

North, but not necessarily Eurocentric – unless one considers “Eurocentric” to mean everything that comes out of Europe.

Finally, Martino tries to demonstrate, and with success, how in Fernando Po capitalism emerged in the context of semi-criminal, dodgy, illegal, and murky social relations. We are perhaps in the proximity of a rare example, in today’s historiographical research, of a neo-Marxian or post-Marxian explanation of labour market creation as the beginning of a capitalist mode of production in Africa. The focal points of this approach are the intermediaries of labour and capital. This book certainly constitutes a must-read for scholars of African labour history.

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DAUT, MARLENE L. *Awakening the Ashes. An Intellectual History of the Haitian Revolution*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill (NC) 2023. xxi, 415 pp. Ill. Maps. \$99.00. (Paper: \$34.95; E-book: \$27.99.)

The two most frequently cited recent works on the Haitian Revolution in English-language scholarship are Laurent Dubois’s *Avengers of the New World. The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (2004) and Michel Rolph-Trouillot’s *Silencing the Past. Power and the Production of History* (1995). Marlene Daut, a professor in the Department of African American Studies at Yale University and the author of two previous books on nineteenth-century Haitian authors, shows in her latest book, *Awakening the Ashes*, that Dubois’s and especially Rolph-Trouillot’s books have been misinterpreted in a way that obscures Haitians’ own contributions to their liberation and to historical scholarship. Many authors have tried to integrate the Haitian Revolution into the larger narrative of Atlantic revolutions, à la Dubois, whereas local opposition to slavery and colonialism long predated the Enlightenment. Despite the frequent lament about the “silencing” of the Haitian Revolution in the historiography, works on Haiti’s history were always plentiful and accessible to anyone willing to consult nineteenth-century Haitian literature. Yet, “ignoring, discounting, dismissing, downplaying or outright failing to consult Haitian scholarship produced in Haiti by Haitians is a familiar dynamic in contemporary scholarship” (p. 5), a critique that is, in this reviewer’s experience, distressingly accurate, even among Rolph-Trouillot’s loudest fans, who can denounce the “silencing” of Haitian voices in their introduction and then pay little heed to French- and Creole-language archival documents and historical works produced in Haiti (known as the French colony of Saint-Domingue prior to 1804) in their footnotes.

In keeping with the book’s title, Daut seeks to “awaken the ashes” by bringing to the fore those nineteenth-century Haitian authors who wrote early and abundantly about

their country's history, such as Baron de Vastey, Juste Chanlatte, and Charles Hérard-Dumesle. The titular "ashes" are also those of the earlier generation of Haitians who died in the struggle for emancipation and independence. Early Haitian authors liked to mention the physical, interred remains of revolutionary martyrs: indeed, vivid references to the charred and dismembered bodies of the victims of colonial violence pepper early Haitian texts, including the 1804 declaration of independence. By commemorating the buried bodies of the everyday martyrs of Haiti's pasts, writers developed a kind of "history from below" ("way below", Daut quips on p. 22), which predated the works of Jules Michelet and Marc Bloch by decades. This is a book about the dual meaning of "deed": it covers the actions of Haitian rebels as well as the way that later Haitian historians recorded those actions (p. 14).

The book is divided into three parts, each of three chapters, which retrace Haiti's threefold past: the colonial era; the Revolution; and the early history of Haiti as a sovereign state. The first three chapters, which cover indigenous Tainos, African slaves, and free people of color, respectively, show that, according to early Haitian historians, "Haiti's was not simply a revolution that happened in Saint-Domingue after the French and American revolutions. It was a three-centuries-long organized rebellion" (p. 121). Nineteenth-century Haitian authors had no personal knowledge of the Tainos, but they reinterpreted Spanish colonial sources to paint the Taino *caciques* (rulers) Anacaona and Enrique as precursors of later Haitian rebels (p. 40). Chapters Two and Three draw heavily from historian Baron de Vastey and free-colored activist Julien Raimond to document active opposition to slavery and racial discrimination prior to 1789. Present-day historians should indeed explore that issue extensively: they often begin their examination of the Haitian Revolution with the slave revolt of 1791, Vincent Ogé's uprising of 1790, or white colonist rioting in 1789. By doing so, they follow the lead of contemporary white writers, who described the 1791 slave revolt as a bolt from the blue. But dismissing the 1791 revolt as an anomaly was really a ploy by white colonists to prove that Saint-Domingue's slaves were so content with their fate that they only revolted due to the influence of outside agitators. Haiti's alternate historiography points to earlier, well-established patterns of resistance, which, if documented by archival research, could help us better understand the genesis of the Haitian Revolution.

The second part of Daut's book, which covers the Haitian Revolution of 1791–1804, also embraces a Caribbean focus. The outbreak of the Haitian revolution was the product of local resistance, not French revolutionary ideals or outside conspiracies (Chapter Four). The 1793 proclamation of emancipation, covered in Chapter Five, should not be credited to Léger-Félicité Sonthonax, the French commissioner who penned it. "African freedom fighters had already brought the plantation economy to a standstill", so emancipation was already a reality prior to the official decree (p. 141). Further, Sonthonax immediately proceeded to restrict the freedom of ex-slaves through strict labor regulations. In the last years of the Revolution, Haitians had to personally defend their hard-won freedom when First Consul Napoléon Bonaparte sent a vast expedition, led by his brother-in-law, General Victoire Leclerc, to reinstitute the old order. Had Haitians not shed blood for their own freedom, they would have endured the fate of the re-enslaved laborers of

Guadeloupe when Napoleonic France abandoned its earlier embrace of universal emancipation (Chapter Six).

