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## Review of *The Creation of the British Atlantic World* edited by Elizabeth Mancke and Carole Shammas

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## Book Reviews

*The Creation of the British Atlantic World*. Edited by ELIZABETH MANCKE and CAROLE SHAMMAS. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005). 408 pp. \$52.00 (cloth).

Atlantic history, or the study of the motion and exchange of ideas, people, culture, and capital between Europe, Africa, and the Americas, has become much more than a cottage industry over the past two decades. Building off of but diverging from the imperial history of Charles Andrews and others, Atlanticists have presented a powerful challenge to the historiographical hegemony of the nation-state. In her introduction to *The Creation of the British Atlantic World*, Carole Shammas explains that “Atlantic history has little time for or interest in examining the place of imperial politics in the shaping of the transatlantic experience” (p. 5). Instead, Atlanticists use “nonpolitical causation” to explain how a British Atlantic world was crafted in the early modern era by various transnational and subnational groups (p. 5). Merchants, African slaves, Indians, missionaries, migrants, botanists, painters, Quakers, and lawyers were all crucial actors in the production of this British Atlantic, and the volume under review engages this multitude of subjects and perspectives to explore how that world was fashioned.

The text is divided into three sections. The first, “Transatlantic Subjects,” deals mainly with the various groups whose perpetual motion characterized this fluid Atlantic world. James Horn and Philip D. Morgan’s essay on “Settlers and Slaves” combs over some familiar demographic territory on African and European migration, but it also contends that not all European migrants were settling in the Americas. Many western Europeans were also moving east rather than west

during periods of crisis, war, and unemployment. Horn and Morgan's piece also forces us to question whether the total numbers for migration are as statistically important as per capita migration, an issue that Joyce Chaplin considers in her essay on Indian enslavement. Chaplin found that although Indian slaves taken in wars were not as numerous as African captives, their loss to indigenous societies already depleted by warfare, disease, and forced migration was all the more significant and should be studied in more detail. Two essays, one by Mark L. Thompson and another by David Barry Gaspar, then discuss contested legal spaces in the British Atlantic. Thompson explores the career of Thomas Yong, a man who represented himself differently to English officials, Virginia politicians, Delaware Indians, and Dutch settlers in hope of colonizing the Delaware River. As he traveled farther away from the metropole, he endowed himself with more personal authority. Yet Yong continually represented himself as both a subject of the English Crown and as a member of the English people (a construction that Thompson dubs "national subjecthood"). Though this is a very useful essay, some readers may be irritated by jargon-laden phrases such as "rhetorical work," "discourses," and "modes of identity." Gaspar carries on this investigation of legal zones by examining a dramatic court case in which Cape Verdeans taken as slaves by a British captain sued for their repatriation once they reached Antigua. Though the slave trade was a nefarious practice, it was circumscribed by a set of geopolitical realities: British officials were concerned about the specter of piracy, and the Cape Verdeans were legitimate subjects of Portugal, a nation with which Britain wanted to maintain friendly commercial relations. Thus, the Cape Verdeans were set free and brought home. If diplomacy saved one group from slavery, Christianity failed to do so for Marotta/Magdalena, a Catholic African who was sold into slavery, shipped to the West Indies, and converted to Moravian pietism. The essay on Marotta, by Ray Kea, recounts a fascinating physical and spiritual journey of a person who fused West African, Catholic, and Moravian cosmologies into one epistemology. Kea's essay also shows the potential of using biography to illuminate larger patterns in the macrohistory of the Atlantic world.

