On the morning of August 19, 1741, Peter Vezian, quartermaster of the Boston sloop Revenge, appeared before a British judge on New Providence Island to request permission to sell four black prisoners taken on board a Spanish privateer. By all accounts, one of the prisoners, Francisco Menéndez, was a man of high rank, having commanded a Spanish unit of black soldiers during the relief of the British siege of St. Augustine in 1740, and a pair of witnesses claimed that the other three prisoners, who had served in Menéndez’s company, were also freemen. Exploiting inconsistencies in the testimony, Vezian insisted that neither witness was to be believed. Instead, he invoked the indisputable evidence of skin color. “Does not their Complexion and features,” Vezian asked the Bahamian court, “tell all the world that they are of the blood of Negroes and have suckt Slavery and Cruelty from their Infancy?”

Vezian also reminded his listeners of the “barbarous Action[s]” allegedly committed by Menéndez’s soldiers during the siege of St. Augustine—a record, he maintained, which showed that their perpetrators knew nothing of either “Liberty or Christianity.” On this basis alone, Vezian hoped that the judge would accept Menéndez’s status as a slave, and he urged the court to follow the “old Law of Nations” in sentencing the others, whereby “all Prisoners of War, nay Even their posterity are Slaves.”

Stories such as those of Menéndez and his fellow prisoners have long served as an example of the rich potential in comparative history, especially histories that take as their subject the inhabitants of the Spanish and British empires. Whether we consider John Elliott’s magisterial new history of Britain and Spain in America or the continued interest in Herbert Eugene Bolton’s classic essay “The Epic of Greater

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America” (1933), historians have often looked to comparative history as a way to transcend “national frameworks” in both colonial Anglo-American and Spanish American historiographies. In the case of Francisco Menéndez, the Spanish corsair’s fate suggests that, despite its many problems, there is still merit in Frank Tannenbaum’s famous thesis—first articulated sixty years ago—that Spanish law and custom gave blacks in Spain’s Atlantic empire “certain rights and protections not found in other slave systems.” As Jane Landers has written, Spaniards “generally accepted” testimony that men such as Menéndez were free, and Spanish law “granted the enslaved a moral and juridical personality.” On the other hand, British and Anglo-American jurists tended to be much less accommodating, demanding certificates and other written evidence of free status that “were almost impossible to produce.” In keeping with such tendencies, the judge on New Providence Island proved willing to accept Peter Vezian’s representation and allowed Francisco Menéndez to be sold as a slave.

If the proceedings against Menéndez invite comparisons between the Atlantic empires of Britain and Spain, however, they also highlight some of the limitations inherent in comparative history. In particular, the case shows that, far from being distinct entities, as comparative studies usually suggest, the two empires were part of the same hemispheric system or community. This interconnected system, moreover, was fundamentally asymmetric, with Spain, as the senior and historically preeminent member, often holding the upper hand. Although the judge on New Providence Island ruled that Menéndez and another of the prisoners were slaves “according to the Laws of the plantations,” and he declared the other two captives to be prisoners of war (though not slaves) “according to the Laws of England,” the various parties seem to have realized that Britain might not have the final word in the matter. In a letter to the Revenge’s owners in Boston, the ship’s master noted somewhat defensively that the “Negro Man Francisco,” whose sale added a meager


4 Landers, Black Society in Spanish Florida, 2, 45.

thirty-four pounds to the total value of the Spanish prize, “was one of the Capts. belonging to that Comp’y of Negros and Molattos that used the English so barbarously . . . att St. Aug’ne.’” In ruling that only two of the prisoners were slaves, the judge seems to have had similar concerns, based, perhaps, on the tendency of Spanish officials to mount successful appeals against verdicts like the one handed down against Menéndez. Although we do not know whether that is what happened on this occasion, it is certainly one possibility, for Spanish records show that by 1759, Menéndez had resumed his post at the head of the black garrison at St. Augustine.7

As Francisco Menéndez’s captivity, enslavement, and eventual liberation suggest, the history of the Spanish and English-speaking Atlantic worlds is often best approached not from a comparative standpoint, but as a form of interconnected or “entangled” history. In its most pronounced form, comparative history studies societies that are geographically or temporally remote.8 Even when the societies in question are closer in space or time, comparative approaches tend to accept national boundaries as fixed, to take the distinctiveness of their subjects as a given, and to assume that the subjects being compared are, in fact, comparable.9 Entangled histories, by contrast, examine interconnected societies. Rather than insisting on the comparability of their subjects or the need for equal treatment, entangled histories are concerned with “mutual influencing,” “reciprocal or asymmetric perceptions,” and the intertwined “processes of constituting one another.”10 Because such interconnections often (though not always) occur in contiguous societies, one way to think

7 Landers, Black Society in Spanish Florida, 45.
of entangled history is as a more capacious form of borderland history; entangled history also bears some resemblance to transnational history, although the latter, as Akira Iriye has written, “retains ‘national’ as part of what it describes.”

As is evident from Francisco Menéndez’s experience, an array of interconnected processes linked the British and Spanish Atlantic worlds throughout the early modern era, some national in character, others having more to do with cosmopolitan phenomena such as race, religion, commerce, gender, and the law. Because of the dominance of national frameworks—both within the British and Spanish Atlantic empires and, eventually, in the creole American republics that succeeded them—historians have not always grasped or adequately conveyed the significance of these overlapping processes, yet they were both profound and tangible. Although the concern here is mainly with the implications for the history of the English-speaking Atlantic, it is worth noting that for Francisco Menéndez, the community that mattered most was probably neither the Spanish Empire in whose service he spent most of his adult life nor the British Empire whose courts briefly condemned him to slavery, but the entangled community that included both.

Like comparative history, entangled history speaks to tendencies that have long had a presence in the scholarly literature, especially the literature on what historians of Anglo-America call the Spanish borderlands. Stretching from Florida to Texas and California, these are the lands that formed the core of Bolton’s “Greater America”; although sometimes studied from a comparative standpoint, they remain an important part of the attempt to complicate Anglo-centric histories of the United States by emphasizing interconnecting themes and influences.

As critics have often noted, Bolton’s vision suffered—and in the hands of his successors occasionally continues to suffer—from a number of shortcomings, one of the more notable being a preoccupation with “those regions,” in the words of Jack Greene, “that subsequently became part of the United States.”

