

The Creation of the British Atlantic World

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Anglo-America in the Transatlantic World

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Introduction

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The idea of *Atlantic* history has always been at odds with the much older and more deeply entrenched conception of the past as, preeminently, the history of nation-states, a mainstay and the last vestige of the paradigm of power. The project to create or to uncover an Atlantic history called not just for considering events and developments in a broad transoceanic framework but, more importantly, for reconceiving the entire historical landscape in which they occurred, a landscape in which contemporary regional or cultural similarities, not ultimate membership in some as yet uncreated national state, would provide the principal criteria of organization.

JACK P. GREENE, "BEYOND POWER"

Atlantic history is flourishing as never before. Yet the tension vis-à-vis other conceptual frameworks that Jack Greene mentioned nearly a decade ago persists. For example, the coeditor of a recent volume on the British Atlantic world and a strong proponent of an Atlantic perspective finds himself still having to confront the question, "is [early modern Atlantic history] not just a more acceptable way to study the history of the Spanish, Portuguese, French, British, and Dutch seaborne empires?"¹ This question attains even greater saliency when the project is not simply the Atlantic but the *British* Atlantic. Some deny that one Atlantic existed during most of the early modern period. Instead, it is argued, three Atlantic subregions existed: a North European Atlantic linking western European ports with the eastern North American seaboard and a few West Indies islands; a Spanish Atlantic, linking Seville to the Caribbean and the American mainland; and a Portuguese Atlantic, linking Lisbon to Brazil and West Africa. "Insofar as Atlantic history has been written, it has tended to be an Atlantic history compartmentalized into these three zones of European settlement, trade, and colonial rule," writes the distinguished historian of the Spanish Empire, J. H. Elliott. The overlap of Atlantic geography with nation and

empire is notable. Obscuring the division between the Iberian and the British Atlantics raises problems similar to those identified in Fernand Braudel's path-breaking *The Mediterranean . . . in the Age of Philip II*, in which Ottoman Islam and Latin Christendom were thrown together too blithely for some readers to discern any unified Mediterranean culture. Still another shortcoming with the Atlantic paradigm is the increasing tendency over the early modern period for activities in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian oceans to merge, a situation that the framework of imperial history accommodates more handily than does Atlantic history.²

So, what does the Atlantic history approach offer, particularly if it is prefaced by the name of an empire or nation-state, that traditional imperial history does not? To its advocates, Atlantic history carries fewer presuppositions about cultural hierarchies and displays more openness to multidirectional effects. Much of early modern European imperial history has been consumed with one central issue in two parts: how did western Europeans with obscure global pasts rise to worldwide dominance in this period; and why did the British, specifically, come to be the premier imperial power by the mid-eighteenth century. In widely consulted surveys of overseas activities, such as J. H. Parry's classic *The Establishment of the European Hegemony, 1415–1715*, the actors are a synecdoche for their European country of origin, men propelled forward by a national imperative to defeat their rivals. Each western European country had its own trajectory, yet initiatives always originated on the eastern side of the Atlantic and crossed to the Americas. Ralph Davis makes two strong points in his preface to *The Rise of the Atlantic Economies*, which, despite its title, adheres more closely to the imperial approach than the Atlantic history paradigm: (1) "the main influences on European economic development arose within the countries of Europe themselves," and (2) Europe had no "special unity in its course of development." Transatlantic activities are best studied as a contest among western European nations in which the most enterprising wins.³

The alternative perspective, which generally prevails among those calling themselves Atlantic historians, is well described in the introduction to *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire*, published in 1991. Its editors, Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan, like Greene, write of a new way to view British imperial development in the Atlantic and by implication the imperial developments of other nations. They envision it as "the recruitment of a wide variety of peoples, their interaction, their conflicts,

their partial absorption, and their creation of new cultures."⁴ The authors of the individual chapters focused on the non-English ethnicities and races in the British Empire—the Irish, Scots, Indians, Africans, Dutch, Germans, Scotch-Irish—as well as groups outside the thirteen colonies, particularly in the West Indies and Canada. These groups are no longer confined to the receiving end of transatlantic culture, but rather helped define it. The approach is particularly well suited to the transatlantic experience of Africans.⁵ Scholars who emphasize environmental and geographic forces or aspire to a natural history of the ocean also find this approach welcoming, although much less of this type of Atlantic history has been produced to date.⁶

