"The New World's Atlantic: Recent Orientations from the Americas"

Edward P. Pompeian

College of William and Mary

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Within the last fifteen years, the field of Atlantic World history has matured, and a "new" history is in the making to account for a wider range of peoples, places, and processes than we have typically associated it with. These developments should come as no surprise. From its intellectual and scholarly inception in the mid-twentieth century, the concept of the Atlantic World offered historians novel tools and hermeneutics to investigate and reconsider questions about the early modern era's economies and societies. It enabled historians to apply increasingly complex and often comparative analysis to the examination of labor regimes like plantation slavery or the development of economic systems like capitalism in the American crucible of colonialism and imperialism. It reinvigorated efforts to transcend national borders and place transnational actors, subjects, and processes at the forefront of historical inquiry in our increasingly self-conscious period of globalization since 1990. Within the last fifteen years, the approach and methodology has attracted a legion of practitioners and rightly spawned a multiplicity of Atlantic Worlds, thanks to historians who have continued to question and debate the benefits and shortcomings of the Atlantic World frameworks. That the "Atlantic World" lost its singularity and splintered into a diverse and pluralized British, French, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, and African "Atlantic Worlds," is neither the latest nor will it be the last evolution in the scholarship, however.[1]

Today, a "new" Atlantic history is being written and practiced on a global scale. This "new"—what I will call, for lack of a better phraseology—world's Atlantic history appears unlimited by oceanic, geographic, political, or academic boundaries.[2] Due to vigorous scholarly

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[1] For overviews of the field of Atlantic History see Peter A. Coclanis, "Drang Nach Osten: Bernard Bailyn, the World-Island, and the Idea of Atlantic History," *Journal of World History*, 13 no. 1 (Spring 2002): 160-82; Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Alison Games, "Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities," *American Historical Review*, 111 no. 3 (June 2006): 741-57. For the proliferation of national or imperial Atlantic Worlds see, for example, Peter A. Coclanis, ed., *The Atlantic Economy During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999; David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Martin Elsky, Gauvin Alexander Bailey, Carla Rahn Phillips, and Liza Voigt, "Spain and Spanish America in the Early Modern Atlantic World: Current Trends in Scholarship," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 62 no. 1 (Spring 2009): 1-60; Allan J. Kuethe and Kenneth J. Andrien, *The Spanish Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century, War and the Bourbon Reforms, 1713-1796* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Benjamin Breen, "Hybrid Atlantics: Future Directions for the History of the Atlantic World," *History Compass*, 11 no. 8 (2013): 597-609 The multiple and disintegrated Atlantic Worlds based on national-centric narratives are now reified in Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Atlantic History: A Critical Apprisal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) and Nicholas Canny and Philip Morgan, eds., *Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World, 1760-1820* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[2] I have chosen the designation, "world's Atlantic history," because it accounts for the complex translocality that defines the recent scholarly endeavors to trace the connected histories of the Atlantic World and *locales* outside of Western Europe, North America, South America, and Africa. For an explanation of translocal history see Dominic

research, it is now hardly possible to imagine "a largely self-contained Atlantic world" prior to 1800, as Nicholas Canny insisted was the case only ten years ago.[3] Although the most careful and able practitioners of this globalized history may lack a shared "school of thought" or be ill-inclined to embrace one, they have been building a growing historiographical structure to support the notion that, in the words of Philip J. Stern, "global engagements [were] a kind of norm, rather than an oddity and exception" in the early modern period.[4] All these developments reflect how, with the exception of digital humanities, academic globalism may be the defining intellectual trend of the past fifteen years within not only the historical discipline but also in the study of the human experience at large.

What is the "new" world's Atlantic history and what does it portend for historians of early America in 2014? Firstly, the world's Atlantic history aspires to track the exchanges, movements, transfers, and re-transfers of people, ideas, and commodities across oceans and earthly limits.[5] It is the product of historians who could not ignore the fact that the goods,