To this, we might add a second, related short-
coming, which is that the interest in borderland history has tended to limit the search for points of contact between the early modern Spanish and English-speaking Atlantic worlds to those parts of the British Empire and the United States that were once part of or immediately contiguous to the Spanish Empire. Although not all parts experienced the interplay with the same intensity, the mutual influencing evident in Francisco Menéndez’s ill-fated encounter with a British judge on New Providence Island recurred throughout the English-speaking Atlantic, including localities as distant from Spain’s frontiers as Virginia, New England, and Ireland.

If we think of the British and Spanish Atlantic empires as two parts of the same hemispheric system, we also need to realize that this system was deeply asymmetric, with the balance of power tilting heavily for much of the colonial era in Spain’s favor. Not only was Spain the dominant military and naval power during the first century and a half of Europe’s overseas expansion, but as late as the end of the eighteenth century, its American possessions far outstripped those of its rivals, including Britain and the United States, in both wealth and population. On the eve of the American Revolution, at a time when the combined indigenous, settler, and enslaved population of Britain’s North American colonies was perhaps 3 million, the Spanish empire contained nearly three times as many inhabitants. In 1800, the one urban area in the Americas with a population of more than 100,000 was Mexico City, and Spanish America boasted thirty-seven of the hemisphere’s fifty largest cities, as opposed to a mere five that fit that category in the United States. Although Spanish creoles lagged behind their Anglo-American counterparts in some areas—the first successful Spanish American newspapers date only to the 1790s— their cultural achievements in music, theater, architecture, and the writing of their own history were much more impressive. As Jose Moya has aptly written, “only the blinders of U.S.-centrism can obscure the fact that before 1776 the principal sites of modernity could be found not in Boston or Philadelphia, but in places like Guanajuato and Salvador[...]. . . Mexico City and Lima.” If British America was a provincial fragment of Britain proper, it was also, in important respects, part of a Spanish periphery that included much of the Western Hemisphere.

This asymmetric relationship touched practically every aspect of Britain’s Atlantic empire, starting with the way that Britons conceived of their imperial project and how they understood the relationship of their own overseas expansion to that of their European rivals. For writers on empire throughout the English-speaking Atlantic, it was a commonplace that Britain’s was a polity, in the words of David Armitage, at once “Protestant, commercial, maritime, and free.”

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15 Victor M. Uribe-Uran, “The Birth of a Public Sphere in Latin America during the Age of Revolution,” Comparative Studies in Society and History 42, no. 2 (2000): 440–448, esp. Table 2 (446–447). Mexico City and Lima both had newspapers during the first half of the eighteenth century, but Uribe-Uran discounts their importance because they were published only intermittently (440–441). On historical writing in Spanish America, see Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World (Stanford, Calif., 2001).
17 David Armitage, The Ideological Origins of the British Empire (Cambridge, 2000), 195. See also
purposes of this formulation was to embolden the British in the face of threats from hostile powers in Europe, especially powers that were Catholic. In the words of London’s Anglican clergy, speaking during the last great Jacobite rebellion in 1745, Britain had a long and distinguished history on this score, time and again thwarting “the restless spirit of Popery, which never neglects the least opportunity of enlarging it’s borders,” and defying “the pleasure which arbitrary powers naturally take, in destroying the liberties of a free nation.”18 As Linda Colley has written of Anglo-French relations during the long eighteenth century, “the British and French had their teeth so sunk into each other . . . that they could neither live together peacefully, nor ignore each other and live neutrally apart.”19 The same was true of Britain and Spain in America, where, as Anthony Pagden has reminded us, Spanish aspirations to establish a “true ‘lordship of all the world’ ” during the mid-sixteenth century helped set the terms by which Spain’s European competitors, including both Britain and, eventually, the United States, measured their own imperial history.20

Nowhere was this influence more conspicuous than in the arguments with which the British sought to legitimate their possessions in America. Even before the first successful settlement at Jamestown, England’s expansion was heavily indebted to Spain’s example. In Ireland, Elizabethan adventurers such as Sir Humphrey Gilbert and Sir Henry Sidney justified their brutal treatment of the Gaelic Irish during the 1560s and 1570s by drawing on published accounts of the conquest of Mexico, and that experience in turn helped shape the ideology that the English used against the native peoples of Virginia.21 Because the first English settlers in America hoped to replicate the indigenous labor and tributary systems of New Spain and Peru, Spanish history also figured prominently in the Virginia Company’s decision to establish a settlement among the powerful and well-organized Algonquian-speaking Indians of the lower Chesapeake. Although Powhatan’s authority over the werowances within his chiefdom was far less extensive than that of either the Aztecs or the Incas over their own tributary subjects, and his ability to resist European invaders was much greater, the English spent their first fifteen years in Virginia trying to turn the colony into a sort of Protestant Mexico. “The manner how to suppress them is so often related and approved, I omit it here,” wrote John Smith of the bloody Indian warfare that plagued the colony during its early years; “you have twenty examples of the Spaniards how they got the West-Indies, and forced the treacherous and rebellious Infidels to doe all manner of drudgery worke and slavery for them.”22

18 Clergy of London, Address to the Throne (1745), State Papers (SP) 36/79/80–81, National Archives (formerly Public Record Office), Kew, United Kingdom.
19 Colley, Britons, 2–3.
If the British sought to imitate key parts of Spain’s empire, they consciously rejected others, especially the claim, based on Alexander VI’s papal bull of 1493, to sovereignty over all American lands and waters west of the Azores. Although Spain’s hemispheric pretensions were never enforceable—a reality that Madrid admitted in 1670 by recognizing England’s right to trade and settle in North America and the West Indies—they had the effect of casting the British as interlopers committed to the principles of international liberty, both for themselves and for the other maritime powers of Europe. In both Britain and America, such interactions contributed to the myth of the Black Legend, which identified Spain’s overseas empire with everything that Britain’s was not: indolence, superstition, backwardness, and tyranny. Even after the balance of power began to tip in Britain’s favor, Alexander’s donation continued to haunt Anglo-Spanish relations, with Spain’s determination to interpret British rights as narrowly as possible mirroring protestations that “Britons,” in the words of James Thomson’s famous anthem, “never will be slaves.” During the so-called War of Jenkins’ Ear, British dramatists, writers, and composers—among them George Frideric Handel—routinely depicted Britain as a modern-day Israel, resisting the tyrannical grasp of a new pharaonic Egypt. “We are certainly a most exposed


24 Richard L. Kagan, “Prescott’s Paradigm: American Historical Scholarship and the Decline of Spain,” American Historical Review 101, no. 2 (April 1996): 430; Elliott, Empires of the Atlantic World, 404. As James Epstein notes in “Politics of Colonial Sensation: The Trial of Thomas Picton and the Cause of Louisa Calderon,” in this issue, the Black Legend remained a foil for Britain’s imperial identity as late as Thomas Picton’s trial for the torture of Louisa Calderon, a young mulatto girl, while he was governor of the former Spanish colony of Trinidad in 1801; while conceding that such practices were not legal under the common law of England, Picton’s defense successfully argued that Spanish law sanctioned judicial torture.


people,” warned the New England poet and clergyman Mather Byles in a sermon before Boston’s artillery company in 1740; “assure your selves [that] you are venturing in the name of the Lord of Hosts; and he is engaged for you.”

