

Introduction

As the title of this collection suggests, our aim is to rethink the relationship between the rise of capitalist economic development, Western European expansion in the Atlantic basin, and state mobilization of unfree labor from the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries. In contrast to much of the scholarship on the Atlantic world, the essays in this collection examine the state as an agent in both imperial and capitalist expansion. Although our framework is largely Atlantic, its implications are global. The main actors in these essays are coerced workers and the officials and institutions of Western European imperial states and their colonies in the Americas. The works presented here help transcend national, imperial, colonial, geographic, and historiographic boundaries by offering comparative insights, both within and across empires, into multiple forms and ideologies of unfree labor as they evolved over more than four centuries of imperial and economic development. We hope these insights will clarify new avenues of research for scholars interested in the histories of coerced workers faced with the growing power of imperial states and capitalism in an evolving Atlantic world.

One innovation in this collection is the emphasis on the state itself as a key actor in the mobilization and employment of unfree labor. Most of the essays highlight people working under varying regimes of coercion who were deployed in both the public and the private sectors in ways that mutually benefited both public and private interests. In fact the boundaries between state and private actors and interests in the recruitment, deployment, and policing of unfree labor over time were always blurred. States routinely collaborated with quasi-state entities, such as chartered trading companies or privateers, and with private entrepreneurs to execute state tasks with unfree labor. State officials often pursued their own private enrichment through state institutions with forced laborers. Thus, the essays in this collection pay particular attention to the many layers of personnel, authority, jurisdiction, and funding that comprised metropolitan, imperial, and colonial branches of administration. We also see the many interconnections between colonial administration, quasi-state institutions, and the various human officials who made and modified state policy.

To date, studies of Atlantic economic and labor history have focused more on the work of colonial subsistence and market production than the work necessary to establish and defend colonies, and build imperial infrastructure.¹ This

¹ For two, earlier collections of essays on unfree labor in the Atlantic world see Colin A. Palmer, ed., *The Worlds of Unfree Labour: From Indentured Servitude to Slavery* (Aldershot: Ashgate

may be because it is easier to measure aspects of “productive” labor such as efficiency and productivity, or measure its impact over time, if the work results in a product that has value in a market. It is much more difficult to measure the value and productivity of what we might call “constructive” labor, work that built and sustained empires. The extension of empire into the Americas and elsewhere included a range of tasks even broader than those required in the private sector—extracting state-owned resources, building and sustaining settlements, constructing imperial infrastructure (ships, roads, forts, prisons, warehouses, governors’ mansions), transporting trade goods, and defending those settlements on land and at sea. This kind of labor might better be called the reproductive labor of empire, a labor that is often unpaid and unpleasant and therefore requires the state’s forcible expropriation of people’s bodies to extract the political and economic benefits of their labor. States’ efforts to coerce people into doing their work through enslavement, indenture, impressment, and penal servitude sustained European imperialism for centuries, but they also had profound effects on evolving ideas about labor, freedom, and empire itself.

While considering the debates that marked the Loyola conference, it became clear that our volume would need to address the conflicting views historians have brought to bear on the nexus between unfree labor, imperial expansion in the Atlantic, and the political economies of empire that guided such expansion. Most fundamental were debates about defining freedom and unfreedom. Early on it became clear that it was more useful analytically to think of various types of labor on a continuum, rather than as sharply delineated opposites. Yet the analytically comfortable continuum often foundered when we confronted workers’ own responses to the work regimes they were forced to endure. This was especially contentious in our efforts to understand the similarities and differences between indentured labor and slavery.

Chattel slavery became both the metaphor and the reality of the ultimate in unfreedom in Europe and its colonies by the end of the seventeenth century. This equation in part explains why the Atlantic experience of African slavery and its abolition shaped all forms of unfree labor in the Atlantic basin and beyond from the late 1600s onward. The racialization of slavery in the Atlantic world and its consequences for African-descended people marked a key difference between enslavement and other forms of labor coercion. At the same time, however, the labor of indentured workers proved critical in the formation of the Atlantic economy. For instance, indentured servants and

Variorum, 1998) and Paul E. Lovejoy and Nicholas Rogers, eds., *Unfree Labour in the Development of the Atlantic World* (Ilford, UK and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1994).

others forced into servitude made up the mainstay of the unfree workforce at the inception of the English plantation complex in the mid-seventeenth century. In all, close to 2.6 million indentured workers came to toil in the Americas between 1492 and 1922. Tens of thousands of convicts came as well.² Working and living conditions for both groups were often indistinguishable from those endured by slaves, yet neither indenture nor convict labor has imprinted itself on both the public and scholarly consciousness to the same degree. Legal differences between slavery and indenture made more difference over the long term than they did for those who suffered through both regimes. White servants who survived their indentures usually became wage laborers, and often rented land to farm for their own gain; few returned to Europe, although many moved on to other colonies in search of opportunity. Surviving Asian indentured servants who came after 1834 could also improve their material circumstances in some American settings. For black slaves such paths to freedom and material improvement were rare indeed.³ Imperial officials and employers never tired of emphasizing the contractual basis of indenture in their own defense, although in practice, many indentures were

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- 2 For servitude's importance in the early plantation complex, see John Donoghue, "Indentured Servitude in the Seventeenth Century English Atlantic: A Brief Survey of the Literature," *The History Compass* vol. 10 (2013): 1–10. For estimates of 1,153,000 indentured workers and 149,000 convicts who migrated to the Americas from 1492 through 1880 see David Eltis, *Coerced and Free Migration: Global Perspectives* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), Table 2, 67. For an estimate of 1,438,485 indentured workers who migrated to the Americas from 1881 through 1922 see David Northrup, *Indentured Labor in the Age of Imperialism, 1834–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), Table A.2, 159–160.
- 3 For the enslaved manumission and self-purchase were legal in most of the Atlantic empires, at least into the eighteenth century. Thereafter, particularly in Anglo-America the possibilities for achieving freedom diminished. See Elsa Goveia, "The West Indian Slave Laws of the Eighteenth Century," *Revista de Ciencias Sociales* vol. 4, no. 1 (1960): 75–106 on the variations in manumission policies, civil and religious rights of enslaved and free people of color in the Caribbean by the 1700s. For a discussion of the labor, race, and citizenship after emancipation in comparative perspective see Frederick Cooper, Thomas C. Holt, and Rebecca J. Scott, *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Post-emancipation Societies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). On indentured laborers and their prospects during and after bondage see: E. Van den Boogaart and P. Emmer, *Colonialism and Migration: Indentured Labour Before and After Slavery* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1986); Alison Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Christopher Tomlins, *Freedom Bound: Law, Labor, and Civic Identity in Colonizing America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). On indenture and its aftermath from 1834 to 1922, see Northrup, *Indentured Labor*, 104–154.

indeed forced upon workers, who often died during their terms of service. For historians it is more difficult to understand what degree of agency, desperation, or coercion laborers experienced in “choosing” indenture or, less often, even enslavement.⁴ Many early modern Europeans and colonists decried indenture as slavery, yet indenture persisted as a form of servitude even for whites into the nineteenth century.