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Sachsenmaier, "Introduction: Neglected Diversities" in *Global Perspective on Global History: Theories and Approaches in a Connected World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1-10. Some have called the trend away from a British Atlantic focus the "New Atlantic History." Others have suggested historians "move beyond" Atlantic History by adding a "global perspective" or substituting "global" or "world" history for Atlantic History. Like Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Erik R. Seeman, I believe global history has influenced the new historiographical trend significantly, but I consider what is now taking place a different and distinct intellectual endeavor from Atlantic History proper. See David Eltis, "Atlantic History in Global Perspective," *Itinerario* 23 no. 2 (July 1999): 141-61; Alison Games, "Beyond the Atlantic: English Globetrotters and Transoceanic Connections," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 63 no. 4 (October 2006): 675-92; Coclanis, "Atlantic World or Atlantic/World?" *William and Mary Quarterly*, 63 no. 4 (October 2006): 725-42; Philip J. Stern, "British Asia and British Atlantic: Comparison and Connections," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 63 no. 4 (October 2006): 693-712; Coclanis, "Beyond Atlantic History," in Greene and Morgan, *Atlantic History*, 337-56; Carla Rahn Phillips, "Twenty Million People United by an Ocean: Spain and the Atlantic World beyond the Renaissance" in Bailey, Phillips, and Voigt, "Spain and Spanish America in the Early Modern Atlantic World," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 28; Rosemarie Zagarri, "The significance of the 'Global Turn' for the Early American Republic: Globalization in the Age of Nation-Building," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 31 no. 1 (Spring 2011), 4-5; Manuela Albertone, "Historical reflections upon commerce, political economy, and revolution in the eighteenth-century Atlantic World," *History of European Ideas* 37 (2011), 506.

[3] Canny, "Atlantic History and Global History," in Greene and Morgan eds., *Atlantic History*, 329. Unlike Canny, Games conceptualized Atlantic history as "a *slice* of world history...[or] a way of looking at global and regional processes within a contained unit, although that region was not, of course, hermetically sealed off from the rest of the world, and thus was simultaneously involved in transformations unique to the Atlantic and those derived from global processes." See Games, "Atlantic History," 748.

[4] For two excellent example see Kris Lane, *Colour of Paradise: The Emerald in the Age of Gunpowder Empires* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010) and Molly Warsh, "Adorning Empire: A History of the Early Modern Pearl Trade, 1492-1688," (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2009). For this assessments of the field see Stern, "Neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth: Early Modern Empire and Global History," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 72 no. 1 (March 2009), 124, and Jack R. Censer, "Preface," to Philip D. Morgan and Molly Warsh, eds., *Early North America in Global Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2014), viii.

[5] For the "transnational turn" and its shortcomings see Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories," 761; Gould, ; Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Erik R. Seeman, "Introduction: Beyond the Line: Nations, Oceans, Hemispheres," in *The*

people, and processes they studied were of the Atlantic World but not confined by its ocean or "system." In this sense, the scope and ambition of the world's Atlantic history surpasses those of its precursors, which were most often Northern European, British, or Anglophone-centric and confined overwhelmingly to the shared and common historical experience of the four continents of Europe, North America, South America, and Africa.[6] Though recent scholarship has certainly broadened the scope of the Atlantic World into Asia, the vast majority of these works remain focused on using familiar language sources to reexamine European or Euro-American subjects abroad and to address problems and debates inside the historiography of the British Empire or the early United States for example.[7] Thus, the new global approaches challenge Early Americanists to consider the implications of connections outside the historiographies of the Atlantic Worlds.

Secondly, the world's Atlantic history is an analytical approach that most frequently employs the methodology of *histoire croisée,* that is, "connected," "shared," or "entangled" histories with a focus upon "crossing or intersection."[8] These crossings and intersections can be of numerous kinds, scales, and degrees relative to the subject or subjects under investigation, but they are often of a transnational, or more appropriately extra-national or *translocal* nature. The chief advantage of a translocal lens is that it both grants and accounts for the centrality of the local places, people, cultures, objects, and phenomenon involved in connected histories. In the words of one of its chief contributors and proponents, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, connected history

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Atlantic in Global History: 1500-2000 (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson-Prentice Hall, 2007); xxiii-xxv; Cañizares-Esguerra and Breen, "Hybrid Atlantics."

[6] Games, "Atlantic History," 744; "Stern, "British Asia and British Atlantic," 693-697; Albertone, "Historical reflections," 506; Cañizares-Esguerra and Breen, "Hybrid Atlantics," 597-99.