Despite such Hispanophobic tendencies, the history of Britain’s expansion remained intertwined with its Spanish antithesis, as Britons adopted a language of imperial legitimacy diametrically and self-consciously opposed to the Spanish model of donation and conquest. Drawing on the Roman law concept of *res nullius*, British and Anglo-American writers—including, famously, John Locke—argued that before Columbus’s first voyage, the Americas were among the “empty things” of the world and were thus the property of all mankind and beyond the power of any sovereign to bequeath or possess. In such unoccupied lands, *dominium* (i.e., property rights and sovereignty) as it existed in Europe was possible only among settlers who had taken actual possession of the land. Among other things, the doctrine of effective occupation, as it came to be known, was meant to subvert Spanish claims to territory not directly under Spain’s control, but it also served to differentiate Britain’s “libertarian” imperial project from what the British came to regard as a Spanish empire dependent on excessive force and conquest. Because Indians cultivated only a small portion of the land in North America, Anglo-Americans were allegedly free to purchase and settle on the large tracts that remained without violating the rights of the original inhabitants. In this, the British told themselves, they differed from the Spanish, whose empire had its origins in the brutal subjection of the more densely settled and “civilized” pre-Columbian peoples of Mexico and Peru. Indeed, given the breadth of Spain’s hemispheric aspirations, the British were not above claiming Spanish tyranny as part of the benighted state from which they hoped to rescue the woodland peoples of Virginia and New England—a claim vividly illustrated by the Indian who beseeches the English on the seal of the Massachusetts Bay Company (1629) to “Come over and Help Us.”

Put this way, the contrast between the two Atlantic empires could not be greater.

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29 Although the work of armchair jurists and theorists, this discourse can also be found throughout the papers and memoranda of colonial officials; see, for example, Harman Verelst, “Observations on the Right of the Crown of Great Britain to the North West Continent of America” (April 16, 1739), CO 5/283, 1–9 et seq.; see also James Muldoon, “Discovery, Grant, Charter, Conquest, or Purchase: John Adams on the Legal Basis for English Possession of North America,” in Christopher L. Tomlins and Bruce M. Mann, eds., *The Many Legalities of Early America* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2001), 25–46; Williams, *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought; Stuart Banner, How the Indians Lost Their Land: Law and Power on the Frontier* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005).

30 For the Spanish reference in the Massachusetts seal, see Pagden, “The Struggle for Legitimacy,” 52. In an indication of the prevalence of such views, the Swiss jurist Emer de Vattel, whose treatise on the law of nations was the standard text on the subject in both Britain and the colonies during the later eighteenth century, praised the Puritans for “purchas[ing] of the Indians the land of which they intended to take possession”; Vattel, *The Law of Nations; or, Principles of the Law of Nature, Applied to the Conduct and Affairs of Nations and Sovereigns. From the French of Monsieur de Vattel* (London, 1797), book 1, chap. 18, § 209 (101).
or—to students of comparative history—more familiar, pitting an Iberian model, in which authority descended from on high, against what Pagden has called the “nascent republicanism” of Britain’s decentralized, settler-based ideal. What has received less attention is that the terms upon which the British sought to legitimate their imperial project were never sufficient to disentangle that project from its Spanish antithesis. Although Anglo-American settlers on land claimed by Spain could unilaterally create de facto property rights and exercise many of the attributes of sovereignty, neither they nor the British government could hope to establish dominium in the fullest sense of the word. For that, Britain needed Spain’s recognition, and for most of the early modern period that recognition was not forthcoming. Although the Anglo-Spanish Treaty of 1670 acknowledged Britain’s right to all lands that its subjects “at present hold and possess,” Spain insisted well into the eighteenth century that the concession did not apply to settlements made subsequent to the treaty, including Georgia, British Honduras, and the so-called Neutral Islands in the West Indies; nor did it guarantee freedom of the seas. As late as the American Revolutionary War, Britain and Spain were still arguing over such matters in the South Atlantic and the Caribbean, and Spanish claims in the Pacific nearly caused a breach during the Nootka Sound incident of 1789. Only with the collapse of the Bourbon monarchy in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars did Spain’s pretensions cease to matter. Even then, the (admittedly remote) possibility that the revanchist government of Ferdinand VII might attempt to revive them during the 1820s was enough to lead President James Monroe of the United States to make his famous proclamation, with Britain’s tacit support, that the Americas would henceforth be off limits to European expansion.

This entangled Anglo-Spanish history necessarily complicates any attempt—including any attempt undertaken from a comparative standpoint—to write the history of either Britain’s Atlantic empire or the early United States as the history of politically self-sufficient nations with full mastery over their own destiny. Although British and Anglo-American officials such as the judge who consigned Francisco Menéndez to slavery in 1741 would have been loath to admit it, Spanish norms and institutions continued to intrude, sometimes decisively. This was especially true for groups on the margins of creole society: Indians, African Americans, and white squatters and interlopers. On Honduras Bay and Nicaragua’s Mosquito Coast, where several thousand British settlers conducted a profitable trade in logwood (used in the manufacture of dye) and mahogany throughout the eighteenth century, Spain’s refusal to grant Britain territorial jurisdiction placed the mixed-race inhabitants in what the king’s advocate James Marriott called a legally ambiguous “family state.” Because the logwood cutters were under the jurisdiction of neither Britain nor Spain, they were in effect subject “to no Jurisdiction at all”—“a collective body of fugitive

32 Davenport, European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States, 2: 194. See also Pares, War and Trade in the West Indies.
persons composed of all nations,” as Marriott wrote in 1766, who lived as “Outlaws with respect to the laws of both . . . Sovereigns.” Although free as individuals to occupy land, erect houses, and establish families, “which is in effect colonizing,” the settlers together constituted, at best, a “sort of colony,” whose collective rights, according to Marriott, were “sometimes maintained by force, often interrupted and never allowed by the Court of Spain.”34 Under such conditions, Spain’s refusal to give up territorial sovereignty rendered the settlers stateless, sentimentally part of the British nation (though only just), but only tenuously subject to the jurisdiction of the British government. “As they have a natural right,” wrote Marriott, “to form themselves by an original compact into any model of government, so they may commit irregularities and outrages on the Neighboring Settlements of the Crown of Spain, without the Crown of Great Britain by the law of nations being responsible for it.”35

