

gender and class position and began to wear more “class appropriate” attire (described as a skirt and high heeled shoes), as opposed to more comfortable “island attire” (120). She calls this “cross dressing across class” (119). Readers are also privy to her self-actualization as she chooses to draw upon the strength of other black women feminists such as Angela Davis and Audre Lorde to address her fears as a woman in patriarchal Jamaica. This gives rise to her gendered, ethnographic “tuffness,” something akin to what she observes so many native Jamaican women, including ICIs, performing on a daily basis (187).

Ulysse argues that the dissertation on which this book is based served as a form of activism. As an example of that activism, she chose to include only one small hand-drawn picture in the entire ethnography. This is a geographical sketch of the island of Jamaica (161). There are no other photos or illustrations inside or outside the book. During a book signing engagement, Ulysse stated it was her goal, and should be the goal of all ethnography, to attempt to educate and dispel stereotypes by providing the reader with enough accurate information to encourage them to create their own visuals. She argued that photographs and pictures would not lend to this educational experience and would also further the visual stereotypes of the Caribbean “market woman.”

Even if it does not lead to the abandonment of photographs and other visuals as compliments to ethnographic texts, this remarkable and engaged ethnography should be required reading for anthropologists and anthropologists-in-training, in particular those contemplating their “nativeness” in respect to their ethnographic research. It will be especially important for

those with an interest in Caribbean and gender studies and deeper considerations of fieldwork ethics, global inequalities, and the ongoing efforts of decolonization through ethnography.

The Reaper’s Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery. *Vincent Brown*, Massachusetts/London: Harvard University Press, 2008. 340 pp.

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To what extent are death and its meanings essential to order, as well as to social conflicts? This book examines how people ascribe deep political significance to beliefs and practices associated with death, or what Vincent Brown calls “mortuary politics.” The author bases his evidence on the high mortality rates usually acknowledged by scholars as one of the most crucial factors of Atlantic slave societies. Brown delves into the ways death has shaped these societies’ quotidian relations. This involves an investigation into how the population revealed attitude to death around disputes over belongings, property, authority, morality, and territory. The result is a book that looks closely and in novel ways at Jamaica, Britain’s most important Caribbean colony, from the 18th to the beginning of the 19th century. At that time Jamaica was known as the “grave of the Europeans” due to high mortality rates. Thus the author has found an appropriate setting for examining life, death, power, and slavery.

This fluent, well-researched, and sensitive narrative the author shows that attitudes about death affected the history of those living in slavocratic Jamaica. And this

is the major reason the book attracts this reader's attention: Building on relatively unexplored territory, Brown points out essential elements of Jamaican society. He analyzes how people were related to the deceased; how beliefs and mortuary practices responded to demographic, social, economic, political, and religious changes; and how the mortuary policies shaped Jamaican history since relations with the deceased girded conflicts, rebellions and even parliamentary politics. For instance, in chapter 5 the author describes the violent deaths of slaves and the resulting *Zong Case* when, in 1781, a ship's captain decided to throw overboard sick and weak Africans so as not to threaten the value of the rest of the boat's "cargo." This action shocked British abolitionists and served as one catalyst in the struggle to end the Atlantic trade (1807) and British slavery itself (1838).

Brown's extensive research in various archives permitted him to identify an array of direct and indirect references to death, to deceased persons, and to afterlife visions among free people and slaves. Building on this evidence, chapter 4 illustrates how slaveholders availed themselves politically of ideas about spirits' return to Africa after death. Slaveholders thus threatened their slaves with retaliatory punishment involving the mutilation and public exposure of corpses so as to avoid suicide among their captives.