The work presented in this volume shows that multiple forms of unfree labor bracketed the establishment and disintegration of Atlantic empires from the sixteenth into the twentieth centuries. The enslavement of Africans and their descendants in the Atlantic world has been particularly well studied and has generated an extensive debate about the institution’s role in the history of the Atlantic empires and of global capitalism. We do not intend to duplicate that massive effort here. Instead, we seek to understand the range of and interactions among different forms of unfree labor in the evolution of imperialism and capitalism in the Atlantic world. This volume shows how the work necessary to establish and reproduce empires shaped workers’ relationships with imperial states and the ideologies of freedom, legitimacy, and citizenship in important ways not captured in studies of productive labor alone. Commodity production for a market was not the only factor driving the transformation of labor itself into a commodity. For instance, in particular historical moments and settings imperial competition and colonial defense could generate sufficient demand for labor to transform labor markets and modes of labor control. We recognize that states’ patterns of recruitment and employment of unfree labor, including but not limited to slavery, were shaped in part by an increasingly integrated world market and the interests of merchants and owners of capital. However, state institutions and policies were not merely tools that directly translated those interests into practice. As a number of the essays in this volume show, state actions could be shaped by other political or ideological imperatives as well. Additionally, in some settings, the politics of imperial competition and defense could deprive thousands of life and liberty in cases of impressment and transportation, while in other settings they could compel officials to modify the terms of labor with their workers to forestall rebellion.

4 For a more detailed discussion of the many paradoxes and problems in defining slavery and freedom see, Stanley L. Engerman’s “Introduction” to Engerman, ed. *Terms of Labor: Slavery, Serfdom, and Free Labor* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 1–23. Also, Cooper, Holt, and Scott, “Introduction,” *Beyond Slavery*, 1–32.

Theoretical Frameworks

One of the main purposes of our book is to situate labor history within the history of European political economies of empire. In doing so, we illuminate how the expansion of global capitalism and state-driven, Atlantic empire-building unfolded as interconnected processes over the early modern (ca. 1500–1800) and modern eras. The reciprocal history of state formation and capital accumulation was predicated upon imperial warfare and the concomitant rise of the early modern Atlantic plantation complex,⁵ both of which encompassed economic innovations in production, commerce, finance, and labor, the latter marked most profoundly by the racialization of slavery. Brought into being through interstate competition and capitalist expansion, the Atlantic world became a developmental crucible for more integrated global networks of economic and cultural exchange towards the end of the early modern period. We have thus focused on the Atlantic as a primary theater of operations for colonization, capitalist expansion, and state-sponsored empire-building, recognizing that these processes depended critically upon state efforts to mobilize labor for commodity production and labor to expand and reproduce the empire. Despite the symbiotic relationship between empire-building and capital formation and accumulation, the existing literature on the Atlantic empires has not done enough to fuse imperial histories of the state with those of labor and capital. To address this gap in the literature, the discussion now turns to an interdisciplinary examination of four fields of study: world systems theory, Atlantic history, global labor history, and the history of capitalism.

World systems theory is a multi-disciplinary study of modernity pioneered by the work of the sociologist Emmanuel Wallerstein, who was deeply influenced by Marxian thought and the historical scholarship of the Annales School, most notably by the work of Fernand Braudel.⁶ The central thesis of

5 Philip Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

6 Fernand Braudel published prolifically. For two of his most influential works, see *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Centuries*, 3 vols., Miriam Kochan, trans. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992); *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II*, 2 vols., trans. Siân Reynolds (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973, 1995). *The Mediterranean* and *Capitalism and Civilization* were first published in French, respectively, in 1949 and 1967. For an historiographical appreciation of Braudel's work within the tradition of the Annales school, see Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School 1929–89* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

world systems theory is that the Western-dominated, modern world emerged through a history of totalizing, capitalist integration that functioned in part through interstate competition. While capitalism created one, international division of labor, world systems theory holds that the competition between sovereign states that emerged in the sixteenth century, partly as a result of the on-going transition from feudalism to capitalism, created a regional hierarchy that divided the world into “core” and dependent or “peripheral” zones. The capitalist West and its powerful states dominated the core; their colonies and weaker states constituted the peripheries.⁷

Wallerstein’s four-volume collection, *The Modern World-System*, has attracted legions of critically-engaged practitioners as well as overtly hostile critics. Both the first and second volumes have been questioned for over-emphasizing the profitability and globally-integrating tendencies of foreign commerce during the early modern era. While this critique has some validity, we find it less convincing than others that accuse Wallerstein of collapsing politics into economics, resulting in an analysis of interstate competition that obscures vital, often culturally-derived differences between state political ideologies and internal state structures. These differences shaped the contingent and varied history of capitalism’s expansion, which, apart from its partial dependence on state intervention, owed much to the interstate competition for dominance within Europe and across the wider world.⁸ Wallerstein also does little to situate the

7 Wallerstein worked out his world systems theory through dozens of publications, but the four principal works are: *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1976); *The Modern World-System II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600–1750* (New York: Academic Press, 1980); *The Modern World-System III: The Second Era of Great Expansion of the Capitalist World-Economy, 1730–1840s* (San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 1989); *The Modern World-System, IV: Centrist Liberalism Triumphant, 1789–1914* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011). Wallerstein paid tribute to Braudel’s influence by naming the Center for the Study of Economies, Historical Systems, and Civilizations at SUNY-Binghamton after the Annales school historian.

8 For important critiques of Wallerstein’s interstate analysis, see Theda Skocpol, “Wallerstein’s World Capitalist System: A Theoretical and Historical Critique,” *American Journal of Sociology* vol. 82, no. 5 (1977): 1075–1090; Robert Brenner, “The Origins of Capitalist Development: A Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism,” *New Left Review* vol. 104 (1977): 25–92; Robert A. Denmark and Kenneth P. Thomas, “The Brenner-Wallerstein Debate,” *International Studies Quarterly* vol. 32, no. 1 (1988): 47–65. For more recent work that offers nuanced, interdisciplinary analysis of how the capitalist world system evolved through hegemonic institutions that depended on complex combinations of private and public power within and without the state proper, see Giovanni Arrighi and Beverly Silver, *Chaos and Governance in the Modern World System* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1999); Roy Kwon, “Hegemonies in

modern sovereign state's emergence explicitly in the history of the imperial state. Indeed, he consigns empire to antiquity as a political and economic system that forestalled capitalist development, whereas we see the emergence of the Atlantic empires as central to capitalism's early modern history.⁹ Our book argues that competitive empire-building in the Atlantic became a forcing house of modernity by catalyzing capitalist enterprise and revolutionizing the Western state as a sovereign entity, through its evolution as a bureaucratically complex, fiscal institution devoted to war-making, colonial conquest, and colonial governance in regions of the world hardly known to its medieval predecessors. Wallerstein wrote that interstate competition limited rather than expanded the sovereignty of early modern states. In contrast, most historians argue that western European states, competing for imperial dominance in the Atlantic world expanded their sovereign dominion by administering new colonies directly or by delegating shares of governing power to colonial assemblies or chartered, public/private ventures. Importantly, as we argue here, the interstate competition over Atlantic colonization that expanded the sovereign powers of western European states, especially over people and their labor, also fostered capitalist economic development.¹⁰

