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Introduction: The Making and Unmaking of an Atlantic World

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Abstract and Keywords

Beginning in the fifteenth century, people, plants, pathogens, and animals — began to move regularly back and forth. As connections and exchanges deepened and intensified, many new societies, polities, and cultures arose, particularly in the Americas that were destroyed. This book describes, explains, and contextualizes these path-breaking developments from the late fifteenth century conquests of Native American populations (in North America) and the contribution to the Atlantic trading world that flourished through the trade and importation of slaves from Africa, human settlement, and the Atlantic world of the eighteenth century into multiple periods.

Keywords: [Atlantic world](#), [Atlantic Ocean](#), [slaves](#), [human settlement](#), [pathogens](#)

BEGINNING in the fifteenth century, people, plants, pathogens, and animals—some key agents—began to move regularly back and forth. As exchanges deepened and intensified, much was transformed. Many new societies, cultures arose, particularly in the lands and islands touched by the Atlantic. Several authors in this volume seek to describe, explain, and contextualize concerning these path-breaking developments from the late fifteenth century. The contributors benefit from an outpouring of recent scholarship that is more ambitious than anything previously published, since it covers a wide chronological spread, and operates on an extensive geographical scale. It is the hope of thirty-eight authors to think comparatively when addressing the Atlantic world, with the hope of removing barriers that have tended to compartmentalize the study of ‘national’ involvements with an Atlantic world, even when the Atlantic world is the focus.

Our appraisal opens when some people (mostly Christians) first set foot on the Americas, and it closes when the integrity that had been established by political, economic, (p. 2) technological, and moral forces of the Atlantic world we have labelled emergence, consolidation, integration, and the number of these stages. One of the goals of this introduction is to provide a number of these stages. One of the goals of this introduction is to provide a study of Atlantic history.

While bringing readers up to date with current scholars

least in adumbrating a narrative for the study of this broad how, over the course of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, these worlds were both distinctive and distinctive features but also sharing much in common, each of these worlds, which had achieved a degree of social complexity and interdependency until a single functioning Atlantic world emerged, degrees by European, African, and American peoples, for the final cluster of chapters suggest that the interconnectedness of the world in any given part usually led to significant disruption of the system. This introduction brings this preferred narrative into focus and shows how it emerges when developments in any given area are considered in context.

The particulars discussed in this collection will be familiar to those who read the History of European Overseas Expansion. To this extent, the Atlantic world was a barrier against human endeavor, and Europeans, and their relatively superior technologies, and their ships, had previously acted as a barrier against human endeavor. The driving force behind the overthrow of the Aztec, the Incas, and the American peoples succumbed disastrously to pathogens that were the most obvious victims and instruments of the Atlantic world. However the dominant Eurocentric model of the world's persistent influence over their destinies exercised by Native Americans in the eighteenth century. Received wisdom is therefore modified by Native Americans and Africans in shaping the course of the world's extension of European history, and teleological delineation of the world is therefore emphatically rejected.²

These essays show that successive European conquests (in North America) succeeded only because small groups of determined Europeans promoted them could form alliances (p. 3) with native peoples, and that massive population losses suffered by Native Americans were the result of maltreatment, and unthinking environmental destruction, and the impact of Old World diseases. But while they do not explain how some of the indigenous populations survived, the authors explain how some of the indigenous populations survived; on the West Indian islands where native populations survived either by melding with the Europeans, or by intermingling with inhabitants on the mainland, or by forming intertribal unions; similarly, in coastal Brazil many native peoples survived by moving into the Amazonian interior. The native populations of the Americas when they, in turn, experienced European 'invasions'.