The same stateless, freelancing dynamic was evident in Britain’s maritime rivalry with Spain in the “border seas” of Florida and the West Indies.36 Because the Spanish treated the crew of any merchant ship that strayed into what they claimed as their territorial waters as outlaws and the ship itself as a legitimate prize, the British government faced an unenviable choice, between going to war to avenge the insults of Spanish corsairs, and appearing to accept the legality of Spain’s assertions by allowing its subjects to be treated like pirates. In the celebrated case of Captain Robert Jenkins, whose vessel was stopped by a Havana guarda costa shortly after sailing from Jamaica in 1731, the Spanish commander strung him up by the neck, threatened to burn the ship if he did not divulge the location of its money, and severed his left ear, “bidding him carry it to his Master King George.”37 Although the episode eventually supplied the name for the Anglo-Spanish War of 1739, perhaps the most interesting part of Jenkins’s story is that the British government waited eight years to avenge his dismemberment, thereby appearing to accept Spain’s version of the encounter. As Rear Admiral Stewart, commander of the British station at Jamaica, wrote in his report on the attack, it was well known that “the traders of Jamaica [were] as great rogues as the Spaniards,” that this “illicit trade [was frequently] carried on by armed sloops, or in convoy, in defiance of the law,” and that Britain’s own mariners were often as “cruel to the Spaniards” and had “murdered seven or eight of them on their own shore.” As long as Spain maintained its maritime pretensions, and as long as

36 Bushnell, “Borderland or Border-Sea?” 643–653.
37 American Weekly Mercury, September 30–October 7, 1731, 2. The Anglo-Spanish dispute over maritime rights in the Caribbean is covered in detail in Pares, War and Trade in the West Indies, esp. chaps. 1, 2, and 11.
Britain was unwilling or unable to compel Madrid to change course, British sailors in the Caribbean had every reason to disregard the laws of their own government as well as those of Spain, and to use force independently in their own defense. “Vil-lany,” Stewart concluded, “is inherent to that Climate.”

In the case of Indians and African Americans, these conflicts over territorial and maritime sovereignty often included jurisdictional disputes over the bodies and souls of people either allied with or subject to the British crown. Under the terms of Alexander’s donation, the Spanish claimed dominion not only over the “mainlands and islands” of America but over the hemisphere’s “residents and inhabitants” as well, the expectation being that Spain would use its authority to reduce its new subjects “to the Catholic faith.” Although this requirement applied only to Indians, Spaniards in Florida and the Caribbean effectively broadened it to include Africans, especially Africans fleeing slavery in South Carolina and the British West Indies. Given the suspicion with which they regarded Protestant missionaries in their own midst, Anglo-American planters frequently noted the threat posed by Spanish clerics who preached the doctrine of liberty for slaves who were quite insensible of them, except as procuring their manumission.” Invariably, the British responded by disputing the legality of Spain’s jurisdiction over their own servants, as well as the sincerity of the conversions upon which that jurisdiction depended. “I pray leave to assure you,” insisted Gilbert Fleming, governor of the Leeward Islands, to his counterpart on Puerto Rico in 1751, “that not a single Slave has deserted us in search of the Roman Catholick Religion, or of Christianity of any Denomination whatsoever.” As Fleming must have realized, however, African slaves in the British colonies—particularly those whom Ira Berlin has described as “Atlantic creoles”—were often aware of the possibilities for improving their condition in Spanish territory; in more than a few instances, religion was a decisive factor. During the Stono Rebellion of 1739, many of the slaves who sought to escape the plantations of South Carolina for Florida were “Angolans” who observed the Catholic rites and catechism of their native Kongo. Of those who managed to elude capture, several ended up swearing allegiance to the

38 “Notes of correspondence between the Lords [of Admiralty] and [Rear Admiral] Stewart as to Spanish depredations, the orders for reprisals, and the difficulties they will raise,” May 15, 1731, in R. G. Marsden, ed., Documents Relating to Law and Custom of the Sea, 2 vols. (1915; repr., London, 1999), 2: 278. For similar accounts of peacetime depredations by British and Anglo-American mariners, see Henry Moore, Lieutenant Governor of Jamaica, to the Earl of Holderness, August 31, 1757, October 4, 1757, and February 6, 1758, CO 137/60, 262, 264, and 270.

39 “Inter Caetera,” in Davenport, European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States, 1: 76 (editor’s trans.). The original text from which the quoted excerpts are taken reads: “terras firmas et insulas predictas illaramque incolas et habitores . . . subjicere et ad fidem Catholicam reducere proposuistis” (73).

40 For the longstanding hostility of Anglo-American slaveholders to Protestant missionaries, see especially Jon Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People (Cambridge, Mass., 1990).

41 Gilbert Fleming to Don Augustine Pareja, May 21, 1751, CO 152/45, 256. See also Lords of Trade to the Earl of Holderness, May 22, 1754, CO 152/41, 63–68. Conversely, when the Jamaican corsair Robert Searle sacked St. Augustine in 1668, he informed the Spanish authorities that his governor had given him permission to enslave all people of color, regardless of whether they were free subjects of the king of Spain; Amy Turner Bushnell, Sitiado and Sabana: Spain’s Support System for the Presidio and Mission Provinces of Florida (Athens, Ga., 1994), 136.
Spanish king and serving in Francisco Menéndez’s company of black soldiers at St. Augustine.\(^{42}\)

Despite Spain’s own growing dependence on plantation slavery—notably, from the 1760s onward, in Cuba—this willingness to make Catholic freemen of British slaves had far-reaching consequences along what the English earl of Egmont called the “frontiers of America.”\(^{43}\) In South Carolina, the proximity of Spanish territory, coupled with a large black majority, helped make the slave codes among the harshest in the Americas; slaves caught attempting to flee could expect to face a horrific array of penalties, including, for repeat offenders, castration.\(^{44}\) On the other hand, Spain’s policy of manumitting African American fugitives and encouraging acts of slave resistance in Britain’s colonies repeatedly forced Britons and Anglo-Americans to make concessions of their own. To counter “Offer[s] of Liberty from the Spaniards,” British officials were often compelled to manumit black soldiers in the West Indies, assuring them that they would “not be employed but as soldiers.”\(^{45}\) The fear of Spanish intervention was likewise instrumental in persuading Jamaica to reach a negotiated settlement to the island’s long-running Maroon War in 1739, and such considerations helped postpone the spread of slavery in Georgia.\(^{46}\) Although the British government legalized the institution in 1750, many settlers worried about Georgia’s “nearness to the Spaniards.” In such a vulnerable borderland, wrote the colony’s president, William Stephens, in 1742, slaves “would soon find means, by untrodden paths thro’ a Wilderness of thick Woods,” to flee to the Spanish stronghold at St. Augustine. Once in Florida, “they would soon have Arms put into their hands, and . . . fight against us.”\(^{47}\)