The third part of the book brings us to the early national era, notably Jean-Jacques Dessalines's 1804 declaration of independence and Haitians' subsequent support for anti-colonial struggles in the Americas (Chapter Seven), as well as Haitian authors' efforts to combat slavery (Chapter Eight) and racism (Chapter Nine), both of which were still the norm beyond Haiti's shores. Those campaigns were significant: despite the "relative obscurity today of most of the Haitian names that populate this study", notes Daut, nineteenth-century Haitian authors were "read widely across the nineteenth-century Atlantic World", even if current "North Atlantic scholars [...] routinely evoke the concept of 'silencing the past'" (p. 4). "Haiti produced more books in proportion to its population than any other state in the Americas aside from the United States" (p. 328). That claim is a useful counterpoint to the current historiography, which typically presents independent Haiti as a pariah state isolated by economic embargoes and a lack of diplomatic recognition.

Because this is, per the book's subtitle, an "intellectual history" of the genesis, unfolding, and aftermath of the Haitian Revolution as retraced by Haitians, rather than a traditional history based on comprehensive archival research, Daut has a tendency to take some documents at face value, notably those written by the famously canny Toussaint Louverture during his 1796 feud with Sonthonax (p. 136) and his 1802 imprisonment by Bonaparte (p. 174). In both cases, Louverture likely misrepresented his real views on forced labor and colonialism in an effort to gain the French government's support for his short-term goals (besmirching a political rival and being released from prison, respectively), so context is key.

The histories by Baron de Vastey are a useful corrective to the more widely read works of colonial apologists like Moreau de Saint-Méry, but they are biased in their own right: they are nationalist accounts produced under the reign of King Henry Christophe. By embracing these alternative readings of the past, Daut occasionally oversimplifies the historical narrative, notably during the revolutionary era, when some Frenchmen genuinely embraced the cause of emancipation while some colonists of color were slow to sever their links to the old plantation system. In reference to the 1802 Leclerc expedition, she writes that Bonaparte instructed his general to "rid Saint-Domingue of Louverture", which is true, but also "to reinstate slavery" (which he did not actually spell out in his instructions) (p. 167). Daut further asserts that Bonaparte's 1802 restoration of slavery in French colonies "did not result solely from the capricious whim of one terrible dictator" but was carried out with "the consent of large sectors of the French populace" (p. 169), with "damning" implications for a French Revolution that was not serious about the universality of its ideals (p. 167). The initial 1794 French law of abolition was broadly popular in the metropole; assessing public opinion under Napoléon's dictatorial rule is a more difficult enterprise, but it is worth noting that there was significant opposition to the restoration of slavery in the First Consul's own legislature. To state the obvious: Frenchmen did not all share the same political views during their Revolution.

Some Haitians' commitment to freedom was not straightforward either, as Daut acknowledges when she mentions that "tensions of freedom" remained in independent Haiti, particularly under the imperial rule of Dessalines (p. 206). Chapter Seven, which covers independent Haiti's opposition to colonial rule in the Americas, begins with Dessalines's 1804 declaration of independence, in which he specifically promised that he had no desire to interfere with neighboring colonial holdings. Just like its French counterpart, the Haitian Revolution was a complex political process that does not perfectly fit a heroic narrative.

These various concerns about oversimplification all stem from the book's premise, which is to use Haiti's own historians to retrace their understanding of the revolutionary struggle. As such, they do not take away from what will hopefully be this work's main legacy for the field of Haitian revolutionary studies: to convince English-language authors concerned about the "silencing" of the Revolution and the colonial bias of early French authors to spend more time engaging Haiti's own scholarship, or at the very least to read Daut's useful summation of it, presented here conveniently in chronological order and in English.

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GILBERT, CHRIS. *Commune or Nothing! Venezuela's Communal Movement and Its Socialist Project*. Monthly Review Press, New York 2023. 216 pp. \$89.00.

Chris Gilbert's study sketches out a contextualization of the so-called "communes" in contemporary Venezuela. These are understood as "a production model based on social property [and] oriented toward eliminating the social division of labour that is typical of capitalist model" (p. 17). The *comunas* should not be regarded as mere cooperatives, as these are, so Gilbert tells us, "still private property", i.e. "collective private property with their adversarial relations with other enterprises, including other cooperatives, with which they compete, and with society at large" (p. 88). The author, who lives in Venezuela, visited several "communes" in the country, and describes and analyses the functioning of this (alleged) new type of economic model. Their implementation, Gilbert argues, means the very "recovery of original Marxism" (p. 23) and even "an important hope for the world" (p. 195).

The book contains nine chapters, all covering different types of "communes", divided by geographical or sectoral criteria. Digressions are also inserted into each chapter in order to contextualize historical aspects, such as Venezuela's indigenous inheritance, its successive struggles for political independence, the social and intellectual roots of Venezuela's leftist political forces, Hugo Chávez's biography, and correlated aspects. Digressions also allude to theoretical problems, particularly