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Creating a New World: A Historiography of the Atlantic World

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ENCOUNTERING THE OLD WORLD



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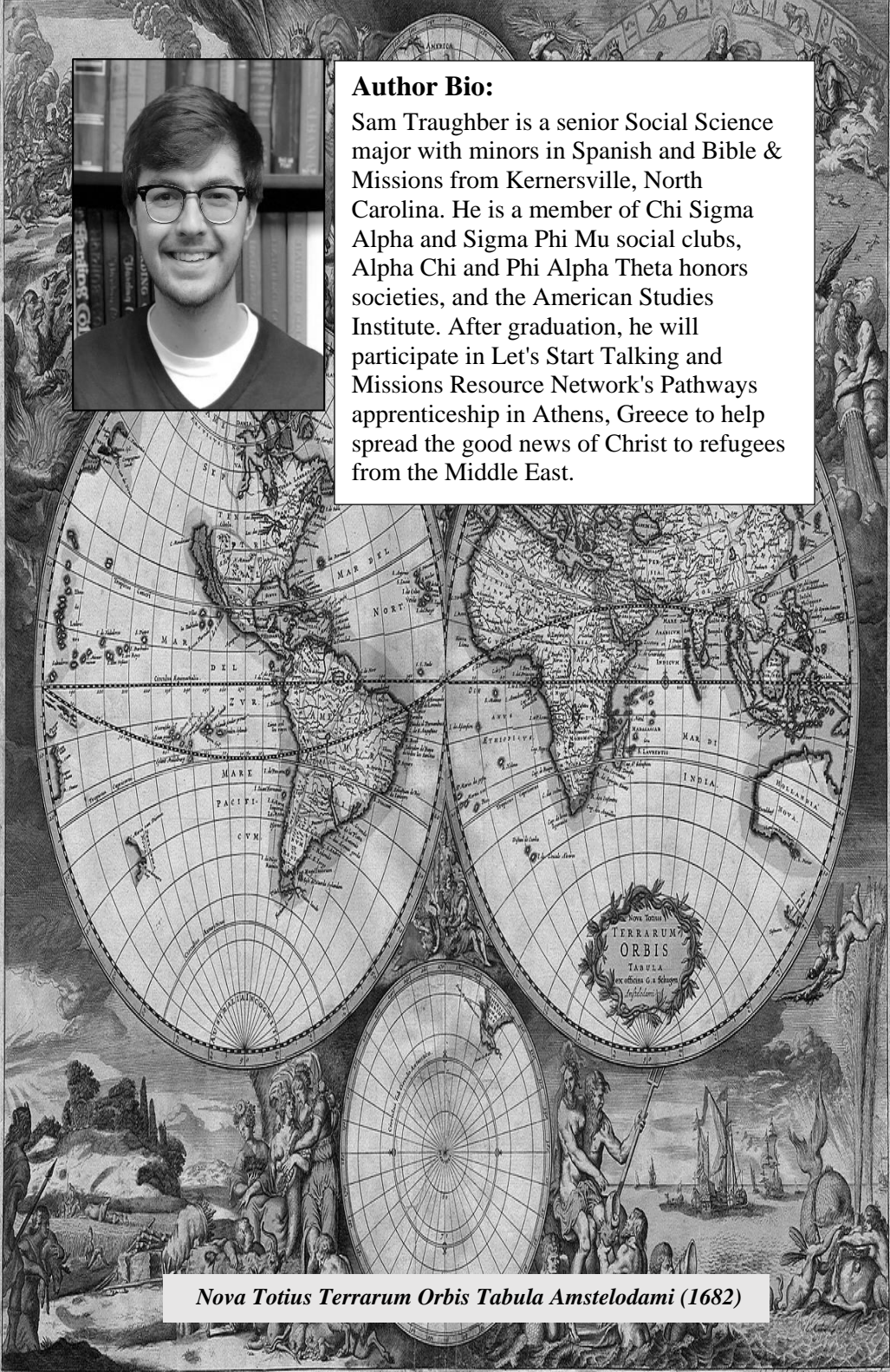
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Nova Totius Terrarum Orbis Tabula Amstelodami (1682)