Reaper's Garden follows the advice of Sidney Mintz and Richard Price as regards the necessity of analyzing carefully how material life shaped the evolution of beliefs and practices brought to America by Africans. Brown emphasizes the scope of enslaved people's cultural creativity. Chapter 6 analyzes numerous aspects of Africans' religious conversion, showing how they adapted Christianity to the basic tenets

they associated with death and the spirits, as well as to the political tensions of slavery. In this case, the Christian message of equality beyond the grave was transferred to the mundane realm. This is due to Africans' belief in a strong link between the spiritual and the mundane worlds, while relegating the horrors of slavery to hell. This suggests that Christianity served as a powerful instrument for political reform.

Brown also demonstrates that cultural practices, especially those related to death, played a major role among Africans in the political history of slavery. In several excerpts, the author argues persuasively that people's relations to death and the deceased transformed the transcendental into an arena of mundane conflicts. In chapter 3 he presents different ways slaves managed, through negotiations and conflicts, to bequeath belongings and plots of land to relatives and enslaved companions. Chapter 7 describes how rebels seized an improvised casket from a member of the slavery-supporting troops and buried the corpse of a black colonel involved in the *Baptist War* of 1831, a major black rebellion that threatened the colony. In the same chapter 7 the author also emphasizes how slaves and free people mobilized individual and collective remembrances of the feats of the deceased so as to legitimate disputes during and after slavery.

The way Brown weaves his arguments suggests he might go further with his analysis. One approach would be to place the book in conversation with the work of James Sweet (*Recreating Africa*), which is only briefly mentioned by Brown in the epilogue. In chapter 6, Brown advocates the idea of a "creolization of the spiritual world" (223) and resorts to John Thornton's analysis of African's process of incor-

poration of Christianity in the context of social, demographic and political transformation in the first decades of the 19th century. Brown could have provided readers interested in the African Diaspora and the African attitudes toward death with a discussion about the different ways that these beliefs, such as the persistent belief in the spirits of the dead, were transferred to America in the context of conversion to Christianity. An argument with Sweet would point out the divergences and convergences between these two recent analyses that focus on the great significance of the deceased, the spirits, and the ancestors.

However, this lacuna does not diminish this work's merit. Brown convinces the reader about the viability of viewing Jamaican mortuary politics as both an analysis of the political implications of cultural practices and a material history of supernatural imaginaries. Additionally, in several instances the author makes sweeping yet insightful statements about the conceptions and attitudes of death in the 18th century, mainly those related to a putatively European Protestant religious matrix. In this way he begins to shed light on the history of death in the West in relation to the Black Atlantic. *Reaper's Garden* is a must-read book.

Crossing the Water: A Photographic Path to the Afro-Cuban Spirit World. *Claire Garoutte and Anneke Wambaugh*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2007. 280 pp, 157 photographs.

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Cuban scholar Joel James Figarola (1999) has argued that notions of the dead and

their continuing ties to the living are central organizing principles across Cuban popular religious practices that help explain how and why distinct traditions are often practiced as complementary. The theme of human relationships with spirits of the dead is vividly explored in *Crossing the Water*. The title invokes a Cuban religious metaphor for the permeable gulf that enables communications between humans and the spirit world and gives spirits of the dead and the deities special potency in the living world. This fine project of visual anthropology explores one man's religious practices within Santería, Palo Monte, and Spiritism, thus demonstrating the commonalities and complementarities that make such a seemingly eclectic approach to religion work for so many Cubans.

Coauthors Claire Garoutte and Anneke Wambaugh are photographers who show more than a minor personal interest in, and commitment to, the practices they document. While neither is trained as an anthropologist (Wambaugh studied art history), their photographs are nuanced, dynamic, and detailed enough to captivate the casual reader and expert alike. The book rests on the authors' long-term relationship with religious practitioner Santiago Castañeda Vera in Santiago de Cuba. The authors acknowledge the influence of Karen McCarthy Brown's *Mama Lola* (1991), something evident in their sensitivity to their relationship with their primary subject and field consultant. At various points in the text they reflect on the multiple working relationships that produced this jointly authored book.

And then there are the photographs, some 150 of them, many in resplendent full-page format. Most capture moments of ritual action with the drama of the best