Farther to the north, British colonists had less to fear from direct threats of the sort described by Stephens, yet even there, what contemporaries understood as a


\(^{44}\) South Carolina’s slave statute of 1696 stipulated that male slaves apprehended attempting to escape for the fourth time “shall be gelt”; William M. Wiecek, “The Statutory Law of Slavery and Race in the Thirteen Mainland Colonies of British America,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 34, no. 2 (1977): 270.

\(^{45}\) Trelawney to the Duke of Newcastle, May 29, 1741, CO 137/57/1, 101. For more on the use of black soldiers during the Anglo-Spanish War of 1739, see Trelawney to Newcastle, May 17, 1741, ibid., 62–63; Trelawney to Newcastle, April 25, 1742, ibid., 145–146; see also papers relating to the British expedition against Omoa (1779), CO 137/39; Sir John Dalling, Governor of Jamaica, to Lord Germaine, no. 76, July 2 and 28, 1780, CO 137/78, 166–171. See also Edward L. Cox, “The British Caribbean in the Age of Revolution,” in Eliga H. Gould and Peter S. Onuf, eds., *Empire and Nation: The American Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Baltimore, Md., 2005), 275–294; Christopher Leslie Brown and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age* (New Haven, Conn., 2006).


Spanish model of incorporating blacks and Indians into colonial society intruded on the polarization that characterized race relations in Britain’s empire. In the Protestant revivals that swept the North American seaboard from the 1740s onward, the specter of militant Catholicism almost certainly helped missionaries such as George Whitefield begin to overcome white hostility toward evangelizing free and enslaved blacks.48 Britain’s colonists were also keenly aware of their vulnerability to Spanish warships, many of which depended so heavily on sailors “of broken color [i.e., mulattoes], blacks, and Indians” that the governor of Florida claimed during the 1750s that he could not “arm a single corsair with [only] Spaniards.”49 When a Cuban guarda costa seized several vessels off the Capes of Virginia in 1724, the Boston Gazette pointedly noted the presence of “Negros and Molattos” among the ship’s Spanish crew.50 “Let us fall upon some Means,” implored the Anglican clergyman William Currie following a Spanish raid on two Delaware plantations in 1747, “to keep off those Enemies of human Nature; I mean a lawless Crew of French and Spanish Privateers.”51 Significantly, during the New York slave conspiracy of 1741, five of the plot’s alleged ringleaders were black sailors who had been taken from a Spanish corsair and, like Francisco Menéndez, sold into slavery. Among the charges leveled against them was that they were “Emissaries” of Spain, whom Spanish officials had commissioned “to burn all the Magazines and considerable Towns in the English North-America.”52

Despite the absence of a British counterpart to the Spanish missions and castas that governed the status of Indians in New Spain and Peru, Indians played an especially important role in perpetuating these interracial Anglo-Spanish entanglements, and none more so than the “wild” or independent Indians who made up roughly half the native population of Spanish America.53 On the Mosquito Coast,

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50 Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade*, 4: 119. For similar observations about the crew of a Franco-Spanish vessel (sailing under the American flag) during the American Revolutionary War, see Sir John Dalling, Governor of Jamaica, to Lord Germaine, no. 18, April 25, 1778, CO 137/73, 143–144.

51 [William Currie], *A Sermon, Preached in Radnor Church, on Thursday, the 7th of January, 1747 [i.e., 1748]. Being the Day Appointed by the President and Council of the Province of Pennsylvania, to Be Observed as a General Fast* (Philadelphia, 1748), 17.


53 David J. Weber, *Bárbaros: Spaniards and Their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven, Conn., 2005), 6. As Weber notes, historians have tended to overlook the large number of Spanish Indians in borderlands (or “frontier” regions) such as Patagonia, California, the Gulf Coast, and the Lower Mississippi Valley. In such regions, the points of contact between Spanish-Indian relations and Indian relations in the empires of France and Britain were considerable; see Amy Turner Bushnell, “Gates, Patterns, and Peripheries: The Field of Frontier Latin America,” in Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy, eds., *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500–1820* (New York, 2002),
the “aversion” of the local Miskito Indians to Spanish authority was so intense that the British agent Robert Hodgson could only surmise that, despite having “no record of [Spain’s] Inhumanity in those parts of the World,” the Miskitos had “implicitly imbibed an hereditary Rancour.”\(^{54}\) Capitalizing on this animosity, the British constructed a series of alliances during the eighteenth century that included mutual pledges of military assistance, Miskito participation in the Indian slave trade (mainly with Jamaica), and elaborate coronation ceremonies, whereby British officials conferred the titles of “general,” “admiral,” and “governor” on a succession of Miskito kings, along with badges of honor such as a “laced hat” and written expressions of fealty. Typically, this diplomacy also had a sexual dimension, as Miskito women formed liaisons with English settlers, creating a mixed-race population in which, by the mid-1750s, mestizo boys and girls outnumbered white children by eleven to one.\(^{55}\) Whether the Miskitos’ embrace of British culture represented anything more than a shared hatred of Spain is hard to say. On attempting to convert a Miskito king to Christianity in 1775, Olaudah Equiano, for one, was shocked to hear the other Indians mock their leader, telling him “never to fear the devil, for there was none existing.”\(^{56}\) Nonetheless, the British were only too happy to cast the Miskitos as supporting actors in their own Hispanophobic narratives of liberty and empire. In 1740, the Miskito King Edward signed a declaration in which he pledged to assist the British in “help[ing] all Indian Nations who are now in Subjection to the Spaniards to throw off the Spanish Yoke, and to recover their Ancient Liberty.”\(^{57}\)

If Britain used Indian alliances to make inroads in Mesoamerica, Spain’s still-extensive claims in North America led the Spanish to adopt a similar strategy among the woodland Indians of the Gulf Coast and the Mississippi Valley. As David Weber notes, officials in Spain’s distant borderlands increasingly emulated the Indian diplomacy of Britain and France, basing Madrid’s authority not on papal donation and unilateral conquest, but on written treaties with the representatives of local Indian nations. On this basis, the Bourbon monarchy was able to establish a formidable presence in North America in the years following the Spanish acquisition of Louisiana in 1762, creating a network of alliances that, during the early 1790s, included the Choctaws, Cherokees, Chickasaws, Creeks, and Seminoles.\(^{58}\) At a time when the Spanish population (creole and peninsular) of East and West Florida was probably no more than two thousand, the Creeks and Seminoles alone may have numbered as many as forty thousand men, women, and children, giving Spain an effective buffer against land-hungry Anglo-Americans. In 1786, a Creek military campaign to expel Georgia squatters from lands west of the Ogeechee River was so successful that

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\(^{54}\) Robert Hodgson, “The First Account of the State of that Part of America called the Mosquito Shore” (1757), CO 123/1, 77.


