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Pluralism: Comments on an Ideological Analysis

ABSTRACT

Answering Don Robotham’s claim in “The Why of the Cockatoo” that his pluralism “was a reaction to the crisis of the nationalist ‘acculturation’ movement after World War II,” the author says it is absurd and arbitrary to insist that his first two essays on slavery, both devoted to historical developments and situations during the 19th century, were inspired by or concerned with political developments in Jamaica between 1952 and 1954.

INTRODUCTION

The central theses of Don Robotham’s recent exercise in “ideological analysis” are

one, that the initial formulation of pluralism is in the framework of acculturation; two, that the content of this process is an acculturation towards British culture on a non-exploitative, non-antagonistic basis [Robotham, 8, 116; 7, 76].

As rephrased later,

It was acculturation, not pluralism, which constituted his (my) initial point of departure and ... it was acculturation not pluralism, which was dominant in the early years [Robotham, 8, 119; his italics].

As he says,

This is an absolutely critical point on which both Smith and myself cannot be right. Either his initial views were pro-British acculturationist or they were not. Either pluralism was initially a secondary element in his initial formulation or it was not. No ‘presumables’ can cloud this point. This matter can only be settled by lengthy quotations and comparisons of the two articles, Social Structure in the British Caribbean around 1820 and Slavery and Emancipation in Two Societies [8, 117].
As corollary Robotham claims that

There was a definite and basic change in Smith’s assessment of Jamaican society during slavery between the two articles in 1952-3 and 1954. In the first article, acculturation prevails, pluralism is a sub-theme. In the second article the order was reversed [8, 132].

This leads him to ask, “what underlay the change?” [8, 132]; to which he replies,

What shaped Smith’s thinking (and that of his class) at this time was not only the class struggle in Jamaica. It was also the anti-colonial struggle in general and the international class struggle in the centres of imperialism” [8, 139].

This broader perspective ... helps to explain the liberal anti-Communist atmosphere in which some of the foundations of Smith’s acculturationist outlook were laid. It also helps to explain the qualitative growth of the pluralist tendency in Smith’s line of thinking in the 1954 essay. Whereas in 1952, the crisis left the acculturationist foundations of his thoughts intact, pluralism only appearing as a sub-theme, the Grenada crisis was different...

This experience, when added to Jamaica from 1952 to 1955 when the Left through the PEO, continued to pose a threat to the social order, helps to explain the change in his attitude and thinking evident in the 1954 essay [8, 140-141].

Having initially claimed that

The theory of the plural society as developed by M. G. Smith can be better understood as an ideology developing out of the political developments in Jamaica during the period when the theory developed, that is in the decade from 1952 to 1961 – the precolonial (sic) decade [Robotham 7, 86; my italics],

in his recent paper Robotham [8, 115-117] reduces the period and publications he regards as relevant from 1952-1961 to 1952/3-1954, When my first two Caribbean essays were written.

It is of course absurd and arbitrary to restrict discussion of an analytic framework that has continuously evolved from 1953 until the present to its first two years and publications. It is even more absurd and arbitrary to insist that those essays, both devoted to historical developments and situations during the last century, were inspired by or concerned with “political developments in Jamaica during ... 1952 to 1961 – the pre colonial decade”, or, in the current revised version, from 1952 to 1954. However, such a procedure seems essential for Robotham’s [8, 114] “general method of ideological analysis” which he claims I have “stubbornly confused” with “psychological analyses and an indictment of ... (my) personal motives” [8, 114-115; Smith, 14, 109,
117]. Unfortunately Robotham's latest display of the general "method" once again confuses or conflates psychological and "ideological" analyses, as his frequent references to my attitudes, [8, 132, 133, 146, 147], changes of attitudes [8, 133], pessimism [8, 115], "urgently felt needs" [8, 141], hostility [8, 115, 146], psychology [8, 145], mentality [8, 148], commitment [8, 150], convictions, evaluations, etc. demonstrate. However, for Robotham, like Humpty-Dumpty in the Looking Glass, by the 'method of ideological analysis' things are whatever he chooses to call them.

Initially Robotham [7, 77] had asked whether "Smith's sensitivity was a direct result of his contemporary experience of Jamaican society in 1952" (his emphasis); and claimed [7, 80] that "Smith's pluralism was a reaction to the crisis of the nationalist 'acculturation' movement after World War II". With reference to the expulsion of the Left (the Four Hs) from the PNP in March 1952, Robotham [7, 77; 8, 133-137] asked rhetorically "Could M. G. Smith, so closely a part of the political grouping at the centre of these events, have gone unaffected by this affair or by the general atmosphere of class confrontation and social strife which characterised these years?"

In his recent essay, Robotham [8, 133-138] dwells at length on political developments in Jamaica from March to October 1952, and cites circumstantial evidence to suggest that I lied in denying knowledge of those events [Robotham, 8, 133-138]. However, unlike his initial presumption that my writings in 1953 and 1954 were the "direct result of ... contemporary experience of Jamaican society in 1952" [Robotham 7, 77, his italics] and expressed my reactions "to the crisis of the nationalist 'acculturation' movement" [8, 88], he now says,

It is not my thesis that the line taken by M. G. Smith in his 1952-53 essay was 'motivated' by developments in the PNP during those years. Rather I adhere to the view that both the stand taken in the 1952 crisis, and the line of the 1952-53 essay were the common products of 'Smith's conception of acculturation' which we regard as typical of that contradictory anti-colonial pro-British brand of nationalism characterising many movements of the period [Robotham, 8, 138].

As I remained in Britain from December 1950, when I returned from Nigeria, until September 1952, and knew nothing of the '1952 crisis' or of the PNP's expulsion of the Four Hs in March that year, presumably the 'stand' to which Robotham refers in the passage just
cited was that ‘taken’ by the PNP leadership or others then resident in the island and involved in that crisis. Just how such a stand could be a “product of Smith’s conception of acculturation” which had never till then been communicated, orally or otherwise, to anyone in Jamaica, though puzzling to me is clear to Robotham, since his ideological analysis brooks no empirical restraint.

In sum, Robotham argues that the two Caribbean essays I wrote in 1953 and 1954 show that between 1952-53 and 1954 my views evolved from acculturationism towards a more rigid pluralism... This conceptual evolution reflected a socio-political evolution in the situation of the middle class between the fifties and sixties...If Smith can show that his views did not so evolve, that there is no significant difference between the initial and later formulations along the lines I have described and that these were unconnected to political and social events, then my evaluation of him as a middle class ideologist reflecting, in the ebb and flow of his thought, the ebb and flow of the middle class' socio-political fortunes, collapses further [ibid., 116].

In accepting this invitation and replying to Robotham’s critique, while regretting the tedium involved, I am simply concerned to show that from the beginning pluralism provided my analytic framework for Caribbean studies, and not acculturation; that there was no such change in my views of contemporary or historical Jamaican society as Robotham claims to have found between 1952 and 1954; and that the essays written in 1953 and 1954 were not influenced by current developments in Jamaica, Grenada or elsewhere, as he asserts [ibid., 133-141].

**REACTIONS TO HERSKOVITS**

As related already [Smith, 14, 116-117], while in London in 1951,

Following an interview with Dr. Dudley Huggins ... I read anew and with care various monographs of Melville and Frances Herskovits... I could not fail to grasp the implications of the Herskovits’ concern with acculturation among New World Negroes in the Caribbean as well as in the United States and Brazil, and noted later that

As a process occurring within populations bearing common political institutions, acculturation implies a high degree of internal cultural differentiation, that is a pluralistic character. Such acculturation processes define the societies in which they occur as pluralities of greater or less degree [Smith, 11, 73]

However, being then unfamiliar with the concept and even with the term 'plural society', I groped about for both.
Quotting that passage Robotham [8,120] comments,

By Furnivall out of Herskovitz is thus the pedigree of pluralism, according to Smith’s own account.

Here Smith not only acknowledges the influence of Herskovitz but also the dialectical interconnection between acculturation and pluralism, specifically affirming that he derived, in part, the latter from the former.

The Humpty-Dumpty is at work again, transforming things by verbal magic, but nothing could be further from the truth. As that account of my response to Herskovitz’s works makes clear, having re-read and rejected the acculturation framework that permeated them, I “groped about” for the concept of the plural society until Daryll Forde told me of Furnivall. Only if the total rejection of a theoretical framework demonstrates its adoption could the Humpty-Dumpty or anyone claim that my rejection of Herskovitz’s framework demonstrates the derivation of pluralism from Herskovitz’s or other acculturationist studies. Some reasons for my rejection of acculturation as a framework and focus of study are set out in A Framework for Caribbean Studies [Smith 11, 24-43], which was written in 1955 right after my comparison of slavery and emancipation in Hausa Zaria and Jamaica.