New support for an Atlantic perspective has come from an unlikely source—scholars investigating the ideology and workings of the British Empire itself. They contend that the terminology associated with empire building is inappropriate for describing how contemporaries identified themselves and their intentions until at least some point in the eighteenth century. Even though the first volume of the *Oxford History of the British Empire* adheres to a more political view of expansion across the Atlantic, its editor, Nicholas Canny, admits in his introduction that the "study of the British Empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries presents special difficulties because no empire, as the term subsequently came to be understood, then existed, while the adjective 'British' meant little to most inhabitants of Britain and Ireland."⁷ In subsequent chapters, several authors drive home that point by noting the difficulty the English had in justifying the legitimacy of their American settlements, the reluctance of the early Stuart governments to support overseas expansion, and the lack of references to an *empire* in America until well after the Restoration.⁸

In his recent monograph, Atlantic history proponent David Armitage has painstakingly traced the slow expansion of the term *British Empire* to include transatlantic settlements in its meaning. Not surprisingly, he finds that English writers during the sixteenth and most of the seventeenth century did not create an imperial ideology based on Protestantism or the exploits of their seadogs, much less expand the concept of expansion from an English activity to a British one. The crucial step toward conceptualizing a British empire was not taken before the Glorious Revolution, in his view, when the idea of an empire of trade was grouped with traditions of religious and civil liberty to identify a distinctive British community. People did not commonly refer to a British empire until the second quarter of the eighteenth century, decades after

the Act of Union joined the Scottish and English parliaments. Moreover, he finds, provincials—Irish unionists, American planters, and officials—took the lead in employing imperial terminology not residents of the English metropolis.⁹ Another study, this one finding ethnic and national identity of questionable importance in “the early modern British world,” further elucidates why theorizing about a transatlantic British empire was a nonevent for so long.¹⁰ Examining how contemporaries in England, Scotland, Ireland, and the American colonies conceived of their ethnicity and national identity, Colin Kidd discovers an ever shifting mix of Celtic Briton, Gothic Saxon, and Norman elements, none of which were utilized for their racial content as much as their association with ancient constitutions, kingdoms, Biblical chronologies, and ecclesiastical polities. With national identity not dependent on either ethnic or civic territorial definitions as much as institutional histories and pedigrees, the only clear pedigree that led to “British Empire” in the seventeenth century was the Stuart dynasty, a particularly insecure foundation for the creation of a transatlantic imperial edifice. A third scholar of non-European English warfare in the period up to 1688 considers the whole empire business absurd. “Many colonial peripheries which have become retrospectively matters of obsessive interest to scholars,” Bruce Lenman claims, “were of very little contemporary interest indeed to the core English population.”¹¹ Basically, transatlantic settlements formed by colonists in America or by the East India Company in Asia, according to this view, were on their own.

The newer version of imperial history—known as “The New Imperial History”—considers such matters as empires within Europe, the impact of the “periphery” on the “core,” the development of a seaborne citizenry, and the formation of a subaltern class fitting in well with the transnational and regional approaches found in the historical work on the Atlantic world.¹² Both aim at expanding the number of actors and depict the Atlantic from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century as a multinational zone in that migrants entered more often as part of a maritime exploit, trading company, plantation complex, or social, religious or ethnocultural group than as an instrument of a European nation-state strategy. The sea and the coastal cities of the Atlantic became places where males from different classes, races, and religions intermingled and sometimes fought. Enslaved Africans and Indians, white indentured servants, and ship crews made unreliable subjects of a European Crown as did sectaries disappointed with the religious orthodoxy of their homelands and merchant/planters preoccupied with finding the best price for crops destined

for shipment to transatlantic consumers.¹³ Control from the homeland authorities tended to be irregular and disruptive rather than unifying, and colonists often feared that attention from the metropolis would only mean interference in their trading arrangements or with their forms of government and religious practice.

