

INTRODUCTION

MARCO MARIANO ^{*}
FEDERICA MORELLI ^{**}

In the last three decades, scholars working in the field of Atlantic history have demonstrated the explanatory power of this geographic region as a unit of analysis (Armitage 2002, Baylin 2005, Games 2006). Restoring the connections and exchanges between Africans, Europeans, and American Indians, Atlantic perspectives have deepened our understanding of transformations over a period of several centuries, casted old problems in an entirely new light, and illuminated connections hitherto obscured (Benjamin 2009, Green & Morgan 2009, Carmagnani 2018). More importantly, privileging a history beyond national or imperial borders, Atlantic history has broken down not only old regional barriers and paradigms, but also modes of analysis based on modern cultural and political hierarchies (Gillroy 1995, Thornton 1992). In this light, Euro-American relations, once seen as the core of “Western civilization”, are reconsidered as part of a wider, multicentered transnational space.

The coherence of the Atlantic does not mean however that the region was hermetically sealed off the rest of the world. Since 1492 the Atlantic space had been drawn into global ties that intensified in the 19th century thanks to four major developments: (1) revolutions and independences in the Americas, (2) the end of the Atlantic slave trade, (3) the expanded European colonization of Africa, (4) the transportation revolution and its impact on the circulation of people, goods, and ideas across the Atlantic basin in the “long” nineteenth century. Even though the region is no more characterized by the coherence of the previous centuries, these developments configure the Atlantic as an important laboratory within which to examine regional and global transformations. After the revolutions, the end of the transatlantic slave trade, and the expansion of European colonization in

* Università di Torino. Address for correspondence: marco.mariano@unito.it.

** Università di Torino. Address for correspondence: federica.morelli@unito.it.

Africa, the encounters among Europeans, Native Americans, and Africans have not ceased, but they had been fundamentally transformed (Gabaccia 2004, Fogleman 2009, Moya 2007, Rothschild 2011).

Drawing on these findings and considering the limited impact that the Atlantic history is still having in certain European countries, this special issue focuses on the new or alternative geographies that the Atlantic paradigm has created in the 19th and 20th centuries. With the term “new geographies” we refer to specific or discrete spaces that, thanks to this approach, have gained a new political and social place in the Atlantic or the global context. We also refer to commercial routes or markets that had been consolidated after the Atlantic revolutions or the end of the transatlantic slave trade and that eventually opened up new global connections. In particular, this issue addresses the transformation of the Atlantic space after the collapse of the transatlantic empires at the beginning of the 19th century and the emergence of a new economic, political, and strategic space in the 20th century, here exemplified by relational nation-building processes and post-World War II Americanization.

The first three articles deal with transformation of the Atlantic space during the dissolution of the Spanish Monarchy, which started in 1808 and concluded in the 1820s with the independence of Central and Southern America from Spain. This last revolution, along with the Brazilian independence from Portugal in 1822, liberated the hemisphere from colonial European powers, with the only exception of the Caribbean region. The new political situation drove some political leaders both from the North and the South to elaborate the geographical – as well as political – idea of a western hemisphere, the Americas, as Monica Henry’s chapter brilliantly demonstrates. Early nineteenth-century actors (such as Jefferson, Miranda, Burke, Moreno, Egaña, Shaler, Thornton, Monteagudo) had a nascent idea of belonging to a hemisphere of their own, which was different from the other continents. While U.S. Americans expanded west and southward, hence aggrandizing the Union, Spanish Americans were experiencing division and re-composition, because of the extreme political fragmentation entailed by the crisis of the Spanish Monarchy and the independence wars. As the wars came to an end, these independent regions coalesced into federations and confederations that were more, or less, loosely connected. And it was at this point that Americans met to discuss in Panama, initiating the shift from conceiving *América* as their continent to *América* as a more encompassing hemisphere. The article thus invites historians of nineteenth-century Americas to consider the hemispheric perspective, particularly strong in these years, in analysing also the nineteenth-century national period in order to deepen our understanding of themes such as frontiers, communications, constitutional experiences, education, labor.

