

ON GOOD BOOKS AND GOOD QUESTIONS,
REGARDLESS OF WHAT IS “COOL”
IN ATLANTIC HISTORIOGRAPHIES
(EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH
CENTURIES)

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Workshop of Revolution: Plebeian Buenos Aires and the Atlantic World, 1776–1810. By Lyman L. Johnson. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011. Pp. xiv + 410. \$25.95 paper. ISBN: 9780822349815.

Slavery, Freedom, and Abolition in Latin America and the Atlantic World. By Christopher Schmidt-Nowara. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011. Pp. xiii + 204. \$28.95 paper. ISBN: 9780826339041.

Domingos Álvarez, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World. By James H. Sweet. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011. Pp. xvii + 300. \$37.50 cloth. ISBN: 9780807834497.

Making a New World: Founding Capitalism in the Bajío and Spanish North America. By John Tutino. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011. Pp. x + 698. \$29.95 paper. ISBN: 9780822349891.

José Sánchez Espinoza ran a landholding empire in late eighteenth-century central and northern New Spain, specialized in crops and cattle to feed the mining towns and cities of the valley of Mexico, the Bajío, and Northern Mexico. He had tenants, slaves, and salaried workers to whom he advanced wages in produce. He was a ruthless entrepreneur who would manipulate the prices of crops, cut worker rations and wages, displace laborers, sell slaves, and marginalize his kin in an effort to pump up profits. He was also a devout priest who supported hospitals, nunneries, religious orders, and lay priests. Sánchez Espinoza was like his uncle, the priest Francisco de Espinoza y Bejarano, from whom he inherited estates in the Bajío and San Luis Potosí. We have often been told that capitalism was born out of the anxieties generated by notions of grace and salvation among the members of the European Reformed churches.¹ We have also been told that capitalism first flourished in the English Midlands in the mid-eighteenth century among middle-class dissenters: Unitarian and Deist entrepreneurs who transformed the new sciences of Newton and Bacon into machinery for industrial

1. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, ed. and trans. Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells (1905; New York: Penguin Books, 2002).

production.² But can one tell the story of the origins of capitalism from the perspective of the likes of Sánchez Espinoza?

In *Making a New World* John Tutino does just that, locating the origins of capitalism in the Bajío and Northern Mexico, which specialized in the production of a critical staple in early modern globalization: silver. Beginning in the sixteenth century, silver opened Ming and Qing China to European merchants and globalized the world. The Bajío was at the center of these global changes. Silver was extracted and refined in shafts and patios that employed tens of thousands of laborers in mining towns like Guanajuato, San Luis Potosí, Zacatecas, and Parral. The farmers and textile workers of Querétaro, San Miguel de Allende, and countless other towns fed and clothed these workers. The mines and refining centers, in turn, required animals to move mills that crushed ores and pumped water out of the ever-deeper shafts. Mules moved commodities across rugged terrain; the grease from cattle oiled the mills and lighted the shafts; sheep produced the wool for the textile mills. The Bajío enjoyed dozens of well-capitalized banks to keep the economy going; endowments and gifts willed to nunneries and religious orders over generations transformed the church into a large urban property owner and the main source of credit and lending.

This new world of piety and cutthroat entrepreneurship developed in lands that had been in the hands of nomadic indigenous groups for centuries, the Chichimecas. Facing the onslaught, the Chichimecas either withdrew further north or were incorporated into the emerging economy as slave laborers. The conquered land then received thousands of natives from Central Mexico, who arrived as allies of the Spaniards; they were Otomis and Tlaxcalans. Otomis created the first sixteenth-century town in the Bajío, called Querétaro, which they owned both politically and literally. Spaniards followed and tried to wrestle Querétaro away from the Otomis, but because the crown had introduced laws that allowed the natives to litigate Spanish encroachments to a halt, Spaniards failed to take over and instead moved on to found new towns elsewhere.