In adopting Furnivall’s concept of plural societies as the basis for my Caribbean research, not only did I reject prevailing frameworks for the study of acculturation, whether Herskovitz’ [1, 2], Redfield’s [4, 5], or Malinowski’s [3]; but I simultaneously replaced culture by society and social structure as the analytic framework and object of study. That reorientation will surprise no one familiar with the differences between British social anthropology, in which I was trained, and American cultural anthropology. However, given Robotham’s insistence on the primacy of acculturation in the genesis and development of my plural analysis of Caribbean society past and present, I cite some comments on Herskovitz’s work that indicate my reaction.

After defining acculturation as “cultural change in a situation of contact between carriers of different cultures” [Smith, 11, 24], I sketched Herskovitz’s conceptual framework and urged caution in classifying cultural elements as focal or otherwise, stressing their interrelations [11, 27]. I then remarked that

In the historical situation of Afro-American culture contact, these foci of contact reflect the interests of the dominant group in its control of the subordinate as slaves. Consequently the social organisation, technological and economic practices of the subordinate Negroes were subject to pressure of a kind without parallel for intensity and continuity in such other fields as religion, music or folklore. Language, the essential mode of communication between the dominant and subordinate groups, occupied an intermediate position in this variable pressure of cultural elements between the
two groups. The advantages of conceiving the contact situation as a field of variable pressures over time as well as at any moment are many and varied. It directs attention consistently to the study of the social relations between and within the two culturally differentiated groups as the matrix of these acculturation processes, and thereby invokes employment of historical and sociological research together to relate these processes to the structures and situations through which they matured ... A good many possible fallacies are ruled out at once by such conceptualisation of the contact continuum, and effort is thereby redirected from the development of broad classificatory conceptions such as retention, reinterpretation, and syncretism, and imprecise and unverifiable hypotheses such as that of cultural focus, towards the formulation of more limited propositions capable of being tested against historical materials [11, 28].

To illustrate some of these points I considered Herskovits' interpretation of the "problem of family derivation" among Afro-Americans, noting that

The problem is basically one of deviance rather than one of cultural survival or reinterpretation... Distinctions between deviance and Africanism are surely of critical importance to Afro-American research...(but) the distinction between deviance and Africanism is... somewhat difficult of construction in Afro-American studies, on three main grounds: imprecision in the definition of traits as African or other...; wide variability in the level of generality of the concept of reinterpretation, which, together with the imprecise definition of Africanism, allows of extension equally to almost every field of social life; and most important, the formulation of problems of Afro-American contact and research mainly in terms of culture and acculturation, without corresponding emphasis on the primarily sociological aspects of these processes...Where the deviant practices are concentrated disproportionately among a particular ethnic group, the culture of which forms a direct object of enquiry, it is easy to conceive the differentiating behaviour primarily, or even entirely, in cultural terms. This oversimplifies the problem and poses questions of acculturation and culture change which may be of little direct relevance [11, 32].

Again,

To devote insufficient attention to the sociology of acculturative situations or to the role of organised and persistent groups in the preservation or transmission of culture is methodologically perilous, since it is clear that the group as a carrier of culture is a natural unit far superior to the individual... The point to note here is that if acculturation is to be studied in terms of specific social contexts, then this extension of interest would entail major revisions of the method, theory and conceptual equipment of Afro-American research [11, 34].

That is precisely why I set out to reorient the study of Caribbean society from acculturation towards the plural. With explicit reference to my account of West Indian society c. 1820, I remarked
Studies of acculturation which are inadequately balanced by studies of the social situation, processes, and structures involved in such change, can hardly be expected to produce agreement, where social structures are the cultural traits involved. Careful reconstructions of past states of the societies with which Afro-American studies are concerned on the basis of indexed documentary materials, undertaken with the object of defining the structures, contexts, and functional characteristics of units and institutions in these past systems, are perhaps the only ways of determining how past social conditions and processes may have guided acculturation and contributed to the development of current social and cultural forms [11, 36-37; emphases in original].

In a later essay [Smith, 9] which Robotham [7, 803; 8, 145] cites as evidence of my supposed anti-popular and anti-African tendencies, I listed various conditions that should be met before "indeterminate attributions" of current practices as "reinterpretations" of Africanisms can be safely accepted. Those stipulations were necessary since, as noted earlier,

reinterpretation demarcates a category of persistence which cannot be defined or recognised in formal terms, but involves functional or valuational correspondences. From this point of view, it is somewhat difficult to set any bounds (other than the purely formal one already mentioned) to the ramification of the reinterpretable mechanism which expresses "the force of cultural conservatism" within any process of cultural exchange. Herskovits is well aware of this but fails to face its implications. "This of course raises one of the most difficult problems in the entire field of cultural dynamics — whether any element of culture is ever taken over without some degree of reinterpretation, however free the borrowing" [Herskovits, 2, 351]. The point is that, as defined, reinterpretation can apply to every cultural item observed among persons initially classified as bearers of any particular culture on grounds of race, descent, nationality or otherwise. All that is necessary for this assertion is that there should be no formal parallels with practices of the "original" culture, and also that there should be a general tendency of human cultures to show some correspondences on the planes of function or value. Categories of such generality are liable to mean everything and nothing at once [Smith 11, 35].

With such exclusion of reinterpretations, the study of African cultural survivals in their pure or mixed forms as retentions or syncretisms, is still pursued by linguists, cultural historians and cultural anthropologists, though it contributes little to our understanding of contemporary social forms, conditions and processes. However, being trained as a social anthropologist to interpret cultural data by reference to the social situations and relational structures in which they occur and the parts they play therein, I set out to replace the prevailing acculturationist, trait-distribution approach in Caribbean studies by a plural
framework for the sociological study of these Creole societies and cultures, both historic and contemporary, as shown by my essays on their structure c. 1820, on 'The Plural Framework of Jamaican Society' [11, 162-175], which was written in 1956, and by my accounts of Grenada [Smith 12], Carriacou [Smith 10], "the Grenada crisis" [Smith, 11, 262-303], etc. [v. 11, 11].

ON CARIBBEAN SOCIETY, C. 1820

In reply to the statement that my first Caribbean essay on social structure c. 1820 was dominated by "acculturation towards British culture on a non-exploitative and non-antagonistic basis" [Robotham, 8, 116] while the second reversed the relation between pluralism and acculturation [8, 132], it is necessary to look closely at both essays, and particularly the first.

At the start of that essay I set out its methodological and substantive aims, the former being to test "the utility of...old accounts for functional analysis of West Indian culture and society", while

the substantive interests of the present paper are twofold. It questions the common assumption that changing economic conditions determine changes in social structure in one particular instance; and, by providing a summary account of British West Indian society in structural terms at a point in time midway between the abolition of the slave trade and the Emancipation Act, it seeks to draw attention to certain structural conditions which are relevant to the study of the social development of the British Caribbean since that time [Smith, 11, 92; emphases added].

Thus, as its title and the conclusion confirms, that paper focussed expressly on conditions of social structure rather than acculturation; and its closing sentence reiterates the theme:

With such a historical background, investigation of the pluralistic and status aspects of contemporary West Indian social systems seems an urgent task of sociological research [11, 115].

The body of the essay is a descriptive account of Jamaica and St. Vincent c. 1820, whose populations were initially classified as

whites, who were either Creoles (i.e., born in the West Indies) or immigrants, and were all free; free coloured; free black; coloured slaves, who together with the free coloured were all Creoles; black slaves, subdivided into Creoles and African immigrants" [11, 92-93].

After describing the social organisation and institutional practice of these social categories, the essay concludes as follows:

From the preceding account of West Indian society about 1820, its complexity and internal differentiation emerges clearly. The three main social
sections defined primarily by legal status, as free with full civil rights, free with limited civil rights, and unfree, are shown to have been composed in the main, but not universally, of persons who differed also in race and colour. Thus the whites were all free, but were internally differentiated, free persons with limited civil rights were in the main coloured, but included some black, and the unfree were predominantly black but included some coloured persons. Thus, though racial elements were of great prominence in the historical development of these social sections, at this period the two were not homologous [11, 111-112].

I could not state more clearly and succinctly the structural bases and character of the three main sections of those colonial societies, constituted and differentiated by legal status and civil rights than as “free with full civil rights, free with limited civil rights, and unfree.” Nonetheless, as we shall see, Robotham [8, 124] replaced these juridical distinctions by racial criteria to distinguish racial sections.

Following those remarks I summarised the institutional differences of the three sectional cultures and emphasised the analytic importance of their structural pluralism.

