

Ideas about Brazilian Abolition and Immigration: A Franco-Brazilian Public Sphere,
1871 – 1889

By

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The story of Brazil's final abolition of slavery in May 1888 encompasses the entire nineteenth century. There is no consensus on when abolitionist sentiment in Brazil became what might be called a movement, but several dates bear mentioning. The first is 1822, when Brazil gained its independence from Portugal in a unique process in the Americas wherein Portuguese royalty – based in Rio de Janeiro since 1808 – led the split with the metropole. The continuation of a European monarchy in Brazil meant, among many other things, that the institution of slavery was not called into question to the degree that it was in Spanish America during the wars for independence. Two treaties signed with Great Britain in 1831 and 1850 were aimed at ending the slave trade to Brazil. Illegal importation and internal slave trading actually increased in the 1830s and 1840s, and only when the British applied military pressure in 1850 did the Brazilian parliament pass a law that achieved a limited success in curtailing slave traffic. The Paraguayan War, fought between Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina, on the one hand, and Paraguay on the other, between 1864 and 1870, served to weaken slavery in Brazil as many slaves were granted their freedom in exchange for military service. The Law of the Free Womb (also known as the Rio Branco Law) passed in the Brazilian parliament on September 28, 1871 and is arguably the most important step that Brazilian lawmakers took towards abolition until the 1888 *Lei Auréa*. The law declared free those children born of a slave mother after the date of the law's passage. The master of the mother had the choice to hand the child over to the care of the state shortly after his or her eighth birthday in exchange for an indemnity, or to keep the child in servitude until his or her twenty-first birthday with no indemnity. In 1884, Ceará became the first Brazilian province to abolish slavery within its borders, and in 1885 the Saraiva-Cotegipe Law declared free those slaves over the age of 60. Most authors agree that widespread, popular abolitionist sentiment was not present in Brazil until the ten years prior to the formal outlawing of slavery in

1888. Although, as mentioned, no one event or exact date has created consensus as to when the movement for total and immediate abolition began in Brazil. The sources examined herein indicate, however, that arguments for the continued viability of the Law of the Free Womb had disappeared from public discussion by late 1884.

Much has been written in both the Brazilian and American academies about the so-called “Free Womb Period” in Brazil. What is understood less well are the ways in which the effects of this law were interpreted and debated at the international level, most importantly in France. Many French intellectuals, abolitionists and other observers (Victor Hugo, Victor Schoelcher, P.S. Lamas, Louis Couty, Felix Ricard, Charles de Tourtelon, Emile Levasseur, and Arthur de Gobineau, to name a few) were intensely interested in Brazil’s attempt at gradual abolition. Their ideas mixed with those of a handful of Brazilian intellectuals (most importantly José do Patricínio, Frederico José de Santa-Anna Nery, André Rebouças, and Eduardo da Silva Prado), all proponents of immediate abolition, who actively sought to garner international support for their cause and recognition on the world stage more generally for Brazil. Their approach included publishing in French periodicals such as *Le Rappel*, *Le Revue Sud-Américaine*, *Le Revue du Monde Latin*, and *Le Revue des Deux-Mondes* and Brazilian periodicals like *A Gazeta da Tarde*, the *Journal do Commercio*, and the French-language *Le Messager du Brésil*, and writing books in French, including one specifically for the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris. Several of these Brazilian intellectuals traveled to or even resided in France to engage popular and elite support to overcome what they felt was an insufficient measure for ending the institution of slavery in Brazil.

This paper will demonstrate that the most common argument laid out both by Brazilian and French authors involved the notion that Brazil would not be able to successfully attract large

numbers of European immigrants as long as a single slave remained in the country. There was universal agreement that Brazil was in desperate need of European labor, and the view that the method employed for ending forced labor by the 1871 law was simply too gradual came to dominate by the mid-1880s. These authors used lofty language to describe how immigrant labor was crucial for harnessing Brazil's natural bounty to claim its place among the world's developed nations, while simultaneously condemning, or in some cases downplaying, the shameful fact of slavery's existence in the South American empire.

The sources analyzed in section three were selected because they allow for an understanding of the ways in which international discussions shifted over the course of the Free Womb Period. In very general terms, the following trajectory can be discerned in these French sources: the early years of the period saw mostly optimism that the gradual approach was a prudent way to avoid social unrest and an interruption of agricultural labor; the debate reached its peak with the abolition of slavery in the Brazilian province of Ceará in 1884 as Brazilian abolitionists advocated that the rest of Brazil should follow that example; beyond 1884, the opinion of those observing Brazil from across the Atlantic shifted decidedly in favor of immediate abolition.

This essay will set out to achieve three interrelated objectives. The first will be to briefly discuss the existing works that treat Franco-Brazilian linkages in the second half of the nineteenth century. The contributions of the authors of these few works are substantial, but the discussion will demonstrate that there is much more work to be done on this understudied international dynamic. The second objective will be to trace a broader historiographical trajectory regarding Brazilian abolition as a whole. A few works were carefully selected from an enormous pool of potential choices in order to show that, amongst many worthy topics that have

been insightfully studied, the public sphere in which French and Brazilian intellectuals debated ideas and shaped policy remains largely unremarked.¹ The third and final objective will be to analyze these ideas and contributions in three key publications from the 1870s and 1880s.

I – Late Nineteenth Century Franco-Brazilian Relations

The scarcity of works on this topic means that the following analysis comes close to being exhaustive. The first work to appear is a largely biographical treatment of Frenchmen who, in one way or another, shaped Brazilian history. *Les Français dans l'histoire du Brésil* was written by Mario de Lima Barbosa, translated by Clément Gazet, and published in both Rio de Janeiro and Paris in 1923. In 484 pages and 95 chapters the reader is given an overview of Brazilian history dating back to early disputes between the French and Portuguese for settlement rights on the newly discovered South American mainland.² The more modern chapters discuss French noblemen such as the Taunays, Auguste de Saint-Hilaire, le comte d'Escragnolle, Charles Ribeyrolles, and the well-known influence of Positivism and the ideas of Auguste Comte in Brazil. The chapters on Brazilian abolition are dedicated mainly to a short and somewhat vitriolic debate between the famous French abolitionist Victor Schoelcher and the French doctor Louis Couty who resided in Brazil in the early 1880s at the time of the debate. The heart of this debate, immediate abolition advocated by Schoelcher versus strict adherence to the Law of the Free Womb supported by Couty, also forms the heart of this essay. The finer points will be analyzed in detail below.

Amongst the few scholarly works that have been published on similar subjects since 1923, three articles must be mentioned. The first, by Isabel DiVanna and published in the journal

¹ Jürgen Habermas. *The structural transformation of the public sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

² Mario de Lima-Barbosa and Clement Gazet, *Les Français dans l'histoire du Brésil* (Rio de Janeiro: F. Briguiet, 1923).

