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The Idea of Atlantic History

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When I was invited to participate in the conference marking the twentieth anniversary of Leiden's Centre for Overseas Expansion and to contribute to the conference's retrospection of recent scholarship on the history of overseas expansion, I happily agreed. And I agreed specifically to contribute a paper on what was rather casually, I think, called 'The Atlantic in the Ancien Régime'. Since I had been working, one way and another, in that area for a long time, I expected no difficulty in writing up a reasonable paper. But the more I thought about the subject, and the more I reviewed what had been done in recent studies of 'the Atlantic in the Ancien Régime' the more mysterious and interesting the question became and the more strongly I was led back to earlier antecedents in the literature. I had a growing feeling that something strange had happened, something that, oddly enough, I had myself been involved in without knowing it, something that I was in fact attempting to formulate in connection with an international seminar on Atlantic history that I will be directing over the next few years.

Everywhere I turned, it seemed, the phrase Atlantic history kept turning up, the more recent the writing, the more frequently it appeared: in every special field – in economic history, historical geography, cultural history, political history; but it was not merely the phrase. There was about all this an increasing sense of something new evolving, an historical concept, which went beyond description into a covering idea, a fresh formulation, perhaps (one must use quotation marks) 'a paradigm shift'. And then I was confirmed in this by reading at approximately the same time the inaugural address of the Rhodes Professor of American History at Oxford University entitled 'American History in an Atlantic Context' (1993) and an American doctoral dissertation (1992) and its interpretative sequel, advancing the concept of 'Atlanticization' in the early period of Anglo-American history and the need to reconceive that history as the story of a 'new Atlantic community'.¹

Graduate students are not, let it be said, like mice led into dangerous mines to expire first from the noxious fumes, but they do, at times, sense the breaking ideas – what might darkly be called the latest fashions but

what might more brightly be called signs of the creative future. For they want fresh material to shape into new figures, or new ideas by which to reshape the old.

From all of this I was convinced that I was involved in something more interesting than an account of twenty years of scholarship. The subject of the paper as it developed had become the emergence of a framework for historical scholarship which needed to be explained. Where had the notion of 'Atlantic history' come from, how it had evolved, and what in the end does it, or is it likely to, mean? And beyond that, and more generally, it seemed that I was preparing a case study of the way illuminating ideas emerge in history, the forces that impel them, and the beginning, at least, of their life cycle.

I

How had the idea of Atlantic history developed? First let me say how it had *not* developed. The concept of Atlantic history did not develop in imitation of Braudel's concept of Mediterranean history, despite the fact that French 'Atlanticists' like Pierre Chaunu, publishing in *Annales* and under the sponsorship of Lucien Febvre and the Sixth Section of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, have ritually invoked his name and the inspiration of his famous book. For *La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen à l'Époque de Philippe II* is disaggregative – taking apart, not putting together, the elements of a world. It is conceptually meta-historical not historical, based on a formulation essentially epistemological not historical. And the impulse behind it, as Braudel said himself, was not so much intellectual as 'poetic', a reflection of his love affair with the Mediterranean world, which some might say is not *a* world but several worlds. Nobody I know is or has been poetically enraptured by the Atlantic world.

Nor is it simply an expansion of the venerable tradition of 'imperial' history, either British, Spanish, Portuguese, or Dutch, though that tradition, immensely innovative in its time, was, and is, by definition at least trans-Atlantic. Both of the two great American scholars in this tradition who were the leaders, Charles M. Andrews at Yale and Clarence Haring at Harvard, wrote works of great scope, detailing the structure and management of the two major Atlantic empires in the Ancien Régime; and both were immensely creative archival scholars. Andrews in effect discovered the Anglo-American archives of the first British empire in London's Public Record Office, catalogued them, indexed them, and put them to use, as did his most accomplished students. Haring similarly uncovered and made initial use of archives in Madrid and Seville. But neither thought of themselves as dealing with Atlantic history as such – neither used the term. They were describing the formal structure of imperial governments. They studied institutions not the people who lived within these governments or their activities, and they concentrated on the affairs of a single nation.

Nor does 'Atlantic history' emerge from the great plethora of writings on exploration and discovery, works by S.E. Morison, David Quinn, William Hovgaard, Fridtjof Nansen, Henry Harisse, C.R. Boxer, Bailey Diffie, Edgar Prestage, J.P. Oliveira Martins, Henry Vignaud, Antonio Pigafetta, H.P. Biggar, followed by a whole library of narratives of the first settlements that resulted from the explorations they traced. They were retailing individual narratives by which a world was gradually discovered, not what the emerging world was like.

By World War II both imperial history and the history of exploration and discovery had matured as subjects, were largely consolidated, and seemed to invite only incremental contributions to a well-sketched scene, not the exploration of a new kind of understanding. There were institutions, laws, legal structures, revolutions, and tales of heroic adventurers, but few people, no societies or social organizations; above all, there were no large and interesting unanswered questions. The questions being asked seemed to require information, not answers. There was no integration of the themes that existed, no concept that would give the details some general significance. There seemed to be only discrete, scattered accounts of certain elements in a large story, which lay inert with respect to each other.

Then, during and just after World War II the situation began to change. The origin of change is important, and suggests a general characteristic of historiographical movement. It lay not within historical study but outside it, in the public world that formed the larger context of historians' awareness. The ultimate source may be traced back to 1917 and the writings of the twenty-seven-year-old Walter Lippmann, then an avid interventionist and already an extremely influential journalist. In 'The New Republic' in February 1917 – 'in one of the most important editorials he ever wrote' – he declared that America's interests lay with the allies and that the country was driven to intervene not merely to protect 'the Atlantic highway' but to preserve the

profound web of interest which joins together the western world. Britain, France, Italy, even Spain, Belgium, Holland, the Scandinavian nations, and Pan-America are in the main one community in their deepest needs and their deepest purposes [...] We cannot betray the Atlantic community by submitting [...] What we must fight for is the common interest of the western world, for the integrity of the Atlantic Powers. We must recognize that we are in fact one great community and act as members of it.

Two months later he was vindicated when the United States entered the war.²

But Lippmann's hopes for a formal, enduring construction of an Atlantic community faded in the isolationist aftermath of the war and disappeared in the domestic turmoil of the depression. His views of 1917 were not

forgotten, however, and during World War II they were recovered, first by Forrest Davis and then by Lippmann himself.

Davis, a fellow journalist, published in 1941 *The Atlantic System*, a book-length commentary on Roosevelt and Churchill's 'Atlantic Charter', in which he reviewed the history of Anglo-American relations and quoted Lippmann at length to argue the case for intervention. The book was a fervent political tract, denouncing 'the Axis blueprints for a New World Order [as] a sterile prisonhouse inhabited by robotlike heroes and faceless subject races' and arguing that 'The Atlantic System is old, rational, and pragmatic. Growing organically out of strategic and political realities in a congenially free climate, its roots run deep and strong into the American tradition.'³ Two years later Lippmann resumed his arguments of 1917, adapting them in sharpened form to the problem of the world order that would follow the end of the war. In his *US War Aims*, written in 1943 but delayed in publication until, a month after D-Day, the outcome of the war seemed assured, Lippmann argued that the new post-war world order would, and should, be dominated by 'great regional constellations of states which are homelands, not of one nation alone but of the historic civilized communities'. Among them, first among them, he wrote, will, or should be, the Atlantic Community, which was, he said, an 'oceanic system' whose chief military powers were, in respect to one another, islands. There were of course national differences within the Atlantic region, but they were 'variations within the same cultural tradition', which was 'the extension of Western or Latin Christendom from the Western Mediterranean into the whole basin of the Atlantic Ocean'.⁴

Though Lippmann drew on a general sense of history, his book, like Davis', was a political tract, a program of Realpolitik that abandoned Wilsonian universalism and One World idealism in favor of the protection of national self-interest. His view of the post-war world as a cluster of regional power centers dominated by the Atlantic states was picked up by other commentators and politicians. And it was picked up too by historians who were particularly attracted by references to the protection of Western or Latin Christendom, especially those most sensitive, in these pre-Cold War years, to the threat of Communist expansion. These historians – first among them, significantly, Catholics – grasped the historical importance of the underlying assumptions and implications of Lippmann's message.