The preceding account also makes clear the extent to which, and the ways in which, the three principal sections of colonial society at this period were differentiated culturally — that is, by their adherence to different institutions. To summarise, the whites, the free colored and blacks, and the slaves, differed from one another in their religious observances and concepts, their legal and political institutions, education, kinship and mating patterns, family organization, property rights, land tenure and use, division of labor, language, occupations and technology, community organization and associations, markets, value systems, recreation and folklore. The diversity of institutional sub-types characteristic of these differing social sections has been documented to some extent above. In effect, the population of a British West Indian colony at this period was culturally pluralistic — that is to say, it contained sections which practised different forms of the same institutions. Thus the population constituted a plural society, that is, a society divided into sections each of which practised differing cultures. Moreover, in the West Indies these social sections were organized in a rigid hierarchy defined in terms of social and legal status differences, including the most extreme form, slavery.

This peculiar form of pluralism in the social structure of the British West Indian colonies of this period has never, to my knowledge, received the attention or emphasis that it deserves as a causal and explanatory principle. Hitherto, the earlier development of the West Indies has been studied mainly by economic historians, who assume tacitly, here as elsewhere, that economic factors determine processes of change and forms of social structure [Smith, 11, 112].

In light of these quotations, it is obvious that pluralism provided the analytic framework of my first essay on Caribbean societies, and
not acculturation, whether towards some undefined “British culture” [Robotham, 8, 116], or towards some imaginary version of that culture that was “non-exploitative” and “non-antagonistic”. Having attempted to show that although sugar production by plantation slavery was clearly uneconomic, planters resolutely rejected any changes that could improve their returns [11, 112-114], the essay concluded as follows:

It seems clear that considerations of status rather than economic forces maintained the social structure at this period. One might even go further and state that since a rational adjustment to their economic context would have led to changes in the social structure of West Indian colonies, this was prevented by the greater necessity to maintain the social structure in its current form... When slavery was abolished in the British colonies, it was by a fiat of the British Parliament, and not by local action.

Sufficient evidence is provided by our authors to show how considerations of status operated not only throughout all sections of Creole society but also with great effect among the immigrant whites. It may seem paradoxical that preoccupation with status could maintain a social structure, since social structures are simply ordered relations of statuses defining the roles of individuals or groups within a population. The fact that this condition did obtain in West Indian society in the 1820 period may well be sufficient to suggest questions concerning the homogeneity of that society and its culture. We have seen that status was even more important than race and color in the structure of British West Indian society at this period, and that quite rigid structural relations held between members of differing social sections. This is probably the explanation of the West Indian preoccupation with status at this period, since any alteration in the statuses of different sections would be followed by structural changes in their relationships, thus endangering the unity and stability of the total society. Moreover, that different types of common institutions were manifested by sections of the society occupying sharply differentiated statuses in the social structure should now be apparent. In view of this marked cultural differentiation of the social sections of British Caribbean colonies it seems clear that the total units were plural rather than homogeneous societies. Hence the preoccupation with structural relations between the principal social sections, and hence also the paradoxical preoccupation with status [11, 114-115].

It seems unnecessary to underline the explicit and overriding structural interests and focus of that essay given the passages cited. However, throughout its descriptive section, the preoccupation of West Indian colonists, black and white, free and slave, creole and immigrant, with status, its expression and enhancement, recurs again and again. As noted in the conclusion,

Our authors... show how considerations of status operated not only throughout all sections of Creole society, but also with great effect among immigrant whites [11, 114],

almost all of whom at this date were British, but who, while living in
the Caribbean, were obliged by various pressures to creolize and follow their Creole peers in this as in other respects. Thus not only does the first essay present a structural account of Caribbean society c. 1820. It identifies the structural bases of the Creole plural framework, shows how the

three main social sections defined primarily by legal status as free with full civil rights, free with limited civil rights, and non-free...were differentiated culturally [11, 111-112];

and highlights “this peculiar form of pluralism in the social structure...as a causal and explanatory principle” [11, 112] that accounts for the status preoccupations and rigid structural relations of the principal social sections at this period, since any alteration in the statuses of different sections would be followed by structural changes in their relationships, thus endangering the unity and stability of the total society [11, 115].

THE IDEOLOGICAL METHOD

Given the structural focus and explicit sociological preoccupations of my essay on Jamaica and St. Vincent c. 1820, I have tried to understand how Robotham could possibly misconstrue it as dominated by acculturation [Robotham 8, 116]. Three overlapping sets of factors, ideological, conceptual and textual, seem important. Of these, ideological factors are primary in several ways. Given his own ideology, Robotham clearly assumes that my Caribbean essays are determined by a ‘world outlook’ or ideology, which he regards as so profoundly acculturationist that I am unconscious of it [Robotham, 7, 77]. Elaborating that theme, he says

The acculturationist pro-assimilation-of-British-culture point of view, with its exaggeration of the role of educational reforms, is well known to have been the ideology of the Jamaican reformist middle class of the fifties and sixties. If I can demonstrate that Smith held such views it helps to establish my case that Smith’s pluralism is an ideology shared with the middle class. Likewise, if he can show he had no such initial ideas, it weakens my case.

The same applies to my claim that he displays hostility to popular culture and militant working class movements. This is also a well known characteristic of middle class ideology and practice. If Smith can show this to be false, he further weakens my argument that he is an ideologist of the Jamaican middle class [Robotham, 8, 115].

The major premise of both syllogisms is that “the Jamaican reformist middle class” of the fifties and sixties had certain ideological orientations which included “acculturation towards British culture” etc. The minor premise is that I belonged to that segment of the
“middle class”. *Ergo*, “Smith’s initial formulation of pluralism is in the framework of acculturation...towards British culture on a non-exploitative, non-antagonistic basis” [Robotham, 8, 116; 7, 76]; and I must therefore also be hostile to ‘popular culture’ and ‘militant working class movements’.

This ideological analysis first assumes that classes, though undefined, are the primary structural units of Jamaican society; second, that class position determines ideology; and finally that such class-bound ideology determines and pervades the writings of individuals. Accordingly, if the Jamaican middle classes, reformist or other, are hostile to popular culture and working class movements, as certain versions of Marxist theory prescribe, being of that ‘class’ or ‘fraction’, I must display or share that hostility, and nothing I may have done or published, including my work with and report on the Rastafari movement [Smith, Augier and Nettleford, 15; Smith, 14, 130] can be accepted to the contrary [Robotham, 8, 146].

Whether in fact the undefined class model that underlies Robotham’s “ideological analysis” is appropriate for Jamaica, we cannot say, since he nowhere indicates what he means by class. Indeed, by his “general method of ideological analysis”, such things as class, acculturation, ideology are whatever Robotham chooses to call them, and need no definition since concepts and facts are trivial or meaningless without such ideological interpretation as the “general method” provides. Thus, while illustrating his own ideological notions of ideology and class, Robotham’s critique excludes as irrelevant such contradictory data as my isolation from Jamaican affairs from 1940 until September 1952, and from November 1952 to January 1954. Clearly, given my isolation from Jamaican affairs over twelve years and my immersion in those of other countries, it is most improbable that in 1952 I could know or share the current concerns of the local middle class. However, since various views and orientations are attributed to the “reformist middle class” on ideological grounds, being of that stratum, on Robotham’s assumptions I must automatically have held and expressed those views, whether absent in Britain or Grenada, or discussing Caribbean societies c. 1820. Nonetheless, by distinguishing the “Jamaican reformist middle class” [*ibid.*, 8, 115] and the “anticolonial middle class” [*idem*, 7, 69] Robotham implicitly acknowledges the existence of anti-reformist and pro-colonial segments of that “class”, thereby illustrating the empirical independence of ideology and class that refutes his assumptions and destroys his argument.

At the conceptual level, Robotham [7, 77] regards “Smith’s conception of acculturation...as typical of that contradictory anti-colonial
but pro-British brand of nationalism characterising many movements of the period’; and claims [7, 75] that “acculturation is...so deeply rooted in ... (my) world outlook” that it pervades my thinking and remains substantially implicit. Nowhere does he indicate either what he means by acculturation, or what he thinks I mean by the term, though my definition of it [Smith, 11, 24] and various remarks in my first essay indicate that by the acculturation of coloured folk I meant their “adoption of white behaviour and institutions” [11, 98; Robotham, 8, 124] and “acculturation to white standards” [Robotham, 7, 75], while by that of African slaves I meant their “acculturation to ...slave status in the West Indies” [Smith, 11, 105].

In place of a definition of acculturation, Robotham uses the term loosely to include social differentiation by birth, race, colour, political and legal status, occupation, employment status, nationality and birthplace, all these conditions being social in their basis and significance for personal status. He also treats social mobility among whites in Caribbean society as evidence of acculturation, even though it normally involved no cultural change. Following my initial error, he fails to distinguish acculturation as “cultural change in a situation of contacts between carriers of different cultures” [Smith, 11, 24; Redfield, Linton, Herskovits, 6, 139], from enculturation or socialisation which denotes the processes by which individuals acquire their native cultures from infancy onwards. As these conceptual confusions considerably inflate the “evidence” of acculturation that Robotham perceives in my essay, I shall discuss them further below.