Together the essays in this collection show how the Atlantic empires expanded their sovereignty by organizing economic activity abroad that increased the demand for unfree labor and the need to legitimate coercive labor regimes. These organizational priorities required imperial states to make historically new, sovereign claims over the labor power and the physical bodies of their own and foreign people. For example, states forced enemy soldiers, smugglers, those it deemed seditious, vagrants, and the poor and homeless into several forms of unfree work, including plantation labor, fort building, and military service. Unfortunately, neither world systems theory nor imperial

the World-System: An Empirical Assessment of Hegemonic Sequences from the 16th to 20th Century," *Sociological Perspectives* vol. 54, no. 4 (2011): 593–617.

- 9 In *The Modern World-System II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600–1750*, Wallerstein essentially reduces "mercantilism" to a commercial response to the crisis in European feudalism, downplaying its part in the titanic struggle between imperial states for hegemony in both the colonial Atlantic and Europe itself. In our view, the history of early modern empire-building subsumed the history of mercantilism; the latter's crucial origins in colonization and colonial commerce were associated with but not determined by Europe's feudal crisis; mercantilism, in fact, can be considered both a cause and symptom of the feudal crisis.
- 10 See, for example, Immanuel Wallerstein, "The West, Capitalism, and the Modern World-System," *Review* vol. xv (1992): 561–595 and the discussion of state sovereignty as limited by interstate competition on pp. 579–580.

Atlantic histories have analyzed these processes in much detail. Conversely, the contributors to this book demonstrate how the Atlantic empires and their colonial governments actually created a spectrum of unfree, productive and reproductive labor, calculated for political and economic exploitation to give imperial states a competitive advantage against their rivals. Political structures, we argue, played an indispensable part in the commodification of labor power and people, a process made possible by revolutionary notions of state sovereignty born of Atlantic involvements.

While Wallerstein has been rightly criticized for his problematic treatment of political structures, he should be credited with making clear and direct links between interstate competition and the “ceaseless accumulation of capital” that marked the advent of the global economy.¹¹ Imperial histories of the Atlantic world, with their focus on ideology, administration, law, language, and culture, have seldom made this link in any systematic and explicit fashion, even when they go a long way in exposing the weaknesses of Wallerstein’s core-periphery determinism. When imperial literature does turn its attention to economic expansion, the capitalist modes such expansion assumed rarely receive any sort of rigorous analytical engagement.¹² As a result, histories of the imperial Atlantic economies often lose their capacity to account for the state’s part in one of the most deeply transformative events in human history, the centuries-long transition that made capitalism a global phenomenon, a transition that depended not upon mystical “market forces” guided by a mythical “invisible hand,” but upon the drive to maximize profits that actually helped create market demands instead of responding to them, as many economic historians argue. The import of such demystification can hardly be understated, for it historicizes both the state and capital, which have been falsely rendered in the past and present as natural foundations of advanced civilizations.¹³

¹¹ Ibid., 568–569.

¹² See for instance, David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Armitage does excellent work excavating protean concepts of British imperialism through a linguistic method. But unfortunately, while historicizing the ideological justifications British writers employed on behalf of a commercial, maritime empire, Armitage’s reliance on language naturalizes a historical process, that being the progressively capitalist modes of commerce and finance that shaped the discourses and policies of English expansion in the Atlantic. As a result, he forfeits an opportunity to more fully contextualize how early modern British imperial ideology departed fundamentally from its intellectual inheritances.

¹³ See for instance Dale Tomich’s critique of neo-classical economic history in his introduction to *Through the Prism of Slavery: Labor, Capital, and the World Economy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 8–9.

Although Wallerstein foregrounds the power interests of the state in world systems theory, he has been correctly criticized for a deterministic reading of the core states' relationship to the periphery, seeing the latter locked in a condition of developmental dependency. Similar criticisms have been launched against imperial histories of the Atlantic for reducing the history of the colonial periphery to a function of policies initiated within the imperial metropolis. But Wallerstein's analysis of capitalist labor forms in the colonial periphery contains the very grounds for reformulating his core/periphery dynamic. In such a reformulation, colonies can be seen as indispensable engines of capitalist modernity, as they played host to the most profitable innovations in capitalist labor relations, as the history of slavery and servitude in the Atlantic attests.¹⁴ Unlike Marx and most labor historians who published before the 1990s, Wallerstein sees slavery and servitude as integral to capital accumulation. Indeed, Wallerstein has "questioned whether [wage labor] has been even the majority mode within historical capitalism.... It is surely not clear that in the history of the world there has been less slavery within the capitalist/'modern' historical system than in previous ones. One might perhaps make the opposite case."¹⁵ In this book, we make the case that states and colonial governments helped create capitalist systems of slavery and servitude. These governments used unfree labor to construct and defend their empires, both physically and ideologically. Political institutions around the Atlantic empires helped create the conditions in which goods were efficiently and securely produced by servants and slaves for an expanding world market. As several contributions in this book demonstrate in regard to the politics of unfree labor, imperial and colonial governments

14 David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of New World Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Moving beyond core/periphery determinism, Davis compares the slave regimes of the British, French, and Iberian Atlantic, exploring how culturally specific imperial/colonial tensions and intra-colonial conflicts informed the national, imperial, and global histories of "New World" slavery, which he identifies as a politically-structured, explicitly capitalist institution. Lauren Benton's attempt to move beyond core/periphery determinism is less successful. In "From the World-Systems Perspective to Institutional World History: Culture and Economy in Global Theory," *Journal of World History* vol. 7, no. 2 (1996): 261–295, she draws important attention to the stadial and structural rigidities of Wallerstein's model. But in her subsequent monograph, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400–1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), she fails to improve upon the promise of her insights. While she deftly recovers the social contexts and cultural negotiations that guided imperial/colonial and intra-colonial legal histories, she adopts a cultural determinist approach that abandons capitalism as a meaningful analytical category, hardly a satisfying alternative to world systems theory in explaining modern global historical development.