History of European Ideas in 2012, is entitled “Reading Comte across the Atlantic: Intellectual Exchanges between France and Brazil and the Question of Slavery.”³ The subtitle is exactly aligned with the purposes of this essay, but as the title suggests, DiVanna focuses on the intellectual contributions of Auguste Comte, particularly as they manifested themselves through the ideas of the Brazilian doctor Luís Pereira Barreto (1840 – 1923), who received his training in Belgium just as abolitionist sentiment was gaining ground in Brazil. DiVanna formulates the following argument:

Barreto was not a staunch abolitionist – far from it. In fact, he seemed irritated by the ‘metaphysical defenders of social contract’ who converted themselves into abolitionists. These misguided individuals, Barreto claimed, believed that man is good by nature, and that society is an evil. Barreto believed nothing of the sort. As a faithful positivist, he thought that an orderly society could bring further progress, and refused to accept that someone can ‘make’ progress happen rather than encourage it. Revolutions were the result of such attempts to free the people before the society is ready. In his view, abolition would come at the right time, and as long as the middle ground between the metaphysical abolitionists and the conservative farmers was found, progress would occur.⁴

While certainly this description of Barreto and the implications for Positivist thinking on Brazilian abolition are interesting, it will be seen with closer examination that those at the front lines of Brazilian slavery debates almost never invoked Comte’s philosophy directly. DiVanna’s portrait of Barreto situates him near Couty with respect to policy recommendations, yet Couty was staunchly anti-Positivist, never mentioning Comte except to deny any association. Leading abolitionists also refrained from invoking the French philosopher. Thus, while Comte’s ideas bore an enormous influence in Brazilian society in many respects, his impact on the abolition process could be described as minimal.

The next article, “Keeping up Appearances: The International Politics of Slave Trade Abolition in the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World” by Matthew Mason, has a promising title

³ Isabel DiVanna, “Reading Comte across the Atlantic: Intellectual Exchanges between France and Brazil and the Question of Slavery” (*History of European Ideas*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 2012, pp. 452 – 466).

⁴ DiVanna. 462.

and articulates the idea of an “Atlantic moral consensus,” the existence of which reinforces the central argument of this essay.⁵ Mason, however, falls short of probing this idea from a truly international lens, relying heavily on the case of the British. This consensus, he argues,

... in conjunction with British solicitude, induced country after country to incur solemn treaty obligations to cooperate in abolition. In the end representatives of these nations abided by those treaty promises for the same reason they hesitated to make them: their national honor was at stake. They had hesitated to sign partly for fear of losing face before their domestic audiences. But they signed and then abided by the treaties because of the fear of losing national honor before the respectable opinion of the entire Atlantic world.⁶

At no point during the article does Mason demonstrate how other Atlantic world actors were involved in foreign abolition processes. Here, it will be argued that certainly the role of the British in ending slavery in Brazil, especially the overt diplomatic and military pressure that they applied, should not go unexamined, but that, indeed, the more subtle roles of other European powers deserve historical attention as well. Due to limitations of time and space, this study will only take on the French case.

The only author to look specifically at a French periodical published in the 1880s in France that pertains to issues of Brazilian abolition is Marie-José Ferreira dos Santos. Her article “*La Revue du Monde Latin et le Brésil, 1883 – 1896*” introduces many of the actors crucial to this essay and gives an excellent, if brief, overview of the context in which this wide-ranging publication emerged.⁷ *La Revue du Monde Latin* and *La Revue Sud-Américaine* are two among very few French journals with contributing authors paying close attention to developments in the Americas during this time, the former including current events from Western Europe as well.

⁵ Matthew Mason, “Keeping up Appearances: The International Politics of Slave Trade Abolition in the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World” (*The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 66, No. 4, 2009, pp. 809 – 832).

⁶ Mason. 832.

⁷ Marie-José Ferreira dos Santos, “La Revue du Monde Latin et le Brésil, 1883-1896” (*Cahiers du Brésil Contemporain*, n° 23-24, 1994, p. 77 – 92).

Ferreira dos Santos is to be commended for her detailed treatment of the ideas of Fr derico Jos  de Santa-Anna Nery, whom she describes as “le v ritable ambassadeur du Br sil en France” (discussed below), Charles de Tourtoulon, the founder of the *Revue du Monde Latin*, and the comte de Barral, a Brazilian who took over management of the *Revue* in 1885.⁸ She also does an excellent job describing the current state of affairs in France at the time. Particularly illuminating is her depiction of the way French intellectuals sought to promote a “fraternit  latine” that would mask France’s diplomatic isolation in Europe following the Franco-Prussian War.⁹ The analysis that follows in section three represents a deeper look at a fascinating network of French and Brazilian intellectuals first brought to light by Lima Barbosa, Mason, and particularly Ferreira dos Santos.

II – A Historiography of Brazilian Abolition

This section will examine six histories that pertain to Brazil’s abolition process in the second half of the nineteenth century. The number of relevant works produced, especially since 1970, means that six is a tiny fraction of the possible options. These specific works were selected because they allow for a trajectory with certain patterns to come into view. As Jeffrey Needell’s 2006 publication *The Party of Order: The Conservatives, the State, and Slavery in the Brazilian*

⁸ Ferreira dos Santos. 81.

⁹ Ferreira dos Santos. 78 – 79. “Au terme de la guerre franco-prussienne, le trait  de paix sign  le 10 mai 1871 donnait   l’Allemagne l’annexion de l’Alsace-Lorraine et une indemnit  de cinq millions de francs. Il imposait  galement   la France la pr sence d’une arm e d’occupation dans une vingtaine de d partements. La toute nouvelle R publique, proclam e le 4 septembre 1870, dut aussi faire face   la Commune (18 mars-28 mai 1871), insurrection parisienne provoqu e par l’humiliation de la d faite, la mis re du si ge et les d cisions de l’assembl e de Bordeaux qui, sans tenir compte des circonstances, venait d’ordonner le paiement des loyers et des dettes. La Commune fut sauvagement r prim e. C’est donc pour la France, en ces d buts de troisi me R publique, un moment de crise nationale, d’isolement diplomatique, de recherche d’une nouvelle forme d’h g monie culturelle apr s la d faite de 1870, la Commune, les rivalit s coloniales   l’ poque des imp rialismes europ ens et du partage du monde. M me si la R publique s’efforce de d tourner l’attention vers l’expansion coloniale, l’opinion aspire de plus en plus   une revanche sur l’Allemagne. Ce contexte politique donne lieu, chez certains,   des discours convenus sur la fraternit  latine, faisant de la France le «g nie tut laire» de cette fraternit . Ce discours permet de masquer l’isolement diplomatique fran ais en Europe et d’occulter les probl mes internes   travers un apparent mais aussi r el rayonnement culturel international, sorte de contrepoids face   l’Allemagne.”

Monarchy, 1831-1871 treats an earlier period than the others, it will be analyzed first.¹⁰

Thereafter, the organizational schema could be described as “macro – micro.” In other words, two foundational works from North American authors, Robert Conrad’s *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery, 1850-1888* and Robert Toplin’s *The Abolition of Slavery in Brazil*, both published in 1972, will be scrutinized side by side.¹¹ Both works paint the abolition process with broad strokes and allow the reader to glimpse certain priorities that dominated the discussion of slavery’s end, both in Brazil and in the Western world more broadly, in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The second grouping consists of three more recent works, two by Brazilian historians and one by an American, that dramatically shift the conversation towards the initiative taken by non-elite actors, including slaves themselves, to bring about the demise of Brazilian slavery. Sidney Chalhoub, Dale Graden, and Maria Helena Machado assume a level of knowledge from their readership that approximates the macro-level treatments of Conrad and Toplin as they delve into case studies of Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, and São Paulo state, respectively.¹² This essay will demonstrate that the micro-level, detail-oriented research exemplified by Chalhoub, Graden, and Machado has increased our understanding of the degree to which oppressed peoples participated in their own liberation process, finally realized in 1888. What is left unsaid by all of the authors discussed herein, however, is most relevant to our larger discussion. As with Mason’s article above, the influence of Great Britain in Brazil’s internal politics receives far and away the most

¹⁰ Jeffrey D Needell, *The Party of Order: The Conservatives, the State, and Slavery in the Brazilian Monarchy, 1831-1871* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006).

