

BOOK REVIEWS

Rich in description and breadth of content, *Incarcerated Mothers* has room to deepen the analytical scope. Problematizing the tensions between oppression and resistance (and better clarifying the concepts) would allow for more about “what is done to mothers in and by these systems” and “the agency of the mothers themselves, their resistance and values that are of high importance to them” (11). Eljdupovic and Bromwich extend Andrea O’Reilly’s idea of “Mother Outlaw” as a way to “bridge the gap” between incarcerated and many other mothers (21). There is room left to explore a link between empowered mothers as “ideological outlaws” and incarcerated mothers as “legal outlaws.”

Constrained choices are found in all mothering contexts but are particularly salient for incarcerated mothers whose decisions about how they mother and meet their child(ren)’s needs are inextricably bound in the social spaces in which their lives are embedded, structured by race, gender, class and other inequalities. Shame of letting others down may be shared among mothers, yet a freedom *some* of us find in letting go of the cultural myth of the “perfect good mother” by embracing a maternal role on our own terms, as “outlaw,” may be less likely for incarcerated moms, ironically. Eljdupovic and Bromwich argue: “when women from the margins do mother, they place value on themselves and on children that the society in which they live has deemed unworthy of investment” (6). Stories about “Other” mothers challenging mainstream discourse on parenting and gender justice may help to shift the social devaluation of incarcerated mothers and their children. In response to women’s oppression a new paradigm where we support amelioration through stable and caring communities for all mothers and children over criminalization holds promise for social justice.

Reproducing the British Caribbean: Sex, Gender and Population Politics After Slavery

Juanita De Barros.

Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2014.

REVIEWED BY RACHEL O’DONNELL

Juanita De Barros’ new text on the politics of reproduction in the Caribbean’s post-slavery period, *Reproducing the British Caribbean: Sex, Gender, and Population Politics after Slavery*, traces the gendered and racialized policies that resulted from ideas surrounding population, reproduction and individuals in

the Caribbean after the end of slavery in the region. De Barros situates her discussion within three British colonies (Jamaica, Guyana, and Barbados) and two historical moments: the end of slavery in the region (1834/1838) and the violent labor protests (1934-1938) that led to nationalist movements for independence. She draws a number of noteworthy conclusions about slavery and its emancipation as well as reproduction and population growth, elaborating on the racialized underpinnings of colonial policy surrounding sexual and domestic practices in the Caribbean and the Eurocentric assumptions that informed these policies. Ideas about race and racialized views of population, health, and reproduction take center stage in her research in surprising ways, from policies surrounding infant and maternal welfare to tropical medicine, among others.

New attitudes emerged after slavery ended in the Caribbean, and as De Barros argues, many of these were invested in the success of emancipation itself. These new ways of thinking about medicine and society were crucial to policy development surrounding health and reproduction. De Barros considers the involvement of local physicians and researchers in tropical medicine, local midwives and the training programs provided for them, as well as the local mothers who were the targets of this official concern. She argues that individuals helped to shape approaches and implement policies to ensure the reproduction of Caribbean populations in the decades before independence. She demonstrates the centrality of sex, marriage, and women's reproductive labor during the colonial period and links these concepts to the emergence of new social orders after slavery, indicating how colonial anxieties surrounding sexuality continued to unfold in post-slavery societies.

These colonial anxieties figure prominently in the extensive research De Barros presents in five chapters, each of which focuses around a central element of her argument. She draws clear connections between falling birthrates, infant mortality, and population 'degeneration'; between health and national wealth; between eugenics and the ways in which the impoverished of the region were blamed for these problems, poor women in particular being condemned as unqualified mothers who contributed to their own children's mortality. De Barros reminds us that reproduction remained a measure of emancipation's success. Indeed, racial fitness was a powerful tool of empire, and the story De Barros writes of the ways colonial powers maintained 'fit' colonial peoples to labor in plantations and mines, and produce healthy and reproductive offspring is a captivating one. She does well to include the many ways in which birth practices changed in this time period, together with movements to eliminate traditional midwives for their 'unsanitary' traditional birth practices, and other ways that non-whites were represented as 'primitive' in sexuality and in the domestic sphere, including in childbirth itself. Most

interestingly, she details the role individual white British women played in this process highlighting tensions around ‘hygienic’ methods of child rearing. Indeed, policies that were seemingly innocuous, such as new methods for counting and keeping track of births and deaths, served the colonial governments in a multitude of ways.

De Barros presents a timely study of Caribbean reproductive policies, as well as the legacies of race, gender and colonialism as they continue to affect ideas and policies in the region as a whole, engaging intimately with ideas about sexuality and population growth and tropical disease. By placing reproduction centrally in her work, De Barros’s new book makes a welcome contribution to the literature on post-slavery societies, nicely situating her gendered historiography within Caribbean Studies and work on the African diaspora. This text will be of urgent importance to the fields of Caribbean history and sociology, as well as mothering and motherhood in a global context.

Wood

Jennica Harper.

Vancouver: Anvil Press, 2013.

REVIEWED BY DORSÍA SMITH SILVA

In *Wood*, Jennica Harper contemplates the multiple meanings of “wood” by revealing the complex layers of parent-child relationships in the stories of imaginary children, surrogate caregivers, fictitious father figures, and disillusioned progeny. Divided into six sections, the volume articulates the stories of wooden objects, wooden people, and wooden situations. While the connections between some of the poems are tenuous, the volume succeeds in Harper’s skill to manipulate the definitions of wood and conjure new understandings of parenthood.

The first section titled, “Realboys: Poems for, and from, Pinocchio,” is told from the prospective of the wooden childlike puppet Pinocchio who was made by the woodcarver Gepetto. As in the childhood tale, Pinocchio wants to become a real boy, attend school, and please his father-figure and creator Gepetto. Yet, his inability to become human causes great distress in “Where It Goes”: “But I have no blood to offer. No cells, / no jellyseeds