

BOOK REVIEW ESSAYS

## Atlantic Disjuncture: Recent Historiography of Transoceanic Diasporas, Communities, and Empires

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This essay reviews the following works:

**Staying Afloat: Risk and Uncertainty in Spanish Atlantic World Trade, 1760–1820.** By Jeremy Baskes. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013. Pp. ix + 381. \$54.57 hardcover. ISBN: 9780804785426.

**The Material Atlantic: Clothing, Commerce, and Colonization in the Atlantic World, 1650–1800.** By Robert S. DuPlessis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Pp. vii + 332. \$29.99 hardcover. ISBN: 9781107105911.

**The Temptations of Trade: Britain, Spain, and the Struggle for Empire.** By Adrian Finucane. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. Pp. 1 + 211. \$45.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9780812248128.

**Guiana and the Shadows of Empire: Colonial and Cultural Negotiations at the Edge of the World.** By Joshua R. Hyles. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014. Pp. ix + 185. \$76.56 hardcover. ISBN: 9780739187791.

**The Portuguese-Speaking Diaspora: Seven Centuries of Literature and the Arts.** By Darlene J. Sadlier. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016. Pp. 314. \$29.95 paperback. ISBN: 9781477311486.

**Amsterdam's Atlantic: Print Culture and the Making of Dutch Brazil.** By Michiel van Groesen. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. Pp. xx + 272. \$47.50 hardcover. ISBN: 9780812248661.

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Atlantic history is an ever-evolving discipline. For decades, it has sought to disrupt the myopia of discrete colonial and regional studies of early modern polities by emphasizing the transimperial and transnational interactions between people of the four continents surrounding the Atlantic Ocean. The discipline's very capaciousness has led to definitional quandaries as to what makes a study truly "Atlantic," but it also has allowed for a remarkably regenerative field of historical interpretation.<sup>1</sup> The six works analyzed in this essay display the diversity of recent historiographical trends in Atlantic scholarship. They cover the British, Spanish, Dutch, French, and Portuguese empires. These books investigate topics as varied as imperial politics, literature and the fine arts, material and print culture, commercial finance, and interimperial diplomacy. Their authors highlight the power of nonstate actors, subjects' alienation with empire, and the logistical and cultural challenges in transatlantic state-making. Diasporic understandings of European

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<sup>1</sup> For representative examples of works seeking to define and redefine Atlantic history see David Armitage, "Three Concepts of Atlantic History," in *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800*, ed. David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 11–27; Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Alison Games, "AHR Forum: Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (2006): 741–757; Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Benjamin Breen, "Hybrid Atlantics: Future Directions for the History of the Atlantic World," *History Compass* 11, no. 8 (2013): 597–609.

Atlantic and global expansion feature prominently in these books. Dispersion over vast distances produced cultural and social hybridity as an adaptation to new environments. The Atlantic experience was not only hybridized but also contested. In particular, information about war, political conditions, and trade across the oceans engendered debate and conflict. Although these Atlantic histories feature individuals and groups confronting imperial boundaries, they also assess, to varying degrees, how European states managed their empires and their subjects. Throughout these books, the Atlantic serves as a prism that refracted the ideas and plans of European powers toward unexpected outcomes.

In *Guiana and the Shadows of Empire: Colonial and Cultural Negotiations at the Edge of the World*, Joshua Hyles offers a political history of that region from pre-Columbian origins to the present. Animating Hyles's secondary-source-based survey is an Atlantic paradox: How did a region of similar environment, cultural and political homogeneity, and modest geographical size develop into three distinct colonial, and later national, projects? From these diverging histories, Hyles concludes that "the Guianas—now known individually as Guyana, French Guiana, and Suriname—are the ideal historical laboratory in which to study the cultural outcomes of European colonization" (3).