One danger, of course, in painting Crown, court, and the metropolitan political nation as reluctant imperialists and colonials indifferent to king and country is that it can encourage a return to the “fit of absent mindedness” theory of global domination. Atlantic history has little time for or interest in examining the place of imperial politics in the shaping of the transatlantic experience. In *Strangers within the Realm*, only one contribution, an analysis of “who cared about America” in Britain, dealt much with the issue of imperial structure, and the answer to who cared reaffirmed that what existed in the Atlantic world was an empire of trade. Britons with the greatest continuing investment in the thirteen colonies had mercantile not political interests, and the governmental influence of these overseas traders waxed and waned, strong in the first two-thirds of the eighteenth century but at a low point right before the American Revolution.¹⁴ British Atlantic history, as illustrated by a recent collection of essays,¹⁵ tends toward nonpolitical causation, and when it does focus on politics it is the politics of the Revolution and slavery that mark dissolution of empire.

What keeps the traditional imperial approach alive and volumes like the new *Oxford History of the British Empire* continuing to issue from university presses is the presence of much documentary evidence concerning national competitiveness in the creation of the Atlantic world.¹⁶ Those in and around the court and sailing the seas routinely attributed imperialist motives to their enemies and, proudly, to themselves.¹⁷ As has been recently pointed out, the divergent paths taken by China and Western Europe in overseas expansion were not due to big gaps in living standards or technology but were heavily influenced by the objectives of ruling dynasties and the responses of the polity. The Qing rulers of the Chinese empire discouraged any migration unrelated to the shoring up of imperial boundaries and the protection of ancestral homelands in Manchuria. In Western Europe, the existence of culturally homogeneous yet autonomous states, it is theorized, led to heightened competition among them and a positive view of colonization after two kingdoms, Portugal and Castile, enjoyed substantial success in their transatlantic endeavors. Wars and rivalries within Europe spilled over into the Americas.¹⁸

Research on the persons involved in overseas colonization and trading companies in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries supports the notion that, from the Elizabethan period on, at least one part of the English polity had a consistent strategy of not just Atlantic but overseas expansion to the West and the East. In the late sixteenth century, a powerful group comprising courtiers, City of London merchants, and West Country gentlemen formed a militant Protestant expansionist network that aimed for dominion beyond Ireland in the Atlantic and the capture of oceanic trade routes to East Asia. Membership in these two endeavors even overlapped, as leaders put together an alternative foreign policy featuring a much more aggressive stance in non-European areas of the globe than did the official policy of the Tudor and early Stuart monarchs.¹⁹ Indeed, the Crown seldom reined in these adventurers because of the economic and political support they furnished and because any curtailing of their activities was equated with being soft on Catholicism and selling out to the more powerful Habsburg and Bourbon dynasties. In this period the eastern seaboard of North America was colonized and trading forts established in Asia and Africa, while Puritan politicians pressured the Crown to build a naval force that could secure and enhance these outposts and the new commercial initiatives they represented. Those in the new overseas trades disproportionately joined the ranks of the Puritan/Parliamentary cause, while English colonists, rather than celebrating the freedom that disorder provided, feared instead that a distracted metropolis might abandon them.²⁰

One might argue that the alternative policy became the official policy with Cromwell's assumption of power during the Interregnum, when he launched the "Western Design" in the Caribbean, funded a state navy, and implemented navigation acts. The later Stuart kings, it is generally conceded, did not reverse these policies of Cromwell and used proprietary grants and trade monopolies to solve patronage problems.²¹ Looking at the creation of the Atlantic world from this perspective revives the view that overseas expansion before the eighteenth century was more a deliberate strategy on the part of an influential segment of the English polity and very much connected to the nation-building enterprise, even if the theorizing about empire can not be compared to what occurred after the Glorious Revolution, the Act of Union, or the Seven Years' War.

