

reflection to some planters.” Although Waud’s illustration indicates real continuities in the plantation system from the era of slavery to that of emancipation, it also registers an underlying disruption to what the authors call the “web of paternalist relations” on southern plantations (p. 70).

Technological progress in plantation societies can be seen not just in the machinery of production but also in the evolving modes of representation, which culminate in the book with Marc Ferrez’s stunning photographs of coffee plantations (*fazendas*) in the Paraíba Valley in the 1880s. In contrast to the invisibility of slaves in many of the visual sources of plantation slavery, Ferrez’s photographs make visible the men, women, and even children who worked the *fazendas*. Looking at them in this revelatory book reminded me of how little most of us know about the people who harvest our food, stitch our clothing, and mine the metals that power our phones and the computer that you may be using to read this review today.

ADAM ROTHMAN, *Professor of History, Georgetown University, Washington, DC, USA*

Professor Rothman is the author of Beyond Freedom’s Reach (2015) and co-editor of Facing Georgetown’s History (2021).

. . .

The Silver Women: How Black Women’s Labor Made the Panama Canal.
By Joan Flores-Villalobos. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023. 296 pp. Hardcover, \$39.95. ISBN: 978-1-5128-2363-9.

doi:10.1017/S0007680523000466

Reviewed by Jason M. Colby

The Panama Canal has not suffered for lack of historical attention. Since its completion in 1914, it has been the subject of celebratory popular accounts, most prominently David McCullough’s *The Path Between the Seas* (1977). In subsequent decades, historians such as Michael Conniff and Julie Greene explored the central role of migrant workers, and particularly West Indian men, in making canal construction possible (Michael L. Conniff, *Black Labor on a White Canal: Panama, 1904–1981* [1985]; Julie Greene, *The Canal Builders: Making America’s Empire at the Panama Canal* [2009]). Likewise, other scholars have highlighted the role of black migrant labor in the making of the US empire in Central America and the Caribbean (Aviva Chomsky, *West Indian Workers and the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica, 1870–1940* [1996]; Jason M. Colby, *The Business of Empire: United Fruit, Race,*

and *U.S. Expansion in Central America* [2011]; and Frederick Douglass Opie, *Black Labor Migration in Caribbean Guatemala, 1882-1923* [2012]). Yet most historians, this reviewer included, have underplayed the role of West Indian women in making the canal and the broader US empire possible.

This is the sizable historiographical gap that Joan Flores-Villalobos sets out to fill in *The Silver Women*. Drawing on extensive archival research in the United States, Central America, the West Indies, and the United Kingdom, her study reveals the centrality of West Indian women not only to the success of the canal construction but also to the maintenance and reproduction of the West Indian communities that took shape in and around the Canal Zone. In this way, her study has much in common with Lara Putnam's pathbreaking *The Company They Kept* (2002). Even more than Putnam, however, Flores-Villalobos clearly traces how the hidden labor of West Indian women contributed to and shaped US imperial expansion. In particular, she shows how these women provided services not only to the West Indian men who made up the bulk of the "Silver" roll workers in the Canal Zone but also to the "Gold" roll white American employees in the form of food, childcare, and other domestic labor. "In short," she argues, "West Indian women's labor made the United States' imperial project possible" (p. 3).

Following a crisp, well-argued introduction, Flores-Villalobos offers seven thematic chapters focused on the experiences of West Indian women in Panama between 1904 and 1914. This structure works well due to her consistent exploration of the intersections of West Indian and US imperial gendered ideologies and practices. Although the canal enterprise depended on the work undertaken by West Indian women, their labor fell almost entirely outside the US government payroll. As a result, Flores-Villalobos notes, these black migrant women were "disquieting subjects for the Canal administration—their labor sorely needed but rarely acknowledged; their presence morally dangerous unless heavily surveilled and regulated" (p. 37). This tension proved especially striking during a 1905 media scandal, in which rumors emerged that the US government had recruited three hundred women from Martinique to work as prostitutes in the Canal Zone. Yet as Flores-Villalobos shows, it was the freedom of West Indian women from traditional modes of dependence within formal marriages that opened them to charges of prostitution.