"Transatlantic Connections" begins with a piece by April Lee Hatfield on how merchants and mariners had intimate contact with colonists in the courts and public spaces of the colonies, thus giving the colonists a more expansive worldview and broadening their transatlantic identities. William M. Offutt's fascinating, if sometimes difficult, essay on "The Legalistic Turn in Colonial British America" contends that the first years of colonial settlement were characterized by

an overlapping of distinct legal traditions that were continuously drawn upon and reshaped by colonial “legal literates” (p. 164). By 1680, however, English common law was fast becoming professionalized and institutionalized in the colonies, giving colonial subjects a common legal vocabulary that replicated English institutions abroad. By contrast, Jonathan Edwards’s attitudes toward the Enlightenment suggested revulsion, not mimesis, of European culture. Avihu Zakai relates Edwards’s fears that by minimizing the importance of God and proposing a mechanical philosophy, Enlightened thought could quickly lead “to the detachment of the moral system from God” (p. 190). Therefore, Edwards attempted to fabricate a distinctly American spirituality that made his famous revivals the site of the cosmic battle between God and Satan and returned God to the center of human experience, history, knowledge, and morality. The Halleian Lutheran missionaries that Wolfgang Splitter investigates were less interested than Edwards in these epistemological questions and more concerned about imposing order and discipline on the disorderly congregations of eighteenth-century Pennsylvania. These missionaries made an alliance with Anglicans in order to challenge the Quakers’ political power, protested against religious heterogeneity, began a campaign against amateurish freelance missionaries, and tried to establish their own schools for Lutheran education. In the end, they were victims of their own success: The Lutheran church became highly organized, but it lost the hearts and minds of the youth in the years following the American Revolution.

The final section, “Imperial Visions and Transatlantic Revisions,” engages the issue of empire in the British Atlantic. Co-editor Elizabeth Mancke contends that the British government had a very organic and evolving relationship with the chartered enterprises that had taken the financial risks to survey and explore the land, establish colonies, and create the commercial networks that would form the basis of the transatlantic economy. But three issues—Crown distribution of land, royal government over American subjects, and British relations with foreigners—pushed the metropolitan government into a more active position just as the chartered companies were falling apart. Empire became part of British life through chartered companies as well as other cultural projects, such as the creation of the gardens at Kew and the proliferation of landscape art. In “Seeds of Empire,” Robert Olwell examines how British officials supported the construction of a garden to house the flora that was being collected from the Americas, especially the newly acquired colony of East Florida after the Seven Year’s War. The Kew gardens symbolized British control over both other

nations and nature, but some Britons feared that excessive imperial extension would corrupt traditional culture at home. If Britons were somewhat wary about empire, John Crowley shows that they grew a voracious appetite for the empire's visual representation in the latter half of the eighteenth century. As travelers and military officers moved throughout the Atlantic, they painted topographic landscapes that attempted to lasso Britain's faraway lands into the imagined community of the Isles. Finally, Karin Wulf's work on the genealogical diary of a Deborah Norris Logan, a Pennsylvania Quaker, demonstrates the continued importance of family lineage and transatlantic identities even after the Revolution. Logan's diary confirmed her family's paternal treatment of slaves while simultaneously displaying its central role in the founding of Pennsylvania, the American Revolution, and the establishment of a new American nation. Wulf's piece speaks to one woman's production of history, memory, and identity during a period of profound imperial, national, and personal crisis.

This volume would be useful in a graduate seminar in early American history and indispensable in one on Atlantic history. Though there are a few very minor grammatical mistakes, the collection is generally well written and edited, and the index is unusually comprehensive for an edited volume (p. 316). The contributors and editors have done us a great service by bringing together in one volume some of the more creative and novel approaches to Atlantic history. As such, Atlantic history may yet serve as a panacea for the fragmentation and specialization that some historians frequently lament.

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*The Great Land Rush and the Making of the Modern World, 1650–1900.* By JOHN C. WEAVER. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003. 488 pp. \$45.00 (cloth).

Historians who engage in comparative history over long periods of time face enormous challenges. Explanations of change for one society often do not carry over to a second society, and the historian is forced to reconcile, discard, and develop new explanations and puzzle over endless inconsistencies and peculiarities of time and place. The challenge magnifies when the historian attempts, as John C. Weaver does