¹¹ Robert Edgar Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery, 1850-1888* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

Robert Brent Toplin, *The Abolition of Slavery in Brazil* (New York: Atheneum, 1972).

¹² Sidney Chalhoub, *Visões da liberdade: uma história das últimas décadas da escravidão na corte* (São Paulo-SP: Companhia das Letras, 1990).

Maria Helena P.T. Machado, *O plano e o pânico: os movimentos sociais na década da abolição* (São Paulo: EDUSP, 2010).

Dale Torston Graden, *From Slavery to Freedom in Brazil: Bahia, 1835-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006).

attention among international actors. France, the United States, and others are merely mentioned in passing, if at all.

As the title suggests, Needell's *The Party of Order: The Conservatives, the State, and Slavery in the Brazilian Monarchy, 1831-1871* is a political and intellectual history focused on debates that took place and alliances that formed within Brazil's ruling elite in the forty years prior to the passage of the Law of the Free Womb in September 1871. Needell builds upon and largely reinterprets the conclusions of such authors as José Murilo de Carvalho, Emília Viotti da Costa, and Roderick Barman, whose works focus on this mid-century period. Needell traces the emergence of the Conservative Party via its roots in the Party of Order from the 1830s and shows how the interests of the land- and slaveholding elites who made up this faction and those of the emperor Dom Pedro II began to diverge around 1850. He argues that Dom Pedro II was able to stifle the influence of the Conservative Party in the 1850s and 1860s, particularly as he laid the groundwork for the gradual abolition law of 1871.

While technically beyond the temporal range of his study, Needell's conclusions regarding developments in the 1870s and 1880s are perhaps more germane to this essay. Needell makes a compelling case that the authoritarian tendencies that manifested themselves repeatedly in Brazil in the twentieth century can be traced back to this period:

After 1871, it seems clear that the contradiction between the representative, constitutional form of monarchy established by the reactionaries in 1837 – 1842 and the reality of imperial intervention and statist authoritarianism... became fatal. In effect, the representative, constitutional government of the Party of Order had come to be seen as an institutional farce... It was this statist, authoritarian legacy, hardly covered by a thin sheet of institutional legitimization, which survived the Monarchy, a somber presence in Brazil's political culture ever since.¹³

Thus, Needell argues, Dom Pedro II's eventual overthrow, intimately linked with the destruction of slavery, did not equate to a triumph of representative politics: the coffee growing elite

¹³ Needell. 321.

continued to dominate through the First Republic, achieving their legitimacy through a drastically limited electoral base; and later, suggests Needell, the return of authoritarianism to Brazil under Vargas and the military regime should be seen as an unenlightened legacy of Dom Pedro II's somewhat more benevolent rule. In addition to more common criticisms that the Law of the Free Womb did little or nothing for those who were enslaved at the time of its passage or that it was weakly enforced or too gradual a solution, Needell cites 1871 as the pivotal moment for cementing authoritarianism as a crucial component of Brazil's modern political culture.

Where Needell's priority is unquestionably politics and the debates that occurred within parliament and other elite circles (with slavery's fate as a central topic), the remaining works take on Brazilian slavery and abolition head-on. Needell also draws his study to a close where most of the other authors begin. In the early works of Robert Conrad and Robert Toplin it is possible to discern certain scholarly priorities regarding the study of slavery that have decreased in prominence since the early 1970s. The most obvious, especially in Toplin's *The Abolition of Slavery in Brazil*, is a strong desire to compare the abolition of slavery in Brazil to its counterpart process in the United States. Toplin was writing very shortly after the U.S. civil rights movement and was most likely responding to a perceived necessity to justify his choice of topic to a domestic readership. While a justification of this sort would no longer be necessary, Toplin is correct in asserting that the slave regime in Brazil was similarly brutal to the slave regime in the United States. According to Toplin, this locates him amongst a then-contemporary strain of Brazilian and North American authors who were struggling to dispel the notion that Brazilian slaveholders were remarkably paternalistic and even progressive in the manner in which they treated their slaves. He cites the work of Octávio Ianni, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Florestan

Fernandes, and Emília Viotti da Costa on the Brazilian side, and Stanley Stein and Richard Graham on the American.

Toplin builds on the work of these prominent intellectuals to craft his overall thesis. Their argument, and his, that Brazilian slavery was characterized throughout its long history by violent masters and deplorable conditions also suggests that the process of abolition was not as peaceful as most historians had acknowledged up to that point. Despite the fact that no bloody civil war accompanied its demise, Toplin argues that “[m]ore than anything else, the environment of tension and upheaval explains the decision in favor of immediate abolition in May of 1888.”¹⁴ In other words, abolitionist activity, which included violence and the threat of violence, from all sectors of society served to terminate an institution that remained economically viable until the very end. Or, as he insists, “[t]he institution was not dying except in the minds of the people.”¹⁵ If the explanation that invokes paternalism and progressivism on behalf of the slaveholders is too simplistic (or simply incorrect) on one side of the issue, Toplin counters with an equally simplistic explanation in the opposite direction. His framing of the issue displays a well-rounded grasp of the major developments in the 1870s and 1880s, but his decision to grant the abolitionist camp’s most aggressive groups all of the transformative power should be considered at best an exaggeration.

Like Toplin, Conrad rejects the idea that Brazil’s coffee growing elites deserve credit for leading Brazil’s abolitionist movement in his 1972 contribution *The Abolition of Slavery in Brazil*. He instead focuses on several groups that had previously evaded scholarly attention. First, he notes that representatives of Northeastern planters tended to argue in favor of abolition in the parliamentary debates that took place immediately before the passage of two gradual

¹⁴ Toplin. xi.

¹⁵ Toplin. xvii.

emancipation laws, the Law of the Free Womb and the Saraiva-Cotegipe Law (1870 – 1871 & 1884 – 1885), because a series of economic crises in that region led to a massive transfer of slave labor to the coffee-growing Southeast and the consequent predominance of wage labor in the Northeast. Conrad also considers the isolation faced by Brazil after emancipation in the United States' South in 1865, and more rapid strides toward the same goal in Cuba during the period. Finally, Conrad briefly describes the emergence of urban abolition clubs in the early 1880s simultaneous with parliamentary reformers beginning to speak out more vocally in favor of immediate freedom for all of Brazil's slaves. It was only after 1886, Conrad concludes, that popular and parliamentary unrest reached a crescendo; the resistance from Southeastern planters finally broke; and they shifted their political weight in support of immediate abolition. Thus, Conrad is to be commended for his balanced, if somewhat superficial, depiction of Brazil's abolition process.

The next three works to be considered are Sidney Chalhoub's 1990 monograph *Visões da liberdade: uma história das últimas décadas da escravidão na corte*, Dale Graden's 2006 *From Slavery to Freedom in Brazil: Bahia, 1835-1900*, and Maria Helena Machado's 2010 *O plano e o pânico: os movimentos sociais na década da abolição*. Both Chalhoub and Machado take an in depth look at local abolitionist activity in the decade leading up to abolition in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, respectively, and Graden looks at a longer swath of time in Bahia, using the 1835 Malê Revolt as his starting point and taking the reader up to the start of the twentieth century. These three pieces of scholarship should be considered emblematic of the high quality work being done on Brazilian slavery in recent years. All three authors avoid the simplistic explanations for slavery's demise characteristic of Toplin, and earlier authors, and they depend

on extensive archival research to bring previously unknown or forgotten elements of the struggle for freedom to light.

