lector a la interconexión entre género, raza y clase en la historia de Venezuela y, por extensión, de todo el continente latinoamericano.

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Lara Putnam’s fascinating recent book takes a broad look — and yet a very close one — at the hundreds of thousands of British Caribbeans who left their islands of birth and sought work and new lives in the circum-Caribbean area at the dawn of the 20th century. The book traces the establishment of this migratory sphere and its role in the creation of both black nationalism and internationalism through the press, religion and popular culture. It examines its consolidation and fragmentation in the face of the changing terrains of work, citizenship and national sovereignty in Central America and the Caribbean.

Putnam reconstructs these radical moves from the bottom up and from the margins. On the very first page of the book she stresses that “Sometimes the experiences and ideas of not-very-powerful people in not-very-prominent places generate very powerful changes” (1). She therefore goes on and decen ters prominent sites of the black diaspora, such as Harlem and Paris, in favor of what she terms “cosmopolitan peripheries” — the port towns, banana fields and oil construction sites of the Caribbean islands and Central America. She turns away from high politics to popular culture and popular beliefs, and especially from the Great Man theory to the examination of working class people, a shift which results in emphasis on the dominant role played by women in the cultural ferment at the turn of the century in the Greater Caribbean. Note, for example, the intricate manner in which she weaves throughout the book the life of Louise Helen Norton, better known as Louise Little, who immigrated in 1897 from a small fishing village in Granada to Montreal, Canada, through her marriage to Earl Little, their activities in UNIA as devoted Garveyites in the U.S., the circum-Caribbean black press she made her children read daily and the island-based popular beliefs she practiced with them, until her withdrawal into dementia, while one of her children, Malcolm Little, better known as Malcolm X, leads the Nation of Islam. This is but one example of Putnam’s impressive ability to craft micro history within the framework of transnational history.
The six chapters relay a multi-layered, sometimes conflictive, story of collective and individual identifications among the Afro-descendants in the British Caribbean. The first chapter outlines the broad contours of the circum-Caribbean migratory system from the second half of the nineteenth century through the first decades of the twentieth; chapter Two turns to supernatural beliefs and practices, termed by outsiders “Voodoo” and “Obeah”, although considered “Science” by insiders. In this especially alluring chapter, Putnam shows the extent to which practices of supernatural manipulation served as the lingua franca across the Greater Caribbean and stresses that those popular beliefs and practices, resented by the Black elite as “African Barbarism” were the harbingers of the 1930s religious movement that was more radical than anything those leaders had conceived of — Rastapharianism.

Chapter Three traces the shifting regimes of mobility control, which became race-oriented, and its consequences on race consciousness and the construction of the idea of “The Negro Race”. Chapter Four examines the print-based public sphere, once again through decentralization and a bottom-up perspective. Instead of highlighting the well-studied activities of W.E.B de Bois and Marcus Garvey, Putnam scrutinizes small-town newspapers and traces the establishment of a community of writers and readers alike across the Greater Caribbean.

Chapter Five presents the supranational black performative realm as another venue of black internationalism. Putnam claims that Jazz was a circum-Caribbean migratory project, forged as much in the “practice dance” of the youth in Port Limón and Colón, as in Harlem’s sparkling night clubs. She then locates the origins of Reggae in 1920s Port Limón, not 1960s Kingston. The last chapter concludes with the temporary halt of Caribbean migration: Deported from their countries of work and residence — sometimes even of birth — to the unwelcoming islands, the returnees became prominent in the religious radicalism and labor protests of the late 1930s, which Putnam views as one of the indications of the beginning-of-the end of the British Empire.

The book is based on large-scale archival research as well as a rich array of secondary literature. Putnam is extremely sensitive to her sources: She notes that “Not only were letters written; letters were saved” (38) and she is not afraid to express sympathy, “His expectation of quick resolution breaks your heart” (93). This is an admirably well-written, thought-provoking and honest book (note the final story of the conclusion). However, it lacks some background on the historical developments which spurred the mass Caribbean migration as well as the circumstances awaiting migrants in their receiving societies. The lack of such information might leave Putnam’s astute analyses somewhat in a vacuum. Yet, Radical Moves is an exceptional achievement. It provides excellent methodological tools for the study of migration, diaspora, popular culture, social
citizenship and nation-building and the creation of popular culture far beyond the circum-Caribbean. Moreover, it is an excellent source for advanced courses on Latin American and Caribbean Studies, African-American Studies, Empire and Colonial Studies and Religious Studies.

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