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Review / Reseña

Canessa, Andrew. *Intimate Indigeneities: Race, Sex, and History in the Small Spaces of Andean Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012) and Jackson, Shona N. *Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012)

Working Indigeneity

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It made sense to me, a few months ago that books titled *Intimate Indigeneities* and *Creole Indigeneity* might be productively reviewed alongside one another. The process of reading and reflecting on these two monographs has simultaneously confirmed and confounded that original sense. In some key ways, Shona Jackson and Andrew Canessa are engaged in parallel work: both highlight the generative connections between indigeneity and national identity, both address the centrality of land and

labor in understandings of indigeneity, and both treat indigeneity not as an inherited, biological status but as a socially constituted process of belonging. In the end, they examine how the meaning, experience, and purpose of indigeneity are created and disseminated. And yet, their studies depart from remarkably different standpoints and progress in radically different directions, highlighting just how much work indigeneity has been made to do both historically and in present-day scholarship. In light of those striking similarities and differences, this review begins with a brief, chapter-by-chapter overview of each book, allowing each study to stand on its own. It concludes, however, with an extended reflection on what the two texts together might tell us about the valence of indigeneity in contemporary Latin Americanist scholarship across disciplines and regions.

Two Books, Two Regions, Multiple Indigeneities

Shona Jackson's *Creole Indigeneity* aims to reshape scholarly assumptions about the racialized process of anti- and postcolonial national subjectivity in the Caribbean. Using Guyanese history and textual production as a touchpoint, Jackson emphasizes questions of Caribbean *Creolité* more broadly. She complicates the standard dialectic which focuses on the relationship between white European colonizers and black Creole subjects, and calls attention instead to the strategic erasures that anti- and postcolonial Creole nations enact to establish their own claim to native status over against the claims of Indigenous Peoples.¹ Though arguing that the presence of Indigenous Peoples in Guyana and the Caribbean as a whole ought to be “a starting point for modern Caribbean history and political and cultural theory,” Jackson operates in between the claims that either slavery or the subordination of Indigenous Peoples must be exclusively constitutive of Caribbean modernity.² Instead, Jackson argues, “it is not a matter of either blacks *or* Indigenous Peoples, but it is

¹ Throughout this review, I will use the terms for social groupings that Jackson and Canessa themselves use, which will make for some inconsistency. Jackson capitalizes Indigenous Peoples and her references to Indians invoke the Southeast Asian Indians who arrived in Guyana late in the colonial period. Canessa most frequently uses local terms such as *jaqi* (indigenous people) and *q'ara* (white people), but also uses “indian” and “indigenous” in certain contexts.

² Shona N. Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 16.

the relationship into which they are placed under colonialism that is definitive for Caribbean modernity.”³

To illustrate that constitutive interaction, Jackson works at both local and regional levels and parses both historical texts and recent literary theory. After an introduction that frames the anti- and postcolonial history of Guyana in light of Creole (black and East Indian) nationalism and the displacement of Indigenous Peoples, Jackson steps away from what she terms a “sociological” approach to Creole subjectivity. For the remainder of the book her analyses take a textual-theoretical approach, exploring interethnic conflict “as the consequence of Indo- and Afro- Creole production of belonging (understood as both material and metaphysical).”⁴

That focus on the textual production of belonging leads into an opening chapter in which Jackson establishes her concept of Creole indigeneity, suggesting that the process of becoming Creole is best understood in terms of acquiring Caribbean indigeneity. In this chapter, Jackson focuses on Afro-Creole experience, but rather than offering an exploration of “concrete racial and ethnic identities,” she elaborates a multivalent “dialectic of being” in which Creoles establish a native claim to land against both the exploitative hegemony of the white colonizer and the absent-presence of an Indigenous Other. Creole indigeneity, in this sense, alters the scholarly discussion about settler colonialism, emphasizing that settler belonging has been continuously “refashioned and redeployed” as indigeneity by groups seeking membership in Caribbean nation-states.⁵ These processes of becoming Creole through new notions of belonging, Jackson suggests, require an ongoing “ground clearing” which makes native status available to Blacks and Indians by displacing Indigenous Peoples.

Chapter two, “Labor *for* Being: Making Caliban Work,” examines one central trope of Creole indigeneity’s ground clearing—the malleable figure of Caliban—and elaborates the importance of labor in creating Creole claims to nativity. It illuminates “the ways in which Creole subjectivity literally depends upon the ability to make Caliban *continue* to work for modern being,” suggesting just how thoroughly Caribbean claims to

³ Ibid., 5.

⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁵ Ibid., 61.

national identity depend on the material and discursive labor of citizens.⁶ The chapter emphasizes as well how the appeal to labor that hinges Creole belonging within Guyana and across the Caribbean depends on the “difference and otherness of Indigenous Peoples,” who are seen as non-laboring because of their separation from the plantation economy.⁷ For a reader primarily interested in the specifics of Creole indigeneity in Guyana, this chapter could feel like a detour. However, its reconsideration of Caliban as a region-wide trope both highlights Jackson’s deft theoretical skill and helps link the book’s study of Guyana to critical discussions about Caribbean literature and culture more generally.

From chapter two’s emphasis on labor and broader Caribbean tropes, chapter three moves to the material work that myth-making performs for the production of Creole subjectivity in Guyana. This chapter examines how both before and after independence the narrative of El Dorado structures Guyanese national identity. The author traces the elaboration, uptake, and recreation of the idea of “El Dorado” in terms of a distant indigenous wealth that Creole labor brings into being. In this sense, Jackson argues, El Dorado becomes part of the production of Guyana’s material reality; its “endless articulation” allows the Creole nation to fulfill inherited (colonial) narratives of progress.⁸

Moving ever further into the Guyanese context, chapter four applies the previous chapter’s exploration of myth to the ethnonationalism of mid-twentieth century Afro-Creole president, Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham and his party, the Peoples National Congress (PNC). Jackson asserts that the “mythopoeics of conquest and extractable wealth” advanced by Burnham and the PNC, both established the sovereign subjectivity of Creoles and constituted that sovereignty as indigenous to Guyana.⁹ The chapter focuses on the social, political, and economic vision disseminated by the Burnham administration in its propaganda document *Co-operative Republic, Guyana 1970*. Examining the essays in *Co-operative Republic*, Jackson illustrates how Burnham articulated the young nation’s future in

⁶ Ibid., 76.

⁷ Ibid., 86.

⁸ Ibid., 144.

⁹ Ibid., 145.

ways that imagined the interior or “hinterland”—closely associated with Indigenous Peoples—as a colonial space ripe for exploitation by the labor and culture of the postcolonial Creole nation-state. In this way, Jackson suggests, Indigenous Peoples become essentially possessions of the postcolonial state in relation to Creoles, “making them both inimical to and necessary for Creole humanity” (170) and the progress of the nation.¹⁰

Shifting focus from Afro-Creole to Indo-Creole subjectivities, chapter five suggests that despite the challenges that Indo-Caribbean narratives might pose to Afro-Creole nationalism, the two forms of Creole experience in Guyana similarly depend on strategies of indigenous belonging and political subjectivity that displace Indigenous Peoples through an emphasis on plantation labor. Though acknowledging that Guyana’s Indo-Creole president Cheddi B. Jagan sometimes served as an ally for Indigenous Peoples’ political action, Jackson identifies shared narrative themes in the ways that Indo- and Afro-Creole political leaders have imagined both indigeneity and the image of Indigenous Peoples for the sake of the Creole nation. In particular, this chapter returns to the theme of labor, tracing how Indo-Guyanese claim the land and create political belonging through appeals to their history of indentured work on coastal plantations.

The exploration of labor and land, indigeneity and Creole subjectivity that drives *Creole Indigeneity* as a whole, calls attention to the enduring power of colonial narratives even in anti- and postcolonial contexts. Jackson asserts that the colonial, capitalist, and empiricist traditions that Europeans brought to the Caribbean have persisted in these claims to indigeneity. Within those structures, particularly their dependence on the tropes of labor, she argues, “subaltern...settler groups, largely blacks and Indo-Caribbean peoples, have simultaneously resisted colonialism, become indigenous, and with lasting results for social being in the region, deployed a new understanding of indigeneity that can support modern belonging and the institution of themselves as new natives.”¹¹ In the end, then, Jackson challenges Caribbean studies to “move beyond

¹⁰ Ibid., 170.

¹¹ Ibid., 211.

Caliban, or beyond the metaphysics of modern labor,” suggesting that such an emphasis only serves to re-inscribe both Western norms of subjectivity and the erasure of Indigenous sovereignty. Concluding her study, Jackson emphasizes the need for new ways of national knowing and being, calling for a more fluid articulation of place, belonging, and subjectivity that would allow Creoles access to indigeneity without requiring the negation of Indigenous Peoples.

