Francisco Colom González and Angel Rivero, eds.

The Traditions of Liberty in the Atlantic World: Origins, Ideas and Practices. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2016. Pp. ix + 208. Hb, \$120.

“Liberty,” writes Michel Ducharme in his essay contained in this anthology, “helped reshape the intellectual foundations of the Atlantic world by fundamentally transforming how people conceptualized social and power relations” (131). Yet, as Ducharme and other contributors to this volume painstakingly note, liberty, despite being a fundamental epiphenomenon in the Atlantic world, has had little influence on scholarship outside that on the American Revolution. Indeed, the concept has an uneasy relationship with the rest of the Atlantic, especially its place and role in a larger, transnational Age of Revolutions. The essays contained within *Traditions of Liberty* seek to understand where the Latin American revolutions, the Iberian nations, and the monarchical, semi-independent states of Brazil and Canada fit into a larger conversation about liberty and revolution in the Atlantic world. Given the dearth of research on conceptions and understandings of liberty in these places, this collection goes a long way in starting a much-needed scholarly conversation.

To best address these issues in relatively understudied areas, the book is divided into an introduction and three parts examining colonial antecedents, revolution and independence, and the implementation of liberalism. It is amazing in its diversity and scope, not only containing essays on Spanish America, Brazil, Portugal, and Canada, but also including contributions from a number of academic disciplines including history, political theory, philosophy, international relations, and political science. The main thrust of the book is to be as comprehensive and inclusive as possible, arguing that the “traditions of liberty” were not a “mere agglomerate of ideas transmitted through readership or editorial circulation.” Rather, they were “normatively oriented social practices with a discursive dimension,” containing “different vernacular and borrowed elements that travelled back and forth [across] the Atlantic and took root on both its shores” (5).

This theme runs throughout the book, such as Rubem Barboza Filho’s essay examining the tension between “modern” imported ideas of liberalism and republicanism versus traditional conceptions of liberty in Brazil. Likewise, Antonio Velasco’s essay on Mexican independence—and many other essays in this volume—demonstrates there were deeper, more local traditions of liberty and nationalism and other parts of the Americas were not just mimicking the revolutionary ideals of the United States and France. Likewise, most of the essays attempt to better understand the underlying tension between ancient/positive notions of liberty (political participation) and modern/negative liberty (civil

rights) that confronted all political movements, regardless of location during the Age of Revolutions. This discussion adds a complex dimension when put into conversation with older, indigenous conceptions of freedom from across the hemisphere.

There is much to be commended about this book. All of the essays, in one way or another, attempt to explore the deeper origins and meanings of liberty. Many reach into Latin America's deep past, seeing, for example, the arguments of Bartolomé de las Casas as creating a discourse of liberty that creoles of all colors could draw upon in times of revolution. Others are great examples of Atlantic history, such as Angel Rivero's essay that explores the Portuguese uprising of 1820, persuasively arguing it drew upon traditional Iberian understandings of liberty, had French and American influences, and profoundly shaped Atlantic political movements, especially in Brazil, all at the same time. Likewise, Michel Ducharme's essay on Canada provides one of the most astute explanations and explorations of Anglo-American conceptions of liberty that this reviewer has ever seen in print. His essay provides a blueprint for anyone looking to understand how Canadians defined and embraced a different, yet no less profound, tradition of liberty than the United States. Finally, readers of this journal will find much to their liking. Given the focus on local understandings of liberty and freedom, it is impossible for the authors exploring Spanish America, Brazil, the Iberian nations, and French Canada to ignore the Catholic political tradition. Many essays explore how Catholic humanism, baroque Catholic political philosophy, and Jesuit teachings influenced political culture in the revolutionary Americas. Whether creating stereotypes of Brazil's indigenous population, spreading knowledge and information about the American colonies after their expulsion from the Spanish and Portuguese empires, or helping to propagate an "international code based on Christian natural law" (94) to justify conquest and conversion, the Jesuits shaped the intellectual trends that forged Latin American traditions of liberty.

That said, there are some issues with the volume. First, the anthology consists of published seminar proceedings. Certainly, this type of publication gives readers access to the latest scholarship on the subject, but it also means many of the essays are underdeveloped and the reader is left wanting more, especially the essays comparing various revolutions across the Atlantic world. Although that is not necessarily a bad thing, such issues cause the volume to seem incomplete and experimental rather than definitive. In a similar vein, many of the essays attempt to connect the historical issues they explore to contemporary politics and political culture. These efforts, while admirable, tend to come at the end of essays and seem abrupt and out of place, making them distractions to otherwise interesting and creative arguments. Third, while this

volume draws from all over the Americas and the Iberian nations of Europe, there are some conspicuous gaps in coverage. Despite many references to the Haitian Revolution, for example, this collection does not include an essay examining traditions of liberty there. Such a conspicuous absence is surprising as Haiti provides both a Francophone and African alternative to dominant Anglo-American narratives and has been intensively studied by scholars for the past fifteen years. Finally, the volume needs a conclusion to tie the many disparate themes together.

In the end, this anthology will be of much interest to scholars studying revolution in the Atlantic world. The tension—i.e. were Canada, Latin America, and the Iberian nations part of larger processes or were their revolutions and political development the product of unique and unconnected circumstances or a combination of both—and traditions of liberty explored in this volume are important for understanding the revolutions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. While some of the essays could be a bit more developed and comprehensive, it is best to view this volume as the beginning of a new, larger, and more inclusive history of the age of Atlantic revolutions.

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