

ATLANTIC WORLD

Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions. By Jane G. Landers. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010. Pp. x, 340. Appendices. Notes. Index.

Atlantic Creoles explores the contested, fractured world inhabited by groups of mixed-race creoles as they negotiated the nexus between Florida, Saint-Domingue, and Cuba during the Age of Revolutions. Using six interrelated case studies, Landers argues that rather than being a marginalized set of individuals specific to any one colony this motley collection of escaped slaves, self-freed emancipists, revolutionaries, royalists, and native Americans in fact shared ideas about autonomy and freedom that reached across shifting borders. In vying for their own future, Landers contends, these individuals and groups acted as a powerful force in the history of the region, with long-lasting resonances for the wider Atlantic.

A central theme in this book is the interconnectedness of the members of this diverse group. There is the story of Big Prince Whitton from the southern United States, who fought for his family's freedom with royalist Spanish forces in Florida and then in Cuba, and the story of Georges Bissous who did likewise during the Saint-Domingue revolution only to find himself caught out by the tide of war and end up, like Whitton, among a large and ebullient group of creole émigrés in Cuba. There are also stories from the rise of Seminole nation on the Florida borderlands and the short-lived state of Muscogee and the connections between the two. As Landers highlights, both groups were peopled by émigrés and maroons who defied the advancing tide of the United States by fighting for their independence, sometimes on their own and at other times allied with one royalist power or another.

Told together, the stories of these little-known actors present a powerful defiance. By choosing to focus on these protagonists, Landers helps to reshape the way we think about the social, racial, and political boundaries of the northern Caribbean and southern United States and to re-evaluate the place given to creoles in the historiography. *Atlantic Creoles* is a refreshing addition to a field that is all too often the preserve of generalized macro histories, with little connection to place or individuals.

Atlantic Creoles is not without flaws, however. All the case studies are highly masculinized. While tantalizing glimpses of women do occasionally surface—for example, Prince Whitton's wife Judy and the "Cuban" Anna Kingsley—their intriguing biographies are left aside for those of prominent if hitherto under-researched men. This omission is odd and at variance with new directions in research focusing on the vital importance of free women of color in the history of the Atlantic. There is also the question of the title. Landers' book does not study the Atlantic in a broad sense but focuses in fact on a narrow, heavily Hispanic nexus between Saint-Domingue/Santo Domingo, Florida, and Cuba. While her focus is understandable given the size constraints of the book, more needs to be said about the alternative visions of free colored people in the wider Caribbean and how the present research fits into those complementary histories.

There are in fact many creole stories to be told in marginal, contested parts of the Caribbean, not just this one.

Despite the fact that Landers's writing shows great verve and skill, the narrative is at times a little convoluted or rushed, with some lack of balance from one chapter to another. This, again, is largely because the book is too short for what should perhaps have been several longer pieces. *Atlantic Creoles* also lacks a comprehensive conclusion of the kind that might really open this subject up to other avenues of research and underscore the novelty of this work in a crowded field.

Atlantic Creoles is overall an excellent book and the fruit of prodigious and painstaking research in archives across the Atlantic World. While some chapters are stronger than others, the spatial limitation adds to their collective strength. Using biography and microhistory to illuminate a wider picture, as Landers does, adds a great deal to a trend in Atlantic studies that is both important and long overdue.

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Árabes y judíos en Iberoamérica: similitudes, diferencias y tensiones. Edited by Raanan Rein. Sevilla: Fundación Tres Culturas, 2008. Pp. 460. Notes.

In recent years several collections of articles and monographs discussing Arabs and Jews in Latin America, or treating them side by side, have appeared. The book under review represents a sophisticated addition to this literature. Jeffrey Lesser describes this approach in his theoretical introduction, in which he advises scholars to compare immigrant populations, rather than examine them in isolation, and to insert them into the national rather than the diasporic context. Studying Arab and Jewish Latin Americans together confounds established notions, revealing for example how aspects of each group that observers have considered unique in fact were shared.

Some authors focus on Jews and especially on the under-studied Sephardim. In particular, Raanan Rein and Mollie Lewis, Adriana Brodsky, and Susana Brauner challenge customary beliefs and demonstrate how these groups have reshaped Jewish and Argentine identities. Rein and Lewis show how in the 1920s and early 1930s, the periodical *Israel* brought together writers and readers of Eastern European and Mediterranean origin around Zionism. It also publicized the increasing social interactions between those two communities, thus undermining the Sephardic/Ashkenazi binary. Unlike most Argentine specialists, who concentrate on Buenos Aires, Brodsky describes Sephardic organizations in the interior between 1900 and 1950 and their links to the capital, a network that reinforced the idea of the nation. Syrian Jews have kept a low political profile in Argentina, but they have not necessarily been apolitical, Brauner notes. A few were Peronist functionaries, and a small number became leftists later in the 1960s and 1970s; by the latter decade Syrian Jews had engaged politically to protect their economic interests.