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Book Review

[*Plantation Pedagogy: The Violence of Schooling Across Black and Indigenous Space*](#)

By Bayley J. Marquez

University of California Press, 2024

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In *Plantation Pedagogy*, Bayley J. Marquez offers a stunning account of the ways post-emancipation educational projects sought to teach Black and Indigenous students through pedagogies of settlement and slavery. Marquez tells an expansive story about what she calls plantation pedagogy—“a form of teaching that draws on human-space relations in an attempt to transform Black and Indigenous peoples as well as land”—which stretches impressively from focused accounts of individual schools like the Hampton Institute and the Carlisle Indian School to colonial schooling projects in Hawai‘i, the Philippines, Liberia, and elsewhere (4). Showing the reach of “the Hampton model” both nationally and across Pacific and Atlantic currents, Marquez emphasizes that schooling for Black and Indigenous students in North America was always bound up with schooling for Black and Indigenous students in other sites of US empire. The book enriches our understanding of schools like Hampton, tracing its connections to Hawai‘i and the Philippines not as an offhand point of fact, but as a central component to understanding the school’s reach and the transfer of plantation pedagogy to transnational schooling projects. Focusing on specific schools likewise allows Marquez to tell a broad and comparative history, and to argue that the late-nineteenth century push for education taught settlement and slavery through its very structure.

Discussing educational projects across plantation, reservation, and colonial contexts, Marquez offers a methodological critique. Adapting Audra Simpson’s notion of *ethnographic refusal* as a model for approaching colonial archives,¹ Marquez intentionally refuses to ventriloquize the voices of Black and Indigenous students in colonial boarding schools. This means that *Plantation Pedagogy* primarily focuses on institutional history—the teachers, administrators, reformers, and organizations who worked across these schools—rather than the experience of individual students them-

selves. Such an approach gives readers a broader understanding of the ways plantation pedagogy functioned across a variety of spaces and across time. Marquez's framing of refusal as an archival research methodology is an important one, and the book models caution when engaging with the stories of boarding school survivors.

Marquez's theorization of plantation pedagogy attends to the ways land theft—the transformation of Indigenous connections to homelands and nonhuman kin into property fit for white settlement, and the similar transformation of land into plantation economies—was inherently pedagogical. Connecting educational policies to land theft and the immobility of Black and Native peoples through the physical space of the plantation and the reservation, Marquez not only underscores the deep connections between school officials and politicians like Henry Dawes but also frames settlement and enslavement as pedagogical policies to begin with.

Chapter 1, “Plantation Pedagogy, Educative Space, and the Currents of Colonialism,” traces the geographic, environmental, architectural, and pedagogical through-lines of plantation and settlement at the Hampton Institute. Marquez historicizes Hampton's setting in the tidewater region of Virginia with its own histories of both plantation and settlement economies and lays bare the ways its educational mission drew explicitly from enslavement and anti-Indigeneity. The chapter focuses not just on the types of instruction available to Hampton's Black and Native students, but how the school was architecturally designed to teach relationships to place that mimicked slavery and settlement. Chapter 2, “Plantation Pedagogy on the Reservation,” extends this focus to similarly consider the geographies of the reservation as pedagogical space meant to instruct Native peoples' relationships to land through policies of allotment and “productive” use of space. Marquez offers a compelling reading of the ways plantation pedagogy on the reservation was rhetorically connected to, and yet simultaneously built in contrast with, the plantation.

In the next two chapters, Marquez considers the movement of plantation pedagogy offshore. “Pacific Currents: Island Plantations and Industrial Schooling” traces how white reformers enacted plantation pedagogy in both Hawai'i and the Philippines. Attending to the distinct histories of both sites of US empire, Marquez nevertheless emphasizes that educational projects in Hawai'i and at Hampton were always deeply entwined, and that this entanglement extended far beyond Samuel Chapman Armstrong's connections to Hawai'i. Although Marquez notes that tenets of plantation pedagogy like “proximity to whiteness” varied in the Philippines, for instance, where proximity to whiteness was not an immediate educational goal, she nonetheless considers how US-run Philippine schools built from models at Hampton and Carlisle. In “Atlantic Currents: Industrial Education and Anti-colonial Struggle in Africa,” Marquez turns across the Atlantic, focusing on the Booker Washington Institute of Liberia and considering not only how the Institute built from Hampton's and Tuskegee's models of agricultural and industrial education, but how the export of plantation pedagogy to Africa ironically circled back to slavery's origins, “creating a many-layered enmeshment of slavery and settlement” (107). Tracing these “currents

of colonialism,” Marquez’s attention to plantation pedagogy in Africa demonstrates “how education for slavery and education for settlement overlap and merge in new ways in this transferal of industrial schooling models back across the Atlantic” (107).

In Chapter 5, “‘Out from Cabin and Teepee’: Settlement, Slavery, and the Making of Domestic Space,” Marquez considers the gendered education of Black and Native students at Hampton, conceiving the cottage as pedagogic space to train students in domesticity. As in other chapters, while the narrative primarily centers on Hampton, Marquez notes where the cottage as pedagogic structure appeared in Liberia, Hawai‘i, and the Philippines. The book’s final two chapters consider how plantation pedagogy was disseminated beyond the schoolhouse itself. “Teachers of Teachers: The Expansion of Plantation Pedagogy through Teacher Training” focuses on teacher training programs at Hampton, Carlisle, and the Jeanes Fund supervisory teaching program, arguing that teacher training modeled proximity to whiteness even for Black and Native teachers. Chapter 7, “‘Better Land, Better Stock, Better People’: The School as Experiment Station and Laboratory,” focuses on agricultural experiment stations at boarding schools and at what would eventually become land grant universities in the aftermath of the Morrill Act. As Marquez’s attention to land and space makes clear throughout the book, education profoundly influenced not only students’ relationships to land, but land itself. Marquez thus considers the experiment station as an extension of plantation pedagogy and as central to the makings of land grant universities.

Expansive in scope, richly theorized, and deeply researched, *Plantation Pedagogy* is a welcome contribution to recent comparative work on US colonial and racialized education. While the book will most directly appeal to scholars working on the history of education, Black studies, and Native studies, Marquez’s theorization of the plantation across the US South, the reservation, the Philippines, Hawai‘i, and Liberia carefully models how all scholars can approach comparison without flattening local context.

Notes

¹ Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Duke University Press, 2014).