In March 1945 Ross Hoffman, at Fordham University, published a broad-ranging sketch entitled 'Europe and the Atlantic Community'. In it he stated – quoting Madariaga of Spain and Salazar of Portugal as well as Lippmann – that the Atlantic ocean was 'the inland sea of Western Civilization', and that the 'Atlantic community' ('the mighty geographic, historical and political reality that surrounds us on all sides') was 'the progeny of Western Christendom'.⁵ That theme was fully orchestrated later that year in an address by the President of the American Historical Association, Carlton J.H. Hayes of Columbia University.

Hayes, an eminent scholar, a renowned and influential teacher at Columbia University, like Hoffman a convert to Catholicism and a fervent anti-communist from the moment the wartime alliance with Russia ended, further developed the idea that there was a distinct 'European or "Western" culture' which was rooted in a common inheritance of Greco-Roman, Judaic-Christian traditions. Recently returned from a controversial ambassadorship to Spain, Hayes, in his presidential address, 'The American Frontier – Frontier of What?' attacked the parochialism of American historians and their exaggerated sense of American exceptionalism, and urged them to think in terms of America's historic affiliation with Europe, now threatened by alien doctrines encroaching from the east.

The area of this common Western culture centers in the Atlantic and extends eastward far into Europe and along African shores, from Norway and Finland to Cape Town, and westward across all America, from Canada to Patagonia.

Decrying the tradition of American cultural as well as political isolationism, warning against the equal dangers of an 'artificial Pan-American myopia and 'starry-eyed universalism', Hayes denounced the neglect of this 'community of heritage and outlook and interests in Europe and its whole American frontier'. Of the 'Atlantic community and the European civilization basic to it, we Americans', he said, 'are co-heirs and co-developers, and probably in the future the leaders'. After World War I America failed to prevent the disintegration of that community, and the world paid a terrible price. Now America must recognize that 'the Atlantic community has been an outstanding fact and a prime factor of modern history' and must take its 'rightful place in an international regional community of which the Atlantic is the inland sea'.⁶

2

A major policy statement both political and academic by a leading scholar-diplomat, Hayes' speech formed a bridge between public policy commentary and historical scholarship, and it can be read today, Patrick Allitt writes in his study of Catholic intellectual life in America and Britain, 'as a historically informed manifesto for the creation of NATO and a continued American presence in Europe'.⁷ In the decade that followed – which saw the creation of the Marshall Plan, the Truman Doctrine, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, all of which gave power and substance to a general concept – the language of discussion by professional historians began to change. The word 'Atlantic' began to appear in a scattering of unrelated probes in history, especially the history of the pre-industrial period.

These forays took all sorts of forms, came from all sorts of places, and were driven by all sorts of personal motivations, in no way reflecting a common goal or general concept. But they all expressed, simply in their

terminology, a growing sense, derived from the drift of external circumstance, that the Atlantic world was a unit, an historical as well as a current political entity. Recognizing and signalling this fact seemed somehow to elevate one's historical understanding. The word 'Atlantic' began to carry with it an aura of broad awareness, of sophistication, that gave a heightened meaning to otherwise prosaic historical material; it acquired intellectual stature.

Thus in 1946 an English historian, H. Hale Bellot, in an address entitled 'Atlantic History', urged the school teachers of history in Britain to include American history in their curricula not as

a separate national story to be laid arbitrarily alongside the national history of Great Britain, but [as] an integral and vital part of the history of those areas, European and American alike, which border upon the North Atlantic, and something without an understanding of which the history of western Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is incomprehensible.

For the great historical developments in the United States – economic, political, and demographic – are not American but Atlantic phenomena. The boundary between the area which is settled and that which supplied the settlers and the capital resources is not the Atlantic seaboard, the political boundary of the United States, but the Appalachian range, the watershed of the Atlantic basin.⁸

The next year, 1947, Jacques Godechot, professor of history at the University of Toulouse and a well-known historian of the French Revolution, made his first foray into a subject that would occupy him for the rest of his life. In his *Histoire d'Atlantique*, written when he had been teaching at the French naval academy, he set out, in a luminous introduction, a view of the Atlantic as an 'immense plain without landmarks, a gigantic "no man's land", an ageless desert' – yet an area with a history, 'a long and weighty history' marked by great flows of wealth in times of peace and great battles and piracy in times of war. And no less than territorial areas, it had been transformed by modern technology. 'To write the history of the Atlantic is not, therefore, an absurdity', for that history illuminates the history of everything to the east of it, and particularly the history of modern France. Godechot continued his Introductory apostrophe at the end of the book in a concluding paragraph entitled 'toward an Atlantic civilization', but in its substance the volume was a thin account of maritime history, chiefly French naval history, from 600 BC to 1946. Since the monographic foundations for such an immense survey were lacking, C.N. Parkinson wrote in one of the few reviews of the book, the effort was 'premature'. And furthermore, he noted, Godechot was ignorant of many of the works that did exist, and 'his conclusions are often wrong'.⁹

But Godechot, though his energy may have been 'misapplied', had identi-

fied and embraced, however briefly and rhetorically, a theme which others were independently beginning to explore in different ways, for different reasons, and from different angles of vision. Two years after Godechot's book was published obscurely in France, Michael Kraus, at City College in New York, attempted to demonstrate, in a book entitled *Atlantic Civilization – Eighteenth Century Origins*, the impact of North America on Europe, arguing on the basis of literary documents that North America accelerated the growth of Europe's economy, helped make European class relations more fluid, and stimulated the imagination of Europe's poets, philosophers, artists and scientists. The construction of an Atlantic civilization, he concluded – a joint enterprise of the New World and the Old – 'is one of the most remarkable developments in world history.'

The next year, 1950, saw a flurry of statements suggesting other dimensions. From Portugal came a paper by V.M. Godinho, anticipating his later general work on the economy of the Portuguese empire, under the general title of 'problems in Atlantic economy', though in fact it only explored the Portuguese-Brazilian sugar trade. Simultaneously, Max Silberschmidt, of the University of Zurich, presented a paper to the International Congress of Historical Sciences subtitled 'Die Atlantische Gemeinschaft' in which he urged historians to recognize the fact that the dominance of the separate European nations in the nineteenth century, each pursuing its own fortunes, had given way, through two world wars, to the overwhelming power of America which had led to the integration of Europe into a pan-Atlantic community. Three years later (1953) Pierre and Huguette Chaunu published in their essay 'Economie atlantique. Economie mondiale' the prospectus of their vast statistical study, *Séville et l'Atlantique* which would appear in 11 volumes between 1955 and 1959. 'Atlantique' was for them still only a convenient term to describe a phenomenon that was not different in kind from what Haring had dealt with in his *Trade and Navigation between Spain and the Indies* (1918) or Earl J. Hamilton in his *American Treasure and the Price Revolution in Spain* (1934). But the language was becoming more sophisticated, more elevated, more suggestive of a new plane of thought. Lucien Febvre, in a typically frothy Preface to the first of the Chaunus' volumes, cast the subject as 'l'espace atlantique', a phrase which Pierre Chaunu, working within the *Annales'* ambit, would expand into the *Annales'* characteristic formulation, 'les "structures" et les "conjunctures" de l'espace Atlantique'.¹⁰

But by then, as this Atlanticist awareness grew, other historians, moving in from different intellectual origins, were making the first efforts at a general conceptualization. Almost simultaneously (1953-1954) from Ghent in Belgium, from Toulouse in France and from Princeton in the United States came statements that tackled the issue head-on. The first formulation came in an essay by the Belgian medievalist and economic historian, Charles Verlinden, published in volume I (1953) of the tri-lingual 'Journal of World History'. Long a student of slavery in medieval Europe and of trans-oceanic

commerce, Verlinden declared, in a paper entitled 'Les Origines Coloniales de la Civilisation Atlantique', that:

it is certain that an Atlantic civilization exists today and that the nations of western Europe as well as of the two Americas and South Africa are daily becoming more completely integrated within it. A civilization nourished by and based on ideas, institutions, and forms of organization and work of common origins has developed gradually on the two coasts of the new Mediterranean of our time: the Atlantic ocean.