Chalhoub bases his analysis on a close reading of 137 criminal proceeding records from the archive of the “Primeiro Tribunal do Júri” between 1870 and 1888, and 78 civil suits of slaves pursuing liberty from their masters during the same period held in the National Archive. Chalhoub describes these latter cases as “incredible processes, with dense and engaging protagonists who obliged me to tell their story.”¹⁶ His stated goal is to approximate an understanding of exactly what the concept of liberty meant to slaves and *libertos* (freedmen) in order to better comprehend how oppressed peoples contributed to the struggle for total emancipation.¹⁷ Methodologically, Chalhoub embeds his work in a rich tradition of historians and anthropologists who have sought to recreate the ethos of a particular time and place and to thereby avoid simplistic value judgments based on modern sensibilities. Not least among the scholars he cites are Clifford Geertz, E.P. Thompson, Keith Thomas, Natalie Zemon Davis, Sidney Mintz, Carlo Ginsburg, and Robert Darnton, all towering figures in their own right and particularly influential in the Brazilian academy. Overall, Chalhoub’s contribution is to show not only the role of slaves and *libertos* in shaping the abolition movement, but also, he successfully argues that the Law of the Free Womb was the formal recognition of certain liberties that slaves had secured in practice over many years leading up to that event.¹⁸ Considering that Chalhoub began his research for this book in 1983, he certainly deserves credit for his pioneering research

¹⁶ Chalhoub. 22. “... processos incríveis, protagonizados por personagens densas e envolventes, e que me obrigaram a contar a sua história.”

¹⁷ Chalhoub. 22. – “... a tentativa de compreensão do significado da liberdade para escravos e libertos”

¹⁸ Chalhoub. 30. – “... a lei do ventre livre representou o reconhecimento legal de uma série de direitos que os escravos vinham adquirindo pelo costume, e a aceitação de alguns dos objetivos das lutas dos negros. Na realidade, é possível interpretar a lei de 28 de setembro, entre outras coisas, como exemplo de uma lei cujas disposições mais essenciais foram ‘arrancadas’ pelos escravos às classes proprietárias.”

regarding the specific ways in which slaves and other oppressed peoples fought for their own liberty.

Both Dale Graden and Maria Helena Machado, then, owe a debt to Chalhoub. Indeed, it is clear from the beginning of *From Slavery to Freedom in Brazil: Bahia, 1835-1900* that Graden will be focusing on the role of slave resistance in Bahia, a province that he insists is understudied yet as important as the Southeast for understanding the broader patterns of Brazilian abolition. In referring to the contributions of authors like Chalhoub, Graden argues that “[a]bolition has been shown to be a process far more complex than merely the handing down of laws by enlightened leaders and parliaments or progressive sentiments inexorably linked to a widening system of international capitalism.”¹⁹ Graden organizes his study around three key dates (1850 – 51, 1871, 1888) and a final section entitled “Freedom” that looks at the period from 1888 until 1900. At each point, he attempts to inject slave resistance as a driving factor in propelling large legal shifts towards freedom. His argument is most compelling when he is able to show evidence of the ways in which slaves facilitated the flow of information that helped their cause, whether it was in communication with liberated Africans, foreign traders, or white and mixed-race abolitionists.

The recent publication (2010) of Maria Helena Machado’s work on the state of São Paulo, *O plano e o pânico: os movimentos sociais na década da abolição*, indicates that historians are still determined to analyze and understand the ways in which resistance by marginalized groups shaped a complex and critical process in Brazil’s history. Machado’s study reflects extensive work in a large number of local archives throughout the state with particular emphasis on organized resistance in the region of Campinas. She succeeds in her mission to write “a study of the social forces and tensions from the point of view of the oppressed” and

¹⁹ Graden. xvii.

recovers evidence of programs of agrarian reform and social integration.²⁰ These programs were created in direct response, she argues, to organized resistance by slaves in the state of São Paulo; the gains, however, were quickly reversed during the First Republic and consequently forgotten until this book's publication. Machado, like Graden, is also interested in the channels used to convey critical information in the decade leading up to 1888, particularly in how this information travelled back and forth between city and countryside and what role slaves, immigrants, and urban workers played in its transmission. Her own words neatly summarize her mission, one that we have seen successfully carried out by Chalhoub and Graden as well: "Neglected by the historiography, the social agitation that characterized the decade of the 1880s was forgotten. The lack of documental research related to the least visible aspects of this campaign is one of the relevant causes of this tendency, that here I attempt to partially recover."²¹ In spite of the scarcity of documents all three of the above authors have succeeded in extracting maximum meaning from what does remain. They are a fundamental part of a cohort of historians who have not necessarily downplayed the role of politicians and elite landowners in securing liberty on May 13, 1888, but who have complicated what was certainly a simplistic understanding of Brazil's abolition process prior to the 1980s. On the other hand, they represent the dominant tendency in the historiography to focus on the minutia of domestic events at the state and local levels. The international level continues to go unexamined.

Considering the current state of the "macro" scholarship truly brings the contributions of the historians discussed above into full relief. Toplin, Conrad and Needell all deserve credit for asking the right questions about the motivations and actions of Brazil's elite sectors. Needell

²⁰ Machado. 9. "... um trabalho sobre as forças e tensões sociais do ponto de vista dos oprimidos."

²¹ Machado. 18. "Desprezada pela historiografia, a fermentação social que caracterizou a década de 1880 foi esquecida. A carência de pesquisas documentais relativas aos aspectos menos visíveis desta campanha é uma das causas relevantes desta tendência, que aqui procuro parcialmente sanar."

even goes so far as to assure his reader that he is aware of the importance of historically marginalized groups, even if they rarely factor into his analysis.²² Chalhoub, Graden, and Machado, however, deserve the highest praise for committing serious time and energy to discovering shreds of information that point to a more complex story that would otherwise be lost to history. The work of dozens of historians like them throughout the Americas has made it possible for authors like Christopher Schmidt-Nowara and Seymour Drescher to recently publish two synthetic works on the history of abolition in Latin America and the Atlantic World.²³ The sections that they each dedicate to Brazil are rich with the type of information that demonstrates a close reading of works like the final three discussed above. Their treatments of events in Brazil are excellent and they have clearly benefitted from the aforementioned authors. Drescher and Schmidt-Nowara are quick to discuss ideas about liberation that reverberated around the Atlantic World, particularly in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with the Haitian Revolution and the Spanish American wars for independence, but they seem to miss the continued importance of this phenomenon in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Drescher's ideas on this matter are worth examining in more detail. First he argues, "There seems to be little evidence that groups or geographical regions active in abolitionist movements elsewhere in the Atlantic world played a prominent role in pressing for abolitionist initiatives during the generation after the closure of the Brazilian slave trade in 1850."²⁴ And yet he begins to contradict himself later on the same page:

Brazil aspired to be an outpost of European culture and civilization in a nation with the highest proportion of population of African descent on the mainland of the New World. The emperor's whole political position derived from a constitution modeled on the

²² Needell. 4 – 5.

²³ Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, *Slavery, Freedom, and Abolition in Latin America and the Atlantic World* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011).

²⁴ Drescher. 353 – 354.

French monarchy. His cultural capital was Paris. He was more sensitive to a strongly worded petition for abolition emanating from a French abolitionist committee in July 1866 than to the steady stream of denunciations coming from a few Brazilian poets and journalists in the 1860s.²⁵

As this passage demonstrates, the following section will show that there *is* in fact evidence for strong French abolitionist influence in Brazil. It begins in 1848 when the French government passed a law ending slavery in its overseas colonies; it includes Drescher's example from the 1860s; and it intensifies in the 1870s and especially the early 1880s. It can only be hoped that the nuance characteristic of these most recent works continues to be a priority for those interested in the history of slavery and abolition. The history should be complicated even further, however, as a more diverse range of international pressures are taken into account.