[7] This recent and innovative scholarship aims exclusively at questions and problems that "matter" to the history of the British Empire or the United States, and the titles are revealing of the resilience of the imperialist or nationalist orientation. See for example, Miles Ogborn, *Indian Ink: Script and Print in the Making of the English East India Company* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560-1660* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); James R. Fichter, *So Great a Profitt: How the East Indies Trade Transformed Anglo-American Capitalism* (Harvard University Press, 2010); Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011);

[8] The development of *Histoire croisée* can be traced to the mid-1990s. For a definition and an overview see Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmerman, "Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity," *History and Theory*, 45 no. 1 (February, 2006): 30-50. For other examples of histoire croisée or connected history see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," Modern Asian Studies 31, no. 03 (July 1997): 735–62; Subrahmanyam, "*Connected Histories,* 2 Vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Eliga H. Gould, "Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery," *American Historical Review*, 112 no. 3 (June 2007): 764-786; Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, "Entangled Histories: Borderland Historiographies in New Clothes?" *American Historical Review*, 112 no. 3 (June 2007): 787-99.

allows historians to examine "how the local and specific have interacted with the supralocal," while simultaneously appreciating the "specific local expressions" of global phenomenon.[9] And yet, the method does not impose the sometimes unsuitable and limiting designations of transregional, transatlantic, transcolonial, and transimperial, or the anachronistic "transnational" upon our historical subjects.[10] Thus, connected histories dare early Americanists to reconceive the local not as a bounded space; but to imagine it, rather, as a place that was constituent of the world and yet simultaneously distinct.

Thirdly due to its translocal method and analysis, the world's Atlantic history demands new skills and requires new resources from historians—chiefly, the ability to engage in multi-lingual, multi-archival research in far-flung repositories and a deep familiarity with multiple historiographical fields. Inevitably, the acquisition of such skills involves substantial investments of time and money. And of all the possible faults we may find and will continue to encounter with the world's Atlantic history, the logistical problem of time and money may prove to be the most challenging. After all, it gives those who belong to the wealthy and the privileged institutions of international academe great advantages and erects significant obstacles to the rest. By exposing the disparities between research and educational institutions, nation-states, and world regions, this world's Atlantic history is certain to reveal the material limits and institutionalized inequalities of the professional field and to map the uneven international academic terrain in which we all labor.[11] Thus, the global-historical approach provokes early Americanists to toil with and become proficient in other languages, and to participate in efforts to make archival collections and research more accessible to their peers in the United States and abroad.

Fourthly, the world's Atlantic history is not only an analytical framework or a research methodology. It is also, I believe, a professional practice or habit, which should challenge and motivate its practitioners, non-adherents, skeptics, and even detractors to go beyond the mere use of multi-lingual, multi-archival, and multi-field research in their scholarship. After all, those working to globalize the study of the Atlantic Worlds are not lone path breakers on the trail of

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[9] Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories," 745-750. See also Stern, "British Asia and British Atlantic," 712; Sachsenmaier, *Global Perspectives*, 6.

[10] By contrast, for a recent historiographical survey of the Atlantic World literature that argues in favor of a history of "transimperial entanglements" see Ernesto Bassi, "Beyond Compartamentalized Atlantics: A Case for Embracing the Atlantic from Spanish American Shores," *History Compass*, 12 no. 9 (2014): 704-16.

[11] Sachsenmaier, *Global Perspectives*, 4, 9, 12-41.

novel insights and discoveries. Though it is still fragmented by national academic cultures, the practice of translocal history has now become an international intellectual endeavor with a noticeable influence on the historical professions inside and outside the United States. The endeavor of translocal history has linked historians of early America to specialists in European, Iberian American, African, and Asian history in a concerted effort to widen the scope of the Atlantic Worlds and to integrate these frameworks into a larger global context.[12] This pattern suggests two significant implications for the historical practice. On one hand, it means that historians who aspire to trace connected histories across oceans and borders should also strive to transcend the very historiographical boundaries that continue to compartmentalize our scholarship into national fields or area studies.[13] On the other hand, it also means we should aim to defy academia's national borders, which encourage ignorance or disregard for foreign-professional historians' parallel work or which promote disengagement from their research problems and projects. Thus, the global approach encourages Early Americanists to transcend the institutional, professional, and national boundaries that channel us all into the mastery of small worlds but blind us to the implications of much larger ones in our graduate studies and research.