Andrew Canessa’s *Intimate Indigeneities* opens with a deceptively simple question: “But what does it *mean* to be indigenous?” Canessa is primarily interested in this question in emic terms. He pursues “what it means to be indigenous to indigenous people themselves, not only when they are running for office or marching in protest but especially when they are in the small spaces of their lives.”¹² *Intimate Indigeneities* therefore takes readers into those small spaces—kitchens, sleeping places and gravesides—to define indigeneity not in terms of blood and biology, but as his interlocutors do: as a question of practice and presence. Canessa is not oblivious to larger power structures nor to “abstract concepts such as race, sex, and history,” but he approaches them through the lives of “people who continue to experience colonial oppression in warm, sweaty places where power continues to percolate.”¹³ In this case, the warm and sweaty places into which Canessa invites us are in the pseudonymous highland Bolivian town of Wila Kjarka, where Canessa has conducted ethnographic research since 1989.

Chapter one orients us toward Wila Kjarka in spatial terms. Using a social geography not of Wila Kjarka itself, but of its surrounding communities, the chapter maps the dominance, isolation, and distance (both physical and cultural) that position Wila Kjarka and its residents’ sense of themselves. Continuing to situate Wila Kjarka, Chapter two offers two parallel histories of the community. First, Canessa lays out a Western

¹² Andrew Canessa, *Intimate Indigeneities: Race, Sex, and History in the Small of Andean Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2, 25.

style narrative based on archeological and historical research, moving chronologically through pre-Colombian, colonial, and republican eras. Then he turns to local histories and the three periods under which adult Wila Kjarkeños distinguish their history—*chulla pacha* (roughly, the time of the ancestral spirits), *inka pacha*, and *patruna pacha* (the long colonial era). These divergent ways of telling history, Canessa argues, give insight into the meaning of indigeneity for the older generations of Wila Kjarkeños: “history,” he writes, “provides a way of understanding the profound difference between indians and the whites and mestizos who dominated them.” In that way, indigeneity is tied to “a sense of justice rooted in historical consciousness.”¹⁴ Canessa explains, for example, that for Wila Kjarkeños Bolivia’s shift from colony to independent nation meant very little—the era of *patrunapacha* in which *q’ara* (white people) controlled the land continued unbroken. Wila Kjarkeños own sense of historical transition into the present era emphasizes instead relatively recent local events that returned the land to *jaqi* (indigenous, Wila Kjarkeño) hands.

That reclamation of land is the subject of chapter three, which traces how Wila Kjarkeños remember the watershed events of the early 1950s, what they leave out of their histories, and “how not only the fact but the very process of memory and amnesia is key to their understanding of who they are today.”¹⁵ Though the events that returned control of Wila Kjarke to *jaqi* and ended the era of *patrunapacha* were nearly simultaneous with the Bolivian revolution of 1952 and subsequent land reforms, Canessa emphasizes that Wila Kjarkeños do not narrate their local history in light of that national history. Instead, they highlight local conflicts that left Wila Kjarke destroyed, but also eventually resulted in their triumphant return and acquisition of land titles. Recounting the memory of that conflict, Canessa suggests, not only narrates Wila Kjarkeños’ claim to the land and their victory over the hacendados, but also frames Wila Kjarkeño identity in general. Sharing the memory of the war repeatedly solidifies what it means to be *jaqi* in Wila Kjarke, Canessa argues.

¹⁴ Ibid., 87.

¹⁵ Ibid., 91.

Moving from historical and geographic context to the very smallest spaces of life in Wila Kjarka, chapter four traces traditions of birth, marriage, and death to illuminate what it means to be jaqi, or indigenous. In Wila Kjarka, Canessa explains, “personhood is a process that arguably is only completed on the death of an adult... Personhood, including its gendered aspects, is not understood to be rooted in substance but in practice, how one acts upon the world and the kinds of human and extrahuman relationships one has.”¹⁶ What distinguishes jaqi from q’ara, then, is not biology or phenotype, but participation in the activities of communal life. Jaqi do jaqi things and, as Canessa points out repeatedly, ceasing to be engaged in the material and symbolic activities of jaqi life means becoming q’ara or, at least, ceasing to be jaqi.

