

Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal

Volume 12

Issue 1 *An Other Moment: Un-Collapsing the Chinese Presence in the Caribbean*

Article 6

May 2015

“A Cloak That Looks like Help”: US Intervention and the Neoliberal Turn in Kerry Young’s *Pao*

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Recommended Citation

Wilson, Kristine A. (2015) “A Cloak That Looks like Help”: US Intervention and the Neoliberal Turn in Kerry Young’s *Pao*,” *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal*: Vol. 12 : Iss. 1 , Article 6.

Available at: <http://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/anthurium/vol12/iss1/6>

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The history of political violence in Jamaica dates at least as far back as the 1944 election, shortly after the formation of its two main political parties. However, the nation experienced unprecedented levels of violence between 1972 and 1980, during Michael Manley's first two terms as Prime Minister. Conditions became dire enough leading up to the 1976 election for Manley to declare a state of emergency, despite the potential consequences that the appearance of instability would have on foreign investment and tourism. In the run up to the 1980 elections, the escalating violence reached a climax; most estimates agree that well over 700 people lost their lives during this brief period.¹ These events are typically attributed to a combination of internal and external factors, including the history of political clientelism within Jamaica and the complex, dependent relationship between Jamaica's political economy and the international economic order. However, in his book *Jamaica: Struggle in the Periphery* (1982), Manley insists that the country's economic downturn and the inexplicable rise in violent crime were part of an orchestrated destabilization campaign emanating from the United States, in collusion with the opposition party. Manley claims, for example, that "the whole history of the escalating difficulty between the two [political] gangs reeks of provocation" (139) and he has "no doubt that the CIA was active in Jamaica [in 1976] and was working through its own agents to destabilise [his government]" (140). These assertions have been somewhat controversial. The US government has consistently denied the allegations; moreover, the covert nature of destabilization strategies makes it nearly impossible to produce concrete proof.

But the circumstantial evidence is highly suggestive: inaccurate and inflammatory stories in the US media eroded tourism and foreign investment; investment in the bauxite industry—a point of contention between the US and Manley's administration—took a significant downturn; and gunmen somehow acquired automatic weapons and began using them indiscriminately. Rumors of a CIA presence abounded,² fueled by the public claims of ex-CIA operative Philip

¹ The exact number of political casualties in the months leading up to the 1980 elections is unknown, but estimates range from eight hundred to a thousand (Sives, 2002, 78). Scholars such as Thomas D'Agostino (2009, 114) and Carlene Edie (1986, 88) follow the generally-accepted figure of around 800, while Manley puts the figure at around seven hundred fifty (194). Amanda Sives (2010) notes that the difficulty in ascertaining a precise figure comes from the underreporting of attacks "due to fear of partisan police" and the difficulty of interpreting statistical reports, which do not include a separate category for political murders to distinguish them from other murders (107-108). The official police estimate of the 1980 murder rate is 889—an increase of 153% from the previous year (Sives, 2010, 107). To further put this figure into perspective, the number of murders in 1980 alone is roughly equivalent to the number of violent deaths in the entire decade of 1960-1970 (Lacey, 1977, 3).

² For instance, Sives (2010, 102) and L. Alan Eyre (1984, 28) note the prevalence of graffiti with slogans such as "Out with SPYaga" and "No CIAga here," referring to JLP leader Edward Seaga's rumored collusion with US covert operations. In *Envisioning Caribbean Futures*, Brian Meeks (2007) describes the "whiff of civil war in the air" during the late 1970s (2). He mentions

Agee that appeared to confirm this speculation.³ Meanwhile, members of the local bourgeoisie emigrated to the US and Canada in droves, taking their foreign exchange with them. Suspicions of destabilization in Jamaica were not unfounded in the Cold War context that saw other Caribbean and Latin American nations undergo similar interventionist tactics.⁴ Manley's adoption of a non-capitalist "third path" for development and his opening of diplomatic relations with Cuba caused ripples of fear that Jamaica—a nation of geographic proximity to the US—would fall into Communist clutches. In a time when the polarization of capitalism and communism dominated political discourse, the local capitalist class and the US administration clearly perceived Manley's "third path" of democratic socialism as a threat.

