

convincing. At the very least, Lambert has introduced a new and daring approach to a field long overdue for a methodological shake-up.

Some will no doubt object to several matters central to Lambert's method and resulting argumentation. His belief, for example, that the "moral order underpinning [the laws] was not fundamentally Christian" (16) is at odds with the views of many in the field, including my own. What is more, it leads him to exclude or to overlook the important body of ecclesiastical witnesses to Anglo-Saxon legal culture—some Latin, some vernacular—which, if considered, would likely nuance, if not transform altogether, certain aspects of his arguments. Lambert's discussion of theft, for example, would be informed by reference to King Alfred's translation of Exodus 22:2–3 in the Mosaic Preface to his law code, which alters scripture presumably to reflect contemporary Anglo-Saxon legal practice, as has been discussed in recent scholarship. Similarly, considering the ecclesiastical witnesses to Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence would help ameliorate the often-noticed problem that the surviving record is frustratingly incomplete, a point that Lambert acknowledges. Likewise, doing so might allow Lambert to avoid the misperception, implicit in the early chapters of his book, that early Anglo-Saxon law (that is, before the fall of all the independent kingdoms except Wessex in the late ninth century) was essentially homogeneous. To the contrary, recent scholarship has emphasized regional diversity.

These complaints do not detract from the overall quality of Lambert's insights, however. Lambert is at his best when he describes how the laws functioned in a real-world context, even when his imaginative conclusions rest on a degree of speculation. *Law and Order in Anglo-Saxon England* is an excellent contribution to the field that will necessarily impact scholarship on the laws, and perhaps Old English studies more generally, for a long time to come.

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Randy M. Browne, *Surviving Slavery in the British Caribbean*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017. Pp. 288. \$45.00 hardcover (ISBN 9780812249408); ebook editions are available from selected online vendors.

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For the past 50 years, scholars of slavery have worked within a framework built by a brilliant cadre of historians. Eugene Genovese was at the forefront,

developing an understanding of slavery in the Americas as a system grounded in class-based conflict in which the enslaved and the enslavers negotiated a fragile truce. Resistance simmered constantly in this delicate balance and virtually every act on the part of the enslaved functioned as a form of resistance. The entire system was a tinderbox waiting for a spark that would ignite violent rebellion, as it did most dramatically in Haiti. Over the decades, many talented historians honed these arguments and brick by brick, built a most imposing edifice that seemed to explain how slavery as an institution functioned. Over time, however, the excitement and vigor that animated the field seemed to dissipate somewhat, and over the past decade or thereabouts, scholars have questioned whether or not that imposing scholarly edifice was as solid as it appeared to be. Randy Browne makes an important contribution to this emerging debate with his impressive study of slavery in Berbice.

Berbice was an outlier among the British colonies in the Caribbean. Located on the northern coast of South America, the British captured it from the Dutch in the late eighteenth century. By the terms of the treaty between those two powers, the British retained certain features of the Dutch administrative structure, including the office of the fiscal, described as “chief magistrate, public accuser, and attorney general” (34). The enslaved could appeal unfair and abusive conditions to this official, and those complaints and the investigations into them provide a remarkable archive offering insight into the colony’s slave and legal system. In many ways it was atypical. At a time when Britain’s older colonies, Barbados, for example, were falling on hard times, Berbice was very much a frontier. The colony produced cotton, sugar, and coffee on plantations, almost all of them in the hands of absentee owners. Only a few hundred whites resided there, along with a few hundred free people of color and a slave population that numbered 28,000 in 1807. Sex ratios were skewed even by Caribbean standards with 128.4 men to every 100 women. Working conditions were harsh, and British attempts to ameliorate slavery beginning in 1824 did little to change that situation. The result was a steady stream of petitions for redress, a rich archive unlike any other in British America, many of them describing shocking incidents of violence and abuse.

Where officials were recording in order to establish whether or not the law had been violated, Browne uses the records to unlock the hidden histories of these individuals while at the same time reading them “with the grain” (p. 7); namely, to understand the legal and cultural context in which they were created. The records allow him to analyze the relationships between white enslavers and the enslaved, and the ways in which the enslaved used the law to protect the rights and privileges they had negotiated with their overlords. Because few whites lived there, black drivers played an essential role in the plantation hierarchy, and these cases reveal a great deal about them and the ways that they performed their duties and exercised their power. Their

privileges—better housing, clothing, food, and access to women—gave them much longer lives than the laborers they supervised. Given the skewed sex ratios, establishing families was fraught with difficulty, and cases of adultery, separation, and domestic abuse demonstrate the ways in which the enslaved tried to build relationships and families that suited them rather than their masters. One way that the enslaved sought to make sense of the harsh world they occupied was through the custom of obeah, an African-derived practice that offered healing, protection, and power. Its rituals could sometimes be violent and even deadly, which was one reason that the colonial authorities feared it and prosecuted its practitioners. That constant struggle to survive sometimes pitted the enslaved against one another, and that conflict and competition is on full display in this book.

It would have been easy for Browne to use this material to add one more brick to the traditional historiographical construct, but he has chosen a more ambitious route. As he surveyed the terrible hardships that confronted the enslaved in Berbice—the harsh working conditions, the high death rates, the difficulties in establishing stable families, their efforts to negotiate with their enslavers and compete with each other for better working conditions and sustenance—he concluded that what they sought above all else was survival. Although this may seem obvious, in Browne’s skillful hands it becomes a powerful analytical tool, because he argues that surviving took precedence over the fight for freedom. What does agency mean in that “Hobbesian world” (191)? What relevance did the Western abstract notion of freedom have for the enslaved population of Berbice, many of them native Africans and all of them trapped “in a world where the central problem was one of survival” (11)? Such questions have the power to make a subtle but crucial shift in how historians approach slave histories. If abstract notions like freedom and equality were less important to live actors than survival and social position, then the histories should reflect this. Browne’s book makes that point very clear.

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Edward James Kolla, *Sovereignty, International Law, and the French Revolution*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Pp. xii, 340. \$99.99 hardcover (ISBN 978-1-107-17954-7).
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In *Sovereignty, International Law, and the French Revolution*, Edward James Kolla astutely guides the reader through the transformative, if sometimes