These differences in viewpoints concerning the transatlantic experience are reflected in the contributions to this volume. The authors are less interested in a descriptive history of the Atlantic world and more concerned with exploring the transformation of peoples, institutions, and ideas as they circulate around

and across the ocean.²² The first chapters address the issue of what difference crossing the Atlantic made in the status and identities of groups and individuals. The second section asks what kept those bordering the Atlantic connected. If the Atlantic world is to be a useful concept, the elements that integrate it must be made explicit. The role of trade, religion, ethnicity, and class are palpable in these essays. Most of these authors trace the movements of people, institutions, and ideas from one region to another across the ocean with minimal reference to empire. What comes through, though, in the course of relating the history of these movements is the continual appearance of imperial representatives and policies. The issue of empire in the shaping of the transatlantic experience is raised directly in the final section.

Part One: Transatlantic Subjects

A masterful account of the national and subnational social groups that were pushed or pulled across the ocean and the encounters that produced hybrid communities during the early modern period opens this section. In their essay, James Horn and Philip D. Morgan provide an up-to-date analysis of both the European and African migrations to the Americas. As part of this rethinking of European expansion, they make two particularly noteworthy points. First, between 1500 and 1820, about 2.6 million Europeans emigrated across the Atlantic compared to 8.75 million Africans. In other words, out of every four transatlantic immigrants, only one was from Europe, while three came from Africa. Needless to say, much more attention has been lavished on that one in four, even though the African crossing might be more comprehensively documented. Among the most important current research projects in early modern history is the systematic analysis of slave ship manifests, revealing the size, the geographical origin, and the destinations involved in this forced emigration.²³ A second point of importance made by Horn and Morgan is that migration in Western Europe during this period was more to the east—nine emigrants out of ten—than to the west and into the Atlantic. In Africa, however, the transatlantic migration far outweighed the northeast migration over the Sahara. Also, Horn and Morgan stress the regional nature of migration from both continents. Inhabitants of the Americas were not a geographical cross-section of the homeland population, and the points of origin did not stay constant over time. Such patterns lay the groundwork for studying the push factors that provided the free, indentured, and enslaved populations of the colonies.

The next chapter directs our attention to the Native American population. Indian cultures played a critical role in the creation of the Atlantic world. They are a much ignored explanation for why most colonists for two centuries turned their backs on the interior of North America and gazed with telescopic intensity on the string of port cities across the Atlantic.²⁴ If one adopts an Indian perspective, it might well seem that nothing good came from the Atlantic. From the sixteenth century on, not only did it bring an endless stream of aggressive European settlers and enslaved Africans, but for many Indians the high seas must have been associated with their own captivity, whether they were being shipped out to labor in another colony or transported to England as a trophy. Joyce E. Chaplin thoughtfully reflects on the recent attention given this topic, comparing the treatment of Indian captivity with the history of African-American slavery and with the captivity narratives of English colonists. She argues that the significance of Indian captivity is often missed because so many more Africans entered bondage. While it is true that Indian slavery constituted a small percentage of all slavery in North America, in early years and in specific locales it played a devastating role in destroying communities already weakened by deaths from disease and warfare. Initiatives to end Indian slavery came earlier than those aimed at emancipation of African Americans, which raises new questions about the process involved in ending bound servitude. Similarly Chaplin suggests that the scholarly attention lavished on captivity narratives of colonists should be balanced with the accounts of Indian captivity rather than bringing in more far-fetched comparisons with Old World narratives of female bondage in epistolary novels.

The next two chapters, authored by Mark L. Thompson and David Barry Gaspar, respectively, are microhistories that remind us that, even if full-blown imperial visions did not fill the heads of Atlantic travelers, long before 1750 dynastic allegiances were not entirely irrelevant to the identities of those who crossed the Atlantic. Thompson relates the exploits of Captain Thomas Yong, an Englishman with Catholic sympathies, who in 1634 left London bound for the Delaware River with a commission from Charles I to explore and colonize the area. Once there, the prior claims of both Indian nations and the Dutch bothered Yong little. The former lost their rights to dominion after seeming to accept Yong's offer of defense, and the latter's failure to be in residence along the banks of the Delaware disqualified their claims. Yong's rationalizations for claiming the land for the English Crown owed much to the commission itself, which allowed him to take territory "not actually in the possession of any

