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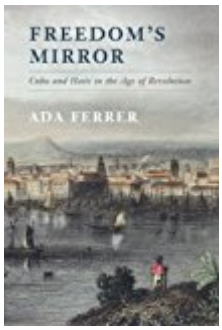
Ada Ferrer. *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. xiv + 377 pp. $29.98, paper, ISBN 978-1-107-69778-2.



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In *Freedom's Mirror*, Ada Ferrer explores the tensions that underlay two overlapping revolutions on neighboring Caribbean islands at the turn of the nineteenth century: one, a struggle against slavery that culminated in the foundation of the independent nation of Haiti, the other, a "sugar revolution" that entrenched enslavement in Cuba. Ferrer traces the encounters between these two societies on seemingly opposite paths. In Cuba, the circulation of people, information, and objects from revolutionary Saint-Domingue generated constant debates in which planter elites and enslaved people asserted visions for their own futures, alternately accelerating and challenging the growth of slavery and the plantation economy. At the same time, the Cuban sugar revolution had repercussions on the eventual rise of antislavery in Saint-Domingue/Haiti as well. Colonial officials based in Cuba forged uneasy alliances with the forces of black self-liberation in Hispaniola, while slaving vessels bound for Havana continued to threaten the unprecedented, fragile achievements of the Haitian Revolution. Focusing first on the period between the late eighteenth century and the defeat of the Leclerc expedition in 1803, and then by considering independent Haiti's material and symbolic presence in Cuba after 1804, Ferrer argues that the Haitian Revolution had a deeply ambivalent impact on the shape of slavery in Cuba.

The book opens during the first stages of Cuba's transformation from a society with slaves to a slave society based on large-scale plantation agriculture. As Ferrer emphasizes, the sugar revolution predated the Haitian Revolution. She traces its origins to a series of reforms stretching from the 1762 British occupation of Havana to the 1789 royal decree that established a "free" slave trade to Cuba, which in turn reflected the growing political power of local planters and creole authorities with interests in slavery. Decades before the August 1791 insurrection on Saint-Domingue's Northern Plain, both the colonial administration in Cuba and the Spanish metropolitan government had already signaled their intentions to elevate "the slave trade as a foundation for tropical

commercial agriculture in [the] empire" (p. 26). For planters and policymakers like Francisco de Arango y Parreño, who had lobbied the Crown for the "liberalization" of the slave trade, the uprising demonstrated the timeliness and prescience of such measures, which would allow Cuba to fill the gap left by Saint-Domingue in the global sugar economy. In one sense, therefore, the inception of the Haitian Revolution contributed to propel Cuban planters and their allies towards a new world that they had themselves envisioned, in which the ascendency of the colony's sugar industry would depend on the dramatic expansion of traffic in African captives and of the enslaved population in Cuba.

At the same time, revolution in Saint-Domingue shed light on the considerable risks that accompanied these projects for Cuba's future. Ferrer demonstrates that the concerns of Cuban officials were directly shaped by the constant maritime communication between the two islands, which forced officials to consider wide-scale black insurrection and subversion as real and immediate obstacles to the success of the sugar revolution. Arriving at Cuban ports, French refugees, soldiers, and foreign sailors shared tales of rebel slaves who had destroyed lives and property, radically challenging the conditions of their own enslavement. These accounts gave concrete meaning to nebulous fears of revolutionary contagion and justified expanded state surveillance. They also helped spread alternative interpretations of the political transformations across the Windward Passage--what Ferrer describes as the "ideological and ritual artifacts of the world's first black revolution" (p. 55). The question of whether contact with Saint-Domingue jeopardized or expedited the consolidation of the new Cuban regime quickly gives way to an exploration of the delicate counterpoint between the forces of enslavement and liberation. The very same vessels that carried constant (if sometimes inconsistent) pieces of news and information about the campaigns of the Saint-Domingue insurgents often transported captives for attempted sale in Cuba.

In one of the central chapters of the book, Ferrer highlights a remarkable moment of ostensible alignment between the two revolutions: the collaboration between officers and soldiers from Cuba, on the one hand, and the Saint-Domingue insurgents who had been recruited as "auxiliaries" of the Spanish Crown on the other. Crucially, these interactions took place neither in Cuba nor in Saint-Domingue, but in the neighboring Spanish colony of Santo Domingo. Ferrer's attention to the eastern region of Hispaniola thus contributes to a growing body of scholarship that has recentered Santo Domingo as a principal site of struggle that conditioned the unfolding of the Haitian Revolution.[1] Ferrer narrates the consolidation of an uncertain pact between Spanish administrators in Santo Domingo and the most prominent early leaders of the Saint-Domingue insurrection--including Jean-François, Biassou, and Hyacinthe--gainst republican France. As the conflict escalated, colonial troops from Santiago and Havana joined the conflict in Hispaniola, bringing the witnesses and beneficiaries of Cuban sugar revolution into a temporary coalition with the agents of Saint Dominguan slave rebellion.