The trends I describe today are certainly not "new." For probably more than a quarter century by now, economic and social historians have led the way in studying individuals, groups, processes, ideas, and commodities that circulated throughout the world in defiance of borders and boundaries. Recall that as early as 1968, Philip D. Curtin proclaimed—in terms that should sound eerily familiar or prescient to us today—that "the recent trend toward a world-historical perspective and away from parochial national history also calls for a new approach to the broad patterns of Atlantic history."[14] It would seem, then, that we have been confronting the problem of the nation-state-based history for at least forty-six years. And yet with a more extensive analytical framework, a wider range of historical perspectives—or, multiperspectivity—and, perhaps, a renewed sense of reflexivity, the world's Atlantic history, I think, still permits

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[12] Sanjay Subramanyan; J.H. Elliott, *History in the Making* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), Chapter 6, "Comparative History,"; Sachsenmaier, *Global Perspectives*, 33-58, 152-71, 219-31.
[13] Games, "Atlantic History," 753.
[14] Curtin believed the alternative to national parochialism was what he called, "the South Atlantic System," a plantation-based system established in "tropical America," which exchanged tropical staples, goods, people, commodities, and other things in transoceanic commerce between Europe, America, Africa, and spread plantation "influence...even beyond the Atlantic world to the textile markets of India." See Curtin, "Epidemiology and the Slave Trade," *Political Science Quarterly*, 82 no. 2 (June 1968), 190.

numerous revisions and research opportunities to the history of Early American economy and society. The remainder of this paper is devoted to examining some of those potential contributions by surveying recent historiographical trends—or scholarly orientations—from the Americas. Although one might as easily and justifiably search out valuable historiographical insights in a survey of recent translocal scholarship on a different place such as Africa or Asia or in an earlier period, mine will concentrate on recent contributions from historians whose research focuses on connections in the context of the Americas and in the Anglo and Iberian Worlds in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

Recent Orientations from the Americas

Historians have begun to reconsider the global connections of the Americas before 1800 from a variety of different angles, and recent commodity studies have brought the inner workings and consequences of an early modern global economy into sharper focus. Commodity histories have pushed historians to reconsider long-standing assumptions about whether the "so-called Atlantic World" was a "discrete unit," and when and where a truly globalized world first emerged between 1500 and 1800. The study of luxury goods has served as the primary vehicle to design and execute research that leads to histories of connections across the barriers of politics, language, culture, and geography—whether oceanic, coastal, or terrestrial. After all, the early modern trade in luxury merchandise such as precious metals and jewels, fine silk and cotton textiles, enslaved African laborers, and those short-lived (or former) luxuries like tobacco, sugar, and chocolate created a "world economy" and had widespread and lasting influence on "innovation in technologies, products, marketing strategies, and commercial and financial institutions," as well as on the development of European colonialism and imperialism, free and coerced labor regimes, and social and racial hierarchies.[15]

[15] Coclanis, "Atlantic World or Atlantic/World," 734, also 730-34. Maxine Berg, "In Pursuit of Luxury: Global History and British Consumer Goods in the Eighteenth Century, Past and Present," 182 (February 2004), 94. See also Eltis, Atlantic History in Global Perspective," 141; Michelle Maskiell, "Consuming Kashmir: Shawls and Empires, 1500-2000," *Journal of World History*, 13 no. 1 (Spring 2002), 28-30, 35-40; Coclanis, "Atlantic World or Atlantic/World," 731; Markus Vink, "'The World's Oldest Trade': Dutch Slavery and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of World History*, 14 no. 2 (June 2003): 131-77; Pier M. Larson, "African Diasporas and the Atlantic," in Cañizares-Esguerra and Seeman, *The Atlantic in Global History*, 129-44; Richard B. Allen, "Satisfying the 'Want for Labouring People': European Slave Trading in the Indian Ocean, 1500-1800," *Journal of World History*, 21 no. 1 (March 2010): 45-73.

Chiefly, however, it was American silver that turned the wheels of the early modern global economy—a fact that no empire, new nation-state, or merchant anywhere on the earth could deny at the time. By the beginning of end of the sixteenth century, Spanish American silver helped fuel the beginnings of global commerce and give rise to a globalized Spanish Empire. Over the last fifteen years, continued research into the important Spanish American silver trade has stimulated connective histories linking Iberian America to world history and to peoples and places outside the Atlantic World. Either directly or indirectly, China absorbed vast quantities of American silver mined in the Andes in the sixteenth century and seventeenth century and especially from New Spain's Bajío and North American provinces after the 1640s. The great Chinese demand for American silver prompted the Spanish conquest of the Philippines, the establishment of Manila in 1571, and the formation of a truly globalized Spanish Empire thereafter, with commercial networks that spanned the Atlantic and Pacific. It was not until later, that English, Dutch, and French merchants (and, much later U.S. traders after 1790) became large-scale silver-trading intermediaries, carrying Spanish America's mineral wealth to Asia. And yet they too have been the subject of recent scholarship on the global exchange of Spanish American specie.[16]