Christian Prince" and to accept the allegiance of Indians who were "willing to submit themselves under our Obedience." Yong, his Catholicism perhaps a factor, justified his actions not so much ethnically, as an Englishman, but as a subject of the king. He was not the only one, however, for whom the king served as a synecdoche for a national group.²⁵

A hundred years later, those operating under the king's commission had grown more wary of dismissing the claims of other "Christian Princes." David Barry Gaspar finds that in the eighteenth century, as the imperial system evolved, the recognition of a person's claim to be a subject of a European monarch brought more respect from British subjects. He considers the issue of national identity not from the individual but the British colonial government's perspective by examining the 1724 decision of Antigua officials to repatriate a group of black Cape Verdeans who claimed to be subjects of the king of Portugal. Why, he asks, would slave-owning elites on the West Indian island recognize these Cape Verdeans' claims to Portuguese subjecthood when they so blatantly ignored the rights of those Africans imported to work in the sugar fields? Gaspar draws attention to the close alliance in this period between Britain and Portugal that proved exceedingly profitable for the former. Cape Verde, because of its strategic position between Africa and the Americas, played an important role in a slave trade more and more dominated by the British. It also seems, however, that the piracy which brought the Cape Verdeans into Antigua was no longer countenanced the way it had been a generation or so earlier, when the taking of an ocean trip left the allegiance of persons and property up for grabs. The age of Raleigh, Drake, and Sir Henry Morgan had ended.

The international context in which the Antigua drama played out is of some importance here. Portugal and Britain had enjoyed a long diplomatic and commercial alliance in which English merchants and the cloth trade occupied a privileged position in the ports of Portugal and her colonies in exchange for protection against Spanish aggression. In the decade prior to 1724, English exports to Portugal had soared.²⁶ Robert Walpole, who had just begun his long career as "prime" minister, "wanted stability and prosperity at home; peace abroad . . . Further it was his intention to control the institutions of government more thoroughly than they had ever been controlled before."²⁷ The incident of the Cape Verdeans occurred during a diplomatic crisis in which Spain threatened to make agreements allowing Austria's cloth trade to gain a foothold in Iberia. Trouble with Portugal, a faithful purchaser of British cloth, was not what the government wanted at this point. The sensitivity of a colonial

governor and assembly to the authority of the king of Portugal and the international policy concerns of the Walpole government seem related.

The last contribution in this section is by an historian of Africa, Ray A. Kea. He has pieced together the unusual history of the Catholic woman Marotta from the Popo Kingdom in the Bight of Benin, who, after being enslaved, surfaced in the records of the Danish-controlled island of St. Thomas in the Caribbean. There she ultimately gained freedom in the mid-eighteenth century and joined a Moravian congregation. The Moravian missionaries, during a short period in the 1730s, arrived in St. Thomas and baptized nearly half of the enslaved population. Planter rage threatened the continuance of the congregation and testimonials were gathered from some of those saved through Jesus Christ. Her story supports both the history of the Atlantic as a history of group migrations and a history of empires. Marotta, whose identity seemed to be much more bound up with liberation Christianity and her African homeland than with any European empire, nonetheless, found herself in the position of having to appeal for permission to worship to a faraway monarch in a land she had never seen.

Part Two: Transatlantic Connections

Chapters in Part Two focus on the processes involved in linking both sides of the Atlantic. As appears to have been the case with American Indian cultures on the eastern seaboard of North America, Western Europeans and Africans had for centuries turned their back on the Atlantic or had given it no more than myopic glances. The newfound ability to navigate the ocean made possible colonies, but it did not necessarily produce an Atlantic culture. What propelled the nonmigrant and the transplanted to keep in contact with one another and think of themselves as part of a common community? One scholar has recently argued that during the civil wars in England, Scotland, and Ireland and the Interregnum, English colonial governments exhibited not an enhanced disaffection from the empire but instead a "compulsion to remain connected." Instability in England during the civil war period did not produce an independent attitude on the part of colonists because they feared that their legitimacy depended on their connection with whomever or whatever held sovereignty in England.²⁸

