BOOK REVIEWS

Tim Barringer and Wayne Modest, eds, *Victorian Jamaica* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2018). 744 pp + 270 colour illus. ISBN 9780822360681. US$ 39.95, paperback.

Despite the expansive list of published work on Victorian imperialism or Jamaican history and culture, *Victorian Jamaica*, a new volume of essays edited by Tim Barringer and Wayne Modest, deserves our attention. The editors begin by defining their scope—Jamaica during the Victorian century—approached with a twist. They explain that instead of looking at Jamaica under Victoria's reign, they look at Victoria's reign from the perspective of Jamaican art, artefacts, and writing. They add, 'every aspect of Jamaican culture during the period was in dialogue, and often in conflict, with ideas, attitudes, behaviors, and restrictions generated by the imperial center' (3). The essays that follow this declaration draw out its significance. The editors are right in noting that 'A Caribbean perspective is essential to a full understanding of British history of the Victorian age' (3). *Victorian Jamaica* is a groundbreaking, refreshing collection that engages with imperial Victorian culture and Jamaican culture from both under-studied perspectives and new methodologies. On both fronts the volume succeeds and should be welcomed by scholars of Jamaican, Caribbean, British, and Victorian culture, history, art, literature, architecture, material culture studies, and religion.

Wayne Modest and Tim Barringer open the volume with a helpful introduction in which they explain the logic behind the creation of what they describe as, 'a first history of the material and visual culture of Jamaica, located within the larger discursive and ideological matrix of the colonial world' (24). The introduction is followed by 'Object Lessons', a shorter section containing vignettes on twenty-two material objects. The remainder of the volume is divided into three parts, each containing

full-length scholarly essays. Readers will find more than three hunded visual images alongside original work by leading scholars in the fields of Jamaican and Caribbean history, art, literature, architecture, performance studies, material culture, fashion, and religion. It's not easy to integrate such a large body of work nearly seven hundred pages in length, but the editors succeed in creating a coherent project where topics echo across section and chapter divisions. The essays are well written, and the subjects covered offer a spectacular range of perspectives on Jamaican cultural formation during the Victorian century. The Morant Bay Rebellion stands as a centrepiece and an important critical lens for considering the integration of art, narrative, and racial subjectivity. This choice has the welcome effect of illuminating under-studied contexts for the Rebellion and their long-standing implications for scholars of rebellion history. *Victorian Jamaica* marks an important turn in approaches to visuality and materiality as a broadening critical methodology for tracing the intersection of objects, narratives, and subjectivities in nineteenth-century Jamaica.

The opening collection of twenty-two vignettes on 'culturally resonant objects' (23) from the nineteenth century explores 'the ways that material objects reflect, and acted to structure, social relations' (51). While other histories have privileged narrative works, Barringer and Modest insist—rightfully so—that material and print objects have something unique to say to us, something that narrative or other print sources are unable to convey. As the essays in this section of the volume demonstrate, the choice to foreground objects invokes the existence and creative work of people who left no printed records of their lives or perspectives. Moreover, the study of objects exposes links between creators and users or sellers and preservers of these objects, thereby pointing to the existence of networks and social relations among multiple groups. The objects include a door lock, a map, a nineteenth-century photography album, a child's cap, and a chess table. The authors make persuasive arguments for the ways this broad array of objects helped to produce and govern racialised subjects.

Despite the obvious strengths of this section, the editors introduce confusion with their claim in the following sentence: 'The result, we hope, is a "thick description" of Jamaican culture and its artefacts that moves beyond what is possible within the framework of narrative history' (35). Such a claim stands awkwardly in a narrative history focused on objects. It makes sense to recognise that historiography has generic limits. For example, unlike a narrative about door locks, handling the physical object might enable us to see the fingerprint of its maker, to smell the rust, or to feel the bumpy surface of the metal. Unless one approaches narrative through the lens of print culture, material culture, or book history, descriptions frequently cannot achieve such tactile or experiential observation or analysis. Physical objects, in contrast, can inspire different kinds of questions or readings unavailable in most narratives. Yet, readers of *Victorian Jamaica* do not have access to the objects under study. Our access comes from narratives about those objects. Moreover, what any scholar brings to their interpretive work of objects has been shaped by their knowledge of narrative history. Thus, the desire to read the objects as separate from narrative seems misplaced. This is a small point, admittedly, and overall this section succeeds in offering compelling accounts of cultural formation, history, and racial subjectivity reflected in or made visible through objects.