*Guiana and the Shadows of Empire* stresses the homogeneous character of Guiana before European expansion. Common linguistic, material, and culinary traits linked the Taino, Kalinago, and Tupi-Guarani peoples of Guiana. Disease, native resistance, and Guiana's forbidding natural environment of jungles, mountains, and swamps mostly conserved previous cultural uniformity by swallowing up sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century European attempts at colonization.

Hyles contrasts this earlier era of homogeneity to a "demarcation period" of colony construction occurring between the mid-seventeenth and the early nineteenth centuries (21). Walter Raleigh-inspired adventuring schemes and trading ventures with the indigenous population gave way to the foundation of sugar plantations in the eighteenth century. In general, these colonies failed to mature and produce riches for the Dutch, French, and British in the same way that their Antillean settlements did. Beginning in the 1790s, warfare spilling out of the French Revolution caused imperial powers to partition Guiana into the long-standing territorial units of British Guiana, Dutch Suriname, and French Cayenne.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Guianas witnessed state-sponsored demographic blending and involuntary migration. Both Dutch and British colonial regimes imported Indian, Chinese, and Javanese immigrants to the Guianas to provide labor for sugar plantations after slavery was abolished. They experienced a steady growth in sugar production throughout the nineteenth century, and then its precipitous decline with turn-of-the-century competition. By contrast, French imperialists experimented with converting their part of Guiana into a penal colony known as "The Green Hell" (64–65), which would house radicals from the French Revolution of 1848.

Colonial abandonment and independence marked the twentieth-century Guianas. Labor unrest, increasing ethnic divisions, and an imperial gaze that shifted toward Asia and Africa dampened European desire to hold onto these possessions. British Guiana gained its independence in 1966 as Guyana and was followed by Dutch Guiana, which emerged as independent Suriname in 1975. French Guiana remained primarily a warehouse for French criminals until 1952, when midcentury reforms transformed the colony into an equal partner in a "Greater France" and kept it under French rule (110–111).

*Guiana and the Shadows of Empire* is an uneven work of scholarship. On the one hand, it seeks to integrate three separate imperial stories and five hundred years of history into a single conceptual matrix. Hyles's work offers useful chronological and thematic designations while stressing the trial-and-error nature of empire building. British, Dutch, and French policymakers experimented with sugar plantations, trading posts, and penal colonies to develop Guiana. The most lasting legacy of these schemes was not wealth generation, but rather the unnatural tripartite division of the region. Furthermore, Hyles rightly argues that the state-facilitated diversification of these colonies contained cultural and political ramifications not imagined by imperial policymakers. On the other hand, the book would have benefited from more careful editing. Its introduction and conclusion contain tired truisms about how "history is not an easy subject, and it involves more than simply telling a good story.... Yet, much to the chagrin of many of its students, the human story cannot be neatly delineated or categorized" (2). Hyles's interpretations, which are rarely based on primary sources, frequently overreach. Anthropologists and ethnohistorians might bristle at his idea of the relative homogeneity of native peoples in pre-Columbian Guiana. Likewise, students of empire will wonder how Hyles comes to the comparative conclusion that "successful exportation and dissemination of culture was a talent the British seemed to possess in surplus" (43).

Unlike *Guiana and the Shadows of Empire*, which tells the regional history of an imperially conflicted Atlantic space, Darlene Sadlier's *The Portuguese-Speaking Diaspora: Seven Centuries of Literature and the Arts* assesses the global cultural diffusion of a single European empire. Sadlier employs an interdisciplinary

methodology that analyzes poems, plays, and novels; works of art, decorative material goods, magazines and field guides, and films, among other sources. At its core, Sadlier's book is about the "literary and artistic representation of a long history of leaving home, losing home, or returning to a home that is no longer the same" (1). It probes the enthusiasm, mental dislocation, and nostalgia that accompanied cultural expressions of Portuguese imperialism from the 1490s until the present.