Having asserted that in my account of Caribbean society c. 1820,

‘Smith regarded every section of Jamaican society, every single ethnic group from the highest to the lowest, as in process of various stages of acculturation to a larger British culture’ [Robotham 7, 75].

Robotham says: “Nor...does Smith clarify just what he means by ‘British’ culture: the East End or the West End, or perhaps the B.B.C.?” [7, 80].

It clearly suits Robotham to say that in my first paper I “regarded every section of Jamaican society...as in...various stages of acculturation to a larger British culture” [Robotham, 7, 75]; but as I neither say nor provide any evidence to that effect, he excuses my oversight by another groundless postulate, namely, that “acculturation is, in fact, so deeply rooted in his (my) world-outlook that, to a great extent, its content is implicit, is taken for granted, and not explicated in any of his essays” [7, 75-76]. Moreover, since that proposition is falsified both by my critique of Herskovits’ work [Smith, 11, 24-37] and my account of
Caribbean society c. 1820, which inter alia stressed that slavery inhibited, i.e., prevented slave acculturation [11, 109; Smith, 14, 125-6], Robotham [8, 121] ignores the former and dismisses the latter — "This argument does not stand up" — apparently because I say that slave adjustment to a more inclusive society as slaves inhibited their acculturation. To Robotham such inhibition did not prevent acculturation [8, 125-6]. However, according to the Concise Oxford Dictionary [Sykes, 16, 555], inhibit names "forbid, prohibit, hinder, restrain or prevent", which in this context, effectively means to obstruct and/or halt slave acculturation in Caribbean societies. Moreover, despite Robotham, nowhere shall we find slave populations that exist independently or outside some "more inclusive society" that contains their masters and the institutional means of their subordination.

Robotham [7, 76] claims that I advocate Jamaican acculturation "towards 'British' culture on a non-exploitative, non-antagonistic basis", and suggests that that "mainspring of Smith’s acculturation theory" [7, 76] reflected my political outlook and determined the argument of my first essay, of which it was "the motive force" [7, 76]. Since he admits that I nowhere say whether by "British culture"...I mean "the East End or the West End or perhaps the BBC", I summarise below some data from my essay which indicate the content of the acculturation it reports, and show clearly that that was neither "towards British culture" nor "non-antagonistic" and "non-exploitative".

On first remarking my supposed failure to indicate the "content" of the acculturative process, [7, 75-6], Robotham undertook to fill the gap by sketching "a general idea of what he (I) means" [7, 76], and promptly attributed to me two quotations of his own invention, the first to illustrate my approval of Monk Lewis for 'abolishing slavery' [7, 76; Smith, 14, 123-4] while the second says, "The divisiveness in Jamaican society had always been engendered by the intransigence of the white ruling class" [Robotham 7, 76; Smith 14, 124]. For that remark of his invention, Robotham [7, 77; Smith, 14, 124] generously credits me with an "acute 'Aeolian' awareness of the divisiveness rife in Jamaican society" and a "strong sense of the fragility of the Jamaican colonial social system". However, as that system had withstood more than a dozen slave revolts and conspiracies by 1820, it did not seem to me particularly "fragile", and I nowhere said so. In brief, given his baseless claims that acculturation motivated and dominated my essay, to account for pluralism as "a sub-theme" [Robotham 8, 132] beside acculturation, Robotham invents a quotation about divisiveness and reiterates the point as "evidence" that "pluralism ...does not as yet envelop the whole
Society, does not as yet constitute its entire framework... (but) is as yet weak... subordinate to the dominant acculturation process" [Robotham 7, 78].

ACCULTURATION AND DIFFERENTIATION

In an authoritative memorandum, Robert Redfield, Ralph Linton and Melville Herskovits [6, 149] defined acculturation as

those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups"

Thus defined, acculturation differs sharply from enculturation, or socialisation as it is often called, which denotes the processes by which infants are inducted into their natal culture, first learning its language and then progressively the basic set of institutional roles through which the society incorporates individuals as members. In my account of Caribbean society c. 1820 I did not distinguish between enculturation and acculturation, but used the latter term to cover both, an error that Robotham adopts. However, given his charge that the concept of acculturation, which he does not define, provided the framework for that study, it is necessary to correct my original error and distinguish the processes of enculturation by which individuals learn their native cultures, from acculturation by which they learn or adapt later in life to some other alien culture.

Thus defined, acculturation proceeded in Caribbean colonial societies c. 1820 between slaves born in Africa, free blacks, among Creoles, free or slave, black or coloured, and among whites, who controlled the government and economy but fell into two “separate cultural groups... the immigrants and the Creoles” [Smith 11, 95], both of which, like the preceding categories, were internally differentiated by occupation, ethnicity, wealth, political and employment status, as well as by birth and socialisation in the Caribbean or elsewhere. While black and white immigrants, slave and free, underwent acculturation to Caribbean society and culture, the coloured, free and slave, like Creole blacks, were enculturated or socialised to that Creole culture from infancy and could therefore only acculturate to some other, foreign culture.

Though differentiation has been a central concept and concern of sociology since Herbert Spencer’s day, Robotham assimilates social cultural differentiation, and interprets all evidence of social or internal differentiation as involving acculturation. Briefly, social differentiation denotes the total set of institutional roles and statuses in a society,
together with the principles that govern their allocation among individuals and social categories.

Robotham's confusion of social and cultural differentiation is apparent in his essays. Discussing my account of differentiation among whites, he says, "social differentiation was replicated by heterogeneity on the cultural level" [Robotham 7, 72]. Three pages later, we are told that "pluralism refers to those 'different stages of acculturation', those marked internal differentiations," [7, 75] 'internal differentiation' being treated as a synonym for 'different stages of acculturation'. Other quotations illustrating his conceptual confusion are given below.

However, as the social structure of a culturally homogeneous, population consists of "set forms of grouping and relations" [Smith, 11, 80], its internal differentiation consists in the diverse statuses and roles allocated to individuals and social categories, all of whom share the same culture, on grounds of age, sex, birthplace, residence, descent, occupation, and such other variables as the role distribution involves.

The internal differentiation of a culturally homogeneous society thus consists in the variety and distribution of its institutional statuses and roles, together with the conditions that govern their distribution, which manifest the common culture. Unless otherwise qualified, the internal or social differentiation of a population thus assumes its shared culture and consists in the prevailing array and distribution of its institutional statuses and roles. When a group or society includes two or more populations that display cultural differences, its cultural differentiation should be clearly indicated and distinguished from that inevitable and universal internal differentiation of actors by status and role without which there can be no human society. Careful reading of my first two Caribbean essays will show that wherever specifically cultural differences occur within the populations they discuss, these are either mentioned separately, or in addition to its unavoidable social differentiation [v. Smith, 11, 92, 93, 95, 96, 98, 100, 102, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 112, 115; ibid., 145-148, 157, etc.].

Clearly, as the universal precondition of human society, the differentiation of social roles and statuses within a culturally homogeneous society differs in base and character from cultural differentiation which always involves the presence of two or more culturally distinct collectivities, which need not involve their acculturation, as indicated below:

For Hausa society as a whole, the function of slavery was integrative, and it operated as a channel of acculturation. For the Jamaicans, it had an opposite function in that it provided the basis for the cultural and social differentiation of the society along plural lines [11, 147].
Pluralism and Ideology

Evidently Robotham does not recognise that any population that shares a common culture will be internally differentiated. In his initial critique of my essays, having remarked “the clearly differentiated categories” of Caribbean society, he treats my account of “the internal differentiation of white society at this period” as an “elaborate arithmetical analysis” [Robotham 7, 72], and scrambles the distinction between those cultural differences that distinguished Creole and immigrant whites, whether well or poorly educated, and other modes of “social differentiation...replicated by heterogeneity on the cultural level” [7, 72; Smith 11, 95]. The equation of social and cultural differentiation is also evident in his definition of ‘pluralism’ as “those ‘different stages of acculturation’, those ‘marked internal differentiations’” [Robotham, 7, 76] that characterised Caribbean societies. These misconceptions underlie his conclusion that in my first essay “pluralism...has an effect which is as yet weak...subordinate to the dominant acculturation process, an effect which only causes differentiation, a secondary effect” [7, 78, my italics].

Whereas at first Robotham correctly quoted my remark that slaves “probably showed the highest degree of internal differentiation” [Smith 11, 101; Robotham, 7, 73], in his recent essay he alters and italicises that sentence to say “slaves probably showed the highest degree of cultural differentiation” [Robotham 8, 126: his emphasis], thus substituting ‘cultural’ for ‘internal’, i.e. social, differentiation, and perverting my account to fit his central thesis that acculturation provided my analytic framework. Given the function of the altered phrase, and the italics in which it is set, that alteration was clearly not accidental but illustrates Robotham’s technique of inventing and manipulating quotations to fit his polemic that featured so prominently in his [7, 76] initial critique. Noting that practice, [Smith, 14, 104, 123-4] I treated it as typical of the “extraordinary mixture of prejudice, ignorance, dishonesty and presumption, that motivated Robotham’s essay” [14, 130]. In reply, while denouncing my remarks on his misrepresentations, “deliberate falsifications”, etc. [v. Robotham 8, 112-114], Robotham shamelessly repeats his disreputable practice by substituting ‘cultural’ for ‘internal’ differentiation in the passage cited [8, 126].

