



Everyday Life in the Early English Caribbean: Irish, Africans, and the Construction of Difference (Early American Places)

Jenny Shaw

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Set along both the physical and social margins of the British Empire in the second half of the seventeenth century, *Everyday Life in the Early English Caribbean* explores the construction of difference through the everyday life of colonial subjects. Jenny Shaw examines how marginalized colonial subjects—Irish and Africans—contributed to these processes. By emphasizing their everyday experiences Shaw makes clear that each group persisted in its own cultural practices; Irish and Africans also worked within—and challenged—the limits of the colonial regime. Shaw's research demonstrates the extent to which hierarchies were in flux in the early modern Caribbean, allowing even an outcast servant to rise to the position of island planter, and underscores the fallacy that racial categories of black and white were the sole arbiters of difference in the early English Caribbean.

The everyday lives of Irish and Africans are obscured by sources constructed by elites. Through her research, Jenny Shaw overcomes the constraints such sources impose by pushing methodological boundaries to fill in the gaps, silences, and absences that dominate the historical record. By examining legal statutes, census material, plantation records, travel narratives, depositions, interrogations, and official colonial correspondence, as much for what they omit as for what they include, *Everyday Life in the Early English Caribbean* uncovers perspectives that would otherwise remain obscured. This book encourages readers to rethink the boundaries of historical research and writing and to think more expansively about questions of race and difference in English slave societies.

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Gertrude Ponder:

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