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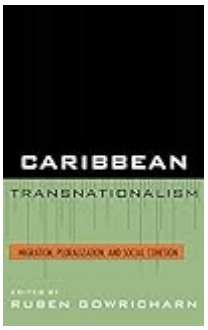

Ruben Gowricharn, ed. *Caribbean Transnationalism: Migration, Pluralization, and Social Cohesion.* Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006. 253 pp. $29.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7391-1397-4; $83.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7391-1167-3.

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Creolizing Nationalism and Ethnifying Transnationalism

Caribbean Transnationalism: Migration, Pluralization, and Social Cohesion brings together a selection of articles originally presented as papers at the International Conference on Globalisation, Diaspora, and Identity Formation organized by the University of Surinam in February 2004. Most of these articles deal with the southern Caribbean: Trinidad, Surinam, and the Guianas. Ruben Gowricharn very helpfully contextualizes the reader in a Caribbean where "group identities are constantly shifting under the impact of creolizing nationalism and ethnifying transnationalism" (p. 12). Despite containing some bland chapters, the book offers social scientists and historians (and to a lesser degree literary critics) some exciting ethnographic narratives and timely theoretical interventions that, at their best, refreshingly go beyond tired critical commonplaces.

Gowricharn's introduction suggests that this volume will take to task the imprecise use of terms such as "diaspora" and "transnationalism." He dismisses out of hand (and out of context) Stuart Hall's alignment of diaspora with heterogeneity, difference, and hybridity; less controversially, he dismisses Paul Gilroy's notion of the Black Atlantic as an oversimplified unity (p. 5). Reflecting the collection's disciplinary grounding in the social sciences, Gowricharn calls for a "typology" and a "precise definition" of transnationalism (p. 7). Fortunately, and despite the combative tone of the introduction, the collection does not spend too much time nitpicking over terminology. Instead, each of the book's four sections attempts to shed a different conceptual, historical, or anthropological light on the diverse manifestations of Caribbean transnationalism. The articles in the first section of the book, "Conceptual Issues," tend to suffer for their attempt to broadly survey commonly used categories in Caribbean studies. The exception is William F. Santiago-Valles's "Resistance Among Those Displaced to the Caribbean: Suggestions for Future Research," which argues for the need to suture cultural and material history. By revisiting two fascinating case histories of grassroots research and activism–the Negro Welfare Cultural and Social Association (NWCSA) in Trinidad, 1933-1945, and the Red Thread woman's collective in Guyana, 1985-present–Santiago-Valles presents "examples of worker's [sic] representing their interests without intermediaries as a counterweight to the iden-

tity politics promoted from the North in order to weaken the economic and cultural resistance in the South" (p. 72). These organizations mobilize a vernacular account of global capital's regional and local effects in order to bridge ethnic divisions and contest the material conditions of the working classes. In a provocative call to intellectual arms, Santiago-Valles argues that social scientists should organically derive their conceptual frameworks from Caribbean transnational migrants' own lived engagement with globalization. Fernando Rosa Ribeiro's "The Guianas Revisited: Rethinking a Region" argues that the Guianas–which in his estimation should include Surinam, Trinidad, and parts of Venezuela–represent a "specific type of Caribbean society and a frontier region between the Caribbean and the Amazon" (p. 23). The Guianas in fact represent "a permanently open frontier" that encourages settlement schemes which routinely fail, while nonetheless sedimenting a legacy of pluralism (p. 33). Rosa Ribeiro argues that this state of cross-border flux and pluralism makes the Guianas uniquely difficult to theorize. Echoing Santiago-Valles, he calls on researchers to use "locally grown *imaginaires* and narratives" to accomplish this, though it is unclear why he himself did not do so (p. 35). Similarly, Michele Reis's chapter on the Caribbean diaspora, "The Modern to Late-Modern Period in the Caribbean Diaspora," describes a phenomenon familiar to students of the region, yet leaves the reader wishing she had unsettled to some degree this familiarity. The article outlines the "specificities" of the Caribbean diaspora, noting for example that "Caribbean festival arts and music are a global phenomenon" (p. 48). Reis mentions the "mediatization and commodification" of these "identity markers," but decides not to unpack these phrases with an analysis of their inherent ambiguities.

