Stefanie Hunt-Kennedy. *Between Fitness and Death: Disability and Slavery in the Caribbean*. Disability Histories. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020. Pp. 244. $19.95 (digital).
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One of the issues facing historians examining the historic Caribbean and North American scene is the relative scarcity of works in English detailing the occurrence of disability in the slave societies of the region. Stefanie Hunt-Kennedy's *Between Fitness and Death: Disability and Slavery in the Caribbean* represents a comprehensive and noteworthy contribution to this field. The enhancement represented by Hunt-Kennedy brings into focus the complexity of Caribbean slave societies. Through an examination of various aspects of the development of slave societies in the region—legal, sociocultural, and politico-economic—among other important developments, Hunt-Kennedy traces the issues that shaped the treatment of enslaved Africans.

In the introduction, Hunt-Kennedy unearths the philosophical issues that underlay the treatment of enslaved Africans in the British Atlantic. Citing the editors of the *Athenia Mercury*, she traces the origin of views of Africans as riddled with "imperfections" (14). Indeed, Blackness was seen as a physical and moral illness that separated Africans from Europeans. Hunt-Kennedy uses such negative philosophical renderings to demonstrate "that disability was a factor that shaped both the lives of the enslaved and the meanings of enslavement" (5). She also considers conceptions of ability in the early era of enslavement in the New World, asserting, "ability itself [had] a raced history" (10). That is, Europeans felt that Africans were irrevocably intellectually and physically deficient. In this context, through five chapters Hunt-Kennedy elaborates on the analysis begun in the introduction.

In chapter 1, Hunt-Kennedy discusses an emerging philosophy of Africa and Africans. Here she analyzes the development of "monster" images in the literature of the sixteenth century, noting that the determinants of "monster" identification were no longer based on "physical deformity alone, but rather deviant inner characteristics and behaviors" (15). She writes of "fanciful" texts that viewed Africa as a land where "half-man, half-animal" races lived (16). She observes that Shakespeare's Caliban is portrayed as an "ethnic other" (23) and opines that Richard Ligon's description of African women in early seventeenth-century Barbados linked the Blackness of the African to a maternal inheritance that tainted the enslaved with an indelible disability. Such renderings pointed to Africans as "disabled," a context that Hunt-Kennedy further analyzes in chapter 2.

Drawing on extensive material evidence in multiple forms, Hunt-Kennedy documents in almost excruciating detail the cruelty of the slave system. Indeed, a considerable strength of the book is Hunt-Kennedy's remarkable scholarship and her thorough grasp of primary and secondary literature. Thus, in chapter 2, she addresses the formulation of the first legal statute in the New World to govern enslavement, the 1661 Barbados Slave Law, and its reproduction in the 1664 Jamaican Slave Law. Paradoxically, these laws identified Africans as "an uncertain, dangerous kind of people" (30), while at the same time, they "constructed a slave whose humanity was recognized in order to facilitate its legal disablement" (46). Moreover, the slave laws animalized the existence of the enslaved, who were not entitled to any protection of the law, as were white laborers. Additionally, the slave laws invested the bodies of the enslaved with criminality, thus permitting the branding of bodies and the infliction of cruelties such as castration and other forms of dismemberment, and even death for the most minor of offenses. In short, the law served to disable "the already disabled" (67).

In chapter 3, Hunt-Kennedy examines the relationship between the economic value of the enslaved and the question of disability. The murder of Africans who had been rejected by the enslavers on the African coast illustrates another element in the dehumanization and commodification of these bodies. Thus, Africans "became commodities whose bodies were used for production until they were useless to plantation production" (72). In many cases, plantation

managers expressed, as did Samson Wood of the Newton Plantation in Barbados, a desire to be rid of sick or superannuated enslaved workers on the basis that they represented a loss to plantation production. Again, the unsanitary conditions on the plantations, the forcing of pregnant females to work at backbreaking tasks almost to the very eve of childbirth, among other negative aspects of life, led to the spread of diseases and death. Scabies, leprosy, yaws, measles, smallpox, diphtheria, and whooping cough were only a few of the disabling results of a plantation regime. Again, in this environment, Hunt-Kennedy takes the time to note that there were some enslaved, like Makandal in Saint-Domingue, who wore their disability as a badge of honor.

In chapter 4, Hunt-Kennedy brings the matter of marronage into sharp focus. The issue of disability again figures heavily in the sanctions employed by enslavers to dissuade would-be escapees. The sanctions could include dismemberment, branding, and other disfigurement, such as slitting of noses, and even death for absences of thirty days or more. In some cases, as is illustrated in extracts from the diary of Thomas Thistlewood, an English planter resident in Jamaica, some runaways had the extreme indignity on recapture of being tied down to the ground with a rope and stake and having another enslaved defecate in the runaway's mouth. In comparing the treatment of the African body in advertisements seeking the return of runaways, Hunt-Kennedy notes that marks of disfigurement were largely absent from advertisements in the metropole. Conversely, in the Caribbean context, such marks were very common, signifying disability as a mark of criminality and an identifier of an innate inferiority of Africans.

In chapter 5, Hunt-Kennedy interrogates the question of disability and monstrosity in the emerging abolitionist literature. By the eighteenth century, a number of developments, including slave rebellions in the Caribbean and an emergence of sympathy toward people with disability, were shaping a debate about the morality of enslavement. In this period, discussion about the disability of enslavement became a propaganda strategy that "reflected cultural shifts regarding ideas of pain, suffering and sensibility" (139). Of central importance in this discussion is the acknowledgment that abolitionists were coming to the view that monstrosity or disability in slave societies was not located in the individual African but in the institution of slavery itself. Hunt-Kennedy concludes her very powerful survey and analysis by observing that the coming of emancipation did not mean that the formerly enslaved were free from the disabling legacies of the former enslavement. In any case, the "punished body" that was characteristic of enslavement was paradoxically a "text" or canvas of various stories, not least of which was the "supposed rebellious nature" of Blacks and "a refusal to accept one's enslavement"(165).

Hunt-Kennedy's treatment of the subject matter is a powerful analysis of significant aspects of the trauma of enslavement. This must-read, comprehensive text demonstrates a skillful weaving of the underlying evidence and exposes the broad panorama of enslavement in the British Atlantic.

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In *Transatlantic Upper Canada: Portraits in Literature, Land, and British-Indigenous Relations*, Kevin Hutchings analyzes the intersection of nineteenth-century Romanticism and indigeneity in a transatlantic context. Employing a biographical approach, Hutchings focuses his chapters