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Critical Explorations of Gender and the Caribbean: Taking it into the Twenty-First Century

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About two months before the writing of this review, an open letter from a law student at the University of the West Indies (UWI) arrived in our email inboxes via a Caribbean Studies Listserv. In it the student wrote to one of her poverty law professors, critiquing him for his recent lecture on sexual intimacy (or rather, sexual “primitiveness”) in the Caribbean. Feeling that her questions and criticisms of his argument were foreclosed by the professor’s unwillingness to entertain feedback and queries during lecture, the student used the letter to regain voice and wrote:

[Professor] you raised the concern that women in the Caribbean were far too likely to have children by multiple fathers. This tendency, you argued, could be attributed to the operation of what you termed the “Big Dick” model of choosing a partner. This, you stated, and not say poverty,

or cultural circumstances or preference accounted for the high incidence of illegitimacy in the Caribbean. You did not leave it there however, you went on to make the claim that “Caribbean women” were more likely to have children with multiple partners than were women in the “West” (your term).¹

The professor’s lecture, as presented by the student, taps into long-standing and gnawing presumptions about gender relations and roles in the Caribbean that, in many respects, decontextualize gendered patterns of Caribbean lived experience. These presumptions posit that Caribbean culture (Afro-Caribbean culture implicitly) is defined in part by aberrant and destructive family patterns that do not follow an assumed norm. Such views can also be found within the writings of European colonizers and North American social scientists. However, they have also been roundly criticized and corrected by Caribbean feminist scholars especially starting in the 1980s. The three volumes reviewed here continue the feminist scholarly work of deconstructing, contextualizing, and reorienting conceptualizations and analyses of gender in the Caribbean.

Made up of territories colonized by the British, French, Spanish, Dutch, and Danish who held plantations operated by the forced and under-compensated labor of African slaves and Asian indentured servants, the Caribbean is a region where the colonial and plantation experience partially shaped what men and women experience. For instance, as Barbara Bush (1990) showed (as if anticipating the law professor’s proclamations), while the patterns varied by colonial power and individual territory, Afro-Caribbean families were broken up by the plantation experience, leading to extended family structures and shifting and fluid partnerships and kin arrangements. We also know that Afro-Caribbean and, to a lesser extent, Indo-Caribbean women have always worked in and outside of the home (often due to colonial requirements and more recent economic imperatives), breaking down ideas about strictly divided gender spheres relating especially to work (Safa 1995). Yet, during the mid-to-late twentieth-century period by which point a majority of the region’s territories were pursuing or had achieved independence from colonialism, women’s roles in politics and nationalist movements were not as prominent and public as they were for men who dominated these spaces. When this is considered together with the fact that women’s contributions in the political realm have largely been under-recognized (Bolles 1996), we are able to see an area of gender inequality and gender power dynamics. And, under contemporary economic globalization processes, we have seen that, due to gender ideologies and foreign employers’ cost-saving tactics, women

have been drawn heavily into the labor force at lower wages while men have been simultaneously disconnected from occupations traditionally defined as male. This has complicated ideas and categorizations of male-female spheres, but it has also contributed to shifting patterns of family formation and gender roles and relations (Safa 1995; Freeman 2000). Social science literature has documented these patterns, and literary analyses also have revealed such themes when writers place gender in the context of the interplay of structure and agency. The literature, then, has been quite clear in emphasizing the historical, political, and economic context in which women and men's roles and relations have emerged and become possible. At the same time, it has situated such gendered social patterns within the active choices that men and women make within these contexts, as well as the particular and simultaneous constraints and opportunities that they present for the paths that women and men can and do follow.

As we mentioned, this gender studies literature increased noticeably in the 1980s. The student's letter to her professor, then, comes roughly twenty years after three landmark edited volumes on gender emerged. *Women in the Caribbean* (Ellis 1986) and *Gender in Caribbean Development* (Mohammed and Shepherd 1988) challenged prevailing social science perspectives that regarded women as domestically bound or deemed flexible and non-marital Caribbean partnership patterns pathological, much in the way that the law professor appears to deem them.² A few years later, *Caribbean Women Writers* (Cudjoe 1990) recognized Caribbean women's contribution to the production of literary arts in the region and helped launch the annual conference of the Association of Caribbean Women Writers and Scholars that is still in existence. Since their publication, these books have been bolstered by an extensive list of edited volumes³ and monographs on women and men's roles, identities, and relations as well as the production of meanings and representations around maleness and femaleness. The student's email is a reminder that this body of material *is working*. Her astute, academically driven observations illustrate that the vast literature on Caribbean gender studies has impacted our abilities to problematize maleness and femaleness in the region. At the same time, the letter reveals that the work must continue because, clearly, uncomplicated and problematic notions of gender in the Caribbean persist in some circles. Thankfully, the three edited volumes reviewed here are taking up this challenge.