Chapter five offers another approach to the local meaning of indigeneity. It highlights the constitutive distinctions between jaqi and q’ara through the figure of the *kharisiri*—the q’ara fat stealer who preys exclusively on jaqi victims, usurping the vital force that jaqi acquire through their daily activities and their relationships with the telluric spirits. While other scholars have theorized the figure of the *kharisiri* in terms of how it imagines profound Otherness, Canessa suggests that the fear inspired by the *kharisiri* also provides insight into jaqi understandings of *self*. It calls attention to the “social and physical processes” that constitute *jaqi* subjectivity. It points, as well, Canessa argues, to the ways that “jaqi view power and the illegitimate usurpation of power”—helping Wila Kjarkeños explain both their own social place and the injustice by which outsiders maintain social and economic power over them.¹⁷

The final three chapters of *Intimate Indigeneities* spiral outward, connecting the small spaces of Wila Kjarka to national imaginaries. These chapters, Canessa explains, demonstrate that “the deeper one delves into the intimate spaces of human lives, the greater the scale of the issues that are exposed.”¹⁸ In this vein, chapter six offers a study of the local school, of bilingual education, and the ways that official education emphasizes national identity and progress at the explicit expense of indigenous ways of

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 181.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

being. Chapter seven, for its part, calls attention to the complexities of race and gender that arise as the traditions of the jaqi community come into contact with influences from the outside world. Strikingly wide-ranging, chapter seven weaves together such seemingly disparate topics as gender relations, domestic violence, military service, migrant labor, national belonging, and the racialization of violence, showing how they collide within the intimate spaces of Wila Kjarkeño life. Chapter eight takes the concerns of chapter seven into a broader historical and national context of gender, race, and sexuality. In the racialized, colonial/neo-colonial context, Canessa argues, “sex is much more than the product of unequal relations; it is the mode through which race status and citizenship are asserted...these dynamics of race and sex remain at the very heart of how the nation is imagined and citizenship construed.”¹⁹ The chapter uses an analysis of dolls, clothing, and beauty competitions to highlight how whiteness remains the locus of desire even as images of indigeneity are appropriated into national culture. As it closes, the chapter turns to Evo Morales’ rise to power, noting both how national protests against the Morales administration use of terms of sexual dominance to symbolically return “dirty Indians” to their place and how Morales himself projects an image of sexual virility that turns racialized stereotypes on their head. At the same time, Canessa warns, even such strategic uses of sexuality to undermine racist assumptions can reify masculine dominance over Indian women and maintain dominant “sexuality [as a primary] means through which citizenship can be claimed.”²⁰

The postscript that closes Canessa’s study follows the previous chapter’s focus on Evo Morales, tracing how the “new indigeneity” that Morales symbolizes is arriving in Wila Kjarka. “As is by now clear,” he writes, Wila Kjarka “is not an isolated hamlet beyond the currents of modernity and change. The new indigenous reality is a world less concerned with agriculture and more directed to education and market economics and, consequently, the new indigenous consciousness is certainly arriving.”²¹ In ten pages expressing both optimism and nostalgia,

¹⁹ Ibid., 247.

²⁰ Ibid., 280.

²¹ Ibid., 282.

Canessa sketches an altered Wila Kjarka, one in which indigenous people experience new prosperity, new opportunity, and new connection to the nation, but also one in which the old ways of being jaqi have been eclipsed. “Ironically,” Canessa concludes, “the hegemony of the new indigenous identity may not only do away with the colonial discourses that relegate people to the status of indian, but it may also take with it the lifeways of people who are jaqi.”²²

The Meanings and Uses of Indigeneity

The differences between Jackson’s *Creole Indigeneity* and Canessa’s *Intimate Indigeneities* become apparent to a reader almost immediately. Though both begin with stories—Jackson’s narration of a memory of growing up in Guyana and Canessa’s description of a recent scene in his friend Maruja’s kitchen. However, the narratives quickly move in different directions. The most palpable of those divergences is in the arena of methodology, which is not surprising, given that one is a literary scholar and the other an anthropologist. Jackson seems most in her element in the theoretical realm, making fine-grained but significant interventions into Caribbean anti- and postcolonial thought and evocatively challenging assumptions about the creation of both subjectivity and history. *Creole Indigeneity* thus pulls relentlessly toward the theoretical—the two opening chapters (a combined 100 pages) range far beyond the particulars of Jackson’s Guyanese focus to establish the conceptual implications of the project. For his part, Canessa is rooted in ethnographic specificities and gestures toward theoretical implications only from within the small spaces of everyday life in Wila Kjarka. *Intimate Indigeneities* begins in the kitchen, and its argument focuses us on the quotidian experiences behind larger social phenomena.