Kerry Young's (2011) novel *Pao* sympathizes with the view that US interests, along with local elites, colluded to undermine Manley's government by weakening the local economy, exaggerating and misrepresenting Manley's socialist ties to Cuba, and inciting widespread political violence. The protagonist in *Pao* links these events to past forms of imperialism by rehearsing anti-imperial rhetoric imported from Mao's China, but his revolutionary values are often at odds with his capitalist ambitions. While Pao attempts to negotiate a "third path" of his own by balancing these contradictory impulses, he ultimately succumbs to the apparent inevitability of the neoliberal turn. The Manley period marks a pivotal transition in Jamaican political economy, from a time of radical experimentation and political possibility, to one of resignation to the global economic order. Through Pao's ambivalence and dubious character, the novel critiques Jamaican political culture, in particular the external constraints imposed by foreign dependence and the internal constraints arising from patron clientelism and the self-interest of the middle classes. Although *Pao* does not offer a particular prescription for renewal or reform, I contend that it does help to diagnose some of the structural problems that have stymied such action.

Pao chronicles modern Jamaican history, from the protagonist Yang Pao's arrival in Kingston during the 1938 labor strikes to the contemporary neoliberal era, ending in the early 1990s. More than a decade after Pao's father Yang Tzu is killed in the Chinese Civil War, the remaining members of the Yang family are

widespread "rumours of subversion" and quotes Bob Marley's song *Rat Race*: "Rasta don't work for no CIA" (2).

³ See, for example, Manley (236), Kaufman (1985, 118), and Payne (1994, 54). Phillip Agee, a disaffected former CIA operative, visited Jamaica in 1976 and spoke at several meetings in association with the Jamaican Council for Human Rights, where he delineated the CIA's likely involvement in a destabilization campaign (Payne, 1994, 54). Agee was a whistle-blower who penned the 1975 CIA exposé *Inside the Company*. He later founded the *Covert Action Informational Bulletin* (a.k.a., *Covert Action Quarterly*).

⁴ Manley draws extensive parallels between Chilean destabilization and events in Jamaica during his administration (e.g., 138, 172, and 223-237).

summoned to Jamaica by an old family friend, Zhang Xiuquan. Zhang himself immigrated to Jamaica some years before, at the behest of the Kingston Chinatown Committee, who sought a skilled soldier to protect their interests.⁵ Pao eventually takes over Zhang's role as "godfather" of the Chinese community, earning the family's livelihood by collecting protection money from local business owners. While Zhang was content to offer protection in exchange for room and board alone, Pao has greater ambitions. He expands his protection racket into an enterprise comprising both black market and legitimate business activities. Even his personal relationships are deeply entrenched in his business dealings. His closest childhood friends become his henchmen; he meets his true love, Gloria, when she hires him to protect the brothel she operates; and he acquires his wife, Fay Wong, in an attempt to legitimize his own business through association with her father, a prominent businessman and owner of a lucrative grocery chain. Although devoted to quoting Zhang's revolutionary anti-imperial propaganda and Sun-Tzu's *The Art of War*, Pao adopts these principles superficially, not as honor codes but as ways to justify scheming his way through both his professional and personal life. The novel follows Pao's various exploits and misadventures through the early days of Independence, the Manley administration and political violence of the 1970s, and the neoliberal turn of the 1980s under Edward Seaga.

JAMAICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Jamaica's two main political parties, the People's National Party (PNP) and Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) were formed in 1938 and 1943, respectively, in the wake of massive, island-wide labor strikes. Despite ideological differences, the parties were similar in that they developed populist platforms, relied on strong, central leadership and established clientelist networks to gain and maintain party loyalty.⁶ Antagonism between the parties, especially during election years,

⁵ Zhang arrives in Kingston in 1912, just prior to the 1918 Anti-Chinese Riots, during which the predominately black underclass burned and looted Chinese shops when false rumors spread that a Chinese shopkeeper had killed a Creole policeman. For a fuller discussion of the 1918 riots, see Howard Johnson's (1982) article "The Anti-Chinese Riots of 1918 in Jamaica." Similar riots broke out during the 1938 labor strikes and again in the 1960s. However, as Johnson notes, the 1918 attacks were largely racially motivated, while the 1938 riots were not limited to Chinese business people but also targeted other prosperous ethnic minorities (19). Terry Lacey makes a similar distinction with regard to the 1965 Anti-Chinese riots (14; 85-87). The 1965 riots precipitated a much larger outbreak of political violence in 1966-67.