Edited by three well-respected and prolific Caribbean feminist scholars and published by the most prominent university press in Anglo-Caribbean Studies, the volumes represent a collection of interdisciplinary, theoretical, empirical, and critical essays on various dimensions of gender

within social science and humanities studies. They incorporate work from historians, literary scholars, legal scholars, artists, and social scientists based primarily in the region (Anglophone Caribbean and, to a lesser extent, the Spanish-speaking Caribbean) but do not exclude scholars based in North America and Europe. In cross-cutting ways, contributors take up topics such as gender and feminist theorizing; gender and power; representations, essentializations, relations, and constructions of gender in popular culture, literature, and historic and contemporary everyday political, economic, and social life; Caribbean masculinities and femininities; and gender and its intersections with race/ethnicity, class, nation, and—to a lesser extent—globality.⁴ And, although the volumes hold particular emphases (e.g., Reddock's emphasis on masculinities; Barriteau's emphasis on gender and power; and Mohammed's emphasis on feminist thought), all three share concerns and intersecting interests in particular areas of gender studies. Indeed, all push forward more extensive theorizing of gender-inclusive notions of maleness, femaleness, and relations between men and women, particularly in the Caribbean. In this way, we see the volumes as building on one another and forming part of a larger conversation.

Feminist thought

In *Gendered Realities*, UWI's literary scholar Patricia Mohammed (2002) laments the problematic assumption that there are separate male and female spheres seen as divided into public versus private, a division that never reflected Caribbean social gendered realities given colonial and postcolonial exigencies and formations that required women to work outside of the home. Drawing on Foucault, she argues that gender studies is an epistemological and ontological project "about finding the 'truth of our being' . . . [a project in which the] feminist goal [is to ensure that] no gender is negatively objectified" (2002: xvii). But, Mohammed notes (as the student's email mentioned above reveals) that such tasks of gender studies and feminist projects are challenging and often impeded by processes within the field of gender studies and beyond it, dynamics that include (dis)agreements about what gender and gender studies entail.

This impressive book invests in this field and challenge through its seven parts and twenty-nine chapters, in which there are common themes regarding the popular imagination of male-female spheres as separate versus the overlapping reality of those spheres. The first part is on feminist theory and method with chapters that, in different ways, caution against the pitfalls of essentialism. This is a current throughout all three volumes (less so, however, in Reddock's book), in which a

critique of postmodern “Western” feminist approaches are questioned in part for their applicability to the Caribbean but also for their theoretical utility. Two chapters (by Saskia Wieringa and Odette Parry) explore the subject of education and, engaging strongly on theoretical grounds, offer up important points regarding: (1) the interplay of and distinction between essentialism and constructivism (with a critique of uncritical support of constructivist approaches alongside an argument for salvaging the politics of essentialism) and (2) the theoretical and epistemological underpinnings of methodologies as well as (especially in Parry’s chapter) the ways that power, agency, and epistemological practice intersect. In an empirically based chapter, Michelle Rowley draws on findings from a study about women of African descent on the island of Tobago to advance the novel concept of “matrifolk” which characterized the diverse spaces of motherhood, womanhood, and marriage that women on the island must traverse and negotiate. Janet Momsen’s chapter addresses the paradox of a patriarchal ideology within Caribbean societies where a vast number of households are headed by women, as well as the historic and contemporary ways in which women have participated actively in the economic public sphere.