Portuguese diasporic anxieties over religiosity, interaction, and cultural transmission figure prominently in Sadlier's work. Sixteenth-century epic poems (*cantigas*) such as *Os Lusíadas* by Luís Vaz de Camões pondered tensions between voyaging and leaving loved ones behind and between enrichment and evangelization. Early modern Jesuit writings were particularly critical of what they saw as the insufficient religious zeal of Portuguese colonizers. Like much of the literature of the time, the Jesuit corpus demonstrated curiosity in Indian, Chinese, and African others. Sadlier also points to examples of traditional native bronzes, ceramics, silks, and weaponry from these regions of contact depicting the Portuguese presence. As Portugal emerged as a slave-trading and slaveholding empire, its iconography and literature depicted enslaved Africans only sparingly as set pieces or, in the case of abolitionist writings, as noble victims.

Sadlier identifies hybridity in the work of artists who lived Atlantic and global lives and in artwork that mixed Asian and African aesthetics with recognizable Portuguese symbolism. Colonialists imported Chinese and Japanese art objects made in traditional styles, but with Portuguese tastes and iconography in mind. An element of the familiar thus pervaded the exotic and made it palatable for a Portuguese audience. Cultural production of the empire might critique both the colonizer and the colonized. Portuguese diasporic literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, such as José Maria Eça de Queiroz's novel *O Mandarim*, featured dueling Orientalist tropes of a delicate and aestheticized Asia, but also of a savage continent given to drugs, prostitution, and graft. Portuguese colonialism to the interior of Africa produced literature that emphasized the "white man's burden" and the benefits of Portuguese colonization there, but denounced cruel treatment of Africans by some imperialists. Hybridized cultural expressions might also be used as apologist tracts for colonialism. Sadlier points to the Salazar dictatorship's sponsorship of Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre's tour of Portuguese possessions in Africa in 1951. Freyre wrote positively of miscegenation in the colonies as a civilizing mission and a hybridization of Eastern and Western cultures.

*The Portuguese-Speaking Diaspora* underscores how a range of Portuguese and Portuguese colonial artists experienced disorientation by living abroad for significant periods. Their perspective on what was "Portuguese" often came unmoored as they became liminal people not truly existing in either a home or colonial cultural milieu. For example, numerous films in the 1980s documented the jarring experiences of soldiers returning from the unpopular Angolan War. Foreign-born subjects of the empire who journeyed to Portugal likewise experienced homesickness and double consciousness. Along with children of Portuguese settlers abroad, African and Asian university students formed an intellectual community at the Casa dos Estudantes do Imperio in Lisbon and produced a circular whose content could be anticolonial or nostalgic for home. Across the centuries, the subjects of Sadlier's survey asked questions about the mission of Portuguese colonialism. Were the Portuguese overseas to evangelize, extract wealth, bolster Portuguese nationalism, or enact cultural transformation among subject populations?

Sadlier's work offers a wide-ranging survey of diasporic literature and art of the Portuguese Empire. It creatively uses an impressive diversity of sources and media to reveal perspectives reaching beyond the standard Portuguese literary canon. Moreover, the global scope of the book is ambitious. At times, the reader may wish for a bit more signposting in the middle of chapters. Sadlier sometimes leaves it to the reader to construct their own arguments about empire and art. This shortcoming notwithstanding, *The Portuguese-Speaking Diaspora* consistently explores themes of estrangement, disillusion, and longing in colonialism.

Compared to the survey works of Hyles and Sadlier, Michiel van Groesen's *Amsterdam's Atlantic: Print Culture and the Making of Dutch Brazil* examines Atlantic culture over a much more circumscribed time horizon and geographic area. The work looks at the Dutch invasion of Habsburg Brazil during the long-running Dutch struggle for independence. It analyzes this conflict from the vantage point of Amsterdam, a seventeenth-century European center of finance, printing, commerce, and tolerance. Prints, paintings, poems and ballads, sermons, architecture, correspondence, diaries, and cabinets of curiosities demonstrated that "by the 1630s and early 1640s coverage of Dutch Brazil had evolved into the early modern equivalent of a multimedia experience" (9). Van Groesen posits that, in the case of Dutch Brazil, "the transformation of rumors and printed news into public agency ... may provide a useful template for the ways the Atlantic world became a public experience in early modern Europe" (198).