⁶ Carl Stone (1980) defines clientelism, or "machine politics," as "the exchange of economic and social favors to a poor and socially fragmented population in exchange for party support" (91). In order to maintain power, the state depends on the capitalist class for financial and political support, as well as for its help maintaining stability by placating the mass of middle- and lower-class constituents with state resources in exchange for votes. The state therefore provides

increased as these clientelist networks became more entrenched. Until the 1960s, however, the vast majority of political violence involved assault or stoning, not gunfire. Early incidents of political violence were primarily instigated by attempts to control the streets in order to prevent opposition party meetings. They occurred sporadically and on a limited scale (Sives, 2002, 73). Nonetheless, political scientist Trevor Munroe and historian Arnold Bertram (2006) characterize these early altercations as having sown “the seeds of distrust and hatred [that] led to the emergence of partisan violence as a permanent feature of the political process” (126). Interparty rivalries based on mutual antipathy were only exacerbated by party clientelism. As Carl Stone (1986) observes,

Even where no benefits are actually received, the hope of obtaining benefits among the desperately poor and socially disadvantaged who make up a disproportionate number of the party faithful often becomes sufficient reason to militantly identify with the most extreme action (violent or otherwise) that is likely to assist the party’s chances of winning an election. (56)

When the competition for resources within an economy of scarcity does lead to violence, it in turn strengthens party identification and interparty hostilities. For the hard core supporters, party loyalty is highly personal and emotional. Stone (1980) attributes “combative, aggressive and violent defense of the party and its leaders against real or imagined threats from the opposition” to the emotional intensity derived from strong partisan socialization (99-100).

The combination of clientelist distribution of scarce resources and strong party socialization led to a then-unprecedented level of political violence in the 1960s. While earlier outbreaks of political violence were more connected to political identity than material benefits, this changed in the 1960s with the politicization of space in Kingston’s poorest neighborhoods (Sives, 2002, 73-74). Ghetto constituencies were born with the construction of the Tivoli Gardens housing estate in West Kingston, originally planned by the PNP but taken over by the JLP after the 1962 election. As a JLP project, the jobs associated with the construction of Tivoli Gardens—as well as the housing units it contained—were allocated to JLP supporters, causing resentment from “PNP supporters who had seen their homes destroyed [within the shantytown torn down for new construction], were not allocated housing, and were denied employment on the

economic incentives for the capitalists, promotions and perquisites for the bureaucrats and various material incentives for other brokers, who in turn provide much-needed resources such as jobs, housing, goods and social services to the masses to secure their party loyalty.

construction site” (Sives, 2002, 74-75).⁷ Thus, for the first time in the 1967 election, political patronage was rolled out on a large scale and space was physically divided according to party affiliation. Unsurprisingly, then, the 1966-67 election campaign also signaled the change in political violence. Rather than sporadic conflicts resulting in street fights or injury from sticks or thrown objects, suddenly “gangs, guns, and bombs were in widespread use, and politicians as well as rival political supporters were targeted until, finally, a state of emergency was declared in the area” (Sives, 2002, 75).⁸ By the mid-1970s, these ghetto constituencies had increased in number and had evolved into garrison communities, where armed gangs used fear and intimidation to secure the loyalty of residents and committed criminal acts of violence against the opposition party.⁹

The evolution of patron clientelism in Kingston is reflected in *Pao*. Zhang is initially headhunted by the Chinatown business association in order to provide protection to local shopkeepers whose businesses were threatened by racially-motivated violence. He is called “Uncle” by the Chinatown residents, “because he is not your papa but him look after you... [Y]u can go to your uncle with your troubles and he will do right by yu. Them know Uncle Zhang tough, but them also know him fair” (Young 31). Zhang does not exploit the community he serves; he offers his services in exchange for room and board, and does not expect further compensation. He only asks, when the time comes, that his employers provide passage and a larger home so that he can bring Pao and his family to Kingston. Zhang later grooms Pao to take over as “godfather” of Chinatown upon his retirement, but by that time the political and social context has changed.

In 1944, after the advent of the political parties and the instantiation of patron-clientelism, the role of “Uncle” has shifted to the charismatic party leaders. Amanda Sives (2002) argues that “[p]olitical parties were seen as extended families” with patriarchal leaders who would tend to their constituents’ needs (74). Pao recognizes this shift when he remarks, “the Chinatown Committee not looking after us like the way they do with Zhang in the beginning. Chin say that was a long time ago and a different sort of arrangement. Now we have to make our own way” (Young 53). Pao still runs protection and gambling rackets, as well as a black market operation selling illegally-obtained US Navy surplus, but his activities are no longer sanctioned (or legitimized) by the Chinatown Committee.

⁷ In response, the PNP built its own housing estate, Arnett Gardens (also known as Concrete Jungle), in the early 1970s, which further politicized Kingston’s urban geography.

⁸ This occurred in the context of escalating interparty hostilities in the mid-1960s, following future JLP leader Edward Seaga’s incendiary 1965 proclamation, “If [the PNP] think that they are bad, I can bring the crowds of West Kingston. We can deal with them in any way, at any time. It will be fire for fire, blood for blood” (qtd. in Beckford, 2002).

