject since Lord Robert Chalmers *A History of Currency in the British Colonies*, published in 1893, and Ida Greaves series of essays on "Money and Currency in Barbados" published in the *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society* in the 1950s, it makes an important intervention. In scarcely more than one hundred pages, Armstrong covers a period that stretches from the species-scarce days the seventeenth century to the post-Independence organization of the Barbados Central Bank in 1973 while accounting for the history of the Doubloons, Joes, Dutch ryders, Mexican pieces of eight, half bits, "pillared dollars" (p. 23) colonial bank tokens, and "clipt" (p. 15), debased, defaced, worn, mutilated, and counterfeit coins that circulated within Barbados in the intervening years. Armstrong writes with economy and lucidity. His use of English and Barbados archives is meticulous. And in some cases, such as in his recovery of the history of the West India Bank, a "truly West Indian institution" (54) that competed with the Colonial Bank in the mid-nineteenth century, *A History of Money and Banking in Barbados* emerges as the

single best source within the historiography.

Yet *A History of Money and Banking in Barbados* has a number of weaknesses. Some of them are of a disciplinary nature and are thus probably not entirely fair to mention. Armstrong is an economist and though (thankfully, for this reader) he does not overwhelm the text with quantitative data, a greater attention to qualitative scrutiny would have been welcome. In some parts, the book is little more than a timeline that unfolds without argumentation or analysis. It is poorly sign-posted, chapters end abruptly, and it closes without anything approaching a conclusion. Occasionally, *A History of Money and Banking in Barbados* presents itself as an almost documentary text, reproducing statutes and memoranda verbatim in long block quotations without any kind of comment. He writes, for instance, of a £4000 shipment of copper coins sent from England in 1817 that “were not well accepted throughout the West Indies, especially in Jamaica were the blacks and even beggars refused to accept them” (p. 18). He describes how free laborers in Barbados continued to work on plantations even when their wages were in jeopardy because of the failure of the Royal Bank of Liverpool. On one estate, “they asked their employers to give them food in lieu of a certain amount of wages and they would cheerfully wait for the balance in cash until such time as specie became plentiful in the colony” (p. 50). Yet in both cases, Armstrong does not follow up with a simple question: why? Why were the copper coins so repulsive to Jamaica’s Blacks and beggars? Why were laborers who were so close to being slaves willing to work for free?

*A History of Money and Banking in Barbados* is a conservative text. Armstrong does not engage with the historiography of a critical tradition of Caribbean political economy represented in the work of Best and Beckford or, for that matter Walter Rodney or Eric Williams. He makes no claim of a radical critique of the uses of intermediaries in the imperial context or the role of British (and, later, Canadian banks) in West Indian underdevelopment. That said, Armstrong provides compelling evidence affirming these claims. His discussion of seignorage, and of who should profit from it reveals that despite the paucity of evidence on the amount of currency imported into Barbados, substantial profits were made. Armstrong is not explicit here, but he shows that foreign institutions profited from the circulation of coins within the West Indies. It should also be mentioned that what presents itself as a narrowly focused, local study is actually much more than that. *A History of Money and Banking in Barbados* is only nominally about Barbados. Instead, Armstrong, without explicitly stating its, demonstrates how the development of monetary and banking sovereignty in Barbados emerged over a long history of contestations that occurred on a variety of geographical scales. He shows that to understand the history of money and banking in Barbados one must look

to questions of inter-imperial rivalry, to inter-colonial relations within the West Indies and within the greater Caribbean region, but also to the place of Barbados with British Commonwealth, the West Indian Federation, and the new, still-developing arenas of the post-Independence Caribbean. *A History of Money and Banking in Barbados* is a comparative transnational and trans-regional monograph that quietly hides under a national cover. Armstrong's book and Higman and Monteith's *West Indian Business History* have much to recommend them. They also suggest that the scholarship of business and banking in the West Indies is still very much an open enterprise.

### Reference

Monteith, Kathleen E.A. 2008. *Depression to Decolonization: Barclays Bank (DCO) in the West Indies, 1926-1962*. Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press.

**Jordana Dym and Karl Offen, eds. 2011. *Mapping Latin America: A Cartographic Reader*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 338 pp. ISBN: 0-226-61822-22.**

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**B**rilliant in conception and beautiful in execution, *Mapping Latin America* explores ways of reading maps. In doing so, it raises two fundamental questions about “mapping” and “reading.”