Van Groesen details the initial success of Dutch governmental attempts to sell colonialism to a populace lacking reliable information on South America. Before the expedition, Dutch perceptions of Brazil came from a haze of sixteenth-century French travelogues and costume books on indigenous tribes. War with

Spain focused Dutch eyes on Brazil as a strategically and commercially profitable colonial venture. The initial success of Dutch military maneuvers in 1624 became *the* story of the period. Weekly bulletins (*corantos*) and news maps brought information quickly, if not always accurately. The Dutch government and the West India Company pushed an official story of events, emphasizing triumphs and demonizing Spanish cruelty by drawing on Black Legend tropes.

Settlement in Brazil made the flow of news increasingly difficult for any one party to regulate and led to public debate. Broadsides, playing cards, and cheap maps boasted of military victories and sought to legitimize Dutch claims. However, eyewitness and word-of-mouth accounts of soldiers, sailors, and settlers often contradicted state propaganda. Conflicts emerged in the press between free traders and monopolists over the Brazil trade. The economic realities of sugar production overruled ethical questions about the commodification of Africans.

Van Groesen argues that public exchange soured into outright criticism and pessimism about overseas operations by the late 1640s, as Portuguese counterattacks began to repel the Dutch. Weekly news bulletins were filled with discontent over lost loved ones. Finger-pointing and blame dominated the press. Staged chats (*praatje*) in pamphlets expounded on how Brazil was an unwinnable fight, the West India Company was a hopelessly corrupt institution, and the Dutch Republic was being punished for its wickedness. With the final loss of the colony to Portugal in 1654, a collective nostalgia for the missed opportunity of Dutch Brazil took hold of print culture in Amsterdam.

Overall, *Amsterdam's Atlantic* reminds the reader to recontextualize seemingly unimportant or self-evident historical phenomena within a broader schema. It offers a corrective to the idea of Brazil as merely a failed colony or an afterthought for the Dutch. As van Groesen deftly shows, the invasion of Brazil opened up a raucous arena of open debate in Amsterdam. The author produces a vivid portrayal of what early modern public reception of overseas news looked like through a wide-ranging and nuanced use of print sources. An active press, firsthand accounts, and an engaged populace back home made it impossible for any one entity to control the narrative of Atlantic colonialism. At times, van Groesen overshoots this evidentiary base to talk about a universal “public Atlantic” when particularities of the Dutch case do not necessarily translate across empires.<sup>2</sup> *Amsterdam's Atlantic* is not for the uninitiated as it frequently references Dutch campaigns and turning points in the Dutch West India Company without much foregrounding. These minor issues notwithstanding, van Groesen's work successfully illustrates that imperial designs did not take place in a vacuum, but rather inspired vibrant public response back home.

Robert DuPlessis's *The Material Atlantic: Clothing, Commerce, and Colonization in the Atlantic World, 1650–1800* analyzes a very different expression of culture in the dressing habits of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Atlantic inhabitants. It studies the commerce, usage, and societal mores of clothing in South Africa, Angola, Argentina, Brazil, Saint-Domingue, Jamaica, Louisiana, Montreal, South Carolina, and Pennsylvania. DuPlessis explores these topics through probate inventories, merchant papers, letters, newspapers, commercial records, runaway slave ads, and paintings. *The Material Atlantic* contends that “sartorial creolization” (20) in Africa and the Western Hemisphere was an unsteady process. Modifying apparel was the norm, but slaves, indigenous people, and creoles experienced starker shifts than did Europeans born in Europe. Increased global commerce produced a standardization of textile production and usage even as novel climates and situations allowed for diversification of available clothing styles.