The history of native societies and habitats through our

adaptation rather than termination. The changes that e intermixtures; shifts in territories; the formation of nov and sometimes between Native Americans and Europe European weapons and technologies; the increased inv by European demand for American commodities; the d resulting from the introduction of European livestock, v population losses suffered by Native Americans, regard to the various crowd disease pathogens that Europeans Old World. But the narrative is also one of survival since of influence was seldom total or immediate, and that re who continued to shape their destinies throughout the influence was the continued employment by European and the resort of astute Native Americans to 'forum sh contested disputes.³ Also, in the religious sphere, wher treating of encounters in Central and South America, sc concern here is to explain how everywhere the Christia

If some Native Americans contributed to the Atlantic tr century onwards, rulers on the coast of West Africa (an preserving their economic as well as their political inde well into the eighteenth century. Where much previous or English, or Dutch, or French traders first conveyed A here emphasize the tentative character of the European the eighteenth century; the reliance of European merch sequence of African polities abutting the Atlantic Ocean African gold, textiles, and dyestuffs, rather than slaves,

Thus, while some African slaves were conveyed across labour shortages in Central and South America, it was r principal interest of European merchants dealing with A America, occasioned principally by the demographic cc expansion of sugar cultivation and production in Brazil from Africa. Slaves, however, could be acquired only w cooperation of African traders, or traders of mixed Afric and castles on the African coast, or on islands offshore. extent of slave stations along the coast, while African tr to reach ever deeper into continental Africa for slaves to labour. The cultural and linguistic range of the African p American plantations increased correspondingly, and p traffic was at its height. The traffic proved profitable for

who conveyed Africans to the Americas, not least because of the use of European slave ships for the transatlantic crossing. Compared to the slave trade, the interest in slave trading, once both groups were put on a humanitarian, evangelical, or political cause for influence.

Slaves on plantation estates managed their work rhythms and created maroon societies where possible, and strove to retain social and political aspirations. A sense of 'Africanness' may have been brought together of an ever greater range of Africans in America and a new consciousness.⁵ Once Africans and African Americans came to live in many locations in the Americas, it became necessary to create laws which, in themselves, rendered these American societies different. Codes did not prevent the sexual exploitation of women, and this gave rise to mixed populations everywhere that slavery was practiced. Africans were accorded a separate legal status from African-born and Native American peoples created yet other configurations.

Interminglings occurred on many other levels. Native Americans brought their plants (the most important of which were the potato and maize) and domesticated animals primarily to the Americas, the new world which boosted people's height; Africans transferred to the Americas bananas, okra, sesame, watermelon, and African rice; and Europeans brought plants and commodities that were native to Asia. In the Americas, had their Euro-American masters reliant on the curative properties of plants.

Historians of the Atlantic world are generally at pains to explain why because scholars of other dispersed worlds linked by a common sea were determined by the forces of nature. Prime among these was the Mediterranean world where social forms and trading patterns were constants, regardless of the cultural backgrounds of the participants. More recently historians of the Indian Ocean, many of them influenced by predictable wind systems and water currents prevailing in the region, have found more important than the navigational, nautical, astronomical, and astronomical traders, in linking the various trading sectors of the Indian Ocean. This pre-dated European water-borne influence in that area.

Current scholars of exploration and trade on the Atlantic are interested in generations how the endeavours of mariners in the age of discovery prevailing winds and currents of the ocean in much the

and limited by the forces of nature. Such factors, as much in the Atlantic, are advanced to explain the plurality of Atlantic European navigators during the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (and earlier) were limited by natural geographical principal routes by which they could negotiate their way across the northern route which was an extension of that plied by the Portuguese with which the Portuguese became acquainted when they took advantage of the eastern trade winds to carry them southward. The northern route brought Bristol fishermen to the Newfoundland coast of the Atlantic, while Columbus, in 1492 and in his subsequent