Though my account of whites in Caribbean society c. 1820 identified as their primary division that between immigrants and Creoles, who “formed separate cultural groups” [Smith, 11, 95], each containing principal and secondary whites, Robotham [7, 72] regards the class differences of principal and secondary whites as their “overall cross-cutting, dominant distinction.” From that point on in his initial critique,
he systematically confuses social differentiation with pluralism and cultural differentiation, although wherever the latter is involved I specifically said so in my initial account of Caribbean society c. 1820.

In a culturally homogeneous population, all forms of social differentiation assume the common culture and so exclude its cultural differentiation. When Robotham changes the remark that slaves “probably showed the highest degree of internal differentiation” [Smith, 11, 101] to read “the highest degree of cultural differentiation” [Robotham 8, 126], he misrepresents all forms of social differentiation as cultural differentiation and erroneously inflates his claim that acculturation pervaded my account of Caribbean society. By ‘internal differentiation’ in that misquoted sentence, I clearly referred to differences of race, colour, occupation, rank, status, authority, power and their identification with closed estate communities, which provided the primary social differences among slaves, other than sex, age, generation and kinship, in contrast to the sharp cultural differences between Creole and African slaves, the latter themselves divided by tribe and ethnicity, language and culture into several mutually exclusive and non-acculturating segments, much as white colonists also divided culturally and socially into Creoles and immigrants.

In his initial critique Robotham [7, 75] nicely illustrates his conceptual confusion in the following passage:

In this analysis, pluralism refers to those ‘different stages of acculturation’, those ‘marked internal differentiations’ which are said to characterise the society. Nowhere be it noted...are these differentiations said to be incompatible. On the contrary the ‘culturally pluralistic’ sections of the society are said expressly to practise ‘different forms of the same institutions’ [7, 75; his emphases]

Thus according to Robotham, internal differentiation involves cultural differences of a pluralistic type.

FURTHER CONCEPTUAL CONFUSIONS

In his recent paper Robotham expresses his confusion more clearly à propos my remarks on the internal differentiation of white society...by...the multiple variables of individual status from which the differentiation of sub-groups and classes followed. Culturally, also, the white population was heterogeneous with distinctions between the well educated and poorly educated, while the immigrants and the Creoles formed separate cultural groups [Smith, 11, 95; Robotham, 8, 123]

From this he correctly concludes that “If there were ‘different cultures’ between sections, then there were as well ‘separate cultures’ inside sec-
tions at least where the whites were concerned” [8, 123; his italics]. However, he treats the social differentiation of whites as evidence of their ‘separate cultures’, noting that although principal and secondary whites were set apart by relations of authority and subordination, wealth and power, “promotions occurred with sufficient frequency to furnish strong incentives...towards maximisation of status” [Smith, 11, 96; Robotham, 8, 123], he remarks.

In other words, lower sections of the white section were acculturated to the higher sections. All of which, if it is not to lead to the utterly absurd conclusion that the whites, because of ‘separate cultures’, did not constitute a single social and cultural section, while coloureds and blacks did, can only make sense if the underlying concept is one of a general process of acculturation, within which pluralism is occurring and from which it is perceived as deriving. Viewed from the angle of this generally pervasive acculturation process, degrees of acculturation and thus a kind of multiple pluralism, operate both within and between sections, permeating the whole system [8, 123-4, his emphasis].

These sentences express such prime conceptual and textual confusions that we should consider them one by one.

First, Robotham treats social mobility among whites from secondary to higher status as proof of acculturation, though it involved no acculturation, and was in any case limited in scope and volume as indicated by the remark that occasional white overseers assimilated “in varying degrees to the dominant white class” [Smith, 11, 96]. He so clearly assumes that all forms and degrees of social differentiation involve cultural differences that he treats social differentiation as evidence of “separate cultures inside sections” [Robotham 8, 123], and concludes that acculturation proceeded pervasively both within and between social sections in the colonial society, thereby illustrating “the general process of acculturation, within which pluralism...is perceived as deriving” [8, 124].

However, that is only the first of several confusions in this remarkable paragraph. In the essay it discusses I distinguished social section and class by inter alia describing the principal whites as a “closed social class” [Smith, 11, 96], while including principal and secondary whites in the same social section defined explicitly by legal status as “free with full civil rights” [11, 111-2]. Nonetheless, since “whites were internally differentiated” [11, 112], Robotham [8, 123] scrambles the differences between these social categories, assimilates class to section, and speaks of lower and higher “sections of the white section” instead of classes, thereby facilitating his discovery of the “general process of acculturation” [8, 124].
Following that coup, to avoid the "totally absurd conclusion that the whites, because of 'separate cultures' did not constitute a single social and cultural section, while coloureds and blacks did", Robotham postulates the "underlying concept...of a general process of acculturation...both within and between sections, permeating the whole system" [8, 124; his italics]. However, my account of colonial Caribbean society distinguished "three main social sections" defined primarily by legal status, as free with full civil rights, free with limited civil rights, and unfree, ... composed in the main, but not universally, of persons who differed also in race and colour. Thus the whites were all free but were internally differentiated, free persons with limited civil rights were in the main coloured but included some black, and the unfree were predominantly black but included some coloured persons [Smith, 11, 111-2].

As that passage shows, in my account there were no black or coloured social sections to set by that of whites, who were all free with full civil rights, though internally differentiated. For reasons best known to himself Robotham replaced two of the social sections I had distinguished legally by racial ones of his own invention which he casually attributes to me, [8, 124], even though I had stressed that blacks and coloureds were both divided between the slave and the free. Not content with that conceptual havoc, he scrambles the distinction between social sections which are juridical categories, and social classes which are otherwise distinguished; and, to complete the confusion, he translates social differentiation into 'separate cultures', thus generating "acculturation."

Given such deliberate and multiple confusions, it is most unlikely that any clarifications I can make between social and cultural differentiation, or differentiations within and between cultures, between classes and social sections, social mobility and acculturation, or acculturation and enculturation, would have the least impact on Robotham, since his "ideological analysis" positively requires such confusions. I have therefore tried to show some of the ways by which he reached his pre-determined conclusion that the "underlying concept" of my first Caribbean essay was "a general process of acculturation within which pluralism is occurring, and from which it is perceived as deriving" [Robotham 8, 124]. That conclusion exactly reverses the conceptual framework that underlies my account of Caribbean society c. 1820 which, as indicated above, begins with structural pluralism as the differential incorporation [Smith, 11, 111-112; 13, 91-151] of free whites and black slaves that generated an intermediate section of free persons with limited civil rights, who were mostly coloured but included free blacks, along with other
differences between Creoles and immigrants, white, black and coloured, free and slave.

CREOLE OR BRITISH CULTURE

Though Robotham claims that my “initial formulation of pluralism is in the framework of acculturation...towards British culture on a non-exploitative, non-antagonistic basis” [Robotham 8, 116; 7, 67], as noted above, he admits that I nowhere “clarify just what he (I) means by ‘British culture’” [Robotham 7, 80]. However, given his repeated claim that “in the early essay on ‘Social Structure in the British Caribbean around 1820’, acculturation with a pro-British content was the dominant theme” [Robotham 8, 121], let us re-examine the essay with that issue in mind.

As noted above, the most important distinction among white colonists c. 1820 was that between Creoles and immigrants, followed by those between principal and secondary whites, and between English and Scots, all of whom could be classified as British under the Act of Union, 1714. While the immigrants were socialised to British culture, Creole whites, even when educated abroad, had from infancy been socialised to the conditions and culture of Caribbean society. My account provides ample evidence that the dominant culture in the colonies was Creole and not British.

That this was so for hybrists and slaves is obvious. As hybrists all coloured natives, free or slave, were socialised or enculturated from birth to Creole culture. By contrast,

For the African immigrant, acculturation to his slave status in the West Indies was marked by two stages: arrival, followed by a period and process known as ‘seasoning’, after which the lifelong acculturation process was voluntaristic [Smith 11, 105; italics added].

Since at that date slavery had no place in Britain, though central to Caribbean society, acculturation for the African slave was clearly to the Caribbean Creole society and culture rather than the British. The same is true of Creoles, whether free or slave, most of whom were illegitimate by birth and socialised to the plantation society with its Creole culture, language and other institutions. What then of the whites, and particularly of white immigrants, since white Creoles were all socialised to the Creole culture which differed, as shown below, from that of Britain?