For the specialist in intellectual history the origins of that common civilization is to be found in the eighteenth century. But the development of cultural relations in a larger sense would have been impossible in the Atlantic world without the existence of institutional, economic, social, and administrative foundations and precedents created in western Europe during preceding centuries, that is, the Middle Ages. More than that, a continuity exists between certain colonial developments in the Mediterranean world in the late middle ages and the great colonizing enterprises in the Atlantic region in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Verlinden thereupon proceeded to sketch the lines of continuity that had led to the origins of 'Atlantic civilization'.

Verlinden's 'Les Origines Coloniales' was a true 'essay' – a probe, a test, a conjectural point of view and a new perspective – which, he believed, had all sorts of possibilities for both scholarship and public policy, and all sorts of challenging questions. Was 'Atlantic civilization' not unique in its integral bindings between common economic and institutional structures and cultural life, as opposed to the Islamic and Buddhist worlds which would appear to be unified only by a common religion overlaid on very different socio-economic infrastructures? Was Atlantic civilization not distinctive in its formation around an interior ocean? Had not colonization via maritime routes, as opposed to overland linkages, made possible a distinctive political world? These were questions, Verlinden said, that one could well imagine an international symposium under UNESCO auspices discussing, with results that might help future statesmen avoid blunders.

Closer to an immediate outcome and more practical was another project which, Verlinden said, he had already begun organizing. With initial help from the Rockefeller Foundation, he wrote, he was bringing together university professors and archivists from Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, and North America to work with the 'Commission Panaméricaine d'Histoire' to publish two volumes of documents to be called *Patterns of Colonial Organization and Operation from the Middle Ages to the Eighteenth Century: Mediterranean and Atlantic Areas*. This publication, concentrating on issues of the commercial organization of colonial enterprises, territorial concessions, forms of tenure, and administrative organization in both the colonies and the metro-

poles, would provide 'the first truly scientific base for the comparative study of institutions which shaped the origins of Atlantic civilization'.¹¹

The projected volumes seem not to have appeared, nor did Verlinden's essay lead to substantive history, though he continued to write general works on the origins of the Atlantic world and its continuities with the past.¹² The movement toward a fuller conceptualization of the idea of Atlantic history was impelled more effectively and visibly a year after Verlinden's essay appeared by two other historians for whom that idea was equally compelling. In 1954-1955 Godechot spent a year as a visiting Research Fellow at Princeton University. During those months he collaborated with his host, Robert Palmer, who remembered Godechot's *Histoire de L'Atlantique* and who had just published two articles on the eighteenth-century revolutionary movement as a phenomenon 'more or less common to an Atlantic civilization'. Revolutionary aims and sympathies, Palmer had written, 'existed throughout Europe and America [...] They were not imitated from the French.' One big revolutionary agitation had arisen everywhere in the Western World 'out of local, genuine and specific causes'. With these ideas and those of Godechot's earlier *Histoire de L'Atlantique* in mind, the two men prepared a joint paper, entitled 'Le Problème de L'Atlantique', for presentation to the Tenth International History Congress in Rome.¹³

After due acknowledgement of the politics of the Atlantic Charter, of the journalists Davis and Lippmann, and of the historians Hayes, Bellot, Kraus, Godinho, and Silberschmidt, the authors swept broadly, in sixty-two pages, over all the issues, historical and contemporary, that they could associate with the concept of Atlantic civilization. A diffuse, learned inquiry, it looped back on itself to pose, repeatedly, challenging questions. Had not the Atlantic ocean, like Braudel's Mediterranean, 'become a basin around which a new civilization slowly formed, an *Atlantic* civilization? [...] Barrier or bond, such is the problem of the Atlantic.' Had there been *one* Atlantic civilization in the past, and if it still exists has it diverged into several? Was not A.P. Whitaker right in thinking that Latin America and English America formed two sides of an 'Atlantic triangle' of which Europe formed the third – and that only during the Enlightenment had there been 'a certain uniformity in ideas and values'? And further, since all that had been created by Europe's influence on the Western Hemisphere, did not the enfeeblement of Europe after two world wars mark the end of 'the first great period of American history' which had begun in 1492?

Godechot and Palmer's answers, rather open-ended, came in eight sections, which followed a discussion of Braudel's apparently inspirational notion that the history of an ocean involves the history of the lands that surround it. Thus launched, the authors moved on to a discussion of the 'permeability' of trans-oceanic routes and communications, England's dominance of the Atlantic waters, the North Atlantic triangle of Canada, Britain, and the United States, and the history of commerce in the Atlantic basin. They then circled back to the question of whether there has been

one Atlantic civilization or several. One, surely, they wrote, if one contrasts east and west. For it is clear that the civilization of the Atlantic world, for all its internal differences, having preserved in its foundations the 'idées maîtresses' of Judaeo-Christianity, Roman law, and Greek reason,

has been able to create a society more liberal and more dynamic than that of the East of the old continent. To an ever growing extent it attached the highest value to liberty and the perfectibility of the individual, to the idea of law as an expression of justice, to the conception of a legitimate power as defined and limited by law. It is less and less disposed to follow custom passively and to submit to force.

Yet, the authors wrote, Atlantic civilization has never been static or monolithic, and they proceeded to survey all the recent historical writing that had probed, one way and another, the multitudinous problems of and variations within Atlantic history as it had developed since the eighteenth century. Their conclusion, after a detour into the vagueness of the term 'civilization' as defined generally by anthropologists and specifically by A.L. Kroeber, was that America and Europe had been closely united in the era of the eighteenth-century revolutions, but since then, despite their common culture, they had grown apart.

If the asymmetry between the United States and Europe in the sphere of economics could be reduced, if the poverty of Latin America could be diminished, if Europe continues to grow stronger, if the USSR continues to live apart, if the great Asiatic civilizations develop their nationalisms and their hostile dispositions to the West, then there will be a renewal in the future and a development not only of an Atlantic diplomatic alliance but also of a western or Atlantic civilization.¹⁴

In part still politically didactic, but also bibliographically academic, and suffused with an air of discovery, Godechot and Palmer's essay met with what Palmer later called

a surprisingly cool reception. A famous British diplomatic historian said that there was no such subject. A then young but later famous British Marxist historian said that he hoped that no such subject would ever be heard of at any future congress. We were accused, then and later, of being apologists for NATO and the newfangled idea of an Atlantic community.

And the reception continued to be cool, Palmer later wrote, when the two authors' major works appeared, to which the essay of 1954 had been a prologue. Godechot's two-volume *La Grand Nation* was published in 1956; it traced the spread of the French Revolution and its ideas throughout Europe, and incidentally in America (a subject Godechot would expand

in a later book, *France and the Atlantic Revolution of the Eighteenth Century*, 1965). Palmer's even more ambitious *The Age of the Democratic Revolution* (two volumes, 1959, 1964) drew the American Revolution directly into the larger picture and assigned it a key creative role in that whole Atlantic phenomenon.