The importance of this "unlikely alliance" for slavery's divergent trajectories in Cuba and Saint-Domingue was far more than symbolic. As they collaborated with insurgent leaders on and off the battlefield, the officers who had arrived from Cuba remained apprehensive about the project and the potential impact that it would have on the nascent plantation society at home. Some of these Spanish officers, such as Francisco Montalvo, José María de la Torre, and the Marqués de Casa Calvo were themselves wealthy Havana slaveowners who participated to varying degrees in the sugar revolution. Yet the officers' concerns about the repercussions of Spanish support for the black generals were not enough to outweigh their simultaneous resolve to profit from the circum-

stances in Santo Domingo. These individuals purchased sugar-processing machinery directly from the auxiliaries, thus transferring the infrastructure of Saint-Domingue's formerly dominant industry to a new plantation center. For his part, Casa Calvo entered into a business partnership with Jean-François, acquiring livestock, pack animals, and machinery. Most importantly, while cooperating with the insurgent generals in and outside of combat, Casa Calvo, de la Torre, and others purchased men and women from Saint-Domingue whom they described as slaves, and over whom they eventually exercised ownership in Cuba.

The breakdown of the military alliance with the auxiliaries, the declaration of peace between France and Spain, and the growing power of both Toussaint Louverture and Napoleon Bonaparte all shifted the terrain on which Cuban colonial officials and planter elites engaged with authorities, refugees, and news from Hispaniola. As the tensions escalated between Louverture and Bonaparte, Cuba occupied key ground in the counterrevolutionary struggle that appeared poised to reestablish the old order in Saint-Domingue. The eastern coastal region between Santiago and Baracoa served as a regular point of disembarkation for French vessels during the Leclerc expedition and eventually became a new, if temporary, home for thousands of evacuating soldiers, civilians, and people claimed as slaves from Saint-Domingue. Meanwhile, Cuban slaveholders and French sailors flouted local and imperial law in order to engage in human trafficking between the two islands, a trade that was apparently authorized by beleaguered representatives of the French state. As revolutionary antislavery emerged as the rallying point for the Armée Indigène during the Haitian war of independence, events in Cuba highlighted the enduring and resurgent forces of enslavement (and reenslavement) that accompanied it.

Confronting the apparent deepening of boundaries between these spaces of slavery and freedom, the final chapters of the book weigh the significance of independent Haiti's presence in Cuba's immediate vicinity. Here, Ferrer offers a nuanced intervention into the widespread scholarly debates over the force and limits of Haiti's example across the Americas, insisting that the new state projected radical antislavery without instigating slave rebellion beyond Hispaniola. For Ferrer, the question is not whether the new state sponsored agitation abroad, but how its enactment of emancipation and free soil at home challenged the broader space of Atlantic slavery and intersected with invocations of Haiti among "self-appointed agents" (p. 213) in other slave societies. Indeed, enslaved people across Cuba developed and circulated their own ideas about Haiti as a direct counterargument to the visions for plantation society laid out by the colony's elites. Ultimately, "Haiti" functioned as both a physical postemancipation space in Hispaniola and an imagined post-plantation future in Cuba, facilitating the propagation of antislavery thought and action even in the absence of explicit orders from Jean-Jacques Dessalines or his successors.

The 1812 José Antonio Aponte rebellion highlighted the stakes of these invocations of Haiti in Cuba. In the book's penultimate chapter, Ferrer calls attention to the three years that preceded the rebellion in order to demonstrate how local and global events shook the foundations of empire and slavery on Cuban soil. The crisis of legitimacy triggered by Napoleon's invasion of the Iberian Peninsula, the ensuing Atlantic debates over the boundaries of sovereignty and the future of the slave trade, and the struggles of local creole authorities to maintain order and affirm loyalty to the Crown together created an opening for Cubans of color to make new claims about their own place in the nation, and even to advocate the destruction of slavery itself. In this context, Aponte's movement exposed the fragility of the regime that the sugar revolution had created.