III – A Franco-Brazilian Exchange

III(a) – L. Michaux-Bellaire

The short book *Considérations sur l'abolition de l'esclavage et sur la colonisation au Brésil* provides an excellent starting point both because of its publication date, 1876, still relatively close to the passing of the 1871 law and because its author, L. Michaux-Bellaire, raises most of the topics of discussion that will be debated in France over the next twelve years.²⁶ The title page describes Michaux-Bellaire as a “Doctor of Law, Lawyer to the Council of State and to the Court of Appeals,” and he apparently published two other works in his lifetime on different topics, a short pamphlet almost immediately after *Considerations* and another book in 1892.²⁷ His contribution is peculiar in that it stands as an isolated example of French commentary on the Brazilian abolition process in the 1870s, and in spite of its seeming importance, the work is never cited once the debate gains momentum in the early 1880s. In addition, Michaux-Bellaire himself

²⁵ Drescher. 354 – 355.

²⁶ L. Michaux-Bellaire, *Considérations sur l'abolition de l'esclavage et sur la colonisation au Brésil* (Paris: Guillaumin, 1876).

²⁷ “Docteur en Droit, Avocat au Conseil d'État et à la Cour de Cassation”

never enters again into the conversation. His short book of 69 pages, however, will serve here to introduce the controversies that Brazil's effort at gradual abolition engendered abroad.

Michaux-Bellaire constructs an argument in his work that turns out to be a fairly accurate prediction of Brazil's future. His contention is that the Law of the Free Womb is a necessary step towards abolition that will soften what would be, in the case of immediate abolition, harsh labor shocks for the economy, and a general malaise, or even deviance, amongst the newly liberated slaves. His real prescience enters into play, however, when he asserts "Brazil will go beyond the law of 1871. The day will come, and undoubtedly it is near, when slavery will be completely abolished in the empire."²⁸ He never dares to say exactly how near, but this passage gives the impression that Michaux-Bellaire was intimately acquainted with Brazil's social crisis. He concludes that total abolition will be carried out "without danger, without commotion, because the law that we are examining has wisely prepared the way for the transition."²⁹

To understand how Michaux-Bellaire arrives at this positive interpretation of the 1871 law, some of the finer points of his argument must be understood. Of primary importance are his relatively progressive ideas contradicting the commonly held view that African descended peoples were naturally inferior. In spite of his belief that he had "not thought to treat the question, so long controversial, of the purported inferiority of the black race," his opinions on this topic prove central to his argument.³⁰ The previous statement and the following are hidden in one of the book's few footnotes: "The vices that one justly assigns to the blacks seem to us to be the result exclusively of the burdens of the servile regime, of the lack of instruction, in a word, of

²⁸ Michaux-Bellaire. 40. "... le Brésil ira plus loin que la loi de 1871. Un jour viendra, et sans doute il est proche, où l'esclavage sera complètement aboli dans l'empire."

²⁹ Michaux-Bellaire. 40. "... sans danger, sans commotion, parce que la loi que nous examinons a sagement préparé la transition."

³⁰ Michaux-Bellaire. 38. "Nous n'avons pas la pensée de traiter la question, si longtemps controversée, de l'infériorité prétendue de la race nègre."

the brutality of slavery. By suppressing the cause, one will make the effects disappear.”³¹ It is precisely because Michaux-Bellaire believes that former slaves can *slowly* adapt to free society and become productive citizens that he supports the gradual abolition imposed in 1871. If his ideas about the long term potential of a freed slave to take on characteristics necessary for survival in a free society can be described as optimistic, he is equally pessimistic about the short term prospects: “Similar to those who exit a dark night, they will be blinded by the light. In liberty, they will only see their rights, they will not suspect that they have obligations.”³² He goes on to say, somewhat confusingly, that the enslaved have “never had a care, no preoccupation of their existence,”³³ his point being that the former slaves will be unable to provide food and shelter for themselves when they have grown accustomed to receiving these essentials from their masters. Illnesses, old age, and poverty are on Michaux-Bellaire’s list of things that slaves never had to consider under servitude.³⁴ He is not overly sympathetic to the plight of Brazilian slaves, but his overall idea, that transitioning into the structures of a free society would be jarring for those unaccustomed to it, is certainly valid.

Michaux-Bellaire continues along this same line of reasoning by turning his attention to the families of former slaves. The family, “the source of the strongest joys and the most poignant pains,” will confer “a new dignity” on the former slave who must learn “to bear at once the honor and the burden.”³⁵ According to Michaux-Bellaire, the former slave will not only have to provide for himself, but he will have to provide for his wife and children, which leads him to

³¹ Michaux-Bellaire. 38. “Les vices que l’on reproche justement aux noirs nous paraissent résulter exclusivement des inconvénients de régime servile, du défaut d’instruction, en un mot, de l’abrutissement résultant de l’esclavage. En supprimant la cause, on fera disparaître les effets.”

³² Michaux-Bellaire. 36. “Semblables à ceux qui sortent d’une nuit profonde, ils sont ébluis par la lumière. Dans la liberté ils ne voient que les droits, ils ne soupçonnent pas les devoirs.”

³³ Michaux-Bellaire. 36. “... ils n’ont eu jusqu’alors nul souci, nulle préoccupation de leur existence.”

³⁴ Michaux-Bellaire. 36. “... il faut devenir prévoyant, songer à la maladie, à la vieillesse, échapper à la misère, la pire de toutes les conseillères.”

³⁵ Michaux-Bellaire. 36. “... la source des joies les plus vives comme des plus poignantes douleurs... cette dignité nouvelle... supporter à la fois l’honneur et le fardeau.”

exclaim “[w]hat manner of worries and anxiety unknown until now!”³⁶ These thoughts on the family set up the central argument of Michaux-Bellaire’s book:

How, in the state of moral inferiority to which he [the former slave] has been restricted, will he be able to direct his spirit towards these great problems? Is it not necessary for his instruction and his education to develop? And could not one say that in the well-understood interest of the slave himself, a progressive emancipation is preferable to a too-sudden call for liberty?

His last sentence here is critical as it sets Michaux-Bellaire apart from the remaining authors to be discussed. Clearly, Michaux-Bellaire considers the general idea of abolition to be in the best interest of Brazilian society broadly speaking, and perhaps he considers the abolition of slavery in the Americas to be important for promoting humanitarian ideals in the Western world, but he frames his preference for a gradual abolition around the interests of the slaves themselves.

Rarely, as we will see, do the actual slaves enter into the debate. Others will point to the financial difficulties inflicted on the masters by abolition, or some of the broader societal concerns mentioned above. The discussions after *Considerations* about how to support the slaves’ entry into society are few and far between.

Further drawing on his fears regarding a too-sudden transition to freedom, Michaux-Bellaire predicts that social unrest would ensue, an argument echoed five years later by Louis Couty in his book *Esclavage au Brésil*.³⁷ Michaux-Bellaire insists that public order has frequently been “menaced by these hordes of rapidly enfranchised slaves; formidable at once for their number, their physical force and their lack of intellectual development.”³⁸ At this point, his argument starts to blend these social issues with economic ones. First, he points out the obvious

³⁶ Michaux-Bellaire. 37. “Que de préoccupations et d’inquiétudes jusque-là inconnues!”

³⁷ Michaux-Bellaire. 37. “Comment, dans l’état d’infériorité morale où il avait été maintenu, aurait-il pu diriger sons esprit vers ces grands problèmes? Ne faut-il pas que son instruction et son éducation se fassent et se développent? Et ne peut-on pas dire que, dans l’intérêt bien entendu de l’esclave lui-même, une émancipation progressive est préférable à un appel trop brusque à la liberté?”