⁹ For a more detailed discussion of the criminal composition of political gangs, as well as the degree to which they acted autonomously or on orders from political bosses, see Chapter 3 in Amanda Sives’ (2010) *Elections, Violence and the Democratic Process in Jamaica, 1944-2007*.

The perception the local residents have of him likewise changes; instead of a respected and trusted uncle, he is viewed as a gangster. Zhang remarks, “Things different now...People think different ‘bout you protecting them. They think different ‘bout favour they ask you. You not Uncle no more. You Mr. Fixit. In the old days they happy you call in to share a bowl of tea. Now you need an appointment so they can clear all their fancy guests out of the way before you turn up” (Young 145). Indeed, much of his wife’s shame and hatred of Pao stems from her perception of him as a thug and criminal.

The changing political landscape also affects Pao’s position in the community, ultimately rendering his role obsolete as the violence shifts from race- and class-motivated attacks to politically-oriented attacks. As one of Pao’s business partners comments, “right now [1964] a man can get shot just for wearing the wrong colour shirt in the wrong part of town. So maybe this be a warning to you to throw out every green [JLP] or orange [PNP] shirt you got” (Young 140). Pao initially forestalls the encroachment of Louis DeFreitas, a local hoodlum and “rude boy,” into his territory when DeFreitas’s gang begins selling drugs and weapons in Chinatown. However, as Kingston’s geography becomes more politicized, it is only a matter of time before Pao’s protection racket becomes obsolete, to be replaced by the political posses led by “rude boys” such as DeFreitas. Pao warns his young brother-in-law, Kenneth Wong, not to get involved with DeFreitas: “DeFreitas busy talking politics now but him only a punk. Him don’t care ‘bout unemployment and education, him only interested in what advantage or money he can get outta a situation” (Young 158). Pao’s assessment of DeFreitas reflects the opportunism of both the political parties and the criminal class, who mutually benefit from their collusion. As the violence escalates in the 1960s and 1970s and the spatial configuration of Kingston neighborhoods becomes more politicized, Pao notices, “Chinatown was on the move. All these people I deal with all these years suddenly start take off for Canada or the US, and the ones that stay behind move uptown... Pretty soon, there was going to be nobody left in Chinatown to protect, because the people moving in didn’t need or want no protection from me. They got that all sorted out themselves” (Young 190). In other words, at this stage, the politically-divided posses have begun taking over the role of protection because the nature of violence has shifted.

MICHAEL MANLEY AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM

When the founding father of the PNP, Norman Manley, retired from politics in 1969, his charismatic son, Michael, assumed leadership of the party. Seeking to address the endemic problems of poverty and unemployment, he ran on a nationalist reform platform that garnered wide popular appeal. His landslide

victory in the 1972 election “reflected the broad range of support which Manley received...and could only be interpreted as a decisive mandate for change” (Payne and Sutton, 2001, 68). Manley’s plans for economic, political, and social reform grew out of four intertwining principles. He aimed to reduce foreign control over Jamaican politics and economics, create a more egalitarian society that celebrated both individual and collective worth, increase political participation and decrease political manipulation, and promote Jamaican heritage and culture (Manley 39). This vision for change included progressive measures such as improvements to health care, expansion of education to all social classes, work programs to alleviate unemployment, land reforms, and the redistribution of wealth. Concurrent with these goals, he aimed to transition Jamaica from a dependent capitalist economy to a more self-sufficient mixed economy (Payne and Sutton 68-69).

Manley initiatives for change and his insistence that “better mus’ come” are reflected in *Pao*. Invigorated by Manley’s campaign speeches, Pao compares Manley’s anti-imperialism with Zhang’s stories of revolutionary China. Although a Chinese transplant himself, Pao identifies strongly as a Jamaican and swells with national pride upon Manley’s victory:

...we wanted social justice and fair distribution of wealth, and we wanted to ease out from under so much foreign control.... When Michael Manley win the general election in 1972 I celebrate more than I done for Independence ten years earlier, because this time...[i]t was like we really going do something. We really going make it different, like Manley say, we were going to “walk through the world on our feet and not on our knees.” (Young 199-200)

Pao’s sentiments speak to Manley’s wide appeal to the masses. They also demonstrate the intertwined relationship between the four principles of Manley’s reform program. By inspiring the public with the goal of escaping economic bondage—an incentive particularly appealing to the masses of people living in poverty—he forged a spirit of national and individual pride that, in turn, made people feel a part of the political process.

