

BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

## Interrupted Continuities: Transatlantic Relations during and after the Age of Revolutions (1775–1824)

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This essay reviews the following works:

**Connections after Colonialism: Europe and Latin America in the 1820s.** Edited by Matthew Brown and Gabriel Paquette. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2013. Pp. vii + 328. \$54.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780817317768.

**Frontiers of Possession: Spain and Portugal in Europe and the Americas.** By Tamar Herzog. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015. Pp. i + 377. \$35.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780674735385.

**Imperial Portugal in the Age of Atlantic Revolutions: The Luso-Brazilian World, c. 1770–1850.** By Gabriel Paquette. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. vi + 445. \$140.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781107028975.

**Revolutions without Borders: The Call to Liberty in the Atlantic World.** By Janet Polasky. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016. Pp. 392. \$25.00 paper. ISBN: 9780300219845.

**Crisis in an Atlantic Empire: Spain and New Spain, 1808–1810.** By Barbara H. Stein and Stanley J. Stein. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014. Pp. ix + 773. \$89.95 cloth. ISBN: 9781421414249.

**Empire's End: Transnational Connections in the Hispanic World.** Edited by Akiko Tsuchiya and William G. Acree Jr. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2016. Pp. ix + 223. \$34.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780826520777.

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Anthony Pagden recently borrowed two related German concepts to describe creole identities in Spanish America at the time that the independence movements got under way. They constituted, he wrote, *Kulturnationen* (cultural nations) and not *Staatsnationen* (political nations). “And so long as these *cultural nations* remained part of a monarchy composed of a number of such nations under a single ruler, there clearly existed no call for political separateness.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, the transition to independence was not bound to happen. Napoleon’s 1808 intervention at Bayonne, where he forced both King Ferdinand VII (r. 1808, 1813–1833) and his father Charles IV (r. 1788–1808) to abdicate, changed the creoles’ outlook, inducing them to morph into *Staatsnationen*, which required the creation of new political entities ex nihilo. We may wonder whether the sudden change in sovereignty that marked the turning point signaled the beginning of an entirely new age. Every attempt at periodization is necessarily flawed, because it assumes that one epoch is neatly distinguishable from the previous one and the next. The differentiation between the colonial era and the national period in Latin American history is no different, as shown in many of the works under review here.

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Pagden, “Empire, Nation, and Republic in the Transformation of the Modern Hispanic World,” in *The Traditions of Liberty in the Atlantic World: Origins, Ideas and Practices*, ed. Francisco Colom González and Angel Rivero (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 51–53.

At what moment did the old imperial states actually begin to crumble and new polities emerge? The early nationalist historiographies of Spanish America identified the formation of juntas in the wake of Napoleon's self-serving mediation as the first sign of life of the new countries. To this day, national celebrations in many countries revolve around the juntas' establishment, as the autonomy thus achieved is seen as a prelude to revolution.<sup>2</sup> The juntas' professed allegiance to Ferdinand VII was merely a ploy that masked the new leaders' desire to effect a complete break with the metropole. Indeed, some of Venezuela's creoles responsible for deposing the captain-general and installing a junta in Caracas later presented their outward commitment to the king-in-exile as a tactical move that was intended to preserve social peace.

Most scholars have meanwhile rejected this interpretation. Autonomy, or home rule, Jaime Rodríguez writes, "was a traditional concept, not a revolutionary one." Even when the word *independencia* was used in New Spain, he adds, it meant "autonomy," "self-government" or "independence from the French."<sup>3</sup> Barbara and Stanley Stein beg to differ. Although they don't emphasize this point, their book *Crisis in an Atlantic Empire: Spain and New Spain, 1808–1810* includes numerous examples that defy Rodríguez's position and suggest that genuine American independence was feared or anticipated ever since the fateful sequence of events in Bayonne. Members of Spain's political elite immediately grasped that following the example of the juntas that sprang up in the Peninsula after Ferdinand's exit, colonial councils would be formed that would usher in independence. One of these men noted that as soon as Napoleon's actions became known in America, ideas of independence emerged "which come so naturally to men" (463). The Spanish community in Mexico City shared the metropolitan unease about the consequences of Bayonne. What the *europesos* had not forgotten was a conspiracy in 1799 that had been nipped in the bud, but a search of the ringleader's rooms had produced a declaration of independence that bore a strong resemblance to that of the United States. The news of the palace coup of Aranjuez in March 1808 that had enabled Ferdinand to accede to the throne and forced Charles IV to step down had also created unrest. Some radicals floated the idea that by cutting all ties to Spain, local merchants could wipe out a debt of 37 million pesos to their Spanish counterparts. Handwritten *pasquines* appeared in different parts of Mexico City which called on "Patricios y Europeos" to choose independence in imitation of the United States. Ultimately, the fear of independence and the establishment of a republican government along the lines of the North American neighbors motivated peninsular merchants to team up with some *oidores* of Mexico City's *audiencia* to launch a coup d'état on September 15, 1808, against Viceroy José de Iturrigaray y Aróstegui, whom they saw as closely allied to creole interests. The Steins persuasively argue that this was a crucial event: the coup "destroyed the illusion that had led people to tolerate the old regime" (357). Like in revolutionary France, the age-old structures lost their authority and could no longer be retained.

