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**François Furstenberg.** "The Significance of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier in Atlantic History." *American Historical Review* 113.3 (June, 2008): 647-677.

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Based on a broad reading of historiography covering the years from 1754 to 1815, François Furstenberg offers two welcome rejoinders to historians of the United States and of Atlantic international relations in the late colonial and early national periods. His first, and by far his most explicit challenge is for historians to re-examine the geography of the great many Atlantic worlds constructed around port cities, maritime commerce and the centrality of the ocean both as barrier and corridor. Second, though no less important, he quibbles with national historians of the United States, who seem to have trouble crossing the chronological divide between the colonial era and the early Republic. In sum, then, Furstenberg offers yet another wrinkle for one of the most dynamic areas of current historical inquiry, but what might be called the reform package that he offers may fall somewhat short of the revolution he appears to propose.

Seeking to recast the trans-Appalachian West as the primary theatre of significance for Atlantic history from 1754 to 1815 (p.648), Furstenberg opens in grand fashion with a description of the Appalachians in geological time. For an article covering the eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries, he shocks readers to good effect (in addition to the typeface chosen by the editors of the *American Historical Review*) with his first phrase, "Four hundred and eighty million years ago." (p.647) If this appears at first as *longue durée* history *ad absurdum*, Furstenberg quickly corrects that impression by highlighting the significant geological realities that linked Africa, Europe and North America, even before there was an Atlantic. This theme recurs throughout the article, again to good effect, highlighting not only the age of the Appalachian mountains as a geographical feature, but also the topographical and logistical considerations that have characterized their history since the dawn of humanity: the difficulty of crossing them, the divergence of watersheds, and the ethnic and later imperial frontier zones to which they gave rise.

All of these themes are significant to Furstenberg's overlapping arguments that the nascent United States figured among the least likely powers to gain dominion over the trans-Appalachian West, and that the annexation of this territory should not be seen merely as an outgrowth of the Treaty of Paris of 1783 or the War of 1812, but rather as part of a continuous string of conflicts spanning 71 years, which he dubs "The Long War for the West". (p.650) In a cogent narrative that crosses the chronological frontier from Anglo-American colonies to the early republican period, he brings together the Seven Years War, the American War of Independence, the native American wars of the 1790s and the aforementioned War of 1812; he makes an intriguing case, at least, that this Long War should occupy a central place in both national and Atlantic history.

Geographically, at least, Furstenberg has a point. He rightly situates the trans-Appalachian West between its two most convenient points of entry for the colonial powers—the St. Lawrence / Great Lakes waterway and the Gulf of Mexico, with their corollary "hot spots": the Ohio Valley and New Orleans, respectively (pp.650, 661-662). He further notes the region's Amerindians as holding a central position between Anglo-Americans to the east, Spanish to the west, French and later British to the north, and a mix of French and Spanish to the south. Moreover, he begins to hint at the centrality of the region for the United States' national growth, not only territorially, but also in economic and demographic terms. Finally, he remarks the degree to which dominion over this area rested with initiatives not only from the settlers coming into it and the Amerindians already there, but also from imperial metropolises as widely spaced as Philadelphia (later Washington), Paris, London, Madrid and Cap François. (esp. pp.652-653; on the lattermost, see pp.668-673)

In all of these respects, Furstenberg appears to make a compelling case that Atlanticists need to re-orient their maps. Such a degree of reorientation needs to occur, in fact, that Atlantic historians should add Marietta, Ohio, to their list of "Atlantic" sites of interest.(p.662) Furstenberg is certainly correct to add inland and riverine strongholds and trading posts to the list of sites for Atlantic conflict and exchange, and Marietta, though perhaps operating on a different scale, thus joins such establishments as Montreal, Albany, Michilimackinac, Fort Prince George (later Pittsburgh) and Vincennes, Indiana. Just as Furstenberg proposes, then, albeit in slightly different language, this reorientation would be little short of a revolution for Atlantic history.