As part of his plan to decrease foreign dependence, Manley pursued a policy of non-alignment with the world’s superpowers. This policy extended from his identification of Jamaica with the developing world. As political economists Anthony Payne and Paul Sutton note, “he attached considerable weight to the development of a global Third World economic strategy designed to increase collective self-reliance” (70). In addition to proposing Third World coalitions, he

ardently supported liberation movements, particularly in Africa.¹⁰ In some ways, this commitment to non-alignment was also a nationalistic statement—an assertion that even small, peripheral countries can be international actors. The policy of non-alignment converged with what Manley called the “third path,” a development strategy that rejected the Cold War capitalist-Communist binary in favor of a mixed economy. While Manley sought to reduce foreign dependence and control through “direct state activity,” at the same time, his government respected private property rights and “also had a firm and unwavering commitment to the preservation and development of a strong private sector” (Manley 43). Manley posited the “third path,” as a practical and viable alternative to the Puerto Rican (neo-colonial) and Cuban (Communist) models. He characterized it as “a Jamaican way rooted in our political experience and values, capable of providing an economic base to our political independence and capable of some measure of social justice for the people” (Manley 38). Moreover, the “third path” exemplifies Manley’s anti-imperial politics in as much as it represents a tacit refusal to align with either superpower (US or USSR) and to forge an independent development path.

US INTERVENTION AND DESTABILIZATION

In 1974, the PNP rebranded Manley’s original four principles under the banner of “democratic socialism” and began taking measures to resuscitate the economy, which had taken a heavy hit during the oil crisis and global recession the previous year. As a strategy for raising the GDP, Manley implemented a production levy on bauxite, the mineral used to make aluminum, which effectively replaced previous agreements with the North American bauxite and alumina companies (Payne and Sutton 73). The government also sought to gain majority control in the companies’ local operations and led the initiative to form the International Bauxite Association (IBA), a global collective of producers. These measures outraged the companies, who challenged the legality of the levy by filing suit with the World Bank and pushing the US administration to intervene. They also moved some their production facilities to other parts of the world in retaliation, but eventually accommodated themselves to the necessity of accepting the levy. Although the matter was resolved, it put Manley’s government on the radar of the US administration (Payne and Sutton 73-74).

Manley’s leading role in the formation of the IBA, an OPEC-inspired consortium of Third World bauxite producers, coupled with his suggestively-named “democratic socialism,” raised concerns that quickly escalated into full-

¹⁰ Manley’s support of Cuban involvement in Angola would later become a point of contention with Kissinger and the US administration. See Manley’s *Jamaica: Struggle in the Periphery* for a full account (113-117).

blown Communist hysteria. Moreover, Manley's friendly relations with (and proximity to) Cuba and his non-capitalist "third path" to development caused fear and suspicion amongst the Jamaican bourgeoisie and US investors. The opposition JLP party was quick to latch onto and exploit this fear. According to a London newspaper report during the 1976 election, Seaga and Manley agreed "that fear of communism is one of the main factors in Jamaica's economic recession, but Mr. Seaga says the fear is soundly based on the PNP's close ties with Cuba while Mr. Manley says it is just opposition propaganda" ("Mr. Manley," par. 12). Rumors of Manley's Communist ties stemmed from his policy of non-alignment and his failure to denounce communism and Castro outright; instead, he insisted that communism was a non-issue in Jamaica and assured his constituents that "[t]here is absolutely no danger whatever, no possibility whatever, of Jamaica becoming a Communist state. It is not part of our stream of historical experience" (qtd. in "Mr. Manley," par. 10). However, the distinction between Manley's democratic socialism and Castro's communism remained blurry for some.

This conflation was clearly exploited and exacerbated by the JLP. Manley places blame squarely with opposition leader Edward Seaga, accusing him in no uncertain terms of red-baiting, an old tactic of the JLP (Manley 131).¹¹ In response to the PNP's non-capitalist stance, the JLP positioned itself as "pro-Western and pro-capitalist and aligned itself with the US government... Political divisions within Jamaica became identifiably linked to the international competition between capitalism and socialism" (Edie, 1991, 90). This positioning clearly displays a deft manipulation of rhetoric, whereby "pro-Western and pro-capitalist" are misleadingly set in opposition to the agenda of Manley and the PNP. As Amanda Sives (2002) notes, Manley sought to make Jamaica more self-reliant and to develop relations with the South, "but at no time did he call for the state to expropriate private property, and indeed he expressed a desire to work with local capitalists to develop the economy" (77). The distinction here is that Manley favored non-alignment, a development path that was neither capitalist nor Communist. Nevertheless, the JLP's declaration of a pro-capitalist position