Conversely, Flores-Villalobos does a superb job of showing how West Indian women responded to both US imperial power and Panamanian legal authority. Often, they strategically used US assumptions of deference and femininity to utilize Canal Zone authority in securing their interests—such as suing for money owed them by West Indian

men or filing for divorce in the case of the small number of middle-class West Indian women. Likewise, she explores the deeper impact of death among West Indian workers. Whereas most historians have discussed laborer mortality largely through statistics, Flores-Villalobos evokes the real-life impact of the deaths of West Indian male laborers on their families as well as the resourceful efforts of women to petition US and British authorities to secure the remains, backpay, and treasured possessions of lost loved ones. In one of her many evocative turns of phrase, she observes that this “archive of grief and mourning starkly elucidates the negligence of U.S. racial capitalism in Panama and the dynamic West Indian women developed to memorialize their deceased kin” (p. 146).

Yet that same insight points to the shortcomings of *The Silver Women*. First, despite its precision and empathy in depicting the life experiences of West Indian women, the book suffers from some conceptual fuzziness. Particularly striking is its frequent characterization of the US canal construction as an instance of “racial capitalism.” Flores-Villalobos never clearly defines this term, which frankly seems ill-suited to describe the venture. After all, virtually everything in the Canal Zone was owned and controlled by the US government. True, the enterprise intersected with instances of racial capitalism, such as the nearby corporate enclaves of United Fruit Company, which also relied on West Indian migrant labor. If anything, however, it seems more accurate to describe the US canal enterprise as an instance of colonial socialism—with all the racial inequalities that shaped other US endeavors. This points to a second limitation. Although Flores-Villalobos is clearly aware of the larger context of empire and immigration, her study largely ignores those broader connections until the end of the book. As a result, the broader scope of West Indian labor migrations remains more implicit than explicit in the text. Finally, and surprisingly, the book is nearly devoid of images of any kind. It offers no photos and includes only one map—a dimly reproduced historical one at that. This is unfortunate, as spatial relationships play a central role in Flores-Villalobos’s analysis. At the minimum, it would have helped readers to include a map of the Caribbean with an inset of the Canal Zone. But photos would also have enhanced her effort to recover her subjects’ lives from obscurity. In the author’s defense, these were likely press decisions, much like the lack of a bibliography (including of archives visited), which makes it more difficult to assess Flores-Villalobos’s research.

Despite these problems, Flores-Villalobos has written a superb first book that deserves wide readership. She makes magnificent use of individual stories to flesh out lives that have long been silenced in the archives. Well written, accessible, and concise, it is well suited for

assignment in upper-level undergraduate or graduate courses on US-Latin American relations, Caribbean history, or global women's history.

JASON M. COLBY, Professor of History, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia

Professor Colby is a specialist in US international, environmental, and business history. He is the author of The Business of Empire: United Fruit, Race, and U.S. Expansion in Central America (2011) and Orca: How We Came to Know and Love the Ocean's Greatest Predator (2018).

. . .

Exporting Capitalism: Private Enterprise and US Foreign Policy. *By Ethan Kapstein.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022. 304 pp., 21 illus., 1 table. Hardcover, \$39.95. ISBN: 978-0-674-25163-2.

doi:10.1017/S0007680523000569

Reviewed by Thomas Zeiler

In this book, scholars will find an informative and reasonable argument, and a healthy dose of skepticism, about the effectiveness of private enterprise in the development efforts of the Global South. Ethan Kapstein, a former US government economist who worked on global development in places as diverse as the former Soviet Union and Afghanistan, offers a sobering yet hopeful perspective on bettering the lives of billions of people. He digs deeply into the historical literature and current events to make the case that foreign aid must take precedence over (though not preclude) an untenable reliance on market capitalist ideology that so permeated the Cold War era and the modern period of globalization. It is a conclusion that tasks rich countries with adopting more Big Government activism rather than depending on the private sector for capital.

Kapstein studies how the United States banked on private enterprise to boost economic growth at home, and then carried that view abroad after World War II. Yet he wonders why growth and development failed to take root in many instances. Specifically, the US government pursued a climate of long-term foreign direct investment (FDI) that more than aspired to export capitalism; it sought to change the way developing nations conducted their business and shaped their political systems. It is a bold critique because the historical record, including the very recent past, is littered with examples of market-driven development coming up short.

Judiciously spreading the blame in a way that will make no observer entirely happy, Kapstein challenges governments to do much better. He is a solid neo-liberal internationalist who leans decidedly toward market