

The Creation of the British Atlantic World. *Edited by Carole Shammas and Elizabeth Mancke.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005. vi + 400 pp. Illustrations, tables, notes, index. Cloth, \$52.00. ISBN: 0-801-88039-4.

Reviewed by Matthew Mulcahy

Atlantic history is in vogue these days, and this collection celebrates one of the scholars responsible for the blossoming of the field, Jack P. Greene. Greene helped found the Atlantic History Program at Johns Hopkins University in the early 1970s, and his extraordinary scholarship has ranged widely across time and space in its exploration of the social, political, economic, and cultural development of the British Atlantic world and the revolution that splintered that world in the 1770s and 1780s. The essays in this volume—written by historians who have worked with Greene in one capacity or another, mostly as students at Hopkins—pay tribute to Greene’s breadth of vision and highlight the insights that can be gained from an Atlantic perspective.

As coeditor Carole Shammas notes in her introduction, compared to older imperial histories that discussed overseas expansion and colonization, Atlantic history “carries fewer presuppositions about cultural hierarchies and displays more openness to multi-directional effects” (p. 2). Atlantic historians stress the extent to which the British Atlantic world was shaped by participants on the periphery as well as in the core; its development reflected the interactions and conflicts between Europeans, Africans, and Native Americans in the new physical and social environments in which they found themselves, as well the interests and actions of British policymakers, producers, and consumers. Analyzing such issues and evaluating shifting relations between individual colonies, Britain, and other parts of the Atlantic basin is a difficult task, a point almost universally acknowledged by those who do “Atlantic history.” Such difficulties may help explain why many practitioners—including several in this volume—employ a microhistory approach; focusing on small and specific events and individuals provides a foundation for exploring bigger questions and issues.

The book is divided into three sections. In the first, “Transatlantic Subjects,” James Horn and Philip Morgan compare the migration patterns and experiences of the 1.4 million European and 2.7 million African migrants who crossed the Atlantic to British America between 1500 and 1820; Joyce Chaplin calls attention to the understudied subject of Indian slavery and its devastating impact on Indian communities; Mark Thompson explores the theoretical foundations for English claims to land in the Delaware Valley during a 1634 voyage by Thomas Yong; David

Barry Gaspar recounts a fascinating case of several captured Cape Verdians who sought, and gained, freedom by declaring their identity as Portuguese subjects; and Ray Kea narrates the story of an enslaved Catholic African woman who is manumitted on the Danish island of St. Thomas, joins the Moravians, and ultimately petitions the Danish queen in an effort to win support for the Moravian mission. In the second section, “Transatlantic Connections,” April Hatfield highlights the important role that mariners played in trading news and information, as well as carrying goods, around the seventeenth-century Atlantic world; William Offutt argues that during the second half of the seventeenth century English common law displaced a more diverse set of legal systems that colonists had employed in earlier decades; Avihu Zakai complicates the cultural and intellectual relationship between Europe and the colonies by highlighting Jonathan Edwards’s rejection of metropolitan culture (in the form of Enlightenment rationalism), the influence of Edwards’s writings on European evangelicals, and his role in the creation of a distinct American Protestantism; and Wolfgang Splitter examines the difficulties encountered by German Lutherans who sought to impose European notions of “order, ordination, and subordination” in pluralistic and individualistic eighteenth-century Pennsylvania (p. 233).

The final section, “Imperial Visions and Transatlantic Revisions,” contains four essays: Elizabeth Mancke traces the role of chartered enterprises in British colonization efforts and the “near abandonment” of such enterprises by the end of the seventeenth century in response to growing concerns about issues of crown lands, governance structures, and relations with outsiders in various colonies (p. 260); Robert Olwell follows a collection of seeds from East Florida to Kew Gardens as a means of exploring conflicting attitudes about empire in the second half of the eighteenth century; John Crowley explores the rise of topographic painting in the second half of the eighteenth century and suggests that such paintings helped Britons identify and legitimize their expanding empire; and Karin Wulf employs Deborah Norris Logan’s early-nineteenth-century writings about her family history to analyze the continuing importance of lineage and connections in an era that emphasized democracy and individualism.

All the essays in the collection are of high quality. None explicitly focuses on what might be considered more traditional business or economic history issues—there are no essays detailing the activities of merchants and shopkeepers or examining transatlantic trade or domestic production. Hatfield’s smart piece is the closest to such concerns. She rightly notes that we know more about mariners in the Atlantic world during the eighteenth century, but that their importance in disseminating information, economic and otherwise, among colonists was greater in the seventeenth century, before newspapers existed in the colonies and when sailors spent more time in specific ports. Several other articles address economic issues in one form or another.

Horn and Morgan's excellent essay pulls together the two distinct literatures on European and African migration, and argues that while "economic vicissitudes in Europe and perceived opportunities in America" help explain the movement of people, the "enormous and continuing demand for field laborers in the plantation colonies" was the key factor pulling both poor whites and enslaved Africans across the Atlantic (p. 25). The valuable trade links between Britain and Portugal is central to Gaspar's story of the repatriation of Cape Verdians: Antiguan officials knew well that maintaining good relations with Portugal was important for "preserving and enhancing the development of the British Atlantic economy" (p. 113). Offutt and Mancke's fine pieces emphasize the legal and political contexts for economic developments in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Overall, these essays cover a wide range of topics, time periods, and places—indeed, some expand beyond the Atlantic to discuss developments in Australia and India—but together they highlight some of the complex relationships that linked Britain and its Atlantic colonies in the early modern period.

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