

Adrian Leonard and David Pretel (eds), *The Caribbean and the Atlantic World Economy: Circuits of Trade, Money and Knowledge, 1650-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015) xiv, 319 p. ISBN 978-1-137-43271-1.

The economic history of the Atlantic World has traditionally limited itself to the period from around the mid-fifteenth century (when Portuguese expansion along the African coast developed) to the caesura in trans-Atlantic shipping during the Napoleonic Wars when the British abolished the slave trade (1808) and the Spanish colonies in Latin America gained their independence. The broadness of the definition of what the Atlantic World was has complicated determining its end. The traditional argument for ending in the early nineteenth century is that the slave trade formed the crucial link in the chain that connected the continents. A very valid counter argument to this has been that slave trade did not cease when the British Empire abolished it; millions of Africans were still deported from Africa to the Americas during the nineteenth century. *The Caribbean and the Atlantic World Economy* firmly makes the case to expand the horizon of Atlanticists to include the long nineteenth century. The study of the Cuban economy, its links to Britain and the wider Atlantic world proves itself to be fundamental to the expansion of economic Atlantic history beyond the traditional confines of the discipline. In this way it seems that the insight from Caribbean studies, a field that has long recognized the importance of Cuba to the region's nineteenth century history, is being generalized to Atlantic history.

One of the main questions the editors want to tackle is how asymmetry developed in the Atlantic economy. The volume is set out to be non-partisan to the many debates on economics in the field of Atlantic history and the editors have allowed for methodological and theoretical eclecticism. Answers, they argue, should be 'complementary' (4) rather than emphasizing one-dimensional caricatures of economic historical explananda such as the advance of entrepreneurial spirit or the effect of slavery. If the volume was compared to *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy*, published in 2001 to celebrate the work of Jacob M. Price, readers would quickly notice the strides that have been made in opening the field to more diverse methodologies and approaches.

In their introduction the editors curiously announce the prominence of Wallerstein's Core-Periphery model in the volume. And indeed, several pieces take this model as a guiding principle to structure their studies. What is curious about this is that the chapters that do this do not incorporate a discussion of the words of caution and outright criticisms of the model that have been coming out over the past decades. Of the 'Core-Periphery' articles in the volume the one by Martín Rodrigo y Alharilla stands out positively: based of laborious study of primary

sources Rodrigo y Alharilla traces the capital flight from Cuba (conceptualized as periphery) to cities in the core, specifically in the United States.

A volume on the economic history of the Atlantic world cannot do without discussing the Williams thesis, of course. Both David Ormrod and Knick Harley take jabs at Williams by evaluating the role of the Atlantic system in the economic development of Britain. In this the discussion by Harley is particularly noteworthy. Instead of resurrecting Eric Williams as a strawman (as often happens) Harley takes the original work of Williams seriously and makes an argument for a more subtle treatment of the role of the Atlantic world in British economic development. He argues that especially the growth of North America, which he sees as closely linked to the 'staple production' on the Caribbean island, was important to the diversification of British manufactures. This analysis could have fruitfully been expanded by taking a truly Atlantic approach to the question and recognizing that the North American colonies were not just supplying goods and offering services to the British Caribbean, but to the entire tropical plantation world of the Caribbean and the Guiana's.

Atlantic history has come to stand for the aim to transcend national history and to investigate comparisons and connections that have for long been obscured by methodological nationalism. It should be stressed that this is an aim, and not necessarily one that is achieved by all contributions in the volume, as per the example of Harley cited above. The volume is at its best where it is grounded in fresh excavations of source material, such as an exciting database of thousands of shipwrecks off the Florida coast by Chuck Meide, the insurances underwritten by Obadiah Brown or the previously mentioned study of the investment portfolio of Tomás Terry Adan in the chapter by Rodrigo y Alharilla. Insightful are the chapters that offer overviews of economic developments, for example Gert Oostindie on the Dutch Atlantic and the comparison of the rapid expansion of sugar production in various colonies in the 19th century by Dale Tomich. The volume is most innovative where it departs from empire-centered approaches and when it includes illicit trade and smuggling firmly into the narrative, as in Nuala Zahedie's chapter on Jamaica, Inés Roldán de Mantaud study of the interimperial linkages of the Baring company operating between Britain and Cuba and especially Manuel Covo's disentanglement of the complex relationship between the young and vulnerable United States with the French state, which was struggling to maintain control over its islands while posing itself as North America's 'metropolis by adoption'.

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