³⁸ Michaux-Bellaire. 37. “... menacé par ces hordes d’esclaves subitement affranchis, redoutables à la fois par leur nombre, leur force physique et leur peu de développement intellectuel...”

that immediate abolition would replace coerced labor with free labor, allowing “he who so desires” to work.³⁹ Next, he insists that free blacks would not only agitate or rebel, but that “experience proves that once emancipated, the black remains unproductive.”⁴⁰ Liberty, according to Michaux-Bellaire, equates in the mind of a free black “at least at the beginning” to “the right to do nothing; he gives in to his faults and vices, idleness, drunkenness, [and] debauchery.”⁴¹ This is a carefully crafted statement by the author because it allows him to stand by his insistence that former slaves can become productive eventually and to simultaneously insist that emancipation must be carried out by degrees. The country will suffer, he says, when “agriculture is deserted, [and] workshops are abandoned... with a lack of arms, everything stops.”⁴² And here he emphasizes his main point: “free labor is far superior to slave labor; but there still must be time to organize, which is impossible when the emancipation is not gradual.”⁴³ These lines written by Michaux-Bellaire set up his final thoughts which encapsulate a common theme: slave labor was insufficient to cultivate all of Brazil’s natural riches (coffee being the most productive crop), and abolition will produce an even greater labor shortage unless Brazil can successfully compete with its South American neighbor, Argentina, to attract white European settlement. The question of whether the Brazilian government can succeed in attracting especially Italians, Portuguese, Spaniards, French, and Germans while slavery still exists is now of central importance. Michaux-Bellaire and Louis Couty both think that slavery’s gradual elimination is

³⁹ Michaux-Bellaire. 37. “Travail qui veut.”

⁴⁰ Michaux-Bellaire. 37. “... l’expérience prouve qu’à peine émancipé, le noir reste oisif.”

⁴¹ Michaux-Bellaire. 37 – 38. “... au moins dans les premiers temps, le droit de ne rien faire; il s’adonne à ses défauts et à ses vices, la paresse, l’ivrognerie, la débauche.”

⁴² Michaux-Bellaire. 38. “Et cependant le pays souffre; l’agriculture est abandonnée, les ateliers sont déserts, les intérêts généraux du pays sont compromis. Faute de bras, tout s’arrête.”

⁴³ Michaux-Bellaire. 38. “Nous reconnaissons assurément que le travail libre est de beaucoup supérieur au travail esclave; mais encore faut-il avoir le temps de l’organiser, ce qui est impossible quand l’émancipation n’est pas graduelle.”

compatible with a steady increase in migratory flows. Others, whose viewpoints come to dominate by the mid-1880s, disagree entirely.

III(b) – Le Revue Sud-Américaine

Le Revue sud-américaine; publication hebdomadaire politique, économique, financière et commerciale des pays latins de l'Amérique, as the title suggests, was a weekly French periodical published in Paris between 1882 and 1890 that reported the political, economic, financial and commercial news of Latin America.⁴⁴ The editors, Pedro S. Lamas and Louis Guilaine, included news from across Central and South America but showed a clear bias towards events in Argentina and Brazil. The entirety has been preserved on microfilm and organized in eight volumes. Using the indices, every article listed under the keyword “esclave” was examined along with the majority of those articles pertaining to “immigration,” and “emigration.” Since each volume contains between 500 and 600 pages, the articles discussed below should not be considered exhaustive of the treatment of Brazilian abolition in this periodical, but certainly a sufficient number of articles are included to give an idea of the changing ways in which the French press framed the issue in the 1880s.

The following analysis will be divided between those articles containing an argument based principally on domestic economic imperatives for abolishing slavery, and those articles wherein the abolition of slavery is tied directly to the need to attract European immigration, which one might describe as an international economic argument. Throughout the Free Womb Period everyone writing in France about the abolition of slavery in Brazil agrees that the institution must end; the question being debated is *how* it will end, or what is the best method to bring about liberty for the slave.

⁴⁴ Pedro S Lamas and Louis Guilaine, *Revue sud-américaine; publication hebdomadaire politique, économique, financière et commerciale des pays latins de l'Amérique* (Paris: La "Revue", 1882).

As these articles will demonstrate, the opinion of Michaux-Bellaire and Louis Couty that a gradual emancipation is preferable falls out of favor around 1884. As mentioned previously, 1884 is also the year when the Brazilian province of Ceará liberated all slaves within its borders. This event spurred a public controversy between Louis Couty and the famous Brazilian abolitionist José do Patricínio which played itself out in the pages of two Rio de Janeiro-based newspapers: Patricínio's *Gazeta da Tarde* and the French-language *Le Messager du Brésil*. Couty's passing later that year and Patricínio's vigorous effort to garner support for his abolitionist efforts in France (including a trip to Paris in March and April of 1884) were undoubtedly two important factors in the shift away from French ideas about the continued viability of gradual emancipation.

Domestic Economic Concerns

An article published in late 1882 from the first volume provides a glimpse into the early ideology of the periodical. Its praise for the Law of the Free Womb is qualified in the following way: "The law of September 28, 1871 produces its natural consequences; although it does not act with the desirable speed, it is not incompatible with the prudent idea to manage the transition that we all desire so forcefully, that of slave labor for free labor."⁴⁵ Thus, they describe the law as having a positive effect but not advancing towards the goal of complete liberation quickly enough. This viewpoint is similar to that of Michaux-Bellaire who imagined an end to slavery that would naturally come about before the last slave born before 1871 passed away, well into the twentieth century. Both Michaux-Bellaire and the author of this article in *Le Revue Sud-Américaine* are optimistic about the results of the September 1871 law, yet vague in exactly what they think will happen to bring about slavery's total abolition. Not until 1884, shortly before the

⁴⁵ Lamas & Guilaine. Volume 1. page 368. "La loi du 28 Septembre 1871 produit ses conséquences naturelles, même si elle n'agit pas avec la vitesse désirable, il n'est pas incompatible avec l'idée prudente de gérer la transition que nous désirons tous avec tant de force, celle du travail servile pour le travail libre."

passing of the Saraiva-Cotegipe Law, does an article in *Le Revue Sud-Américaine* mention an alternative to the long process of liberty being granted at birth and slavery ending only at death.⁴⁶ In discussing the part of the Saraiva proposal that called for an annual depreciation of a slave's value over a thirty year period, the author of this article predicts, "adhering strictly to the terms of the project definitely approved, slavery will have totally disappeared before thirty years, but we believe that this disappearance will take place well before, and that the slave owners will prefer to emancipate, rather than wait for the total depreciation."⁴⁷ Here again, observers seem to be staking the liberty of individual slaves on the good nature or economic reasoning of that slave's master. The author continues by praising the political maneuvering of João Maurício Wanderley, the baron of Cotegipe, saying "he has confronted an irritating question of social order that will resolve itself normally and regularly."⁴⁸ This article marks the last time *Le Revue Sud-Américaine* produced an article on the topic that does not advocate immediate legal abolition.

International Economic Concerns – Immigration

The earliest articles in *Le Revue Sud-Américaine* to mention the possibility of European immigration lament the twin facts of Brazil's small population and untapped natural resources. These calls for settlement are relatively straightforward; it is not until 1884 that the contributors begin to connect Brazil's lackluster record of immigrant attraction, especially in comparison to

⁴⁶ The Saraiva-Cotegipe Law, promulgated on September 28, 1885 granted liberty to those slaves over 65 years of age and also assigned monetary values to slaves of different age brackets. Masters were required to register their slaves with the government and were granted the option of receiving an indemnity for liberating a slave. The law stipulated the depreciation that would occur year-to-year on the value of a slave with 100% devaluation being reached in 30 years. Female slaves were assigned values at 75% the rate for male slaves.