While they make allowance for such environmental details, historians of the Atlantic Ocean by mariners associated with traditional human agency. Thus they attribute the ultimate success in comprehending that ocean to a slow accumulation of knowledge of the Atlantic Ocean by those searching for fishing grounds, a knowledge of the water route to Asia by the African coastline. Historians of the Atlantic communities developed a knowledge of several Atlantic routes; each; a better understanding of what ships and sails were used in these waters; an appreciation of how to travel ever-longer distances; an accretion of information about the hazards associated with these groups benefited from improved scientific practices and navigational instruments and maps that had been advanced in Italy. Credit is also given to pilots and ship captains (from Columbus) who participated in the exploration of the Atlantic and the scholarship on which they are based, is that the major breakthrough in emboldening European seafarers to navigate the Atlantic 400 years previously, intelligent experimentation had been carried out between their homeland and their settlement on Greenland, from which they returned home. Despite their insistence that the Atlantic are sometimes forced to concede that imperious study, Stephen Behrendt has discerned that as the transatlantic range during the third quarter of the eighteenth century expanded and when traders might pursue their business.⁸

The issue of predetermination also features in scholars of the Atlantic and Native American peoples. Authors have long contended that their expulsion from Spain, prefigured how Iberians were expelled (p. 7) similarly argued that English responses to, and in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries were conditioned

Ireland.⁹ Recent scholars, including authors in this volume, have sought in the past half-century to distinguish between parallels, verbally, by recent work on the interplay of Mediterranean Christianity in the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa, indigenous populations of the Americas, and by Columbus and his associates on various Caribbean islands. This leads to the conclusion that the encounters were parts of a larger process that influenced the actions of Christians, and that all three were in an identical, fashion.¹⁰ Also considered in this volume is the context of the increased incidence of mass violence, which unquestionably included as much 'domestic as colonial', and that violence in Europe was of such extent that real and imagined atrocities in both spheres were reflected in the printed literature of the period.¹¹

Another subject of general interest is the extent to which the process of establishing settlements within Europe, in Africa, or on the Americas, and human settlement in America, or determined the shape of the settlement tendency of Spaniards to locate themselves in towns from the countryside, and of English, French, and Dutch settlers in rural settings.¹² Such generalizations now carry less weight because of the settlements established by each European power in the Americas, and being given to the extent to which the economic activity of the settlement there. This has been demonstrated most effectively in the case of fishing or other maritime activity.¹³ Similarly, European settlements closely involved with the production of high-value goods, such as state involvement in the conduct and protection of trade in the processing of agricultural goods experienced less state involvement and freedom. However, attachment to freedom was necessary in the early period, business in most (p. 8) European countries was heavily dependent on political connections required to negotiate state monopolies.

Efforts to compare and thus arrive at generalizations have often focused on differences into focus. To overcome this bias, many of the authors have focused none more stark than that between the European and African migrations, and more accurately the re-peopling, of America.¹⁵ What the authors have in common is the millions who crossed the Atlantic during our centuries, and the conditions of enslavement, violence, economic dislocation, social and economic conditions'.¹⁶ Notwithstanding this commonality a fundamental difference in African migrations over the question of volition. Essential to the migration of emigrants to America, including indentured servants, but also the forced expulsion in the aftermath of war, exercised some degree of

Furthermore, some Europeans, increasingly so in the e about their American destinations. African migrants, or had been enslaved after they had become captives in tr them from their African villages. Captives then frequen eventually reached a slave-trading port on the Atlantic a European slave trader who, in turn, would convey his the prospect of best profit to the trader. European migr usually made their own way to ports of embarkation, p sometimes selected a ship heading for a particular dest the outward voyage. European migrants also frequentl their crossing, or cooked their own food, whereas the c responsibility for the nurture, hygiene, and health of th bondage.

Another fundamental difference related to gender bala migrations to America during the centuries in question sex ratio was however more evenly balanced in the Afri than men were customarily forced into slavery, a functi workers, and African women slaves being required to s European traders were aware of the prejudice of plante they had consistently solicited (p. 9) their African suppl produced some rectification of the gender imbalance, k considerable number of African women necessarily be

The two population flows also differed due to the much geographic backgrounds from which African slaves, as Europeans who crossed the Atlantic usually went to col some inclusivity was initially tolerated especially amon later decades of the seventeenth century. Thus, for exam considered different in Spanish and Portuguese Atlanti were considered strangers in New England towns. This after the mid-seventeenth century, and most conspicu which then began to draw people from more heteroger included Scots, Irish, and Welsh from within the British from extensive areas of Germanic-speaking Europe, to France.