¹¹ The PNP has always held Fabian socialist views, but denounced Marxist-Leninist communism. Despite this distinction, the JLP's platform in 1949 was centered on an anti-Communist crusade against the PNP, which resulted in the PNP moderating its platform and ejecting leftist, Marxist elements from the party. This included disbanding its union affiliate, the TUC (Munroe and Bertram, 125-128). Norman Manley denounced fears of a Communist uprising as early as 1937, when the unions began to consolidate but before the formation of the political parties. He stated that "[communism] has for the past hundred years been a bogey used by big capitalists to frighten people, and this talk of communism in Jamaica has no meaning" (qtd. in Hart, 1999, 33). In response to media accusations regarding his supposed Communist leanings in the 1970s, Michael Manley's own response strongly echoed his father's statement.

shaped the perception that Manley's relations with socialist regimes precluded a good relationship with capitalist countries.

Pao doesn't condemn Manley for his support of Cuba, but he is concerned about the effect it will have on Jamaica's relationship with the US and how that will affect his business. He seems torn between his ideological position and his practical concerns. He agrees that Manley was right to support Cuba's involvement in the Angolan liberation movement, for example, but adds, "now they cut off our US aid we practically bankrupt overnight, and now we going have to go borrow a whole ton of money" (Young 213). Pao goes on to describe the escalation in violence after Manley's concession to the IMF, which he simultaneously connects with the economic disaster wrought by structural adjustment and with "a CIA operation to destabilise the country because America didn't want another Cuba right there in their back yard" (Young 213). Moreover, he expresses a personal concern over the increasing violence, which is "costing [him] money" because it interferes with his delivery of foodstuffs to customers across town (Young 212). While Pao oversimplifies the economics by suggesting that the denial of US aid over the Angola issue forced Manley to deal with the IMF, this scene plays out the repercussions of independent political action within the context of foreign economic dependency.¹² It directly addresses US anxiety over Jamaica's relationship with Cuba and demonstrates the devastating consequences of reactive US and IMF interventionist strategies on local business owners and the underclasses.

The local and foreign press played an important role in spreading the misperception that the PNP was aligning itself with Cuba and other Communist regimes. Manley claims that the most influential (and notoriously conservative) newspaper in Jamaica, the *Gleaner* began an attack against his administration during the first term. Comparing it to the infamous *El Mercurio* in Chile, Manley claims that "[b]y 1975 the *Gleaner* was on the warpath. It had not yet attained the levels of orchestrated venom which were to mark its performance later, but it was already sounding a strident cacophony of abuse and sowing the seeds of discord

¹² In *Jamaica: Struggle in the Periphery*, Manley recounts an informal meeting in 1976 during which Henry Kissinger asked that Jamaica "at least remain neutral on the subject of the Cuban army presence in Angola" (116). Manley said they would consider their position carefully and let him know their decision, and Kissinger immediately brought up Jamaica's recent proposal regarding \$100m in trade credits (116). To Manley, this shift in the conversation (from Angola to the trade credits) suggested that the trade credits were contingent upon his decision regarding Angola. When Manley ultimately supported Cuba's presence in Angola, he "never heard another word about the hundred million dollar trade credit" (117). (For Manley's entire account of the Angola issue, see pp. 113-117.) However, it's doubtful that these trade credits would have sufficiently bolstered Jamaican industry to prevent Manley seeking recourse with the IMF, as Pao seems to suggest. For a full account of the economic and political factors influencing the IMF decision, see Chapter 11 in *Jamaica: Struggle in the Periphery*.

and suspicion wherever it could” (134). Meanwhile, he continues, “the foreign press began to campaign against us as well... Every sort of claptrap and lie about Cuba’s presence in Jamaica was trotted out.... During 1976, there was a mounting flood of American articles against Jamaica” (Manley 136). These claims have been substantiated by several independent studies of Jamaican and North American news media during the 1976 and 1980 elections.¹³

This negative press, in turn, instigated a flood of emigration, the flight of local and foreign capital, and a marked downturn in tourism.¹⁴ In *Pao*, the protagonist mentions that the negative press is indirectly affecting his business supplying hotels and restaurants with black market Navy surplus, since “every week now the orders getting less and less what with the slump in the tourist trade that the American newspapers cause” (Young 212). Later, when visiting an American hotelier who is attempting to blackmail him, Pao notices that “Sam hotel got everything, except one thing. It not got no paying guests because the American media so busy frightening all of them good US citizens with they stories of...violence and mayhem in Jamaica that none of them want to set foot down here no more” (Young 224). He considers this ironic, since the violence is primarily contained in Kingston and “don’t involve no tourists anyway, and certainly not in Negril or Ocho Rios which is where all the tourist traffic at” (Young 224). His assessment thus undermines the inflammatory news stories that exaggerate and misrepresent actual conditions on the island. Pao’s difficulty transporting his black market navy surplus, moreover, signals Jamaica’s heavy dependence on imported goods due to issues such as colonial underdevelopment and balance of trade difficulties resulting from externally-imposed structural adjustment.