CREATING A NEW WORLD: A HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE ATLANTIC WORLD

By Sam Traugher

Atlantic history, a relatively new study, seeks to gain better understanding of the many transatlantic connections that existed in the early modern period. It encompasses the imperial histories of the various Western European nations as well as the regional histories of West Africa and the Americas. The starting and ending dates, like the concept itself, are rather fluid, but can start as early as Portugal's first explorations in the early fifteenth century and end as late as the abolition of the Brazilian slave trade in 1888. A narrower view would cover from 1492 with Christopher Columbus's voyages until the U. S. abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 1808. Spanning four continents, this broad frame of study parallels the vastness of the Atlantic itself. The Atlantic Ocean bound the civilizations of these regions together through shared experiences and connections. This set of transatlantic civilizations, then, makes up what is called the Atlantic World.

The Atlantic World brought together peoples of half the globe, along with their economies, societies, religions, ideas, and environments in a major step towards globalization. Following the voyages of Columbus in 1492, the two worlds of Afro-Eurasia and the Americas became inextricably linked following the voyages of Columbus in 1492. One story bound up five continents, a story that took place largely in the setting of the Atlantic Ocean. Silver from an obscure corner of Bolivia drove economic relations between Spain and China.¹ Common European illness devastated Mexico.² Europeans shipped millions of Africans across an ocean to grow sugar in the Caribbean. Great Plains culture relied heavily on horses from Spain.³ Democratic thought from thirteen

¹ Charles C. Mann, *1493: Uncovering the New World Columbus Created* (New York: Random House, 2011), 191.

² Alfred W. Crosby, Jr., *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 1972), 38.

³ Crosby, 102

English colonies spurred reform across Europe.⁴ Much like the Atlantic World itself, the historiography of the Atlantic has brought together various ideas from myriad sources into one story. No one source can be identified as the primary driver of the study of the Atlantic World. Rather, this essay claims that a complex web of thought coming from political historians, economic historians, social historians, biological historians, historiographers, and geographers, along with contemporary geopolitical circumstances, led to the creation of Atlantic history.

Atlantic history as an academic discipline first appeared in the 1960s with the Atlantic History and Culture program at John Hopkins University.⁵ At this time, only a few historians would have considered themselves Atlanticists, studying the entire early modern Atlantic as one civilization. The movement towards an Atlantic perspective, however, had roots earlier in the twentieth century. Historian Bernard Bailyn, in his 2005 historiography *Atlantic History: Concepts and Contours* traced the origins of the Atlantic World concept not to a historian, but to a journalist. In *The New Republic*, Walter Lippmann argued for the United States to enter the Great War in February 1917 by justifying it in a historical context. “Britain, France, Italy, even Spain, Belgium, Holland, the Scandinavian countries, and Pan-America are in the main one community in their deepest needs and their deepest purposes... We cannot betray the Atlantic community.”⁶ Lippmann argued again in the 1940s for an Atlantic approach to American foreign relations in his book *U. S. War Aims* where he proposed a new postwar world of historically tied regional communities, the first of which would be the Atlantic community.⁷ Although not directly calling for the study of Atlantic history, these thoughts demonstrate that contemporary context did play a part in viewing the Atlantic World as a shared heritage. The historical study of the Atlantic World grew out of a context of a transatlantic Cold

⁴R. R. Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800*, vol. 1, *The Challenge* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959), 239.

⁵ Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan eds., *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3.

⁶ Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concepts and Contours* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

War, which fostered transatlantic connections such as the Marshall Plan and NATO.