The subsequent section, 'Making Victorian Subjects', includes a cluster of essays on topics from the law, the Morant Bay Rebellion, liberalism, sanitary reform, education and reformatories, botany, sports, and the writing of imperial culture. This section clearly addresses not just a changing Jamaican world and political history, but the rise of 'new subjectivities' as Anthony Bogues puts it (158). The section opens with Diana Paton's wonderful history of Victorian Jamaica, a period when, she notes, 'society did not yet include the majority of the population' (125). She traces the history of the law as a frame for reading Jamaican cultural developments under Victorian rule. Also very strong in this section is Rivke Jaffe's discussion of pollution which presents colonial Jamaica as culturally resonant with the present, while tracing Victorian-era medical care and legislation on health reform. Jaffe

concludes by noting, 'the historical association of dirty places with "unclean," morally deficient people continues to inform environmental and health inequalities in Kingston' (186). Such views offer a new lens for considering existing scholarship on similar debates in Victorian England about poverty and cleanliness, particularly in urban spaces such as Manchester and London. Julian Cresser's discussion of the creolization of Victorian sport prompts consideration of everyday life in Jamaica. Catherine Hall's capstone to this section offers a very important discussion of slavery's erasure in the post-emancipation era—a point that reverberates with Nadia Ellis's essay in a later section of the volume, 'Jamaican Performance in the Age of Emancipation' in which she notes, 'For black performers operating within traditions with a long history of anticolonial resistance, performances after 1838 rendered emancipation ironic precisely because performances of freedom continued to be necessary' (623). Collectively, these essays speak to the need for reading Jamaican cultural formation through the lens of Jamaicans, while reaching back to the social conditions in the pre-Victorian era that act not just as a prelude, but as a persistent and evolving cultural force in the decades that followed.

The relationship between England and Jamaica in the Victorian century is not simply about two locales redefining their relations with one another. This volume argues that both were undergoing monumental change in this period, and those changes were often working relationally or at odds with one another. *Victorian Jamaica* addresses these shifts directly in the next section, 'Visual Material Cultures', which traces the contours and effects of some of the most significant historical changes in this period. Tim Barringer focuses on the kind of visuality to emerge following emancipation. He follows two massive transformations: the media shift from lithography and painting to photography and wood engraving; and the changing nature of the labourer from slave to worker. His discussion illuminates the problem of representing the new post-emancipation class of people. David Boxer builds on this work in an important essay on the Duperly family and 'Cartemania' during the Morant Bay Rebellion period. Gillian Forrester

extends this discussion by looking at the genre of photography albums from this period, many of which were created from photographs produced in the Duperly studio. And Anna Arabindan-Kesson turns the discussion of photography in the direction of East Indians, or South Asian labourers. She recalls that 'between 1845 and 1921, when the practice of indentured labor ended, approximately thirty-seven thousand Indian laborers were imported to Jamaica' (395). Even in the middle of this large and growing population of immigrants, during the late-nineteenth century East Indians were photographed in Jamaican studios 'in ways that accentuate their foreign and even exotic status while providing a picturesque site within the Jamaican landscape' (397). Arabindan-Kesson offers a fascinating analysis of these photographs and the ways they speak to Indian efforts to maintain ties with their homelands (395).

