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*Climate and Catastrophe in Cuba and the Atlantic World in
the Age of Revolution* (review)

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Chapters three through six most engaged this reviewer, primarily because this is where Gutman's visually supported analysis of how the city's future was imagined during these two decades is the strongest. In chapter six, for example, she explores how illustrations in New York's journals and magazines at the time influenced the type of imaginative ideas about future Buenos Aires, particularly images of skyscrapers as icons of the modern metropolis. With recent and newly envisioned technologies in building techniques, transportation, and urban mobility, planners and architects began to see a different type of city, a more vertical and dynamic built environment that would help to deliver the promise of Argentina on the occasion of its centenary. Bear in mind that in 1910 Argentina had become one of the richest countries in the world (and the richest in the Southern Hemisphere) based on its export of agricultural products, and the capital's movers and shakers were emboldened to envision Buenos Aires as a modern world city. Gutman's methodological approach in this book of comparing and integrating the planning visions and designs of professionals with images of the future metropolis circulating in public journals and newspapers is innovative and refreshingly different from classical treatments of urban change. Some of the images portending how the future might look are ideal (Figure 110 – compare this with modern-day Catalinas Norte in Buenos Aires), while others are a little more fanciful (Figure 165). Overall, the analysis is extremely valuable because it highlights the importance of negotiated space where urban projects can be envisioned that balance the expectations of planners, architects, and the general public alike.

Buenos Aires: El Poder de la Anticipación will be beneficial reading for a wide audience, including Latin Americanist geographers, planners, futurists, journalists, and architects. Its focus on urban development and how a vision of the future inspired multiple actors who plan, (re)create, and (re)build the city every day in myriad ways is innovative and wonderfully illustrated. A key theme index would have been helpful, but there is a detailed index included of journals and newspapers published during the period both in Buenos Aires and New York. A *tour-de force* of urban historical research, Gutman's work has set the standard for further examinations of how the city is envisioned in the present for future generations.

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Climate and Catastrophe in Cuba and the Atlantic World in the Age of Revolution. Sherry Johnson. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011. xiii + 306 pp., maps, figures, appendices, index. \$39.95 cloth (ISBN 978-0-8078-3493-0).

Sherry Johnson's *Climate and Catastrophe in Cuba and the Atlantic World in the Age of Revolution* is a notable contribution to the emerging literature on environmental history of the Greater Caribbean. Johnson relies on sources from a variety of disciplines – historical climatology, environmental history, and more traditional colonial history – to weave together a compelling argument for taking into consideration environmental criteria in analyzing the history of the Caribbean and the Atlantic world.

The time frame of the study is the second half of the eighteenth century. She focuses on this time span because of the frequency of severe weather events that affected the Americas and Europe during this anomalous warm period, associated with what climatologists today refer to as El Niño/La Niña-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) climate

patterns. El Niño brings about severe drought to the Caribbean, Mexico and tropical regions in Africa that can last for one or several years; meanwhile, La Niña, which follows immediately after, increases hurricane activity, rainfall and flooding in these regions. In dating El Niño/La Niña cycles, Johnson relied on recent work by scientists Gergis and Fowler who have dated ENSO events since 1525. The time span that Johnson analyzes falls within the so-called “age of revolution” in the European and American sides of the Atlantic. Among the momentous events that occurred during this period of political upheavals were the United States War of Independence, the French Revolution, and the Haitian Revolution.

The stated purpose of Johnson’s work is to: “show how disaster in the Caribbean generated both positive and negative consequences throughout the Atlantic basin. The timeline of disaster placed alongside a chronology of political, economic, and social events demonstrates causal relationships between scientific facts and historical processes. This juxtaposition makes clear that processes and events that traditionally have been attributed to political, economic, and/or social forces were impacted by, and often caused by, weather-induced environmental effects.”

Although not explicitly set out, the mechanisms through which El Niño/La Niña climate induce or contribute to socioeconomic and political developments are as follows. First, the prolonged droughts associated with El Niño result in decreased agricultural production and loss of livestock. When coupled with the inability to import foodstuffs, the phenomena give rise to hunger and malnutrition and propensity to illness, culminating in popular discontent and political instability. Second, the severe rains and hurricanes associated with La Niña flood agricultural fields and high winds destroy crops/livestock/structures. In turn, the inability to import foodstuffs can lead to give hunger and malnutrition and a propensity to illness. This can be a recipe for popular discontent and political instability. In each scenario, the unmet demand for food imports was heavily influenced by monopolistic trade policies of the colonial powers, taken to the extreme by Spain through its regulation that all trade between Cuba and the metropolis had to be channeled through a single port in each country (Santiago and then Havana; Seville and later Cádiz).