DuPlessis argues that dress functioned as a marker of civilization and taboo for early modern Europeans. Nakedness and body modification were unacceptable. These preconceptions colored interactions with West Africans, who were seen as civilized because they were clothed and had advanced textile traditions. By contrast, connotations of savagery marked European perceptions of indigenous groups in Brazil who dressed elaborately, but with few textiles.

Changes in apparel as a result of Atlantic interactions could signal the wearer taking on new cultural identities or him or her engaging in diplomacy, conversion, or climatic adaptation. The re-dressing of indigenous people and enslaved Africans in the Americas was common in the early modern Atlantic. Missionizing impulses, ritual gift giving, and gender role policing often determined the ways in which Europeans attempted to re-dress Native Americans in the early modern Atlantic. For enslaved Africans, re-dressing was mostly an involuntary act. It demonstrated the power and control of masters over their slaves. A consistent costume of rough and durable clothing served to signal enslavement. DuPlessis contends that European influence might be dominant in these processes of hybridization, but that did not mean that Europeans were in complete control of changes taking place. Enslaved people who dressed

<sup>2</sup> On the public reception of Atlantic news and ideas outside of the Dutch Empire, see, for example, Kenneth J. Banks, *Chasing Empire across the Sea: Communications and the State in the French Atlantic, 1713–1763* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006).

themselves in ways that strayed away from masters' directives engaged in potentially subversive acts of anti-commodification. Ironically, it was the labor of these plantation slaves that made new materials and dress regimes possible for Europeans.

DuPlessis pivots from the clothing of subalterns to that of free European settlers in the torrid and temperate zones of the Atlantic. Settler dress was predominately European-influenced, but excessively hot for the tropics. Over time, despite the need to project themselves as Europeans, white settlers in the tropics did adapt somewhat to climatic considerations by wearing lighter fabrics. In slave societies, free people of color generally dressed more like whites to put cultural distance between themselves and the enslaved. Dress regimes in temperate zones were more uniform and displayed a less hybridized character. Lightweight cottons and linens did not supplant woolens as they did in hotter climates. Throughout this survey of Europeans abroad, DuPlessis stresses that a tension would exist always between Old World ideas of civilization and probity embodied in European dress regimes and the convenience and comfort of wearing new overseas items.

*The Material Atlantic* offers remarkable coverage of clothing and identity across a range of continents, races, and classes. For specialists in material culture, it supplies a wealth of information about textile materials, fashions, and clothing adaptations. A set of gorgeous color illustrations from the period complement these details. DuPlessis's work also merges discussions of distribution and consumption. At times, the author vacillates in important debates topical to his subject. It is difficult to tell what DuPlessis wishes to convince his audience of when he states, for example, that "new, revised, or retained, post-contact Atlantic dress regimes were rooted in material possibilities at once similar and disparate" (54). The book also strangely defines the Atlantic world as beginning in the 1640s with the rise of plantation societies. Sixteenth-century historians, and particularly those studying the Iberian Atlantic, would reject this designation. For his chosen period, however, the author displays an impressive command of the topic.

Whereas DuPlessis's book examines the broad contours of an understudied topic, Jeremy Baskes's *Staying Afloat: Risk and Uncertainty in Spanish Atlantic World Trade, 1760–1820* provides an important work of revisionism. Taking on preconceptions about early modern commercial restrictions and free trade, Baskes argues that protectionism had an internal logic: managing risk. Heavily regulated routes, traders, goods, and ports of the Spanish imperial fleet system ensured more predictable supplies, fewer glutted markets, and more regularized trade. Implicit in this argument is a challenge to the historiographical idea of a golden age of commerce after late eighteenth-century trade liberalization decrees (*comercio libre*). Opening trade created speculative merchant ventures and insurance practices that, when coupled with the endemic warfare of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, led to the ruin of many prominent Spanish transatlantic commercial firms.