15 Wallerstein, "The West, Capitalism, and the Modern World System," 575–576.

often worked cooperatively, but their relations were also fraught with tensions that revealed the sometimes conflicting agendas of the imperial state and the private interests ensconced in colonial governments. Colonial governments wielded considerable if not decisive influence over unfree labor regimes in the “periphery” and capitalism’s expansion transformed the character of free and unfree labor in the core and periphery diachronically, suggesting that historians should explore the relations between free and unfree labor as part of a reciprocal rather than stadial history.¹⁶

Some of the best work on the imperial history of the “core” states of the “world system” has flourished in the literature of Atlantic history, which certainly can no longer be called an emerging field. Although its origins stretch back to the late nineteenth century, Atlantic history really became prominent in the 1990s, with its maturation marked by internal critiques from Atlanticists and criticisms by both national and global historians. At this point, few studying the history of western Africa and the Americas can now write without reference to the work of Atlantic historians, who have provided an invaluable service to historical scholarship by revealing the limitations of work that strictly adheres to a national paradigm.¹⁷

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- 16 Over the course of five decades, the Latin American historical anthropologist and world systems theorist Sidney Mintz has done much to fruitfully complicate Wallerstein’s core/periphery model, with special attention to labor history. See, for example, “The So-Called World System: Local Initiative and Local Response,” *Dialectical Anthropology* vol. 2 (1977): 253–267; *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin, 1986); “Creolization and Hispanic Exceptionalism,” *Review* vol. 31, no. 3 (2008): 251–265.
- 17 For competing and conflicting reflections on methodological approaches to Atlantic history and its historiographical impact, see Marcus Rediker, “The Red Atlantic, or, ‘A Terrible Blast Swept over the Heaving Sea,’” in Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun, eds., *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean* (New York: Routledge, 2003) and David Armitage, “Three Concepts of Atlantic History” in David Armitage and Michael Braddick, *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002). Rediker, in contrast to Armitage, convincingly places the history of capitalism, and in particular capitalism’s labor history, at the core of Atlantic history. The national paradigm rarely afflicted Africanists studying the pre-imperial era. But it should be emphasized here that Atlantic history has had an uneven impact, with historians of the Americas far outpacing their Europeanist counterparts (including those studying Britain) in terms of broadening their historical contexts through an Atlantic perspective. Europeanists who have embraced world systems theory present a vital exception, as do historians of early modern Ireland, who, led by D.B. Quinn, played instrumental parts in conceptualizing the Atlantic approach. For a critique of insular historiography and the promise of widening British and Irish history with more global perspectives, see Nicholas Canny, “Writing Early Modern History: Ireland, Britain, and the Wider World,” *The Historical Journal* vol. 46, no. 3 (2003): 723–747. For an appreciation of Quinn’s contributions to Atlantic history, see Nicholas Canny and Karen Ordahl Kupperman, “The Scholarship and Legacy of David Beers Quinn, 1909–2002,” *William and Mary Quarterly* vol. 60, no. 4 (2003): 843–860.

Atlantic history views the Atlantic Ocean, and the littoral and landed interiors encompassing it, as an historically-integrated region created initially in the early modern period by the commerce and colonization that brought Africans, Native Americans, and Europeans into social, cultural, economic and political relationships.¹⁸ Atlanticists do not approach colonial histories in the Americas as mere preludes to the “inevitable” birth of American nation-states. They instead seek more authentic historical contexts by uniting colonial and post-colonial histories to show how the circulation of people, goods, ideas, and experience integrated distant points around the Atlantic world or shaped the history of a specific region located within it.¹⁹ The essays in this collection are all conceived

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- 18 From the fifteenth through eighteenth centuries, “Atlantic,” while in use, was outpaced by “the Western Ocean,” the “North Sea,” “the Ocean Sea,” and the “Ethiopian Sea.” “Atlantic” became a regular reference to the ocean discussed here by the mid-18th Century. Whatever early modern people called it, at both the elite and popular levels, they had already begun to think of the Atlantic and its littoral as an interconnected and interactive space. See Joyce Chaplin, “The Atlantic Ocean and its Contemporary Meanings, 1492–1808,” in Jack Greene and Phillip Morgan, eds., *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 35–54. For work on the Atlantic world as an “Atlantic System” with definitive criteria overlapping with Wallerstein’s world systems theory but with greater emphasis on cultural history, see Horst Pietschmann, ed., *Atlantic History: History of the Atlantic System, 1580–1830* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2002), especially Pietschmann’s introduction and Pieter Emmer’s essay, which respectively support and reject political and economic modes of “Atlantic System” analysis. For slavery and the slave trade’s central place in the systematic integration of an Atlantic world, see Barbara Solow, ed., *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
- 19 For an explanation of the idea of Atlantic history by a figure crucial to its founding and development, see Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005). For a conceptualization of Atlantic history from one of its most influential practitioners, and one that stands in sharp relief to Bailyn’s, see Marcus Rediker, “The Red Atlantic, or, A Terrible Blast Swept over the Heaving Sea,” in Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun, eds., *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean* (New York: Routledge, 2003). For critiques and historiographic reviews of Atlantic history, see Greene and Morgan, eds., *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*; James Sidbury, Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, James Sweet, Claudio Saunt, Pekka Hämäläinen, Laurent Dubois, Christopher Hodson, Karen Graubart, Patrick Griffin, “Forum: Ethnogenesis,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 68, no. 2 (2011), 181–239; Jose Canizares-Esguerra and Erik Seeman, eds., *The Atlantic in Global History, 1500–2000* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2007); Alison Games, Phil Stern, Paul Mapp, Peter Colcanis, and Julie Sievers, “Forum: Beyond the Atlantic,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 63, no. 4 (2006), 675–776; Ian K. Steele, “Bernard Bailyn’s American Atlantic,” *History and Theory*, vol. 46, no. 1 (2007); Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, “Some Caveats about the ‘Atlantic Paradigm,’” *History Compass* (2003), <http://www.history-compass.com>; Joyce E. Chaplin, “Expansion and Exceptionalism in Early American History,” *Journal of American History*, vol. 89, no. 4 (2003), 1431–1455.

in this broad Atlantic framework, though most focus on the interactions between European metropolises and colonies in the Americas.

Studies of the African slave trade and African slavery in the Americas have had perhaps the greatest success in establishing the Atlantic as a coherent framework for historical analysis, an especially impressive feat considering the methodological diversity that marks this literature. Pain-staking statistical research has invaluablely improved our understanding of the scope, scale, morbidity, geography, commercial integration, and economic complexity of the slave trade, which brought approximately 12 million Africans on the “Middle Passage” across the Atlantic.²⁰ Many Atlantic histories focus on slavery’s economic and political impact on the Americas, Europe, and Africa, and have been especially adept in explaining the relationship between slavery, slave trading, and capitalism’s geographic expansion and structural development. Other studies of slavery concentrate on the cultural adjustments and practices of resistance that Africans and their descendants made as a result of their Atlantic diaspora. As Atlanticists have demonstrated, slavery and the slave trade made the Atlantic world a historically crucial space for the spread of global capitalism. Powerfully human histories of the slave trade have recovered the subject as a lived experience, revealing yet another dimension of capitalism’s impact in the Atlantic world and the histories of class and racial formation that it helped bring into being. We now have a clearer understanding of both the scale of the slave trade and the suffering, exploitation, resistance, despair, compassion, and cultural creativity of the enslaved. Much work remains to be done, however, as better integrating African societies into the historical consolidation of the Atlantic world remains a challenge for Atlanticists.²¹

20 The culmination of the work in quantitative history of the slave trade is available through the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database at <http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces>.

