

mensionen von *new materialism* verweisen (S. 342–397, u.a. Konsumverweigerung). Einige Unterpunkte erwartet man in einer Abolitionsgeschichte, aber der Unterpunkt „[K]eine Initiative gegen den deutschen Anteil an Sklavenhandel und Sklaverei“, den ich auch als Forschungsprogramm für exzellent halte, verweist einerseits auf die Probleme von Abolitionsgeschichten überhaupt (siehe oben) und andererseits auf die Tatsache, dass es die Sklaverei- und Sklavenhandelsgeschichten sowie Geschichten von Deutschen als Versklavern sind, die überhaupt erst einmal geschrieben werden müssen. Sie werden, auch und gerade in Mikrogeschichten und *life histories*, die die Autorin anreißt, auch in den globalhistorischen Narrativen ihren Niederschlag finden (müssen).

Um es kurz zu machen: ich halte das Buch für eine sehr gute, auch sehr gut geschriebene Studie, die zum Glück nicht nur eine neue Version europäischer Abolitionsdiskurse fortschreibt. Sehr empfehlenswert.

#### Anmerkungen

- 1 C. Hall/N. Draper/K. McClelland, „Introduction“, in: Hall et al. (Hrsg.), *Legacies of British Slave-ownership. Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain*, Cambridge 2014 (Paperback 2016), S. 1–32, hier S. 17.
- 2 K. Weber/J. Wimpler (Hrsg.), *Globalized Peripheries. Central Europe and the Atlantic World, 1680–1860*, Woodbridge 2020.
- 3 F. Eichmann, *Krieg und Revolution in der Karibik: Die Kleinen Antillen 1789–1815*, Berlin 2019.
- 4 A. von Humboldt, *Diario „Habana 1804“*. El diario original de Humboldt, escrito en La Habana, hrsg. v. M. Zeuske, La Habana 2021.
- 5 A. Reséndez, *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America*, Boston/New York 2016.

**Manuel Barcia: *The Yellow Demon of Fever: Fighting Disease in the Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Slave Trade*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020, 281 pp.**

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*The Yellow Demon of Fever* explores how the nineteenth-century transatlantic slave trade came to represent both a breeding ground for a wide range of tropical diseases, and a laboratory for medical experiments in sanitizing the morbid epidemiological ecosystem thus created across the Atlantic world.

In this book, Manuel Barcia, chair of global history at the University of Leeds, argues with compelling evidence that, following the signing of bilateral treaties for the abolition of the slave trade between Britain and foreign states, the clandestine nature of the trade led to worsening sanitary conditions on board slave ships. With health inspections and sanitary precautions in Africa routinely overlooked by slave traders in their haste to escape from anti-slave trade patrols, and with ships overcrowding with captives in order to maximize profit on the American markets (mostly in Brazil and Cuba), slave vessels and barracoons across the post-1807 Atlantic world became “sites of extreme oppression and repositories of disease” (p. 75) to an unprecedented degree.

Against this backdrop, the *Yellow Demon of Fever* demonstrates how the identifica-

tion and treatment of diseases, the control and immobilization of potential agents of transmission, and the provision of prophylaxis and care all underpinned a “dream of hygienic containment” (p. 59) that served both sanitary and political goals, including appeasing public anxieties about such diseases. It documents with forceful detail the wide range of prophylactic measures, including vaccination, inoculation, ventilation, fumigation, disinfestation and whitewashing (among other strategies) that were mobilized to keep disease infection and transmission under check. In a context in which vectors of infection and transmission remained fiercely debated, diseases spread by the post-1807 transatlantic slave trade also sparked calls to morality, sobriety, and temperance that commonly betrayed underlying political and moral agendas (chapter 1).

The *Yellow Demon of Fever* draws upon a fascinating variety of primary sources produced by anti-slave trade Navy officers, consular agents, Mixed Commissions and British Vice-Admiralty courts, missionaries, and travelers, slave traders and surgeons on board slave ships, as well as municipal and state authorities. The complex evidence left by these different actors led Barcia to all shores of the Atlantic Ocean. Its painstaking collection and creative assembling through different jeux d'échelles constitutes a remarkable achievement in itself. Among the many methodological strengths of this book, one may for instance stress Barcia's use of sources left by slave traffickers and surgeons on board slave vessels that shed light on their dealings with this Atlantic morbid ecosystem, including rare medical instructions and lists of drugs stored in slave ships' medi-

cine chests (chapter 2). Based on these traces, one of the book's main arguments is that health practitioners on board slave ships “often used state-of-the-art remedies and therapies that did not differ much from strategies used by those attempting to bring their slave-trading endeavors to an end” (p. 64).

