More than thirty years of theoretical and conceptual debate among historians has established the many strengths and weaknesses of the Atlantic paradigm. The most satisfying work in Atlantic history is broadly contextual, situating local histories within wider circulations, exchanges, and migrations far beyond what old nation-state-based historical narratives ever considered. *Louisiana: Crossroads of the Atlantic World* joins the ranks of the best kind of Atlantic history. As the authors collectively show, an Atlantic approach reframes Louisiana’s past, and rescues the colony’s history from its neglect by U.S. colonial historians and historians of France. For readers of the *NWIG*, this book will provide new insights about the entanglements between Louisiana and the Caribbean islands to which it was connected. More importantly, it will provide excellent models for the use of Atlantic history to situate the study of a single colony in a wider and richer scope.

The essays are various, touching on political, social, economic, and especially cultural history. The collection opens with a useful introduction by Cécile Vidal, who shows how Atlanticists have amplified a recent expansion of Louisiana historiography begun in the 1990s by Gwendolyn Hall and Dan Usner, among others. While Usner and Hall succeeded in putting Louisiana into a mainstream conversation on “colonial America,” the Atlantic historiography has recentered Louisiana within competing empires, broader economies, and a complex web of cultural and social entanglements well beyond North America. Joining this movement, the book’s essays are organized in three sections.

The first section, “Empires,” begins with a masterful essay by Guillaume Aubert which explores the Code Noir of 1724 as a response to critiques by Capuchin priests regarding the morality of enslaving Christians; Aubert shows how these criticisms combined with local imperatives in Louisiana to move the laws about slavery toward a more race-based logic. Alexandre Dubé then joins the debate over whether the French Empire was really “imperial” despite being the only Atlantic system to be governed by a single entity—the Navy. Dubé traces individual administrators up the ranks of Louisiana’s bureaucracy, showing how some were appointed from France and some from the colonies themselves. This movement around the Atlantic, combined with the local officials’ contributions, made the French system both “Atlantic” and “imperial” in ways that previous historians of empire have ignored. And if the French Navy accommodated both breveted and nonbreveted officials in their govern-
ment, Sylvia Hilton shows how the Spanish Empire went even further, incorporating foreigners (non-Spanish subjects) as imperial agents. Importantly, it was the wider context of imperial contestation in the Atlantic World that explains why Spanish Louisiana’s government was so flexible and accommodating.

Part II, “Circulations,” focuses on the movement of goods and people. Sophie White’s masterful essay explores the crime of theft within Louisiana, showing how slaves used thievery to gain access to Atlantic consumer goods that were denied to them on account of their enslaved status. White shows that similar patterns of thievery created continuity between Louisiana and France, where theft served to redistribute scarce goods among the poor, as well as Africa, where hucksterism and fencing were traditions within the African societies from which slaves originated. But if this suggests continuity with slaves’ African past, Jean-Pierre Le Glaunec warns readers—especially partisans in long-standing debates about “creolization” and “Africanization” in New World slave societies—to consider the important context in which such processes actually took place. In Louisiana, he shows, most slaves lived in a “small world,” with few other fellow slaves. Here, he concludes, it must have been difficult to reconstruct African cultures and patterns, delaying processes of Africanization among Louisiana slaves ironically until after slaves ceased arriving directly from Africa in the early nineteenth century!

The three essays in Part III, “Intimacies,” explore Louisiana’s marriage practices and racial construction within an Atlantic context. Vidal unearths a heretofore unknown baptismal record kept by Capuchin priests in Louisiana which includes an idiosyncratic typology of mixed-race people. Tracing the origin of this system not to imperial law but rather to Capuchins’ experience in Haiti underscores the Atlantic dimension of racial construction. Mary Williams shows how the shift to Spanish law in the 1760s affected the status of mixed-race people under Spain’s more liberal laws, but also how French precedent “blunted” the impact of these changes. Emily Clark demonstrates that free people of color married in ways and for reasons much more complex than those suggested by stereotypical narratives about the New Orleans “quadroons.” Clark reveals that free Blacks’ considerations about marriage were made in an Atlantic context strongly affected by the Haitian revolution and other complex phenomena. Sylvia R. Frey concludes the volume with an essay that provides a synthesis.

It is difficult to summarize the many complex insights of these rich, dense papers. While there is much more to learn from them than the simple point that Louisiana’s history is best understood in an Atlantic paradigm, that point is an important contribution of the book. At the same time, for those who do