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The Oxford Handbook of Slavery in the Americas

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Bickers suggests that, while settlers and expatriates 'saw one world of empire settlement stretching from New Zealand via Shanghai, India, to Sudan and beyond, a world in which they encountered members of the same social circles, outside observers will see a world of multifaceted difference and particularity' (p. 5). For readers of this volume this particularity is strongly in evidence, particularly in how Britishness is constituted relationally in ways that are contingent on context. Religion becomes an important marker of difference in some cases, such as for the Britons defining themselves against Argentine catholicism in Buenos Aires (David Rock). In other sites of domicile, whiteness is more critical, itself a slippery and socially constructed notion as the distinction made by Britons in Rhodesia between themselves and Afrikaners and poor whites demonstrates (Donal Lowry). The impact of the racialisation of space was of course varied, but John Lonsdale's chapter on Kenya describes an extreme example of how Britishness sometimes revolved around disturbing notions of mastery that led to violent beatings and killings of Africans.

Many of the authors comment on a shared sense of British imperial identity. Indeed, shared practices of diaspora resonate across chapters, including participation in the war effort, the establishment of ethnicised commercial and social institutions, and the perceived importance of a 'British' education. At the same time, there are competing narratives of localised identities shaped by particular places of residence. Therefore, while the forms of social stratification that existed between the British and the ruled are well known and resonate across chapters, what emerges from this volume more uniquely is a sense of the extremely varied patterns of migration, employment, status, and residence that create and result from social differences internal to the British diaspora. Bickers, for instance, describes how Britons in Shanghai were dominated by settlers, in comparison to Hong Kong's sojourners, and had much more of a political influence as a result. So, although the Shanghailanders also understood their experience in relation to British residents of other ports in China, through their shared consumption of the *North China Herald* for example, and in relation to the wider world of empire, there were important distinctions in their identifications. In Malaya, Tim Harper shows how the coherency of 'the British community' is unsettled by a number of factors including: divisions between rubber planters with three of four generations of domicile and new arrivals, as well as the urban Straits Settlements and those living away from the larger port towns; the Asianized food habits of the British and Creole bungalow architecture; intermarriage in the earlier colonial period; partial inclusion of wealthy Asians in British sociality and the creation of parallel clubs that also made claims of imperial citizenship; dominance of Scottish planters and traders at the turn of the century institutionalised in the St Andrew's Club in 1908; and the reassertion of a European identity after the second world war, increasingly influenced by American consumer culture. In India, a social division existed between the engineers and skilled mechanics employed in service to the railways and the working class, mainly Scottish employees of the jute factories who were housed in compounds adjacent to the factories (David Washbrook). In Ceylon we find a cleavage between the government administrators and the tea planters, a collective conflict that is materialised clearly in debates about the conditions of the Tamil estate worker (Margaret Jones). Meanwhile, James Whidden suggests boundaries of ethnicity or nationality were eclipsed at times by class in the interdependencies of the Egyptian and British social elite, and emphasises the European and cosmopolitan experience of unofficial Britons living in Cairo, with their 'new identities that fitted an imperial diaspora inclusive of diverse cultural communities' (p. 46).

The contribution of this volume to theorising 'Britishness' among Britons overseas could be strengthened. In the introduction,

Bickers acknowledges that a volume grounded in locality cannot claim comprehensiveness and risks compartmentalising experience. Indeed, while the volume does set up some strong parallels (for example, surveying communities in neighbouring countries), readers are made to do much of the comparative work themselves. Engaging more comprehensively with the issue of gender would also have been beneficial. Though many of the contributors provide convincing statistical evidence to assert the dominance of men, particularly in the earlier colonial period, this can be no justification for the way in which all too often the experiences of women are reduced to a single paragraph, while British masculinities come to stand for Britishness itself. John Lambert's chapter on Natal stands out in this regard for its interesting discussion of settler masculinity (performed through sports, volunteering, and membership of social institutions) and the ambiguity of women's racialised privilege in a strongly gendered society. However, in spite of these weaknesses, the volume provides an important sense of the temporal and spatial variations evident in imperial assertions of Britishness among settlers and expatriates. As such it will be an important resource for students and academics alike.

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Robert L. Paquette and Mark M. Smith, *The Oxford Handbook of Slavery in the Americas*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, xii + 755 pages, US\$27.50 hardcover.

Despite the increasing tendency to reach for the internet instead of the reference shelf when searching for secondary literature and background information, well conceived and executed handbooks continue to have an audience. In this case the editors have brought together thirty-five expert contributors collectively to summarize the history and historiography of a topic central to understanding the Americas and broader Atlantic world. They have organized the resulting thirty-two essays, nearly all sole authored, into two major sections: the first treats particular places in the Americas and the second general themes and methods.

The ten essays of the first section cover the destinations for enslaved Africans. Some treat broad regions (Mexico and Central America) while others provide more detailed examinations of major destinations, such as Cuba, Brazil, and the USA. The USA, in fact, has separate essays on 'Colonial and revolutionary' and 'Early republican and antebellum' periods, reflecting the earliness of its revolution, long postcolonial persistence of slavery, and extensive historiography on each period.

The limits of individual expertise preclude thorough evaluation of all essays by any single reviewer but if the treatments of colonial Mexico and Louisiana are representative, the authors have provided well balanced introductions for scholars who want to begin a new research project anywhere from the sixteenth-century Rio de la Plata to the nineteenth-century USA and many times and places in between. They engagingly and concisely outline the general history of slavery in each place, particularly regarding scale, timing, and scope. And they follow with reviews of the classic literature and major conceptual shifts balanced against the details of more recent scholarship. That some scholars already expert regarding a particular place will justifiably argue for the inclusion of additional literature does not detract from each essay's remarkable accomplishment of summary, synthesis, and analysis in no more words

than a journal article. Readers newly interested in investigating slavery in a particular place will receive initiations that prepare them to delve deeply into the relevant primary and secondary sources despite word limits resulting in inevitable omissions.