The reaction of the local capitalist and middle classes to the increasing political violence and Communist hysteria in the press during the mid- to late-seventies ranged from fear to flight to sabotage. Active divestment contributed to the economic destabilization of the country during Manley’s administration; for

¹³ For data and analysis about the *Gleaner*’s anti-Manley bias, see Marlene Cuthbert’s (1976) article “Some Observations on the Role of Mass Media in the Recent Socio-Political Development of Jamaica” and John Lent’s (1982) “Mass Media and Socialist Governments in the Commonwealth Caribbean.” Cuthbert (1979) conducts a similar study of the foreign press in “News Selections and News Values: Jamaica in the Foreign Press.” See also Jack Johnson-Hill’s (1981) analysis in “Unheard Voices: Jamaica’s Struggle and the Multinational Media.”

¹⁴ A study by Marlene Cuthbert and Vernone Sparkes (1978), comparing US and Canadian news media and tourism rates, suggests that the news media alone might not have accounted for the drop in tourism from the US. Their data seems to suggest that the role of travel agents as mediators might have influenced their clients’ susceptibility to influence by negative press (218). Nevertheless, a number of contemporary news outlets and other sources—including the Jamaican Tourist Board—perceived and reported a connection between negative press and a 30% drop in US tourists from 1974-76.

example, Payne (1994) notes that the local capitalist class damaged the economy by “smuggling wealth out of the island to Miami and other parts of the North American continent” (55). The titular character in *Pao* sees this increase in emigration and the flight of capital as a business opportunity. After his business partner, Finley, points out that hordes of people are “jumping on a flight to Miami since [Manley] introduce all these changes and especially since the property tax” (200), Pao concocts a money smuggling scheme that he sees as mutually beneficial to himself and the émigrés. He uses his legitimate business concerns—the supermarket chains he runs and the transnational cosmetics company he founded—to shift foreign capital at a profit:

We passing the US dollars through the cosmetics company and the Jamaican dollars through the supermarkets... Everything turn out fine because I was selling US dollars at ten times the official exchange rate to people who would rather have US \$100,000 in an American bank account than a million Jamaican dollars in Kingston. Especially since constant devaluation mean that the Jamaican dollar worth less and less. (202)

In other words, Pao pays lip service to Manley’s anti-imperialism while at the same time indirectly supporting US destabilization efforts by actively undermining the Jamaican economy with illegal foreign exchange. As if to compensate for his black market activities, he puts extra money in the church’s collection box for poor relief. Pao apparently thinks that he can balance his unethical business practices with good works, as if balancing numbers in a ledger, but his contributions are clearly a hollow attempt to assuage his conscience.

NEGOTIATING THE NEOLIBERAL TURN

By the end of the 1970s, global recession and the flight of local and foreign capital had crippled the Jamaican economy and thwarted Manley’s plans for social and economic reform. Jamaican voters, exhausted by the worsening economy and the bloody political campaign, elected Edward Seaga and the JLP to power in 1980. Seaga was popularly perceived as a “fixer,” a businessman who might be able to leverage his local and foreign connections in order to alleviate Jamaica’s significant economic problems (Sives, 2010, 115; Payne and Sutton 104). Indeed, almost immediately after his election, foreign aid from the United States resumed, as Seaga wholeheartedly embraced the resumption of “friendly” relations with the US vis-à-vis a commitment to its neoliberal economic imperative. Payne and Sutton characterize Seaga’s Jamaica as “probably the most committed client state of the US government in the Caribbean area” (107). In addition to public shows of his alliance with Reagan, such as his visit to the White House in 1981, Seaga’s involvement was integral to US-Caribbean trade

agreements such as the Caribbean Basin Initiative. Pao seems ambivalent about the changes he sees in the wake of the 1980 election: “even though the foreign investment good... Is the foreigners in charge of our destiny, because it...them deciding what going get cultivated or developed, and them deciding the time frame, and them deciding how much investment them putting in for how much profit them taking out” (Young 242). He characterizes Jamaica’s neoliberal turn as a more insidious form of imperialism, in that it hides its own agenda. Comparing the neoliberal era with the British imperialism of the past, he remarks that “in the old days everybody could see that it was the British that was responsible for the slavery, whereas... [n]owadays it hard to see how we being controlled by foreign powers because *this new kind of imperialism come wrapped in a cloak that look like help*” (242, my emphasis). Pao refers here to the structural adjustment programs imposed by the IMF as conditions for economic aid, which Seaga had readily accepted.