Both Spaniards and Otomis turned to African slaves to keep up with the labor demands in mines, mills, and households. As the global appetite for silver grew, the Mexican frontier kept moving north, west, and east into San Luis Potosí, Parral, Nuevo México, Sinaloa, California, Nuevo León, and Texas. With every push into new lands, an endless flow of Chichimeca and Apache captives streamed in to provide a ready labor source for cattle ranches, mines, and households. In the Bajío, race and gender played their typical roles of justifying hierarchies and securing order. Yet gender and race never became insurmountable gatekeepers to upward social mobility. The Bajío and Northern Mexico were fluid social spaces where rugged newcomers, including slaves, struggled over lands and riches. Piety and religion helped everyone cope with diseases, losses, and sudden changes in fortune, blessing and sanctifying their pursuits.

2. Robert Schofield, *The Lunar Society of Birmingham: A Social History of Provincial Science and Industry in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963); Margaret C. Jacob and Larry Stewart, *Practical Matter: Newton's Science in the Service of Industry and Empire, 1687–1851* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

But how could an economy like that of the Bajío and Northern Mexico, with African slaves, Apache *jenízaros* (captives given to households as servants), Pueblo captives, convent oblates, *criados* (servants brought up within households), and hacienda peons, be “capitalist”? From a Marxian perspective, to call this world capitalist is a contradiction in terms. Capitalism is a mode of production in which laborers earn wages. Although the Bajío relied largely on wage labor, it also witnessed a multitude of forms of forced labor. To talk of the Bajío as capitalist, one has to redefine capitalism as a blend of several economies coexisting at once, one in which both subsistence and commercial economies are subordinated to predatory capital. This is the way French historian Fernand Braudel defined capitalism for the Mediterranean world.

In his remarkable and thick book, John Tutino recreates the “capitalist” world of the Bajío and Northern Mexico in the terms suggested by Braudel and manages to turn the dominant narrative of the origins of modernity on its head: Northern Mexico, not the English Midlands, begot modernity. Tutino places the Bajío right at the center of the origins of capitalism, which he associates with the early modern globalization brought about by the Chinese demand for American silver. In the process, Tutino brings detail and texture into the social history of the region. He breathes life into the Bajío as he fills this space with cunning Otomi urban dwellers who never gave up their special legal privileges; farsighted nuns who transformed their convents into powerful lending agencies; speculating priest-landlords who artificially kept the prices of wheat up when there was famine and drought; assertive slaves for hire who accumulated enough capital to buy slaves of their own; quick-to-riot mestizo mine workers who expected high wages and low sales taxes; enterprising single females and widows who ran businesses; ruthless conquistadors who launched expeditions into the borderlands and enslaved Chichimecas, Pueblos, Cados, and Apaches; Franciscans and Jesuits who were utterly determined to build vast networks of missions even if it meant martyrdom; and myriad Marian cults that filled every spiritual and healing need. Tutino offers a painstaking description (which is curiously based mostly on secondary sources, not archival work) of the peoples and economies of the Bajío as they moved into the north, in fits and starts, from the sixteenth to the late eighteenth centuries.

In the wake of the Age of Revolutions this world would disappear, and with it the memory of its role in the rise of capitalist modernity. As the region experienced unprecedented growth in the eighteenth century and the demand for silver in China plateaued, predator capitalists in Northern Mexico squeezed rural and urban workers alike. The Bourbon monarchy added to the inner tensions by attacking the Catholic Church and its cults, both in Spain and the Indies, and by increasing taxation in the New World. In the wake of the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767, for example, riots broke out in mining towns and were brutally put down. The process came to a head when Napoleon invaded Spain in 1808. The political vacuum it created unleashed the pent-up fury of the working classes in the Bajío, who under the leadership of priests like Miguel Hidalgo and José María Morelos turned against the regime, damaging mines and mills with the same zest with which they smashed long-standing racial and social hierarchies. The Bajío became a new Haiti: an engine of “capitalist,” global modernity literally destroyed

by the working poor. Tutino promises to tell this story of the undoing of the Bajío in a companion volume.