First question, what is a map? In the introduction, the editors define a map as a “graphic representation of space (real or imagined, terrestrial or otherwise) that organizes, presents, and communicates spatial information visually” (p. 6). This is an inclusive, expansive definition that goes beyond the more modern preoccupations with scale, projection, orientation, titles, and legends in two-dimensional graphical representations. The ample scope of the volume encompasses a number of representations that strict, modern definitions would classify, at best, as “map-like.” For example, this volume includes: a mural-map from an ancient Mayan palace; illustrations from the colonial period in Bolivia, Mexico and Peru; several topographical profiles of mountainous areas of South America;

schematic drawings used in hydrological works in Mexico and Chile; propaganda maps that combine art, country silhouettes, and texts in Argentina and Mexico; and mental maps from twentieth century Chile. More conventional examples, such as charts, routes, property surveys, and modern maps, are also analyzed.

Second question, what does it mean to “read” a map? We should begin with a series of specific, contextual questions: who made the map, for whom, how was it made, and what was its use? In order to answer these seemingly simple questions we must be familiar with the conventions and languages of maps and we must know thoroughly, by means of additional primary or secondary sources, the history of Latin America. Thus, the history of the map reveals both the history of cartography and the history, not only of Latin America, but also of the European empires that once claimed sovereignty over its territories. This volume encourages us to seek out the “meaning of space” in the context of political economy, cultural conventions, and above all, as instruments of power and also of resistance.

One learns much from the book about the history of Latin America as well as the history of cartography. More importantly, the chapters show many different kinds of maps and diverse ways to read them. Hence, the book is a “cartographic reader” in that it explores maps as “graphic texts” and discovers ways of reading them. Following the principles of critical geography, the authors seek out the “meaning of maps” and their connection with power. In this respect it is important to consider both the elements that the map includes as well as what the map excludes. The selection and exclusion of cartographic features in order to fashion ways of representing and seeing led one contributor to proclaim that all maps tell lies (p. 293). Since critical geography proceeds from an analysis of “power,” it is surprising that the editors never define it or its possible dimensions. Likewise, the editors do not define “space,” even though it would seem to be a central analytical concept.

Edited by Jordanna Dym and Karl Offen, the book comprises a forward by Matthew Edney, an introduction by the editors, and almost one hundred maps discussed by 54 authors in 57 short chapters. Each chapter is a several-page analysis of one or more maps from the history of Latin America. Each is conveniently footnoted and referenced. In addition, the bibliographic essay written by the editors is an excellent resource for continued reading and research. The book is organized chronologically into three periods. The colonial period, comprising the sixteenth and seventeenth century is interpreted as one of “explorations and empires.” Sub-themes include the imaginary of the New World, the development of urban centers, the exploitation of the environment, imperial rivalries, and local resistance. The nineteenth century is defined as one

of “enlightenment, independence, and the nation-state.” Sub-themes emphasize the creation of nation-states by means of territorial control and political economy. Finally, the twentieth century is characterized by maps of widely different purposes and variegated mapmakers, with sub-themes ranging from planning, management of natural resources, propaganda, education, ethnicity, and so forth.

Caribbean scholars will find many maps, but will wish for even more. We find a fascinating chapter on a sixteenth-century map of Guiana by Sir Walter Raleigh that illustrated his oft-cited statement that the country “hath yet her maidenhead”; a chapter on eighteenth-century European rivalries which includes a map of the West Indies; a chapter on “forts and ports” which includes maps of Cuba (1817) and Panamá (1779); two maps (1929, 1934) of the United Fruit Company facilities on the Caribbean coast of Honduras; a chapter on twentieth century road maps with a motoring map of Cuba (1956), a hybrid map composed of an aerial photograph with legends from the Cuban missile crisis; two maps from the Miskitu region on or near the coasts of Nicaragua and Guatemala. Finally, the book includes two property maps, one from Jamaica and the other from Saint-Domingue.

This book moves productively in several directions at once. The initial motivation was pedagogical: to bring maps into the classroom for the teaching of Latin American history. This proposition implied that, first, maps were crucial to the understanding of the history of Latin America, and second, that cartography must be always firmly anchored in its historical context. The book posits maps as primary documents of the first order. As a result, it reaches out, not only to teachers and students, but also to historians and cartographers as researchers. This book was a joy to hold and browse through; my paperback copy was nicely bound on thick paper. Unfortunately, some of the cartographical reproductions were too small to examine closely, although some chapters included amplified map segments. A web link is provided to view some of the maps on-line, but too few are included and the external links are simply too complicated to follow. These are really minor complaints; the overall result is an exemplary collection of critical cartographical readings that will inspire teaching and research.