⁴⁷ Lamas & Guilaine. Volume 4. Pages 155 – 156. "... en s'en tenant strictement aux termes du projet définitivement voté, l'esclavage aura totalement disparu avant treize ans; mais nous croyons que cette disparition aura lieu bien avant, et que les propriétaires d'esclaves préféreront émanciper ceux-ci, plutôt que d'attendre la dépréciation totale..."

⁴⁸ Lamas & Guilaine. Volume 4. Pages 155 – 156. "Il a apaisé une irritante question d'ordre social qui va se résoudre normalement et régulièrement..."

Argentina, with the presence of slavery in the empire. The following example from 1882 is typical of the argument and type of language employed until the middle of the decade:

...it is not enough to be rich for the sake of being rich. It is not enough to have a marvelously fertile soil, mineral beds, mines, golden riverbeds, [and] precious rocks... buried in the depths of the earth. It will be essential to cultivate the riches... and to harvest the agricultural products whose sale will permit the farmer to obtain a net benefit on global markets where they will compete with similar products from other countries where the farmer is honored...it is not enough that a country contains natural riches, it must know how to organize its labor in a manner that the natural or manufactured products do not get to market burdened with labor costs capable of absorbing nearly the totality of the selling price... Here is a country of vast territory that possesses incalculable riches. But it only possesses twelve million inhabitants, including slaves and the indigenous; and in order to attain the same population as France, proportional to its territory, Brazil would have to currently possess 700 million souls, or double the population of Europe!⁴⁹

While never explicitly mentioning immigration as a solution to this problem, the implication is clear: Brazil must modernize its economy if immigrants are to be expected to come to its shores in more substantial numbers. The most important step to “organize its labor,” again only implicit in this passage, would be to abolish slavery.

Two short articles also published in the early part of the decade serve to highlight the way in which Brazilian slavery and its implications for free laborers were interpreted in Europe. The first article is not concerned specifically with Brazil but instead with the ways in which overpopulation in Europe could be used to the advantage of the countries of the Old World. The author of the first article, published in early 1882, makes the claim that it is equally important for

⁴⁹ Lamas & Guilaine. Volume 1. Page 10. “... il ne suffit pas d’être riche pour se dire riche. Il ne suffit pas d’avoir un sol merveilleusement fertile, des filons métallifères, des mines, des sables d’or dans ses rivières, [et] des pierres précieuses... enfouis dans les entrailles de la terre. Il faudrait cultiver les richesses... et en tirer les produits agricoles dont la vente rémunératrice permettrait à l’agriculteur d’obtenir un bénéfice net sur les marchés du monde où ils iront faire concurrence aux produits similaires des autres pays où l’agriculture est en honneur... ce n’est pas assez qu’un pays renferme des richesses naturelles; il lui faut savoir organiser le travail de façon que les produits en nature ou manufacturés n’arrivent pas sur le marché surchargés de frais de main-d’œuvre capables d’absorber la presque totalité du prix de vente... Voilà un pays d’une étendue énorme et que renferme des richesses incalculables. Mais il ne possède que 12 millions d’habitants, y compris les esclaves et les indigènes; et pour atteindre à la même population que la France, proportionnellement à son étendue, le Brésil devrait compter à l’heure actuelle 700 millions d’âmes, c’est-à-dire plus du double de la population de l’Europe!”

colonial powers to send emigrants to the “relatively deserted countries of Latin America” as it is for them to populate their overseas colonies.⁵⁰ The author of this piece no doubt imagined remittances or other forms of capital flowing back across the Atlantic from the lands where “the conditions of the soil and the liberal institutions promise the foreigner a brilliant and prosperous future.”⁵¹ It is critical to note, however, that this author almost certainly did not have Brazil in mind when he wrote these words. In a later issue, the editors at *Le Revue Sud-Américaine* reprinted a short article from the French-language Brazilian newspaper *Etoile du Sud* based in Rio de Janeiro. The article attempts to discourage potential migrants in France from coming to Brazil because of the possibility that the migrants will face slave-like working conditions. The author of this article uses more direct language perhaps in an attempt to drastically impact the reader’s decision making process: “we have need of free arms for the work, but we do not... desire to replace African slaves with European slaves, nor black slaves with white slaves.”⁵² The article finishes on this dire note: “we believe it is necessary, for our own interests and for the honor of Brazil, to dissuade our compatriots to come to a country where the free man of Europe risks being assimilated into slavery.”⁵³ Certainly there was no precedence for this argument and the view of the author could be described as extreme, but on the other hand, there were disadvantages to entering the labor force of a country where the vast majority of manual labor was forced. Regardless of how many readers this article reached, the presence of slaves in Brazil doubtlessly made it a less appealing destination for the European multitudes than other countries in the Americas.

⁵⁰ Lamas & Guilaine. Volume 1. Page 11. “... les pays relativement déserts de l’Amérique latine.”

⁵¹ Lamas & Guilaine. Volume 1. Page 11. “... dont les conditions du sol et les institutions libérales promettent à l’étranger un avenir brillant et prospère.”

⁵² Lamas & Guilaine. Volume 4. Page 428. “Nous avons besoin de bras libres pour le travail, mais nous ne voulons ni ne désirons remplacer les esclaves africains par des Européens esclaves, ni les esclaves noirs par les esclaves blancs.”

⁵³ Lamas & Guilaine. Volume 4. Page 428. “Nous croirons devoir, dans l’intérêt même et pour l’honneur du Brésil, dissuader nos compatriotes de venir dans un pays où l’homme libre d’Europe risque d’être assimilé à l’esclave.”

Other arguments about the need for the Brazilian government to adopt measures to attract foreign labor did not focus on slavery. In an 1884 piece in the *Revue Sud-Américaine* provides commentary on a recent article published in one of the oldest Latin American newspapers still in circulation, the *Journal do Commercio* from Rio de Janeiro. The *Revue* reports that that the author of the *Journal do Commercio* article argued that Brazilian immigration was stagnant and even seemed to “lose ground year by year.”⁵⁴ The *Revue* supports the idea that immigration, “the important element of populating and the powerful factor in national production and public wealth,” is weak in Brazil because of “the instability of the measures applied and the absence of a serious and durable system that favors it and regulates it.”⁵⁵ If Brazil cannot create a more serious infrastructure to support immigrants with their transportation costs, housing, and employment, the piece concludes, it “will remain stationary and without progress for a long time to come.”⁵⁶ The diversity of arguments about why Brazil was unable to attract the numbers it desired from Europe suggests that the issue increased in importance in the mid-1880s as the demise of slavery drew near.

One final article to treat the abolition and immigration issues simultaneously examines the different regional manifestations of slavery across Brazil and the effects this will have on the ability to attract white European workers. This piece, published in early 1886, is the latest yet to be examined, meaning that the implications of the Saraiva-Cotegipe law are clearly taken into account. The article begins with a table estimating the size of the slave population in each Brazilian province, and pegs the ratio of slaves to citizens at one to fourteen. The author then

⁵⁴ Lamas & Guilaine. Volume 4. Page 88. “... le Brésil reste à peu près stationnaire en matière d’immigration, ... semble ne gagner du terrain pendant une année que pour le perdre l’année suivante.”

