

***Planning the Past: Heritage Tourism and Post-Colonial Politics at Port Royal.* Anita M. Waters. Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006. 136 pp.¹**

Reviewed by Heather A. Horst

Planning the Past is an engaging account of the social history of Port Royal, the famed Jamaican city renowned throughout the Euro-American world as a haven for pirates and economic exchange during the 16th and 17th centuries. Drawing upon theories of social memory, Anita Waters couples an ethnographic approach with historical and archival research to understand the various strategies that Jamaicans and others developed over the past five decades to catapult the “sleepy fishing village” to a major heritage tourism destination.

Waters develops her argument over the course of five chapters that roughly correspond with the various stakeholders who sought to shape, plan and reconstitute Port Royal as “a potential national asset” (p. viii). Applying Michel Rolph-Trouillot’s notion of “silences,” Waters begins by examining a variety of plans for developing Port Royal initiated by the British colonial office in the 1950s. Waters outlines eight plans and proposals submitted by entities, ranging from Jamaica’s Urban Development Commission, the Jamaica National Trust Commission and UNESCO, and the particular narratives of Port Royal that underpin their proposals. For example, whereas a 1967 Urban Development Corporation plan seeks to capitalize upon narratives that “evoked buccaneers, admirals and the pre-earthquake town” (23), the UNESCO plan of 1997 involved the reconstruction of an archaeologically-inspired street alongside a large warehouse in which tourist items of Spanish, Dutch, and English origin could be sold to cruise ship passengers. Waters then ties the proposals to shifts in Jamaica national, political, and popular culture since the 1960s.

The provocative chapter, “Tourists Love Pirates,” explores Port Royal’s legacy in the popular imagination. Utilizing Richard Price’s concept of “the postcarding of the past” wherein historical dynamics are subsumed under vivid imagery and playfulness, Waters questions why pirates continue to dominate the relationship foreigners continue to develop with Port Royal and, in turn, the necessity of harnessing these images for the tourist gaze. Waters begins by comparing the meaning of pirates in American and European popular and literary culture with Afro-Jamaican interpretations of pirates. While the differing interpretations of pirates by Europeans, Americans, and Jamaicans is not especially surprising, Waters analysis of academic attention to pirates also implicates European and American academics. As she demonstrates, the historical literature on pirates, penned primarily by white European males, percolates with romanticized images, in some instances associating the outlaw lifestyle of the pirates with the rebellion of the Afro-Jamaican peasantry. Waters cogently demonstrates that the salience of pirates lies much less in the affinity for resistance than its’ role as a symbol of “the extraordinary liberties enjoyed by Europeans in the colonies” (p. 55), a role that is shared today in the sea, sun, and sex imagery of the Caribbean as tourist destination.

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In contrast to depictions in academic and transnational popular culture, Jamaicans emphasize the Port Royal's glory as a major British naval base in the 19th and early 20th centuries, long after the destruction of the pirate-run town on June 7, 1692. The Jamaican nation's shifting attitudes in racial consciousness and increasing embrace of Afro-Jamaican cultural forms inspired many of Jamaica's political and business leaders to devise plans to incorporate Afro-Jamaican culture into their proposals. As Waters observes, "Like other silences in history, however, the silences of Africans and of Jamaicans of African descent...have been drowned out by the clear place that Port Royal has in the narratives of Englishmen in the New World" (p. 76). In particular, Waters focuses upon the incarnations of the Port Royal Development Company Ltd. plan (initiated in 1993) that proposed that contemporary Afro-Jamaican culture be integrated into the living museum through the incorporation of the food court, an African market next to the naval hospital, a restaurant and a living history room. While not replacing the significance of Port Royal as a naval port, the voices and experiences of Africans becomes apparent for the first time in these plans.

Chapter five focuses upon the estimated 1200 residents who inhabit Port Royal and their interpretation of history and the heritage tourism plans over the past decades. A relatively cohesive community geographically dispersed between two residential areas, Waters describes the narratives surrounding community survival of hurricanes as well as what is often not recognized as the continued British occupation of Port Royal up to independence in 1962. In addition, Waters outlines the development of the controversial Brotherhood of Port Royal, a citizens' organization that has established itself as an important voice in the community. Waters' depiction of residents' interests, skepticism and frustration with the various failed proposals tied to development emerged as a fascinating treatise on local politics but could have gone further in discussing the dynamics of kinship and relatedness. However, in recognizing that the center of the book is Port Royal and not the community (indeed Waters reveals that the community often has very little say in these contested negotiations), more details about this relatively isolated and misunderstood community might have offset the balance of the book.

This anthropological angst aside, there is much about Waters' timely book to embrace. For readers with an interest in popular culture, Waters provides an enjoyable, if not incisive, commentary on Keith Richards, whom Johnny Depp confesses to have channeled for his depiction of Jack Sparrow in Disney's *Pirates of the Caribbean* series. Scholars of Jamaican politics and history will prize Waters' knowledge and appreciation of Jamaican political culture, including excerpts from an interview with former Prime Minister Edward Seaga. Waters' careful analysis of the many failed attempts to plan and package Port Royal as a heritage tourism site, coupled with her attention to social memory, will also be valuable to scholars studying the politics of the past through the lens of a world heritage site. Waters' *Planning the Past* represents an important case study of the contested and changing representations of history and heritage, one that sheds light on Jamaica's relationship with its colonial past and the region's continuing struggle with historicity and authenticity.

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