This coup is meticulously analyzed by the Steins in a work whose painstaking research—in eighteen archival repositories in Spain, Mexico, France, and Britain—and attention to detail will be hard to emulate. Time and again, their treatment of institutions, individuals, and events showcases their intimate knowledge of published and unpublished sources. *Crisis in an Atlantic Empire* tells the story of the first two years of the imperial crisis that began with the removal of King Charles IV at Aranjuez in March 1808 and ended with Miguel Hidalgo's *Grito de Dolores*. Filled with interesting insights, the book makes clear, first of all, that members of the Spanish elite invited French intervention in Spain's affairs in order to remove Manuel Godoy from the political scene. Godoy, the favorite of Charles IV, was despised by a large section of Spain's political class. In the first months of 1808, some of his enemies suspected that Godoy was planning a royal flight to the colonies in a scenario similar to the transfer of the Braganzas from Portugal to Rio de Janeiro in 1807 as French troops approached Lisbon. This conviction influenced the overthrow of Charles and Godoy at Aranjuez. Napoleon and his advisers, for their part, uncritically accepted the belief that Spanish opposition to Godoy was uniform and that Spain's population would willingly collaborate with the French. Nothing could have been further from the truth. Unlike its political class, the Spanish public abhorred the French. Nonetheless, the anti-French uprisings that followed, whether in Madrid (the Dos de Mayo) or in the provincial capitals, were hardly spontaneous. Local notables distributed arms to crowds that then enacted the "popular will" with help from the officials.

<sup>2</sup> José M. Portillo Valdés, *Crisis atlántica: Autonomía e independencia en la crisis de la monarquía hispana* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2006), 67.

<sup>3</sup> Jaime E. Rodríguez O., "We Are Now the True Spaniards": *Sovereignty, Revolution, Independence, and the Emergence of the Federal Republic of Mexico, 1808–1824* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 42, 373 n. 58. See also John Tutino, "Soberanía quebrada, insurgencias populares, y la independencia de México: La guerra de independencias, 1808–1821," *Historia Mexicana* 59, no. 1 (2009): 15.

The removal of the Bourbons reverberated an ocean away, enabling the enemies of Mexico's viceroy to plot his overthrow, which would also be dressed up as a popular act. Previous years had seen a growing tension between Iturrigaray and both *audiencia* and *consulado*, the city's main governmental and economic institutions. Even the imperial officials in Madrid began to withhold their support for the viceroy, although they stopped short of recalling him. Nor did the Seville junta, which claimed preeminence among all the juntas that sprang up across the face of Spain, take a liking to Iturrigaray, because he intended to introduce various overdue reforms which, however small, alarmed the commercial interests of Cadiz and Seville, whose mouthpiece the junta was. Especially his plan to allow for minimal participation of foreigners in Spain's transatlantic trade system was anathema, while his cozy relationship with creole mine owners, cultivated since he first arrived in 1803, aroused suspicion. Andalusia's powerful merchants surmised that the viceroy favored a movement for autonomy for New Spain. The Steins suggest that the merchants had a hand in the September coup through one of two commissioners they sent to Mexico, without whose approval the *oidores* would probably not have taken part in the viceroy's technically illegal imprisonment.