For all the exhilarating novelty of his account of the origins of capitalist modernity, Tutino's is not a book on Mexico in the Atlantic. Tutino's Bajío is rather claustrophobic, even hermetic. All the historical actors in the book are incestuously connected to the region, rarely stepping into the rest of New Spain, let alone the world. China and the Pacific appear in the book largely as a backdrop to explain the rise of silver mining. We learn nothing about the thousands of *indios chinos*, Filipino slaves, who once lived in the cities and haciendas Tutino explores.³ The Africa of Tutino's *bozales* (slaves born in Africa) is as fleeting as is his China. Tutino's Northern Mexico is not "borderlands," either; it is the "frontier" of Frederick Turner's yesteryears. Tutino's Bajío lacks entirely in dynamic, *sovereign* indigenous polities of Apaches, Comanches, and Chichimecas with geopolitical visions of their own.⁴ There is no awareness that a good number of the captive Apaches of the eighteenth century, for example, wound up in Cuba building Havana's fortifications.⁵ Tutino is not interested in the connective tissue that tied the Bajío to the larger Atlantic basin. The *consulados* of Mexico and Veracruz rarely show up. The complex networks of *montañeses* (Cantabrian) and Basque merchants linking Querétaro, Zacatecas, Parral, and Guanajuato to either Mexico City or Jalapa and Veracruz go unmentioned.⁶ There is no attention to any indigenous, black, creole, or religious networks that connected the Bajío to Seville or Madrid, even though all these groups had peregrinating *procuradores* (legal representatives) constantly crisscrossing the ocean in search of alms, justice, profits, or souls.⁷

And yet, despite this rather terse listing of shortcomings, I still think that Tutino's is a great book. It is not clear whether attention to transatlantic networks and connections would have made his argument any more compelling. There is nothing inherently wrong with Tutino's approach; an Atlantic narrative that emphasizes networks and connections, including the ceaseless movements of commodities, peoples, institutions, and ideas across the boundaries of traditional historiographies, is no guarantee of novel insight.⁸ And that is the point of my review: neither the number of archives one visits, nor the methodological scale of one's point of view is as important as the nature of the questions and the answers one gives.

3. See Tatiana Seijas, "Transpacific Servitude: The Asian Slaves of Mexico, 1580–1700" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2008).

4. See, for example, Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); and Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

5. See Paul Conrad, "Captive Fates: Displaced American Indians in Southwestern America, Mexico, and Cuba" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2011).

6. On these networks, see Barbara H. Stein and Stanley J. Stein, *Edge of Crisis: War and Trade in the Spanish Atlantic, 1789–1808* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

7. On indigenous *procuradores* and transatlantic networks, see Jose Carlos de la Puente, "Into the Heart of the Empire: Indian Journeys to the Habsburg Royal Court" (PhD diss., Texas Christian University, 2010).

8. See Cañizares-Esguerra and Ben Breen, "Hybrid Atlantics: Future Directions for the History of the Atlantic World," *History Compass*, forthcoming, 2013.

Take for example the case of the city of Buenos Aires in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a thriving port city and a contested borderland, whose development is recounted in Lyman L. Johnson's *Workshop of Revolution*. Buenos Aires had long been a backwater of the Spanish Empire, a port for smuggling silver from the Peruvian highlands. As the Bourbons reformed the empire, they designated Buenos Aires as a port from which silver could be shipped to Spain. They also understood its potential as an entrepôt. Yet the shift from Callao to Buenos Aires had unintended consequences, for Buenos Aires became part of the trading networks of the Portuguese and British Atlantics.⁹ The proximity to Brazil, for example, transformed Buenos Aires into a typical early-modern African Atlantic city: thousands of slaves brought by Luso-African traders from Congo and Angola streamed into the port to be sold into farms, shops, and households.¹⁰ Most of these slaves, in turn, worked as slaves for hire in the urban trades, which allowed them to save and buy their own freedom, creating a growing free colored community. Slowly Buenos Aires began to resemble Rio and Bahia.¹¹ The connection to the British Atlantic, on the other hand, opened the port to British commodities and thus to organized smuggling into the Peruvian highlands. Since Portugal and Britain were allies, Buenos Aires also became a geopolitical prize. In 1806 and 1807 the British Navy twice invaded the city and twice was driven out by local militias. These militias, in turn, declared Buenos Aires autonomous from the Spanish monarchy in 1809. In 1810 the city became an independent republic, going against the will of most city *juntas* in the viceroyalty, which declared autonomy but also pledged allegiance to the king.