These were imaginative, notable, large-scale works, but the reception remained negative.

Not only Marxism [Palmer recalled] but a certain French national self-image was offended. We were thought to downgrade the importance or uniqueness of the French Revolution by diluting it into a vague general international disturbance. Godechot and I were thereafter paired as two proponents, or indeed the only proponents, of something called the Atlantic Revolution, a phrase that he used more often than I did.¹⁵

Two decades later Palmer was still replying to critics of the Atlantic Revolution thesis. But though his view of the French Revolution was by-passed by, or absorbed in, those of Albert Soboul and a host of other Revolutionary historians, his and Godechot's groping, tentative sketch of the Atlantic world as a community in itself, especially in the late eighteenth century, gradually acquired substance and certitude. For their view had developed not abstractly or deductively but empirically, as an extrapolation from their own documentary research. Together with the first of Philip Curtin's path-breaking studies of slavery (1955),¹⁶ their publications marked the point at which the external, public orientation of historians' thought merged with the internal propulsions of scholarship itself, the inner logic of historical inquiry.

3

For scholarship has its own internal dynamics. The inductive elaboration of research in specific subjects that has no other purpose than its own fulfillment – is in no way an epiphenomenon reflecting something more determinative than itself – is an independent creative force. In these years the interior impulses and logic of scholarship were leading in directions congruent with and supportive of the post-war political perspectives that had initially given the idea of 'Atlantic' phenomena its aura of sophistication. This was part of a more general development. In several different areas the constant enrichment of historical research, the propulsive logic of inquiry, during years of immense expansion in the academic world and an unprecedented amount of international communication and interaction among scholars, led to a re-scaling of perspective in which the basic unit of discussion was larger than any of the traditional units within which the research began. Simply by the force of scholarship itself, what I have elsewhere called large-scale orbits developing through time were becoming visible as they had not been before, and within them patterns of filiation

and derivation.¹⁷ The major locus for such fructifying research lay in the area of Atlantic history.

Before the decade was out Pierre Chaunu, embarking alone on a four-volume interpretation of the seven volumes of data he and Huguette Chaunu had published in their *Séville et l'Atlantique*, was moved to contemplate not simply Seville's Atlantic commerce in all its aspects but 'the history of an ocean'. Analyzing his mountains of documents and statistics, he wrote that the Atlantic was the first ocean – as opposed to Braudel's inland sea – 'to have been regularly crossed, the first to find itself at the heart of an economy, indeed of a civilization, diverse, complex, multiple ... yet essentially one.' Humbling himself before, while attempting to distance himself from, the apparently unapproachable perfection of Braudel's *Méditerranée*, Chaunu plunged with incredible energy into his 4,102-page interpretation of Ibero-Atlantic civilization, a sequel to his and Huguette Chaunu's preceding 3,880 pages of data. He organized his four volumes in terms of the Annalists' 'structures et conjoncture', analyzing in two volumes the constituent elements, then in the final two volumes the movement of things – the modifications, variables, gradients, and speed. 'Space' in these volumes, he wrote, was 'sacrificed to time'. The result was a prodigious panorama – its outline often lost in the sheer immensity of detail – of an Ibero-American world: not only the two continents in their interaction but the involvements of their 'archipelagos' (outlying islands, east and west) as well. Neither altogether shapeless ('aplastante') as one critic said (though it is monstrously verbose, repetitious, and self-indulgent) nor one of 'the historical masterpieces of its century', Chaunu's 'history of the Atlantic as a trading area during the hegemony of Spain' undoubtedly focused on the Atlantic 'in such a way as to make possible a fresh and immensely rewarding look at reality'.¹⁸

While Chaunu was completing his titanic oeuvre, other important lines of historical scholarship were developing independently, which added substantial detail to the historical concept of an integrated, cohesive Atlantic world. Developments in demographic history, originating in France in the 1950s, then spreading to England and to the United States, spilled over naturally into migration studies that added a new dimension to Atlantic studies.

Greatly aided by computers – liberated by computers – and by the estimation techniques of the economists, historians began a new wave of logically developing research into trans-Atlantic population movements that had remarkable results. For the first time they could count, or at least estimate in a persuasive way, the numbers of people in the pre-industrial, pre-statistical era who left the Old World for settlement in the New. The numbers proved to be unexpected, in some cases quite remarkable: circa 400,000 British to the Caribbean and the North American colonies in the seventeenth century (when the total population of England and Wales was less than 6 million), circa 300,000 in the eighteenth century. From various

German principalities in the eighteenth century approximately 100,000 were found to have migrated to the trans-oceanic west, and something like the same number came in the same years from Ireland. The figures for Spain were smaller, relative to the size of the home population – approximately 437,000 from 1500 to 1650 – and the French, with the largest domestic population, may have sent over 67,000 to Quebec of whom seventy per cent returned to France.¹⁹ The mere establishment of such migration figures was important and intriguing in itself, but that was only the beginning of a developing inquiry, and not the most interesting part. Questions followed, logically and naturally, once these figures were in place. Why did these people migrate in such numbers? Where had they come from? What drove them out or enticed them over? What kind of people were they? What baggage, cultural and material, did they bring with them? There were no obvious answers, and the attempt to find them led, by an ever-expanding interior dynamic, to even deeper and more puzzling and interesting questions, all of which spanned the Atlantic world and drew it together.

That half a million Germans, mainly Protestant, fled from the Palatinate, ruled in the later seventeenth century by reactionary princes, and from elsewhere in southwestern Germany, northern Switzerland, and southeastern France seeking refuge in more tolerant communities – that was no mystery. Nor were the decisions of the majority of that diaspora mysterious. They did the rational thing, and moved off a few hundred miles northeast to Protestant Prussia, which was trying to populate the Ostmark, or sailed down the Danube into Hapsburg lands where they were promised some degree of security. What *was* mysterious is why 100,000 of them did the *irrational* thing and undertook a grim trip down the Rhine where they had to pass through some forty tolls and barriers, to end up impoverished in Rotterdam, where they waited under difficult conditions, every passing day reducing their resources, until they could get passage to Southampton or Cowes. Once at those English transit points they again had long delays under even worse conditions, and then risked their lives on a 3,000-mile ocean voyage in vessels little better than coastal schooners. Why did they do this, especially after the miseries of this enterprise became notorious in the villages of the Palatinate?²⁰

Similarly, what was one to make of the tens of thousands of workers from all over England – farm hands as well as artisans – funnelling through London and Bristol to accept degrading contracts to work in the hot tobacco fields of the Chesapeake colonies under conditions that were well known to be at best difficult, most often miserable, at times fatal? And why do the Irish migration figures, starting in the early eighteenth century, bunch at decennial points? What happened at those ten-year intervals to intensify the out-migration?²¹

Such questions were intriguing; they developed from earlier questions and answers, and they had their own intrinsic interest. Answers to them did not serve any greater purpose than to satisfy one's intellectual curiosity

and resolve certain nagging anomalies; but once answered, they led to a broadening understanding of the Atlantic world as an integrated human community. For, from such research, moving by its own impulses, it became clear that one could only understand the magnitudes and character of trans-Atlantic migration by examining both, on the one hand, domestic mobility at home and also, on the other, population conditions in the western hemisphere. It was all one vast unit.

