standards of the person who wrote it and of the publisher who brought it out expecting it to appeal to a significant buying public, to see the underlying presuppositions of its production, its aporia, its silences, its rhetorical sleights of hand. This does not mean that Stavans is not negative in a basic way: he directs some very pithy barbs against Sandra Cisneros's writing and the sort of liberal enterprise he views responsible for canonizing her as *the* Chicana writer. And anyone who cringes at the mere mention of Selena's name, appalled by the cheap sanctification of this trite singer, will delightfully savor Stavans's sarcastic comments. A particularly useful example of this approach is his discussion of Frida Kahlo (of the now somewhat fading Fridamania) vs. Benita Galeana, a political activist closely attached to the Communist party in Mexico, with which Kahlo and her husband, Diego Rivera, were involved. Stavans's essay is subtitled "unparallel lives," and his interest lies with demonstrating why Kahlo has been converted into a "mythical figure" and why Galeana is virtually forgotten. Were this more than a note, Stavans might have found time to analyze some of his own presuppositions, and he too conveniently forgets why Kahlo is important to a feminist agenda.

This leads me to a final observation about what I think is a very lovely collection of notes, whose main use is to showcase some of the topics that require more theoretically grounded analysis. At times Stavans tends to get rather smarmy, as though meaning to enhance his engagement with the allegedly highly sophisticated audience that reads the sort of publications where many of these notes first appeared. Space prevents me from going into the issue of how Latin American literature is getting covered in United States intellectual forums other than the circuit sustained mostly for professional academics, but this is a matter that requires the cultural critic to engage in some metacommentary that might have provided a nice complementary conclusion to this collection.

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Struggles for Freedom: Essays on Slavery, Colonialism, and Culture in the Caribbean and Central America. By O. NIGEL BOLLAND. Belize Chronicals Series, no. 4. Belize City: Angelus Press, 1997. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. 334 pp. Paper.

This important collection of essays brings together newly edited materials and previously published work by the author on the English-speaking Caribbean. Bolland, a sociologist, aims to look at the economic, political, and cultural forces that have shaped Caribbean societies from colonial times to the present day. Divided into four sections—"Colonial and Creole Societies," "Colonization and Slavery," "From Slavery to Freedom," and "Class, Culture and Politics"—*Struggles for Freedom* is diverse in its approach and subject matter. In the introductory essay, "Creolization and Creole Societies: A Cultural Nationalist View of Caribbean Social History," Bolland makes clear that "creolization" constitutes a central dynamic of Caribbean social history, and this assertion reverberates throughout the book.

Bolland begins part 2 by looking at the colonization of Central America and the

enslavement of its inhabitants, while demonstrating the economic links that existed between Central America and the Spanish-dominated Caribbean prior to 1550. He focuses on indigenous slavery and offers the generally accepted argument that the impact of African slavery in any particular region was inversely related to the availability of indigenous labor. The chapter on Belize is more specific, as it examines labor practices related to timber extraction in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Bolland makes clear that Belize's creole culture evolved from the complex interaction among slaves from different cultural backgrounds, slaves and their masters, and men and women who were not primarily engaged in plantation slavery. The final essay in this second section examines changing European perceptions of Amerindians in Belize, from the early European colonizers of the time of Columbus to the British overlords of the nineteenth century. Bolland surveys the perceptions of colonizers and chroniclers during the initial phase of contact and colonization, although he pays particular attention to the ethnocentric views of the British, a legacy that persists to this day.

In part 3 Bolland questions the notion that social relations changed after the abolition of slavery. He demonstrates that in many cases slaves had opportunities to engage in wage labor while so-called "freed men and women" were often coerced. This same theme is more specifically treated in chapter 6, which examines how after abolition the British ensured continued control over land and labor in the West Indies in general and Belize in particular. This section concludes with an essay on the politics of freedom in the British West Indies. Bolland tackles the complex question of how former slaves gave meaning to their freedom by examining issues of worker autonomy after emancipation. As he shows, the answer to this question varied, and must be interpreted within the complex relationship between "dominance, resistance and accommodation" (p. 187).