To a merchant "interloper" or "intermediary" who lived in the age when rising European empires gradually eclipsed Asia's long-powerful and dominant Gunpowder Empires, the significance of American silver to global commerce and to imperial fortunes was simply too lustrous to ignore. Even the most precocious and acquisitive merchants and traders of the newly independent United States of America utilized well-established translocal patterns of navigation to obtain Spanish American silver and to circumnavigate the globe in pursuit of Asian markets. After 1789, European imperial warfare and revolutionary tumults in the Americas enabled neutral U.S. merchants to obtain the large specie outlays needed to participate in the transoceanic trade to Asia. Via direct and indirect exchanges at British Caribbean and Spanish American ports and in convoluted silver trading schemes, a wealthy and well-connected merchant minority

[16] Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, "'Born with a Silver Spoon': The Origin of World Trade in 1571," *Journal of World History*, 6 no.2 (Fall 1995): 201-221; Flynn and Giráldez, "Cycles of Silver: Global Economic Unity through the Mid-Eighteenth Century," *Journal of World History*, 6 no. 2 (Fall 2002): 391-427; Alejandra Irigoin, "The End of a Silver Era: The Consequences of the Breakdown of the Spanish Peso Standard in China and the United States, 1780s-1850s," *Journal of World History*, 20 no. 2 (June 2009).

in the United States —"the wealthiest one percent of the wealthiest one percent"— dominated the Early Republic's participation in the globalized Asian trade.[17]

Other luxury commodities sourced in Iberian America also contributed to make the Spanish colonial possessions an integral hub of the global trading web that long-connected America to Europe, Africa, and Asia before 1800. For example, Molly Warsh has examined the Caribbean pearl trade in a global context, and has shown how the production, trade, and consumption of Spanish American pearls took place in a "overarching global market." In fact as she argues, the transoceanic nature of the trade itself influenced the development of individual, community, and national identities in South America and throughout the Atlantic World. Warsh is attentive to the social consequences of the international pearl trade, and she traces the jewel in a history "not just of entangled empires, but of overlapping oceans." Her arduous multi-archival research links enslaved African divers in Venezuela to the development of pearl fisheries in India, Scotland, and California, and to the trade and conspicuous display of pearls in Iberia, Nueva Granada, Peru, Italy, and England.[18] Likewise, Kris Lane has explained how Colombian emeralds became a truly global commodity, and were consumed in Iberian America, Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia between the early sixteenth and late eighteenth century. For Lane, the history of the Colombian emerald highlights the real existence of a period of "early modern globalization" during the Age of Gunpowder Empires. In Colombia, mixed-labor regimes of Muzó and Muisca "serfs" and enslaved Africans mined the green stones, and small numbers of mostly Jewish merchants transported them across the world's oceans to Anatolia, Persia, and

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[17] For the links between American silver and the rise of Europe and the fall of the Asian empires see Lane, *Colour of Paradise,* 189-91, 202-3; Tutino, *Making a New World,* 1-22, 451-92; Irigoin, "The End of a Silver Era,"; David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760-1840* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010). The quote is from Fichter, *So Great a Proffit,* 132, but see also 112-19. For United States participation in the Spanish American and Asian silver trade see Stuart Weems Bruchey, *Robert Oliver Merchant of Baltimore, 1783-1819* in *The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science*, LXXIV, no. 1 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1956): 263-333; Matilde Souto Mantecón, *Mar abierto: la política y el comercio del consulado de Veracruz en el ocaso del sistema imperial* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 2001), 190-205; Adrian J. Pearce, *British Trade with Spanish America, 1763-1808* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007); Carlos Marichal, *Bankruptcy of Empire: Mexican Silver and the Wars between Spain, Britain, and France, 1760-1810* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Ch. 5; "The Hope-Barings Contract: Finance and trade between Europe and the Americas, 1805-1808," *English Historical Review*, CXXIV, 511 (December 2009), 1324-1352; Barbara H. Stein and Stanley J. Stein, *Edge of Crisis: War and Trade in the Spanish Atlantic, 1789-1808* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), Ch. 12; Irigoin, "The End of a Silver Era,"; Cuenca Esteban, "British 'Ghost' Exports, American Middlemen, and the Trade to Spanish America, 1790-1819: A Speculative Reconstruction," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3rd Ser., 71 no. 1 (January 2014): 63-91; Pompeian, "Spirited Enterprises: Venezuela, the United States, and the Independence of Spanish America, 1789-1823" (PhD diss., College of William and Mary, 2014).

[18] Warsh, "Adorning Empire," 3, 5, 8-9.

