

# H-Net Reviews

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Jack P. Greene, María Teresa Calderón, Clément Thibaud, eds. *Las Revoluciones En El Mundo Atlantico*. Bogotá, Colombia: Taurus, 2006. 437 pp. (coth), ISBN 978-958-704-437-9.

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This volume brings together fifteen historians with different research topics and regional foci, who place the Spanish American wars of independence within their broader Atlantic context. Indeed, one of the most interesting aspects of this book is an Atlantic framework that sees the Atlantic in the the American (Jack P. Greene) and French revolutions, to include connections with Italy (Federica Morelli), Brazil (Joao Paulo G. Pimenta) and Haiti (Benard Gainot). The benefits of this approach are revealed in Morelli's comparison of how the notion of "passive revolution"—imported revolutions that did not emerge from local conditions—has shaped the historiography of both the Spanish American and Italian revolutions. Morelli's chapter on Spanish America and Italy raises new questions about the intellectual and political history of the Atlantic revolutions. We now need to ask what explains the similarities between Vincenzo Cuoco and Simón Bolívar's ideas about passive revolutions: why was this concept so important in both historiographies, why did it last so long, and why is it so difficult to overcome in spite of scholarly works that have challenged it in both regions? Alejandro Gómez's chapter also opens new avenues of comparison by asking how the Caribbean context influenced Francisco de Miranda's position on race relations and the political role of Afro-Venezuelans in the patriot movement. Finally, Pimenta reminds us of the importance of looking at the connections between LusoAmerica and Spanish America by highlighting the influence of the Spanish American revolution on political developments in Brazil.

Another strength of this edited volume comes from the articles that use new sources and approaches to provide a detailed analysis of the intellectual and political culture of the period. Georges Lomné shows the impor-

tance of classical republicanism in the education and the ideology of New Granada's patriot leaders. Notably, he finds evidence of classical republicanism not only among the educated elite, but also among some sectors of the popular classes. From a different perspective, Victor Uribe Urán and Juan Carlos Chiaramonte also offer new insights into the intellectual world of the period. Uribe Urán examines the evolution of public and private law and Chiaramonte looks at how some enduring historiographical topics of the wars of independence go back to the protagonists of the wars themselves. Their close and detailed analysis of sources provides an excellent example of how to study patriots' worldview and intellectual connections to other revolutionaries of the Atlantic world. Javier Fernández Sebastián offers another angle on the intellectual history of the period by analyzing the contemporary meaning of the terms "revolution" and "liberal." He notes, for example, that the widely used concept of "liberal revolution" is an anachronism that does not reflect early nineteenth-century views that tended to see them as opposites. He also points out how in the early decades of the nineteenth century the term was more widely used in Spain—and Mexico—than in other European countries and suggests that the history of modern liberalism cannot continue to omit the crucial role played by early Spanish and Spanish American liberalism. Finally, María Teresa Calderón and Clément Thibaud provide an interesting examination of the transition between a religiously based political system and a liberal political system. An additional contribution of this volume lies in the group of articles that compare the United States and Spanish American revolutions with novel perspectives that leave behind the trite "why did we fail?" question. Anthony McFarlane examines the impact of war in Spanish American and North American societies, while

Jack Greene argues for the need to include the postcolonial in the study of United States history.

The essays in this book are to be commended for providing fresh perspectives and suggesting new avenues of research. However, they also reflect the endurance of certain notions about wars of independence that continue to inform the histories of this period in spite of new research that questions them. For example, the notion that Spanish America was an exceptionally traditional society permeates several articles. This and similar assumptions derive from a historiographical tendency to make patriots speak with one—often Bolívar’s—voice without taking into account the multiple ideological po-

sitions that emerged during the period. Bolívar and other well-known founding fathers were in dialogue with and in opposition to other patriots whose views covered a broad political spectrum that was much more extensive than the divisions between federalist and centralists, and that we are only beginning to fully understand. Annick Lemperière’s analysis of the national archive as a continuation of the colonial repository might open the door to examination of sources to challenge these approaches. Still, this point should not minimize the volume’s original and important contributions that make it mandatory reading for any specialist of nineteenth-century Latin America.

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