Thus, in my *Voyagers to the West*, I found that the migration flow from England in the late eighteenth century was not a singular phenomenon: it was a dual migration, shaped by conditions in two areas of Britain that differed radically on a dozen variables that could clearly be distinguished by computer analysis. To jumble them together not only distorted one's understanding of the migration itself but also precluded understanding the differential fortunes of the migrants once they arrived in America.²² Similarly, a young historian, Leslie Choquette, has recently explained more of the French-Atlantic migrations than we have ever known before by examining not the migrations themselves, but rather, in exquisite detail, the social and demographic conditions that prevailed in certain regions and villages of France, some of them coastal catchment areas for uprooted people, some remote, traditional, tightly cohesive communities far from the main routes of human traffic. Her exhaustive study, which developed naturally from an initial numerical analysis, proves the French emigration to have been 'essentially a modern movement', with two-thirds of the migrants drawn from the towns and cities of a country whose population was eighty-five per cent rural. And those who were of rural origins came from 'regions that were well integrated into market economies, and where agriculture was incipiently capitalist'. The implications are quite startling. Eugen Weber, in his famous *Peasants into Frenchmen*, demonstrated the growing modernity of ordinary Frenchmen. But Choquette shows the opposite: the French Atlantic migration was a process of urban Frenchmen turning into peasants as they settled into the Canadian land; and from that fact flows a new understanding of Canadian as well as French demographic history. And what we know now about the migrants to Spanish America – much more than was known before but still not enough – has been explained by similar close analysis of the major regions of Spain, and, in one outstanding study, by analysis of linguistic differences in Spain region by region.²³

As such research progressed, independently of political or other external pressures, the unitary character of the entire Atlantic world became increasingly clear. One of the recent works on German domestic migration explains in detail the existence of obscure German settlements in a remote corner of the present American state of Georgia in the early eighteenth century as an incidental consequence of the decisions of the reactionary Archbishop of Salzburg to expel the evangelicals from that deeply provincial, mountainous mining region. So the famous Archepiscopacy of Salzburg, soon to be the scene of Mozart's triumphs and trials, and the obscure,

primitive, frontier evangelical village of Ebenezer, Georgia, are part of the same story.²⁴

But there is a deeper dimension to the realization that domestic and trans-Atlantic migrations were part of a single whole. It has now become clear, through self-intensifying research, that the whole Atlantic world in the pre-industrial period formed a single vast labor market. It was an inefficient labor market, to be sure, inelastic in its operation; it was regionalized and segmented by mercantilist blockages, and it stumbled through periods of glut and scarcity that could not be controlled. But we now know that in important respects it was, nevertheless, a single functional unit.

Thus the phases of the trans-Atlantic emigration of English indentured servants correlate statistically with increases and decreases in the price of tobacco produced in the Chesapeake colonies and the fluctuations in real wages in England. When in the seventeenth century tobacco prices rose in the English and continental European tobacco markets, production expanded in plantations 3,000 miles away, new areas of cultivation were opened up, and the need for plantation labor increased accordingly. The most recent volume of essays on the subject is called, pointedly, *Unfree Labour in the Development of the Atlantic World*. It deals with labor on the Caribbean frontier and northwest Mexico, with vagrancy in Britain and the Cape Colony, and with workers' migrations and rebellions in Brazil; but its emphasis is on slavery. For it is the slave system, in all its vast ramifications, that dominated the eighteenth-century American labor markets.²⁵

The present, technical discussion of Atlantic slavery has reached a degree of sophistication appropriate for that enormous, endlessly tragic and endlessly consequential story. And as it has developed in the past quarter century – with book after book exploring more and more of the details – it has brought disparate worlds increasingly together into a single Atlantic entity. A group of extremely ingenious historians and anthropologists – among them Philip Curtin, Paul Lovejoy, Joseph Miller, Patrick Manning, Martin Klein, and Pieter Emmer, some of whose work is summarized in two important collections of essays: *The Uncommon Market* and *Slavery and the Atlantic System* – have explored the African sources of American slavery (its demographic, cultural, and economic roots in that continent) which they and others, like Stuart Schwartz, have related to conditions in the Americas. One can now see how villages deep in equatorial Africa came together with plantations in remote parts of Brazil, the Caribbean islands, and up-country South Carolina. It is not simply that uni-national studies, like Joseph Miller's superb book on the Portuguese slave trade, have followed out every link in the great chain that joined Africa and America. More than that: slavery in the entire Atlantic basin – that huge pan-oceanic oval which included large parts of two continents – has been viewed comprehensively as a single 'system', fundamental to the whole of Atlantic commerce. It was slavery, according to Barbara Solow's introduction to the latest work on the subject, entitled *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System*,

that made the empty lands of the western hemisphere valuable producers of commodities and valuable markets for Europe and North America: What moved in the Atlantic in these centuries was predominantly slaves, the output of slaves, the inputs of slave societies, and the goods and services purchased with the earnings on slave products. [...] Slavery thus affected not only the countries of the slaves' origins and destinations but, equally, those countries that invested in, supplied, or consumed the products of the slave economies.²⁶

Slavery and the labor market were only one part, though a major part, of a general Atlantic commercial system, the interdependence of whose elements has, since the 1950s, become increasingly clear. For Atlantic trade in the Ancien Régime, despite all the distances involved, was not an impersonal mechanism whose managers manipulated numbers and other symbols abstracted from real people and things. It can be seen as a human community that lived close to the production and distribution of the goods it managed.

Early in this new phase of historical writing it became clear, for example, that the merchants of seventeenth-century New England were dependent for their profits not on a stable triangular trade but on an unstable, flexible, multilateral geometry of trade that shifted in such unpredictable ways, depending on the vagaries of local gluts and dearths, that success required marketing agents of extreme reliability and skill. As a consequence New England's earliest trading network throughout the Atlantic basin became a kinship network as merchant families sent out the people they could best trust – sons and loyal in-laws – to man the families' trade in England, Ireland, the Wine Islands, the Caribbean, and the southern mainland colonies. And what family ties did for the New England families, religious affiliations did for Pennsylvania's Quaker merchants. Their co-religionists spread out through the Atlantic ports to manage the trade from and to Philadelphia. Young sons of trading families everywhere – in England as in Spain, in the Netherlands as in France – were sent abroad to learn the business at various locations throughout the Atlantic basin, to meet the people they would later have to deal with, and to pick up what they could of the most modern techniques of commerce.²⁷

The emphasis on the human, individual, entrepreneurial aspects of commerce has cast new light on old problems in the link-ages within the Atlantic system. By examining not the structure of the commercial-political organization of the Dutch West India Company but the people who devised those institutions and controlled them, Oliver Rink found that the failure of the company, which had tentacles throughout the Caribbean and reached into North and South America, did not mean the failure of the major players in the company. They knew how to exploit the company, how to circumvent its problems and continue to profit as individuals. Those who had presided

over the Company's incompetence and bankruptcy in New Netherland not only continued to profit as individual traders in the Company's once-monopolized territory but made deals with the English when New Netherland became New York and continued to trade there profitably for years thereafter.²⁸

As the years passed and trade grew more elaborate in the eighteenth century, involving more and more commodities, reaching deeper and deeper into the myriad markets, public and private, in what Ralph Davis called *The Rise of the Atlantic Economies*, the complexity of the merchant networks grew until they reached the point of refinement that has been described and analyzed by David Hancock. In his *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community* Hancock examined in remarkable detail the entrepreneurial and social lives of a group of twenty-three Anglo-Scottish merchants who rose from obscurity to affluence in the mid-eighteenth century. They dealt in slaves, in Florida plantations, in sugar, tobacco, timber, and provisions; they supplied bread to the British army in Germany during the Seven Years War, and ultimately became bankers, British estate owners, and art collectors. The key to all their varied activities was their integration. Debts incurred in opening plantations in Florida were liquidated by profits in the slave markets in Africa; huge profits from bread contracts were invested in land deals in South Carolina and the Caribbean; capital derived from sugar production and marketing provided capital for commercial loans.