The book's focus on health practitioners as oft-neglected yet crucial actors in the transatlantic slave trade, especially during its illicit phase, is particularly engaging. Barcia exposes the limits of European medical knowledge against the yellow fever, typhoid fever, malaria, and dysentery (among many other diseases), and the ways by which rudimentary medical facilities, logistical constraints, and scant financial resources frustrated health practitioners' attempts to contain disease (chapters 3 and 4). Against this backdrop, Barcia emphasizes African and African-descended health practitioners' key role in the diffusion of a botanical and medical knowledge that infused Circum-Atlantic medical, public, and academic debates on how to prevent and treat tropical diseases. To be certain, the transatlantic circulation of this corpus of medical and botanic knowledge is far from being a novelty of the nineteenth century, but Barcia skillfully analyzes how such knowledge exchanges played out at a time of profound imperial reconfiguration across the Atlantic world (chapter 5).

*The Yellow Demon of Fever* connects with flourishing historiographies on the circulation of medical and botanical knowledge (e.g. Pablo F. Gómez, Londa Schiebinger, Judith A. Carney and Richard N. Rosomoff[1]), imperial hygiene (e.g. Alison Bashford[2]), and the ambiguities of British global abolitionism (e.g. Maeve

Ryan, Pedraic X. Scanlan[3]). It skillfully interweaves the histories of the nineteenth-century transatlantic slave trade, medicine and medical knowledge, humanitarianism, and European colonialism in Africa and the Americas. It stands out for its valuable incorporation of non-Anglophone historiography, for instance the Brazilian history of medicine represented by Tânia Salgado Pimenta and Flávio Gomes, among others.[4] This book forcefully sheds light on what the emergence of modern epidemiology owes to the multifaceted trial-and-error process of medical experimentation in the “slave-trade contact zones” of the Atlantic world. Furthermore, the *Yellow Demon of Fever* aptly emphasizes the limits and ambiguities of the British anti-slave trade project as humanitarian enterprise. Barcia convincingly argues that the acquisition and exchange of medical knowledge in what he terms “slave-trade contact zones” paved the way to proto-imperial designs over an African “frontier” to be civilized. Barcia’s stimulating argument that medical knowledge born out (the fight against) the transatlantic slave trade provided a crucial underpinning for the consolidation of European colonies and helped unlock areas of the Atlantic world to European imperial designs assuredly deserves further academic scrutiny.

*The Yellow Demon of Fever* provides illuminating insights on French and Portuguese anti-slave trade patrols. More fundamen-

tally, it sheds light on instances of collaboration between the British navy and foreign squadrons in the Atlantic Ocean that illustrate how the eradication of the illicit slave trade dovetailed with multiple European colonialist agendas that – beyond imperial competition – often acted in symbiosis (at least, more so than commonly acknowledged in the historiography). Barcia’s work touches upon other important issues which should elicit further research among historians, for example regarding the mortality of liberated Africans, on which academic knowledge remains fragmentary. Overall, one of the book’s main merits lies in its capacity in prompting series of new questions and in fertilizing intriguing avenues for historical research.

#### Notes

- 1 P. F. Gómez, *The Experiential Caribbean: Creating Knowledge and Healing in the Early Modern Atlantic*, Chapel Hill 2017; L. Schiebinger, *Secret Cures of Slaves: People, Plants, and Medicine in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World*, Stanford 2017; J. A. Carney/R. N. Rosomoff (eds.), *In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa’s Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World*, Berkeley 2009.
- 2 A. Bashford, *Imperial Hygiene: a Critical History of Colonialism, Nationalism, and Public Health*, Basingstoke 2004.
- 3 M. Ryan, *Humanitarian Governance and the Origins of a British Anti-Slavery World System*, New Haven 2021; P. X. Scanlan, *Freedom’s Debtors: British Antislavery in Sierra Leone in the Age of Revolution*, New Haven 2017.
- 4 T. Salgado Pimenta/F. Gomes (Hrsg.), *Escravidão, doenças e práticas de cura no Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro 2016.