

Milan and Pisa, where development was gradual, there was no awareness of the genuine innovations of the period: the actors simply did not realize the medium- to long-term consequences of what they did. In Rome, however, since the *Comune* was established from one day to the next as an act of rupture, senators were much more aware of the innovation they were bringing to the city. Of course, it is difficult to prove conclusively that contemporaries had any notion of “innovation” in relation to the novelties introduced, particularly when certain kinds of source are lacking (*memoriae*, etc.). Thus, arguing as Wickham does that Pisans, for instance, were unable in 1075 to foresee the eventual changes in the form of government that fully crystallized in 1115 (p. 95), while the Romans were more aware, can be regarded either as overly obvious – for not even today is it possible to estimate the reach of an action unless one supposes a perfect economic, political, and social model to be at work – or too uncertain to be asserted as confidently as Wickham does. The two modes of establishing a commune were different: Rome established its *Comune* by adopting the “full package” from other experiences, while Milan and Pisa worked out their own systems. Alternatively, the juridical, and to a certain extent historical, education of several of the men who set up the communes might suggest that they did indeed have some awareness, some idea of how politics should work, and that they took the necessary time to elaborate and organize such new models, being simultaneously anxious to maintain the social order.

Wickham’s book is an extremely well-structured analysis of the early stages of Italian communal formation. The author offers a different way of understanding the process, by looking more closely at the social and cultural side, and his book will challenge Italian and international scholars to examine other cases in depth.

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NEWMAN, SIMON P. *A New World of Labor. The Development of Plantation Slavery in the British Atlantic. [The Early Modern Americas.]* University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2013. viii, 327 pp. Ill. £36.00.
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The central subject of *A New World of Labor* is the relationship of different modes of African slavery to white free and unfree labour in the Caribbean and West Africa, and, to some extent, North America, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Its particular focus is on Barbados, the first British colony to organize a new, brutally extractive slave regime c.1640–1680, and on Cape Coast Castle, the key British slave factory on the Gold Coast, where the balance of power lay more in African hands, and where more benign forms of indigenous African slavery persisted into the nineteenth century. While rigorously comparative, it is also a connective history that, on the one hand, examines the relationship between coercive management of labour in sixteenth-century England and white and black forced labour in Barbados in the 1640s; on the other hand, it shows how slave legislation, ideology, and practices from Barbados diffused to Jamaica, the Leewards, and, ultimately, North America.

A New World of Labor is the product of an ambitious circum-atlantic research programme, drawing on archives in Britain, the United States, Barbados, and Ghana, as well as drawing deeply on the contemporary pamphlet and polemical sources. In particular, Newman has made significant and original use of the Royal African Company archives in order to understand the everyday social relations that underpinned Cape Coast Castle. Given that the Barbados story is not quite virgin territory in “Atlantic history”, perhaps the greatest empirical freshness in this study lies in that contrapuntal juxtaposition of the plantation regime with the social relations of the British *comptoir* in West Africa.

At the level of analysis, *A New World of Labor* makes three significant interventions. The first, as noted above, is to underline the importance of Barbados as the place where African and English modes of production met and were transformed into a dramatically new form of slavery. The second is to insist that the coercion of English, Scottish, and Irish indentured workers, convicts, and political prisoners provided important precedents for the practice and theory of plantation slavery on that island. The third, connected to this, is to suggest that the slavery and racism were not necessarily connected. That is to say, that “slavery” could exist without forms of phenotypic difference and without necessarily depending on civilizational contempt, as, on the one hand, with white men in Barbados in the 1660s treated sometimes in more ruthlessly extractive ways than more expensive African slaves, and, on the other, with Africans, particularly where they were depended upon, held as slaves but treated as peers and equals as contracting parties. The path towards these conclusions are the four parts of the book, each about seventy pages, which organize different angles of view on the British Atlantic and its regimes of production.

“Settings”, the first, includes three chapters that examine the general order of labour and society in England, West Africa, and Barbados, respectively. The most important of these is the chapter on England, in which Newman examines late mediaeval and early modern legislation for the control of workers and the poor. He persuasively shows that there is an important mid sixteenth-century tightening of labour regimes, an increase of confrontations between capital and labour, which provided important cultural and institutional precedents for the coercion of white and black labour a century later in Barbados. The Vagrancy Act of 1547, for example, during the short period it was in force, empowered magistrates to sentence those deemed as incorrigible vagrants to two years of slavery, during which he might “cause the said Slave to work by beating, cheyning or otherwise” and might place iron rings on his or her neck and feet. On the Gold Coast, on the other hand, the success of slave trading depended so much on cooperation from local people, including those bound in customary conditions of African modes of slavery, that rules operated more to limit violence and to keep workers happy. In Barbados, the subject of the third chapter, the colony began to draw on unfree labour from the British Isles to produce tobacco, and then, with the fateful turn to sugar, began to integrate African labour, but on terms very different from those at Cape Coast Castle.

“British Bound Labor”, part II, falls into two chapters. “White slaves” describes several waves of unfree white labour in Barbados – Cromwellian convicts, in particular the Irish, transported petty criminals from England, the Duke of Monmouth’s rebels, and later Irish and Jacobite political prisoners – first, as part of the almost consensual contractual unfree labour schemes contemporary in the British Isles, and then as a rigorous and violent system of labour extraction, first alone, then side by side Africans, and, ultimately, either displaced and marginalized or made overseers or soldiers. “A company of white negroes” contrasts this with West Africa, where a very different structure of labour needs and conditions, and a disease environment that imposed high mortality on European immigrants, meant that whites were sought as master artisans or soldiers, and worked more in cooperation with

Africans, free and unfree and, increasingly, “mulatto boys”, neither under violence themselves, nor in a position of command over Africans.

