

of the narrative (83, 91, 102, 124). In this regard, the text keeps in step with the gender-conscious trend of modern Caribbean historiography.

Alas, two fundamental claims of the text are problematic. The author asserts that his exploration of the major theme, surviving slavery, is disconnected from “the enslaved people’s efforts to rebel, resist and wrest some measure of autonomy from their enslavers” (4). Yet he repeatedly underscores that they were frequently compelled to disobey and run away to lodge complaints because their masters “did everything possible to keep enslaved people from making complaints” (57). Indeed, the letter of the Berbice law legalized their actions, but in practice enslaved persons intentionally defied their masters in lodging complaints. The perspective, therefore, that complaints were separate from resistance is not sustained in the discourse. The final conclusion of the text is also a difficult pill. In reference to the lives of enslaved persons in Berbice, the author declares, “It was, in the end, a world at once utterly foreign and disconcertingly similar to our own” (194). The comparative similarity the author draws between the lives of servile laborers and our current milieu is unacceptable and disconcerting.

Despite these two weaknesses, the sources of this study are solid. The thematic, geographical and chronological parameters are clearly established, the stylistic structure is consistent, and the text makes a unique and very interesting contribution to Caribbean historiography.

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HAITIAN REVOLUTION

The Priest and the Prophetess: Abbé Ouvrière, Romaine Rivière, and the Revolutionary Atlantic World. By Terry Rey. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. 330. Illustrations. Bibliography. Notes. Index. \$75.00 cloth.
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Romaine la Prophétesse was a charismatic leader of insurgent slaves and freemen who garners a few sentences in most histories of the Haitian Revolution. His public career, characterized by extreme violence and his claim to be the Virgin Mary’s godson, lasted six months. For 30 years we have known he was a free landowner and not, as previously assumed, a slave, but he remains a tantalizing enigma, largely unstudied except for an article on him that Terry Rey published in 1998. Abbé Félix Ouvrière was an even more obscure bit-player in the revolution, but finally, in this lively and informally written narrative, Rey puts both men center stage. They spent just a few days together during the uprising of free people of color in western and southern Saint-Domingue that led, in April 1792, to France’s abolition of racial inequality. From

his mountain fastness of Trou Coffi, Romaine terrorized the region between the towns of Léogane and Jacmel. Ouviaère was sent to him as an envoy by the free colored leaders. He is one of only two people to have left a description of the Prophetess, who vanished following his military defeat.

Rey's study reveals far more about the priest, who went on to have a distinguished medical career, than about the mysterious Romaine, but it adds fresh detail about the shaman warlord from some previously unexploited sources and fits his story into the political narrative of the period. It also benefits from Rob Taber's recent discoveries about Romaine's life before the revolution, as well as Carolyn Fick's earlier research. Most important, Rey confirms suspicions about Romaine's gender ambiguity, which he relates to African traditions of sacerdotal gender inversion. Although he abandons the depiction of Romaine as a Kongolese ex-slave and maroon, advanced in his 1998 article, Rey interprets the creole leader's ambiguous femininity as part of his appeal to his numerous African followers, and his Marianism as specifically appealing to the Kongolese. Romaine's religious world, Rey insists, was one of folk Catholicism rather than Vodou, and he downplays Vodou's influence on the Haitian Revolution in general.

Long characterized by general overviews, Haitian Revolution historiography remains in need of in-depth regional studies; this one unfortunately does not dig very deeply and has several flaws. An ethnographer rather than a historian, Rey has missed important archival material relating to his topic, and his knowledge of the secondary literature seems rather thin. He pays little attention to the divisions within the free colored and slave communities, or to the relations between them, and he displays little grasp of the conflicts that split the white community, although these are central to understanding the story he tells.

Factual errors abound; mangled proper names and other misspellings, mistranscriptions, and poor translations are numerous. Some key individuals are misidentified (Vissière, de Villars); others scarcely appear at all (Pompé, Baudry des Lozières). Analyses and judgments are consequently not always convincing. The repeated statement that Romaine "conquered" both Jacmel and Léogane is somewhat misleading, and the claim that he "orchestrated" the rebellions in both areas is not really proven, though it certainly provides unity to the narrative. The notes sometimes lack vital information. The text badly needs adequate maps, and also proofreading.

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