The close ties between Spain's ruling body and the commercial interests of Cadiz and Seville and their colonial partners did not weaken after the Junta Central succeeded the Seville junta as the chief Spanish body with governmental powers in September 1808. Financially dependent on the Cadiz merchants, who furnished over 200 million *reales* in loans in 1808 and 1809, the Junta Central had no choice but to yield to their demands. What were their demands? Along with their colleagues in Mexico City and Veracruz, the merchants of Cadiz sought to retain the transatlantic commercial system without allowing any concessions to merchants and planters in colonial outposts such as Caracas, Buenos Aires, and above all Havana. These demanded legalization of commerce with neutral and friendly nations, in particular the United States and Britain, a trade that enabled them to sell their colonial produce. Unlike the precious metals mined in Mexico and Peru, Cuba's sugar and Venezuela's cacao could not be warehoused in times of war. However, Spain's authorities continued to reject the pleas of the "new" economic zones, thus thwarting British attempts to gain the right to trade directly in Spanish America at the same time that Britain became a crucial anti-French ally in Spain.

In these crisis years, conservative *européos* and embittered creoles shared one objective: maintaining the status quo. From the perspective of the coup leaders, preservation of the status quo required terminating the viceroy's rule, while creoles embracing the notions of autonomy and independence hoped to accomplish their goal without altering the social order. In the Age of Revolutions, those pulling the strings among conservatives as well as rebels did indeed try to keep the social fabric intact as much as possible. This raises the question, brought by Gabrielle Paquette in his well-written and wide-ranging *Imperial Portugal in the Age of Atlantic Revolutions: The Luso-Brazilian World, c. 1770–1850*, "whether there was anything revolutionary about the revolutionary age and, in the Ibero-Atlantic case, whether independence masked deep continuities with the *ancien régime*" (373). That depends, of course, on one's definition of revolution. Are regime changes only revolutionary if they are as all-encompassing as the French and Russian revolutions?

Although Paquette's continuities are not so much social as transatlantic, he does address the need of Brazil's elite to preserve existing hierarchies: "The white Brazilian elite found that republicanism and democracy were dangerous concepts and were scared off from experimenting with them in a society with such a high proportion of enslaved Africans and free people of color" (104). For a long time, these concepts were a powerful antidote to whatever dreams the elite may have had of separation from Portugal. Ultimately, independence became conceivable when Portugal proved unable to offer protection against a plebeian insurrection. What was called for was a "conservative revolution of independence" (142) antithetical to the French Revolution, which was routinely employed as shorthand for political and social apocalypse, but not without French inspiration, namely that of Napoleon. Historian Roderick Barman has argued that Brazilians' ideological affinity with the emperor explains why Napoleon could exert so much influence on Brazil in these years. His regime was regarded as a model of social conservatism, "above all his restoration of slavery in 1802."<sup>4</sup>

Paquette does not ascribe such influence to Napoleon—the Corsican hardly makes a cameo appearance in his book. What *Imperial Portugal* does show is how far-reaching the changes were that stemmed from the invasion of Portugal which Napoleon had ordered. The ensuing wars led to a population decline of more than three hundred thousand and undermined the economy, which also suffered from the Court's

<sup>4</sup> Roderick J. Barman, "The Napoleonic Revolution and the Construction of the Brazilian Empire," in *Napoleon's Atlantic: The Impact of Napoleonic Empire in the Atlantic World*, ed. Christophe Belaubre, Jordana Dym, and John Savage (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 50.

extensive stay in Rio. The Portuguese economy was likewise affected by the opening of Brazil's ports to foreign ships in 1808, which put an end to Portugal's official monopoly of trade with Brazil. Britain was the main beneficiary of this dramatic change. Within four years, 25 percent more British merchandise entered Brazil than Britain sent to all of Asia. Economic shifts alone, however, cannot explain why Brazil ultimately became independent. Paquette's objective is actually the opposite. He tries to demonstrate that Portugal's Atlantic empire was *not* predestined to go down as those of Britain, France, and Spain before it.