21 For an overview of African Atlantic history, see Philip Morgan, “Africa and the Atlantic,” in Greene and Morgan, eds., *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, 223–248. For statistical research on the slave trade, see David Eltis, David Richardson, Stephen D. Behrendt and Herbert Klein, eds., *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM Set and Guide* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); David Eltis and David Richardson, eds., *Extending the Frontiers: Essays on the New Transatlantic Slave Trade Database* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008). For an approach that puts the human experience at the center, see Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007). Other important work on the slave trade and its circum-Atlantic impact include John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1600* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Joseph E. Inikori and Stanley L. Engerman, eds., *The Atlantic Slave Trade: Effects on Economics,*

Exploring experience within a particular empire has been a staple of Atlantic scholarship, although in historicizing states (whether imperial or national) as ideologically-driven institutions riven by conflicting interests, Atlanticists have departed from past generations of historians who naturalized empires as anthropological givens. Again, in regard to empires, Atlanticists have encouraged “transatlantic” or “hemispheric” histories that compare and contrast Atlantic empires to establish how their histories both connect and depart from one another. Hemispheric approaches to colonial and imperial Atlantic histories have done much to wear away the rigid determinism of the core/periphery relationship that plagued both imperial history and continues to plague world systems theory; as a result, our appreciation of so-called peripheral influence on the core has grown appreciably, perhaps to the point where the core/periphery dichotomy has lost its former utility.²² Comparative histories of

Society, and Peoples in Africa, the Americas, and Europe (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992); Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730–1830* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the African Slave Trade* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Joseph E. Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Economic Development* (New York: Cambridge, 2002); Patrick Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism, and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Paul E. Lovejoy, *Slavery, Commerce and Production in the Sokoto Caliphate of West Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005); Jose Curto and Paul Lovejoy, eds., *Enslaving Connections: Changing Cultures of Africa and Brazil during the Era of Slavery* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2004); David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000). As the scholarship of the world historian Patrick Manning reminds us, the transatlantic slave trade was inextricably connected to the internal African slave trade and others that sent captives to what we now call the Middle East. See Manning’s *The African Diaspora: A History through Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); ed., *Slave Trades, 1500–1800: The Globalization of Forced Labour* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996); *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades* (Cambridge University Press, 1990). For cultural approaches to the African experience in Atlantic history, see James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Michael Gomez, *Exchanging our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Culture in the Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

- 22 Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, *The Americas: A Hemispheric History* (New York: Modern Library, 2003); Jack Greene, “Hemispheric History and Atlantic History,” in Greene and Morgan, eds., *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, 299–317; “Beyond Power: Paradigm Subversion and Reformulation and the Re-creation of the Early Modern Atlantic World,” in Jack Greene, *Interpreting Early America: Historiographical Essays* (Charlottesville: University

the Atlantic empires have also highlighted the weaknesses of the sociological model building of world systems theory, which minimizes the ideological and structural differences between states that made interstate competition so dynamic and the consequent history of capitalist expansion in the Atlantic and beyond so contingent. Comparative Atlantic approaches have demonstrated how different structural, ideological, commercial, and cultural influences conditioned imperial states and the colonial revolutions that sought to dismantle them.²³ Comparative studies have revealed similarities among empires as well as the differences between them. For example, the historian Eliga Gould has skillfully exposed how empires created legal double standards to justify institutions such as slavery in the colonies, even when they could not be countenanced by the state at home.²⁴

Intellectual historians of the Atlantic world have rarely grappled with the explicitly capitalist economic contexts of colonization and empire-building; labor historians, particularly historians of slavery and servitude, have treated the problem in illuminating ways. For example, an impressive set of studies have proven how sugar planters were far from paternalistic signeurs, despite their cultural and legal-self fashioning, and exploited slave labor within an expressly capitalist economic system.²⁵ Regarding British colonization, scholars

Press of Virginia, 1996), 17–42; J.H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006). Also see Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy, eds., *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the New World, 1500–1800* (New York: Routledge, 2001) for comparative approaches to the Iberian, Dutch, British, and French Atlantic empires.

- 23 Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*; Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France, c. 1500–c.1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); Christian Koot, *Empire at the Periphery: British Colonists, Anglo-Dutch Trade, and the Development of the British Atlantic, 1621–1713* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); David Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires: England and the Netherlands in the Age of Mercantilism, 1650–1770* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Wim Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World: A Comparative History* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400–1900*; Elizabeth Mancke, “Empire and State,” in Armitage and Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800*, 175–195.
- 24 Eliga Gould, “Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery,” *American Historical Review* vol. 112 (2007): 764–786.
- 25 See for instance, Stuart Schwartz, *Sugar Plantation in the Formation of Brazilian Society* (New York: Cambridge, 1985); Herbert S. Klein, “The Atlantic Slave Trade to 1650,” in Stuart Schwartz, ed., *Tropical Babylons: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450–1680* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Russell Menard, *Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Servitude in Early Barbados* (Charlottesville, VA: University of

have exposed how the chattel principle of servitude laid the legal and economic foundation for racialized slavery in an “empire of liberty” that made the Atlantic plantation complex a laboratory for capitalist modes of production, trade, and finance.²⁶ Intellectual historians have also been remiss in studying the history of ideas that accompanied class formation in the Atlantic. Although dismissive of the alleged crudities and idealism of labor history, self-proclaimed intellectual historians of Atlantic colonization should re-examine the myopic and idealized contexts of their own methodologies before throwing stones; employing material contexts would help as a first step.²⁷ In *The Many-Headed Hydra*, Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker demonstrated how the early modern Atlantic world witnessed the birth of a multi-ethnic, multi-racial proletariat