**Philippe Bourgois. 2010. *En busca de respeto: La venta de crack en Harlem*. Traducción de Fernando Montero Castrillo. San Juan, Puerto Rico: Ediciones Huracán. 359 pp. ISBN: 1932913378.**

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La tarea de reseñar el libro *En busca de respeto: La venta de crack en Harlem* de Philippe Bourgois es, sin duda, un reto por un sinnúmero de razones.<sup>1</sup> Lo que sucede es que referirse a *En busca de respeto*, implica abordar no solo una obra seminal en el campo de la etnografía urbana de las drogas sino de la antropología en general. Este trabajo es el fruto de cinco años de convivencia del autor con los protagonistas de este estudio en el llamado Harlem Hispano de la ciudad de Nueva York y se inscribe en una larga tradición de etnografías urbanas que abordan el tema de las drogas y la violencia. Desde mi perspectiva, este trabajo se destaca debido a que enmarca de forma dinámica las conexiones entre los procesos micro observables, es decir comportamientos y relaciones propias de las etnografías clásicas, con el análisis macro estructural y un afín teórico amplio que va desde la teoría feminista hasta la teoría de la producción cultural. Además, es un ejemplo exquisito de un trabajo de campo realizado con rigurosidad y sensibilidad. El rigor del enfoque naturalista, se complementa de forma excepcional con un minucioso trabajo de fuentes secundarias que le dota de una profundidad histórica que amplifica y robustece la escala de lo etnográfico. En este sentido, es un trabajo ejemplar para cualquier estudiante de antropología sobre lo que constituye la observación participativa y el análisis antropológico profundo.

*En busca de respeto*, también se ubica en otra larga tradición: la antropología sobre los puertorriqueños. Dentro de la historia de las representaciones de los puertorriqueños como el “otro” antropológico, esta etnografía propone una perspectiva alterna. Como cuestión de hecho, el autor es explícito sobre este particular y plantea que “el propósito inmediato de este libro es mostrar el rostro humano de los enemigos públicos de los Estados Unidos sin ‘desinfectar’ sus actos ni glorificarlos. De manera más implícita, este libro también aspira a situar a los narcotraficantes y delincuentes callejeros en su justo lugar como parte de la corriente dominante de la sociedad estadounidense. Los personajes

de este libro no son ‘otros exóticos’ habitantes de un mundo irracional aparte, sino productos ‘hechos en los Estados Unidos’” (p. 323). El autor no es ni pretende ser neutral, las oscilaciones emocionales al enfrentarse a los eventos que describe (y que todos los que estamos en esa área de estudio hemos experimentado de una u otra manera) le imprimen transparencia y honestidad a esta representación. Mi sensación tras la lectura es que sin estar libre de todo pecado esta etnografía supera por mucho la exotización tradicional que caracteriza la antropología de los puertorriqueños y de los usuarios de drogas que se ha hecho en el pasado.

Con respecto a este aspecto, quisiera dedicar unas palabras a la traducción al español de este trabajo. Toda traducción, me parece, tiene el riesgo de pérdida de contenidos y significados. En el caso de una etnografía, estas potenciales carencias involucran un peligro aún mayor: la pérdida de legitimidad. Sin embargo, aquí Fernando Montero Castrillo realizó un trabajo excepcional que reviste de mayor autoridad y realismo a un trabajo ya de por sí poderoso. La traducción de Montero Castrillo es de primer nivel y captura el habla coloquial, desde la jerga hasta la sintaxis, lo que evidencia un trabajo realizado con gran detalle y sobre todo con mucho respeto. La sensación que me provocó como hablante del dialecto puertorriqueño fue de identificación: reconocí el habla de la calle y la mía propia en los pasajes de los protagonistas. Esta traducción tiene además otro mérito. En el marco de las representaciones antropológicas hechas sobre los puertorriqueños, la disponibilidad de una de ellas en nuestro vernáculo permite que sectores más amplios de nuestra colectividad accedan al derecho de pasar juicio crítico sobre lo que “otros” han dicho de “nosotros”. Esta traducción al castellano, se me antoja, pues, como un ejercicio de balance de poder, toda vez que casi siempre lo que se dice se hace en el idioma del que nombra y rara vez en el del nombrado.