India, to satisfy Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal demand for gems that were the "colour of heaven"—prized by Muslim rulers and elites as noble gifts and treasures for their association with the Prophet Muhammad.[19] While the production, trade, and consumption of pearls and emeralds "was not globally transformative" as was the case for Mexican silver, these jewels forged additional connections between people and places in the New World, the Atlantic World, and throughout the globe.[20]

Taken together, commodity studies make a significant contribution to de-centering Europe in the history of Iberian America and the early modern world. As many scholars have now pointed out, the reorientation of global trade away from a European-centric model and onto an Asian one produces a different perspective: long into the nineteenth century, early-modern European empires and merchants were "middlemen" or "helpmates" in a global trade that was focused not on Europe but on Asia.[21] More important, they have posed a challenge to the exceptionalist origin stories of capitalism and of the formation of a global commercial system in which the European empires, and, particularly, early modern Britain are the sole progenitors. Most notably, John Tutino has applied the scholarship on the global consequences of the Mexican-Chinese silver trade to revisionism, arguing that the rich silver mines of the Bajío and Spanish North America helped give rise not only to an era of world-wide trade but also to capitalism—by which he means, a commercial society, defined by profit seeking entrepreneurialism and capitalist social relations and production, emerged in colonial New Spain during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[22] Similarly, a recent spate of reexaminations of Iberian commercial policy during the Bourbon Reforms of the late-eighteenth century, is undermining out-of-date narratives that had once been compared and contrasted intransigent absolutism and mercantilism in the Iberian Atlantic World to the liberal economic and political regimes that emerged in the British Atlantic World.[23]

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[19] Lane, *Colour of Paradise*.
[20] Lane, *Colour of Paradise*, 204.
[21] Flynn and Giráldez, "'Born with a Silver Spoon,'" 202-203; Coclanis, "Atlantic World or Atlantic/World?" 730-34; Irigoin, "End of a Silver Era," 208-210; Lane, *Colour of Paradise*, 7-8, 93; John Tutino, *Making a New World: Founding Capitalism in the Bajío and Spanish North America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 2, 8-9.
[22] Tutino, *Making a New World.*
[23] Jeremy Adelman, Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Gabriel B. Paquette, *Enlightenment, Governance, and Reform in Spain and its Empire, 1759-1808* (Houndsmills, Bassingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008); Stein and Stein, *Edge of Crisis*; Xabier Lamikiz, *Trade and Trust in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2010); Jeremy Baskes, *Staying Afloat: Risk and Uncertainty in Spanish Atlantic Trade, 1760-1820* (Stanford:

If commodities and human migration prove one of the most useful and fruitful bridges to places beyond the Atlantic World, merchants and mercantile networks reveal obstacles to connected histories. Firstly, there is the problem posed by the archive itself, which was created to preserve a working memory of empires, nation-states, great men, and powerful families rooted to a particular geography. Consequently, the reconstruction of mercantile networks and the tracking of individual merchant's and trader's business activities across borders is both time consuming and frustrating, as any historian who has done so can attest. After all, we are reliant on what few documents merchants and traders chose to safeguard or the ones that executors, ancestors, and archivists deemed suitable and valuable for preservation. Secondly, the paper trail merchants and traders left behind is riddled with interruptions and silences. Those documentary breaks impede our ability to understand without difficulty what or who was the crucial link between a merchant or mercantile community in one place and that in another. This is the reality of temporal, spatial, and cultural limits, no matter how permeable we believe or imagine global boundaries to be in the early modern period.

To resolve these problems, scholars have turned to the well-documented and well-preserved papers of the European trading companies, which were set up by kings and bureaucrats to manage and monopolize key portions of early modern global trade. These commercial enterprises generated what Lara Putnam calls "the production and preservation of dense documentation."[24] We certainly need to know about the companies' activities and the role they played. However, we need also to know about the less-privileged people—broadly defined—who kept the networks of global trade in motion without royal charters and other official rights or political aids. For obvious reasons, prosopagraphies of commercial globetrotters have tended to concentrate on the wealthy and, most often, the European or Euro-American trader and trading community.[25] Future prosopagraphies of merchants and traders in the world's Atlantic history will certainly provide us with clearer understandings of how these merchants' networks did not

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Stanford University Press, 2013); Allan J. Keuthe and Kenneth J. Andrien, *The Spanish Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century: War and the Bourbon Reforms, 1713-1796* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

[24] Putnam, "To Study the Fragments/Whole: Microhistory and the Atlantic World," *Journal of Social Science*, 39 no. 3 (Spring 2006), 619; Coclanis, "Atlantic or Atlantic/World History," 732.