As in Momsen’s discussion, historical considerations mark many of the volume’s chapters. However, history is centered in the chapters by Verene Shepherd and Bridget Brereton where academic analyses of gender and history emerge, while the academic contexts of gender are profiled in chapters by Peter Whiteley and Barbara Bailey. Brereton reviews pivotal academic contributions in the field of gender and Caribbean historiography while Shepherd’s important article contributes to our understanding of the limitations and constraints to accessing Indo-Caribbean women’s histories in Jamaica, given scant and unreliable sources on this population. Indeed, we see the underrepresentation of Indo-Caribbean experiences in these volumes just as Shepherd rightly points out is the case in (most) other research areas. Both Whiteley and Bailey underscore how constructions of masculinity and femininity link to the ways that girls and boys, men and women are channeled through schools. For his part, Whiteley finds that, within Jamaica, Trinidad, Tobago, and Barbados, girls predominate in certain science fields such as biology but not in others such as physics and engineering, where boys predominate. He cites images of gender and science, gender of school-teachers within these fields, and gender dynamics within classrooms as possible explanations for such difference.

A section on gender in the realm of family, economy, and society concerns particular practices, ideologies, discourses, theories, and silences surrounding women’s engagement with the economy and broader society.

Two chapters offer valuable new insights into the significance of race and age for women's experiences with family and work, importantly breaking apart notions of a universal Caribbean female experience. Alissa Trotz's chapter on Guyana problematizes women's economic engagement by exploring how race and ethnicity factor into the extra-domestic work patterns for women heading households. Her research shows that Afro-Guyanese women actively participate in the labor force no matter their household structure or marital status; contrarily, Indo-Guyanese women are more apt to work outside of the home when they are not married and head their own households. Looking at Jamaica, Joan Rawlins demonstrates that, unlike younger women who have been more of a focus in the literature, a majority of middle-age and older women work in unremunerated tasks as family caregivers (e.g., raising children of family members who have migrated) and community service providers, alongside their work in extra-domestic paid employment.

Caribbean women's realities are also addressed in chapters considering how Caribbean writers (dis)engage conventional literary styles and genres around gender themes. David Williams calls for feminist readings of West Indian classic novels, arguing that these have been overlooked yet communicate particular "perceptions of reality" (2002: 291). In close readings of different Caribbean novels, Patricia Ramsay and Denise de Caires Narain both argue that the writers they review present empowered Caribbean female subjects, echoing Michelle Rowley's and Eudine Barriteau's social science findings that Caribbean women challenge the limits placed upon them. Anne Marie Ramsay looks at two novels by Afro-Costa Rican writer Quince Duncan and effectively argues that Duncan paints a complicated picture of female empowerment against various stereotypes such as female victimhood, passivity, or oblivion to gender status. The chapter by Anne Maria Bankay joins Ramsay's in focusing on the non-Anglophone Caribbean—a unique and significant contribution in this volume where examples from the Anglophone territories predominate (as in the other two volumes where all chapters concern the Anglophone Caribbean).⁵ Bankay examines the work and context of female writers from the Dominican Republic and interestingly observes that, on the one hand, the writers push craft constraints by experimenting with writing techniques and, on the other, increasingly forge solidarity among themselves. Bankay attributes this solidarity to Dominican engagements with feminism, which foreground women's shared experience.

Portrayals of women and men are also the focus of a section on gender and the media. But the section also considers the structure of Caribbean media, how gender ideologies are reflected within it, and

where and to what extent women are represented in professional capacities within in the field. Marjan de Bruin finds that, among media employees, Caribbean women are poorly represented at the middle management and senior level positions. Hilary Nicholson argues that both men and women are boxed into constructions of masculinity and femininity through media images that reinforce stereotypes of women as bound to the domestic and “traditional” spheres, disengaged from leadership roles, and as sexualized bodies upon which men assert their manliness through violent acts. Final chapters by Kim Johnson and Kathy-Ann Waterman present interesting life stories of two individual women with complex and, in some respects, tragic lives. While the connection between these narratives and the section’s theme are not readily apparent, Mohammed, in her introduction, states that the life histories reveal the disconnect between these individual women’s realities and the way media portray women.