As noted above, whites, whether Creole or immigrant, fell into two categories, principal and secondary, the latter being subordinate politically, by employment and occupation, to the former, who “controlled the economic and political life of the country” [Smith, 11,
and "formed a closed social class" [11, 96].

Linked with this social exclusiveness of the dominant group of whites was the extensive use of ostracism as a mode of social control of its members. The reactions to white women guilty of extramarital relationships, or towards wealthy white men who allowed their natural children to remain slaves, have already been noted. Monk Lewis's experience when attacked by the Custos of Trelawny in Jamaica in the Assize Court on the grounds that he was interfering 'with our system and by (his) insidious practices and dangerous doctrines (calling) the peace of the Island in question' because of his indulgence to the Negroes on his own estate and his views that their evidence against white persons ought at least to be heard, indicates another field of behaviour in which conformity was exacted under penalty of ostracism [11, 96].

In effect, white Creoles effectively obliged white immigrants such as Monk Lewis, though himself a member of the British Parliament, to conform to their customs even when that overrode property rights in their slaves, nullified British Parliamentary legislation to protect Caribbean slaves, and converted "numerous provisions of the Consolidated Slave Acts" [11, 97] into dead-letter laws. The best evidence that Creole whites obliged all immigrants, from colonial Governors down, to accept their norms and practice as the alternative to emigration or silence, is the unbroken history of the Consolidated Slave Codes as dead-letter laws.

Having classified resident whites as British, which while legally true has little relevance in this context given Creole cultural dominance of Caribbean society. Robotham concluded that in my view the free and slave populations of St. Vincent and Jamaica at this period were acculturating towards "British" culture. Nowhere did I either state or suggest that.

To demonstrate the significant differences between Creole and British culture and the predominance of Creole culture among whites, we need only list some data from the essay by institutional sectors. For example, white planters forbade missionary activity among their slaves, and also opposed the conversion of slaves by the Established Church [11, 94]. Whites of all classes, principal and secondary, had both free and slave concubines, coloured or black, secondary whites generally leaving their offspring in slavery while principal whites freed and educated theirs to some extent [11, 94-95]. Creole whites and military immigrants held different ranks in the local militia, but the former used their legal and political power to negate British and colonial legislation on behalf of slaves, and directed government policy on such matters as the arming of slaves [11, 95-8].
In these and other ways the culture of Creole whites contrasted sharply with that of contemporary Britain. In consequence, Creole whites obliged immigrants from Britain to abandon British norms and institutions in the colonies and adopt Creole practices as regards slavery, religion, marriage, family, common law, habeas corpus, wage employment, education, etc. As the coloureds, free or slave, whether educated or not, were socialised from infancy to Creole culture, their illegitimacy, legal status, physical characteristics, preoccupations with shade, status, and disassociation from blacks, distinct mating and family patterns, and native fluency in the Creole dialect, indicate their socialisation in a Creole culture very different from that of Britain, perhaps most clearly so when the free coloureds strove to "assimilate white culture and ... raise their social status" by attendance at church, literary studies, imitating white behaviour, and so forth.

Understandably, black slaves displayed the greatest cultural differences from the "British" models Robotham says then prevailed. Bearing in mind the social organisation of plantation communities and sugar production, besides enslavement, and such responses as malingering, theft, intrigue, conspiracies, plots, abscondment, obeah, poison, and rebellion, Caribbean society and culture c. 1820 differed from that current in Britain in its systematic denial of freedom, formal education, Christianity and justice to the slave majority; in its 'seasoning' and systematic dispersal of immigrant African 'shipmates'; its denial of marriage, legitimacy and autonomous family life to slaves; and in its obeah, informal 'kangaroo courts', Sunday markets, slave property rights [11, 104-105], standing army and militia, as well as slave identification with estate communities. These institutional practices were all so radically different from and opposed to contemporary British culture, that it would have been remarkable if, having described Caribbean society c. 1820, I suggested that it demonstrated "acculturation towards British culture". Nowhere, despite Robotham's baseless assertions, do I either say or suggest such absurdity.

Far more convincingly than acculturation, for black and white alike, Caribbean cultural history demonstrates how inexorably the conditions of social, political and economic organisation operated to exclude certain forms of ancestral culture, to select, suspend and distort others, and to generate a complex of new institutional practices and ideas that, however bizarre individually, were so interrelated that they seemed mutually essential for the social order, uneconomic as that was. When the British Crown and Parliament chose to develop their tropical territories as plantation societies for sugar production and export, a radically new and different Creole culture and institutional system emerged in
the Caribbean that obliterated and excluded such basic institutions of British society as marriage, family, Christianity, *habeas corpus*, equality before the law, wage labour, free markets, and so on, while generating many new ones. To confuse the resulting Creole slave-based culture with that of slave-free Britain, and present the former as the latter, translates us once more to Wonderland, where such perversions pass as ideological analysis.

**LOVE’S LABOUR’S LOST – IN WONDERLAND**

Not content, Robotham goes further and claims that the "optimistic acculturation" he found pervading my essay is "towards British culture on a non-exploitative, non-antagonistic basis" [Robotham 8, 116; 7, 76], citing my "approbation of the British planter, M.G. (‘Monk’) Lewis" [7, 76] and various invented quotations [Smith, 14, 123-4; Robotham, 7, 76] as "evidence" in support. The real significance of Monk Lewis’s experience was its exceptional nature. Unlike his peers, Lewis

- doubled the legally required number of slave holidays on his estate and appointed others, abolished the use of cart whip, increased the provisions for medical care of slaves, instituted a scale of punishments for different categories of offence, and dismissed white bookkeepers summarily on the evidence of slaves [Smith, 11, 110].

In consequence he was peremptorily arraigned by the Custos of Trelawny in the Assize Court, and condemned for "insidious practices and dangerous doctrines" that threatened to subvert "the peace of the island" [11, 96], following which he soon left Jamaica. Such then was the treatment that local whites meted out to anyone who contravened their norms for slave administration and cultivated "harmonious master-slave relations" [Smith 11, 110; Robotham 7, 76]. Instead dominant Creole whites nullified the slave codes their legislatures enacted by forbidding slave evidence against whites, by excluding missionaries from their estates, by obstructing slave conversions to Christianity, by enrolling in the militia for "the suppression of slave rebellion" [Smith, 11, 97], and by their free use of the cart whip, the treadmill and other disciplinary instruments as "the sole means of preserving the social structure by disciplining slaves" [11, 97], all this while seeking to extract the maximum possible return from systematic exploitation of slave labour by a mode of sugar production that was clearly uneconomic [Smith 11, 104, 110-114].

In light of the data presented, it is clear that the analytic framework of my first essay on Caribbean societies derived from Furnivall and not acculturation towards "British culture" or towards some
imaginary version of that culture which was “non-exploitative” and “non-antagonistic”. Having shown that, although sugar production by plantation slavery at this date was known to be uneconomic, the planters resolutely rejected any changes that would improve their returns [11, 112-114], the essay concluded as follows:

It seems clear that considerations of status rather than economic forces maintained the social structure at this period. One might even go further and state that since a rational adjustment to their economic context would have led to changes in the social structure of West Indian colonies, this was prevented by the greater necessity to maintain the social structure in its current form... When slavery was abolished in the British colonies, it was by a fiat of the British parliament, and not by local action [Smith 11, 114].

THE ALLEGED REVERSAL

According to Robotham, while in my first “article, acculturation prevails, pluralism is a sub-theme, in the second article the order was reversed” [Robotham 8, 132]. We have seen that the first article was based on pluralism as an analytic framework and not on acculturation. However, Robotham attempts to show that my second essay provides an account of slavery in Jamaica which is virtually the opposite of that given in the first essay on 1820, and does so by “lengthy quotations and comparisons of the two articles” [8, 117]. Since both papers were based on the same analytic framework of pluralism, they should not differ in their accounts of Jamaican slavery. However, as Robotham claims that I present “a new account of slavery in Jamaica” in the second paper, which compares slavery and emancipation in Jamaica and the Hausa state of Zaria, and as he says it is “the opposite...” of that presented in the earlier paper “when the notion of acculturation reigned supreme” [8, 128-9], let us review the evidence he cites to support that claim, as well as some that he omits.

He leads off with the following quotation that describes the economic rights of Caribbean plantation slaves in 1820 [Smith 11, 104]:

Economically, slaves enjoyed a wide variety of rights, sufficient to ensure a standard of living significantly above the socially ascribed subsistence margin. In the Consolidated Slave Acts certain of these slave rights were listed and given legal sanctions. They included allowances of imported food of various types, clothing and farm tools, together with usufructuary rights in garden land for the production of food crops and other provisions. By law, every Sunday and one Saturday each fortnight were given to the slaves for the cultivation of their plots; it appears also that the slaves traditionally kept stock of various types, with the probable exception of horses, and had recognised grazing rights on their masters’ estates. From their provision grounds and stock rearing they supplied the master’s household
requirements for payment at market rates and themselves operated as the main contributors to the local Sunday markets, which were frequently condemned on religious grounds by immigrant whites. Various polemical estimates of the prosperity of plantation slaves and their superior economic situation when compared not only with free labourers in Britain, but with white management and ownership in the West Indies, are to be found in some of our authors. It is undeniable that the slaves enjoyed greater security at this period than did free blacks, or the poorer free persons of colour [Smith 11, 104.; Robotham, 8, 129; his emphases].

