A Refuge in Thunder: Candomblé and Alternative Spaces of Blackness. By Rachel E. Harding. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2000. 251 pp.

Enslaved Africans across the Americas refashioned their customs, religion, and other facets of their culture where they could. In certain areas of the Americas, captive Africans asserted their culture as a contesting space in which they could find refuge from the brutalities of enslavement. There are numerous territories in the Americas where African culture afforded protection, healing, and support in resistance against enslavement. Haiti, Surinam, Jamaica, and South Carolina are such examples of places in the Americas where African culture was used to construct an alternative space. Rachel Harding's *A Refuge in Thunder: Candomblé and Alternative Spaces of Blackness* concentrates on Brazil. She trains her focus on Candomblé, a religion that positively served Afro-Brazilians in their pursuit to reclaim and assert their humanity. Harding not only discusses Candomblé effectiveness during the nineteenth-century period of enslavement, but she also emphasizes that after emancipation the religion continued as a safe haven for Afro-Brazilians scarred by a society determined not only to marginalize them but bent on eliminating their presence. The process included a whiting of society, in which after emancipation Brazil encouraged European immigration. Anything that was African was in objection to society's progress. However, Candomblé was able to survive the periods of repression that continued from slavery into emancipation largely because of its relevancy to the needs of Afro-Brazilians. In many regards, Candomblé served a similar function for Afro-Brazilians as Santeria did for Afro-Cubans and Voodoo did for Haitians. Throughout her study Harding draws the connections that these tradition share with Afro-Brazilian Candomblé.

Harding defines Candomblé as a pan-African religion. Similar to Haitian Voodoo, Candomblé is an amalgamation of the religious ideas of the various West and Central African ethnic groups that arrived in Brazil. Therefore, it is a tradition that developed because of the forced entry of various African ethnicities into a space carved out by Europeans. Within this space, the people of these African ethnicities fused their beliefs into a unified theological construct. Candomblé emerges as a resisting force because it clashes with the objective of the space that Europeans created for captive Africans. That objective was exploitation and the destruction of the African personality. However, with the emergence of Candomblé, the objectives of Brazilian slave societies confronted difficulty. Enslaved Africans were able to reclaim that aspect of themselves that slavery destroyed through its practice.

In discussing Candomblé as a force able to salvage suppressed African personality, Harding draws meaningful connections between Candomblé and Afro-Brazilian spiritual traditions, which predate Candomblé's existence. Harding's reference to the antedating practices of Bols de Mandinga and Calundu contextualizes Candomblé as a continuation of enslaved African religiosity in Brazilian slave society. These traditions served in the same capacity as Candomblé and were instrumental in sustaining the Quilombos (Maroon societies) and creating rebellion in the early periods of slavery in Brazil. In addition, these traditions were easily absorbed into nineteenth-century Candomblé.

Other distinctive features identifiable in Candomblé are the religious traits, expressions, and rites of Central Africa, Dahomey, and the Yoruba. In emphasizing the multi-ethnic origins of Candomblé, Harding dissociates herself from a pattern of scholarship that has argued in favor of Yoruba predominance in the tradition. In affirming the multi-African ethnic bases of Candomblé, Harding is in keeping with the recent perspective that although Yoruba is very visible, it does not negate the presence of the Congo and Vodun traditions that are relevant to

Candomblé's existence. There is overwhelming evidence that Harding highlights to demonstrate that nineteenth-century African adherents deliberately negotiated space for each ethnic group to express its identity within Candomblé. One of the most powerful evidence presented in support of multi-African ethnicity is Candomblé structure. To preserve the uniqueness of rituals to each ethnic group, Candomblé communities were structured around ethnicities. These were not tribal groupings, but rather an indication of the rituals of that particular Candomblé community, which followed the protocols of a specific African nation (which was responsible for its establishment). As was in the nineteenth century, today's Brazilian practitioners still maintain the identities of ethnicities as indicators of the ritual structure in a particular Candomblé community. This process is evident in Haiti's Voodoo, where specific rites bear the names of particular Central and West African ethnicities. In the Jamaican Maroon communities, a similar practice was followed to allow the inclusion of Africans from different ethnicities to contribute their traditions in order to create a pan-African identity. In Brazilian Candomblé as in other localities, this merging of the ethnicities into a centralized black culture facilitated spaces in which a black person, regardless of his or her birthplace, was not excluded.

The inclusive nature of Candomblé, coupled with its celebration of African deities, clashed with white power in Brazil. The spaces in which Candomblé expressed itself were called terreiros. Nineteenth-century Bahia terreiros were organized throughout city apartments and houses. In addition, they were situated on city outskirts in the numerous Maroon societies that were formed by runaways. Throughout the nineteenth century, police repeatedly raided these spaces. Although directed towards the destruction of Candomblé, the raids documented in police records provide insight into the structure of nineteenth-century Candomblé. One of the first things that Harding reports using police records, along with other sources, is that in the early nineteenth century, before the abolition of the Brazilian slave trade in 1850, most Candomblé houses were headed by blacks born in Africa. It is not until several years after the slave trade ended that locally born Afro-Brazilians assumed the leadership of Candomblé houses. The reason for African predominance in leadership is tied to the diasporian notion that those born in Africa were spiritually stronger than those born in Brazil. In other slave societies, like Jamaica, where there was a preponderance of native-born Africans during slavery, these were the ones who often officiated in ritual spaces. However, as Harding argues, just because there was a predominant representation of native-born Africans as leaders of terreiros did not mean that locally born blacks were excluded. Police raids on the terreiros reveal that these were spaces of refuge for all Africans in Brazil.

Another important component to nineteenth-century Candomblé, according to Harding, is that a majority of the leadership were comprised of freed persons. The reason for that is that free blacks did not have the restraint of answering to any master and thus could "freely" perpetuate the tradition. In spite of their free status, they continued to be of service to Bahia's enslaved black communities. They performed a variety of rituals for enslaved Africans that would allow them either to secure their manumission or to prevent the cruelty of a particular slave master. Because of their contact and assistance to the enslaved population, free black Candomblé leaders were repeatedly imprisoned. In addition to the presence of free Blacks, another instrumental factor in Candomblé's survival and perpetuation is the association that powerful whites had with Candomblé terreiros. In certain instances, these white associates allowed Candomblé rituals to be performed in their houses. They themselves benefited from the religion's healing practice. More important is the assistance that white patronage provided when the police accosted Candomblé practitioners. Monetary funds and a vouch for the Candomblé leader's character would be

provided by such white patronage. Therefore, in spite of the pro-governmental policy to suppress Candomblé, there were more than enough free blacks who could conceal the practices as well as enough white patronage that would defend the character of its leaders. These are the central reasons that Harding identifies as to why Candomblé survived in Brazil. The other is its necessity in healing the Afro-Brazilian fractured spirit and personality. *A Refuge in Thunder* is an excellent study that ties these themes together to demonstrate the power and relevancy of Candomblé in nineteenth-century Brazil.

Kofia Barima
Indiana University, Bloomington