The societal contrast within the Atlantic world most fre America and Iberian America, with British settlers alleg populations, and being more reluctant than others to e

generalities, including the supposition that the British v European social forms in an American setting, has been comparison between experiences in the British and His as differences between the two experiences.¹⁸ The com with that of Atlantic empires carved out by other Europ account is taken of the British involvement with the Cai This was Britain's most consequential presence in the A intermixing there was as widespread as in any other co scholarly endeavour on colonial British America over th importance to Britain of their presence in the Caribbean whose only significant contribution to increasing the w ultimate seventeenth-century justification of all colonie Chesapeake. The value of each of these commodities w produced on the island colonies. Indeed the mainland c minds of merchants and British officials over the cours for provisions to feed the escalating slave population in mainland colonies. Also eighteenth-century commerci mainland colonies to become suppliers of food to the e developments explain the major expansion in the numl went to settle in Britain's mainland colonies over the cc teleological to suggest that this important developmen parts of mainland British America, could have been ant

Although national segmentation of the Atlantic basin b and other European groups tried to emulate the achiev —thus explaining why some of these essays explore th became increasingly integrated, particularly so in the e the overall volume and range of products criss-crossing back and forth in circular orbits—creating ‘a common s annually visited Saint-Domingue in the 1780s, for exam the Atlantic wine trade); a significant fall in the ratio of c voyage times accelerated, and turnaround times in por predictable, routes more regularized, and even though on some maritime routes was less than on shore, and s Sophisticated marine insurance and financial services a and transatlantic communication improved due to mo services. The density of economic exchanges deepened development contributed to the enrichment of all.

A notable feature of this commercial system was the de

evaded formal, regulated, and official constraints. In va
historian argues, ‘contraband trade dwarfed legal exch
and restriction gradually and imperfectly gave way to lo
decentralized agents. The French relaxed their *exclusif*,
persisted in the transit business, the English experimen
because of its reliance on the Company of Grão Pará ar
was in part because for (p. 11) them ‘mercantilism and
attainable goals’. Different imperial models of trading r
greater openness and porosity; and even the Portugues
the eighteenth century, which became open after 1808.

The number of ‘revolutions’ that historians have posit
revolution, and an information revolution, to name but
Atlantic world was dramatic. Whether a true consumer
Britain's colonies on mainland North America, occurre
world remains debatable, but tastes certainly expande
necessities, and consumption patterns were profoundl
Atlantic wines, coffee, chocolate, rum, and tea became
always a small part of most household budgets; while,
firearms, and metal goods were in great demand. The p
industrial revolution, but the Atlantic's edibles and con
systems’, allowing the continent to overcome Malthusi
sustain the Atlantic slave trade.²¹

Geography facilitated integration. Prevailing winds and
anticlockwise in the southern—help explain why Weste
northern hemisphere and Brazil became its base in the
drained by rivers emptying into the Atlantic are about t
Indian oceans combined, this single ocean's extensive i
hinterlands. Because ports on the Atlantic were always
than interior locations, the distinction between ‘near’ a
has more general applicability. In addition, islands wer
prototype for plantation sugar production emerged on
coast of Africa; these same islands then became crucial
yet other African islands, close to shore, sometimes loc
and (p. 12) the sugar-producing Caribbean islands, par
hubs of empire.²²

Integration was far from just economic or geographic. I
to deal with the rise of inter-imperial commercial comp

policing of their slaves, so they borrowed provisions of inter-imperial emulation. The scores of scientific expeditions, botanists, architects, artists, and city planners who moved data—experiencing, experimenting, eye-witnessing, and contributing enormously to a circum-Atlantic exchange—was just one dimension. In familial arrangements, Atlantic regions were ‘marriage-challenged zones’ or at the very least ‘marriage-challenged zones’. The Atlantic polity embraces in its very name the absorptionist, expansionist Atlantic world; and justifies consideration of, say, the Irish and Dutch empire in one analytical frame.²⁴ In terms of imperialism premised on delegation, on overlapping compromises, Transatlantic exchanges even spurred a greater attention to propose a universal *sensus communis*.²⁵