In regards to historiography, seeking to understand the history of the early modern period in a wider geographic context did not originate with the Atlantic history movement. Before the idea of the Atlantic World became a subject of interest, Herbert Bolton pioneered the concept of a hemispheric approach to the study of the Americas in the 1930s. Unlike the later Atlantic approach, the geographic unit studied in this approach did not cross the Atlantic, but only spanned the two Americas. A context that keenly fit Bolton's expertise (he studied what became the American West when it was still the Mexican North), this hemispheric approach ultimately failed to gain widespread support among historians. The hemispheric approach emphasized the commonality of experience between North and South America, rather than the transoceanic connections of the later Atlantic approach. Although Bolton argued strongly for this approach in his 1933 *Epic of Greater America*, he was never able to fulfill his dream of a complete history of the Americas, because, even before the end of his life, "the course was going into decline and it was too late for such a book."⁸ Although largely a failure, the hemispheric approach provided the groundwork for understanding that the U. S. should be examined within a larger geographical context.

This kind of larger-context history became much more prominent after Fernand Braudel's 1949 *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. In this groundbreaking work, Braudel sought to understand Mediterranean history as a cohesive unit. This book came out of a study on Philip II's Mediterranean policy, but as Braudel continued to learn and write, he "began to ask [him]self finally whether the Mediterranean did not possess... a history and a destiny of its own."⁹ Braudel saw the sea itself as a historical unit of study, much more than a simple background to the stories that took place

⁸ Wilbur R. Jacobs, John W. Caughey, and Joe B. Frantz, *Turner, Bolton, and Webb: Three Historians of the American Frontier* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964), 64.

⁹ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 1:20.

within it and around its shores. This led to his impressive three-part work on the Mediterranean that “divide[d] historical time into geographical time, social time, and individual time.”¹⁰

Part one of this work pulled much more from geography than from history, describing the physical features at play in shaping the history of the region. In the preface to the second edition, Braudel referred to this as “that other, submerged, history, almost silent and always discreet.”¹¹ Historians had neglected this slow history, large-scale and long-term, before Braudel. The second part of the book was a history of social movements such as “economic systems, states, societies, civilizations.”¹² Many later Atlanticists modeled themselves after this middle-term history, taking Braudel’s concept of a civilization around the Mediterranean Basin and applying it to the greater Atlantic Basin. The third part of this book deals with the small-scale, more traditional history “on the scale not of man, but of individual men.”¹³

In *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World*, Braudel hinted several times at the possibility for a greater Atlantic history without confronting it directly. In his section on the geographical impact of the Atlantic Ocean on the Mediterranean, Braudel wrote: “There is another Atlantic which has been neglected [referring to the particularly challenging Atlantic route which connected the North Sea and the Mediterranean], possibly because it links together these particular sectors, and whose full significance will only become apparent in the comprehensive history of the Atlantic which has yet to be written.”¹⁴ Braudel touched on this subject only lightly, describing briefly the interactions between the Atlantic and his Mediterranean World, and the rise of the Atlantic over the Mediterranean.¹⁵

In his 1998 work *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*, Atlanticist and Africanist historian John Thornton traced the roots of Atlantic history back to Braudel, saying “Braudel’s approach changed the way regions were defined, introducing the concept of a

¹⁰ Braudel, 21.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2:16.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1:20.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 224.

¹⁵ Braudel, 225.

history integrated by the sea.”¹⁶ Not long after Braudel, French-trained scholars started approaching the Atlantic in a similar fashion. Three substantial Atlantic works quickly followed Braudel’s *The Mediterranean* and acknowledged him as inspiration: Pierre and Huguette Chaunu’s 1955-1960 *Séville et l’Atlantique*, Frédéric Mauro’s 1960 *Portugal et l’Atlantique*, and Vitorino Magalhães-Godinho’s 1963-1965 *Os descobrimentos e a economia mundial*. Thornton saw all three of these as falling short of Braudel’s example because of their Eurocentric bias, as none gave ample attention to all the peoples around the Atlantic like Braudel had done for the Mediterranean; however, they did greatly contribute to the rise in further scholarship on the subject.¹⁷