Given that in the wake of Napoleon's 1808 invasion of Spain most cities throughout Spanish America chose autonomy as well as a lasting alliance to the dethroned king, Ferdinand VII of Spain, Buenos Aires's decision to opt for independence remains puzzling. Historians have sought to explain Buenos Aires's precocious radicalism by understanding the city within a conceptual framework of the "Atlantic," a perspective that emphasizes transnational connections and that seeks answers beyond developments in the city itself. Buenos Aires allegedly chose secession as a result of the breakdown of the imperial political economy (merchants tired of their subordination to less powerful competing imperial mercantile networks that restricted the flow of capital and free trade) and the ideological upheavals brought about by the American and French Revolutions (new ideas of equality, republican virtue, and citizenship).¹² But clearly, this large Atlantic

9. Jeremy Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

10. On the Luso-African South Atlantic slave trade, see Roquinaldo Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Atlantic World: Angola and Brazil during the Era of the Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, *O trato dos viventes: Formação do Brasil no Atlântico Sul, séculos XVI e XVII* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2000); Mariana P. Candido, *An African Slaving Port and the Atlantic World: Benguela and Its Hinterland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

11. One of the earliest studies is George Reid Andrews, *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires, 1800–1900* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980).

12. See, for example, Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic*.

perspective is not sufficient; a great many other more established Atlantic cities in the Americas, including Spanish holdings as well as those in Brazil, did not break against monarchy and empire. In fact, cities such as Havana that witnessed economic and cultural transformations similar to those in Buenos Aires, unleashed by the Atlantic slave trade and British mercantile networks, remained resolutely within the Spanish Empire.

To explain Buenos Aires's decision to become an independent republic, perhaps what is needed is less a sweeping Atlantic perspective than a more in-depth look into the social history of the city, and this is precisely what Johnson offers in *Workshop of Revolution*. Johnson focuses on the communities of artisans in the late eighteenth century. Surprisingly, as the trades of Buenos Aires boomed, artisans were unable to establish the traditional guilds and corporate hierarchies one would have expected. The key to this mystery is that artisans themselves turned to the burgeoning market of African slaves to buy "apprentices." The apprentices in fact were slaves for hire who would learn the skills and peddle the trades of their masters. Since the Laws of the Indies gave slaves the chance to purchase their freedom, slaves for hire would quickly gain manumission with the proceeds of their trades, establishing a growing community of skilled free colored laborers. *Castas* (mixed-race peoples) from the interior of the Viceroyalty of La Plata also arrived in large numbers (as did foreigners) to a city that grew almost threefold in three decades, from twenty-five thousand inhabitants in 1776 to sixty thousand in 1810. When some artisans sought to create guilds to ban the emerging competition of the slaves for hire as well as skilled free colored and *casta* laborers, they failed. Through litigation, blacks, *pardos* (mulattoes), and *castas* blocked these efforts and even created their own guilds. The absence of a corporate structure of guilds did away with most formal hierarchies of labor.

The city government did not contribute to establishing hierarchies through residential segregation. Slaves, free colored laborers, *castas*, and foreign master artisans all lived and worked in close quarters, frequented the same *pulquerias* and neighborhoods, and even slept in the same rooms (as many were single). Moreover, the economy did not reward master artisans in luxury trades; in fact, the better wages accrued to lower-tier outside trades (carpentry, bricklaying). Slavery, space, and the urban economy all paradoxically and counterintuitively worked to create a labor market that erased traditional hierarchies. The lack of formal structures that could have provided a corporate defense of labor rights contributed to declining absolute wages relative to inflation, at a time when the economy was growing. By the early nineteenth century, Buenos Aires had become a city with low tolerance for sharp-edged hierarchies but with laborers who aspired to some measure of corporate protection against inflation.

When in 1806 the viceroy and the Spanish elites fled before an impending British naval invasion, city authorities turned to the unruly laborers to form militias. The militias not only offered workers higher wages but also a substitute for the discipline and corporate identity of guilds and *cofradías* (religious brotherhoods). Laborers turned en masse to the militias. The militias, in turn, radicalized the populace against the Spanish authorities, who had chosen to flee, and conferred onto laborers a common plebeian identity. A *porteño pueblo* was thus born. The

city would no longer heed the calls of either monarchy or empire. Yet the city would also sow the kernel of Argentina's future dependencies: as laborers no longer worked in trades, Buenos Aires began to purchase British commodities for everyday needs.