“African Bound Labor”, part III, focused on the Gold Coast, follows logically from this, with its first chapter, “A spirit of liberty”, showing the much gentler regime of unfree and semi-free labour in West Africa. “We have no power over them”, its other element, makes vivid just how dependent European actors were on African collaboration, from the Caboceers who stood as the brokers in the slaving enterprise, to the most ordinary workers. Particularly fascinating is Newman’s description of the bottleneck controlled by the Canoemen, without whose skill and labour nothing could move between the European ships, anchored sometimes a mile offshore in open roadsteads, and the wave-beaten shores. Canoemen were able to insist that they be paid in gold, not in trade goods, and when they went on strike, the Royal African Company was repeatedly forced to satisfy their requests. But even those “slaves” held a significant degree of freedom. In 1769, Governor John Grossle compared their ungovernability with that of the contemporary American rebels and those who rallied behind Wilkes, complaining that “a spirit of liberty (if Mutiny & Riot deserves that Name) has crept into the[ir] breasts”. Newman argues, not wholly persuasively, that however much Atlantic slavery transformed the Americas and their European peripheries “life and work change relatively little” (p.186) on the Gold Coast.

Part IV, finally, addresses “Plantation Slavery”, and, in two chapters, looks at the making of racial slavery in Barbados, and at the mutations of a regime of labour that began in white, unfree labour and ended up in exclusively African slavery, with the former white working class either dead, migrating, recruited into the forces of coercion, or cast off to live and die in poverty on arid waste land. By c.1660, African slaves began to outnumber whites, and while convicts and indentured workers continued to arrive, by 1680 the ratio was about 7:1. This section is perhaps the least novel part of the argument, so well-studied is the Barbados experience of the “Sugar Revolution” and the labour and social regime of that island in its first decades, although there is novelty in the weave of archival readings with which Newman underpins his narrative. How the Barbados slave regime then migrated to the rest of British America is outlined in the conclusion.

Overall, the central thrust to Newman’s argument is that class was central to the history of the British Atlantic, determining the meaning of race. It was the organization of labour, in the midst of particular modes of production, which created different social and cultural experiences for both whites and blacks in the Gold Coast, Barbados, the Carolinas and New England, and Britain itself between 1500 and 1800. English capitalist modes of labour exploitation in the sixteenth century, and their extension in the brutal forms of white labour semi-slavery in seventeenth-century Barbados, provided crucial precedents for the Barbados kind of African slavery, although over time that slavery became racialized, organizing a register of racial assumptions. In other words, Newman essentially provides a forceful and nuanced argument for the propositions of the first chapter of Eric Williams’s *Capitalism and Slavery* (although, rather oddly, Williams’s masterwork receives attention nowhere in this book), which are also supported by Richard Dunn and Hilary Beckles, and a clear dissent from the Eltis, Gaspar, and, ultimately, Winthrop Jordan argument about the primacy of ideology in the making of negrophobia. It is an argument that is in conversation with Rediker and Linebaugh’s *The Many Headed Hydra*, and with Marcel van der Linden’s ongoing work on the origins of the early modern global history of the working class.

This is an original work of the first importance for historians of the British Atlantic. There are, however, two angles of view from which it is incomplete. The first is the question of Amerindian servile labour, on which Newman is silent. Newman quotes Richard Ligon’s

description of the plantation he leased, including his description of “Houses for Negroes and Indian Slaves” (p. 65), while later he describes white indentured servants mentioning “hammocks” in their wills, without comment. The second, not wholly disconnected, but far more important, is that while Newman *en passant*, but again without pursuing its implications, notes that the Barbados plantation regime was a cultural transport from Dutch Brazil, he treats the “British Atlantic” as a watertight Anglo zone. Not a single source, primary or secondary, in another European language is consulted, and no attempt is made to contextualize either seventeenth-century Barbados or the Gold Coast, relative to their Spanish and Portuguese precedents, or Dutch and French coevals. By looking beyond the north Atlantic Anglo triangle, we might develop an even more sophisticated argument about the relationship between class, race, and European expansion in the early modern Atlantic.

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STUDER, ROMAN. *The Great Divergence Reconsidered. Europe, India, and the Rise to Global Economic Power.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK [etc.]. 2015. xii, 231 pp. Ill. Maps. £65.00; \$99.00. doi: 10.1017/S0020859016000110

For more than a decade, the discussion about the timing and causes of a “Great Divergence” in economic fortunes between Europe and Asia has been central in global economic history. Whereas the conventional view presupposes that Europe was in the lead since the late middle ages, as a result of fundamental differences between Europe and the rest of the world, revisionist scholars adhering to the so-called “California School” have argued that Europe and Asia were on a more or less equal level of economic development until around 1800 and that Western Europe took the lead only following a fortuitous spin-off of the large colonies in the Americas, combined with the advantage of favourably located coal.

Studer’s contribution lies in the well-defined reciprocal comparisons between Europe and India (much of the discussion hitherto focused on the comparison between Europe and China), the use of an explicit Smithian theoretical framework, the exploitation of an extensive new dataset on wages and prices, and the application of sophisticated statistical analyses. Studer suggests that, in contrast to revisionist claims, India and Europe’s levels of economic development diverged already somewhere in the seventeenth century, if not earlier. He goes on to argue that at least a part of the divergence was driven by differences in geography, the quality of transportation systems and, consequently, the degree of market integration (i.e. the degree of relatedness of market prices of the same commodity in different locations). He argues that these results go against views that emphasize the role of colonial exploitation in the rise of Europe as well as in the decline of India.

The introduction provides the reader with an overview of both the body of literature dealing with market integration and the divergence debate itself. First, he finds that, despite the fact that there are many studies on market integration, scholars are not yet in agreement on the degree of market integration in Europe before the nineteenth century, let alone on its role