The Chaunus’ *Séville et l’Atlantique*, in particular, became a major force propelling Atlantic history forward. In a massive study of the trade conducted between Seville and the Spanish Indies, the Chaunus created a store of information that quickly became “indispensable” to historians of Imperial Spain and the Atlantic.¹⁸ In later volumes, Chaunu followed some of Braudel’s methods in describing the geography and economic worlds of the Spanish Atlantic.¹⁹ *Séville* emphasized the importance of silver to the Spanish economy and demonstrated that Spain’s power rose and fell with its control of the transatlantic economy.²⁰ The Chaunus “elevated the subject to an ‘infinitely higher level,’ and ‘in such a way as to make possible; a fresh and immensely rewarding look at reality.’”²¹ *Séville et l’Atlantique*, an economic history inspired by a geographic history, effectively opened the door to later Atlanticists.

In 1949 (the same year as Braudel’s *The Mediterranean*) Michael Kraus, in his *The Atlantic Civilization: Eighteenth Century*

¹⁶ John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1.

¹⁷ Thornton, 1.

¹⁸ Roland Dennis Hussey, review of *Séville et l’Atlantique, 1504-1650*, by Huguette and Pierre Chaunu, *The American Historical Review* 63, no. 1 (Oct. 1957): 111-112.

¹⁹ Frédéric Mauro, review of *Séville et l’Atlantique, 1504-1650*, by Huguette and Pierre Chaunu, *The Economic History Review, New Series* 14, no. 2 (1961): 355-356.

²⁰ J. H. Elliott, *The Old World and the New, 1492-1650* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 88.

²¹ Bailyn, 32.

Origins, asserted “the concept of the Atlantic community is much in evidence in our present-day consciousness.”²² For Kraus, this Atlantic community effectively consisted of only North America and Western Europe; he argued that Europe grew along with the Americas into a new, shared civilization in a way it did not with Asia because Europe and the Americas more fully adopted each other's patterns of life.²³ Kraus sought to show the origins of this Atlantic community by describing interactions across the Atlantic starting in the eighteenth century. He argued that the New World “had a profound effect on Europe” by accelerating the transition to a money economy, by making traditional social classes more fluid, by stimulating the arts and sciences, by creating whole new fields in the social sciences, and by (perhaps most of all) challenging conventional ideas of political science.²⁴ Thus, by 1949, the idea of a common history and destiny tied together Europe and North America in a fashion that would persist throughout the Cold War era and beyond.

While working on his two volume book *The Age of Democratic Revolution* (1956, 1964), American historian R. R. Palmer met French historian Jacques Godechot. The two historians of the French Revolution together wrote “Le Problème de l’Atlantique du XVIIIe et XXe Siècle”²⁵ in 1954, a political history of the Atlantic World, which Bernard Bailyn called the “first direct attempt at a comprehensive conceptualization of the idea of Atlantic history.”²⁶ This paper “swept broadly” over any issue that the two thought would belong within the field.²⁷ They modeled this civilization off of Braudel’s ideas of a Mediterranean civilization, but also saw it as malleable, as opposed to “static or monolithic.”²⁸ Historians resisted the paper, arguing the subject did not exist and should not exist, calling Palmer and Godechot “apologists for NATO” despite the fact that the two continued to argue Atlantic civilization existed less

²² Michael Kraus, *The Atlantic Civilization: Eighteenth-Century Origins* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1961), vii.

²³ Kraus, 3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 309.

²⁵ Robert Forster, R. R. Palmer, James Friguglietti, and Emmet Kennedy, “American Historians Remember Jacques Godechot,” *French Historical Studies* 16, no. 4 (Autumn 1990): 883.

²⁶ Bailyn, 24.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁸ Bailyn, 26.

in their day than it did in the eighteenth century.²⁹

In his *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, (published in two volumes in 1959 and 1964) R. R. Palmer continued his study of the political history of the Atlantic World. Here, rather than study the whole Atlantic as a civilization, Palmer presented a comparative approach to the study of revolutions across the Atlantic in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, looking not only at the American and French Revolutions, but also political reforms and revolutions in Britain and across continental Europe. He also briefly touched on revolutions in Haiti and throughout Latin America, although he regretted not giving them a larger portion of his study.³⁰ Palmer saw all these revolutions not as isolated events or as one mega-revolution, but as a transatlantic phenomenon, where the ideas and actions of one nation could influence and spur on the ideas and actions of nations an ocean away.