Here, however, Furstenberg may encounter some surprising opposition from some of the "older diplomatic historians" whom he seeks to bring back into dialogue with scholars of imperial peripheries. He is correct that these historians should be in dialogue, and in fact the metropolises and periphery *were* engaged in nearly constant conversation throughout the period of his study. Practicing what he preaches, he does bring in such metropolitan figures as Jefferson, Napoleon and Talleyrand (pp.671-673), alongside a variety of settler interests and Amerindian initiatives within the region. "Older diplomatic historians" on the model of Harold Temperley and Richard Lodge may yet cavil, however, at some of the

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weaknesses in Furstenberg's *longue durée* approach, including occasional oversimplification and some problematic details.

Diplomatic historians accustomed to detailed analysis of a single international crisis over a span of months or at most a few years may question the period of more than seven decades that Furstenberg assigns for the Long War for the West. Taking George Washington's misadventure at Jumonville's Glen for his beginning date of 1754 (p.651, and footnote 5), he may have used a closer reading in his reference of choice—Fred Anderson's superlative *Crucible of War* (London, 2000)—to justify a different starting date, such as Pickawillany's destruction and the Logstown Conference in June 1752, the Céloron de Blainville Mission in 1749, or the founding of the Ohio Company in 1746. Furstenberg highlights a great many intermediary crises, as well, from Pontiac's Rebellion in 1763-64 (pp.651-652) to Talleyrand's threat in 1802 of a French-Haitian campaign against New Orleans (pp.670-673); but the threatened Creek war of 1793 is omitted, and only rarely will readers find the references to foreign archives (e.g. footnotes 20-22, pp.658-659) that are the hallmark of the diplomatic historian's craft.

The other reservation that may give pause to older diplomatic historians is the lack of context. As diplomatic historians of the Cold War rediscover the Third World—not least Cuba leading the Soviets into Angola in 1975—they have gained a greater appreciation for truly *international* history and a broader notion of the international system. Furstenberg also moves in this direction with his integration between peripheries and metropolises, yet in his zeal to press the case for the trans-Appalachian West, he omits Acadia and Louisbourg from his brief account of the Seven Years War (p.651), ignores the maritime issues that were settled in the Jay Treaty (pp.668, 670) and skips over the immigration crises that rocked early American public opinion. It is also never clear why Spain sometimes appears allied with Britain and sometimes with France, and why politics among trans-Appalachian natives seem to run the gamut from imperial submission to virtual independence. Tantalizing as the counterfactual prospect may be of freed slaves from St. Domingue invading Louisiana (p.673), there is also no serious discussion of why they would do so. Questions accordingly beg, whether these shifting alliances and prospective invasions were intrinsic to the trans-Appalachian West, or whether we need to look, as well, at other parts of the Atlantic world—especially Europe.

These two categories of complaint should not be understood only to apply to diplomatic historians, though they do represent the most remarkable distinctions between Furstenberg's scholarship and traditional diplomatic history (which also has its share of shortcomings!). They also highlight the difficulties of any *longue durée* approach for studying diplomatic crises, though these particular issues of methodology may be more appropriate for *History and Theory* than for the *American Historical Review*. Finally, and most directly relevant to the article itself, these critiques allow a much-needed breath of relief for historians of the great many other Atlantic worlds, for whom studies of the trans-Appalachian West will certainly provide new and important insights, though they need not make it the center of their world.

In sum, François Furstenberg offers a compelling and timely rejoinder to practitioners of Atlantic history, to set aside some of their current preoccupation with oceanic exchange and imperial peripheries, and to return some of their attention to inland waterways and proper metropolises. He presents several intriguing openings for what one hopes will become more detailed case studies in the history of the trans-Appalachian West, and alerts national historians of the United States in particular to the artificial barrier they have created between the colonial era and the early republic. Finally, he makes a convincing case for the impact of physical geography on the development of Atlantic worlds—and for the importance of land features as well as the sea. Despite some reservations from the standpoint of traditional diplomatic history, these are remarkable contributions; provided that future scholarship on the region addresses these concerns, the trans-Appalachian West will make a most interesting addition to historians' understanding of Atlantic international relations from 1754 to 1815.

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*Commissioned for H-Diplo by Diane Labrosse*