For the merchants Baskes investigates, information about and preferential access to markets were the coins of the realm. News on political conditions and market saturations in the colonies was absolutely critical. The Spanish fleet system, with its restrictions on how many ships could sail to the Americas and where they could go, "served to diminish the volatility of shifts in supply, which reduced, but did not eliminate, the dangers of financial catastrophe caused by glutted markets" (44).

Baskes's book reminds the reader not to automatically assume economic progress in teleological assumptions of openness and competition. The trade liberalization of *comercio libre* decrees in the second half of the eighteenth century produced new commerce, commodities, and tax revenues, but also uncertainty. Many new merchants joined transatlantic commercial ventures, but minimizing risk became difficult due to increased competition. Colonial consumers could not keep up with the influx of new traders, leading to glutted markets. As many large-scale merchants either went bankrupt or invested in less risky propositions, humbler and more credit-hungry traders took their place. Near constant warfare and privateering from 1793 to 1815 introduced volatility to prices, shipping costs, and insurance premiums.

In one of *Staying Afloat's* more compelling insights, Baskes details how schemes to structurally mitigate new volatility only exacerbated it when unforeseen events occurred. Insurance transformed over the latter half of the eighteenth century from person-to-person sea loans to the pooled risk of maritime insurance companies. Merchants attempted to avoid concentrating risk by contracting multiple companies to underwrite their voyages. A trader also might invest in multiple insurance companies as they would only have to pay for partnership shares in the event of loss. What seemed like a sound investment proved crippling. Tremendous, systemic losses from turn-of-the-century warfare bankrupted merchants forced to fork over payouts for each of their multiple partnerships.

Baskes's work employs a deep reading of insurance company charters, nearly eight hundred insurance policies, bankruptcy proceedings, merchant personal papers, and official reports to offer a genuine revision of historiographical understandings of the Spanish commercial system. As he points out, seemingly archaic

commercial protocols resulted in a defense against risk and uncertainty. The book also revisits free trade decrees to reveal that, in addition to liberalizing trade, they also threatened commercial interests when paired with wartime predation. Baskes's work is an excellent primer to the structure of Spanish merchant finance, credit, and behavior. At times, the book can be repetitive in its attempts to make complicated economic matters accessible. Additionally, Baskes writes that Atlantic merchants "certainly embraced the mercantilist policies that their respective monarchs pursued" (32–33). One wonders how much this sentiment would apply to contrabandists, small-time traders, and a host of transimperial commercial actors beneath the wealth and status of the prominent merchant houses Baskes profiles.<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding these flaws, *Staying Afloat* offers a truly transatlantic interpretation of what made the late imperial Spanish commercial system tick.

Adrian Finucane's *Temptations of Trade: Britain, Spain, and the Struggle for Empire* explores similar themes of trust and war in eighteenth-century commerce but approaches the topic from an interimperial perspective. The book studies the personal relationships of British merchants employed by the British South Sea Company. The company owned the slave trade contract (*asiento*) for Spanish America and was a licensed foreign trading interest in these colonies from 1713 to 1748. Finucane asserts that empire was "a kind of strategy for some groups of subjects who could take advantage of the places that government could and could not assert power over land and trade, making their own fortunes by valuing pragmatism over ideology" (1). To this point, her book constructs representative biographies of South Sea Company agents (called "factors") and their interactions with Spanish subjects in Cartagena, Buenos Aires, Veracruz, Havana, Santiago de Cuba, Portobello, and Panama. Company papers, official correspondence, the memoirs of company employees, and the works of English adventurers and propagandists testify to the South Sea Company as an institution that brought English and Spanish subjects together and influenced their empires' development.