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- Virginia Press, 2005); Dale Tomich, “World Slavery and Caribbean Capitalism: Cuban Sugar and Slavery,” *Theory and Society* vol. 23, no. 1 (1991): 297–319; Verene Shepherd, *Livestock, Sugar, and Slavery: Contested Terrain in Colonial Jamaica* (Kingston, JA: Ian Randle, 2009); Hilary McD. Beckles, “Capitalism, Slavery and Caribbean Modernity,” *Callaloo* vol. 20, no. 4 (1997): 777–789; Clarence Munford, *The Black Ordeal of Slavery and Slave Trading in the French West Indies, 1625–1715*, 2 vols. (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992).
- 26 Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944); Hilary McD. Beckles, “The Colours of Property: Brown, White and Black Chattels and their Responses on the Caribbean Frontier,” *Slavery & Abolition* vol. 15, no. 2 (1994): 36–51; *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados, 1627–1715* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989); Theodore Allen, *The Invention of the White Race: The Origin of Racial Oppression in Anglo-America*, 2 vols. (New York: Verso, 1997); John Donoghue, “‘Out of the Land of Bondage’: The English Revolution and the Atlantic Origins of Abolition,” *American Historical Review* vol. 115, no. 4 (2010): 943–974; *Fire under the Ashes: An Atlantic History of the English Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Simon Newman, *A New World of Labor: The Development of Plantation Slavery in the British Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).
- 27 The linguistic analysis of imperial and colonial discourse often leaves its subject at face value, validating as history what really amounted to a mythology when set within contemporary material and social contexts. Andrew Fitzmaurice’s intellectual history of the Virginia Company provides a clear example of this problem. Fitzmaurice explores the civic humanist language that justified the Virginia Company’s colonial projects, partly, as he explains, to exonerate the Company from what he sees as the harsh and mistaken view of historians who portray it as a profit-driven venture. Although the greed-denying principles of the Company’s public spirited language certainly animated its discourse, Fitzmaurice writes as if language were reality. The reality was that while civic humanism flourished in the Company’s promotional material, children were being swept off London’s streets at the Company’s behest, commodified, and sold as temporary chattel property to planters who were in haste to maximize profits at the outset of the colony’s tobacco boom. See Fitzmaurice, “The Civic Solution to the Crisis of English Colonization, 1609–1625,” *The Historical Journal* vol. 42, no. 1 (1999): 25–51.

that challenged the propertied notions of imperial and national liberty during the seventeenth-century English Revolutions and the late eighteenth-century “Age of Revolutions.” Their innovative labor history illustrated the insufficiency of national analysis and exemplified the utility of deploying the Atlantic as a category of historical analysis to recover a history of ideas “from below.”²⁸

The Many-Headed Hydra revealed how the early modern history of the Atlantic beckoned toward the global future of a Western hegemonic, capitalist modernity which exulted in the rhetoric of political and economic liberty while structuring its power and pinioning its expansion on oppressive class relationships that stemmed from the exploitation of both free and unfree labor on transnational scales. As a result, Linebaugh and Rediker have helped lead the way toward an authentic “Global Labor History,” performing two essential tasks of global labor history identified by Marcel van der Linden and Jan Luccasen, two of its leading practitioners: to liberate labor history from its national confines and to integrate the history of pre-industrial workers into the history of capitalism. Van der Linden has also made a compelling call for labor historians to critically engage with world systems theory.²⁹ We believe the essays in this book have gone some way in honoring van der Linden’s appeal, particularly by adopting Wallerstein’s conclusion that capitalism’s global proliferation hinged on the exploitation of unfree labor in the early modern and modern eras, thereby overcoming the errors made by classical and neoliberal political economists as well as labor historians (often writing within the Marxian tradition) that posited free labor as a *sine qua non* of capitalist economic and social relations.³⁰ Moreover, many of the contributors argue

28 For the authors’ reflection on their book’s methods and impact, see Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, “The Many-Headed Hydra: Reflections on History from Below” in Marcel van der Linden and Karl Roth, eds., *Beyond Marx: Theorizing Global Labor Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 21–40.

29 Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World: Essays toward a Global Labor History* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); *Transnational Labour History: Explorations* (Aldershot, 2003); with Jan Lucassen, *Prolegomena for a Global Labor History* (Amsterdam: International Institute for Social History, 1999). Also see Leon Fink, ed., *Workers Across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) for an appreciation of labor history’s global turn from a hemispheric perspective.

30 For insightful reflections on the problem, see Walter Johnson, “The Pedestal and the Veil: Rethinking the Capitalism/Slavery Question,” *Journal of the Early Republic* vol. 24, no. 2 (2004): 299–308; Rakesh Bhandari, “Slavery and Wage Labor in History,” *Rethinking Marxism* vol. 19 (2007): 396–408.

in line with Linebaugh and Rediker that servitude, slavery, and forced military service converged to form a critical nexus of exploited labor that made empire-building and capitalist growth concomitant processes.³¹

Unfree labor also became crucial to post-abolition, capitalist advancement in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A growing literature has demonstrated that after abolition, imperial states worked together and sometimes at odds with colonial planters and post-colonial governments to invent categories of unfree labor necessary for the maximization of profits in cash crop plantation production and in state-supported infrastructure projects such as railroad building. A major feature of this scholarship focuses on the mobilization of Asian and African indentured workers and their (sometimes forced) migration to and within the Caribbean and beyond, revealing how capitalist political economies created labor recruitment systems that spanned the newly globalized plantation complex. Scholars, including contributors in the pages that follow, have also been attentive to how the workers themselves claimed the rights of citizens while agitating for the amelioration and often the abolition of their unfree condition.³² Recognizing that the history of abolition moved at different speeds around the Atlantic empires and global economy, examples in this volume reinforce recent work on how slavery's end in British and French colonies sparked a period of "second slavery" in Brazil and Cuba. Studies are now linking that process to the larger one by which the Atlantic

31 For an amplification on this theme in the seventeenth century English Atlantic, see Donoghue, *Fire under the Ashes: An Atlantic History of the English Revolution*, Chapter 6.

32 Lommarsh Roopnarine, *Indo-Caribbean Indenture: Resistance and Accommodation, 1838–1920* (Mona, JA: University of the West Indies Press, 2007); Emma Christopher, Cassandra Pybus, and Marcus Rediker, *Many Middle Passages: Forced Migration and the Making of the Modern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Hilary Beckles, *Great House Rules: Landless Emancipation and Workers' Protest in Barbados, 1838–1938* (Kingston, JA: Ian Randle, 2004); Frederick Cooper, Thomas C. Holt, and Rebecca J. Scott, *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor and Citizenship in Post Emancipation Societies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); David Northrup, *Indentured Labor in the Age of Imperialism 1834–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Lovejoy and Rogers, eds., *Unfree Labour in the Development of the Atlantic World*, Part III; Walton Look Lai, *Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar: Chinese and Indian Migrants to the British West Indies, 1838–1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); P.C. Emmer, *Colonialism and Migration: Indentured Labor Before and After Slavery* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986), Parts III and IV.

and world economies became increasingly interconnected during the age of industrial capitalism and European colonization in Africa and Asia.³³

While concentrating on the United States within a widening global economy, practitioners of the so-called “new history of capitalism” have shown how capitalism’s progress within the U.S. depended upon various forms of free and unfree labor, with the latter encompassing colonial and early republic-era servitude, antebellum slavery, post-abolition convict labor, debt peonage, and indentured labor, as well as slave trading before and after its American prohibition; as these historians argue, unfree labor regimes in the U.S. linked the nation’s capitalist development to a global capitalist market.³⁴

