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**[Review of] *Maroon Nation: A History of Revolutionary Haiti*. By Johnhenry Gonzalez. Yale Agrarian Studies Series. Edited by James C. Scott. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019. Pp. xiv+302. \$40.00.**

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**Maroon Nation: A History of Revolutionary Haiti.** By Johnhenry Gonzalez. Yale Agrarian Studies Series. Edited by James C. Scott. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019. Pp. xiv+302. \$40.00.

What did freedom mean for the majority of the population in the newly created nation of Haiti after it threw off French rule in 1804, and how did ordinary Haitians' actions shape the future of the country? These are the central questions raised in Johnhenry Gonzalez's *Maroon Nation*, a major intervention in the burgeoning scholarship on the Haitian Revolution. Historians such as Laurent Dubois have argued that the abolition of slavery made Haiti the only country in the revolutionary era that fully embodied the era's principles of liberty and equality.<sup>1</sup> Gonzalez directs attention instead to the ways in which formerly enslaved blacks dismantled the plantation system and freed themselves from the constraints of the Atlantic world's capitalist economy. To achieve this victory, the country's masses had to fight, not just against their former white exploiters, but against the leaders—Toussaint Louverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, and Henri Christophe—whose names remain associated with the struggle against French rule but who sought to revive plantation-based sugar production for their own benefit.

Gonzalez argues that the outcome of this struggle made Haiti a “maroon nation,” living outside the world economy of its day. Although he sees “the rise of partially autonomous rural communities in nineteenth-century Haiti” as “an unprecedented triumph for former slaves and their descendants” (50), Gonzalez warns against “an unduly idealized or romanticized account” (41). Popular resistance prevented the development of a state apparatus capable of imposing a system of wage labor, but this also meant that the government provided no public services, such as education. An exploitative elite, concentrated in the country's cities, extorted wealth from the peasants through taxes and tariffs but did nothing to promote economic development, a strategy that Gonzalez dubs “elite marronage” (260).

Drawing on documents from the Haitian National Archives as well as from depositories in France and the United States, Gonzalez delves into the neglected history of Haiti after independence to argue that what mattered most to ordinary members of the population was the ability to acquire land for themselves rather than having to work for others. Their revolt was not just against slavery but also against the kind of work discipline implied by the capitalist system of wage labor. By squatting on former plantations or moving into remote mountain areas and by engaging in subsistence agriculture rather than raising cash crops, peasants essentially withdrew from the market economy. Acquiring legal title to their land had little meaning for them: a functioning system of records would have made it easier for the elite-run government to impose taxes. In any event, in the first decades after independence, there was more than enough land available to satisfy a population substantially reduced by the savage conflicts that had ravaged the former French colony for over a decade.

This was not the outcome envisaged by any of the military leaders whose names dominate the pages of most books about the Haitian Revolution. As Gonzalez shows, a peasant-based rural society “rose up in spite of *all* Haitian rulers' relentless attempts to reconstitute the plantation system” (172). Louverture, Dessalines, and Christophe all remained in thrall to the idea that only plantation-based sugar production for export, which required an extensive and highly coordinated labor force, could sustain the country. In order to achieve their goals, they attempted to tie black farmers to the plantations where they had previously been enslaved. Implicitly, Gonzalez thus argues that there was less

<sup>1</sup> Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World* (Cambridge, MA, 2004).

of a distinction between the prerevolutionary slave society of French Saint-Domingue and postrevolutionary Haiti than historians such as Dubois have claimed.

Postrevolutionary leaders failed to achieve their goals in part because of the ongoing conflicts among them. As Gonzalez reminds us, Haiti faced ongoing civil war until the final triumph of Jean-Paul Boyer's republican regime over Henri Christophe's monarchy in 1820: "Civil war and instability at the top created a context that favored the persistent emergence of defiance from below" (131). In order to win the loyalty of his own army in the struggle against Christophe, Alexandre Pétion, the mixed-race president of the southern Haitian Republic prior to Boyer, took the drastic steps of offering land grants to ordinary soldiers and affirming the land titles of those who had acquired de facto possession of property, measures that Gonzalez calls "the most radical decrees of the entire Haitian Revolution" (171). By the time the victorious Boyer tried one last time to force peasants back onto the plantations, through his Rural Code of 1826, it was too late: the law's provisions proved unenforceable.

Inspired to some extent by the anthropologist James Scott's work on peasant resistance strategies, *Maroon Nation* also revives questions that were at the heart of debates about revolutionary movements prior to the cultural and linguistic turns of the 1970s. This reviewer was reminded of Barrington Moore's *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, a volume that was mandatory reading for history and social science students in the 1960s.<sup>2</sup> Moore argued that the outcome of struggles over land ownership in primarily agrarian societies was decisive for the prospects of postrevolutionary democracy. Ironically, for Moore, it was postrevolutionary France, the country that fought so hard to prevent the independence of Haiti and the breakdown of the plantation system, that came closest to creating a democracy of small independent landowners. Moore never envisioned the case of Haiti, although Gonzalez's analysis tends to confirm Moore's conclusion, "no bourgeoisie, no democracy." Although Gonzalez warns that "Haiti's history does not easily lend itself to the comparative mode of analysis" (160), by directing attention to classic questions about land ownership and social structure, Gonzalez not only reshapes debates about the Haitian Revolution but also suggests new perspectives on the development of agrarian life in Europe and elsewhere.

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**Public City/Public Sex: Homosexuality, Prostitution, and Urban Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris.** By *Andrew Israel Ross*. Sexuality Studies. Edited by *Janice Irvine and Regina Kunzel*.

Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2019. Pp. xiv+248. \$110.50 (cloth); \$34.95 (paper and e-book).

Andrew Israel Ross's *Public City/Public Sex: Homosexuality, Prostitution, and Urban Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris* examines two populations associated with public sexual behavior during the second half of the nineteenth century in Paris: female prostitutes and men seeking sex with other men. He shows how efforts to clean up the city's streets by removing from public view both female prostitutes soliciting men for sex

<sup>2</sup> Barrington Moore Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston, 1966).