

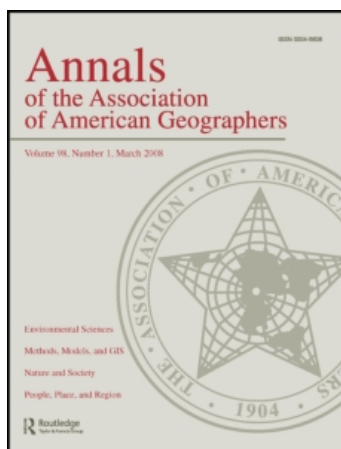
This article was downloaded by: [Canadian Research Knowledge Network]

On: 7 January 2011

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 783016864]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Annals of the Association of American Geographers

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t788352614>

A Review of “Raising Cane in the 'Glades: The Global Sugar Trade and the Transformation of Florida”

Allison Hayes-Conroy^a

^a Graduate School of Geography, Clark University, Worcester, MA

Online publication date: 14 April 2010

To cite this Article Hayes-Conroy, Allison(2010) 'A Review of “Raising Cane in the 'Glades: The Global Sugar Trade and the Transformation of Florida”', Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 100: 2, 483 – 485

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/00045601003638840

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00045601003638840>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

strongest parts of this dense and occasionally confusing book. Gidwani tells us on several occasions that *Capital, Interrupted* is based in part on nineteen months of field work in three multicasite villages in Matar Taluka, and at times in the first half of the book I wished that more use was being made of this work. It is very much to Gidwani's credit, however, that the stories he has to tell about the construction of the Patidar community (in "Birth," a chapter that disrupts more primordial accounts of caste or ethnicity), or of the rise of various subaltern farming communities, or of the ecological problems that have hit the region (in the form of salinization), or even of the outmigration of Gujaratis to the United States or Canada, do come together as the book proceeds. Throughout, archival work usefully complements work done under the scorching sun.

Nonetheless, I cannot help feeling that Gidwani's attempt to stitch together several previously published papers also creates problems, if not quite of waste then of overflow and superfluity, or a lack of value added in places. A more critical reading of *Capital, Interrupted's* various chapters would underscore four points. First, the focus on development rather than on progress or improvement as a motif of liberalism in India is strangely inattentive to those discourses of race and biology that were deployed from around 1860 to 1940 (especially) to disrupt the possibility of development (in the sense of them becoming like us), although, to be fair, this matter is discussed in part in "Machine." Second, the book sometimes fails to advertise its debts to others as strongly as it might have done; the work of Crispin Bates and Alice Whitcomb Clark is properly cited, but it was not clear to me that Gidwani's treatise on the birth of the Patidars adds hugely to Bates's work from

some years ago, or that his work on agrarian change in Matar Taluka is as closely engaged with the work of Whitcomb Clark—or Jan Breman or Mario Ruttan—as it might have been. Perhaps this is harsh, and it might be that I was wanting to read a rather different book, but Gidwani's constant interruptions of his own narratives of agrarian development sometimes made it hard to read his stories against those in the established literature. Third, the idea that capital is always interrupted is surprising only to the extent that we can believe that capitalism can ever be complete or undisturbed. Fourth, offering the book, as in the *Aporia*, in apologetic terms as a commodity—"I offer you this, commodity" (p. 245)—allows Gidwani to reflect on the ethical dilemmas that inhere in using Southern correspondents to advance Northern academic careers but is a little arch when we consider this offering has already been served up elsewhere (in a chapter for a book edited by Tickell, Peck, Sheppard, and Barnes).

All in all, *Capital, Interrupted* does indeed bring "razor sharp intellect to the analysis of development and agrarian politics," as Arun Agrawal maintains in his endorsement on the book's back cover. The book is full of sharp insights and many wonderful and felicitous phrases. A keen intelligence is on display throughout. That said, I am quite sure there is much more to come from Vinay Gidwani on agrarian development and the politics of work in western India. Now that the theoretical groundwork has been prepared, I look forward to reading more in the years to come on the themes advertised in the book's subtitle.

Key Words: agrarian politics, capital circulation, development theory, India, social theory.

Raising Cane in the 'Glades: The Global Sugar Trade and the Transformation of Florida. Gail M. Hollander. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008. xvii and 348 pp., figures, tables, notes, bibliography, appendices, index. \$45.00 (ISBN 0-226-34950-0).