The last section, entitled “Made in the Caribbean: Constructing Gender,” also contains engaging individual selections, but the connections between them in content and focus seem tenuous. The first two chapters are first person accounts: one reprinted from *Lionheart Gal*, a collection profiling three generations of Jamaican women whose life stories were compiled by Jamaican scholar Honor Ford-Smith and told by members of the Jamaican theatre group Sistren; and another presenting a female artist’s annotated diary entries over a decade. Both provide voice and self-analysis/presentation/discovery conducted through considerations of class, race, color, gender and class consciousness, and education as well as through, in the second case, postmodern feminist theories. By contrast, the latter three articles touch upon topics such as family, sexuality, and gender socialization. Like chapters in the book’s earlier sections, Merle Hodge’s excellent chapter sets out to debunk several clichés about gender and Caribbean families, including that women do not work outside of the home (paralleling themes covered by Barriteau and Trotz); that single parenthood does not describe the structure of many Caribbean households because rarely are children raised by a single individual, regardless of a mother’s marital status; and that men are heads of households. In his chapter, anthropologist Barry Chevannes details the values systems, beliefs, and norms of sexuality in Caribbean societies, such as repression of sexual activity leads to ill-health; sexuality is fundamentally heterosexual, especially for men; and sexuality occurs within power relations (2002: 491). Finally, Linden Lewis cites the “destabilizing” impacts that globalization processes have had on Caribbean civil society and gender relations in particular, and then he calls for transforming gender relations so that they are not marked by power imbalances.

By considering gender relations and power, his chapter foreshadows key themes prominent in *Confronting Power, Theorizing Gender*.

Gender and power

Eudine Barriteau, head of the Centre for Gender and Development Studies at UWI's campus in Barbados, introduces this volume by stating that its project is to expose and interrogate how power relations inhere within gender relations. This focus is evident in many of the chapters, although we see the volume's reach expanding more broadly than the subject of gender and power relations. We also find ties between Mohammed's project and some contributions to *Gendered Realities*, demonstrating that Barriteau's work here builds on and expands pre-existing efforts. Indeed, Barriteau cites pervasive regimes of patriarchy as well as hegemonic masculinity as the topics her contributors cover, thus representing issues covered by Chevannes and Lewis in this volume.

The book's first section is another example of its connection with aspects of Mohammed's volume. Entitled "Epistemological Inquiries," the chapters here are critical of postmodern arguments (some of which Barriteau admits that she adopted in her earlier work), particularly those emphasizing difference and privileging analyses of gender over women, and they possess a common theme of exploring what is lost through anti-essentialism and postmodern arguments. Having critiqued her prior uses of postmodernist feminism, Barriteau astutely argues that the shift in thinking from Caribbean women's studies to Caribbean gender studies has meant de-emphasizing the circumstances of women's lives, thereby obscuring how inherently asymmetrical gender relations hold different outcomes for men and women. Michelle Rowley, in a chapter on development scholarship by academics from the North, is also skeptical of postmodern, Northern epistemologies surrounding gender and development and themes of difference that undergird knowledges from that field. Arguments about difference, she says, impede projects of gender solidarity among women of the South. Moreover, Donna St. Hill is also critical of shifts in knowledge production that privilege anti-essentialism. Unapologetically essentialist, St. Hill advocates strategic universalism over anti-essentialism citing, for instance, high rates of physical abuse and unemployment as universals for Caribbean women. For her, that there are few "elite women" in the region justifies this claim of universalism. Yet, for us, the acknowledgment here of class differences among women raises questions about a (non-politically strategic but merely materialist) universalism argument, and we also wonder how benefits from class

and color disparities, which are not restricted to “elites,” complicate the universalism argument.

A North-South distinction also emerges in the book’s section on historiography, although here most contributions demonstrate what historical analyses offer to gender theory and, more specifically, to our understanding of the trajectories, transformations, and placement of gender ideologies, constructs, and relations. While Patricia Mohammed’s chapter discusses the specific foci of Caribbean feminist historiography through an exploration of key texts in the field, chapters by Hilary Beckles and Kamala Kempadoo explore particular historical contexts (in Kempadoo’s case, over time) and relations that shaped particular conceptualizations of women and their status. The latter two also address how sexuality and European constructs of beauty have defined the material and social (im)possibilities before black women in the Caribbean at different moments in time. It is only Richard Goodridge’s chapter that approaches the subject of gender and Caribbean historiography by looking outside of colonial dynamics as he calls for a more accurate and complete understanding of the history of African societies (especially African religions) from which slaves in the Caribbean came to grasp contemporary gender relations in the region. For him, conducting historical research on economic and political processes within African religions can be particularly instructive about Caribbean women’s economic and political engagement, including their propensity to engage in resistance activities.