While state political institutions figure largely in all of these works as purveyors of capitalist growth on national and global scales, only scant attention has been paid to the part the state played in the commodification of people for forced service in a spectrum of unfree labor forms. We seek to rectify that error here, noting that the work of Peter Way, Denver Brunzman, and Niklas Frykman has already shown in valuable ways how forced military labor and the brutal disciplinary regime encompassing military labor, both voluntary and coerced, became an essential instrument

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- 33 Sidney Mintz, Dale Tomich, Michael Zeuske, et al., “The Second Slavery: Mass Slavery, World-Economy, and Comparative Microhistories,” *Review* vol. 31, nos. 2–3 (2008): Part I, 91–247; Part II, 254–437. Thirteen scholars contributed to this path-breaking forum.
- 34 Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Seth Rockman, “The Unfree Origins of American Capitalism” in Cathy Matson, ed., *The Economy of Early America: Historical Perspectives & New Directions* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006); Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Alex Lichtenstein, *Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South* (London: Verso, 1996). Although it takes a non-U.S. subject as its focus, that being the murder of Africans on the British slave ship *Zong* to recoup insurance monies, Ian Baucom’s *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005) attention to the financial history of capitalism and slavery is of a piece with the work done on the same subject by historians of the U.S.; the same may be said in commendation of Margot Finn’s work on the financial commodification and social regulation of the English poor through colonial servitude. See Finn’s *The Character of Credit: Personal Debt in English Culture, 1740–1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003). John Donoghue wishes to thank Jeff Sklansky of the University of Illinois-Chicago for fascinating discussions on the recent historiography of American capitalism. For a review of the literature, see Sklansky’s “The Elusive Sovereign: New Intellectual and Social Histories of Capitalism,” *Modern Intellectual History* vol. 9, no. 1 (2012): 233–248.

of Atlantic empire building.³⁵ *Building the Atlantic Empires*, in contrast to most work on unfree labor's part in the reciprocal histories of capitalism and imperial expansion, turns its full attention to how and why states, both in their own right and in conjunction with private enterprise or state-chartered companies, reduced millions of people over four centuries to labor commodities and varying degrees of unfreedom for political and economic exploitation.

The explanatory power of the Atlantic as a useful category of historical analysis has become increasingly apparent in recent years, not least for its capacity to link the Atlantic world to global history. The Atlanticist Nicholas Canny correctly observed that commerce in the early modern Atlantic helped create one of the signal features of modernity—international markets based on the mass (vs. singularly elite) consumption of imported goods. Canny's observation stands as a reminder to Atlantic history's globalist detractors that far from being enveloped by global history, Atlantic history remains vital on its own terms, while at the same time it supplies critical insights for the work of global historians. The global economic historian Peter Colcanis remarked not long ago that Atlantic history has moved “from obscurity to meaninglessness without any intervening period of coherence.”³⁶ The literature produced by Atlantic historians on labor, migration, capital, and empire, however, demonstrates just the opposite, as fruitful unions between Atlantic and global history have flourished in the wake of Colcanis' dismissive observation. The value of an Atlantic framework to explore the historical relationship between state-mobilized unfree labor, empire-building, and capitalist development is borne out below through a brief discussion of the organizational logic of the book and then a more detailed description of the book's chapters.

We opted to cover all the major Atlantic powers, ordering the chapters by empire to give readers a comparative perspective on how each state grappled with the problem of mobilizing colonial unfree labor for its own

35 Denver Brunsman, *The Evil Necessity: British Naval Impressment in the Eighteenth Century Atlantic World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013); Peter Way, “Black Service...White Money: The Peculiar Institution of Military Labor in the British Army during the Seven Years' War,” in Fink, ed., *Workers Across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History*, 57–80. Niklas Frykman, “Seamen on Late Eighteenth-Century European Warships,” *International Review of Social History* vol. 54 (2009): 67–93. For more work on the political and economic import of military labor, see Eric Jan-Zurcher, ed., *Fighting for a Living: A Comparative History of Military Labor, 1500–2000* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013).

36 Greene and Morgan, eds., *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, 325 for the Canny quotation; p. 5 for Colcanis.

political purposes, which, as many of the chapters demonstrate, often furthered the pursuit of capitalist profit-making in the colonial plantation complex. Applying a strict chronological scheme to the chapters, on the other hand, simply proved impossible. Therefore the book begins with Evelyn Jennings' chapter, which spans most of the chronology covered in the collection and offers a broad overview of types of unfree labor in the Spanish empire. She explores how the Spanish imperial state organized and adapted forms of unfree labor as its empire spread from Europe to the Americas, from 1500 through its end in 1898. The chapters that follow proceed sequentially through the Iberian, Dutch, English, and French Empires in a rough chronological order. Rafael Chamboleyron's work examines the mid-seventeenth through late-eighteenth century Portuguese Amazon region while James Coltrain looks at Spanish Florida from the late seventeenth through mid-eighteenth centuries. Beginning in eastern Brazil in the mid-seventeenth century, Karwan Fatah-Black and Pepijn Brandon branch out from the Iberian to the Dutch Atlantic and into Africa, following their story up through the late eighteenth century. The next two chapters by John Donoghue and Anna Suranyi explore the seventeenth century English Atlantic, focusing on unfree labor in Britain, Ireland, Africa, and the West Indies. The book ends in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with Elizabeth Heath's work on French Guadeloupe, an island that remains a French colony to this very day. Heath's chapter closes the volume at its chronological endpoint, but also offers a close study of how at the beginning of the modern period, imperial states were faced with a new task: mobilizing unfree labor for the post-abolition plantation complex. This process revived forms of plantation servitude common in the early modern English Atlantic and also renewed debates about race, citizenship, and colonial/imperial political relations that had surfaced earlier in the English and Spanish Atlantic. A more detailed summary of each chapter now follows.

Evelyn Jennings examines forced labor as a foundational component of the political economy of Spain's American empire in comparative perspective. She argues that the empire's resilience and longevity derived in part from its access in the metropole and the colonies to large groups of people vulnerable to many modes of coercion: soldiers and sailors, tribute laborers, slaves, convicts, and only belatedly, indentured servants. She uses the case of Cuba to focus more attention on reproductive, imperial labor and its connections to the productive labor of wealth extraction and export production. Over the colonial period Cuba served as a site for imperial administration, maritime commerce, mining, ship building, subsistence

and export agriculture, and fortification and infrastructural construction. Jennings argues that Cuba's forced labor regimes grew out of historical contexts in which subjugation or coercion of labor was mediated by an ideal of mutual obligation between the state and the workers it employed. She shows that the political and economic transformations wrought by imperial warfare, capitalism, and growing resistance by laborers ultimately eroded both crown paternalism and any loyalty it had engendered by the nineteenth century.