Hancock's twenty-three principals, located primarily in London, had affiliates in Scotland, Bance Island (off the coast of Africa), Madeira and the Azores, the West Indies, Florida, Germany, and the Low Countries. As they calculated profits and losses, opportunities and problems, they cast their minds broadly across the whole Atlantic world, viewing, as had their predecessors for almost a century, Britain's own domain as a single great arc sweeping north, west, and south – from Britain, to Ireland, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New England and the Atlantic coastal lands south to Florida, Jamaica and the Leeward and Windward Islands, finally back eastward via the Azores to their African slaving station on Bance island.²⁹

The distances – the geographical ramifications – of the Atlantic trading system were enormous. One of the first in Professor Jacob Price's stream of excellent studies of the Atlantic tobacco trade, which linked North America to Britain, France, and central Europe via Dutch middlemen, traced the negotiations at the end of the seventeenth century for the marketing of Virginia tobacco in the territories ruled by Peter the Great. The so-called 'Tobacco Adventure to Russia', launched by a syndicate of English and Russian merchants and diplomats, failed at the last moment because of incompetence and greed, but one cannot help speculating what the consequences would have been if, as was likely, it had succeeded. If tobacco production in America had risen to satisfy directly the potential Russian market there would have been a huge expansion of cultivation,

great pressure on the labor supply which would have intensified population movements, and soaring profits for American planters and English middlemen. The fates of merchants, farmers, servants, and slaves in the tobacco-producing lands of the western hemisphere would thereafter have been intimately tied to the habits of tobacco smokers in the Russian cities, towns, and country estates.³⁰

But even without the Russian tobacco contract, west and east were drawn together in this line of trade as in others. Rice producers and merchants in South Carolina, like sugar producers in Barbados and Jamaica, Martinique and Guadeloupe, and like fishermen in Newfoundland, New England, and Nova Scotia, have been shown to have searched for possible markets throughout the Atlantic basin, and, despite the restrictions imposed by mercantilist regulations, to have reached into every available corner of that developing world, legally or illegally. It is the 'Atlantic' dimension of the early modern economic history of the Western world that seems now to illuminate the most local, provincial developments, whether in La Rochelle, on the eastern shore of Chesapeake Bay, in Bristol, England, or in a variety of West Indian and Latin American port towns.³¹

The centripetal forces at work in the Atlantic world of the eighteenth century were not, however, restricted to demography, the labor markets, and commerce. One of the major developments in the historiography of the Atlantic world in the Ancien Régime over the past generation – impelled by the inner forces of scholarship itself, by the curiosity aroused by newly gathered information and new questions generated dialectically by answers to old questions – has been a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of Atlantic politics.

Politics, that is, not government. As I said earlier, the formal institutional structures of government in the Spanish, Portuguese, and British empires of that era have long been known – and indeed studies like Magali Sarfatti's *Spanish Bureaucratic-Patrimonialism in America* (1966) transcended the descriptive limitations of Haring's and Andrews' generation, to consider the sociological characteristics of Spanish-American governance. But for reasons that lay deep in historical thinking in the 1960s one felt the necessity to go beyond institutions to the people who controlled these structures, who exploited them, and made them work – beyond the structure of power, in other words, to the *uses* of power and the competition of individuals and groups for the benefits of power. And as that subject – politics – emerged with its own structure, there was revealed a mass of intricate connections throughout the Atlantic world which had not been seen before.³²

Imperial Spain governed its American domain by sending to the colonies governors, judges, higher clerics, and other officials, mandating their regular return to Spain, and, in the early years, limiting the access of American-born (creole) elites to high office. Competition for offices in America was a significant part of politics in Spain; there was always a sizeable and impor-

tant group of Spanish officials whose careers were intimately associated with the Western Hemisphere. But systematic, legitimate, adversarial politics remained rudimentary in Spain's colonies. For power, centered in Spain and radiating out into the American provinces, remained in the hands either of the revolving cadres of peninsular Spanish officeholders or of local elites who bought their way into the imperial bureaucracy. These local American leaders, few in number relative to the politically inert mass population of natives they ruled, sought to merge with peninsular officialdom rather than compete with it, and to secure their local dominance within the sanction of Spanish law and institutions. As a result, after independence swept away the entrenched structure of Spanish authority there was no echelon of independent American politicians long versed in open, competitive political processes and the operation of representative government. Post-colonial politics, lacking well-defined and generally respected institutions, riven by conflicts of region, race, class, and ideology, and dominated by local *caudillos*, veered murderously from anarchy to autocracy.³³

In the British case, the homeland and the colonies were no less politically interrelated, though the results were quite different. The British North American system in the Ancien Régime was based on a settler society dominated by creoles like Washington, Adams, and Jefferson. Their predecessors had completely displaced the indigenous population and had produced several generations of sophisticated local politicians deeply versed in adversarial politics and allied to the political system in Britain though competitive with it. Office holding in British North America, it has been shown, was part of the patronage system at the heart of eighteenth-century British politics. The offices available in the colonies – from the most lucrative, like the major governorships, to the most petty, like tidewaiters in the minor ports – were within the gift of the patronage bosses in England and were distributed within the pressures of the system they managed. The Duke of Newcastle in the mid-eighteenth century could dispose of eighty-five offices in the colonies – invaluable assets in political in-fighting; by the 1770s the number of places in the gift of his successors was 226, and they were bestowed as benefits with an eye, not to the needs and interests of the colonists but to those of the factions in England these brokers served.³⁴

But the influence of the British crown was minimal and the imperial bureaucracy was superficial, for the Anglo-American political system was in its essence a huge network of 'informal connections ... mercantile, ecclesiastical, and ethnic interest groups that had corresponding "branches" in London and the various colonies'.³⁵ And Anglo-America's creole leaders were true politicians, competing openly for the benefits of government, supporting royal authority only when it suited them, challenging it when it was useful to do so, and working within representative institutions whose legitimacy was generally respected. When the light superstructure of royal government was eliminated, a group of able politicians, heirs to more than

a century of political experience, took control with a minimum of upheaval and quickly created stable governments.

The possible implications of pan-Atlantic politics seem endless. A series of deeply researched and ingenious studies on the early years of the first British empire argues that initially the whole system of colonial governance and the very definition of the first British empire, viewed in terms of its politics, can be understood as an extension of England's outpost garrisons, military posts governed by army officers. 'Nine-tenths of the royal provincial governors' appointed between 1660 and 1727 were officers rewarded for earlier services. Nine of the field officers under the Duke of Marlborough in a single battle, the great victory at Blenheim, in Bavaria, in 1704, were given gifts of North American governorships.³⁶

For both British patronage bosses and Anglo-American politicians there was a single complex pan-Atlantic political system, stretching from the crown's Privy Council to the provincial assemblies in America. What happened at the heart of the British government mattered to provincial politicians in America. Fortunes were made, power was gained and lost, in America as in Britain by the twists and turns of factional politics in Britain – and even by the movement of power rivalries in western Europe. Until 1768 the executive head of colonial affairs was the Secretary of State for the Southern Department, and that department included the whole of western Europe. The secretary's decisions with respect to the Western Hemisphere have been shown to have been a function of involvements in Paris, Madrid, and Vienna. There is no more revealing approach to the politics of Britain's Atlantic world than to trace the careers of aspiring American politicians as they sought their fortunes in the intricate political webs 'at home'. Their difficulties in negotiating for positions at the heart of the system, and the seeming arbitrariness of appointments to colonial offices mark a fault line in the Anglo-American political world that would open into an unbridgeable fissure under the pressure of the revolutionary protests.³⁷

4

In so many ways, then – in demographic, economic, and political history – the unit of discussion has broadened out to encompass the entire Atlantic basin, not simply descriptively but conceptually. And the conceptual level has continued to rise, taking different forms at different times by different historians. J.G.A. Pocock, in the first of three pieces on what he called 'a new subject', namely, 'British history', argued that the significant unit for historical comprehension is not the British Isles but 'the Atlantic archipelago'. This, he explained, was

a single system, a diversity of Anglo-Celtic cultures grouped around the northern Atlantic – an English, two Scottish, three Irish, and

an uncertain number of American – increasingly dominated by the English language and by veneration for, if diverse modes of interpreting, English political norms and institutions; and that these were disrupted in the great civil war of the American Revolution.