Like contributors to *Gendered Realities*, Barriteau’s volume explores depictions of gender, particularly in literary and filmic texts. Margaret Gill’s chapter on the work of well-known Barbadian author George Lamming resonates with David Williams’ chapter in *Gendered Realities* as Gill performs a gender analysis of canonical West Indian texts. In a thorough analysis, she argues that two of Lamming’s novels problematize representations of women in ways that support feminist theorists’ critiques of patriarchal images and also reveal West Indian women as complex cultural agents. By contrast, Jane Bryce discusses two 1998 texts, the hip hop culture film *Belly* and the novel *Brown Girl in the Ring*, for their treatment of diasporic identities among West Indians connected to New York and Toronto, respectively. In both she cites themes of displacement and alienation linked to transnational urban life, but, in dealing with these dynamics, she finds characters’ assertion of black masculinity and patriarchy in *Belly* in contrast to expressions of “feminine power” in *Brown Girl in the Ring*.

In a following section, three chapters address the power of formal public structures to shape and define gender. Tracy Robinson and Elsa Leo-Ryhnne both interrogate the obstacles to gender equality posed by

institutional structures. Robinson's interesting analysis of different Caribbean constitutional texts demonstrates that state discourses of gender privilege men as "natural" citizens, whereas women (as wives) acquire citizenship through men or (as mothers) produce citizens through their reproductive roles. Reviewing a study of women students at UWI, Leo-Rhynie shows that, although a numerical majority on campus, women students experience obstacles to leadership on campus due to entrenched power structures and hierarchies. She concludes that liberal feminist positions, which hold that gaining access is the answer to women's oppression, are inadequate to address the Caribbean context where social change in educational structures is needed. Her position is supported by Ann Denis's review of multiple feminist theories of work. Rejecting liberal feminism as well, Denis finds neo-Weberian and postmodern theories more useful, although she points out that Caribbean scholars have long critiqued the "westocentric" analyses of gender and work that postmodernists now perform.

The final two chapters consider hegemonic versus marginal masculinities and also approach critical assessments of the "male marginalization thesis," a pervasive thesis made popular through two books by Jamaican education scholar Errol Miller. Miller posits that Caribbean men remain on the sidelines of key economic and social institutions and areas of life, whereas women dominate in these areas. Looking at the history of elementary education in Barbados between 1880 and 1960, Downes disagrees with Miller's position that colonial policy feminized teaching within Anglophone Caribbean educational systems, stripping men of power in the profession and broader society. He shows that the lower status areas of elementary and infant education have been reserved for women teachers—posing no threat to men's power—while other areas, such as teaching at the secondary school level, deemed "respectable" only for men remain dominated by male teachers. Also challenging the marginalization thesis, Barriteau discusses the thesis' inadequacies, particularly those brought to light by recent social science research.

Caribbean masculinities

Rhoda E. Reddock, who is head of the Centre for Gender and Development Studies on the Trinidad and Tobago campus of UWI, picks up exactly where Barriteau ends. Framing the volume against the thesis of Caribbean male marginality, Reddock credits a relatively recent (1980s) Caribbean men's movement with initiating an interrogation of masculinities in the Caribbean. She traces that movement in part to the formation of a predominantly working class men's group addressing images

and ideas of the irresponsible Caribbean male, particularly in the realm of family and society. But she also traces it to the emergence of Miller's male marginalization thesis referenced in the previous volume and goes on to explore the thesis' theoretical and practical implications for broader discourses on gender and for gender relations. In a similar vein, the essays in the volume reflect a critical exploration of the meanings and significance of specific masculinities (*and* femininities) in Caribbean societies, the structures and arenas (political, social, popular, etc.) that produce and support particular masculinities (and marginalize others), and the contexts in which such masculinities are shaped.