Seaga’s election and Jamaica’s neoliberal turn marked the apparent death (or, at least, crippling) of leftist politics in Jamaica. Since resuming power in 1989, the PNP has accommodated itself to the global economic order and embraced a neoliberal development path, despite evidence that free market capitalism puts small economies at a competitive disadvantage and exacerbates their foreign dependence.¹⁵ This accommodation, according to Brian Meeks among others, is due in part to a weakening of the political left once the leftist elements of the PNP had “dissolved, migrated, or converted to the new paradigm” (8), as well as to a failure of imagination on the part of intellectuals and policymakers (9). Upon his reelection in 1989, Manley himself had accepted the neoliberal development path as the only viable option; his new strategy “endorsed and deepened the liberal market-oriented economic politics of the outgoing Seaga regime” (Payne and Sutton 14). Anthony Payne (1992) characterizes Manley’s third-term strategy as “born of an inability to think of any other viable alternative in the context of the ascendancy of neo-liberal ideas about the international political economy” (473). Manley’s acceptance of neoliberal economics appears to have been one of resignation, rather than ideological endorsement.

Pao reflects on the character of Manley’s post-1989 government and the waning of emancipatory politics with a capitulation similar to Manley’s:

I start to think that maybe it wasn’t just from Manley that the fire had gone. It was gone outta me as well.... It was almost like the whole island move into a different phase of life. We live through our turbulent youth and come out the other side. And that other side was a place of acceptance. Not a place of contentment, it didn’t feel as happy or as comfortable as

¹⁵ See, for example, Payne and Sutton (105, 124) and Meeks (9, 63).

that. Maybe it was a place of resignation. We become resigned to how things was, and we just decide to try do our best with that. (Young 265)

Pao's tone is calm and understated, and thereby unsettling. US influence in the Caribbean, and specifically the neoliberal imperative, had become so pervasive that it "was able to lay down the parameters of what could be done and even *what could be articulated*" (Payne and Sutton 12, my emphasis). While Brian Meeks points to fissures that have disrupted the rhetoric of neoliberalism, he notes that, despite some evidence of progressive political thinking from the ground up, Jamaican economic policies continue to conform to the status quo.

While Pao appears, throughout the novel, to embrace revolutionary ideals and to support Manley's program of social reform, his self-serving actions belie these ideals. Ultimately, Pao is a capitalist whose opportunism more closely resembles Seaga's strategy than Manley's. Payne and Sutton refer to Seaga as "cunning and resourceful" in his attempts to balance internal and external constraints (126), noting that his shifting alliances led some of his critics to label him a conman (125). These same traits are integral to Pao's character throughout the novel, as he uses the principles from Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* to manipulate business and personal situations to his own advantage. At the end of the novel, however, Pao himself acknowledges that "maybe life not just a matter of strategy. Maybe it about something more than that...something different from just ducking and weaving and maneuvering" (Young 262). Ironically, his revelation comes too late. Pao behaves like a capitalist when the time for progressive politics is ripe. The neoliberal era seems to afford no room for the kind of benevolence he later proposes, and in fact calls for exactly the kind of self-interest he is supposedly ready to forsake. Pao's change of heart thus rings hollow and certainly does not suggest that he is prepared to lead the charge toward a better alternative. He only reevaluates his actions after he has successfully exploited Jamaica's political and economic instability to consolidate his personal wealth—and, conveniently, after his "fire has gone out."

Brian Meeks argues that, in order to imagine any other alternative, radical democratic transformation is required "involving all sectors of society in novel and critical ways in the direction and management of the state and economy" (63-64). While he lays out several key principles that would drive such a transformation, his proposal remains largely theoretical. Meeks's argument is important, however, inasmuch as it demonstrates that viable alternatives may exist that could lead to a renewal of emancipatory political praxis. While *Pao* ends on a note of resignation, we might see his daughter Esther as symbolic of hope for the future. As the product of capitalist Pao and Communist Gloria, Esther's forgiveness of her father's neglect, her intelligence, and her admirable character might imply that a new and better alternative can come out of these ideological

divisions. The novel ends after Esther's wedding and the birth of her child, perhaps suggesting that the renewal of alternatives is the task of future generations. This ambiguous ending is not exactly suggestive of hope, but neither does it foreclose on it.

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