The twenty-two essays of the second section address the multitude of themes and methods that reflect the dynamism and diversity of scholarship on slavery in the Americas. Thematically they range from economics to culture and biology to ideology. Representative titles include 'The economics of slavery', 'Gender and slavery', 'Biology and African slavery', 'Proslavery ideology', and 'Emancipation'. The four that focus most directly on methods address the challenges and opportunities involved in comparative studies, historical archaeology, demography, and 'Finding slave voices'.

The second section's essay on 'Slave culture' most directly captures and contextualizes the impact of recent contributions by geographers, especially by Judith A. Carney on the creative roles of slaves in establishing rice cultivation in South Carolina and beyond. Geographers seem particularly well suited in terms of methods and approaches to make many further contributions regarding the African legacy in establishing the landscapes of the tropical and subtropical Americas. Understanding the establishment of agricultural production systems remains especially important because they became so fundamental to the environmental and social relations of the colonies that their consequences persist to the present.

The editors no doubt considered essays dedicated to many relevant topics that could not be included due to page limits. In fact, even to mention some possibilities seems unreasonable given the volume's already massive scope and length. Nonetheless, two areas of recent scholarship seem particularly worth mentioning in the spirit of encouraging additional handbooks rather than critiquing this one. The first concerns the Atlantic turn, the influence of which many of the essays reflect. Several essays address selected aspects of the relationship between research on slavery in the Americas and Atlantic Studies, but only a dedicated contribution would do justice to the conceptual transformation entailed in turning an ocean from a dead space of separation into a lived space of social interaction, reconstructing the maritime networks and actors that linked Africa, Europe, and the Americas, and dissolving long-standing academic boundaries between Africanists, Caribbeanists, and Latin and North Americanists. The second area worth mentioning concerns the digital humanities. Individual substantive essays draw on such innovative internet databases as the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, Louisiana Slave Database, and Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery. But a methodological essay dedicated to the conceptual and practical dimensions of establishing such databases, their ability to address long-standing research questions, and their potential to raise entirely new types of questions would have made a solid contribution.

At the risk of appearing even more unreasonable, I suggest that the addition of illustrations of all types would have enhanced the contributors' essays as well as the editors' efforts at synthesis in their introduction. The entire handbook includes only a dozen tables and three graphs and lacks maps and illustrations of other types except on the dust jacket, which features the much reproduced color print by William Clark of slaves planting sugar cane on Antigua in 1823. Most of the essays could have communicated more effectively with at least some relevant illustrations. Even the best illustrated essay, 'Demography and slavery', which includes all three of the graphs and a third of the tables, could have benefited from more of each given its topic. In particular, however, the editors' overview of slavery throughout the hemisphere over four centuries could have been even more effective if maps and graphs complemented the extremely cogent text.

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Diego Armus, *The Ailing City: Health, Tuberculosis, and Culture in Buenos Aires, 1870–1950*. Durham, Duke University Press, 2011, x + 416 pages, US\$27.95 paperback.

In this impressive book, historian Diego Armus examines the imprint of tuberculosis on Buenos Aires from the rise of bacteriology in the 1870s to the advent of effective antibiotics against the tuberculosis bacillus in the post-Second World War era. Despite bacteriology's impact, during this 80-year period tuberculosis remained a cryptic and fearsome disease. Although the means of transmission was fairly well understood, it was still hard to explain why some people exposed to tuberculosis got sick and died from it, while others remained healthy. More importantly, as Armus repeatedly reminds the reader, until antibiotics emerged there was no reliable, safe, and effective way to treat the disease. For Buenos Aires, the period of 1870–1950 also coincided 'with a time of profound, rapid urban changes that were evident in almost every aspect of the city's life, from demographics to social geography, from politics to culture' (p. 17). During this time Buenos Aires became modern, and grappled with the all of the contradictions of modernization. For those familiar with Argentina, this is well trodden historiographic ground, but Armus alerts us to the central role tuberculosis played in this swift, disorienting social transformation.

In this atmosphere of partial biomedical knowledge and rapid social change, the disease proliferated in the population and loomed large in Argentine culture. The commonplace yet enigmatic tuberculosis became wrapped into all kinds of contemporary social and political projects. First and foremost, there was the desire of the elite to inculcate tenets of modern hygiene among the masses. But tuberculosis also appeared as a justification for city parks and green spaces, physical education for children, limits on 'undesirable' immigrants, and relegating women to the domestic sphere. 'Uncertainty' about tuberculosis made the disease 'a way to speak about many things' (p. 228). Thus Armus focuses mainly on analysing the discourse on tuberculosis, and how it intersected with other key discourses of the time: about gender, sexuality, the family, race, and nation. The raw material for his analysis derives from a prodigious, almost heroic, archival research effort. Armus uses customary sources in the social history of medicine (newspapers, magazines, and medical journals), along with some unusual documents, including tango lyrics, advertisements, utopian fiction, labor union press, and memoirs of patients and doctors. This rich archival evidence allows Armus to reconstruct a lost world that developed in the spaces of working-class homes, hospitals, sanatoria, city streets, tango halls, bars, and brothels.

The topics covered in *The Ailing City* – a translated and modified version of his *La ciudad impura* (Edhasa, 2007) – are as wide-ranging as the book's source base, which can be viewed as both a weakness and a virtue. On the one hand, the book's structure is episodic and fragmentary: not one narrative, but many parallel and competing stories. Armus tells fascinating stories about the city, but tuberculosis often disappears from the frame of reference, or at least recedes to the background. This is particularly the case in the last main