

Book Review

- *Ever Faithful: Race, Loyalty, and the Ends of Empire in Spanish Cuba*, by David Sartorius. Duke University Press, 2013.
- *Punishment in Paradise: Race, Slavery, Human Rights, and a Nineteenth-Century Brazilian Penal Colony*, by Peter M. Beattie. Duke University Press, 2015.

David Sartorius's *Ever Faithful: Race, Loyalty, and the Ends of Empire in Spanish Cuba* explores the relationship between race and politics in nineteenth-century Cuba. Sartorius, currently Associate Professor of History at the University of Maryland, analyses 'how ordinary Cubans expressed support not for national independence but for Spanish colonial government' (p. x). This, he observes, is a story of political allegiance that runs parallel to the raceless nationalism championed by José Martí and Fernando Ortiz. Peter M. Beattie, on the other hand, currently Associate Professor of History at Michigan State University, focuses on Brazil. In *Punishment in Paradise: Race, Slavery, Human Rights, and a Nineteenth-Century Brazilian Penal Colony*, he takes for his subject the island of Fernando de Noronha, which was, during the nineteenth century, the home of Brazil's largest forced labour penal colony. He argues that the island 'provides a little-considered perspective on the interconnected struggles against flogging, the death penalty, and slavery on Brazil's mainland' (p. 3). Taken together, these two volumes offer compelling vistas into Brazilian and Cuban history by analysing topics that have not been considered in great depth.

Sartorius argues that support for Spanish rule was not limited to people of Spanish ancestry. In making this argument, he suggests a more expansive vision of Cuban history. While many white planters exhibited pro-colonial sentiment, so did Cubans of African descent. He investigates support for Spain from the inside out and does not dismiss loyalty to Spain as an aberration or 'a pothole in the road to national identity and citizenship' (p. 2). Rather, it was a 'meaningful political relationship that expressed mutual and reinforcing interests between the Spanish state and Cuban society' (p. 2). He is certainly correct that, in the case of Cuba, scholars have been far more interested in disloyalty than loyalty. In other words, most of the books dealing with this period in Cuba

history analyse rebels and their motivations. Nevertheless, the loyal were no less important and are equally deserving of attention.

Sartorius begins with Napoleon's invasion and the Constitution of 1812. Article 22 of the Constitution affirmed the possibility of granting African-descended men Spanish citizenship under extraordinary circumstances. Some free men of colour preferred affirming their loyalty to the imperial project instead of claiming citizenship under Article 22 because loyalty offered a stable position to negotiate within the empire. Additionally, as Cubans sought more freedom from Spain, they drew on the language of loyalty and privilege instead of the language of citizenship and rights. Fascinatingly, as some Cubans planned rebellions, slaves and free people of colour often alerted authorities to possible disturbances. Informants saw more advantages to claiming loyalty and working within the system than to rebellion. During the Ten Years' War (1868-1878), free people of colour provided crucial assistance defending Cuba against the rebels. After the war, Cubans of colour used public spaces to make their loyalty visible. Of course, when artisans publicized their loyalty, some government officials wondered if they were sincere. Politicians, both Liberal and Conservative, 'attempted to check metropolitan fears of social unrest and violent local initiatives by asserting the loyalty of African-descended Cubans' (p. 184). Even after the beginning of the war for independence, arguments for supporting Spanish rule never disappeared. He concludes that Cubans disavowed the history of loyalty after 1898 and colonial loyalty became an outmoded idea. However, he correctly argues that if we want to understand the history of Cuba, we have to remember not only anti-imperialists but also 'the actions of people who have strengthened imperial formations through their active consent, wilful participation, and benign neglect' (p. 226).