A los retos mencionados, se suma el hecho de que este trabajo se trata de la traducción de una etnografía publicada por primera vez en 1995. Esto podría suponer para muchos un esfuerzo a destiempo. Yo discrepo. Este trabajo ha resistido la obsolescencia que a veces el tiempo le trae a los intentos de documentar el vertiginoso y cambiante mundo de las drogas. Los escritos se resignifican de acuerdo al contexto en el que se lean. Siendo brutalmente franco quisiera que hoy pudiéramos mirar este trabajo como uno de corte meramente histórico, algo así como una mirada a unas condiciones remotas y extrañas ya superadas. Desafortunadamente, *En busca de respeto* asume una triste vigencia en el Puerto Rico de hoy, asediado por una epidemia dual de violencia y drogas. Mientras leía *En busca de respeto* a veces me parecía estar revisando una etnografía sobre las condiciones de marginalidad, desarraigo, enfermedad y extrema violencia de las comunidades urbanas

pobres del Puerto Rico actual. Condiciones producidas—similares a lo descrito por Bourgois para el Harlem de los años 90—por una sostenida crisis estructural política y económica conjugada con las consecuencias de más dos décadas de una fallida política pública local punitiva y no salubrista. Las coincidencias son escalofriantes. Pasajes tales como “Las estadísticas hablan por sí solas: los habitantes varones de Harlem entre los dieciocho y los veinticuatro años de edad tienen mayor probabilidad de sufrir muertes violentas que un soldado de la Segunda Guerra Mundial” (p. 285), encuentran paralelismos en un Puerto Rico donde la tasa de homicidios era 26.2 por cada 100,000 personas para el período comprendido entre el 2008 y 2010. Puerto Rico es un país en donde el año 2011 cerró con 1,136 asesinatos, lo que implica un promedio de 3.11 asesinatos diarios. Para lo que va del 2012 se han cometido un total de 556 asesinatos de los cuales el 50.46% se encuentran en el grupo de 16 a 39 años y 92.9% son varones.

Por otra parte, la distancia de los años ciertamente revela diferencias. Hoy nos enfrentamos a nuevas tendencias en los patrones de uso de drogas en la Isla: poli-usuarios que combinan drogas “legales” e “ilegales” concurrente y simultáneamente lo que aboga por reconceptualizar las visiones unidimensionales sobre usuarios de drogas; “nuevos” adúlteros como la “anestesia de caballo” que promete convertirse en droga base y reconfigurar patrones de uso y los protocolos de tratamiento; la disponibilidad de marihuana sintética, la gasolina, los palitroques que suponen nuevas formas de acceso a drogas “legales” para menores de edad; los crecientes vínculos del narcotráfico a esferas cada más altas en el gobierno, así como una presencia cada vez más significativa en la actividad económica del país, que apunta a un incipiente narcoestado, entre otros.

En el marco de estas concordancias y transformaciones, la propuesta teórica de Philippe Bourgois de desplazar el análisis de problema de las drogas desde la dimensión de la responsabilidad individual hacia una primacía del análisis de cómo “las fuerzas económico-políticas impersonales interactúan con las definiciones culturales de familia y los roles sexuales que se hallan en un proceso de transformación” (p. 322) mantiene igual pertinencia para entender y lidiar con la epidemia de las drogas y la violencia en la Isla. Este acercamiento teórico, propone el autor, permitirá el desarrollo de una política pública enraizada en el análisis histórico-estructural, y en el entendimiento de las complejas dinámicas culturales y sociales que van más allá de la racionalidad económica para definir las construcciones culturales del respeto y la dignidad. Esta es la mentalidad que hace falta en Puerto Rico para pensar más allá de las políticas represivas de “Mano Dura”, “Castigo Seguro”, la “Pérdida de Valores” y comenzar a considerar la salud, la justicia, la

equidad y la compasión como formas de lidiar con la situación de las drogas y la violencia. A mi juicio, es aquí donde radica la importancia de esta etnografía. La mirada etnográfica que aborda los problemas desde la perspectiva de los implicados procura un entendimiento contextualizado de las expresiones cotidianas y significados de la marginación social más allá de los reduccionismos y esencialismo individualistas resguardados en estadísticas, que además, no se recogen de forma adecuada en Puerto Rico.

