

Joseph C. Miller, ed.. *The Princeton Companion to Atlantic History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015. Illustrations, maps. 568 pp. \$65.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-691-14853-3.

Reviewed by Erica Johnson

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Commissioned by Camarin M. Porter (Western Colorado University)

Joseph C. Miller has brought together a unique volume with 4 succinct chronological essays followed by around 120 topical encyclopedia entries on Atlantic history. Authored by Miller, Karen Ordahl Kupperman, Vincent Brown, and Laurent Dubois, the essays each cover a century of Atlantic history from roughly 1450 to 1850. From Juliana Barr and Alan Gallay to Richard Price and James Sidbury, over one hundred scholars of Atlantic history contributed to the encyclopedic second part of the volume. The alphabetically organized entries "present seemingly familiar topics—the Seven Years' War or trading companies for instance—in unfamiliar and provocative ways, as well as unfamiliar topics—such as family networks or imperial planning—in accessible terms" (p. vii). While none of the authors wrote about specific people or places, the thorough index helps in locating mentions of Christopher Columbus, Jamestown, and Kongo within the broader entries.

In his preface, Miller explains that the purpose of the volume is to "present what the field has achieved after 30 years of work" and to "help carry Atlantic history beyond its formative stages toward intellectual maturity" (p. viii). However, this does not mean the contributors see this companion as establishing the only acceptable version of Atlantic history. Instead, they put forth diverse

perspectives. Miller points out the uses of differing dates for the same event across various entries, claiming the editors "did not apply dogmatic answers to these questions in the pursuit of a false consistency" (p. xii). For this reason, this companion is unlike most other encyclopedias or textbooks. While Miller suggests that this volume is accessible to undergraduate students, this "epistemologically challenging historical examination" may be difficult for some college juniors and seniors to engage in without considerable instructor guidance (p. vii).

Miller's prologue provides the necessary background and establishes the major themes for the essays. He emphasizes the need to balance local circumstances, militarism, and commerce in order to historicize "the triumphs of conquest" (p. 3). He also takes care to address any theories that would suggest earlier Atlantic exchanges, such as Africans traveling to the Americas in the fourteenth century. In addition to his prologue, Miller also authored the essay on the sixteenth century. He carries the concepts of his prologue through early encounters in the Atlantic world, focusing on "specie, sugar, and slaves," as indicated in his essay's subtitle. Kupperman picks up with the seventeenth century, discussing the transatlantic movement of commodities, peoples, and ideas. She also addresses local resistance, particularly in

the North American context. In his essay, Brown claims that "the processes consolidated in the eighteenth century mark the region's imagined cohesion ... the entire region had become a dense and regionally differentiated labor system joining the European, African, and American continents in a complex symbiosis" (p. 36). He traces Miller's idea of militarization and commercialization through the "crises of government" in the Age of Revolutions (p. 44). Dubois weighs in on the chronological question of Atlantic history in his essay on the nineteenth century. While some scholars might argue we are still in an Atlantic age, Dubois points to its end in the long nineteenth century. However, he does not fix it to one specific year. In embracing the multiplicity of Atlantic histories, he convincingly explains how the peoples and places within the Atlantic have "differing chronologies" and mark the close of the Atlantic era within their own local contexts (p. 47). He does so by exploring the end of the slave trade, the emergence of the United States as a power, the transition from transoceanic to transcontinental connections, and nineteenth-century nation-states.

The opening essays are brief, covering four centuries in fewer than fifty pages. They read like textbook sections, highlighting major processes and trends in Atlantic history under various sub-headings. The authors do not include notes within the essays, and only Brown provides a list of references at the end of his chapter. While practicing scholars and advanced graduate students will likely know the major works related to each essay, undergraduates will not have a strong grasp on the various historiographies associated with the numerous Atlantic exchanges in each century.[1]

Most of the encyclopedia entries cover eight larger concepts and contexts. In his preface, Miller identifies these as economic contexts, movements of people, political and legal contexts, military contexts, technologies and science, environmental contexts, cultures and communities,

and conceptual approaches. In the front matter, there are alphabetical, topical, and regional lists of entries, making the volume very user friendly. Some of the topics include capitalism, diasporas, gender, languages, maroons, race, and sovereignty. A few of the entries, such as the one on cartography and another on visual representations, include illustrations. Many of the entries include historiographical information as well as a general historical narrative of the topic within Atlantic history. For example, Dale Tomich's entry on agricultural production begins with Fernand Braudel. The entries are typically around two to five pages long and each includes a bibliography of about three to fifteen secondary sources.

Perhaps the most intriguing entry is on the deity Mami Wata. Henry John Drewal focuses on representations of her within African Atlantic history, as well as global influences on her image. Breaking with Dubois's chronological end of Atlantic history in the nineteenth century, Drewal traces Mami through the twentieth century. The entries on the American, French, and Haitian Revolutions provide representative samples of the contributions written on specific events. In this volume, the contributors group the entries on the United States and Haiti together under the larger context of independence and France under national revolutions. The entry on American wars of independence discusses the conflicts within the Western Hemisphere from the Seven Years' War to the dissolution of Gran Colombia.

Miller brings together an impressive group of international contributors, including some of the most well-known scholars in Atlantic history. The contributing historians, anthropologists, literary scholars, geographers, and economists also speak to the variety of approaches to and interdisciplinarity of Atlantic history. This volume is the first of its kind for Atlantic history, and its distinctive format reflects the "distinctiveness of the field" (p. vii). It should be on the shelves of any graduate student or practicing scholar of Atlantic

history as a reference work. This companion could also be appropriate for an upper-division course in Atlantic history, if assigned along with carefully selected primary sources and articles providing grounding in the field.[2] Nonetheless, the maps in the front matter, four of which correspond to the essays, are invaluable resources for instructors and students.

Notes

[1]. Oxford Bibliographies, launched in 2009, includes extensive annotated bibliographies for various topics within Atlantic history. Visit <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/obo/page/atlantic-history>.

[2]. Some examples include Bernard Bailyn, "The Idea of Atlantic History," *Itinerario* 20, no. 1 (March 1996): 19-44; Nicholas Canny, "Writing Atlantic History; or, Reconfiguring the History of Colonial British America," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (December 1999): 1093-1114; Peter A. Coclanis, "Atlantic World or Atlantic/World," *William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (2006): 725-742; David Eltis, "Atlantic History in Global Perspective," *Itinerario* 23, no. 2 (1999): 141-161; and Alison Games, "Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (June 2006): 741-757.

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