

Márcia Regina Berbel, Rafael de Bivar Marquese, Tâmis Parron. *Slavery and Politics: Brazil and Cuba, 1790-1850.* Trans. Leonardo Marques. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016. 368 pp. \$29.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-8263-5648-2.

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Slavery and Politics is a comparative study of Brazil and Cuba that seeks to “integrate both societies into the broader context of nineteenth-century global capitalism” (p. 3). Authors Rafael Marquese, Tâmis Parron, and Márcia Berbel present what they feel is an important contribution to the historiography of nineteenth-century slavery and the global consequences of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World. They contend that despite shared characteristics, in particular the persistent enslavement of Africans and resistance to republicanism, analyses of Brazil and Cuba have tended to isolate the two regions. In so doing, important aspects of Second Slavery have been left unexamined.[1]

The authors focus on international arguments in favor of slavery and their reception and implementation in Brazil and Cuba. Through this focus, *Slavery and Politics* principally asks how such ideologies buttressed Brazilian and Cuban politics in the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution. The authors justify this approach in four ways. They first contend that commonalities between Brazil and Cuba had existed since Europeans’ early conquest of the Americas but were accentuated in the decades after 1791. They then insist that both states were composed of similar planter classes. These slave owners were extremely influential

when crafting imperial policies and consequently are important to look at in concert. Finally, both states shared common histories of pro-slavery positions and, even in the nineteenth century, worked to expand the use of slave labor in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The work is composed of four chapters that provide a chronological analysis of Brazilian and Cuban pro-slavery ideologies during the age of revolutions and era of emancipation. To successfully connect the two states, Marquese, Parron, and Berbel necessarily employ a broad approach that focuses on sweeping global trends that highlight commonalities between Brazil and Cuba. In a sense, therefore, the book is as much an examination of the international pro-slavery response to the Atlantic abolition movement, using Cuba and Brazil as case studies, as it is a comparison. The pro-slavery philosophies, as well as the planters and politicians who were attracted to them over and above loyalty to their state, ran counter to the global movement toward abolition yet were in fact global ideologies as well.

Chapter 1 provides a sweeping comparative overview of slaveholding in the Americas between the early 1500s and late 1700s, organized around a comparison of Iberian and Anglo-French slavery. According to Marquese, Parron, and Berbel, this

period witnessed the rise and fall of an Iberian-dominated Atlantic World that gave way to a “northwestern European Atlantic system” (p. 27). Focusing on this *longue durée* allows the authors to stress that there were distinct, albeit subtle, differences in slaveholding ideologies between the northwestern and southwestern Atlantic Worlds that became ever clearer as they heard the crescendo of the Haitian Revolution. Although it focuses on Brazil and Cuba for its examples, this chapter essentially presents an examination of slavery scholarship from Eric Williams (*Capitalism and Slavery* [1944]) to Laurent Dubois (*Avengers of the New World* [2004]), via the likes of Frank Tannenbaum (*Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* [1946]), David Brion Davis (*The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* [1966]), and Robin Blackburn (*The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* [1988]). While this is a useful historiographical reminder, the target audience for this work should either have a clear understanding of this material already or at least know where to find it independently.

The second chapter focuses on the period between 1791 and 1824. The first section explores the influence of the Haitian Revolution on Brazilian and Cuban slaveholding ideologies up until the “collapse of the Iberian Atlantic system” in 1808 (p. 76). The chapter then follows the constitutional experiences of 1810-24 and shows how slaveholders responded and evolved their thinking in response to the geopolitical upheavals of the early nineteenth century. The authors touch on questions of citizenship throughout this chapter and through this inquiry reveal some important divergences. Brazil developed its infant independence and established increasingly close ties to the British Empire, while Cuba became ever more tightly connected to the Spanish metropole.

Chapter 3 concentrates on evolutions in Brazilian and Cuban governance during the 1820s and 1830s. The chapter begins with the formalization of the Brazilian Parliament and the *régimen*

de las facultades omnímodas for captains general in Cuba of 1825, which centralized colonial power in Havana through to the ascension of the Regresso Conservador in Brazil and the exclusion of Cuban deputies from Spanish Court in 1837. As British imperial officials strove to drive wedges between their Atlantic rivals through the rhetoric of abolitionism, Brazilians’ more amenable responses led to the end of the legal transatlantic slave trade to Brazil, though illicit trading continued. In Spanish Cuba, officials were loath to any ideas of abolitionism despite the political turmoil in the metropole. This more overtly pro-slavery approach was, according to the authors, the signature ideology of the Second Spanish Empire and marked the end of Iberian ideological synergy in the Americas.

