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– *Critical Interventions in Caribbean Politics and Theory*, by Brian Meeks, University Press of Mississippi, 2014.

This book consists of 14 essays written by Brian Meeks since the early 2000s. In its preface, Meeks states that the essays share being part of ‘an extended conversation ... with colleagues and friends ... concerning the course of radi-

cal movements of the 1970s as well as the possible paths for political and social change in the Caribbean since those momentous times' (p. vii). All essays indeed breathe these dialogues and Meeks' strong engagement with them. The book is built up in three sections. The first presents three essays on Caribbean theoretical debates. The first two focus on philosophical approaches of the 1970s Caribbean left (Chapter 1) and Afro-Caribbean thought (Chapter 2) emphasizing the absence of popular culture and popular philosophical constructs in both. Chapter 3 reflects on a debate between Meeks and Watson on Meeks' rereading of C.L.R. James' *The Black Jacobins*. It discusses the manner of Watson's critiquing as an example of (inadequate) Caribbean radical political praxis.

The second section presents essays on The University of the West Indies, emphasizing the need to nurture the university as place of free thought; The Black Power Movement, questioning the rise and fall of the movement; on Lloyd Best, exploring and explaining roads not taken in terms of Best's absence in actual politics as opposed to his contribution to Caribbean thought; popular perceptions of Cuba in Jamaica, arguing that the idea of Cuba as a locus of resistance is the basis of this; and finally on Grenada, carefully deconstructing theories on the built-up to the October 1983 leadership crisis and killing of prime-minister Maurice Bishop and arguing that failed attempts to 'deepen' democracy were the reason. The final section presents five essays in which Meeks' idea of 'hegemonic dissolution', captured by his statement that '[t]he social bloc in charge of [Jamaican] society is no longer ruling over a people convinced of its social superiority and its inherent right to "run things"' (p. 175) is centre stage and linked to various events in Jamaica and to possible future scenarios. All five papers include a section on the future sketching of social, economic and political avenues for Jamaica away from strong inequalities and divisions, and neo-liberal economic dependencies, to an equal, inclusive democratic society.

Meeks is able to present very complex theoretical and philosophical matters in accessible writing and he has a style that moves seemingly easy from the level of 'the everyday' to high levels of theoretical abstraction and back again. This, and his clearly extensive scholarship in and strong personal engagement with Caribbean politics and society make for great, informative and sometimes evocative reading. In this regard, particular outstanding are the essays 'Arguments within What's left of the Left' (Chapter 3), on Grenada (Chapter 9) and, on the public uproar and military intervention surrounding the arrest and extradition of Christopher Coke, alias Dudas (Chapter 13).

Despite the quality of the individual essays, I have two (minor) issues of concern regarding the composition and outreach of the collection. The first concerns the goal and potential impact of the book. Meeks (again in the preface) rightfully emphasizes the need for new radical and critical approaches to Caribbean theory and expresses the hope that this book will contribute to both reflection on the past and stimulating new debates that are necessary for the

‘dreaming, imagining and making of a better future’ (p. xi) . Despite the richness of the various essays, I was, after reading the last chapter, a bit disappointed. I missed a concluding essay attempting to bring them all together in a systematic manner, advancing its (shared) conclusions and as such open up the floor for the aforementioned new debates and dialogues. It may not have been Meeks’ direct aim to do so but it would have been a very valuable addition to the book.

The second concern refers to the outreach of the book. Despite the fact that the book title refers to *Caribbean* politics, it is dominated by the social-political trajectories of a few Anglophone Caribbean states, i.e. Jamaica, Grenada and to a lesser extent Trinidad and Tobago. The Cuban chapter is an exception but is still strongly linked to Jamaica. While most chapters present examples from other (mostly Anglophone) Caribbean countries and Meeks emphasizes the relevance of specific arguments for the larger Caribbean, he does not do full justice to Caribbean diversity in his analysis and presentation of theories, questions and ways forward. This is understandable from the fact that, despite Meeks’ engagement with and interest for the wider Caribbean, his scholarly focus is largely on Jamaica and Grenada. Yet, it does leave some caveats in the building of a broad Caribbean argument. Meeks’ moving from the University of the West Indies Mona campus to Brown University as the chair of the Africana Studies department may just be the right place to enrich his eclectic and prominent scholarship through comprehensive inclusion of social-political trajectories of nations and territories from the wider Anglophone, Francophone, Spanish and Dutch speaking Caribbean.

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