Paquette identifies two problems connected to the existing "paradigm" of the Age of Revolutions. The first is that it "encourages scholars to downplay the largely successful efforts of late eighteenth-century reformers who preserved and transformed imperial structures and fortified connections between far-flung territories" (5). Paquette reevaluates the decades of enlightened reform from 1770 through 1810, which were by no means a historical dead end, and calls on historians to seek explanations for the longevity of existing institutions, and not for Brazil's separation. The second chip on Paquette's shoulder is that the Age of Revolutions is marked, as he argues, by a trope of disjuncture and discontinuity that "precludes adequate appreciation of the connections persisting well after formal dominion was declared extinct." Portugal and Brazil were connected far beyond Brazil's dissociation in 1822. It first took three years for Portugal to recognize Brazilian independence, and not until Brazil paid a £2 million indemnity by virtue of a secret clause. Besides, in 1824, it was *Portuguese* soldiers who defeated the Confederation of the Equator, a federalist movement based on republican principles which deemed the centralized government in Rio equally harmful as the empire's former Lisbon-based government. Backed by the Pernambuco elite, which was alarmed about this rhetoric, the imperial army, dispatched from Rio, crushed the movement. Brazil and Portugal remained conjoined until they went their separate ways in the 1840s.<sup>5</sup>

Paquette has little to say about the military dimension of the independence process. Instead, he is interested in high politics and has written a book of great value, based on a dazzling number of published sources and research in thirty-four archives on both sides of the Atlantic. His work is especially strong in its discussion of the great variety of constitutional projects. Spain and Spanish America are shown to have been models in both parts of the Luso-Atlantic world. The constitutions adopted in Spanish America in the 1810s echoed, for instance, in the quickly defeated Pernambucan revolution of 1817, occurring, as they did, in the same years in the same continent. But particularly influential was the liberal constitution of Cadiz, introduced by the Spanish Cortes meeting in that town in 1812. It was temporarily adopted, for instance, in Portugal in 1820, the year that revolutions sweeping through southern Europe (also Spain, Piedmont, and Naples) were each crowned by that charter, inviting condemnation by the Holy Alliance. Conversely, the dramatic events unfolding in Spain in 1823, when an invading French army toppled the constitutional regime, induced opponents of Portugal's government to put an end to the constitutional experiment that had lasted three years.

Paquette does not explain why the Cadiz constitution was so attractive, but the late Mónica Quijada has explained that it provided for an equal participation of all regions (on either side of the ocean) in national politics and incorporated all ethnic groups, albeit problematically, in its definition of nation and citizenship. In conservative circles, the constitution of Cadiz—along with other liberal constitutions that derived from the French one of 1791—was seen as a recipe for disaster rather than an example. It favored the legislative branch over the royal will, eliminated most hereditary privileges, and deprived the nobility of political power by imposing a unicameral system.<sup>6</sup> Paquette contends that one alternative to such radicalism, which at the same time steered clear of the type of absolutism that was enthroned in Spain from 1814 to 1820 (during Ferdinand VII's reign), was the French constitution of 1814. Based on the British constitution and marking the start of France's restoration after Napoleon's first defeat, the French Chartre was appealing because, unlike some other contemporary constitutions, its adoption had not been followed by instability. The Chartre provided a model for the Brazilian constitution of 1824, although the latter had its own peculiar traits, such as the introduction of a fourth, so-called Moderating Power, in addition to Montesquieu's *trias politica*.

The search for a Moderating Power was not peculiar to Brazil. Historian Marcel Gauchet has shown that it originated in the early days of the French Revolution and reappeared at several critical junctures during

<sup>5</sup> Paquette could have added the continued strength of Portuguese merchants, who controlled retail trade in many cities until well after independence, spawning violent scenes of "Lusophobia": Jeffrey C. Mosher, "Political Mobilization, Party Ideology, and Lusophobia in Nineteenth-Century Brazil: Pernambuco, 1822–1850," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 80, no. 4 (2000): 881–912.

<sup>6</sup> Mónica Quijada, "Una constitución singular: La carta gaditana en perspectiva comparada," *Revista de Indias* 68, no. 242 (2008): 17, 19, 24.



the revolution's subsequent stages, when prominent participants inside and outside the National Assembly pointed out that the existing powers were insufficient to guarantee that the new system functioned efficiently and harmoniously. The new power came in many guises: in one proposal, it was a separate political body that checked the other powers, in another, it was a "national jury" intended to protect the citizenry from oppression by the legislature, and in yet another it was a newspaper that served as the mouthpiece of individual citizens whose rights had been violated.<sup>7</sup> Usually, however, such plans did not leave the drawing board in revolutionary France. The concept of a Moderating Power also infected Simón Bolívar, who adopted it when he developed his Poder Moral. Based on practices from ancient Rome and Greece, Bolívar designed an assembly, one of whose two chambers—embodying the fourth power—was charged with guiding the population in their moral beliefs and behavior. Today, Bolívar's flight of fancy (which was only incorporated in Bolivia's 1826 constitution) smacks of totalitarianism—the chamber's moral censorship extended to the entire social environment of the citizens, with state agents carefully monitoring citizens' every move.<sup>8</sup>