On this passage Robotham comments as follows:

Here we have the early Smith, fulsome in his praise of the conditions which the Mother Country had established for black slaves in Jamaica to ‘enjoy’. Free weekends, free provision grounds, recognised grazing rights, varied and imported food and clothing, not to mention farm tools — all leading to prosperity, a superior economic situation and undoubtedly greater security for the slave over the free blacks and coloured. O Sweet Slavery! O Britannial [Robotham, 8, 129].

By such remarks [8, 132, 138, 144-148] Robotham seeks to demonstrate his righteous wrath at the preceding dry description, at the essay, my work as a whole, and the “mentality” [8, 148] it illustrates. While polemically useful, such moral pretensions and political rhetoric cannot excuse his shoddy documentation, poor scholarship and ideological analysis. As my account of the economic situation of plantation slaves in Jamaica and St. Vincent c. 1820 derives from contemporary historical sources and neither from my ideology nor imagination, my second paper merely repeats that account in summary form:

Care and provision for slaves was institutionalised in the form of allowances of clothing, fish, rum and certain other commodities, provision of medical attendance, and the allocation of mountain lands for subsistence cultivation of ‘ground provisions’ which formed the main bulk of the goods owned or consumed by slaves [Smith, 11, 125].

Before proceeding, let us look at those passages in the first essay that Robotham italicises to highlight my ‘glowing’ [Robotham, 8, 138] account of slavery, beginning with the following: “It is undeniable that the slaves enjoyed greater security at this period than did free blacks, or the poorer free persons of colour” [Smith, 11, 104; Robotham 8, 129].

According to the contemporary accounts on which my essay was based,

The economic circumstances of the free blacks were usually such as to imperil their own subsistence… On purchasing his freedom, the black slave surrendered all his rights to allowances of food, clothing, tools, housing, garden land, medical attention, and other benefits from his former
master, and ceased to be a member of the estate community, setting forth an isolated individual with no rights in land on the grim task of earning his livelihood in a society which had little place for free labour. It is therefore not surprising to find harrowing descriptions of the conditions of the free blacks in triumphant contrast to those of the slaves, in these old accounts, and to hear that free blacks were accused of inciting slaves to rob their masters and sell them produce or goods, as a means of making a living in the markets [Smith 11, 101].

In the paragraph on slave economic rights that he quotes, Robotham also chooses to emphasise the polemical claims by some contemporary writers that plantation slaves in the West Indies were more prosperous than free workers in Britain and perhaps "white management and ownership in the West Indies" [Robotham 8, 129] while ignoring my statement that such claims were 'polemical' [Smith 11, 104]. Being so immersed in his own polemic, he clearly does not distinguish polemic from fact.

In like style Robotham elsewhere italicises the terms 'maladaptation' and 'far better adjusted' that I had used to contrast the accommodations of Creoles and Africans to their situations as slaves. For Africans, I said,

Maladaptation expressed itself in running away, violence, the use of obeah at an individual level, and at the group level in plotting rebellion or murder of white managers. Creole slaves, subject from birth to a continual process of acculturation, were far better adjusted to their milieu, and accepted their situation more fully than the Africans [Smith, 11, 105; Robotham, 8, 127; his emphases].

The Concise Oxford Dictionary [Sykes, 16, 12-13] cites 'adjust' as the meaning of 'adapt' and 'adapt' as the meaning of 'adjust'. As the opposite of good adaptation or adjustment is maladaptation or maladjustment, contrasting modes of behaviour should express their difference. However Robotham [8, 138, 146, etc.] lampoons these remarks and insinuates that I substitute remarks on 'maladaptation' in both essays for any reference to slave revolts [8, 146]. As usual, he ignores whatever disconfirms his 'ideological analysis', including the remark just cited that maladaptation was expressed 'at the group level in plotting rebellion and murder'; but since he says that I write "essays on slavery in Jamaica in which not a trace of slave revolts appear, except as the source for a remark or two on 'maladaptation!'" [8, 1,46], let us consult the texts.

My first essay discussed white reactions to the Maroon revolt in Jamaica and the Carib rebellion in St. Vincent in 1795 [Smith 11, 97-98]. Following the remarks on Creole and African slave adaptation just cited, it continued:
The suspicion with which Africans viewed Creole slaves was expressed in the exclusion of Creoles from rebellions that the Africans plotted against the whites, and reflected this basic cultural division of the slave population. Among the Africans themselves, tribal differences underlined by linguistic barriers continued to be prominent, with the result that different tribal groups such as the Kromanti (Akan) or Ibo plotted rebellion separately, excluding persons of other tribes. Thus, owing to this segmentation along cultural and tribal lines, slave rebellions failed to elicit sufficiently wide support to achieve their end [Smith, 11, 105-106].

In comparing slavery in Jamaica and among the Hausa, I noted that, while in Zaria there was no tradition of slave revolt, “In Jamaica, ... where the slaves occupied a far more unfavourable military situation, there is a long history of slave revolt and conspiracy” [11, 130], and stressed the contrast.

Whereas it was forbidden for a slave to bear arms in Jamaica, the soldiery and command of Zaria included slaves in all ranks. Whereas the period 1804-1900, for which the history of Zaria is known in detail, contains no instance of slave rebellion, the Caribbean colonists lived in a perpetual state of siege of their own manufacture with somewhat uneasy periods of truce between slave revolts [11, 146].

However, having set out to present “the entirely different picture of slavery which Smith must of necessity paint when the thesis of acculturation has begun to falter and pluralism has begun to overcome it” [Robotham 8, 130] only a year later, even though I never advanced any “thesis of acculturation” to begin with, Robotham cites my essay on “Slavery and Emancipation” as follows:

As is well known, in the British Caribbean colonies, under the rules that prohibited the evidence of slaves against free men in a court of law, the elaborate slave codes were ineffective as protection for the slaves, where the obligations of ownership burdened or obstructed the master or his agents. For this reason Jamaican slave codes are unacceptable guides to relations of master and slave which they attempted to define and redefine [Smith, 11, 124; Robotham, 8, 130].

Of this he says, “The reader here faces a thankless task: which Smith to believe?” [8, 130]. Predictably, he cuts the quote precisely where it contradicts his allegation by directing readers to my first essay for a fuller account of slavery in 1820:

For satisfactory data on this pattern it is therefore necessary to turn to old contemporary accounts of conditions in Jamaica. In an earlier paper I gave a summary of such accounts, and those interested in a fuller description are referred to that essay [Smith, 11, 124].

We are back to the game Robotham plays best, manipulating, truncating and inventing quotations. That being the case, since he says [Robotham,
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8, 130], “The reader here faces a thankless task: which Smith to believe?”, I can only respond by citing relevant passages in the first essay that he ignores.

To illustrate the reversal of my original account that he claims to find, Robotham [8, 131] cites another passage that mentions slave punishments and abuse without protection of law, which is best discussed at this point. The passage says,

Incentives to labour ranged from solitary confinement to the cart whip and the treadmill, and though the maximum number of lashes which could be inflicted by a master or his agent on a slave was regulated by statute, these and similar regulations appear to have had little effect [Smith, 11, 125; Robotham, 8, 131].

In the first essay I referred several times to Monk Lewis’s “reforms”, such as his prohibition of the cart whip, and to his indictment by the Trelawny Assize Court for inter alia advocating that slave evidence against whites should at least be heard [Smith, 11, 96, 97, 110-111, 114]. Discussing ‘dead-letter laws’ in Jamaica and St. Vincent, I pointed out that

These ‘dead-letter laws’ in the main relate directly to the relationships between masters and slaves, for example, sections of the various Consolidated Slave Acts... The legal inability of slaves to give evidence against free persons, white or coloured, rendered most provisions of the Consolidated Slave Acts and other ameliorative legislation nugatory from the start. As noted above, however, in the case of Monk Lewis, views on permitting slave evidence were strongly opposed by whites. Hence the paradoxical situation in which the ruling class rejected the only means of implementing legislation for which they themselves were responsible. To implement such legislation would require structural changes in the society, involving particularly the surrender of status privileges by that section of the population to which legislative power was entrusted. Thus the apparent paradox is resolved. Structural realities made fiction of the law [11,97].

Elsewhere I noted that

Slaves were subject to a white supervisor with wide authority and certain obligations. Legal definition of these obligations and limitations on the exercise of authority were not always exercised in practice.