Johnson offers an extraordinarily close look at every aspect of the life of artisans and laborers in Buenos Aires, from types of dwellings and shop culture to forms of leisure and sociability. To be sure, his city is one nestled within the Atlantic. So Johnson explores, for example, migrant inflows and outflows as well as the impact of the French Revolution in the 1780s, when the authorities fearfully identified and prosecuted conspiracies of slaves inflamed by ideas of freedom. He also links changes in wages and prices to cycles of international warfare and geopolitics. Yet Johnson's is not a history of transoceanic networks cutting across imperial boundaries, be they Spanish, Portuguese, British, French, Angolan, or Congolese. His is a rather traditional archive-based urban history, methodologically unexciting. And yet I praise his book, for Johnson offers tantalizingly novel perspectives on long-lasting historiographical puzzles. Methodology and sources often get in the way of most scholars' visions, when in fact they ought to be means in order to answer questions. Both Tutino and Johnson show that in-depth local history can alter our understanding of much larger processes. Is it possible to do the opposite? Can one look at the Atlantic basin as one's main frame of reference and alter interpretations of local histories? James Sweet's *Domingos Álvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World* is important precisely because it manages to do just that.

Sweet traces the story of one Domingos Álvares, an African healer from Naogon, a town in the Mahi region (more specifically Angoli-Cové, present-day Benin), an area lying between the expanding kingdom of Dahomey to the south and a raiding kingdom of Òyó to the north. Domingos, who had many of his teeth filed, ears and nose pierced, and skin tattooed, was most likely a Yoruba priest to the *vodun* (power deity) Sakpata, originator of plagues like smallpox. As disease and contagion spread to the south, Sakpata terrified Agaja, king of Dahomey, for what appeared to be the deity's relentless retaliatory powers against Dahomey's ruthless expansionist policies. In the 1720s, Dahomey witnessed waves of crippling smallpox outbreaks. King Agaja victimized Domingos, together with most Sakpata priests, and sold him into slavery to Portuguese traders in the port of Jakin (next to Ouidah). Around 1730 Domingos arrived in the Brazilian province of Pernambuco, where, in the declining port city of Recife, he was sold to financially strapped sugar plantations, first to the *engenho* Tapirema, where he lived for three years cutting cane (which from a Mahi male's perspective was women's work), and later to Casa Forte, where he worked for three more years as an itinerant healer. Domingos visited plantations for a fee to benefit his new master, Jacinto de Freitas. As he moved around curing slaves, Domingos encountered in Pernambuco a world of Central African medicine practiced by *bozales*, and Africanized Christian healings practiced by Portuguese Catholic priests, among others. In Casa Forte, Domingos grew restive and demanded greater freedom to go gather plants. When Freitas denied him this privilege, Domingos unleashed some of the wrath of his *feiticeiro* (expert on the preternatural) power on Freitas, who

grew ill. As a consequence of his retaliatory spiritual power, Domingos then was thrown in jail for several months before being shipped to Rio de Janeiro to be sold. Like Agaja, king of Dahomey, Freitas's fear drove him to exile the Sakpata priest.

In Rio, Manuel Pereira da Fonseca purchased Domingos to cure his wife; she quickly recovered but soon grew ill again. Within months, Domingos was again sold, this time to José Cardoso de Almeida, who immediately understood Domingos's enormous economic potential and let him freely peddle his trade in the city. In less than a year, Domingos not only accumulated enough savings to buy his liberty but also set up four healing centers, where he gave healing advice to the ill and the needy. This extraordinarily successful religious entrepreneur soon attracted the attention of the authorities, for Domingos no longer came under the protection of a master who might have fended off the prying Inquisition. Perversely, freedom proved his undoing. In 1742 the Inquisition had him imprisoned and shipped to Lisbon to be tried.