Reviewed by Allison Hayes-Conroy, Graduate School of Geography, Clark University, Worcester, MA.

Gail M. Hollander's *Raising Cane in the 'Glades* is an incredibly detailed and thorough account of the growth of the sugar cane industry in Florida, dating from the mid-1800s to the twenty-first century. The main theme traced throughout the book is the ever-shifting "sugar question," which gets continually defined and redefined through changing historical periods of international conflict, cooperation, and negotiation,

always in relation to the Everglades of south Florida. Hollander centers on understanding the creation and transformation of the ecologically and geographically specific Everglades sugar-growing region. She asks, "By what discursive and material processes are regions constructed?" "Specifically through which historically and geographically contingent processes did this sugar region come into being?" (p. 14). Hollander answers this

query quite meticulously by constructing a well-woven story from government documents, corporate texts, interviews, and the records of state department communications, among other sources.

The resulting work is primarily one of historical political economy. Hollander exposes the politics and economics behind how and why various historical arguments have been made about the Everglades. She details, for instance, arguments about swamp drainage and government involvement in Floridian development, about quota increases and agricultural acreage allotments, about regional boosterism, and about the need for protectionism and free trade in regard to the key regional agricultural product, sugar. She situates this contested creation of the Everglades as a region within a broader framework of global commodity exchange; distinctions made about the agro-ecology of the area, about sugar cane as its main crop, and about sugar itself as a food commodity (by industry owners, investors, and politicians) both inform and are informed by national, regional, and global economic relations, particularly with respect to international trade and competition. Hence, another of Hollander's major successes in this book lies in revealing the central role that sugar did (and can) play in the political economic arena in regard to regional and global events that appear to be much larger and broader than sugar itself. For example, Hollander demonstrates links between shifts in U.S. sugar quotas and the fall of the Batista government during the Cuban revolution. More recently, sugar is shown to have been a major player, alongside other agricultural commodities, in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) negotiations.

The first chapter serves to introduce readers to the Florida sugar region (its basic ecology, hydrology, and recent economic and political climate), as well as to establish the theoretical underpinnings of the book. Hollander claims to work within (and hence to speak to) three specific streams of literature. The first is agrarian studies and global food systems theory, of which Hollander particularly recalls work on the internationalization of food production and consumption. Such work encourages attention to the ways in which the agricultural production and commodity trade of specific regions like south Florida influence and are influenced by the production and trade of other regions. Complementing this attention to regional flows, the second stream Hollander focuses on is geographic theories of regions and places. Indeed, her task is not simply to understand sugar as a commodity produced and traded

between regions but more complexly to understand how that commodity has brought the Everglades into being as a distinct geographic entity. The entirety of the book is thus dedicated to revealing the historical contingency and social constructedness of the Everglades as a region. Hollander calls for a "relational" understanding of regional formation, by which she means an appreciation of the social processes in varied locations and scales that work to create a particular area as a "region." Finally, and again related, the third stream of literature that Hollander engages is political ecology, specifically the notion of "regional discursive formation." She takes inspiration from political ecology to focus on the historical presence and power of various discourses about the Everglades as a region.

After introducing this theoretical background, the remaining chapters provide a chronological account of the ever-redefined "sugar question." Hollander begins in frontier Florida with a story of boosterism and failed sugar enterprises and continues through a series of draining projects and discursive strategies to place high importance on domestic sugar and to emphasize the value of Florida as the place to produce it. Wars often prove key to the story; from the Spanish-American War through World Wars I and II to the Cold War, Hollander describes how international conflict interrelates with an often competitive and sometimes collaborative atmosphere among sugar-growing regions. The later chapters portray the consequences of major restructuring in the sugar industry—due in part to the rise of high-fructose corn syrup—and report on some contemporary dilemmas concerning the future of the Everglades as an ecologically valued wetland and as a location for a potential new industry in sugar cane-based ethanol.