The volume is divided into four sections. In "Theorizing Caribbean Masculinities," authors explore patterns of manhood in the region as well as hegemonic constructions of masculinity. Looking at meanings and relations surrounding maleness, chapters by Mohammed and Nurse theorize and deconstruct Caribbean masculinities as part of or shaped by colonial, postcolonial, and global contexts on the one hand and in relation to femininity (rather than separate from it) on the other. Nurse argues that presently Caribbean masculinities, which were developed through European and American privileging of patriarchy, are in transition (as are masculinities more globally). He cites the breakdown in traditional roles for men (like the male breadwinner) given shifts in the economy as well as the ways that black Caribbean men living outside of the region find themselves excluded from equal access to higher education and employment due to current configurations of capitalism and "resistance to racialized masculinities (2004: 24)." By contrast, Mohammed, who is concerned with how patriarchy is formulated through essentialist propositions about gender, seeks to "unmask" the meanings and boundaries of masculinities and consider masculinity in relation to femininity. Cautious of both essentialism and constructivism, like others in these volumes, she asks "how do we employ the theoretical frames of essentialism and constructivism without creating other binary oppositions in thought?" (2004: 49).

The section on "Gender, Socialization, Educational Performance, and Peer Group Relations" centers on the interplay between education and masculine identities and the mediating role that historic and contemporary social formations such as race, class, and gender introduce into the development of particular notions of masculinity. Two of the chapters also explain why a male presence and "successful" performance in Caribbean schools is lacking. Looking at eighteenth- to early twentieth-century Barbados, Downes examines the colonial education system in which government schools were sites for cultivating masculinity among boys who, based on race and class, were divided into separate schools. Following masculinist ideologies attached to elite white boys, black

middle-class boys were instructed that citizenship, militarism, and athleticism as well as socioeconomic and political power represent what it means to be a “boy of the empire”. Chapters by Figueroa and Parry are concerned with why Jamaican boys are not invested in or do not perform well in school. Figueroa contends that, historically, male privilege meant male irresponsibility and lack of discipline. This, he argues, leaves boys without the skills needed to succeed in school (in contrast to girls who, he asserts, are disciplined through family and home and who therefore perform better in schools). Yet, by linking lack of discipline to boys’ disengagement from education, he upholds the image of the irresponsible male so readily critiqued by others in these volumes. Parry counters the popular argument that Caribbean boys avoid schooling because they are on the “fast track” to seek and impress girls, which leads them to pursue fast money instead of education. She offers, alternatively, that a macho identity pervasive in the region runs counter to educational pursuits (as we believe it does in other world regions where boys are alienated from school). It is Crichlow’s personal narrative of history and memory of his life contextualized (and constrained) by the pejorative identity of a *Buller Man*—a homosexual, in some Anglophone Caribbean terminology—that stands out in this section, however. The chapter effectively and engagingly deals with the multiple means and arenas (family, religion, and school) through which heteronormativity was communicated to Crichlow and thereby negated his own sexuality at every turn.

In “Class, Ethnicity, Nation and Nations of Masculinity,” the chapters span the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries in exploring how masculinities are structured and changing, especially in the context of racialized and classed interactions or specific global and national processes. Two of the chapters account for how global processes shape masculinities. Linden Lewis focuses especially on Caribbean masculinity with the advent of economic restructuring in the late twentieth to early twenty-first centuries, which resonates with Keith Nurse’s explication of transitioning Caribbean masculinities. For Lewis, the period represents a crisis for Caribbean men because they became socially dislocated from traditional gender roles, such as the decline in the male family breadwinner, following a rise in male unemployment and the feminization of the Caribbean labor force reshaped in part by the interests of foreign capital. But Lewis also cautions about a rising Caribbean cultural nationalism that resists this economic transitioning through a masculinist discourse linking the nation to men of a particular class. Linda Matthei and David Smith’s chapter looks at the shaping of Belizean youth’s identities among two ethnic groups—Creole and Garifuna—participating in transnational migration. They argue that Belizean second-generation immigrant boys, residing in the

United States and consuming stereotypical media depictions of African American males, formulate their identities through those depictions and in opposition to dominant groups in the United States. This reflects a point underscored in the chapter by Hilary Beckles, who is concerned with black masculinities of enslaved males in the nineteenth-century Caribbean where more marginal black masculinities struggled to participate within and benefit from aspects (such as political and economic authority) of the more hegemonic and elite white masculinities.