After endless inquiries that left a huge file, including detailed accounts of torture and the oral testimony of more than fifty witnesses (market women, slaves, sugar planters, priests, ships' captains, soldiers, merchants, and housewives) from Africa, Brazil, and Iberia, Domingos was condemned in 1744 to exile in the town of Castro Marim, in southern Portugal. Once in Castro Marim, Domingos moved around trying to make a living as a treasure hunter and clairvoyant. He was tried again in Évora a few years later, after it became clear that he had continued his healing practices in rural Portugal. Domingos's paper trail disappears in 1750.

As he pieces together Domingos's itinerant life, Sweet offers insights on every aspect of African Atlantic slavery: the social history of warfare and captivity in West Africa; the movement from the interior to ports in the Bight of Benin; the Middle Passage aboard Portuguese slavers; life in sugar plantations in Pernambuco; and the urban experience in Recife, Rio, and Lisbon. By paying careful attention to the testimony of African witnesses and Fon-Gbe terms in the Inquisition file, Sweet manages to reconstruct the history of Dahomian imperial expansion in Angoli-Cové in the first half of the eighteenth century. He also reconstructs the social history of slavery in the cities of Recife and Rio. Sweet demonstrates the enormous spiritual power that Domingos wielded everywhere: Dahomey, the sugar mills near Recife, Rio, and southern Portugal. Sweet's account vividly shows the freedoms and constraints of slaves for hire in rural and urban Brazil. In Rio, Domingos became one of the most successful entrepreneurs. In one year as peddler of healing cures, for example, Domingos not only paid the required fees to his owner Almeida, but he also bought his own manumission (at a highly inflated price) and purchased a plot and a house in Gloria, in the outskirts of Rio, to establish a Sakpata Yoruban *terreiro* (a space for worship).

Sweet's contribution to the literature is profound as he brings Africa to the center of an Atlantic historiography, which has traditionally integrated Africa from the perspective of the Americas.¹³ Sweet does the opposite: he integrates

13. The literature is large and growing; see, for example, Stuart B. Schwartz, "Cantos and Quilombos: A Hausa Rebellion in Bahia, 1814," in *Slaves, Subjects, and Subversives: Blacks in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Jane Landers and Barry M. Robinson, 247–272 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press,

the history of the Americas into the history of West Africa.¹⁴ Suspicious of the category of cultural hybridity and creolization, Sweet puts African religions, not Christianity, at the very center of the history of Pernambuco and Rio. Likewise, Sweet transforms our understanding of eighteenth-century Dahomey, Òyó, Mahi, and Ouida by looking at the social history of healing in Rio. In short, he digs out of the archives of the Portuguese Inquisition enough evidence to offer a new account of the history of precolonial West Africa, Brazil, and Portugal. This is an extraordinary accomplishment.

It should be clear that one can analyze Atlantic history by inserting the local into grand, new global narratives (Tutino and Johnson), or the global into revised, new accounts of the local (Sweet); either way, if done well, the historiography stands to gain. There is, however, room for myriad other perspectives. Christopher Schmidt-Nowara's *Slavery, Freedom, and Abolition in Latin America and the Atlantic World* offers a sweeping vista of both slavery and abolitionism in the Americas (Spanish, Portuguese, British, and French). His work is a synthesis of the most recent literature, including his own contributions to the history of abolitionism in the nineteenth-century second Spanish Empire.¹⁵

Schmidt-Nowara organizes his review with a comparative perspective in mind. His account seems to confirm Frank Tannenbaum's early twentieth-century thesis: the legal culture of the Iberian Catholic empires allowed slaves to gain somewhat greater social mobility than in the British and French Atlantics.¹⁶ The law of the Siete Partidas permitted slaves the right to buy their freedom. More important, the state (particularly through clerical bureaucracies) reined in the authority of slave owners.¹⁷ The latter did not enjoy the same absolute power over slaves as did, say, planters in the French and British Caribbean. Manumission through self-purchase happened most often in urban settings, where households (including slave households) chose slaves as a preferred investment. The institution of slave for hire secured all households steady incomes, but it also allowed slaves to accumulate savings (as in the case of Domingos) and gain manumission as the law required.¹⁸

2006); Jane Landers, "Cimarrón and Citizen: African Ethnicity, Corporate Identity, and the Evolution of Free Black Towns in the Spanish Circum-Caribbean," in *Slaves, Subjects, and Subversives*, 111–145; Rosanne Marion Adderly, "New Negroes from Africa": *Slave Trade Abolition and Free African Settlement in the Nineteenth-Century Caribbean* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); Mariza de Carvalho Soares, "From Gbe to Yoruba: Ethnic Changes within the Mina Nation in Rio de Janeiro," in *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World*, ed. Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, 231–247 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Alexander X. Byrd, "Eboe, Country, Nation, and Gustavus Vassa's *Interesting Narrative*," *William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (2006): 123–148.

14. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Matt Childs, and James Sidbury, eds., *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), seeks to do the same.

15. Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, *Empire and Antislavery: Spain, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, 1833–1874* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999).

16. Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1926).

17. See also Herman L. Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico: Absolutism, Christianity, and Afro-Creole Consciousness, 1570–1640* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003); Javier Villa-Flores, "To Lose One's Soul: Blasphemy and Slavery in New Spain, 1596–1669," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 82, no. 3 (2002): 435–468.

18. On this topic, see also Zephyr L. Frank, *Dutra's World: Wealth and Family in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004); Rafael de Bivar Marquese, "A dinâmica

Cities all over Spanish and Portuguese America witnessed the growth of large free colored populations. The strong presence of the Catholic Church also created institutions of slave sociability outside the control of masters: *cabildos de nación* (African ethnic associations) and *cofradías* in which forms of African religiosity thrived.¹⁹ Even societies with very large numbers of slaves, like Cuba and Brazil, never quite resembled the slaving societies the French and the British established in the Caribbean. Slaves in the Iberian Atlantic more readily found in armies and militias ways to gain both freedom and upward social mobility. In the case of Brazil, for example, regiments of slaves fought on the side of the Portuguese against the Dutch in Angola and the Congo. Some of the leaders of these armies were awarded honors and even became titled nobles.²⁰ Slaves also found easier ways of establishing maroon communities, which multiplied all over the Spanish and Portuguese Americas (to be sure, the British also had their share in Jamaica, Guyana, and British Honduras, and the French in San Domingue). These communities proved resilient to military attacks and often extracted peace treaties from the Portuguese and Spanish authorities. Many would become incorporated towns with special legal rights, not unlike those enjoyed by the Republic of Indians, the parallel polity created by the crown in the sixteenth century to protect the natives from the Republic of Spaniards. So in addition to the Spanish and Indian Republics, a third Republic of Blacks slowly emerged in the countryside, a republic that actively engaged in litigation and sent legal representatives to Madrid with *memoriales* for the king.²¹ Finally, racial mixing between blacks, whites, and Indians occurred more frequently in the Iberian Atlantic (large mixed-race communities, to be sure, also emerged throughout the British and French Atlantics). When the wars of independence forced all parties to recruit slaves for their armies, the institution of slavery crumbled. This happened in most of Spanish America in the 1810s and 1820s and in Cuba and Puerto Rico in the 1860s through the 1880s.²²

da escravidão no Brasil: Resistência, tráfico negreiro e alforrias, séculos XVII a XIX," *Novos Estudos* 74 (2006): 107–123, and Lyman L. Johnson, "Manumission in Colonial Buenos Aires, 1776–1810," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 59 (1979): 258–279; Andréa Lisly Gonçalves, "Alforrias resultantes da troca de cativos (Comarca de Ouro Preto, século XIX)," in *Termo da Mariana: História e documentação*, ed. Andréa Lisly Gonçalves and Ronaldo Polito de Oliveira (Mariana, Brazil: Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto, 2004), 47–55.

19. This topic is broached well in João José Reis, *Death Is a Festival: Funeral Rites and Rebellion in Nineteenth-Century Brazil*, translated by H. Sabrina Gledhill (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Elizabeth W. Kiddy, *Blacks of the Rosary: Memory and History in Minas Gerais, Brazil* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005); Nicole von Germeten, *Black Blood Brothers: Confraternities and Social Mobility for Afro-Mexicans* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006).