\(^{56}\) Ibid., 126.

\(^{57}\) “The Declaration of Edward King of the Mosquito Indians” (March 16, 1739/40), CO 123/1, 52. See also Hodgson to Trelawney, November 28, 1740, CO 137/57/1, 39–43.

\(^{58}\) Weber, \(\textit{Bárbaros}\), 204–208.
Spanish officials feared being drawn into an open war with the United States. Following the Treaty of Nogales (modern Vicksburg, Mississippi) in 1793, Spain briefly headed a confederation of Indian nations whose influence covered millions of acres claimed by the American Republic, including land from the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in Georgia to the confluence of the Ohio and Tennessee rivers in western Kentucky.\(^{59}\)

Despite this vast territorial reach, Spain’s empire over the Indians of the Southeast was in many respects a hollow empire.\(^{60}\) Not only did the Indians themselves remain fiercely independent, but Spain’s influence in the region depended heavily on the cooperation of French and British traders, many of whom had Indian wives and families and were integrated into Indian society. In the Catholic missions of Mexico and Peru, the Spanish tolerated, and at times positively encouraged, interracial unions, both as a means of converting Indians to Christianity and as a way to incorporate them into Spanish society.\(^{61}\) Among non-mission Indians, on the other hand, Spain’s ability to regulate interracial unions was far more circumscribed, especially in distant borderlands such as those of North America.\(^{62}\) Because of the matrilineal structure of Indian society in the Southeast, European men who married Indian women tended to be marginal figures, typically wielding influence only insofar as they embraced the customs of their adoptive nations. Southeastern Indians were also adept at compelling Spanish officials to play the part of benevolent but powerless “fathers,” notably through the costly practice of giving gifts in exchange for military and economic favors.\(^{63}\) “In the Floridas,” observed the council of Charles IV in 1792, “we occupy only the ports and forts of Mobile, Pensacola, and St. Augustine.” The rest of Spain’s territory still belonged to the Indians.\(^{64}\)

If Spain’s powers were attenuated, the sovereignty that it claimed over the southeastern Indians was nonetheless a significant impediment to the ambitions of its European rivals, including Britain and the United States. Probably no figure used this Spanish counterpoise to greater advantage than the Creek leader Alexander

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64 Quoted in Weber, *Bárbaros*, 204.
McGillivray. The son of a Scottish Indian trader and the mestiza sister of a Kosati chief, McGillivray was among the “gorget chiefs” who rose to prominence during the imperial conflicts of the later eighteenth century, centralizing political authority within the Creek nation, encouraging its members to adopt slave-based agriculture, and amassing a personal fortune that included several plantations.65 During the American Revolutionary War, McGillivray led the pro-British faction in the Creek National Council, shifting the Creeks’ allegiance to Spain at the war’s end. As he wrote in 1784 to Estevan Miró, governor-general of Spanish Louisiana, “the protection of a great Monarchy is to be preferred to that of a distracted Republic.” Despite such professions, McGillivray reserved the Creeks’ right to wage war in circumstances “where Self Defense Made it absolutely Necessary.” He also maintained covert ties with Britain and the United States, serving as a silent partner in the Scottish firm of Panton, Leslie, and Company, which managed Spain’s trade with the Creeks, and accepting a secret commission as a brigadier in the United States Army worth $1,200 per annum. If McGillivray was able to win concessions from Spain’s rivals, however, that was largely because of his status as Spain’s official commissioner for the Creeks—“nuestro mestizo,” as the Spanish called him.66 In the interplay between the various European contenders for dominion in the Southeast, Spain’s hollow empire ensured that mestizos such as Alexander McGillivray remained the creatures of none.

At the time of McGillivray’s death at Pensacola in 1793, the political contours of the Western Hemisphere had already started to change. The salient features of these transformations are well known. In both empires, the roots of change lay in the upheavals of the Seven Years’ War, followed by the attempts of two new monarchs, Charles III (1759) and George III (1760), to strengthen their respective empires through far-reaching military, fiscal, and economic reforms. In the American territories of each crown, the new initiatives, which had as their goal to make the two empires more closely resemble “unitary nation-states,”67 proved deeply unpopular, triggering crises with both European creoles and Indians that included riots,
rebellion, and, eventually, independence. Alexander von Humboldt, for one, had a keen sense of the many similarities between the two. He described the Túpac Amaru rebellion, which convulsed the southern Andes between 1780 and 1783 and claimed more than 100,000 Indian and Spanish lives, as having come close to “snatching from the King of Spain all the mountainous region of Peru at the same time as Great Britain was losing almost all its colonies in the continent of America.”68 Although Bourbon officials managed to quell the rebellion and contain the immediate crisis that had provoked it, the underlying fissures were similar in many ways to those driving the revolution to the north, and they anticipated the seismic rifts that finally destroyed Spain’s American empire during the 1820s.