Later, Pocock expanded the range of his 'project' on 'British history' to include Australasia, but the core was the eighteenth-century phenomenon of a pan-Atlantic culture that included North America, the British Isles, and the British Caribbean, a concept that he and others explored in detail in a seminar at the Folger Library entitled 'Political Thought in the English-Speaking Atlantic, 1760-1860'. 'There are many histories', Pocock concluded, 'that ought to be written of the Atlantic archipelago and its Atlantic and Pacific extensions.'³⁸

Such broadly conceived histories are being written more and more frequently, especially with respect to the English-speaking world, without reference to Pocock's views. A study by Ian K. Steele of the nature of communications in the first British empire entitled *The English Atlantic, 1675-1740* proves to be an 'exploration of the integration of the English Atlantic', of 'the shared experiences within the empire'. It goes beyond the 'innumerable transatlantic networks of business, politics, religion, and family during the colonial era' that have been revealed in recent scholarship, to assess the 'pace, pattern, and change' in a world joined, not sundered, by an intervening ocean. Deeply contextual, it avoids the distorting teleology of an approaching revolution to concentrate on the annealing elements in 'an English Atlantic economic, political, and social community' only some of whose units eventually seceded. And more recently a book by James Horn on seventeenth-century migration to Virginia, echoing the now familiar idea that the peopling of British North America was an extension outward and an expansion in scale of domestic mobility in the lands of the immigrants' origins and that the transatlantic flow must be understood within the context of these *domestic* mobility patterns, pictures the resulting colonial settlement as one of several 'Anglo-American hybrids, integral to the Atlantic world of the seventeenth century ... closely linked to metropolitan society by ties of politics, commerce, kinship, and a common culture.' Coastal Virginia, Horn insists, was 'emphatically English, not just in name but in temperament' – part of a pan-Atlantic world of manifold expressions.³⁹

But such ideas are not restricted to the British domains. One of the most comprehensive conceptualizations of Atlantic history has recently been written by a historical geographer, D. W. Meinig. The first of his three volumes under the general title *The Shaping of America* is called *Atlantic America 1492-1800*, a wonderfully suggestive book which opens with a long section entitled 'The Creation of an Atlantic World'. Meinig's is a vast world. Within a single conceptual framework, imaginatively devised, he discusses the European discovery and conquest of America as a continuation

of the Iberian assault on Islamic Europe, the creation of New Spain, Luso-Africa, Huguenot enterprise, and Dutch and English expansion. Discovery, exploration, and conquest, in Meinig's broad perspective, was a deeply interactive process. The 'Atlantic World', he writes in a luminous passage,

was the scene of a vast interaction rather than merely the transfer of Europeans onto American shores. Instead of a European discovery of a new world, we might better consider it as a sudden and harsh encounter between two old worlds that transformed both and integrated them into a single New World. Our focus is upon the creation of new human geographies resulting from this interaction, and that means those developing not only westward upon the body of America but eastward upon the body of Europe, and inward upon and laterally along the body of Africa. For it is certain that the geography of each was changed: radically on the American side [...] more subtly on the European side, with new movements of people, goods, capital, and information flowing through an established spatial system and slowly altering its proportions and directions; slowly and unevenly on the African side, making connections with existing commercial systems but eventually grotesquely altering the scale and meaning of old institutions.¹⁰

What Meinig finds at the 'macro' level, Ida Altman finds in her microscopic study of the emigration to America from two inland communities in Spain's Extremadura:

From the sixteenth century on the Atlantic did not separate Old World and New but rather bound them together; the currents of influence and impact flowed in both directions [...] to people in places like Cáceres and Trujillo the Indies quickly came to represent not an exotic and distant destination that attracted only the most adventurous but a sphere in which they, their relatives, and acquaintances were directly and indirectly involved.

And the interactive German connections in law have recently been examined, by A.G. Roeber, in the case of the German Lutherans. His *Palatines, Liberty, and Property* is a detailed account of the absorption of the complex quadri-dimensional system of property law in southwestern Germany and northern Switzerland into the Anglo-juridical world of Pennsylvania.¹¹

5

Why do such books appear? Why does Pocock seize on the notion of an Atlantic cultural archipelago to explain great reaches of early modern history? Why does Steele focus on the integrative not the fissiparous elements of the Atlantic world? Why does Horn find so illuminating the unsurprising notion that the North American colonies in the seventeenth

century were English hybrids? Why does Meinig enclose a quarter of the globe into a single conceptual scheme? Why does Roeber burrow in the utterly obscure records of thirty-six villages in Württemberg, the Kraichgau, the Palatinate, and Hesse in order to grasp aspects of the concept of liberty that later developed in Revolutionary America?

Partly, I think, because the public context of our lives has expanded since World War II – partly because the inner propulsions of scholarship have led us there – and partly also because we live at a time when the academic world is far more cosmopolitan than it has ever been. Pocock is a New Zealander, educated in England; he has taught all his professional life in the United States. Steele, a Canadian, was also educated in England, and teaches American history in western Ontario. Meinig's bachelor's degree was in the School of Foreign Service in Georgetown University, and he has taught and lived in Scotland and Australia. Horn is an Englishman whose extensive research in America was made possible by fellowships and grants from the Fulbright Commission, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Johns Hopkins University, the American Philosophical Society, the American Historical Association, the Virginia Center for the Humanities, and the Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History at Harvard University. Western affluence has allowed us to roam the globe as scholars; perspectives broaden, along with intellectual ambitions.

But beyond all that, there comes a moment when historians, wherever they may be located and whatever their personal backgrounds, blink their eyes and suddenly see within a mass of scattered information a new configuration that has a general meaning never grasped before, an emergent pattern that has some kind of enhanced explanatory power. That happened somewhere along the line in the past three decades, to bring the idea of Atlantic history into focus. Those glowing moments of illumination, suffusing at different times and in different ways the thought of many historians working on many problems, are where the real excitement lies.

