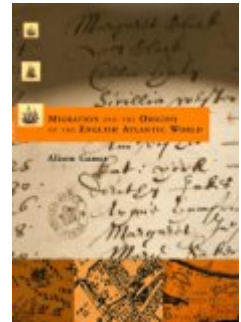


**Alison Games.** *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. xii + 368 pp. \$26.50, paper, ISBN 978-0-674-00702-4.



**Reviewed by** Carla Gardina Pestana

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Alison Games's *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World* contributes to the new "Atlantic history." It uses the 1635 London port register book, in which some 7,500 travelers were recorded. Games has attempted to track the approximately 5,000 of these who journeyed to the Americas. Of these, she was able to find additional information on 1,360. In addition to an extensive survey of the movement of these English peoples through the Atlantic basin, the book also explores the experiences of these migrants in the key areas of labor, prospects for economic success, religion. A well-researched and nicely written work, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World* exhibits both strengths and weakness arising from the project's original conceptualization.

The book is organized into seven chapters, in addition to a brief introduction. The many tables, illustrations and appendices offer helpful guides to the reader as well as the future researcher. The introduction lays out Games's schema for the history of the Anglo-Atlantic world: imagination, creation and elaboration, and integration. The first of these, occurring prior to the 1630s, was dominat-

ed by the dreams of men like the two Richard Hakluyts, and the last, dating from the later seventeenth century, resulted from the efforts to create a cohesive and centralized empire. It is the period of creation and elaboration that has captured Games' interest, for she argues that the 1630s and 1640s, upon which her book focuses, were the key decades for shaping the English Atlantic.

Four chapters deal with migration in one way or another. The first looks at the port register as a whole, charting the trends it reveals for the movement of peoples anywhere they might journey from London to the continent as well as to America. The second chapter focuses in on those who went to America, analyzing differences in age, sex, and family composition for the various regions: the Caribbean, Bermuda, the Chesapeake and New England. Games finds a preponderance of servants in the group as a whole, including many who went to New England. This finding continues a revisionary trend in our understanding of New England colonists. Despite this insight into the importance of servant migration even to New England, that region remains unusual for the

wide age range and density of family ties among migrants. The comparative longevity of settlers in that region only exacerbated these trends. After three thematic chapters (to be discussed below) Games returns to migration in chapter 6, which argues for the continual movement of peoples after the first ship carried them to America. This she supports with a discussion of remigration trends within New England. In this she builds on the findings of Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *New England Generation* (1991) and David Grayson Allen, *In English Ways: The Movement of Societies and the Transferal of English Local Law and Custom to Massachusetts Bay in the Seventeenth Century* (1981). Oddly she acknowledges her indebtedness to the former, but not the latter, although her emphasis on movement rather than stability is much more in keeping with Allen than Anderson. The final chapter looks in a more cursory way at movement in and between other regions, before going on to make an argument about the heterogeneity of colonial society.

The three thematic chapters explore aspects of the life experiences of migrants in three areas. The chapter (3) on labor concentrates on the servant experience as well as the need that such a massive influx of young male servants created for social control in these settlements. This chapter also explores the widespread problem of drunkenness and the widely-feared possibility of servant rebellion. Games finds that unattached men, especially in Barbados, created partnerships and fictive households in order to get ahead financially and ameliorate the problems of isolation from kin created by colonial demographic realities. In a discussion of migrants' prospects (chapter 4), Games explores Bermuda, Barbados, and the Chesapeake. She finds that for those arriving in the 1630s, the Chesapeake and Barbados still held out the possibility of acquiring land, while land shortages in Bermuda forced men to remigrate or concentrate on the acquisition of material posses-

sions (including servants and slaves) as the way to wealth.