If we can detect Rousseau's influence on Bolívar's fourth power, Brazil's 1824 constitution was undeniably inspired by the French thinker Benjamin Constant. It was the outcome of a collaboration between the Council of State and Dom Pedro, the Portuguese prince who declared Brazil's independence and became the country's first emperor, ruling from 1822 through 1831. Historian Neill Macaulay has explained that "as a devotee of Benjamin Constant, Dom Pedro realized that a system of separation of powers required an arbiter. If not assigned in the constitution, the moderating power would be appropriated extraconstitutionally. In the three-branch republics of Spanish America, the moderating power was seized by the armed forces; in the United States, by the Supreme Court."<sup>9</sup> Paquette adds that Brazil's Moderating Power came in the form of reinforced executive power: the emperor could dissolve the Chamber of Deputies if the nation's salvation depended on it, was allowed to nominate and fire ministers, and could nominate senators.

Two years later, Dom Pedro granted Portugal—during his fifty-three-day reign as king of that country—the Carta Constitucional, a charter based on Brazil's constitution but slightly revised to adapt it to Portugal's specific conditions. The Carta would remain in force with some interruptions until 1910. One of the differences with the Brazilian constitution was that the Carta "guaranteed the existence of a hereditary nobility, whereas the Brazilian Constitution substituted a nonhereditary nobility composed of peers chosen by the emperor, usually in exchange for services rendered to the state." Another difference was that the Portuguese Carta "gave the king an absolute veto over legislation, whereas in Brazil the emperor could merely suspend the taking effect of this legislation. But the most striking feature was the retention, even amplification, of the "Moderating Power" in the *Carta*" (Paquette, 202).

Some of the same themes that underpin *Imperial Portugal* come back in an edited collection for which Paquette teamed up with Matthew Brown: *Connections after Colonialism: Europe and Latin America in the 1820s*. The goal of the book is to present the 1820s as neither a decade that saw the end of colonialism or demise of a distinctive Atlantic world, nor the start of the national era, as it is commonly viewed. How do these years look, the editors ask, if they are seen on their own terms? Paquette and Brown are, of course, right in asserting that the 1820s have often suffered from neglect from historians of Latin America and the Atlantic world. At the same time, even this volume cannot exorcise the notion that the 1820s were a turning point of sorts. In his essay, for example, Brian Hamnett identifies the decade as the origin of several issues that would loom large well into the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries. "Foremost of these were the questions of the distribution of power within the sovereign states, the fiscal relationship between their component parts, and the distribution of wealth within their territories" (29).

Brown and Paquette have succeeded in keeping the volume's focus almost exclusively on their decade of choice, thus accentuating its distinct features. In his concluding chapter, Brown starts by describing what the 1820s were not: "no European empire achieved hegemony in the Americas, no national political project proceeded untroubled, and no political ideology (monarchism, republicanism, or mixed constitution) was unequivocally ascendant" (251). He appropriately calls this the "Bolivarian decade," marked by liberal dreams that proved illusory. They crashed, he continues, "against the harsh reality of social and ethnic division" (255). The latter remark comes as a bit of a surprise after reading this collection. Social and ethnic divisions

<sup>7</sup> Marcel Gauchet, *La révolution des pouvoirs: La souveraineté, le peuple et la représentation 1789–1799* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), 77–79, 82–84, 116, 134.

<sup>8</sup> O. Carlos Stotzer, "Bolívar y el Poder Moral," *Revista de Historia de América* 95 (1983): 149–150, 156. Anna Maria Battista, "El Poder Moral: La creación irrisolta e sconfitta di Simón Bolívar," *Il Pensiero Politico: Rivista di Storia delle Idee Politiche e Sociali* 20 (1987): 57–62.