Johnson develops her argument that environmental stress impacted or caused changes that are conventionally attributed to political/economic/social forces alone in six chapters, each dealing with a sub-period during the second half of the eighteenth century, intertwining environmental events and broader socioeconomic/political events in the Americas or in the colonial powers. The text is supplemented with two appendices, one a chronology that juxtaposes weather events in the Greater Caribbean with political events in the Americas and Colonial Europe, and the other reference information on specific periods of intense hurricane activity in the Caribbean for which maps are included in the text. While the maps are useful in illustrating the large number of hurricanes in certain time periods, it would be helpful to the reader if some indication of their magnitude/destructive effect were also provided.

A very well-researched chapter focuses on El Niño/La Niña cycles in the 1750s and early 1760s, culminating with the siege and capture of Havana by the British in 1762. There are many military and historical accounts and explanations of this momentous event whereby a fortified city that was believed to be impregnable fell to a foreign invader after a relatively short siege. Johnson adds a new dimension to the history of this event, meticulously documenting how Havana and its key source of reinforcements, Santiago de Cuba, had been weakened by El Niño/La Niña-related food shortages and sickness (devastating fevers or *calenturas*) that had sapped military strength in both cities and throughout the country. During the roughly one year of British rule, Spain’s trade

monopoly was eliminated, allowing Cuba also to trade directly with British and French merchants and whetting the appetite of Cubans to free trade.

Equally thoughtful and innovative chapters explore the climatic context to changes in trade policies of Colonial powers vis-à-vis their American colonies that eliminated or eased monopolies, the Haitian revolution, and the impetus for increased trade between Spain/the Spanish colonies, particularly Cuba, and the young United States. Particularly interesting is the key role of Philadelphia flour as a countercyclical factor in supplying the Spanish colonies; Johnson points out by around the time of its Declaration of Independence, the United States had become the breadbasket of the Spanish colonies, a condition that is the case still today in the case of Cuba.

To conclude, Johnson's volume is a notable contribution to the environmental history of the Greater Caribbean and deserves attention by historians, economists, climatologists and political scientists. Even if at times Johnson may overstate the weight of environmental events in her analysis, unquestionably her study makes a strong case for the consideration of environmental stress in historical research in the Greater Caribbean and elsewhere.

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The Unconquered: In search of the Amazon's Last Uncontacted Tribes. Scott Wallace. New York: Crown Publishers. 2011. xvi + 439 pp., map, photos, notes, glossary and pronunciation guide, bibliography, index. \$26.00 cloth (ISBN 978-0-307-46296-1).

The Unconquered is a story about a recent attempt to locate an "uncontacted" tribe in Amazonia. Author Wallace (a self described "adventure journalist") takes a journey with a team led by the charismatic Sydney Possuelo to find a group of Indians known as the *flecheiros*, or "People of the Arrow" in the Vale do Javari Indigenous Lands of Brazil. The purpose of the Fundação Nacional do Índio (FUNAI) expedition was to find these natives but avoid direct contact with them, while gathering "practical information" on the location of their villages, their annual migrations, and the status of wildlife where the Arrow People live in order to convince authorities that they should remain uncontacted in this special protected area.

Wallace joins the expedition as they travel up the Itaquai River by boat for two weeks to a strategic point in the protected indigenous lands. They then embark on a grueling hike of 21 days through the forest that is meant to circumvent the Arrow Peoples' territory, returning by canoe down the Jutai River where they are finally picked up by motorboat. The expedition uses GPS to pinpoint locations that were previously mapped by overflights.

The expedition team is made up mostly of natives and *mateiros* (backwoods-men) who inhabit different parts of the Javari Valley. The book describes the journey and the difficulties Wallace and the expedition encounter as they attempt to achieve their objectives. He emphasizes the demanding and fearful nature of the overland hike for himself, as well as for other members of the team. The personalities and interesting personal histories of different team members are presented as he gets to know them along the way. The natural world, which envelops the expedition and seems to disturb the author, is at times of secondary importance in the narrative. The same is true for the tribal