Those methodological and disciplinary orientations lead, as well, to differences in the material of each scholar’s study. Jackson’s analysis centers on public discourse and the creation of hegemonic power. Though the opening and closing chapters orient readers toward the direct

²² Ibid., 292.

experiences of Indigenous Peoples, her primary focus is on those who wield national discourse, especially the Creole intellectuals and politicians who claim indigeneity for themselves. Canessa, in contrast, consciously turns away from “[reading] indigenous identity through its manifestations in public and political mobilizations.” Concerned that scholarship focused in that direction “[denies] a voice to those people who are unable or unwilling to articulate their identities in the public domain,” he offers a study that attends exclusively to those at the margins of indigenous politics until the closing pages.²³

In addition to those structural differences, the two studies also treat places and peoples rather far removed from one another. The Caribbean and the Andean highlands can seem worlds apart when reading these books. For this reader thoroughly steeped in Andean scholarship the location of Jackson’s study required frequent mental reorientations as seemingly familiar histories and terms took unexpected turns; I imagine the same would be true for a Caribbean scholar picking up Canessa’s close reading of the Bolivian highlands. The very locatedness of each study, particularly Canessa’s, can make drawing parallels among the indigeneities they examine seem like an act of violence.

What emerges from the confluence of these two studies, then, is a sense of indigeneity’s immense breadth as a lived experience and as an analytical construct. Any lingering sense that there is a true and generalizable something that can be captured under the heading “indigenous” quickly gives way in the face of the multiply convened notions of indigeneity at work across these two studies. The notion that indigeneity is rhetorical—constructed in particular in historical and social contexts, for particular purposes, and in light of particular power relations—is not new. What Jackson and Canessa together make clear, however, is that even specific, located indigeneities must be approached in terms of the multiple meanings that accrue to them and the diverse uses to which they are put.

Approached in that sense, there are remarkable similarities in orientation between these two books. In particular, each emphasizes that the constitution, creation, and deployment of indigeneity is central to

²³ *Ibid.*, 5.

understanding indigeneity itself. Canessa's entire study plays out his opening claim that "indigeneity is not an identity that is simply given" and Jackson insists throughout *Creole Indigeneity* that indigeneity is always linked to processes of becoming.²⁴

In addition, both studies return repeatedly to commonplaces of land and labor. These commonplaces operate differently in the Caribbean and in the Andes, yet manage to achieve markedly similar ends. This contradiction is especially true with the theme of labor that runs through both books. Jackson posits, for example, that Indigenous People are excluded from national belonging through a lack of labor while appeals to labor provide Creoles with epistemic status as native to the Caribbean. Conversely, Canessa emphasizes that the heavy agricultural labor performed by indians in Bolivia has often positioned them outside of national belonging. Still, labor, performed or lacking, seems always to place Indigenous people at a disadvantage when it comes to claiming status.

Perhaps Canessa's explanation of why he uses the word "indian" so often throughout *Intimate Indigeneities* is apropos for both books: "*Indigenous* can roll off the tongue without too much reflection, as the speaker will be sure that no one is likely to be offended...[*indian*] jars; it does—or should—make one think; and more than any other term, it refers to a long history of colonial oppression."²⁵ Jackson makes a similar point: in Creole Guyana, Indigenous Peoples, excluded from productive labor, are always associated with deprivation. Understanding the space between indigeneity and *indians*, then, helps us understand the work that indigeneity can do for nations even as they obscure and marginalize indigenous peoples. "Indigenous authenticity is not to be found in 'proving' historical continuities," Canessa warns.²⁶ Yet both scholars make clear that understanding the work which indigeneity is made to do requires attention to both the lived experience of indigenous peoples and the broader availability of indigeneity. For this reason, more than any other, it is productive to read *Intimate Indigeneities* and *Creole Indigeneity* alongside one another. If Canessa emphasizes more the particulars of lived

²⁴ Ibid., 4; Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity*, 83.

²⁵ Canessa, *Intimate Indigeneities*, 7.

²⁶ Ibid., 65.

experience and Jackson takes us primarily through the theoretical implications of indigeneity's appropriation and uptake, the books together show that neither orientation is entirely adequate to understanding what "indigenous" means and does in Latin America or Latin American studies. Combined, however, they offer a rich and textured impression of how generative indigeneity is and has been for Latin American nations, for political movements, and for Latin Americanist scholarship.