Reprisals normally followed protests directed against superiors, whether slave or free [11, 110].

Evidently the contradictory accounts that Robotham claims to find in the two essays on this issue are of his own making.

Nonetheless, to illustrate his imaginary reversal of my views Robotham quotes two passages from the second essay that indicate how masters denied slaves education, marriage, and access to Christianity,
and represents them as "further contradiction of what he (I) wrote only a year before" [Robotham 8, 130].

In 1820 formal education and literacy were only available to slaves from missionaries. However,

All five accounts indicate antipathy among white planters to missionary activities among their slaves. So deeply rooted was this attitude to Christian proselytisation among the colonial whites that Bickell, an Anglican curate, based his advocacy of increased facilities for the Established Church in Jamaica on the grounds that “conversion” of the slaves would make them more tractable [Smith, 11, 94].

Under these circumstances, Christian proselytisation, whether by the owner, the Established Church, or other sects, made little headway... Baptism of slaves was not infrequent, but no formal marriages are reported by our sources... Marriage as a legal institution had no place in slave society for various reasons. As property, slaves were prohibited from forming legal relationships of marriage which would interfere with and restrict their owner’s property rights [11, 107].

Once again Robotham has either imagined or manufactured the contradictory accounts of Jamaican slavery he claims to find in these two essays by ignoring any passages in the first paper inconsistent with that conclusion. In like style he quotes the following remark from the second essay as another “contradiction” of my earlier account:

Whereas the obligations of guardianship stress adequate maintenance of the ward, the slave contributed largely to his own maintenance, even more so to that of his master [11, 125; Robotham 8, 131].

However, the account of the economic rights of slaves he quotes to introduce his catalogue of contradictions says,

From their provision grounds and stock rearing they (the slaves) supplied the master’s household requirements for payment at market rates [Robotham, 8, 129; Smith, 11, 104].

To demonstrate that the account of West Indian slavery in my comparison of slavery and emancipation in Jamaica and Hausa Zaria is “a complete reversal of... (my) 1952/53 position on slavery and acculturation”, Robotham [8, 131] cites my remarks that

In effect, the part played by the common institution of slavery in the differentiation of Jamaica and Zaria as societal types completely explains all differences of the institution in these two societies... For Hausa society as a whole, the function of slavery was integrative, and it operated as a channel of acculturation. For the Jamaicans it had an opposite function in that it provided a basis for the cultural and social differentiation of the society along plural lines [Smith, 11, 147; Robotham, 8, 131].
As if his point is obvious, instead of trying to substantiate it, Robotham flippantly repeats his allegation and presents the following mixture of spurious references and twisted snippets from my first essay.

Smith has transported us a long way here from those happy days of yester-year, when prosperous slaves, enjoying a wide variety of rights, vied with each other at evening parties, debating whether to marry whites or blacks, basking in the protection of the Consolidated Slave Acts. As is well known [8, 132].

In claiming that there was a definite and basic change in Smith’s assessment of Jamaican society during slavery between the two articles in 1952/53 and 1954. In the first article, acculturation prevails, pluralism is a sub-theme, in the second article the order was reversed [8, 132], Robotham is misleading, specious and mistaken, as shown above. At no point in either essay did acculturation “prevail” or provide my analytic framework. At no point do the accounts of Jamaican slavery I published in 1953 and 1954 diverge in detail. Instead, as we have seen, the second account rests heavily on the first paper which it cites for those “interested in a fuller description” [Smith, 11, 124]. Hence, as there is no such “change in Smith’s assessment of Jamaican society during slavery between the two articles in 1952/53 and 1954” as Robotham [8, 132] claims to find, we should not be surprised that his “explanations” of that illusory change are rather fanciful. I shall therefore deal briefly with the reasons he gives for that “change”.

CONCLUSION

According to Robotham,

Whereas in 1952 the (Jamaican/PNP) crisis left the acculturationist foundations of his (my) thought intact, pluralism only appearing as a sub-theme, the Grenada crisis was different. By Smith’s own account this had a very important effect.

“I had the chance to witness a state of political unrest marked by arson, periodic strikes and so forth; that experience suggested that Furnivall’s thesis of plural societies defined by dissensus and pregnant with conflict was highly relevant to the West Indies.” [Robotham 8, 140-141; Smith 11, xiii]

The sentence Robotham quotes also said that “this exploratory essay was written in 1952-53 during a field study of Grenada” [Smith 11, xiii]. More precisely, it was written in July 1953 at L’Esterre,
Carriacou [Smith 14, 111; 10, 6] after I had spent several months in Grenada and collected most of the data on its crisis for the account I wrote in 1961 [Smith 11, 262-303]. Unaware of these details, Robotham assumes that my first paper was written before my experience of Grenada’s crisis and the second paper after it. In fact both essays were written well after I had lived long enough in Grenada to absorb, document and understand its crisis; but neither was in the least affected by those events, nor by events in Jamaica, the U.S.A., Malaysia, the U.K., Moscow, Timbuktu or Wonderland.

Robotham’s second ‘explanation’ of the illusory change he claims to find in my thinking between 1952 and 1954 is “the anti-colonial struggle in general and the international class struggle in the centres of imperialism” [Robotham, 8, 139]. That, and the ‘Grenada crisis’,

When added to Jamaica from 1952 to 1955 when the Left, through the PEO, continued to pose a threat to the social order, helps to explain the change in his attitude and thinking evident in the 1954 essay [ibid.141].

In support of that absurdity Robotham cites such utterly irrelevant international developments of 1951-54 as the Korean War, McCarthyism, Aneurin Bevan’s bid for leadership of the British Labour Party, Vietnam’s revolt against French re-colonisation, the Mau Mau in Kenya, and the ‘Jamaica crisis’ of 1952 when the PNP expelled the ‘four Hs’ and amended its constitution to forestall their re-entry [8, 133-143], all of which were equally irrelevant to my preparation of these essays.

Precisely how or why analyses of historical data on Jamaican society in the early nineteenth century before and after emancipation, by myself or any other, could or should have been influenced by the current international, local and regional affairs that Robotham cites, I cannot imagine, since I find fatuous those basic axioms of “ideological analysis” that render such interpretations obvious to true believers and exclude all other possibilities. Surely an individual’s attempts at historical reconstructions so remote from contemporary international and local affairs can neither depend on nor benefit from his awareness of contemporary events.

Despite the disclaimer that it is not his “thesis that the line taken by M. G. Smith in his 1952/53 essay was motivated by developments in the PNP during those years” [8, 138], it is central to Robotham’s explanation of this imaginary change in my views of Jamaican slavery that my “involvement” [8, 133] in Jamaican affairs from 1952-54 somehow affected my “thinking”. By various irrelevant citations from the Daily Gleaner of September 1952 and an interview with Richard Hart, he seeks to persuade readers that not only was I aware, but some-
how ‘involved’ in the PNP’s expulsion of the ‘Four Hs’. Following his general method of ‘ideological analysis’, while Robotham accepts that “Smith was in Jamaica in late September, October and early November 1952” [8, 134], he curtly dismisses whatever else I say of my experience.

Since I was absent in London in March 1952 when it seems from his account that the PNP expelled the ‘Four Hs’, he asks rhetorically

Is it credible that M. G. Smith (by no means isolated from events in Jamaica while a student in London) “had no knowledge or means of knowledge” of these events and was therefore not open to being influenced by them in any way? [8, 136; Smith 14, 112].

Having been isolated from Jamaican affairs throughout World War II, and for years before and after my return to London in December 1950 from Nigeria, by 1952 I had long lost knowledge of and interest in Jamaican developments, and neither sought nor received accounts from home, West Indian newspapers, or listened to radio reports of local developments. Robotham’s claims that my first Caribbean essay used a framework of acculturation towards British culture and presented a different account of Jamaican slavery from the second having been shown to be false, the speculations and insinuations he makes to account for the imaginary reversal of my views are no less spurious than the allegations that generated them.

There are too many other baseless insinuations in Robotham’s essays concerning my attitudes, ‘mentality’ and so forth to deal with here. Fortunately, being irrelevant to such academic issues as the analytic framework and focus of my first two Caribbean essays, and given their character and source, they need no response. However, his insistence on an “acculturationist framework” in the 1820 paper and its subsequent replacement by “pluralism” has obliged me in reply to expose his ideological pretensions, his free way with quotations, conceptual confusions and odd scholarship, in order to show what has been obvious to everyone else for years, namely, that the plural framework was equally basic to my first and second Caribbean essays.

The most important lesson of this protracted unpleasant exchange is that students should never accept critiques or expositions without carefully checking the original texts themselves to assess the accuracy and adequacy of the commentary, whether that is presented as an ideological analysis or not.
REFERENCES


[5]________, The Folk Culture of Yucatan, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1941.