Despite the many points of comparison in the crises that beset the empires of Britain and Spain, however, the two crises were hardly comparable. Not only did Spain’s American empire remain intact almost fifty years longer than Britain’s, but when the final, protracted Spanish crisis began in 1808, Hispanic creoles proved much more reluctant than their Anglo-American counterparts to sever all ties to the metropole. For both Britain and the United States, Spain accordingly remained a potent and hostile antithesis, limiting the ability of either nation to control its imperial project on its own terms. In the case of the Bourbon reforms of the 1760s and 1770s, people throughout the English-speaking Atlantic evinced a keen awareness that the Spanish mantle of American lordship was still an asset of considerable value, one that seemed to justify vigorous measures to strengthen Britain’s authority over its own colonies.69 As had been true since the early eighteenth century, Britons, in particular, also worried that Spain’s American empire might fall to another rival. Despite the apparent priority of Britain’s century-long rivalry with France, one of the main sources of British anxiety during the revolutionary era was the question of which of the two “natural enemies” would control the wealth of Spanish America—a question settled in Britain’s favor only with the “informal empire” that its merchants gained over the newly independent Latin American republics after 1815.70 Significantly, during the final years of the American Revolutionary War, Britons across the political spectrum convinced themselves that the best way to counter the transatlantic threat of France’s alliance with Spain was to recognize American independence and, in so doing, draw the former colonies into a “family compact” of their own.71

68 Quoted in Elliott, Empires of the Atlantic World, 355.
69 See especially Gould, The Persistence of Empire, chap. 4. For the influence of Britain’s example on the reforms of Charles III, see Stein and Stein, Apogee of Empire, esp. chap. 6.
71 [Joseph Cawthorne], A Plan of Reconciliation with America; Consistent with the Dignity and Interests of Both Countries (London, 1782), 48. See also Viscount Mahon to the Earl of Chatham, February 11,
Although these British plans did not find many American takers, no European power posed a greater threat to the new American Republic or cast in sharper relief its post-independence vulnerability to foreign powers than Spain. With a continental empire that stretched from Upper California to the Florida Keys, the Spanish were in a position during the later 1780s and early 1790s to intervene in the affairs of the United States on multiple fronts, providing sanctuary to escaped slaves in Florida, refusing to allow Anglo-American farmers as far inland as Pittsburgh to ship goods through New Orleans, and encouraging secessionist talk among disaffected settlers in Kentucky and Tennessee. Entangling the region’s politics still further, Britain also retained a presence in Spanish North America, both through the covert activities of backcountry Loyalists and through the monopoly that the merchant house of Panton, Leslie, and Company retained on Spain’s Indian trade at Pensacola. Given the small Hispanic populations of Spain’s North American provinces and the proximity of much larger numbers of Anglo-Americans—many with designs on land under Spain’s nominal jurisdiction—Spanish officials bolstered Madrid’s authority by naturalizing non-Hispanic settlers in East and West Florida and Louisiana, requiring only that they take oaths of allegiance and agree to raise their children as Catholics. Thomas Jefferson, for one, hoped that the resulting influx of Anglo-American settlers would Americanize Spain’s frontier, thereby becoming “the means of delivering to us peaceably, what may otherwise cost us a war.” But Jefferson also feared that settlers within the United States’ own limits were capable of transferring their allegiance in other, less welcome directions, including to the crown of Spain.

In voicing concerns about the loyalty of U.S. citizens, Jefferson knew whereof he spoke. As long as Spain’s American empire remained intact—that is, as long as there was no Hispanic counterpart to the British imperial crisis of 1776—it proved impossible to extricate the rights of Anglo-American settlers from Spain’s territorial


73 Both groups often displayed the same independence and disregard for the authority of the British government that Marriott noted (supra) in his observations on the logwood cutters on Honduras Bay; see, for example, the depiction of British squatters in East Florida following the province’s cession to Spain (1783) as “banditti,” “outlaws,” and “rebels,” in Patrick Tonly to Lord Sydney, no. 5, December 6, 1784, CO 5/561, 13–20. See also J. Leitch Wright, Anglo-Spanish Rivalry in North America (Athens, Ga., 1971), chaps. 12 and 13.


75 See, for example, Jefferson’s letter to Archibald Stuart, January 25, 1786, written from Paris in response to news of Spain’s secessionist intrigues during the Kentucky Convention of 1785, in Thomas Jefferson, Writings, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York, 1984), 844. “I fear,” Jefferson wrote, “that the people . . . think of separating not only from Virginia (in which they are right) but also from the confederacy.”
pretensions, even when those pretensions were superficial, conjectural, or unenforceable. In Franklin, the short-lived republic proclaimed in 1786 by settlers in North Carolina’s three western counties (modern Tennessee), disaffected Anglo-Americans briefly contemplated declaring independence from the United States and placing themselves under the protection of Spain, their hope being, as James Robertson told Alexander McGillivray, that officials at New Orleans “would furnish us with trade, and receive our produce.”

In order to avoid Spanish tariffs on goods shipped down the Mississippi, some Tennesseans, including a young Nashville lawyer named Andrew Jackson, went so far as to swear oaths of allegiance to the king of Spain. Writing in 1789 to Estevan Miró, governor-general of Spanish Louisiana, James Robertson claimed that “unprotected, we are to be obedient to the new Congress of the United States; but we cannot but wish for a more interesting connection.” “For my own part,” added Robertson, “I conceive highly of the advantages of your government.”

In order to weaken and contain such sympathies, Congress extended broad rights of self-government to Anglo-American settlers in the trans-Appalachian west in 1790, ensuring, in the words of Peter Onuf, that the American union would remain a loose-knit federation in which the individual states “could (probably) do whatever they pleased.” Even so, as late as the mid-1790s, some Tennesseans could imagine circumstances under which their “Country,” in the words of Andrew Jackson, might be compelled “to break or seek a protection from some other Source than the present.”

In terms of the subsequent history of the United States, one of the most important effects of this Spanish lordship was to feed and encourage the American Republic’s own unilateralist tendencies—whether on the part of the union as a whole or, more typically, through the agency of filibustering strongmen acting at the behest of autonomous states such as Tennessee. As their predecessors had done since the seventeenth century, Anglo-Americans responded to Spain’s still-vast American empire by insisting that settlers who possessed absolute property rights as individuals had an equally unlimited right to the other attributes of sovereignty, including, if they so desired, the *dominium* of independent statehood. Not coincidentally, the Mississippi Valley and Gulf Coast produced a succession of Anglo-American leaders during the early nineteenth century who in embracing this settler republicanism also

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77 According to records in the Spanish archives, Jackson took an oath of loyalty to the king of Spain at Natchez in 1789; Remini, *Andrew Jackson and His Indian Wars*, 285 n. 16.