By the 1960s, Atlantic history began to draw more interest. In 1969, J. H. Elliot gave a series of four lectures at The Queen's University of Belfast, later published in the book *The Old World and the New, 1492-1650*. His theme for the lectures, the "impact of the New World of America on sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Europe," was one that he said should be discussed "either in a very long book, or in a very short one."³¹ *The Old World and the New* was, then, the very short book, followed in 2007 by the very long book *Empires of the Atlantic World*. Elliot acknowledged early in the first lecture that he saw the beginnings of Atlantic history as a subject forming, saying "the literature on the discovery of and colonization of the New World is now enormous, but it is also in many respects fragmentary and disconnected, as if it formed a special field of historical study on its own."³² Taking up ideas from the Chaunus, and drawing off his previous work on imperial Spain, Elliott chose to focus on the Spanish Indies (rather than the English North American colonies) and their impact on the history of Western Europe,

²⁹ Forster et al., 883.

³⁰ R. R. Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800*, vol. 2, *The Struggle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), vi.

³¹ Elliott, *The Old World and the New*, ix.

³² Elliott, *The Old World and the New*, 6.

bringing Latin America more fully into the sphere of Atlantic history.

The first of the lectures, titled “The Uncertain Impact” discussed Europe’s initial response to the discovery of the Americas. Although met with initial excitement, the process of integrating the Americas into European worldviews was, on the whole, a slow process, due largely to how incredibly different the Americas were from Europe.³³ Elliott described how Europe did eventually incorporate the New World into both its Judeo-Christian worldview and its Greco-Roman classical worldview in the second chapter, “The Process of Assimilation.” The Americas strengthened traditional European views that all peoples would eventually become both Christianized and civilized and that Europeans themselves, already both of these, were a superior people.³⁴ Chapter three “The New Frontier” then discussed how the Americas were incorporated into the economic world of Europe. Elliott discussed how American bullion, trade, and opportunity helped Europe rise to be a global economic powerhouse. He concluded that Europe, in acquiring access to America as a new frontier, gained “room for manoeuvre”³⁵ which provided opportunities for people to take risks and succeed. Lecture four, titled “The Atlantic World,” described the political effects the Americas had on Europe and how the Spanish Empire rose and fell with its control of the Atlantic trade. By 1650, Elliott concluded, “The New World... had been accepted and absorbed”³⁶ into an arrogant Europe; however, here he also hinted that post-1650, when England gained control of the Atlantic, the Americas would come to represent something different - new dreams and possibilities of freedom, equality, and inquiry.³⁷ This work, although small, displayed the massive scope of the Atlantic World. Elliott discussed not only political structures and economies that spanned the Atlantic, but also thought, worldview, and culture. This book continued an incredible legacy of integrating many different social science fields into one powerful narrative.

Also tied to the ascent of Atlantic history was a general rise in

³³ *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 103.

³⁷ Elliot, *The Old World and the New*, 104.

migration studies starting in the 1950s.³⁸ This movement had come into fruition by 1969, with Philip Curtin's seminal *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* which brought life to the study of transatlantic migrations and the importance of the slave trade to the Atlantic World. Migration and demographic studies clearly linked together the Atlantic world, displaying the personal familial connections that existed across the Atlantic. Works like David Eltis's 1983 *Free and Coerced Transatlantic Migrations*, by comparing the flows and experiences of migrants from Africa and Europe to the Americas, by their very nature, contributed to the idea of a connected Atlantic World.³⁹

