

Englishmen Transplanted: The English Colonization of Barbados, 1627–1660. By Larry Gragg. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. Pp. vii, 217. \$70.00.)

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Although the Atlantic approach to the history of colonial America has attained preeminence over the past two decades, it has not changed the picture of the white societies of the English West Indies. Richard S. Dunn's *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624–1713* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1972) depicted these islands as social failures, settlements that were riven by every type of disorder, ruled by a spirit of rampant individualism, and unwilling or unable to develop the political, legal, and religious institutions that allowed Britain's colonies on the North American mainland to become ordered and productive societies. Although such scholars as David Barry Gaspar, Richard D. E. Burton, and Vincent Brown have deepened our understanding of the lives of slaves and free people of color in the English Caribbean, Dunn's resoundingly negative assessment of the white populations of these islands appears to have discouraged historians from probing beneath the surface of these societies.

The past year, however, has seen the publication of two significant monographs that focus on the lives and experiences of white West Indian colonists. Trevor Burnard's *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2004) employs a microhistorical approach, drawing primarily upon one remarkable source, the diaries of the eighteenth-century Jamaican overseer and small planter Thistlewood. By contrast, Larry Gragg's *Englishmen Transplanted* depicts the beginnings of the plantation system that Thistlewood would experience at its zenith and presents a broader social and institutional history of the charter decades of Anglo-Barbadian settlement. Gragg's thesis, which his monograph ably supports, is that these early colonists tried, with notable success, to make this tropical island into a "little England," transplanting the principal ideals and institutions of contemporary England, rather than abandoning these values for the sake of unfettered greed.

Gragg's introduction centers upon the notoriously slippery concept of "Englishness." To him, central aspects of English identity in the seventeenth century were "the remarkable mobility of the people" (p. 4), a sense of nationhood centered on the Protestant faith, and, following Mark Kishlansky's *Monarchy Transformed: Britain, 1603–1714* (London, 1996), "an obsession with disorder" (p. 5) and a concomitant attention to its prevention, and a commitment to localism. In his view, these "traits identified as 'English' were all evident on Barbados" (p. 7), and the seven chapters that follow elucidate this thesis.

The earlier chapters of *Englishmen Transplanted* are less successful than the later ones in supporting Gragg's conviction of the "Englishness" of Barbados. His chapter on "First Impressions" works through the corpus of travelers' accounts and other descriptions of early Barbados, emphasizing the generally positive picture presented by visitors such as Richard Ligon, Henry Colt, and Samuel Winthrop. This discussion imparts a vivid sense of the Barbadian environment, but Gragg's stolid prose and his emphasis on description over analysis yield limited insights. The following section, "Establishing a Colony," is particularly frustrating; it presents a detailed account of the local and imperial struggles to determine how and by whom the new colony ought to be ruled. Gragg does convey a sense of the extent to which colonists attempted, often unsuccessfully, to assert their autonomy from a metropole wracked by civil war, but, focusing on the trees rather than the forest, he produces a confounding list of major and minor players in the continuing attempt to gain dominion over this potentially lucrative new settlement.

Gragg hits his stride in a series of short but informative chapters that discuss the transplantation of English institutions to the fledgling settlement. The most successful sections are

those in which he works from sources, particularly a vast collection of wills and deeds held in the Barbadian Archives, that have received little previous study. Through close analysis of these documents at the individual and collective level, Gragg follows James Horn's lead in *Adapting to a New World: English Society in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1994), detailing "the adaptation of familiar institutions to their new surroundings" (p. 58). Rather than dismissing Dunn's conviction that the West Indian colonies were intensely focused on personal and collective economic success, he explains that the "perception of order afforded by the successful transplantation of accustomed ways of organizing their lives helped create a more predictable environment for investment" (p. 87), an environment in which Barbados's economy could flourish. By recreating secular and religious institutions such as law courts and vestries, by attempting to follow metropolitan ways of dressing, eating, and building, and by working to uphold ideals of societal order, seventeenth-century Barbadians were simultaneously deploying English values for their own sake and drawing upon them to make the colony safe, if not for democracy, than for prosperity.

Equally laudable is Gragg's emphasis on the relatively disorderly milieu of seventeenth-century England, with its rowdy alehouses, its culture of public insult, and its notably indifferent record of church attendance. Such evidence of the not always godly atmosphere of early modern England is as necessary to his argument of Barbados's Englishness as his attention to the extent to which islanders worked to transplant the primary structures of the political and social life they had known on the other side of the Atlantic. Gragg brings the book to a solid conclusion by stating that the very elements that most differentiated the colony from the metropole, the tropical environment and the ever-increasing black majority in its population, "induced the planters to draw upon the familiar to give themselves a degree of security as well as a sense of order" (p. 184). This formulation of Englishness as simultaneously being a socially logical form of colonial development and a method of incorporating unfamiliar elements into the life of the settlement is valuable in understanding the cultural transformation not only of Barbados but also of the wider Anglo-American world.

Although Gragg is open in his allegiance to social rather than cultural history, at least passing attention to theories of creolization, such as those of Sidney W. Mintz, Richard Price, or T. H. Breen, would have imparted greater nuance to his discussions of concepts such as adaptation and transplantation. The book also suffers from a notable number of typographical errors and would have benefited from the inclusion of at least one map. These caveats aside, *Englishmen Transplanted* is a significant work for scholars of colonial and Atlantic history, and a crucial one for historians of the West Indies.