[25] For examples see Patricia H. Marks, *Deconstructing Legitimacy: Viceroys, Merchants, and the Military in Late Colonial Peru* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007; David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine: Madeira Merchants and the Emergence of American Trade and Taste* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009); Fichter, *So Great a Profitt,* 132-48.

converse with and depend only on their wealthy and powerful peers, but on people of other circumstance, influence, competence, and background. In the worlds of global commerce, the links between the wealthiest merchants and the rest are probably more important than we might otherwise suppose.

After all, recent scholarship has generated a small but growing literature on the commercial and trading activities of men and even women who ranked far below the "millionary merchants" in the complex and changing racial, gender, and socio-economic hierarchies of the period. Even if women merchants, traders, and smugglers were few in number or enjoyed a less visible role in the dynamics of Atlantic or global trade, women were integral to the formation of commercial partnerships, mercantile networks, and the creation and perpetuation of great trading dynasties. Whether one lived and did business in London, Antwerp, Madeira, New York, Caracas, Havana, Luanda, Manila, or Goa, trading was a family business and a family matter.

Family and clan connected merchants and traders rooted in one locale to kin rooted in places nearby and faraway, beyond territorial boundaries, and across oceans. Examples of the family's importance to trade are so numerous, that a survey of "family webs" of commerce could go on indefinitely. For instance, a few dozen Sephardic and "new Christian" merchant families moved Colombian emeralds from Cartagena to Europe, and from Europe, Africa, and the Mediterranean to Hurmuz, Goa, Madras, Bombay, and Bengal. A small group of "legacy merchants," tied together by "blood and marriage," emerged to dominate the Madeira wine trade. Likewise, Irish-Catholic-Canarian merchant families spread throughout the Spanish Americas, and applied their linguistic and entrepreneurial skills to great personal and familial advantage when Spain's Bourbon kings opened Spanish America to free and neutral trade. The Irish-Canarians excelled at translocal and transimperial trade and they served as key intermediaries in the legal and illegal cross-cultural exchanges that defined the last decades of the eighteenth century.[26] Thus by the middle of the 1700s if not already long before, kinship—whether "real"

[26] See Lane, "*Colour of Paradise*," 94; Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, 141-45; Robert James Ferry, "Cacao and Kindred: Transformations of Economy and Society in Colonial Caracas" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1980), 250-254; P. Michael McKinley, *Pre-Revolutionary Caracas: Politics, Economy, and Society, 1777-1811* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) , 89-90; Manuel Hernández González, *La emigración Canaria a América, 1765-1824: entre el libre comercio y la emancipación* (La Laguna, Canary Islands: Centro de la Cultura PopularCanaria, 1996), 271-359; John Lynch, "Spanish America's Poor Whites," in *Latin America between Colony and Nation* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2001), 58-67; Manuel Hernández González, *Los Canarios en la Venezuela colonial, 1670-1810* (Caracas: Bid and Co., 2008); Hernández González, "El comercio canario-norteamericano y la exportacíon de harinas a Cuba" *Vegueta*, 2 (1995-1996), 81-102; Hernández González, "Los mercaderes de origen extranjero en el tráfico canario-americano durante la etapa del libre comercio (1765-1808)" in Ana Crespo Solana,

or "fictive"—was a primary characteristic of the mercantile trades and profession.[27] Despite all the changes we associate with and assign to the rise of capitalist modernity, family, kin, and community remained crucial to the individual pursuit of wealth. For this reason, more research needs to be directed at examining the roles of women and the family in mercantile networks and communities during the early modern period of global trade.[28]

Likewise, historians studying the trade of peripheral colonies of Spain's American empire—Central America, Nueva Granada, and Venezuela—have documented people who lacked all or some of the privileges of birth, family, race, gender, wealth, and power but still managed to play crucial roles in forms of commerce that defied boundaries and borders. Though they are often overlooked or buried in the historical record, women, "indigenous middlemen," and enslaved and free African Creoles contributed to commerce on maritime frontiers at the edge of empires. One of those places was the coast of northern South America. For Europeans traders of diverse origins, the Dutch island of Curaçao served as an entrypoint and way station for illicit exchanges with the Spanish possessions of South America's lengthy Caribbean coastline, from Panama to eastern Venezuela. Contraband trade was rampant in the region, and it served to funnel goods into the wider streams of Atlantic commerce. Not all smugglers were European, white, or male, however.