The existence of creoles, neither immigrants nor indigenous newcomers alone or from mixtures of newcomers and themselves as separate and distinctive, contributed another dimension to the Atlantic world. The word ‘creole’ (in Portuguese *crioulo* and Spanish *criollo*) referred to World progenitors born in the New World (it even extended to those produced in the New). More recently, linguists have applied the term to those who emerged among the native-born or slaves in contact with European languages widely applied not just in the Americas but also in the African continent. The peoples noted for their cultural plasticity and social adaptability associated with cultural hybridity as people of mixed African and European antecedents but who worked closely with European powers. I term them Afro-Europeans or Euraficans, and occasionally refer to them as slaves or members of the elite, as long as they were located in the Atlantic. In the nineteenth century the phenomenon of (p. 13) creole patriotism emerged in the *penisulares* (Spaniards), and lauding their combined indigenous and European patriotisms who fought the British generally refrained from preferring to describe themselves as ‘American’ or ‘British’. When the British perpetrated the Boston Tea Party did attire themselves as ‘Americans’, they embraced or repudiated hybridity, it was a fact, and the Atlantic—however varied they were—was proof of connection.

The Atlantic War, always a catalyst of change, served to integrate as well as to often relaxed normal restrictions. Foreign ships might be used for various purposes, thus encouraging interimperial cooperation, and the Atlantic describe the ocean became especially current during times of crisis. The Atlantic of that maritime space heightened during a crisis. European

Americans and Africans—on a larger scale, more lethal convergence occurred as Native Americans and Africans engaged in more efficient killing along European lines. Increasingly observed conventions for the conduct of war on a larger scale, whereas smaller, unlimited, frenzied, frontier warfare in Europe became more formalized and confined to the boundaries of life in the rest of the Atlantic world.

While warfare in some respects rendered the Atlantic world more fragmented (and particularly the Seven Years War, 1756–63, the final phase of the process), it also led to a new form of political segmentation into multiple polities, and in two phases. In the first, the great powers, and conflict extended to overseas possessions more significantly, and in many different ways, to the detriment of the emerging hegemony. Then, in the interest of covering the costs of maintaining the hegemony, powers began efforts to tighten control over their territories that had been retained and/or gained through reorganization and reform. Metropolitan officials in Britain and France saw a key problem and began efforts to tighten it. The French, which vigorously expanded. The Spanish Bourbons overhauled their bureaucracy, improved university education, boosted industry, and protected property. Portugal's Braganza rulers, and especially the 18th-century monarchs, implemented a comprehensive reform of their empire, including the expansion of the navy, which included everything from information collecting to (p. 1) the creation of new penal codes, became part of the Enlightened state.

These reform programmes clarified the boundaries between powers whose governments became ever more determined to control their activity that had previously contributed to integration. The process of segmentation of the Atlantic world, but it did so also in response to reform programmes that were necessitated by the war produced everywhere. The first of these was the American War of Independence, the outcome being the fashioning of a new republic from one of the colonies of the Atlantic empire. The origins of the American Revolution lay in the British Parliament to fund the 10,000 regulars stationed in North America during the War. In the Spanish world resentment of Bourbon policy and centralized control led to tax riots, culminating in the Cádiz Revolt in the early 1780s. In the lusophone world, protests occurred in Brazil in 1759, which in turn owed much to the war fought by the Portuguese against the British.