In the book's last section on masculinity, themes and counter-themes of Caribbean men as irresponsible or aggressive emerge. Chapters by Paula Morgan and Kenneth Ramchand both concern imagery of the self-centered Caribbean male who is disinvested in family responsibility and being an economic provider. Morgan discusses Merle Hodge's *For the Life of Laetitia*, a children's novel depicting male characters who are active in family life. Ramchand's chapter is a strong complement. Referencing the common West Indian literary character "bad John" as the quintessential irresponsible Caribbean male, Ramchand analyzes "Aldrick" in Earl Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance* as a reformed "quasi-bad John" who moves away from conventional masculine identities. Finally, two chapters deal with popular culture and the arts. In a rather lengthy discussion, Gordon Rohlehr addresses the ongoing celebration and negotiation of masculinity within Trinidad and Tobago's calypso form and lyrics. A performance genre that has long included a male warrior image, Rohlehr mentions that calypso has had to contend recently with feminist perspectives given the emergence of women calypsonians and feminist critiques. The final chapter of the book rounds out the volume nicely with one of the most innovative means of exploring Caribbean masculinities. Performance artist Christopher Cozier talks of his art displays and performance around specific historic everyday objects of Caribbeanness. The objects—a "shirt-jac" suit worn as a men's uniform shirt and the "tamarind rod," used to punish boys in school—serve as points for Cozier's first-person analysis of the objects' symbolism within his own experience and in broader Caribbean society. Considering both objects as "systems of organization," Cozier implicitly theorizes that they provide insights into masculinities—sometimes racialized and classed—as they represent "the gentlemanly aura of the English royal family," "the revolutionary "hard man" and authority and force (2004: 406, 412).

Conclusion

Cozier's piece is a fine endnote because it speaks to a variety of themes that encapsulate all three volumes, themes that can be useful for

addressing issues raised in the law student's letter mentioned at the beginning of this essay. First, as volumes that are deeply interdisciplinary (a set-up from which North American volumes on gender could learn), the work reviewed here points to an investment in drawing on a range of scholarly approaches to interrogate gender in the twenty-first century. Second, while more could have been included on gender and globalization given the importance of this topic today, the work in these volumes is very transnational. Not only do contributors represent institutions across Caribbean nations, the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, their analyses take into account the Caribbean's intersections with "elsewhere" as well as literature from scholars in North America and Europe. Third, the work reflects an intersection and appreciation of gender theory and empirical analysis. Indeed, the pieces here stand out for their level of theoretical engagement and reveal that the work on theorizing and investigating gender, femininity, and masculinity continues to advance effectively at the pens of Caribbeanist scholars. In several chapters the Caribbean serves as backdrop to illustrate theory (rather than the reverse) or to situate people from the region in a broader geographical context, and we therefore wish that in these cases the Caribbean had been centered more in some of the discussions privileging the development of theory. This dimension aside, the volumes offer exciting and emerging areas of intellectual engagement that are valuable contributions to the literature. Critical assessments of gender studies versus women's studies, for instance, are some of the newer and important interventions in the literature on gender and the Caribbean, as is attention to masculinities. Indeed, given current events around globalization and anti-globalization/American efforts in the region, we find especially important authors' consideration of the concerning intersection of globalization, cultural nationalism, and masculinist discourses. Pursuing these and other ongoing questions about gender (and women and men) in the context of citizenship, nationalism, globalization, development, literary texts, and the arts will equip students and scholars with critical knowledge into the twenty-first century.

Notes

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1. This letter was circulated on 20 March 2007 on the UK's Caribbean Studies Listserv and is archived at <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/archives/caribbean-studies.html>.

2. Several reviews of this anthropological and sociological work exist. See, for instance, chapters in Mohammed and Shepherd (1988).
3. The list of edited volumes is too long to outline entirely here. A few key sources include the following: Boyce Davies and Savory Fido (1990), Cudjoe (1990), Shepherd, Brereton and Bailey (1995), Leo-Rhynie, Bailey and Barrow (1997), Mohammed (1998), Chevannes (2001), and Bailey and Leo-Rhynie (2004).
4. Because of space limitations, we were not able to review every chapter in these extensive volumes.
5. The paucity of non-Anglophone Caribbean scholars in these volumes edited by Anglophone Caribbean academics is not surprising or unique given the persistent colonial legacy in the region. For more discussion on the impact of colonial boundary-making, see Trouillot (1992).

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