In conversation with the recent works of Stephan Palmié, Sibylle Fischer, and Matt Childs, as well as the classic study by Cuban historian José Luciano Franco, Ferrer's chapter on the rebellion places renewed emphasis on the layered strands of political thought, historical interpretation, and spiritual power that undergirded Aponte's call to action.[2] To begin with, she stresses the conspirators' own adaptations of news about the Cortes of Cádiz, British antislavery, and the coronation of Henri Christophe in northern Haiti. Ferrer draws attention to the religious, almost apocalyptic, language of the movement's propaganda, hinting at alternative sources of authority behind the rebellion. The centerpiece of the chapter hinges on her detailed analysis of Aponte's lost book of drawings, which she reconstructs from the full archival court testimonies. Here, Ferrer bridges Palmié's close attention to the staggering range of intellectual influences and apparent paradoxes within the book with Childs's more recent emphasis on the radical objectives of the larger movement that Cuban investigators attributed to Aponte. In the book of drawings, Aponte combined diverse references--to Greek mythology, to the lives of the saints, to the warships that had traveled between Cuba and Saint-Domingue, and to the black rulers of "Ethiopias" past and present--into a "universal history" (p. 303) and a tool for remaking the future. Far from signaling a disconnect between Aponte's intellectual production and the antislavery rebellion with which he came to be associated, Ferrer argues that the book's "inherent and strategic flexibility" (p. 312) allowed it to resonate in different spheres of meaning simultaneously for black readers who became revolutionaries.

Throughout the book, Ferrer's exhaustive archival research bolsters her claims about the material dimensions of connections between Cuba and Haiti, enabling her to ground her exploration of revolutionary aspirations in particular moments and places. Bringing together administrative and military correspondence from metropolitan Spain with judicial records from Cuba, she follows the itineraries of individual vessels such as the ***San Lorenzo***, which carried insurgent general Biassou from Fort-Dauphin/Bayajá to Havana following the cession of Spanish Santo Domingo to France, and which later figured in Aponte's book of drawings. She provides us with glimpses of revolutionary artifacts, including an insurgent's ***escarapela*** ("a rosette or cockade," p. 55) bearing an emblem of the French monarchy, the word "Constitution," and an image of a heart not unlike a ***vévé*** of the contemporary Vodou religion, brought to Baracoa by British sailors who had witnessed the June 1793 burning of Cap Français. Such material fragments demonstrate how "dominant narratives of the events" (p. 55) carried traces of subversive political and spiritual symbols, providing a link between insurgents in Saint-Domingue and enslaved people in Cuba.

Moreover, Ferrer's reading of the records of official court investigations into Cuban conspiracies embraces the inherent uncertainties built into such sources. Without suggesting that the judicial archive offers a direct window into the planning behind the plots, she offers multiple potential interpretations of individual testimonies in order to capture some sense of the breadth of the radical imagination of organizers like Aponte. She also draws on an array of exciting new sources from underutilized archives. In her epilogue, for instance, Ferrer cites Spanish naval records housed at the Archivo de Marina Don Álvaro de Bazán in Viso del Marqués, Spain, including the declarations of Cuban and Haitian captains who testified to the nascent state's policing of the slave trade in surrounding waters. These archival findings point to a final contribution of ***Freedom's Mirror***: the book carries the discussion about Haitian antislavery fully into the postrevolutionary period, paving the way for further work on the ongoing resonances of the independent state's radical policies beyond the shores of Hispaniola and the currents of the Windward Passage. If the Haitian Revolution was intertwined with the rise

of Cuban slavery, Ferrer compellingly shows, it also paved the way for ongoing challenges to the new regime, from the vessels of slave liberation outfitted by successive Haitian states to the voices of antislavery conspirators and patriot insurgents over the course of Cuba's nineteenth century.

Notes

[1]. See, for instance, Graham T. Nessler, ***An Islandwide Struggle for Freedom: Revolution, Emancipation, and Reenslavement in Hispaniola, 1789-1809*** (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Antonio Pinto Tortosa, "Una colonia en la encrucijada: Santo Domingo entre la revolución haitiana y la reconquista española, 1791-1809" (PhD diss., Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2012); and Alain Yacou, ed., ***Saint-Domingue espagnol et la révolution nègre d'Haïti, 1790-1822*** (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2007). For a classic study on the relationship between the two sides of the island during the Haitian Revolution, see Emilio Cordero Michel, ***La revolución haitiana y Santo Domingo***, 4th edition (Santo Domingo: Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, 2000).

[2]. Matt D. Childs, ***The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle Against Atlantic Slavery*** (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Stephan Palmié, ***Wizards and Scientists: Explorations in Afro-Cuban Modernity*** (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), esp. chapter 1; and Sibylle Fischer, ***Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*** (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), esp. chapter 1; and José Luciano Franco, ***La conspiración de Aponte*** (Havana: Consejo Nacional de Cultura, 1963).

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