The most extensive investigation of transatlantic communication in the period following the Interregnum is Ian K. Steele's *The English Atlantic*,

1660–1740: *An Exploration of Communication and Community* and he finds government ties less than robust.²⁹ Steele looked carefully at the ways Britons on both sides of the Atlantic kept in touch. He discovered that commerce gave more structure to the communication networks than did politics, and that commercial communications grew at a faster rate than did political communications. Steele's findings reconfirm the longstanding view of a weak-willed imperial network prior to 1763, one that stood in marked contrast with those of the much more activist Spanish and French empires. Cromwellian Western Designs and the schemes of late-seventeenth-century Stuart militaristic governors appear as exceptions not the rule.³⁰ The Namierite model of patronage and deference politics was expanded to incorporate the eighteenth-century colonies in monographs done a generation ago and little new has appeared to alter the picture since.³¹ The history of patronage connections becomes a history of disconnection between mother country and colonies, foreshadowing the American Revolution.

On the other hand, the notion of a British empire of trade holding the Atlantic together has enjoyed growing popularity in recent years as interest in material culture has grown. The emergence of the great trading companies, escalating demand for tropical goods, and the colonial importation of consumer durables are all part of the story.³² The chapters in this section are not interested in challenging or affirming that the empire of goods provided more of a *raison d'être* for the transatlantic community than imperial structures as they are trying to understand how and in what ways people on both sides conversed and the role of those conversations both in the making of a transatlantic culture and in making it British.

April Lee Hatfield focuses on the go-between role of mariners in seventeenth-century English American ports and communities. Although ostensibly concerned with commercial communication, she finds they also circulated all kinds of information, including news of religion and politics. Her examination of local records, moreover, reveals an international conversation going on among the seafaring population. She makes the interesting point that the influence of mariners was greater in the seventeenth century than later because more colonial inhabitants lived near ports or waterways, mariners' port-stays were longer, and, of course, newspapers and other printed matter were very limited.

Historians consider the English common law to be one of the most important elements binding Anglo-Americans to Great Britain. William M. Offutt in

his intriguing chapter finds that seventeenth-century English settlers drew on a diverse body of legal sources beyond those represented by the common law and that the legal systems of the various colonies differed from one another. Over time, the colonies grew more alike and the common law came to dominate. Other scholars have attributed this process to colonial commercialization, to social development requiring more complex institutional structures, or to a conscious effort by an anxious creole elite to improve their colonial culture through anglicization. Offutt, in contrast, views the encroachment of the common law as commencing in England for political reasons and spreading to all the colonies at approximately the same time, the era of the Glorious Revolution.

Given the religious motivations for migration among a substantial portion of the American colonial population, one might assume that sectarian ties played a big part in transatlantic communications. The connections of New England Puritans and of Pennsylvania Quakers have received the most attention in the historical literature.³³ The personal transatlantic connections of Puritans are usually seen as deteriorating rather quickly although the theological conversation continued over a longer period. Restoration distaste for the Interregnum and Puritan excesses made New Englanders appear as unattractive relics, and no single organizational structure reached across the ocean to encompass both British dissenters and New England sectaries. One of the most radical parts of the dissenter tradition, Quakers did develop, however, a well-organized international structure that kept connections strong, even if adherence to the principles of their sect weakened their influence within Pennsylvania. As Karin Wulf demonstrates at the end of this volume, international Quaker connections and a cultural attachment to Britain survived the American Revolution.

A rejuvenated Church of England, attracting followers within the dissenter strongholds of the northern colonies, is sometimes viewed as yet another institution that encouraged the anglicization of colonial society and thereby fostered transatlantic ties.³⁴ The chapters by Avihu Zakai and Wolfgang Splitter, however, indicate both the limitations of the anglicization theory and the peculiar form it took in some places.

