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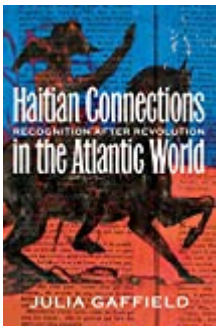

Julia Gaffield. *Haitian Connections in the Atlantic World: Recognition after Revolution.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015. 270 pp. $29.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-4696-2562-1.

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Scholars traditionally described the aftermath of Haitiâs 1804 declaration of independence in terms of an isolation that unraveled only after President Jean-Pierre Boyer agreed to indemnify France for the destroyed property of its former colony in 1825. In *Silencing the Past* (1995), Michel-Rolph Trouillot famously added texture to this thesis when he theorized that the Haitian Revolutionâs challenge to the triumvirate of slavery, anti-black racism, and European imperialism was greeted with an uncomprehending silence from outside the island. Indeed, nineteenth-century Haiti has received less attention than its temporal bookends: the Revolution (1791-1804) and the US military occupation (1915-34). Julia Gaffield addresses this gap and challenges the thesis of isolation with what could be described as a forensic reconstruction of Haitiâs foreign relations before the 1825 treaty. She joins a group of prominent scholars who have added teeth to Trouillotâs ideas by recognizing that silence did not signify an absence of connections. Although many rejected Haiti and all that it represented, numerous merchants, political figures, and state officials traded and corresponded with the country. French opposition, however, required these interactions to be unofficial, which stretched customary and legal definitions of sovereignty and legal commerce. In effect, then, Gaffield uses Haitiâs foreign relations to address broader issues of trade and sovereignty in the Atlantic world. In so doing, she accentuates a number of the hidden relations that created the nineteenth-century Atlantic world.

In the years immediately following its 1804 declaration of independence, Haitiâs foreign trade was fraught and legally ambiguous. The French government refused to recognize Haitian sovereignty, and policing trade was crucial to recapturing its colony in revolt. This did not prevent merchants from places like CuraÃ§ao and St. Thomas from trading clandestinely with Haiti as the dust of the revolution was still settlingâa de facto recognition of the new countryâs existence. Haitiâs ambiguous status placed the actions of Caribbean merchants and Haitian leaders in tension with French metropolitan policy. Opponents of Haitian trade recognized French authority over a rebellious colony; they employed the familiar arguments that trade would be a conduit of racial rebellion throughout the Caribbean. Others quietly enjoyed the economic benefits of trade with Haiti despite French protests. Pre-1825 Haiti showed that it was possible to conduct foreign trade without legal recognition. That trade, in turn, implied a minimal, de facto sovereignty. So what *was* Haitiâs status? Perhaps the only historical actors forced to reconcile this ambiguity were judges in

various maritime courts.

Clandestine trade appears in the archive only when merchants were sentenced for smuggling and others made competing prize claims on the seized vessels. Court rulings had to confront the question of Haitiâs status; the legal variables they considered were intimately connected to larger issues of sovereignty, not just in Haiti, but the Atlantic world. At stake were familiar tensions between metropole and colony but also lateral relationships among islands and their European rulers. In one telling example, French leaders argued with local officials in CuraÃ§ao about whether the latter island could legally trade with Haiti or Britain in the first decade of the nineteenth century. At the time, CuraÃ§aoâs metropolitan ruler, the Netherlands, was technically a French satellite state called the Batavian Republic. CuraÃ§aoâs willingness to trade with Haiti and England amounted to a commercial interaction with the enemies of their colonial powerâs own colonial overlord. This may not have troubled local actors in CuraÃ§ao or the Batavian Republicâs anti-French commercial elite. But it did create complicated questions about French reach, both de jure and de facto, on both sides of the Atlantic ocean.

These court rulings and their legal logics were inconsistent, and Gaffield painstakingly maps this heterogeneous legal terrain across archival collections in the Caribbean, Europe, and the United States. She draws on Lauren Bentonâs theories of sovereignty to posit the multiple types and layers of state power in the early nineteenth-century Atlantic. For Gaffield, the end result of clandestine trade and periodic legal conflicts was something of a stalemate. Although Haiti lacked formal recognition, it staked out a tenuous existence by quietly trading with merchants in the Caribbean, the United States, and England.

Early Haitian leaders recognized this relationship between trade and political power. Gaffield does a tremendous service by analyzing the foreign policy goals of Haitiâs first three leaders and integrating them into discussions of their domestic challenges. For example, Jean Jacques Dessalines, independent Haitiâs first ruler, attempted to establish a trade treaty with Jamaica, then a British colony. His successors Alexandre Petion and Henry Christophe similarly negotiated with different sets of British officials, hoping that a formal trade agreement would help cement their competing claims to rule the territory. These interactions suggest that neither French efforts to curtail trade nor the Atlantic worldâs racial fears were powerful enough to isolate Haiti. But these prohibitions did create some obstacles. For example, Dessalines walked away from treaty negotiations with Jamaican officials when it became clear that an agreement would create a hierarchical relationship and subordinate Haiti. More importantly, Dessalinesâ negotiations with England were derailed when reports of his violence against foreign whites began to circulate in the Atlantic world. In other words, Haitiâs foreign relations were influenced, but not annihilated, by Atlantic-wide fears of racial revolution.

Despite successive efforts by Dessalines, Christophe, and Petion, Haiti never signed a formal trade treaty with England or any British colonies. The same was true for the United States, which briefly banned trade to Haiti between 1806 and 1809, engendering charged debates in the United States about their commercial relationships with the hemisphereâs other independent country. Ultimately, British and US officials realized that a treaty was at best unnecessary and at worst unwise. French prohibitions reduced competition for Haitian trade, which created a shelter for opportunistic US and British merchants. However, Haitiâs poor reputation meant that an official treaty would have been a liability. This situation, Gaffield rightly claims, anticipated British and US commercial dominance in the Latin American countries that gained their independence later in the nineteenth century. From this vantage point, Haiti is less an isolated Caribbean exception than a harbinger of the Latin American future. It is the place where Britain and the United States honed the mechanics and machinations of trade and informal empire in a postcolonial Western Hemisphere.

Although these governments and their merchants were among the major beneficiaries of Haitian trade, Gaffield also reminds readers that the preservation of Haitian independence itself was another effect. In the immediate aftermath of January 1, 1804, there were no guarantees that Haiti would remain independent and most believed it would be recaptured. Gaffield suggests that the Haitian military defenses normally credited with maintaining early independence were working in tandem with economic policies that tacitly proclaimed: I trade, therefore I am. In uncovering Haitiâs early foreign relations, Gaffield sheds light on the economic, political, and judicial processes that made the Atlantic world. Her analytical subtlety in tracing foreign relations and her ability to connect Haiti with multiple territories will appeal to scholars and students outside the specialized fields of Haitian and Caribbean history.