Taking a much different approach than the other early Atlanticists discussed, Alfred W. Crosby, in his landmark 1972 book *The Columbian Exchange*, explored the biological consequences of the post-1492 Atlantic World. He argued that "the most important changes brought on by the Columbian voyages were biological in nature."⁴⁰ To this end Crosby examined food, disease, and demography and how the Atlantic World changed these on both sides of the Atlantic following Columbus. He argued that the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, developing in isolation of each other, became biologically two distinct worlds and that the connection of these worlds, not in natural time but in the rapid pace of human time following the voyage of 1492, proved devastating. Although the spread of Old World animals and New World plants led to overall population growth, Crosby argued the consequences of the exchange have been and will continue to be overwhelmingly negative, due to the incredible loss of biodiversity it has caused. He concluded the book with this pessimistic outlook, saying "We, all the life forms on this planet, are the less for Columbus, and the impoverishment will increase."⁴¹

The Columbian Exchange came out of Crosby's desire to understand man within its context and although Crosby meant in this case, man's biological context, this sentiment still paralleled Atlanticist

³⁸ Bailyn, 32.

³⁹ David Eltis, "Free and Coerced Transatlantic Migrations: Some Comparisons," *The American Historical Review* 88, no. 2 (April 1983): 251.

⁴⁰ Crosby, xiv.

⁴¹ Crosby, 219.

goals of understanding the transatlantic societies of the early modern period in their greater context.⁴² Although this work lies somewhat out of the mainstream of Atlanticist historiography, arguing more for the Atlantic as an ecosystem rather than as a civilization, it has nevertheless been instrumental in demonstrating transatlantic connection. Its title has since become the widely-used name for this subject, refers to the exchange of life forms between Afro-Eurasia and the Americas that took place because of the post-Columbian connection of the two sides of the Atlantic. Even if Crosby was not their direct inspiration, historians have frequently mentioned his phrase and ideas as an argument for studying the Atlantic World more holistically. Much of the later Atlanticist literature echoes and builds off his concept of a transatlantic exchange, adding biological and environmental history to the mix of the increasingly diverse field.

Following in the example of Braudel, D. W. Meinig published *Atlantic America, 1492-1800*, the first volume to his *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History* in 1986. Much like Braudel, Meinig sought to understand how geography influenced history in his study of the United States. In doing this, he hoped to critique standard American history and to create a synthesis of important themes he felt were neglected in its study. This included putting the history of the United States in a greater Atlantic context. In his introduction he stated: “The United States emerges within an Atlantic World and it everafter must share the continent and adjacent seas with other peoples and powers.”⁴³ Meinig traced the human geography of the United States back to an Atlantic World that greatly influenced the peoples, cultures, and systems of the region. He identified two cultural hearths that spread across the Atlantic, an Iberian and a Northwest European (Britain, France, and the Netherlands), which help explain the cultural and historical differences between Latin America and North America. In reviewing his work, historian Don Higginbotham said of Meinig, “I know of no other scholar who has better described how an

⁴² *Ibid.*, xii.

⁴³ D. W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*, vol. 1, *Atlantic America, 1492-1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), xvi.

interdependence developed between the continents of Europe, Africa, and North and South America.”⁴⁴ With this work, human geography became another piece in the ever more complex Atlantic World mosaic.

By the 1990s, Atlantic history had grown greatly in popularity, but was still confined largely to Western Europe and the Americas.⁴⁵ John Thornton, noticing the absence of Africa and Africans in the story, published his *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World* in 1992 “to assess this less well known migration of Africans to the Americas and to place this assessment in the growing field of Atlantic history.”⁴⁶ In his review of the book, Ira Berlin declared it the first major historical work to “[discuss] the creation of African America from the perspective of African society.”⁴⁷ Thornton’s research relied largely on primary texts, which, along with his view of the Atlantic World, led his book to counter much of the secondary literature at the time, which saw Africans as victims of the Atlantic World, not co-creators in it.⁴⁸ Thornton concluded that “Africans were active participants in the Atlantic world, both in African trade with Europeans (including the slave trade) and as slaves in the New World.”⁴⁹ In two sections, “Africans in Africa” and “Africans in the New World,” Thornton explained that Africans were powerful agents in the creation of the Atlantic World, including the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which he saw as an extension of traditional African slave-trading.⁵⁰ In doing this, Thornton gave a powerful new voice, previously ignored, to Africans in the story of Atlantic history.