<sup>9</sup> Neill Macaulay, *Dom Pedro: The Struggle for Liberty in Portugal and Brazil, 1798–1834* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986), 164.

hardly appear in a volume that privileges political history. The exception is Carrie Gibson's brief piece on the specter of Haiti in the Spanish Caribbean in the 1820s, but that has already been superseded by the recent monographs of Alejandro Gómez and Ada Ferrer.<sup>10</sup>

As in Paquette's monograph, the persistence of transatlantic ties beyond independence is one of the major themes here. And once again, it is exemplified by constitutionalism. The editors refer in their introduction to the impact of the Cadiz constitution, which influenced charters in independent Argentina, Chile, New Granada, Peru, Venezuela, and Uruguay. This charter was the fullest expression of Spanish liberalism, whose characteristics are summed up in Will Fowler's chapter: "its ardent faith in representative government and constitutionalism, its defiant anti-absolutism, its emphasis on liberty (free trade, freedom of the press, freedom of movement, freedom of religious belief), equality before the law ... and its defense and romantic glorification of the individual vis-à-vis the collective and corporate practice of the ancient régime" (48). In an eye-opening essay, Maurizio Isabella reveals that the Cadiz constitution also helped create contacts and cultivate sympathy between Italian and Latin American patriots by instilling a common political culture. European examples may have had inspired the independence movement in Latin America, but in turn Latin American emancipation served as an important stimulus for the Risorgimento, the sociopolitical movement that united the Italian peninsula. It signaled that regime change was possible anywhere in the world and that radical politics and violence could be avoided in bringing about such change. Indeed, as Hamnett mentions in his contribution, despite the adoption of the Cadiz constitution in many Latin American polities, the new states eventually backtracked, shrinking the franchise and reducing the number of deputies in relation to population.

If the elites that directed the transition from colony to state aimed to preserve the social status quo, they also did what they could to maintain colonial boundaries. As is well known, the new Latin American countries adopted the legal doctrine of *uti possidetis*, according to which old administrative boundaries will become international boundaries when a political subdivision achieves independence. The authorities assumed that no discussion was possible about their territorial claims inherited from the past. What they found out at their cost was that the past offered no indisputable solutions. This was not a new problem, as Tamar Herzog shows eloquently in her *Frontiers of Possession*. Throughout the early modern period, border issues had divided Spain and Portugal on both sides of the ocean. Contention was usually centered on either the rights given to Spain by papal documents in 1493 and the Treaty of Tordesillas a year later and subsequently confirmed or impaired in treaties, or the legal doctrines that stated that possession determined title. The independence era is at best tangential to Herzog's study, whose conclusions might well apply universally and not merely to the Luso-Spanish relationship.

*Revolutions without Borders: The Call to Liberty in the Atlantic World*, based on a wealth of secondary literature supplemented by archival sources, is also no more than tenuously related to Latin American independence. While Janet Polasky does a good job of integrating Geneva and the Netherlands (North and South) into the story of the Age of Revolutions, she is silent on mainland Latin America for reasons that are not explained. Bolívar is not mentioned at all. The Caribbean does play a role in her book, albeit only the French islands and Jamaica. Her highly readable work, therefore, portrays the Age of North Atlantic Revolutions. *Revolutions without Borders* has an original setup, with a different prism on the revolutionary period in each chapter: pamphlets; memoirs and narratives; newspapers and clubs; rumors; novels; family correspondence; and diplomatic correspondence. The one chapter focused on the Caribbean is that on rumors, and more specifically rumors of freedom, which often preceded slave insurrections and can thus be considered to have been instrumental in their outbreak. Like all students of Caribbean history in the age of the Haitian Revolution, Polasky is indebted to the now-classic dissertation of Julius Scott, which first detailed the role of rumors in conveying news and wishful thinking across imperial boundaries. In addition, Scott showed how authorities and elites would do all they could to suppress news deemed dangerous, like Spanish King Charles IV's *cédula* of 1789 ordering the introduction of a new slave code.

In New Orleans, Santo Domingo, Havana, and Caracas, news about the code seeped through although it was never published.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, slaves in Saint-Domingue found out about the French Revolution despite initial attempts by metropolitan authorities to keep under wraps all news about the storming of the Bastille and subsequent events. In the Spanish empire, as Barbara and Stanley Stein show in their book, blocking

<sup>10</sup> Alejandro E. Gómez, *Le spectre de la Révolution Noire: L'impact de la Révolution Haïtienne dans le monde atlantique, 1790–1886* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013). Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> Julius Sherrard Scott III, "The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution" (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1986), 150.

information not only occurred to prevent slaves everywhere from revolting, but also to discourage creoles from declaring autonomy. In the years 1808–1810, the Junta Central and its successor, the Regency, did what they could to suppress news from the peninsula that might create an appetite for autonomy from the empire. But no order to block the dispatch of official mail to the American colonies had the intended effect.