The remaining essays in this section turn away from painting and photography and toward the built environment and public displays of culture. John Cross's discussion of furniture traces the relationship between colony and metropole and 'the intricacies of the power relationships between furniture makers of different racial and political subjectivities, shaped the emergence of a distinctively Jamaican style of furniture during the Victorian period' (421). James Robertson engages in an important discussion of the way churches and chapels—the buildings of Christian religious culture—reshaped local geographies as plantations fell into ruin. Elizabeth Pigou-Dennis follows with a discussion of creole architecture which, she argues, 'suggests a more complex account than any binary analysis of "African" and "European" influences could produce' (475). This essay might even be read as a coda for the book itself. Collectively, the essays in the volume demonstrate that Victorian Jamaica was not defined or expressed explicitly as a melding of Afro-Caribbean or colonial contexts with British culture. The sum of parts was expansive and diverse, and the mixing of cultures and people generative and dynamic. Petrina Dacres makes this point very clear in a discussion of the fluid meaning of monuments celebrating colonial administrations and Queen Victoria statues. The final essay rounds out the discussion

with a study of Jamaica's role in international exhibitions following slavery. Overall, the essays in this section move from the page to the exhibition or from the photograph to the building. Along the way they point to moments of tension or illumination in Jamaica's march toward modernity. Particularly fascinating in this section is the rise of machinery or technology in re-shaping Victorian Jamaica. Starting with Caribbean adaptations of British architecture or uses of photography, the essays register not just the looming presence of neo-Victorian nostalgia, but the ways in which Caribbean culture reinvented Victoriana through the strategic or creative uses of technology and new art forms.

The volume's final section, 'Race, Performance, Ritual', opens with Belinda Edmondson's nuanced analysis of 'The rise of brown identity in Jamaica' in the post-slavery era. She demonstrates that 'brown' ought to be read as a sign 'not simply a new racial category but also a new cultural identity in Jamaican society, one distinctly at odds with the original status of 'colored' as no more than a barrier class' (553). Edmundson's discussion is fascinating, particularly with regard to the examination of the intersection of race and class. She argues persuasively that brown culture 'was arguably the first manifestation of Jamaican middle-class culture: rampantly consumerist, socially ambitious, insular yet outward looking' (553). Indeed, Edmundson's essay is one of the only in the collection to consider the intersection of class and race, and of intersecting Black, brown, Jewish, and white cultures. Steve O. Buckridge explores clothing and dress as a 'conveyer of class, status, and identity' (577). Dianna M. Stewart's essay on Kumina, an African religious culture brought to Jamaica by Africans who arrived for work between 1841–67, that formed an important component in identity and nation formation. Nadia Ellis's essay on post-slavery performances tackles 'performances of freedom' during a period which continued to be necessary long after emancipation. Daniel T. Neely explores Jamaican music, noting 'through the cracks of Jamaican society, new musical forms emerged independent of and ultimately indifferent to late nineteenth-century public discourse about how Jamaican music should sound' (641).

The final essay of the last section and the volume is written by Faith Smith who concludes with a discussion of James MacGregor's 'The Mysterious Murder' published in 1898 in the *Jamaica Times*. The opening of Smith's essay marks an important conclusion for the volume of essays that precede hers. As she puts it, she 'step[s] out of a strictly Jamaican/Victorian or even Jamaican/English frame to show how other contexts add texture to our conceptions of each' (659). Smith is working against and through Catherine Hall's earlier pronouncement that 'Jamaica and the British Empire have "mutually constituted" each other' (659). One of the clear strengths of the volume, and of Smith's essay, is the way these essays create new pathways for reading the relationship of metropole and colony by introducing little-studied artefacts and written accounts. Yet, Smith's essay takes this further by recalling the dangers of looking back with sentimentality or nostalgia at the Victorian nature of Jamaica. She reads 'The Mysterious Murder' as 'an inquiry into the character of Jamaica's modernity' and as 'a cautionary tale about the presence of black Caribbean people standing in the way of their white counterparts' full modernity, the story also cautions that white people's slaveholding legacy prevents them from exercising power with moral legitimacy' (670). Smith pushes us to complicate Victorian subjectivity not just against and outside of a Victorian viewing lens, but 'within Jamaica's own multitextured landscape' (671).