In part 4, Bolland analyzes four important West Indian novelists (Victor Stafford Reid, Ralph de Boissiére, John Hearne, and George Lamming). Although his frame of analysis is not as clear as in other chapters, he does offer us a glimpse into the cultural history of the region in the preindependence era of the 1940s and 1950s. As he searches for authentic articulations of "Creole culture," Bolland offers little in the way of a historical or nationally-specific context for understanding the novelists and their novels. Moreover, the reader is never quite sure why the author has chosen to examine *these* four novelists. Nonetheless, Bolland makes us understand why he believes it is Lamming who best "makes the concept of an authentic Caribbean nation possible" (p. 256).

The final essay of the book focuses on the role of ethnicity in decolonization and political struggle in two English-speaking Caribbean nations on the mainland: Belize and Guyana. Both countries have remarkably similar histories and thus make for a superb comparison. Bolland forcibly argues that party politics, which many have analyzed through the prism of ethnicity, in fact cuts across ethnic lines. Moreover, in both countries, as in the region as a whole, cultural and ethnic identities are intimately related to class formation, emerging nationalism, and state formation.

This volume is an important contribution to the literature on the English-speaking Caribbean. It is particularly helpful in placing Anglophone communities in a context

that extends beyond the island-nations (although comparative material from the major island-nations of Jamaica, Barbados, or Trinidad is minimal). Bolland inevitably faced the challenge of many Caribbean scholars who must balance broad regional trends with in-depth analysis of specific nation-states. In light of this, it is remarkable that one author is able to provide so much depth and breadth to the subject. For the historian, many of the general essays may not be historically specific enough. Others will lament the lack of comparison with the Spanish, French, and Dutch Caribbean. Yet, these essays provide important themes and issues that will allow for cross-cultural comparison. This volume is well organized and conceptualized (although it does not include the index listed in the table of contents) and will be an important reference for years to come.

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Background

The Códice de Santa María Asunción*: Facsimile and Commentary. Households and Lands in Sixteenth-Century Tepetlaoztoc.* By BARBARA J. WILLIAMS and H. R. HARVEY. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1997. Plates. Illustrations. Maps. Tables. Figures. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. xii, 410 pp. Cloth, $275.00.

Increasingly, pictorial documents in the Aztec native tradition are available in excellent facsimile editions, and the *Códice de Santa María Asunción* is a recent addition to this library of primary sources. The *Asunción* document is a rural census and a record of land ownership and use from Tepetlaoztoc, a local capital near Texcoco in the eastern Basin of Mexico. Unlike the more familiar historical and religious codices, the *Asunción* document offers a rare look at the actual sixteenth-century Mexican families whose lives underwrote the more general accounts told, for example, by the *Codex Mendoza*'s tribute record and "daily life" sections. Dozens of families are named, drawn, and diagrammed, and their farm holdings are measured and assessed. Because the *Asunción* provides this unprecedented level of historical intimacy, it contributes generously to what we know about how the Aztecs saw themselves.

The *Asunción* document dates from about 1544. It was drawn in native style on European paper, and annotated in Nahuatl and Spanish to serve as legal evidence when local farmers accused their colonial *encomendero* overlord of abusing his privileges. The original manuscript consisted of perhaps 125 folios, of which 80 remain. These 160 pages are the census and cadastral records for a dozen villages. Descriptions by Cortés, Zorita, Bernal Díaz, and others of native civil records such as maps and deeds are amply exemplified by the *Asunción*. In prehispanic times, the village headman kept such records, noting births and deaths and overseeing the transferal of plots of unused land and the inheritance of family holdings. Few such documents survived the colonial period, and the *Asunción* facsimile illustrates the formal characteristics of these records,