Polasky makes one important observation: “Rumors fanning Caribbean revolutions did not proceed along a direct path. Otherwise, Jamaica, with its busy ports, would have been more vulnerable to the spread of slave revolts.... Instead of igniting a slave revolt, however, the French Revolution had the opposite effect in Jamaica. It actually bolstered the institution of slavery in the British colonies” (146–147). The portrait of the tumultuous era that emerges from the scholarship reviewed here is that none of the revolts and revolutions discussed were bound to happen. There was always a strong element of contingency. Nor did relations with the former colonizing powers come to a sudden halt after independence was declared. The Age of Revolutions saw, as Brown and Paquette put it, “interrupted continuities between Europe and Latin America, not irreparably shattered bonds” (4).

The essays collected by Aiko Tsuchiya and William G. Acree Jr. in *Empire's End: Transnational Connections in the Hispanic World* drive home the same point. The editors write in their introduction that “the ongoing negotiations between metropolis and post-colonial societies, on both the material and discursive levels, continued to play an instrumental role in the development of both regions” (5). In an innovative chapter, the late Christopher Schmidt-Nowara wonders how we can rhyme the principles of liberty and equality, propagated so widely during the independence era in the early part of the nineteenth century, with the construction of a regime of mass slavery in Cuba in the aftermath of the revolutionary process. One answer, he suggests, can be found in captivity as experienced by Spaniards and American royalists on either side of the ocean. A powerful response to captivity was formulated by Joseph Blanco White, a Spaniard who escaped from Spain to London after the Napoleonic invasion. His subsequent abolitionist writings were influenced by his brother Fernando's trials and tribulations during the Peninsular War, when he was taken by his French enemies to Burgundy and imprisoned. The letters Fernando wrote to his parents and brother “convey the account of his capture, the forced march from Madrid to Burgundy, his hunger, disorientation, and sense of abandonment, all elements that would reverberate through Joseph's depiction and attack on the slave traffic” (135). More typical, however, was a very different response to the wars of independence in both Spain and its American provinces. Schmidt-Nowara argues that the ruthless violence unleashed by anti-royalist forces and the manifold challenges to the status quo left an imprint on the men who witnessed and suffered from it. Scarred by terror and dishonor, military and political leaders, officers and soldiers, bureaucrats and planters shaped a new empire in the Antilles underpinned by absolutism, plantation slavery, and other coercive labor regimes. Further research is needed to prove the thesis of this suggestive essay.

If 1824—the year in which the battle of Ayacucho ended Spain's formal empire in mainland America—was no endpoint, neither was 1898, although the Spanish-American War marked the demise of Spain's second empire, made up of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. In his chapter, Joshua Goode asserts that the same anthropologists who theorized about Spain's past imperial greatness in the New World were hired to help build the Spanish presence in Morocco as scholars and military advisors. Transatlantic links also survived after the Spanish-American War, as Lisa Surwillo shows in her contribution. Like in the previous four centuries, migrants—especially from Asturias, Cantabria, and Galicia—crossed the ocean to Spanish-speaking countries to strike it rich and return to Spain as wealthy men. Not all came back, of course, but among those who did, some had succeeded in their ambition. These *indianos* tended to flaunt their newly acquired wealth. They built American-style mansions and changed the center of their town by constructing schools, community centers, and buildings for religious communities.

History is a mixture of change and continuity, as the books reviewed here show, each in its own way. It is healthy to see scholars downplaying change and emphasizing continuity. While they don't undermine the notion that there was an Age of Revolutions, they do force those of us working in this field to indicate the degree to which successful revolts launched a new era. Our judgment must be informed by an analysis that not only begins before the first clash of arms but goes beyond the years in which the revolutions unfolded. Only then can we make sense of the transformative power of revolution and the legacies of colonialism.

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**How to cite this article:** Klooster, Wim. 2018. Interrupted Continuities: Transatlantic Relations during and after the Age of Revolutions (1775–1824). *Latin American Research Review* 53(1), pp. 159–166. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25222/larr.228>

**Submitted:** 15 March 2017

**Accepted:** 22 March 2017

**Published:** 28 March 2018

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