*En busca de respeto* es una obra ya clásica que provee un importante referente teórico, metodológico y político para aquellos estudiosos del tema de la antropología de las drogas, estudiantes de antropología y todo aquel interesado en una mirada sensible, pero sin cortapisas, de las condiciones de marginalidad y desarraigo que enfrentan los puertorriqueños y otros grupos minoritarios en los Estados Unidos.

### Nota

- <sup>1</sup> Traducción del libro original *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack en el Barrio* (Cambridge University Press, 1995).

**Ennis B. Edmonds and Michelle A. Gonzalez. 2010. *Caribbean Religious History: An Introduction*. New York and London: New York University Press. 269 pp. ISBN: 0-8147-2234-2.**

**Nathaniel Samuel Murrell. 2010. *Afro-Caribbean Religions: An Introduction to Their Historical, Cultural, and Sacred Traditions*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 432 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4399-0041-3.**

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Anthropologist J. Lorand Matory said of the history of Afro-Atlantic religious cultures that, “[the] lifeways, traditions, and the social boundaries they substantiate endure not *despite* their involvement in translocal dialogues, but *because of it*” (Matory 2005:1, emphasis in original). This focus on the dialogic nature of the creation of the

Afro-Atlantic religious world can be extended to our understanding the complexities that create the living religions of the Caribbean. Two books, Ennis B. Edmonds and Michelle A. Gonzalez, *Caribbean Religious History* (New York University Press, 2010), and Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, *Afro-Caribbean Religions* (Temple University Press, 2010), seek to do comparative work on the historical dialogue revealed in the analysis of the multi-layered traditions of the vernacular religions of the region. In this vein, other volumes have attempted to bring a historical and cultural introduction to the religions of the Afro-Atlantic world that includes a distinct focus on the creole traditions of the Caribbean. For example, Carolyn Morrow Long's *Spiritual Merchants: Religion, Magic, and Commerce* (2001), gives us a view of the religions' economic diaspora that expands the idea of the region's reach to places like New Orleans and Spanish Harlem through the study of spiritual sundries sold in *botánicas*, *yerberías*, and root shops. Another volume that looks at the religions of the Caribbean comparatively through the lens of Queer theory is the experience-centered *Spiritual Traditions: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Participation in African-Inspired Traditions in the Americas* by Randy P. Conner and David Hatfield Sparks (2004). Along these lines, *Creole Religions of the Caribbean* by Elizabeth Paravisini-Gebert and Margarite Fernández-Olmos (2003) also provides an introduction to the diverse array of traditions found in Caribbean religious life. The task of providing an introduction and overview to such a complex and layered set of phenomenon is one fraught with difficulties as it is the very specifics of vernacular religions that create their texture and context. Thus, the very generalizing that is required in initiating such projects also must be guided with a very specific topical focus and grounded with a clear theoretical trajectory. In this regard, works like Kamari Maxine Clarke's *Mapping Yorùbá Networks: Power and Agency in the Making of Transnational Communities* (2004), serve as useful models to navigating the complexity of the transcultural work that goes into the construction of Caribbean religiosity. In this regard, Edmonds and Gonzalez, as well as Murrell, give their readers a mixed look at the history of the religions of the region in terms of the trajectory and scope of their volumes.

In *Caribbean Religious History*, Edmonds and Gonzalez offer nine chapters plus a conclusion that include a refreshing consideration of Amerindian, Afro-Christian, Islamic, and Asian influences on the creation of religious cultures in the region. They emphasize the processes of "accommodation, adaptation, and transformation" in examining Caribbean religions like Cuban Santería, Trinidadian Spiritual Baptism, Jamaican Rastafarianism, and Haitian Vodou, to name a few examples (p. 1). The organization of the vast terrain of Caribbean religious culture that the volume seeks to both describe and put into historical perspective

reminds one of how perhaps Émile Durkheim or Melville Herskovits would order the comparative analysis of such diversity. The authors explain different theories of understanding religious admixture in the Caribbean, from detailing some the components of George Beckford and Orlando Patterson's plantation theory, to describing *mestizaje*, as well as explaining creolization as understood by Edward Braithwaite, among other approaches (pp. 8-12). Even within the consideration of these disparate perspectives, Edmonds and Gonzalez aptly recognize the wisdom of allowing specific historical and cultural contexts guide their different discussions of Caribbean religions. However, in the process, they do not fully reveal what informs their choice of topics, religions, and historical epochs that are covered in the volume.