The hemispheric perspective firmly emerges also in Deborah Besseghini's chapter on the connections between Anglo-American World in 1812 and the Spanish American independence movements. The former had important repercussions on conflicts between royalists and independentists in South America. Yet these repercussions, as Besseghini clearly shows, should be integrated in a wider context, since they are linked to formal and informal aspects of the struggle between Britain and the United States to gain influence over the area, in particular in Rio de la Plata and Chile. The American Pacific coast acquires a new centrality here, illuminating neglected details in the geopolitics of Latin-American independence. As also underlined by Monica Henry's chapter, the hemispheric perspective strengthens the Pacific dimension, since for hemispheric peoples the Pacific was as much a site of circulation and exchange as the Atlantic. While there were obvious differences in the scale and magnitude of the interchanges and movements, Americans' connections were both trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific, and within the hemisphere, they operated transimperially and transnationally as they moved across boundaries of colonies, states, and new forms of imperial domination. Instead of focusing exclusively on the national experience, these articles argue that the nineteenth-century globalisation had instead deep 'imperial' roots, traceable both to the early modern colonial empires, but also to a new and 'informal' type of empire. From the first years of the century, this type of empire took on the semblance of a network – potentially global – of personal, political, and economic connections.

Through the Atlantic Revolutions, therefore, the geographies of the Atlantic World expanded themselves, involving not only the Pacific shores, but also the interior regions of South America. This is the fascinating case analyzed by Alejandro Morea and Facundo Nanni in their chapter on San Miguel de Tucumán in the 1810s. Located in the North East of Argentina, the province is not far from the Andes, and indeed, during most part of the colonial period, it was more connected to the High Peru than Buenos Aires. The war of independence, and particularly the cantonment of the *Ejército Auxiliar del Perú*, reinforced its integration into the circuits of the Atlantic networks. A small but significant part of the army's officers were Europeans who fought in Napoleonic Wars, bringing with them not only the technical knowledge acquired during these experiences, but also the links to their personal networks. Following a few biographic trajectories, the essay shows how these European officers achieved to strongly connect the city and the province to the Atlantic space.

Biographic and diasporic approaches also shed light on mid-19th century nation building processes centered mostly, although not exclusively, in the Atlantic basin. This is the perspective adopted by Edoardo Frezet

in his study of Francis Lieber’s “relational nationalism”. Lieber, a German legal scholar, political philosopher, and publicist who moved to the United States in the late 1820s, was the editor of the *Encyclopaedia Americana* and a professor of political science at Columbia College (now Columbia University) from 1857 to 1866. This essay deals with Lieber’s writings and educational activities to investigate the participation of European intellectuals in the formulation of an American exceptionalism as the key ideology of the newly formed nation-state. Lieber, through his works and relations with leading European and US politicians, writers, and educators, emerges as a transatlantic networker and mediator between nationalism and transnational dynamics. His trajectory illuminates the paradox of the international – and in this case quintessentially transatlantic – dimension of the creation of national identities.

Finally, Atlantic geographies were deeply transformed but by no means erased during the twentieth century, as the pre-World War I Atlantic crossings of social movements and progressive policies (Rodgers 1998), the Americanization of mass culture and consumption (De Grazia 2005, Ellwood 2012) and more broadly the multiple and multidirectional connections of the “transatlantic century” (Nolan 2012) aptly show. The essay by David Ellwood sheds light on a relevant and relatively neglected chapter in the history of post-World War II Americanization of Europe, that is how Margareth Thatcher’s rise to power, her policies, and thatcherism *tout court* were informed by the British conservative leader’s admiration and infatuation for the US. As major studies of postwar Americanization contain scant references to the UK, this essay comes as a useful and stimulating reminder of the central role played by Britain in the transatlantic exchange of ideas and policies after 1945.

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