While some New England clergy transformed themselves into latitudinarian and enlightened Anglicans, Zakai examines the considerable religious energy in New England that perpetuated the dissenter stance by critiquing metropolitan trends. His chapter concerns the response of Jonathan Edwards

to British Enlightenment discourse, a subject first made famous by Perry Miller many decades ago. In Zakai's rendering, Edwards is involved in a transatlantic dialogue but the two-way conversation was primarily with Protestant theologians in Britain and Europe who were also disturbed by Enlightenment efforts to excise Christian beliefs from philosophy and history.

Wolfgang Splitter's informative chapter on the problems experienced by German Lutherans in expanding across the Atlantic provides some useful comparisons with the work on British religious groups and a surprising twist on the anglicization theme. By the mid-nineteenth century, thanks to increased Northern European migration, the Lutheran Church could boast more congregations than any other denomination. A century earlier, however, Lutheran membership growth was stagnant and Splitter provides some of the reasons why. The Lutheran Church occupied a niche similar to the Anglican. It was accustomed to being an established church with a tax base and a church hierarchy that controlled access to the ministry. Overseas, it largely confined itself to missionary efforts within the German community. Rather than being in competition with the Anglican Church, the Lutheran hierarchy encouraged cooperation with the Anglican charity school movement through its envoy to the Hanoverian Court in London. Lutheran pastors preferred allying with Anglican interests to joining forces with the more expansionist Moravians or itinerant preachers who established congregations in the colonies. From the picture Splitter provides, the Lutheran establishment actually facilitated the entrenchment of the British in America.

Part Three: Imperial Visions and Transatlantic Revisions

The presence of a British imperial system in the Atlantic becomes more difficult to avoid as one moves through the eighteenth century; its partial collapse after the American Revolution also raises questions about the means by which a transatlantic culture continued to exist. In the sixteenth century, England failed miserably in establishing colonies and ranked far behind the Portuguese and Dutch in maritime skills and trade. Only in piracy against the Spanish did the English excel. England's seventeenth-century troubles—the collapse of its principal export, woolen cloth, and its religious wars—however, proved beneficial for commerce and colonization as tropical goods, religious émigrés, and, at the end of the century, slaves filled the sea lanes of the Atlantic. A population owing allegiance to the English monarch spread along the American east

coast, driving out the Dutch and reducing the claims of the Spanish. The 1707 Act of Union made the English Atlantic British as Scots became a major force in trade and planting. Wars and trade treaties in the first half of the eighteenth century transformed the British into the premier conveyor of people and goods from Europe and Africa over the Atlantic. At the end of the Seven Years' War, the British, having trounced France and its Indian allies, reigned supreme in the North Atlantic region, and the imperial structure in America seemed more secure than ever. A monumental reversal of fortune, however, soon followed. In a twenty-year period all the pillars came tumbling down, after what is usually viewed as an understandable but misguided attempt to tighten control over the empire and place it on a firmer financial footing. American colonists reacted angrily to the abridgement of their rights and ultimately took up arms in a revolution. The British Empire in the Atlantic shrank notably, thirteen colonies shed their British identity and fashioned a new republican vision, and the British regrouped, ultimately creating a new and different global empire in which ventures in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific eclipsed early Atlantic ventures.

The papers in this last section beg to differ with some of the elements in this particular telling of the story. Elizabeth Mancke takes a comprehensive two-century look at the legal relationship between the English and then British sovereign and those holding charters on such crucial matters as the power to grant land, decide the governance structure, and engage in military action and foreign policy. If one looks at the entire Atlantic empire, not just the thirteen colonies, and considers the situation of all those in the empire, including Indians, French Canadians, and slaves, both the view that the metropolis made a sudden shift toward more authoritarian control and against individual rights becomes more problematic.