Games sees the English Atlantic as dominated by puritanism during this era, with all of New England as well as the colonies of Bermuda and Providence Island designated as puritan colonies. She rightly sees puritanism as conflicted and contentious, so that many migrants who might be described as adherents could not agree among themselves about the nature of the religious polity that ought to be erected in America. She echoes the conclusions of Karen Ordahl Kupperman about the ways that the religious tensions in the Atlantic World foreshadowed the divisions in England in the 1640s. The migrants in Games' study participated in the "Antinomian" controversy of the mid-1630s in Massachusetts Bay as well as in the religious divisions in Bermuda in the 1640s, so both of these earn her attention. It is difficult to generalize about religion in the Atlantic world due to the paucity of information for many locales and the episodic nature of what information does survive. Games has a tendency to downplay the significance of the attack on episcopacy in England after 1640 for the situation in the Atlantic basin. I would argue that divisions in the Somers Islands after 1640, although they did build on the earlier puritanism of that settlement, developed out of the changing religious and political context of the civil war era. (Indeed, I make this argument in a book I am currently completing on the English revolution in America.) This problem of the potential for a static representation in Games's account is one which she acknowledges, albeit in a different context, in her introduction (p. 8). Her attention, like that of most social historians, to contention and disruption (which are revealed in the surviving records much more readily than information about the routine replication of established practices) may lead Games to de-emphasize the presence of Church of England belief and practice in the colonies. Games does note that her focus on 1635, when migrants were leaving under the watchful eye of the Laudian establishment,

lead to increased radicalism in the travelers she follows.

Woven through all these chapters are stories, many of them wonderful, of the people Games has tracked. The research method she employed, to look everywhere for the 5,000 people on her lists and to note anything about them she found, gave her a treasure trove of vignettes. It also no doubt produced many fragments of information that never revealed the larger tale within which they were once embedded. With these stories at her command, Games pauses frequently to tell us about her people. We learn of the need for ministers everywhere and many of their mis-adventures, of the demand for military engineers that allowed Lion Gardiner to command an exorbitant sum for his services to Saybrooke Fort, of the wayward daughter Barbara Rolfe who was exiled to America by parents unable to control her. The stories make the book very readable. They make up an odd slice of colonial life, unlike anything gathered together in any other book on the Americas. They come to us not because they involve witches, the residents of a particular town, or converts to a dissenting faith, typical organizing themes in early American social history. Rather these stories are brought to our attention because they involve people who happened to board a ship in 1635. Equally important features of colonial life that did not directly involve one of these traceable travelers are therefore overlooked. So the desire to attract military men generally, and not just those who, like Gardiner, were experts in fortification construction, is not part of this account. If the port lists had survived for another year we would read about other slices of early American life. It should be noted that Games does try to set her each of her stories in a broad context, however, though she allows the particular life histories to lead her (and us) where they will.

*Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World* ends on a rather discordant note. In the final section of chapter 7, Games offers anecdotal

evidence of the heterogeneous nature of the mid-seventeenth-century Atlantic world. She notes that travelers frequently came into contact with people with other languages and cultures, both other Europeans and Indians and Africans, and that this set their American experiences apart from what they had known at home. These observations are not wrong, by any means. I too have long been struck by this feature of the Atlantic World and have collected additional anecdotal evidence of this sort. These observations are, however, oddly placed at the end of this study, which has treated in detail a small group of English migrants. Given that her sample is drawn from the London register that summarize an English dominated movement of peoples, the study itself does not delve into the streams of Irish or Scottish men, women and children who entered the English-controlled Atlantic in this period. To move from a narrow concentration on English migrants and a detailed reconstruction of their American sojourns to a rumination on the diversity of the Atlantic world, and one that focuses on contacts with those from outside the three Kingdoms ruled by Charles I, is to hit a discordant note. The hybridity and heterogeneity of the Atlantic basin is perhaps more appropriately the subject of another monograph, one that would benefit from Games great skills as a researcher.

These minor criticisms aside, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World* is an important and welcomed work. It builds on a daunting amount of research in a wide variety of archives, and it provides a glimpse of the Atlantic basin as it was seen by the seventeenth-century sojourner. Games's focus on the Atlantic as a whole is most welcome. The appearance of this handsome and engaging volume adds to our understanding of the early modern world generally.

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