The second section of the book, "Regional Transnational Communities," explores South-South transnational communities in the Caribbean. In a chapter featuring archival research, literary history, and ethnomusicology, Rosa Mary Allen traces the impact of regional migration on Curacaoan identity in "Regionalization of Identity in Curacao: Migration and Diaspora." Allen complicates our understanding of the motivations behind post-emancipation Afro-Curacaoan migration in the Caribbean, uncovering through nineteenth-century colonial documents that family reunification, and not just economic incentives, prompted many Afro-Curacaoans to migrate to Puerto Rico, for example (p. 82). Drawing on a rich archive of oral histories, she also points out that "subjective factors such as respect and improving their status in the hierarchical society they inherited from the enslaved position" drove many Afro-Curacaoans to migrate to Cuba in the twentieth century. She shows how this intra-Caribbean migration not only conferred status on migrants returning to Curacao, but also helped forge an Afro-Caribbean identity by cross-pollinating language and music throughout the region. Two chapters follow on Brazilian migration to French Guiana and Surinam, respectively. Mainly hailing from Brazilian states bordering these countries, Brazilians enter illegally and work primarily as *garimpeiros* (gold-miners) and manual laborers. Marjo de Theije's "Transnationalism in Surinam: Brazilian Migrants in Paramaribo" reconstructs the formation of a Brazilian transnational community from its diffuse inception to the consolidation of institutions that cater to this community. He tracks how Brazilian culture has moved out of the Belenzinho neighborhood to influence local culture: Brazilian bars and nightclubs are now popular with the Surinamese, and Brazilian evangelical churches are attracting members from the local Moravian church.

The third section of *Caribbean Transnationalism* is labeled "Global Transnationalism." Brinsly Samaroo's "The Mahatma in the Caribbean" surveys Gandhi's career, from his work on behalf of Indians in South Africa to the anti-colonial struggle in India, through the eyes of Indo-Caribbean civil society. Samaroo ties this historical reconstruction–based primarily on contemporaneous journalism–to ideological processes of ethnification that grew out of Gandhi's influence over Indo-Caribbean identity. After Gandhi's death and Indian independence, Gandhi's legacy was still felt as Indo-Caribbean ethnification intensified through what Samaroo calls "transnational dialogue," i.e., the activities of Indian embassies and missionaries, as well as the screening of Bollywood films (p. 151). In another careful historical reconstruction that will interest literary critics as well as social scientists and historians, Alex van Stipriaan follows the development of African diasporic consciousness in Surinam through the lens of Emancipation Day, or *Keti Koti*. Whereas the Dutch colonial government promoted Emancipation Day (July 1, 1863) as an opportunity to reflect on "patience, obedience, modesty, and, above all, gratitude to God and King," van Stipriaan looks at how generations of Afro-Surinamese recoded the holiday to serve their own pressing ideological and material concerns (p.155). From vindicating an autonomous Afro-Surinamese identity in the late nineteenth century, to forging an anti-colonial nationalist identity in dialogue with other colonial intellectuals in the metropole,

to reflecting embattled transnational and diasporic ethnic identities in both contemporary Surinam and Holland, Emancipation Day reflects the fraught discursive contests over national and postcolonial identities.

The final section of the book, "Transnationalism and Social Cohesion," shows how the southern Caribbean challenges European-derived conceptual frameworks frequently applied to the region. Gowricharn's "Ethnicity and Political Stability in Plural Societies" poses the most trenchant critique of these frameworks. Considering the stability of Surinam's plural society, he argues: "Culturally plural societies cannot be classified a priori as intrinsically conflict ridden societies." On the contrary, he continues: "The fact that the dominant approach in the social sciences conceptualizes plural societies as intrinsically conflict ridden stems from a European dream of a culturally homogeneous society" (p. 225). Gowricharn then outlines precisely how weak nationalism and strong ethnification produced stable race-relations in Surinam. It is interesting to note that the major conflict in recent Surinamese history emerged when the urban Creole (Afro-Surinamese) elite from the coastal regions tried to extend its control over the Maroons in the interior. This upset a balance of powers that Wim Hoogbergen and Dirk Kruijt explore in their excellent contribution, "Maroon Migration and Brazilian *Garimpeiros*: New Forms of Ethnic and Political Relations in Postwar East Suriname." In the aftermath of the Creole-Maroon civil war in Surinam, Maroon communities were displaced from territories they had effective dominion over for centuries. Along the banks of the Maroni River in East Suriname and western French Guiana, they resettled in and helped build a "government void… whose characteristics are less violent and whose territory is the locus of a fairly peaceful multi-ethnic social fabric" (p. 183). Hoogbergen and Kruijt analyze how a mutually advantageous ethnic division of labor grew up between the Maroons and Brazilian garimpeiros: "Right of ownership and unofficial taxes remain the domain of the Maroon leaders, while technology and labor is a Brazilian specialty" (p. 196). This political and economic arrangement also has had the effect of regulating marriages and sexual relationships according to Maroon common law. Like Gowricharn, the authors find relative harmony in places where models in the social sciences assume there should be instability.

This is when *Caribbean Transnationalism: Migration, Pluralization, and Social Cohesion* matters most: when it offers scholars in the social sciences and the humanities rigorous ethnographies and historical reconstructions that highlight those exceptional phenomena that escape the routinizing models of Caribbean studies.