Harald E. Braun and Lisa Vollendorf, eds.

Theorizing the Ibero-American Atlantic. The Medieval and Early Modern Iberian World, vol. 53. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013. Pp. xii + 307. Hb, \$148.

Historians of the Spanish and Portuguese empires often lamented the fact that Atlantic history, initially although not recently, tended to focus on the northern portions of that ocean, largely ignoring what was happening in the south. The response of some was to affirm that the south existed. If there was a British Atlantic, parallel to it was an Iberian Atlantic, whose importance they set out to examine and describe. For others, the requisite response was to sustain the existence of a single, yet more inclusive, Atlantic that, portrayed as hybrid and entangled, would encompass the experiences of all the empires, units, and peoples that resided along its shores. These empires, units and peoples constantly interacted with one another to the degree that studying them separately was unjustified or, at least, not necessarily useful.

Theorizing the Ibero-American Atlantic subscribes to both these currents. Including contributions from fifteen scholars of different disciplines and academic traditions, the collection both offers an explanation of why the Ibero-Atlantic mattered, and also suggests that the Atlantic dimension it seeks to encompass is meant to help historians transcend local, national, and temporal contexts, forcing them to move beyond their own area of specialization (6). After a short forward by Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra that stresses that “no place in the Atlantic world contains a past that can be said to belong neatly and exclusively to one or another empire” (ix), and an introduction by the editors, the essays are divided in three parts. The first, dealing with definitions, contains the work of Francisco Bethencourt, David Brookshaw, José C. Moya, and Eliga H. Gould. While the first three play with geographical and temporal scales in order to construct what in their view would be a coherent Iberian Atlantic, Gould suggests instead that the different Atlantics were tightly connected and could not be understood separately. The second part, concerned with “identities and ties,” includes contributions by Lisa Vollendorf, Grady C. Wray, David Graizbord, Mauricio Nieto Olarte, and Vanda Anastácio. In it, questions of gender, race and ethnicity, and exchanges between Europe and the Americas leading to important scientific and cultural changes on both sides, take center stage. The third and last part, focusing on nineteenth-century migration and the present, contains the work of Andrew Ginger, Thomas Harrington, Luis Martín-Cabrera, Daniela Flesler, and M. Michelle Shepherd. Examining such diverse issues as the contribution of Catalans to the formation of modern Uruguay, the origins of Modernism, Truth and Reconciliation, and immigration, here the main concern is the ongoing relations between Europe (or parts thereof) and Latin America

that would justify the continuation of an Atlantic paradigm into the nineteenth and twentieth century. The volume ends with an epilogue by Joan Ramon Resina, who urges scholars to denationalize history and seriously consider the multiculturalism of a zone that can, but perhaps ought not to be described, as a single one.

Readers are likely to be interested by the diversity of opinions represented along its pages. Most, although not all, of the texts read as vindications that express firm beliefs about what ought or ought not to be done. One such belief is the important contribution of the Southern Atlantic to developments in the north and in Europe. Another is the existence of a unified Iberian Atlantic that comprised both Spanish and Portuguese domains but excluded, because different from, most other parts and powers. Yet a third is the continuity of an Iberian Atlantic into Modernity and the present. Several authors call our attention to factors not sufficiently or satisfactorily considered by the traditional historiography, but that, if analyzed from an Atlantic perspective, would make a difference. Others insist that we de-construct Spain, analyzing Iberianism from the point of view of the so-called peripheral, non-Castilian cultures. Independently of the question of whether one agrees with these visions or not, *Theorizing the Ibero-American Atlantic* does a wonderful job at representing the multiplicity of opinions and ways of doing research currently in fashion. As happens with most edited volumes, not all contributions are of equal quality. However, together they urge us either to widen our horizons, or to limit them but, one way or the other, certainly to reflect constantly on how and why we choose and define the object of our research, and what the consequences might be. For scholars of Jesuit studies, this volume is likely to be helpful in figuring out how to study a global phenomenon such as the expansion of the order, while at the same time being attentive to the possible implications of cutting the Jesuit universe into national or regional pieces.

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