

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

convoluted, marshalling of the will of the people in international law during the French Revolution. According to Kolla, the revolution did not intend to conform international law to the will of the people rather than the monarch. However, an internal logic coalescing around the general will proved both expansive and inhospitable to rival forms of sovereignty rooted in dynastic claims. Kolla argues that this guiding principle of the will of the people “inadvertently bled into international affairs, where it inspired a series of unprecedented and interconnected claims to territory” (2).

Using the people’s will as a lodestar for domestic concerns and, by extension, international relations, necessitated theoretical underpinning. For example, whereas the newly minted *citoyens* of Avignon had freely voted to join France, those in the Vendée, if given the chance, might have voted to leave. Merlin de Douai, extraordinarily talented at submitting vestiges of the Old Regime to the sacred goals of the French Revolution in brilliant legal syntheses, provided a way out of this conundrum. For the virtuosic Merlin, legitimate annexation consisted of two independent and sovereign peoples joining together in common consent. In contrast, a region that did not form a separate people, such as the Vendée, could not secede from the state or people of which it constituted an integral component without the blessing of the entire state. The absorption of Avignon, as well as Corsica and Alsatian lands ruled by foreign princes, into France could proceed precisely because the people’s will in those regions favored annexation, trumping less legitimate claims of inherited rule. However, as Merlin himself suspected, this logic later proved inadequate for navigating the complexities of self-determination.

Kolla’s great scholarly contribution is to show how France wove together strands of revolutionary thought into justifications for the integration and exploitation of new territory that eventually refashioned international law itself. The National Convention declared, on November 19, 1792, a “decree of fraternity” promising aid to all peoples wishing to realize their liberty; however, this decree was circumscribed by financial, military, and diplomatic considerations. In the meantime, the French army used “revolutionary power” (*pouvoir révolutionnaire*) to proclaim the sovereignty of the people and dismantle old laws in conquered territories. Kolla writes in straightforward prose, without discounting the many regional obstacles that *pouvoir révolutionnaire* encountered. Beginning with Corsica and Alsace, he then moves to Avignon and the many challenges of self-determination, before analyzing the French experience in Belgium and the Left Bank of the Rhine, where French generals increasingly determined the will of the people. France exerted control over the pre-existing republican traditions of the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Italy by setting up a series of kindred and nominally independent sister republics that bridled at the influx of *Assignats*. Throughout, Kolla captures the confusion and difficulty of translating the will of the people into laws and polity.

Despite the revolutionaries' constant paeans to the will of the people, Kolla's account largely omits the impressions of the foot soldiers of revolution, favoring instead the letters of deputies, generals, dispossessed princes, and other elite actors. Paradoxically, this allows Kolla to illuminate a central irony of revolutionary foreign policy: no matter how often revolutionary populism sought its legitimacy from the people, it more often than not went over their heads, using back channels with sympathetic local elites to obtain the preferred result.

Notably absent is a satisfactory analysis of Napoleon's self-conscious resurrection of Old Regime notions of sovereignty. Kolla seems to accept at face value Napoleon's convenient conflation of personal popularity with the will of the people, preferring to view the First Empire as continuous with previous revolutionary policies toward conquered territories. This view is hard to reconcile with Napoleon's boast to his new father-in-law Emperor Francis I of Austria that he was "the Rudolf of my race," and his constant interference in the marriages of his siblings and generals so as to maximize France's strategic position: schemes that smack of Old Regime Habsburg dynasty building. The book also would have benefited from a more thorough exploration of Old Regime discourse on the monarch as the guarantor of the will of the people, an intellectual tradition first mined then rendered irrelevant by the French Revolution.

These minor criticisms aside, Kolla's examination of the profound legacy of the French Revolution in "catalyzing a transition from dynastic to popular then national" sovereignty (281) is indispensable. Kolla's conclusion, in which the Pandora's box of popular sovereignty is interrogated in light of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is masterful and far reaching. This long-overdue work catalogues how the legitimacy of international law shifted from treaties between monarchs who spoke French and ruled by virtue of their bloodline to treaties between representative bodies whose locus of sovereignty lay in the will, language, and ethnicity of the people.

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Martha S. Jones, *Birthright Citizens: A History of Race and Rights in Antebellum America*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. 248. \$27.99 paper (ISBN 978-1-316-60472-4).  
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From the very moment of its inception, American citizenship was unevenly extended across the native-born population, with race and slavery constituting