20. On this topic, see Hendrik Kraay, "Arming Slaves in Brazil from the Seventeenth Century to the Nineteenth Century," in *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age*, ed. Christopher Leslie Brown and Philip D. Morgan (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 146–179; Hebe Mattos, "Black Troops' and Hierarchies of Color in the Portuguese Atlantic World: The Case of Henrique Dias and His Black Regiment," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 45, no. 1 (2008): 6–69; and Francis A. Dutra, "A Hard-Fought Battle for Recognition: Manuel Gonçalves Doria, First Afro-Brazilian to Become a Knight of Santiago," *The Americas* 56, no. 1 (1999): 91–113.

21. On this topic, see Landers, "Cimarrón and Citizen."

22. Peter Blanchard, *Under the Flags of Freedom: Slave Soldiers and the Wars of Independence in Spanish South America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008); Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868–1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

In every case, the societies that emerged consciously embraced discourses of racial harmony and sought to blur sharp distinctions between blacks and whites.²³ Not so in the British and French Atlantics. During the Revolutionary War in the thirteen colonies in the 1770s, settlers and British royalists recruited black slaves, which caused thousands of slaves to gain their freedom; most, however, followed the British and migrated to Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone.²⁴ In the French Caribbean, on the other hand, the opposite happened. The French Revolution and interimperial wars abruptly put an end to the slave regime in San Domingue, and the Republic of Haiti was born, with no room for whites.²⁵ Tannenbaum would not have taken issue with Schmidt-Nowara's comparative portrayal of Atlantic slaveries.²⁶

Schmidt-Nowara goes beyond comparison and unearths hitherto unnoticed entanglements. He persuasively shows, for example, that in the late eighteenth century the British and the Spanish sought to imitate each other. In the British Atlantic, masters had no counterbalancing institutions to rein them in. Planters did not allow missionaries to convert and educate slaves on their plantations. In the wake of the wars of independence, however, the British public turned aggressively against slavery largely in protest against what they perceived to be the unfettered tyrannical power of New World planters, including those in the recently created United States. Abolitionism emerged partly as a moral, religious crusade against the effeminate and degenerate American planter. This crusade was joined by the British government, which embarked on a self-conscious attempt in the Caribbean to imitate the Spanish on how to curtail the tyrannical power of masters. The reverse was also true. The Spanish monarchy, for example, sought to imitate the extractive models of the British and the French in the Caribbean, and thus it afforded Cuban planters greater commercial freedom to import slaves.²⁷

The quality of historical scholarship does not necessarily lie in the nature of a methodological approach. It lies in the nature of the questions asked and the cogency and power of the answers given. All four books reviewed here are exceptional on both counts. I have paid little attention to the authors' methodologies and sources on the assumption that no amount of documentation and methodological sophistication can ever make a book *good*. I have rather focused on

23. On this, see Marixa Lasso, *Myths of Harmony: Race and Republicanism during the Age of Revolution, Colombia, 1795–1831* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007); and Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*.

24. Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and Their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006).

25. Jeremy D. Popkin, *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004).

26. On Tannenbaum and his persistent relevance, see the various essays in "Forum: What Can Frank Tannenbaum Still Teach Us about the Law of Slavery?," *Law and History Review* 22 (2004): 339–389, by Alejandro de la Fuente, María Elena Díaz, and Christopher Schmidt-Nowara. Curiously, in this forum, Schmidt-Nowara remains rather critical of De la Fuente's attempts to salvage Tannenbaum.

27. On these processes of imperial cross-imitation, see also the work of Gabriel Paquette, *Enlightenment, Governance, and Reform in Spain and Its Empire, 1759–1808* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). On the sweeping postrevolutionary British critique of American slavery and American plantations and the rise of abolitionism, see Jack P. Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

the questions that guided the authors' research. Throughout I have made their questions explicit even when the authors themselves, writing to specialized audiences, have not. This essay might strike many as a mere sequence of entertaining stories culled from the books and tied together by transitional sentences. And yet, theory and literary criticism have made us aware that, ultimately, stories *are* analysis. My careful evocation of the worlds that animate the books under review is itself a way of teasing out the complex and unexpected ways that labor, gender, slavery, and religion in the colonial Americas intersected. It is my hope that this reconstruction of historical narratives illustrates the cumulative effect these works can have on the vibrant questions that now guide our research in Atlantic historiographies.