Two chapters exemplify the ways that this more general approach, in terms of theorizing the history of religious culture in the Caribbean, may simultaneously be instructional yet provide only a partial portrait of any of the traditions described in the work. Chapter 3, "Early Colonial Catholicism" (pp. 45-64), and Chapter 5, "Creole African Traditions: Santería, Palo Monte, Abakuá, Vodou, and Espiritismo" (pp. 93-119), both offer a compendium of historical information that leaves the reader longing for a more in-depth and detailed explication of the lived nature of the religions discussed. For instance, Edmonds and Gonzalez whet our appetites by observing that the Medieval Spanish Catholicism that came to the Caribbean, alongside having a Moorish influence, also contained an "aesthetic influence" that developed "the strong presence of processions, devotionals, and performative rituals" (p. 46). One can certainly see how this early aesthetic influence also marked Caribbean religion in profound ways. In this regard, Edmonds and Gonzalez are clear to point out specific instances of this aesthetic in the history of religion in the Caribbean, like Marian devotion (p. 52). The authors also include an overview of vernacular Catholicism in Cuba, Haiti, and also an important case of cross-transference of religious admixture in the Congo (pp. 54-60). All of these sub-sections of the chapter include vital information about the history of Catholicism in the Caribbean that generates an stimulating introduction. Yet, the "broad brushstrokes" applied to the book as a whole may be too broad in terms of providing a window with which to view the ways that vernacular religious praxis also informed the development of the very structures of Caribbean religions (p. 221). In other words, a little more prose on how local innovation shaped tradition would have added just the right amount of texture to some of the very well selected historical examples provided in the text.

As mentioned above, the chapter on Creole African traditions in *Caribbean Religious History* also provides a good source for contemplating the balance of Edmonds and Gonzalez's religious history. Again, we

find very important religious cultures and practices being covered in one chapter: Santería, Vodou, Abakuá, Palo Monte, and Espiritismo. Indeed, other authors have dedicated whole volumes to just one of these traditions. Lydia Cabrera's seminal work on Afro-Cuban religions, *El monte: igbo, finda, ewe, orisha, vititi, nfinda* (2006 [1954]); and Raquel Romberg's study of *Espiritismo* in Puerto Rico, *Witchcraft and Welfare: Spiritual Capital and the Business of Magic in Modern Puerto Rico* (2003) are two studies that come to mind in this aspect. If one looks at how the Afro-Cuban religious tradition of Palo Monte is described by Edmonds and Gonzalez, we get a general overview of the history, practices and places important to Palo (pp. 102-107). The authors briefly cover some of the main branches of Palo, like the *La Regla Kimbisa de Santo Cristo del Buen Viaje*, with an eye towards providing a quick ethnographic description of religious work under this style of practice (p. 103). However, it would be more telling to the reader to point out the significance of Kimbisa as one of the earliest examples of a creolized religious practice in Cuba that specifically sought to document the integration of white Cubans into an Afro-Cuban religious community as part of its folklore, rites and oral history (See Cabrera 1986). In other words, the tensions, conflicts, and creativity that practices like Kimbisa generated and continue to generate in the Caribbean can point towards significant sociological and cultural discussions that need to be debated in any study of Caribbean religions. Edmonds and Gonzalez point to these important topics for the introductory reader with a large amount of information that is not directly interpreted into a larger theoretical framework. The result is, as the authors acknowledge in the conclusion to the volume, an "entry point" to the deeper and complex worlds of Caribbean religious cultures (p. 221). Though one is left wanting for a more detailed discussion of many topics, the comprehensive selection of the materials that are covered in the volume is impressive and the volume would be a great help in the undergraduate classroom.

Samuel Murrell's *Afro-Caribbean Religions* is also an ambitious venture in terms of the breadth and scope of the religious traditions it seeks to introduce and discuss. This volume takes a different approach than *Caribbean Religious History* in that it squarely places the trajectory of the religions discussed within an Afro-Atlantic geographic and historical framework. Following works like such as Matory (2005), Jacob K. Olupona and Terry Rey (2008), as well as that of Mercedes Cros Sandoval (2007), the book works comparatively with African and Afro-Caribbean religious traditions to create a conversation about the importance of witnessing spaces of cultural innovation and resiliency in the practice of diaspora.