During this time, widening access to computers greatly expanded migration history. New technology allowed historians to create electronic databases from the records they studied and gain access to a host of these

⁴⁴ Don Higginbotham, review of *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*, vol. 1, *Atlantic America, 1492-1800*, by D. W. Meinig, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 19, no. 1 (Summer 1988): 138.

⁴⁵ Thornton, 1.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ira Berlin, review of *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680*, by John Thornton, *The William and Mary Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (July 1994): 545.

⁴⁸ Thornton, 8.

⁴⁹ Thornton, 6.

⁵⁰ Berlin, 546.

databases from either side of the Atlantic. Cooperation among scholars in the field, starting with David Eltis and Stephen Behrendt in 1990, led to the creation of the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade* database in 1999 and then the creation of Voyages, the online publication of this information, in 2006. This assembled vast amounts of information on the transatlantic slave migrations into one database, which will continue to influence the growth of transatlantic studies.⁵¹

By the 2000s, Atlantic history had gained enough attention to be the subject of study itself. In 2001, Central Michigan University put together *The Atlantic World in the Age of Empire*, a compilation of Atlanticist essays and book chapters from the 1980s and 1990s. Here, works by aforementioned authors like Alfred W. Crosby, D. W. Meinig, and John Thornton, along with those of nearly twenty other historians, traced the story of the Atlantic, piece by piece, from its origins as a response to the decline of the thirteenth-century world system characterized by the Silk Road to the revolutions of the early nineteenth centuries and the disintegration of the Spanish Empire. The editors of this work saw Atlantic history as a “dramatic departure” from the traditional history of the early modern period because it acknowledges the importance and contributions of native Americans and Africans.⁵² As a work created by many perspectives integrated into a whole, *The Atlantic World in the Age of Empire* paralleled the story of the Atlantic itself.

The study of Atlantic history continued in 2005 with Bernard Bailyn’s *Atlantic History: Concepts and Contours*. Here, Bailyn sought to explain the historiography of the concept of the Atlantic World and explain contemporary views on the subject. Bailyn described Atlantic history not as a static structure, but as a loose, ever-changing process that connected the four continents of the Atlantic and brought them into a similar set of experiences. He argued that Atlantic history was much more than the sum of the various imperial and regional histories of the time. Throughout his book he emphasized the fact that the Atlantic

⁵¹ “History of the Project,” Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, accessed November 22, 2017, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/about/history>.

⁵² Thomas Benjamin, Timothy Hall, and David Rutherford eds., *The Atlantic World in the Age of Empire* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), pp.

World pulled together obscure peoples around the Atlantic Basin, previously largely isolated, into an intercontinental system that affected every aspect of daily life. Bailyn saw the general outline of Atlantic history in three stages: the “creation of a vast new marchland of European civilization,”⁵³ the development an American economy and its integration into a transatlantic system, and an era of revolutions and nationalization. He saw these themes as permeating Atlantic history, affecting every place in different ways and at different times.

In his historiography, Bailyn traced the roots of Atlantic history back as far as he could (to the 1917 article by Walter Lippmann discussed earlier) and followed the story forward to the twenty-first century. He saw Atlantic history as a unique concept, not directly derived from the geographic history of Braudel, traditional imperial history, or the pan-American history of Bolton, but rather created as a response to all of these.⁵⁴ He acknowledged a host of factors as having influenced the creation and development of the field, including a general widening of perspective into larger geographic units, the rise in popularity of ethnic and migration histories, and the geopolitical situation of the Cold War.⁵⁵ Like others before him, Bailyn saw Atlantic history as incomplete, a subject that had never been studied in its entirety. He ends his book by saying “but the full account of this story... is a tale yet to be told.”⁵⁶ Through this work, Bailyn added the voice of historiography to the growing choir of Atlanticist sub-fields.