Notes

- 1 Daniel W. Howe, *American History in an Atlantic Context* (Oxford 1993); Alison F. Games, 'Venturers, Vagrants and Vessels of Glory: Migration from England to the Colonies under Charles I' (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania 1992); 'Games, Migration and the Evolution of the British Atlantic World under Charles I' (paper presented to the American Historical Association, 1995) 10-11.
- 2 *The New Republic* (17 February 1917) 60; Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (Boston 1980) 111; Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (Princeton 1992) 119-120, 127, 201.
- 3 Forrest Davis, *The Atlantic System* (New York 1941) xi.
- 4 Walter Lippmann, *US War Aims* (Boston 1944) 78, 87; Steel, *Lippmann*, 339, 380, 404 ff.
- 5 Ross Hoffman, 'Europe and the Atlantic Community', *Thought* 20 (1945) 25, 34. For his approach to the formulation of 1945, see his *The Great Republic* (New York 1942) chap. 6. On Hoffman, see Patrick Allitt, *Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America, 1950-1985* (Ithaca 1993) 49-58. I wish to thank Professor John McGreevy for suggestions on the role of Catholic intellectuals in the public policy debates of this era and Professor Allitt for allowing me to see the manuscript of his forthcoming book, *The Convert Era in Catholic Intellectual History: Britain and America, 1825-1962*, which includes valuable information on Carlton Hayes.
- 6 Carlton J.H. Hayes, 'The American Frontier - Frontier of What?', *American Historical Review* 51/2 (1946) 206, 210, 208, 213.
- 7 Allitt, *Convert Era* (MS), chap. 8, 36.
- 8 H. Hale Bellot, 'Atlantic History', *History* 31 (1946) 61-62.
- 9 Robert R. Palmer, 'American Historians Remember Jacques Godechot', *French Historical Studies* 61 (1990) 882; Godechot, *Histoire de L'Atlantique* (Paris 1947) 1, 2, 332-333; C.N. Parkinson, *History* 34 (n.s.; 1949) 260. Five years later Godechot was still thinking of the Atlantic in narrow terms, as the source of economic problems for French coastal towns that led to grievances and appeals for help from the national government on the eve of the Revolution. Godechot, 'La France et les Problèmes de l'Atlantique à la Veille de la Révolution', *Revue du Nord* 39/142 (1954) 231-244.
- 10 Michael Kraus, *The Atlantic Civilization: Eighteenth-Century Origins* (Ithaca 1966) viii, 308-314; Vitorino Margalhaes Godinho, 'Problèmes d'Economie Atlantique: Le Portugal, les Flottes du Sucre et les Flottes de l'Or (1670-1770)', *Annales ESC* 5/2 (1950) 184-197; Max Silberschmidt, 'Wirtschaftshistorische Aspekte der Neueren Geschichte: Die Atlantische Gemeinschaft', *Historische Zeitschrift* 171 (1951) 245-261; Huguette and Pierre Chaunu, 'Economie Atlantique. Economie Mondiale (1504-1650): Problèmes de Fait et de Méthode', *Journal of World History* 1 (1953) 91-104 (English translation in Peter Earle ed., *Essays in European History, 1500-1800* (Oxford 1974) 113-126); Huguette and Pierre Chaunu, *Séville et l'Atlantique* (1504-1650) 1 (Paris 1955) ix.
- 11 Charles Verlinden, 'Les Origines Coloniales de la Civilisation Atlantique', *Journal of World History* 1 (1953) 378, 398, 383.
- 12 Culminating in his comprehensive work, *Les Origines de la Civilisation Atlantique, de la Renaissance à l'Age des Lumières* (Paris 1966).
- 13 Palmer, 'American Historians Remember Jacques Godechot', 882; Palmer, 'The World Revolution of the West, 1763-1801', *Political Science Quarterly* 69 (1954) 4; Palmer, 'Reflections on the French Revolution', *ibid.*, 57 (1952) 66.
- 14 Jacques Godechot and Robert R. Palmer, 'Le Problème de l'Atlantique du XVIIIème au XXème Siècle', *Relazioni del X Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche, Storia Contemporanea V* (Florence 1955) 175-177, 180, 202, 208, 207, 204, 216-219, 238.
- 15 Palmer, 'American Historians Remember Jacques Godechot', 882-883.
- 16 After noting that 'each generation finds its historical questions set, to an extent, by its current problems' and that 'the history of the West Indies in the nineteenth century is brought into a new focus by the experience of Africa in the twentieth', Curtin introduced his dissertation on Jamaica by explaining how the 'South Atlantic System' had operated for two centuries and what its breakup meant. But in its substance the book is a model of monographic scholarship, free of any tendentious 'relevance'. Philip Curtin, *Two Jamaica's: The Role of Ideas in a Tropical Colony, 1830-1865* (Cambridge MA 1955) viii, 4-6.
- 17 Bailyn, 'The Challenge of Modern Historiography', *American Historical Review* 87/1 (1982) 11-18.
- 18 Chaunu, *Séville et l'Atlantique* VIII/1 (Paris 1959) xiii, 5, 7-8, 12-16; Manoel Cardozo review, *American Historical Review* 68/2 (1963) 437-438; Roland Hussey review, *ibid.*, 63/3 (1958) 731.
- 19 Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West* (New York 1986) 24-26; Leslie Choquette, 'Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French North America', *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 104/1 (1994) 30.
- 20 Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America* (New York 1986) chap. 1.
- 21 Russell R. Menard, 'British Migration to the Chesapeake Colonies in the Seventeenth Century', Lois G. Carr et al. eds, *Colonial Chesapeake Society* (Chapel Hill 1988) 99-132; David W. Galenson, *White Servitude in Colonial America* (Cambridge UK 1981) esp. appendixes H-1.
- 22 Bailyn, *Voyagers*, esp. chap. 5.
- 23 Choquette, 'French Emigration to Canada in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries' (Doctoral dissertation; Harvard University 1988), summarized in Choquette, 'Frenchmen into Peasants'; Peter Boyd-Bowman, 'Spanish Emigrants to the Indies, 1595-1598: A Profile', and Magnus Mörner, 'Spanish Migration to the New World prior to 1810: A Report on the State of the Research' in: Fredi Chiappelli ed., *First Images of America: The Impact of the New World on the Old II* (Berkeley 1976) 723-782; Boyd-Bowman, *Patterns of Spanish Emigration to the New World (1493-1580)* (Buffalo 1973).
- 24 Mack Walker, *The Salzburg Transaction: Expulsion and Redemption in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Ithaca 1992) 140; George F. Jones, *The Salzburger Story* (Athens GA 1984).
- 25 Menard, 'British Migration', 116 and Table 5; John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill 1985) 119-128, 135; Paul E. Lovejoy and Nicholas Rogers eds, *Unfree Labour in the Development of the Atlantic World* (Ilford 1994).
- 26 Henry A. Gemery and Jan S. Hogendorn eds, *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York 1979); Barbara L. Solow ed., *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System* (Cambridge UK 1991) 1. Cf. Curtin, *Two Jamaica's*.
- 27 Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge MA 1955) 87-91; Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682-1763* (reprint; New York 1963) 89-95; Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill 1986) 61.
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Cherchez la Femme

Gender-Related Issues in Eighteenth-Century Elmina¹

NATALIE EVERTS

The most peculiar custom here is the marriage of our Europeans with the girls of the country. They call it 'cassares', a name derived from Portuguese which means 'make a home'. When an European arrives on the coast his first efforts are to find himself such a housewife.

P.E. Isert (1789).²

Once the black woman has given him some mulatto children, the white man loves them just as much as a man cares for his lawfully wedded wife and his children in Europe.

L.F. Römer (1760).³

Introduction

In June 1760 Nicolaas Heinsius, Dutch factor in service of the West India Company (WIC) on the Gold Coast, and commander of fortress Batenstein at Butri, took the law into his own hands. He pawned three slaves owned by the black woman Paraba, because she had, in name of her *abusua* (matrilineal descent group) appropriated the inheritance of his deceased African concubine and, what is more, she had told Heinsius that she intended to take care of the raising of his Euro-African son. In a letter to his superiors, who resided at Elmina castle, he accounted for his action. Heinsius explained that he acted not for himself but in his little son's interests, the latter being, so he thought, according to indigenous law, the sole heir to his mother's legacy. The reaction he received from the president and the council at Elmina contained a sharp reprimand. The WIC-authorities designated his claim on the inheritance as unlawful and contrary to customary law, and ordered him to immediately return the slaves.⁴

A conflict such as this one provides some understanding in the subtlety of relations between European traders and their African host societies. The example, taken from the sources, tells us that Heinsius was not an outsider, because he was entangled with the indigenous world in the most intimate