One of the many strengths of the collection is its insistence on reading the Victorian century from a Jamaican perspective. The effect of this methodological choice not only introduces new texts and subjects, but approaches better-known texts and histories from fresh angles. The collection masterfully locates and recovers cultural texts that reflect subjective acts of self-determination and resistance to colonial authority. Moreover, the turn to everyday objects and popular art forms works well as a method of broadening approaches to Jamaican cultural formation in this period. While these objects originate in points around the island, most now reside in archives, museums, or libraries in Kingston or from major metropolitan centres in the US or UK. However, the objects' provenance and situatedness in particular archives raises questions

about the extent to which they can ever be read as representing an exclusively Jamaican or Caribbean perspective, or how they evoke multiple histories and perspectives at once.

Studies of the colonial archive have cautioned us against reading objects as neutral, or outside of the collecting ideologies and historical perspectives of those that selected, arranged, catalogued, and packaged them for future use in institutions. Thus, while many of the objects discussed in the volume are addressed by compelling essays, a logical next step would be to consider their status as 'chosen' and their identity as archival records. Along these lines, we would want to consider their provenance, and the perspectives of those who made the determination that they had cultural or historical value in the first place. Next, we might interrogate the extent to which the items' provenance link them to the very colonial lenses they are thought to oppose. Many of the objects under discussion were chosen by Victorian colonial figures (Frank Cundall, for example) in charge of developing the Victorian collections and institutions where they now reside. The objects were chosen a second time by the editors and writers of this volume of essays because of their exemplary status as representations of Jamaican perspectives. And while they certainly do present Caribbean perspectives, many of these objects record or represent British or Imperial perspectives as well. Hence, future work might not only draw out these complexities, but could probe extant traces of what was never selected or saved by Victorian museum collectors and archivists because it didn't align with British aesthetic or historical priorities. Admittedly, identifying the provenance of the objects will never get us outside of the colonial framework; but it will enable a study of the way historical selection processes and curatorial practices are part of why we can never read objects as neutral or as tied exclusively to one set of perspectives. New work might consider how objects from the street, vernacular texts and architecture, or family relics speak to Caribbean perspectives that flew under the radar of collectors and archivists.

Certainly, objects catalogued and preserved in national libraries and museums have significant value, which is what makes *Victorian Jamaica*

such an important volume of essays. My point is that this important work might be extended by taking these methodologies on the road or into the field to consider how un-curated, everyday objects might open up or complicate what we understand to be a 'Jamaican perspectives', or how such perspectives could illuminate the logic of choice and selection at work among Victorian art collectors and archivists. What if we could study objects outside of major cities and cultural institutions, in local sites of record keeping and memory—inside the cemetery, under the bridge, or on the walls of the classroom? What if we read the archival objects as signs of what was created primarily and saved secondarily, as a blending of histories that might be unpacked by a two-sided study of object and provenance, of the practice of creation alongside practices of selection and safe keeping?

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Jean Besson, *Transformations of Freedom in the Land of the Maroons: Creolization in the Cockpits Jamaica* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2016). viii + 369 pp. ISBN 9789766374082. US$ 47.95, paperback.

Jean Besson's latest work is an ethnographic portrayal of the effects of creolization, globalization, and land ownership in northwest Jamaica that are often referred to as the Cockpits. Her work examines three communities, the Accompong Maroons, Aberdeen, and Maroon Town/Trelawny. This particular region is renowned as one of the sites of Jamaica's eighteenth-century Maroon Wars. Yet, the Maroons were not the sole population who lived in the area, and nearby communities, both those connected with the Maroons and others who bore different marks of the transatlantic slave trade, built their communities in the cockpits after the end of slavery. These communities, over time, saw their