Where Sartorius studies nineteenth-century Cuba, Beattie, at first glance, seems to confine his attention to a much smaller geographic space: the island of Fernando de Noronha. However, as readers quickly discover, *Punishment in Paradise* is more than a microhistory of a penal colony and he offers seven reasons why an isolated penal colony matters to Brazilian history. First, Fernando de Noronha 'offers an unparalleled panorama of justice in imperial Brazil' (p. 4). Second, it was a large, isolated plantation run by convict labourers. Third, the island illustrates 'category drift,' or 'circulation among categories of the intractable poor' (p. 6). In other words, what happens when convicts, after their term was over, stayed on the island as guards? Fourth, army officers developed practices that combined understandings of Fernando de Noronha as a site of exile and punishment as well as a site of rehabilitation. Fifth, the island showcased debates about family life and segregation of prisoners. Sixth, it is tailor-made for international comparisons. Seventh, the penal colony provides insights into gender, sexuality, and heterosexual conjugality.

As with *Ever Faithful*, there is much to commend about this volume. Beattie wonders, for instance, how 'a slaveholding society embraced liberal penology after independence' (p. 23). Pedro II, intellectuals, and politicians under-

stood that slavery gave Brazil a poor international image and looked for ways to improve the country's bad reputation. Hence the efforts to reform penal institutions. He spends a great deal of time exploring everyday life on the island. Convicts, their families, soldiers, army officers, and the occasional visitor, rubbed elbows and had to figure out how to get along with each other. Sometimes people got along too well. Unplanned commerce, bribery, and corruption were ever present. Interestingly, he asserts that the imperial state 'never exercised the kind of total institutional control that advocates of prisons and penal colonies imagined possible' (p. 74).

Imperial officials spent a good deal of time fretting about convict sexuality. In doing so, they grappled with an important question. What was Fernando de Noronha's function? Was it a place of punishment and exile? Or a place of rehabilitation? Officials worried that taking convicts away from their families and placing them in an all-male penal colony would lead to homosexual relations. Their solution, in the name of rehabilitating convicts, was transporting families to the island. Of course, this solution created a host of other problems. Convicts received meagre wages and some found it difficult to support families. What happened when another convict fell in love with a man's wife or daughter? (This happened and usually resulted in violence). In discussing category drift, he notes that some convicts, when their terms were done, stayed on the island and so did their families. Others did not. Some abandoned their families on the island. Then the state had to determine who was responsible for caring for the abandoned people, or for paying their passage to the mainland. He concludes that 'the experiment with conjugal penal living had not succeeded because many convicts did not behave like proper patriarchs' (p. 122).

Fernando de Noronha was not a pleasure resort, but if convicts behaved well, they did have some leisure time and could socialize with each other. Rebellions sometimes occurred. Fascinatingly, during some soldier mutinies, the convicts helped put down the rebellion! Beattie contends that authorities integrated slave convicts into work companies and that they were not treated very differently than most free plebeian convicts. In his final chapter, he correctly critiques the 'shallow southward reach of Atlantic history' (p. 11) and explores how movements against corporal punishment, slavery, and the death penalty became interwoven. Embarrassment over slavery led Brazil to move against the death penalty. The situation in the United States, on the other hand, proceeded in a different direction. He asserts that 'the divergence between death penalty abolitionism in Brazil and the United States lies in the paths each nation took toward slavery's abolition and their different legal, institutional, and cultural histories' (p. 214).

Both Sartorius and Beattie illuminate themes that have been largely overlooked or neglected in national historiographies. For Sartorius, the question becomes why did people stay loyal to Spain, when self-interest suggests rebellion would have been a better idea. He contends that we cannot understand Cuban history if we only focus on the anti-imperialists, which is absolutely true.

Beattie explores the experiences of prisoners in an isolated penal colony. These often-forgotten people on an isolated island, he contends, hold important lessons about Brazilian history. One of the strengths of both books is the fact that they allow people from a variety of social classes to speak. Sartorius, in other words, does not simply quote Spanish officials. Neither does Beattie limit his sources to imperial policy-makers. Both authors seek out the voices of the lower class and they incorporate, whenever possible, the voices of women and people of colour. Thus, we hear from angry men and women, who found that family life on Fernando de Noronha often did not work – although it sometimes did. We hear professions of loyalty from Cubans of colour in Santiago de Cuba, Havana, and Cienfuegos. The inclusion of so many voices strengthens both volumes immensely. Both authors offer important modifications or reinterpretations of Cuban and Brazilian history. Both books will be of interest to specialists and will work quite well in graduate seminars.

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