For example, Linda Rupert has documented how "women from different social [and racial] sectors supported the contraband trade in a variety of ways," including facilitating, practicing, or investing in clandestine commerce. Similarly, Ernesto Bassi has focused attention on the fiercely independent "maritime Indians," including the Cuna of the Darien and the Wayuu of the Guajira peninsulas, whose trade and sea-faring knowledge facilitated trans-Caribbean

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ed., *Comunidades transnacionales colonias de mercaderes extranjeros en el mundo Atlántico* (Madrid: Ediciones Doce Calles, 2010), 167-174, 183; Óscar Recio Morales, "Conectores de imperios: la figura del comerciante irlandés en España y en el mundo atlántico del XVIII" in *Comunidades transnacionales*, 335, and 313-336; Pompeian, "Spirited Enterprises," 61-69, 275, 293, 305-21.

[27] For the phrase, "millionary merchants," see Jefferson to Matthew Crawford, June 20, 1816, in Albert Ellery Bergh, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson,* XV (Washington D.C.: 1905), 28. For the importance of kinship see Hancock, *Oceans of Wine,* 141-45.

[28] For discussions of the role of the family in the economy and commerce of the Atlantic World see for example Linda K. Salvucci, "Merchants and Diplomats: Philadelphia's Early Trade with Cuba." *Pennsylvania Legacies*, 3 no. 2 (November 2003): 6-10; Julie Hardwick, Sarah M. S. Pearsall, and Karin Wulf, "Introduction: Centering Families in Atlantic History," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3rd Ser., 70 no. 2 (April 2013), 206-210; Pernille Ipsen, "'The Christened Mulatresses': Euro-African Families in a Slave-Trading Town," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3rd Ser., 70 no. 2 (April 2013), 371-98.

smuggling.[29] Though women, ethnic and/or religious clans and minorities, African Creoles, and indigenous peoples may not have shared the same advantages as the wealthiest early modern merchants, they proved critical to the inner workings of Atlantic and global trade nonetheless. Rarely mentioned or, more frequently, ignored, their contributions to the fluidity and connectivity of early modern trade across borders should not be discounted and deserve greater attention.

Conclusion

As this brief survey has shown, historians are unlikely to discard both materialist and cultural perspectives to study the economic activities, processes, and phenomena that defined the world's Atlantic history. Nor will local history be lost in the search for connected or entangled histories of the Americas that transcend the Atlantic Ocean and go beyond the real and imagined borders and boundaries that have defined it. As economy and culture have always been inseparable in all human societies, our ongoing attention to local and global economic matters still contributes to the most pressing questions and problems that defined the early modern world, the Atlantic Worlds, and the connections that linked places and people to others far away, beyond extensive distances and great divides, and even across the globe.[30] This most recent reorientation beyond the Atlantic World, suggests developments that historians of the early Americas, the Atlantic World, and the early United States cannot ignore. Or, at the very least, they must contend with the implications of a new history of the Americas in which the British or North Atlantic World was neither the lone engine of modern economic developments nor geopolitically hegemonic until after the still- loosely-defined Age of Revolutions. No matter our historical orientation and field, however, we all must imagine new ways of researching,

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[29] "Indigenous middlemen," is borrowed from Coclanis, but here I intend it to imply any of the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas who facilitated European trading ventures. See Coclanis, "Atlantic or Atlantic/World History," 732, and also Amy Turner Bushnell, "Indigenous America and the Limits of the Atlantic World, 1493-1825," in Greene and Morgan, "Atlantic History," 211-12, and James L. Hill, "Bring them what they lack: Spanish-Creek Exchange and Alliance Making in a Maritime Borderland, 1763-1783," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 12 no. 1 (Winter 2014): 36-67. For the recent work on the role of free and enslaved blacks, women, and Indians in Tierra Firme see Linda M. Rupert, *Creolization and Contraband: Curaçao in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012), Ernesto Bassi, "Between Imperial Projects and National Dreams: Communication Networks, Geopolitical Imagination, and the Role of New Granada in the Configuration of a Greater Caribbean Space, 1780s-1810s" (PhD diss., University of California-Irvine, 2012), 87-113 and 162-87.

[30] Eltis argued the contrary, arguing that "to make sense of Atlantic history we still have to break out of the materialist paradigm and focus on the cultural, not the economic, or to put it another way, to make sense of the economic, scholars should re-examine cultural patterns." See Eltis, "Atlantic History in Global Perspective," 143-44, and 156.

understanding, and speaking to one another about the past to illuminate the complex and dynamic interplay between the local and the global.