78 Robertson to Miró, September 2, 1789, quoted in Whitaker, “Spanish Intrigue in the Old Southwest,” 170–171.

79 Peter S. Onuf, *Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance* (Bloomington, Ind., 1987), xvi. The passage quoted refers to the Northwest Ordinance (1787), which applied only to new states admitted to the union from territory north of the Ohio River; in 1790, Congress extended all of the ordinance’s provisions to Tennessee except for the prohibition against slavery, making states’ right to self-government south of the Ohio even broader. See also Onuf, *Jefferson’s Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville, Va., 2000).

embraced the freelancing tendencies that had long characterized the expansion of British settlers into Spanish territory. Despite his youthful flirtation with Spain, Jackson eventually came to personify the determination of Anglo-American settlers to seize the northern outposts of Spain’s American empire by force, regardless of the seizures’ legality and with or without the American government’s approval. Following his defeat of the British at New Orleans in 1815, whereby the future president consolidated the authority of the American union over a region whose inhabitants had often seemed to “acknowledge allegiance to NONE,” Jackson used Spain’s waning presence to continue fighting in his own behalf as well as that of his settler constituents. In 1818, Jackson launched an unauthorized invasion of Spanish Florida, only to become the territory’s first American governor. In the process, he earned a reputation, at least in the eyes of some historians, as an Anglo-American version of the Spanish caudillo.

If the borderland into which Jackson extended this Anglo-American empire was a zone of unilateral expansion, it was also a racial frontier, a place where Indians, in particular, remained both sovereign and autonomous, and where they intermixed with white creoles in ways that Anglo-Americans increasingly refused to accept. For the persistence of this “mestizo America”—in the suggestive words of Gary Nash—one need look no further than the multiracial armies with which Jackson triumphed at New Orleans and invaded Spanish Florida. Along with white militiamen from Kentucky, Louisiana, and Tennessee, Jackson’s forces at New Orleans included Choctaw warriors, two companies of free blacks, and a band of pirates from Jean Lafitte’s celebrated Baratarian “republic.” Even as Jackson continued to operate within the parameters of a racial order little changed since the colonial era, however, he played a central role in smashing that order to pieces. In the decade following his victory at New Orleans, Jackson destroyed the so-called Negro Fort overlooking the Apalachicola River in the Florida Panhandle, subdued the last of Spain’s southeastern Indian allies during the Seminole War, and started the brutal process of Indian removal that culminated, shortly after the conclusion of his second presidential term, in the Cherokee Trail of Tears (1838). Jackson also imposed a brutal terminus on Britain’s history in the region, summarily executing two British mer-

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chants at Pensacola in 1818 on charges of inciting Indian raids against American citizens.

In so doing, Jackson helped transform a borderland whose racial and political complexity would have been familiar to Francisco Menéndez and Alexander McGillivray into the clearly bounded territory of the United States. At the same time, as exemplified by the oath that he took to Charles IV in 1789, Jackson’s career stands as an enduring testimonial to the manifold ways in which entangled institutions and cultural practices that had developed over three centuries of Spanish rule continued to shape the process by which both Britons and Anglo-Americans extended and established their own national sovereignties. Although the “manifest destiny” that gripped Britain and the United States during the nineteenth century sprang partly from sources internal to each nation, their sense of imperial mission was also a product of their deep and longstanding entanglement with Spain’s global lordship. For the American Republic, in particular, practically every nineteenth-century accession to its empire, from the Louisiana Purchase (1803), through the Mexican War (1845–1848), to the annexation of the Philippines (1898), involved territory that at some point had been Spanish. When Rudyard Kipling, Britain’s imperial poet laureate, invited his Anglo-American cousins to “take up the white man’s burden” at the century’s end, effectively welcoming the United States into the select club of Europe’s imperial powers, it was entirely fitting that the final dissolution of Spain’s overseas empire should supply the occasion.

IN THE FORTY YEARS SINCE THE EMERGENCE of Atlantic history as a scholarly field, one of its defining features has been an insistence on studying the early modern Atlantic world as a zone of interconnection, whether through the movement of peoples, the exchange of goods, or the transfer of institutions and ideas. In the case of Atlantic history’s English-speaking component, however, this insistence has been most evident in histories of developments internal to Britain’s Atlantic empire and the early American Republic. For histories that reach beyond these limits, especially histories

87 The literature on Jackson and the conquest of the Southeast is enormous; for the formative influence of Jackson’s early involvement with Spain, see especially Remini, Andrew Jackson and His Indian Wars; Anderson and Cayton, The Dominion of War, chap. 5; Anthony F. C. Wallace, The Long, Bitter Trail: Andrew Jackson and the Indians (New York, 1993).
that consider the relationship of the English-speaking Atlantic to the Atlantic communities formed by the expansion of Europe’s other maritime powers, British and Anglo-American scholars (insofar as they have attempted to write such histories) have tended to favor comparative approaches. In many ways, this is a legitimate response to problems inherent in the Atlantic world’s utter vastness, allowing historians to focus on discrete parts of much larger relationships and to engage in close analysis of a sort that studies attempting to capture broader horizons often cannot. Nonetheless, as critics of comparative approaches in other fields have frequently noted, historical comparison tends to take as a given the very national boundaries that Atlantic history has long sought to complicate, and it often presupposes comparability where comparability did not exist. For all these reasons, there is a need for Atlantic historians to think equally hard about what it means to write entangled history of the sort exemplified by the English-speaking and Spanish Atlantic worlds. Among other things, the effort should remind us that analytical categories such as the nation, which comparative approaches tend to take as fixed, were (and are) themselves entangled constructs with shifting histories and borders, literal as well as figurative. After all, even a topic as broad as the history of the English-speaking Atlantic world is no less susceptible than other objects of historical analysis to becoming, in the words of Thomas Bender, another “limiting conceptual box.”

This, at any rate, is one of the lessons to be learned by acknowledging the entangled history that bound the English-speaking Atlantic to its Spanish counterpart. Even in moments of apparent self-sufficiency and triumph, the British and Anglo-American Atlantic world(s) remained deeply intertwined with Spain’s Atlantic empire. Only in the most general sense, however, can these transatlantic communities be said to have been comparable or distinct. Despite some apparent similarities, “the new England and the new Spain” were ultimately “not equivalents,” as Francisco Valdes-Ugalde has written, and at no point were their national boundaries and histories unproblematically separate. Together, such concerns ought to stand as a warning both against claiming too much for comparative history and of the need to be open to other approaches, especially when the history involves such dissimilar but entangled communities. We cannot hope to understand the cosmopolitan world in-


91 See discussion above and at notes 8–11. For a brief but cogent discussion of the relative merits of (and appropriate subjects for) comparative versus connected approaches to Atlantic history, see David Armitage, “Three Concepts of Atlantic History,” in Armitage and Braddick, *The British Atlantic World*, 16–25. See also Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors*, chap. 6.


habited by people such as Francisco Menéndez and Alexander McGillivray, or, for that matter, the significance of a totemic figure such as Andrew Jackson, unless we realize that each belonged not to one community but to several, and that those communities together constituted—indeed, still constitute to this day—an interconnected yet porous and open-ended whole.