Rafael Chamboleyron's essay on the Maranhão region of Brazil (ca. 1640–1755) offers a case study of the complex interplay between an imperial state and private interests in a frontier area. In territory that was still largely in indigenous control, the Portuguese crown engaged in warfare with a “double dimension”: to bring native groups under crown control and to acquire slaves. Crown officials also used policy allowing or prohibiting indigenous slavery as a tool to contend with Portuguese settlers and Jesuit missionaries over access to native laborers. Showing some parallels to the Spanish empire, for the Portuguese crown Amerindian workers became an essential element of colonial domination because the state was able to shape access to the natives' labor, tax that access to raise revenue, and employ some indigenous laborers for its own purposes. Chamboleyron argues against a definition of the state that focuses narrowly on its laws and decrees as the driving force of transformation in the region. Rather he sees state officials implementing or modifying policy in shifting colonial circumstances to project imperial power by shaping relationships between groups, establishing the sites of their interaction, encouraging or discouraging economic initiatives, and defending Portuguese colonialism in the region.

James Coltrain's essay offers a good example of Jennings' point about the elasticity of imperial bonds in the complex interplay of state demand for unfree labor and workers' responses to reward and repression. Coltrain examines the twenty-year project of building a stone fort to defend St. Augustine, Florida in the face of English encroachment from the mid-seventeenth through the early eighteenth century. In spite of the colony's remoteness and poverty, its strategic importance as a bulwark against English expansion gave even unfree workers, such as indigenous peons, black slaves, and Spanish convicts, some leverage to negotiate their terms of work and living arrangements. In return most of the unfree workers in St. Augustine made “measured contributions...to Spanish rule” through their hard work and defense of the colony. Hierarchies of class, ethnicity, and race were flexible, but never overturned, and various forms of forced labor remained in place. All in St. Augustine depended on imperial support

to protect them from starvation or capture by English invaders. Most of the unfree eschewed resistance serious enough to undermine imperial control, thereby “reinforce[ing] the security of Spanish rule.”

Pepijn Brandon and Karwan Fatah-Black’s article presents a convincing challenge to the historian Pieter Emmer’s view that the United Provinces eschewed empire-building in favor of commercial expansion. They argue that while politically de-centralized and often out-sourced to chartered enterprises such as the Dutch West Indies Company, a quasi-private venture with a monopoly on the Dutch slave trade, the state actually became a key agent in the global amplification of Dutch power. Turning to labor history for perspective, Brandon and Fatah-Black conclude that despite the failure of their *Groot Desseyn* (or “Grand Design”) for an Atlantic empire, the Dutch state and its private backers relied upon military force to sustain both the ill-fated colonization of Brazil and their share of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The authors’ data and analysis match the complexity of the Atlantic history of Dutch empire-building, rejecting the simple dichotomy between violent imperial and peaceful commercial expansion upon which Emmer’s Dutch exceptionalism rests.

John Donoghue uses the lens of labor history to trace how the English state entered into its initial phase of empire-building in the Atlantic world in the immediate aftermath of the English Revolution. The state forced unpropertied men into military service on stunningly larger scales and in a more systematic fashion than it had previously in the early modern era. Naval impressment and army conscription enabled the state to conquer and colonize Ireland, win a naval war with the Dutch that increased colonial trade, and invade and annex Spanish Jamaica via a transatlantic armada. At the same time, resembling its systematic expansion of military conscription for imperial purposes, the revolutionary government remade pre-existing policies for colonial transportation into a new technology for empire-building, forcing thousands of poor people from Britain and Ireland into chattel servitude in the Caribbean, where they labored beside African slaves. As Donoghue contends, the creation of an English Atlantic imperium was made possible by another revolution in the concept of English state sovereignty: as the state imposed new forms of jurisdiction over colonies and colonial commerce, it claimed new forms of dominion over the bodies and labor power of its own people while it promoted the enslavement of others from around the Atlantic world.

Anna Suranyi explores the seventeenth-century colonial transportation policies of the English state in Britain and Ireland, asserting in contrast to most work on the subject that the transportation of Irish Catholics in the wake of the Cromwellian conquest should not be seen as an exceptional case. Her

contention is that throughout the seventeenth century, the state pursued the transportation of “superfluous” elements of both the English and Irish populations—convicts, the poor, and the seditious—for the same reasons: to seek their moral redemption through servitude, to rid itself of restive populations that were expensive, to detain, surveil, and control, and to provide cheap labor for profit-maximizing colonial planters. She argues that the state strove to exercise impartiality in correcting abuses in the Irish Catholic transportation system, but due to capitalist interests ensconced within the state itself, ultimately lacked the political will to do so. In the end for Suranyi, the state’s good intentions lost out to its population management imperatives and its desire to speed capitalist development in the plantation complex by organizing a supply of exploitable, unfree labor.

Elizabeth Heath brings the history of unfree labor and empire into the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the French colony of Guadeloupe under the Third Republic. Her essay shows well the interactions and contestations over terms of labor and definitions of “Frenchness” and citizenship among metropolitan politicians, colonial officials and sugar producers, and workers, both island-born and immigrants. The two aims of colonial policy over the republican period were incorporating Guadeloupean workers of color as full citizens in the French republic and ensuring the productivity of the island’s sugar industry. In the 1870s and 1880s metropolitan officials had some success in achieving both goals by defining African-descended Guadeloupeans as too French for the degrading work of sugar production and importing tens of thousands of indentured laborers, mostly from India. However, by the 1890s and early 1900s the global economic crisis reduced prices on the world market for sugar, ending government subsidized immigration. Similar to the Cuban case discussed in Jennings’ essay, British pressure also ended Guadeloupean employers’ access to laborers from India. As the immigrant labor pool disappeared, colonial officials eventually privileged profit and productivity in the sugar industry over republican ideals and imposed a more restrictive and racialized form of colonial citizenship on Guadeloupeans of color.

The vantage point of many of these essays is colonial in the sense that it is colonial relations of labor that frame their evidence and argument. Importantly, the colonial perspective clarifies the insufficiency of totalizing and Eurocentric models of economic transition and transformation. There was no single historical path or pattern to a capitalism based on free, wage labor. Instead as historian Steve Stern has argued “what is distinctive about the economic logic of colonial and neo-colonial situations is precisely the entrepreneurial tendency to combine variegated labor strategies,...into a

unified package” in any given enterprise. A similar “law of diversity” as he called it applied to the reproductive labor of empire building and the essays collected here show how workers shaped and were shaped by that law in particular imperial and local circumstances.³⁷

37 Steve J. Stern, “Feudalism, Capitalism, and the World System in the Perspective of Latin America and the Caribbean,” *American Historical Review* vol. 93, no. 4 (1988): 870–871.