Murrell offers us a volume of five parts broken down into fourteen

chapters with an introduction and conclusion. The topical framing includes African religions (pp. 13-36), Vodou (pp. 57-91), Cuban drumming cultures (pp. 95-155), Creole religions (pp. 159-222), and Jamaican religions (pp. 225-320). The section on Creole religions includes Brazil, which is a wise choice for Murrell as he is following cultural movement rather than geographical distinctions in his understanding of how Afro-Caribbean religious communities came into being. Like Edmonds and Gonzalez, the vast array of religious cultures, historical detail, and social forces Murrell attempts to deal with creates a situation where some vital information and central discussions found in the detailed analysis of these traditions must be left out of the work. The result is one where Murrell adopts specificity in a spotted fashion that also leaves readers with unanswered questions.

With that being said, Murrell does provide readers with a clear idea of his perspective on the importance Afro-Caribbean religious admixture. In his introduction to the volume, he clearly emphasizes how pluralism, cross-cultural diffusion, and attenuating to complex historical realities are guiding principles to organizing the encyclopedic amount of information offered in the volume (pp. 6-9). Yet, in several places a more in-depth discussion of certain complicated topics would be appropriate. For example, in looking at the role of women in African religion, Murrell gives general impressions about women's roles in ritual and society from several African nations (pp. 42-45). Yet, he does not emphasize the diversity of ideas on gender *vis-à-vis* the distinct cultural, national, and linguistic differences found among these groups, namely the Yoruba, Zulu, and Sierra Leonian communities being referenced. The result is one where the complexity and nuance of the experience of gender in a range of African religious contexts is lost. For example, the kinds of negotiation about gender that may occur in different Yoruba religious contexts, as explored by Oyeronke Olajubu in *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere* (2003), can truly inform comparative works like Murrell's. This is especially beneficial to consider when it comes to conceptualizing African practices and cultures in ways that add to our understanding of the ongoing, shared contexts of religious change on the continent as well.

Another place where readers are left a little short is in the discussion of Afro-Cuban religious practices. Again, in the interest of space, it is understandable that Murrell had to make some painful choices as to what to include and exclude. However, the presentation of female and male orichas found in the volume is somewhat sparse, especially in terms of describing the importance that different avatars of each deity makes in developing an understanding of how mythology, oral tradition, divination, and ritual come together for the religious community. This

connection between the different *caminos*, or roads, of the orichas and the myths that explain them is a vital key to unlocking the aesthetics and semiotics of embodied phenomenon like spirit possession and creative practices like altar building. For example, in discussing the deity Ochún, Murrell only identifies one manifestation for Cuba, that of Ochún Kole, who he erroneously describes as the most sensuous and flirtatious road of the divinity (p. 111). As Lydia Cabrera makes clear in *Yemayá y Ochún* (1980), there are at least five roads of Ochún, with distinct personalities and conditions of worship, found in Cuba (pp. 70-71). Cabrera also tells us that Ochún Kolé-Kolé or Ochún Ibú Kolé is a road where Ochún is a great sorceress that is associated with the buzzard (p. 71; Castellanos 2001:35). The road of Ochún Yeyé Moró or Ochún Yeyé Kari, however, (and perhaps this is the manifestation Murrell had in mind), “Se pinta, se mira en el espejo, se perfuma . . . / Makes herself up, looks in the mirror, puts on perfume . . .” (Cabrera 1980, p. 70, translation mine). In other words, the details in this regard matter very much because they allow for the opportunity to reveal important strategies to gaining religious literacy in Afro-Cuban religions.

*Afro-Caribbean Religions* does cover a vast amount of material, albeit perhaps too broadly. Murrell himself states in his conclusion that, “no attempt was made to offer a systematic exposition” of the religious cultures he explores (p. 321). Indeed, like *Caribbean Religious History*, the volume leaves the reader wondering what to do with the large array of snapshots into complex religious cultures without a succinct theoretical or topical objective as a guide. Perhaps by focusing on the translocal dialogues that created the diversity and richness of religious communities in the Caribbean the authors of the two introductory books would have been better served. That is, in more robustly theorizing a few aspects that link Caribbean religions together, and illuminating these in specific, detailed discussions, the volumes would have come to life more clearly for their intended audiences. Yet, Edmonds and Gonzalez, as well as Murrell, must be commended for their efforts to include new populations and pairings in their wide considerations of the religions of the Caribbean.

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