Both Robert Olwell and John E. Crowley found an increased tendency in the last half of the eighteenth century for the metropolis to define and conceptualize the empire as a whole, melding together all parts, Atlantic and elsewhere. Conflicts with the thirteen colonies only seemed to speed on this process. Olwell juxtaposes the simultaneous developments of the Royal Gardens at Kew during the 1760s and the establishment of a British colonial government in East Florida. As we know from a recent book on the subject, the Crown intended Kew Gardens as a botanical showcase of global flora drawn primarily from the empire and categorized and named by British subjects.³⁵ The new governor of East Florida, Alexander Grant, who owed his position to the patronage of the

royal favorite, Lord Bute, repaid the favor by sending back to Britain colonial seeds and plants for Kew Garden, a pet project of Bute. Florida, like its seeds, was marketed as an exotic product meriting its own "King's Botanist" in the person of John Bartram. The Atlantic world was becoming an "other" in a way that it had never been previously, yet that otherness was controlled, if not domesticated, through scientific methods.

Crowley, in a fascinating statistic, finds that four thousand books published in English before 1800 had the words colony or plantation in their titles, but only 124 had the term *British Empire* and 87 percent of those were printed in 1763 or later. He argues that a topographical preoccupation with empire accompanied this new linguistic turn. Landscape art, so popular in eighteenth-century Britain, soon was produced for all parts of the empire. Military officers, trained in landscape drawing for the purposes of waging war, often served as the artists. The mood of their imperial landscapes, however, was picturesque: beautiful and nonthreatening with little difference in atmosphere between the Atlantic, Indian, or Pacific arenas.

Appropriately ending this section, Karin Wulf examines how those of British ancestry in the United States related to Britain after the Revolution and the extent to which they perpetuated a transatlantic culture. She studies the way Deborah Norris Logan, the representative of a leading Pennsylvania Quaker family, rearranged her family's history in the early national period to fit a changing Atlantic world but also to establish firmly its British roots. This veneration for having been from Britain was not extinguished even during the period of intense American-British hostility. Genealogy became a new basis for maintaining transatlantic connections.

If the selections in this volume do not resolve the tension mentioned at the beginning of this introduction—the split between those who explain a transatlantic world as the consequence of competing European states striving for empire and those who see it launched through the serendipitous workings of a variety of subnational groups traversing the ocean for a variety of motives, especially economic and religious—they do provide some clues as to the relationship of one to the other. So many of the defining features of the Atlantic world—the preponderance of Africans in the transatlantic migration, the decline of the Indian population, the boom in tropical goods that kept a diverse maritime population employed, the popularity of evangelical Christianity—cannot be explained simply as the outgrowth of rivalries among European

dynasties bent on nation building. Imperial officialdom seemed spread too thin over vast expanses with small budgets and nonexistent troops to foster and control transatlantic developments. Yet many chapters in this book contain episode after episode where imperial acts, whether directly or more often by proxy, affected the flow of events. The constant creation of chartered trading companies, the issuance of commissions to adventurers and grants to proprietors meant never a dull moment for those trying to make a fortune, a war, or a professional career. From early in the seventeenth century, Crown-sanctioned colonial courts relied upon the legal traditions of the metropolis to adjudicate among settlers, and when the Glorious Revolution proved to the winners the superiority of the common law, the legal traditions everywhere narrowed to conform more closely to metropolitan practice. What is perhaps most surprising is how diverse people and obscure places got tangled up with imperial institutions: a British captain's slaves unexpectedly freed by a West Indian governor fearful of disrupting Anglo-Portuguese relations; Newfoundland fishermen pleading for the establishment of a colonial government; a West Indian woman from Africa finding that the right to practice her evangelical Christian faith could best be secured by a petition to a Danish Queen; Lutheran clerics looking to the Anglican establishment for support. Only the American Indians of the eastern seaboard, who had their own authority structures in place, adopted as much as possible an avoidance strategy when it came to both the Atlantic and empire.

The empire being recognized in these chapters, however, is not the highly conceptualized empire of civil servants and colonial office reports, but a simpler form, essentially an authority that could protect subjects and adjudicate. High-definition imperial politics dominated the transatlantic experience in the last third of the eighteenth century, although not everywhere in the Atlantic. After the American Revolution, new means of forging transatlantic ties were fashioned by those segments of the U.S. population that had the closest links to the British polity before the Revolution. In subsequent years other segments would identify and seek connection with other nations and continents across the ocean. This legacy of empire is the one with which the Atlantic world is now most familiar.