Another factor accelerating segmentation was that imperialist movements made it increasingly difficult for Native Americans to maintain their traditional ways of life.

enjoyed in the past. Some Native American groups had diverse trading partners to maintain some cultural integrity in the Atlantic economy through labour drafts or virtual enslavement in their various engagements with Atlantic markets. As protectors and dealt directly with white creoles who could be engaged with nativist movements that rejected all things Spanish against mixed-race collaborators as they were against the new American nation-states as one of the outcomes of segregation—generally forced two outcomes on Native Americans—dependency—both of which cut them off from extensive

How the American Revolution played out is well understood, and the places in the British Atlantic empire that were not—Nova Scotia, Quebec, and the Floridas—were the ones that remained for security or of economic interest. Because the new state was so much with Britain in customs, laws, religion, and political culture, the world of Atlantic commerce with which North America was part of an unforeseen consequence was that the pursuit of American independence but more so in Britain, where the loss of its thirteen colonies led to the emergence of the United States.

By way of contrast, the Revolution in Saint-Domingue was a direct counterpart, because it involved a greater mass mobilization. The revolution of Haiti determined to terminate the trade that underpinned the plantation system was the largest and most successful in history, strongest. Still it was replete with paradoxes. Although it was against slave owners throughout the Americas, it stimulated a huge economic boom, sometimes spoke in the language of republicanism, monarchy, church and king. In the beginning, the massive revolt forced abolitionists on the defensive. The example of Haiti might have been a warning in the Americas, but its immediate consequence was to make the revolution words of one historian, was 'both unforgettable and also

If the American Revolution arose out of a crisis of integrity, it was also from a crisis of disintegration, when Napoleon's armies were in the Americas, whites and free coloured activists in Saint-Domingue were active. In the Americas, American creoles professed loyalty to the monarchy while in Spain a plurality of creole patriotisms emerged within Spain's colonies, and national movements for independence from Spain, and that forced dissidents to move beyond seeking home rule

imperial monarchy. However, given the complex multi-segmented nature of Spain's Atlantic empire, the process was devastatingly costly in Spanish America as in Saint-Domingue, related to the extent of ethnic divisions. Blacks and mulattoes were drawn into the various conflicts; both sides armed slaves as soldiers in some armies. The length and ferocity of the wars, once independence of the several new states had been achieved, was a regime given the sheer human cost of winning independence.

Historians frequently explain how all Atlantic revolutions (as well as also within France) successively influencing and informing each other in a linear influence, these essays point (p. 16) to the ways in which the disintegration of what had previously been a reasonably unified world, emphasizing revolution and nation-building, the essays argue that the revolutionary message did not take hold, with, for example, decolonization in Cuba and other parts of the Caribbean. The Haitian Revolution, and its slave rebelliousness was inspired more by the ideas of many of whom were dispatched across the Atlantic as slaves than by Enlightenment ideology. In a reverse direction, the effect of the Haitian Revolution was that the French abolition of slavery in 1794 did not extend to Africa, as an experiment in the viability of free labour in Africa, the Haitian Revolution advocates in almost every European and American political movement for the abolition of the slave trade. Moreover, the shift from trade to free trade probably increased demand for slaves in Africa, where the production of vegetable oils that became the staple of West Africa's economy was based on the principles and the abandonment of the slave trade in various parts of the world. In fact, the number of slaves brought an end to the institution of slavery; in fact, the number of slaves in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

From the mid-fifteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, the Atlantic world was a peculiar mix of idealism and exploitation, noble aspirations and uneasy tension. But by the end of the period, the region was a mix of nation-states in some places and deepening colonialism in others, where slavery was expanding and those where the institution was being abolished, another fundamental division. The development of steamships, that ever-increasing numbers of Europe's poor, including those from that continent, could gain access to an Atlantic world for the first time. The volume was one forged by trade, the overbearing factor in the Atlantic as well as European traders were able to (and did) operate in the Pacific Ocean as readily as they did the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

segments of the globe, which, with the exception of the had previously been linked to each other indirectly, pri single global market, which extended even to the mark by the reluctant abandonment of slavery, as well as the characteristics of the Atlantic world) throughout the An growing importation of a lowly paid primarily male wo into the previous slave plantations.

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