On the whole, the book does speak to recent suggestions regarding the incorporation of nature into discussion of political and cultural economy (e.g., Mansfield 2003), by exploring the reasons and consequences behind a variety of discourses that served to differentiate aspects of the biophysical world of Florida sugar from other forms and regions of sugar production. Yet at times I found the hesitation, "Where is the ecology in political ecology?" (Walker 2005), still holding strong. Although the book begins and ends with a depiction of the ecological transformation of the Everglades, in most of the chapters ecology is marginalized within larger stories of political economic negotiation—for example, debates over drainage districts and waterways, over the relative profitability of various agro-ecological regions and crops, and over the increasing or restricting of crop acreage. Because ecological transformation as such is

not consistently stressed, many of the chapters feel more like grand works of historical political economy, with less-defined ecological implications in the background. Moreover, because of the density of historical references throughout the chapters, it is sometimes hard to piece together exactly what Hollander wants to highlight in regard to particular concerns of political ecology, such as how to differentiate between unequal agents, who is usurping the power of others, and so forth.

Another topic pushed to the book's periphery is consumption. In chapter 1, Hollander explains that she has been influenced by food systems theory, particularly mentioning the objective of linking relations of production with patterns of consumption. Yet, in the end, the book does not leave room for many linkages to the consumption side of the food chain, except for noting increases in sugar consumption during wartime. The discursive strategies used to construct the Everglades as a region do not directly involve or implicate the consumer, nor do they speak of consumer culture directly. Readers do see the consumer in a derivative way, through mention of how sugar was historically posited as part of a nutritious diet and envisioned as essential to wartime efforts and later in Hollander's inclusion of changing ideas about the healthiness of sugar. Within such discussion, it might have been valuable to see more "culture": Who was the consumer? How did people at large fit into and relate to the Everglades region? Readers are largely left to themselves to envision a sense of the cultural "place" of south Florida and a sense of the culture of the United States at each historical juncture; yet more attention to these aspects might have enhanced the reader's grasp of the complex politics detailed in the book. This is especially true in regard to Hollander's expressed desire to examine Florida's "identity" (or "self") in relation to Cuba as the regional "other" (p. 11) as well as to other sites of sugar production.

Despite these omissions, which perhaps were intentional, *Raising Cane in the 'Glades* is a remarkable accomplishment. This is true not only for what the book contains but also for what it suggests in regard to new connections and future work. First, Hollander's emphasis on the region as "relational" brought to mind recent engagements with relational philosophies and

ontologies within our discipline at large as well as within agrofood studies (e.g., see Goodman 2001). Whereas Hollander does not complexly develop the idea of the relational herself, she leaves room for future analyses to engage with multiple kinds of relationality in regard to both sugar-growing regions and sugar as a food commodity. With respect to the latter, another fascinating place into which the book leads is the body: In her introduction, Hollander highlights that sugar (cane) involves considerable impacts from the "micro level of individual metabolism to the macro level of global restructuring" (p. 16). Although Hollander discusses the "microlevel" of the body only parenthetically, she indicates that there is an entire microside of sugar politics worth exploring (e.g., how sugar as "nutritious" eventually gets replaced by antisugar sentiments and how the sugar industry attempts to battle artificial sweeteners and high-fructose corn syrup). Furthermore, such bodily explorations could be fruitfully tied to regional analyses, revealing how the production of both body and region are interconnected. Finally, Hollander's timely discussion of the ethanol issue and the politics of growing food for biofuel inevitably point the reader toward the future, questioning a new series of political desires and a set of emerging ecological issues and arguments. In the end, this book succeeds not only because it carefully and thoroughly documents the political economic history of the Everglades region but also because it leaves the reader curious about the newest forces that will inevitably shape the persistently evolving "sugar question."

Key Words: Everglades, Florida, historical geography, political economy, sugar cane.

References

- Goodman, D. 2001. Ontology matters: The relational materiality of nature and agro-food studies. *Sociologia Ruralis* 41 (2): 182–99.
- Mansfield, B. 2003. From catfish to organic fish: Making distinctions about nature as cultural economic practice. *Geoforum* 43:329–42.
- Walker, P. 2005. Political ecology: Where is the ecology? *Progress in Human Geography* 29:73–82.

Transfrontier Conservation in Africa: At the Confluence of Capital, Politics and Nature. Maano Ramutsindela. Cambridge, MA: CABI North America, 2007. ix and 181 pp., maps, diagrams, photos, notes, appendices, index. \$90.00 cloth (ISBN 978-1-84593-221-3).

Reviewed by Brian King, Department of Geography, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.