The final chapter expands on analysis of Brazilian and Cuban ideological divergences, initially presented in the second and third chapters, between 1837 and 1850. Although there remained a slaveholding consolidation between the two states through “the expansion of slavery and the contraband slave trade,” practical differences continued to appear (p. 187). As Brazil matured as an independent state, its elites came to increasingly rely on connections to the British Empire. This partnership came at a cost to its slaveholding philosophies, if not its slave labor force. The authors point to an increased frequency of enslaved rebellions and loss of the contraband slave trade to demonstrate how elites felt the effects of Brazil’s alliance with the British Empire. Meanwhile, Spanish imperial representatives and planters in Cuba remained hostile to any argument against their continued slaveholding and importation of enslaved people from Africa. Rather than align with Britain regardless, Spanish Cuban authorities pointed to British consular officials in Havana like Robert Madden and David Turnbull as proof of their direct involvement in enslaved restlessness on the island. By the mid-nineteenth century, the abolitionist work of the British Empire in the southern Atlantic began to fade as an increasingly expan-

sionist and, at least implicitly, pro-slavery United States meant that from 1850 both Cuba and Brazil could look north for anti-abolitionist inspiration.

The authors continue to highlight the importance of the United States in their epilogue. They end with a call to include the United States in examinations of the later nineteenth-century Atlantic World. Due to the central place of slavery in the narratives of the Third Atlantic and the economic importance of the United States to slaveholding coffee and sugar planters in Brazil and Cuba, by the 1850s slavery in the Americas could once again not be divided between Iberian and Anglophone spheres. Furthermore, the United States was the “greatest international bulwark against British antislavery pressure” and therefore biggest hindrance to the global abolitionism of the age of emancipation (p. 266). To this end, *Slavery and Politics* complements the transnational scholarship of Daniel B. Rood (*The Reinvention of Atlantic Slavery: Technology, Labor, Race, and Capitalism in the Greater Caribbean* [2017]). Where he examines the technology and economics of nineteenth-century Atlantic slavery in the Greater Caribbean, Marquese, Parron, and Berbel look at its political culture.

Marquese, Parron, and Berbel are methodical in the presentation of these arguments. Given the enormous amount of narrative and analytical information tackled in each chapter, they opt to separate their historiographical grounding and present examinations of the relevant literature at the opening of each. While a helpful modification of the traditional approach, this does raise the question as to why they did not simply provide eight, more manageable, chapters. Despite the three authors commendably integrating their ideas cohesively, as it stands, the four-chapter format is rather unwieldy due to these vast combinations of historiography and history.

Additionally, the role of the British Empire as a lingering abolitionist heel to Brazilian and Cuban planters and later a direct aggressor in their at-

tempts to preserve slavery is initially understated. The authors argue that British abolitionists played a key role in the Atlantic pro-slavery narrative but hide their involvement in the initial pages of the book. More upfront explanation of the role of the British Empire would have provided some helpful structural direction.

Slavery and Politics relies almost exclusively on parliamentary records. While certainly an important and voluminous source base for assessing the public motivations of an elite political class, it does have its shortcomings. For the most part this is benign. In discussion of Brazilian nonracial constitutionalism, however, the reluctance of the authors to interrogate their subjects’ discussions of inclusivity with more rigor is frustrating. Admittedly, questions of subjecthood are of secondary interest in the work, but they are nonetheless important. A more inquisitorial reading of their sources for understandings of citizenship would have therefore been welcome.

That said, the analysis and depth of historical insight in *Slavery and Politics* is impressive. The authors marshal a great deal of research and pay close attention to its importance not only to their primary comparisons of Brazil and Cuba but also to their secondary critique of the global capitalist system that birthed their slaveholding regimes. *Slavery and Politics* is therefore important reading for scholars looking to better understand Second Slavery in the Atlantic World. Additionally, it provides a useful counter to works that privilege a seemingly inevitable abolitionist dominance, which will make it interesting for those already well versed in the subject.

Note

[1]. Dale W. Tomich, “The ‘Second Slavery’: Bonded Labor and the Transformation of the Nineteenth-Century World Economy,” in *Rethinking the Nineteenth Century: Movements and Contradictions*, ed. Francisco O. Ramirez (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1988), 103-17.

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