The year 2007 saw the publication of *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in the Americas*, where J. H. Elliott returned to the subject of the Atlantic World in a comparative study of colonial Spain and Britain. Like Braudel’s *The Mediterranean*, this work was born out of a study of Habsburg Spain and was intended to provide greater context to that time period. However, rather than study the entire geographic context of the Atlantic, Elliott took a comparative approach, and limited himself to Spain and Britain out of practicality. Elliott saw Spain and England as fluctuating, like an accordion, constantly learning

⁵³ Bailyn, 62.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 4-6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵⁶ Bailyn, 111.

from each other, and so his comparison was not of two static structures, but of two interacting processes.⁵⁷ Elliott's work relied largely on concepts built up in the Atlanticist tradition: that societies interacted with each other and affected the course of each other's histories and that geography and the larger surrounding political and economic context greatly impacted history. He also adds to the Atlanticist tradition with a strong work of comparative history within the Atlantic context.

Soon after, in 2009, the American Historical Association met to discuss the Atlantic World as a concept. It was an "occasion for a critical appraisal of that increasingly popular subject" with scholars of "varying opinions [presenting] short papers on its merits and utility."⁵⁸ Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan afterwards brought these papers, along with a handful of others, together in the book *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* to "assess the impact of the New World of the Atlantic upon the Old Worlds around the Atlantic" and "present alternative or complementary frameworks for analyzing the new Atlantic world."⁵⁹ The chapters provided critiques of the Atlantic World from the perspective of the various national histories encompassed in Atlantic history and the impacts of the Atlantic World on the old societies of the Atlantic Basin. Later chapters discussed topics that Atlantic history had neglected, along with alternative approaches to studying them. In their opening chapter, Greene and Morgan called Atlantic history an "analytic construct and an explicit category of historical analysis that historians have devised to help them organize the study of some of the most important developments of the early modern era."⁶⁰ With this, the authors separate themselves from older views that call Atlantic history a perspective and contemporary views that saw it as a "full-blown field of study."⁶¹ Much of their chapter outlined and then refuted five substantive objections to Atlantic history. This work further illustrates the idea that Atlantic

⁵⁷ J. H. Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), xvii.

⁵⁸ Greene, v.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*.

⁶⁰ Greene, 3.

⁶¹ Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, "Introduction: The Present State of Atlantic History," in *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, eds. Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 4.

history is a broad subject, encompassing a wide variety of topics and perspectives.

In 2011, Charles C. Mann returned to many of Alfred Crosby's ideas in *1493: Uncovering the New World Columbus Created*, where he discussed the post-Columbian world as one of great exchanges. In four sections, Mann described four Atlantic World processes: the transatlantic exchange of tobacco and disease; the transpacific exchange of silver and sweet potatoes; the role of the Columbian Exchange in the food revolution through the potato and the industrial revolution through rubber; and the transatlantic slave trade. The transpacific dimension to Atlantic history was something Mann recognized as a growing area of interest. In his prologue he stated in an aside: “recently a number of Atlanticists have added movements across the Pacific to their purview; the field may have to be renamed.”⁶² Mann, then, saw the Atlantic World as a major step in the long process of globalization. He also recognized that this new telling of the story was partly due to contemporary circumstances, as he had much easier access to Chinese archives than Crosby did a few decades before.⁶³ In *1493*, Mann built on a strong Atlanticist legacy of bringing together ideas from many different places (in his case ideas of globalization, the economy, and food) and creating something greater out of them.

The story of Atlantic history parallels that of its subject. The Atlantic World brought together various peoples of disparate backgrounds to create a world none of them could have imagined on their own. Much the same, modern historians of varied backgrounds and specialties have come together, providing a multitude of perspectives and experiences, to create a world none of them could have imagined: the Atlantic World as a historical concept. No one straightforward explanation can suffice for the rise of this diverse and complex study of a diverse and complex world. Rather, the Atlantic World of twenty-first century historical study and the Atlantic World of early modern history were created in much the same way: through the interaction and shared experiences of distinctly different people.

⁶² Mann, xxiv.

⁶³ Ibid.