*The Temptations of Trade* highlights the liminality, suspicion, and doubt that individuals experienced in eighteenth-century transimperial encounters. During the rise of the South Sea Company from 1713 to 1716, both Spanish and British officials feared the potential religious conflict that company agents residing in Spanish colonies might cause. Company factors were not Spanish but were also not quite seen as British once they had lived abroad for a while. Paradoxically, the Spanish and British crowns worried that company factors could be evangelical Protestant heretics or crypto-Catholics, a fifth column to British invasions or turncoats to British imperial interests. Questions persisted in Britain as well about the place of the South Sea Company in imperial designs. Was this an empire of trade or territory? Was the company an early stepping stone to a British invasion of Spanish America? Logistical problems cropped up almost immediately for the South Sea Company. It could not procure enough slaves for Spanish American buyers and its factors overstepped the bounds of how much trade they could legally transact in the empire.

The imperial unruliness of Atlantic interactions forms a significant theme of Finucane's work. By subcontracting commercial affairs with the Spanish, British imperial policymakers created a situation and a class of agents they could not control. War, smuggling, piracy, and trade disagreements infiltrated the company's heyday from 1717 to 1728. The South Sea Company became a significant slave trading entity, bringing twenty-eight thousand slaves to Spanish America in these eleven years. Nevertheless, company agents often put their own enrichment over the interests of the empire. Conflicts between Spanish coastguard forces, British merchants, and South Sea Company employees over contraband trade and its suppression broke out into low intensity maritime warfare.

These tensions intensified until they caused the downfall of the British *asiento* in 1738 with the War of Jenkins Ear (1739–1748). Complaints increased from Spanish officials about South Sea Company smuggling and from South Sea Company officials about Spanish depredations against British shipping. Connections between South Sea Company factors and Spanish subjects that had made trade flourish could not save the contract. As Finucane remarks, "the closeness, had, in fact, been one of the factors driving the breakdown of the peace" (145).

Finucane brings to bear significant research on company agents who brokered a difficult commerce while enriching themselves. Her work dramatizes the on-the-ground experiences of imperial loyalty and rivalry through their stories. It also greatly adds to previous scholarship on the South Sea Company, which

<sup>3</sup> On these humbler (and often illegal) commercial traders, see Adrian J. Pearce, *British Trade with Spanish America, 1763–1808* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007); Alan L. Karras, *Smuggling: Contraband and Corruption in World History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010); Linda M. Rupert, *Creolization and Contraband: Curaçao in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012); Fabrício Prado, *Edge of Empire: Atlantic Networks and the Revolution in Bourbon Río de la Plata* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015); Ernesto Bassi, *An Aqueous Territory: Sailor Geographies and New Granada's Transimperial Greater Caribbean World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

has mainly focused on its presence in Britain. For a work on interimperial interaction, *The Temptations of Trade* is fairly light on Spanish perspectives at both the primary and secondary source level. Finucane repetitively describes the South Sea Company as some *sui generis* pathway to interimperial trade between the Spanish and the British. Perhaps this is true for the legal side of business, but a rich tradition of British smuggling and incursion into Spanish America predated the company.<sup>4</sup> Despite these flaws, *The Temptations of Trade* provides a fascinating and granular work on transimperial contact and the formation of Atlantic communities.

Together, the works featured here pursue salient themes of itinerant individuals, improvised communities, and imperial anxieties in recent Atlantic historiography. In doing so, they continue to unravel the frequently artificial coherence of individual imperial and colonial histories. Ultimately, all six of these books reveal an Atlantic where power was dispersed, informal cohorts were as influential as nation-states in shaping transoceanic projects, and new circumstances distorted and blended the original meanings of separate cultures.

### Author Information

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<sup>4</sup> On earlier smuggling and interactions, see Kenneth R. Andrews, *The Spanish Caribbean: Trade and Plunder, 1530–1630* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978); Nuala Zahedieh, "The Merchants of Port Royal, Jamaica, and the Spanish Contraband Trade, 1655–1692," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 43, no. 4 (1986): 570–593; Harry Kelsey, *Sir John Hawkins: Queen Elizabeth's Slave Trader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Mark C. Hanna, *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire, 1570–1740* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

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