⁵⁵ Lamas & Guilaine. Volume 4. Page 88. “...cet important élément de peuplement et ce puissant facteur de la production nationale et de la richesse publique... Quant à l’immigration, la cause principale qui empêche son développement se trouve dans l’instabilité des mesures qu’on lui applique et l’absence d’un système des sérieux et durable qui la favorise et la réglement.”

⁵⁶ Lamas & Guilaine. Volume 4. Page 88. “... elle restera stationnaire et sans progrès d’ici à bien longtemps.”

goes on to make predictions about how and when slavery will disappear from the different regions. His ideas for most of Brazil are relatively simplistic.⁵⁷ In his comparison of the provinces of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, however, he arrives at some interesting conclusions. According to this author, Rio was cursed by its climate, which did “not lend itself to the sojourn of emigrants coming from temperate zones.”⁵⁸ He goes on to insist that the value of São Paulo’s 121,000 slaves will decrease as immigrants continued to settle there instead of Rio.⁵⁹ The inverse, of course, is that Rio’s approximately 240,000 slaves will maintain a steady value, lacking any alternative to their labor. “There [in Rio],” claims the author of piece, “the slave will disappear by death or by revolt; in São Paulo, liberty will come to replace him.”⁶⁰ In concluding, the author makes some bold predictions. He insists that this liberty will be attained via “emancipation funds, individual liberations, runaways, and death,” and that “one can calculate that in five years slavery will have disappeared from the province of São Paulo... with legislative measures, without insurrection, without interruption of work.”⁶¹ Here is evidence that as late as 1886 many interested parties were still advocating slavery’s abolition on a piecemeal, state-by-

⁵⁷ Lamas & Guilaine. Volume 5. Page 423. “In the north, the diminution of the value of the slave will facilitate abolition. In three years the provinces of Maranhão and Pernambuco will possess a very limited number of slaves.”

“In the center, the northernmost regions will continue to erect an obstacle to the substitution of the slave laborer for the *colon* (immigrant laborer) with onerous contracts.”

“The conditions are identical for the province of Rio de Janeiro, where slavery will remain in a permanent state...”

“In the other provinces of the South, Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina and Paraná the problem could be resolved in four years.”

⁵⁸ Lamas & Guilaine. Volume 5. Page 423. “Les conditions sont identiques pour la province de Rio de Janeiro, où l’esclavage restera à l’état permanent. Le climat de cette province ne se prête pas au séjour d’émigrants venant des zones tempérés.”

⁵⁹ Lamas & Guilaine. Volume 5. Page 423. “One can be assured that between 1887 and 1891 the average immigration to São Paulo will elevate to 16,000 people per year. We will thus have 80,000 *colons* who will make the price of the slave diminish by 45 percent.”

⁶⁰ Lamas & Guilaine. Volume 5. Page 423. “Là, l’esclave disparaîtra par la mort ou par la révolte, ici, à S. Paulo, la liberté viendra le remplacer.”

⁶¹ Lamas & Guilaine. Volume 5. Page 423. “Grâce au fonds d’émancipation, aux libérations individuelles, à la fuite et par suite des décès, on peut calculer que dans 5 années l’esclavage aura disparu de la province de Saô Paulo. On y arrivera avec des mesures législatives, sans insurrection, sans interruption des travaux.”

state or region-by-region basis. Other articles from this period in *Le Revue Sud-Américaine* show that realistic expectations for national abolition legislation were just taking shape around 1886.

*III(c) – Frederico José de Santa-Anna Nery*⁶²

Le Brésil en 1889 was the culmination of a project directed by Frederico José de Santa-Anna Nery with the intention of transmitting a thorough, accurate, and appealing depiction of Brazil at the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris.⁶³ Nery and his co-director Eduardo da Silva Prado made a call for submissions to “those Brazilians residing in Paris... and to those Frenchmen with relations to the affairs of Brazil,” and the resulting group formed the *Comité Franco-Brésilien*, which officially came into being on March 14, 1888.⁶⁴ Nery himself is the author of seven of the twenty-five chapters in the 700-page volume, which cover topics as diverse as art, immigration, military and industrial strength, and public education, among many others. The two essays most germane to this project are Nery’s chapter on forced and free labor, “Travail servile et travail libre,” and a chapter entitled “Immigration” by da Silva Prado. There is also a small section entitled “Immigration” within the chapter “Les zones agricoles” by the

⁶² More on Nery from *Le Revue Sud-Américaine*:

Lamas & Guilaine. Volume 5, page 423. “Our collaborator M. de Santa Anna Nery just arrived in Pará where he received the most enthusiastic welcome. Members of the delegations of the press, of the chambers of commerce, and of the provincial Assembly greeted him as he disembarked and the crowd cheered. Our colleague has proposed to lead a series of conferences with the purpose of extending commercial relations between France and the great South American empire. He is also actively engaged in preparations for 1889, and everything leads to believe that thanks to his efforts the north of Brazil will play an important role in the Exposition.”

“M. de Santa Anna Nery is certainly one of the most well-informed propagandists that Brazil possesses, and one to whom it owes so much.”

“A distinguished writer, he has redacted several very remarkable works such as the *Civilisation dans l’Amazone, Comoens et son siècle, le Pays du café, la question du café*, etc. He has collaborated with many periodicals of the French press like *la Liberté, la Patrie, le Figaro, la République française*, etc. Everywhere and always, he has directed his efforts towards the goal of making the immense empire of Brazil known to the old world.”

⁶³ Frederico José de Santa-Anna Nery, *Le Brésil en 1889* (Paris: C. Delagrave, 1889).

⁶⁴ Nery. (no page number). “MM. Eduardo da Silva Prado et F.J. de Santa Anna Nery firent appel aux Brésiliens résidant à Paris, et M.E. Lourdelet, Président de la Chambre syndicale des négociants-commissionnaires et E. Pector, président de la Chambre syndicale des négociants-exportateurs, aux Français en relations d’affaires avec le Brésil.”

Brazilian engineer and abolitionist André Rebouças. The focus here will be on “Travail servile et travail libre.”

Nery begins “Travail servile et travail libre” with a brief reflection on the humanitarian triumph embodied by Brazil’s very recent total abolition of slavery, but then turns almost immediately to his main argument: that the total abolition of slavery in Brazil represents a critical opportunity for growing the national economy by means of the labor of European immigrants. He refers to Golden Law or *Lei Áurea* of May 13, 1888 as the cause of “a revolution in the conditions of national work” and highly praises the imperial government of Dom Pedro II for having begun the process of encouraging immigration from Europe during the last two decades to replace slave labor.⁶⁵ Nery insists that there is an inverse correlation between the existence of slavery and the desire of Europeans to migrate to Brazil, and he backs up this assertion with statistics that show that migrant streams went from a trickle before 1871, increased steadily during the following two decades when the Law of the Free Womb was in effect, and achieved record numbers in 1888 when the demise of slavery was imminent. Since the sentiments generated by the Law of the Free Womb are crucial to the argument of this essay, it is essential that Nery’s opinion on the matter is understood. It is clear from his writings that he saw the 1871 law as ushering in an important period of transition from forced to free labor, yet wholly insufficient to achieve the task in a reasonable amount of time. Without the law, however, Nery suggests that moving from a slave society to total abolition in a matter of days would have caused too “radical an economic perturbation.”⁶⁶ This view overlaps in part with that of Louis Couty, who argued earlier in the decade that abolishing slavery entirely would unleash social chaos and possibly even revolution and that the 1871 law was the only sustainable path to

⁶⁵ Nery. 206. “... une révolution dans les conditions du travail national.”

⁶⁶ Nery. 206. “... une perturbation économique aussi radicale.”

liberation. The main difference between Couty and Nery, however, is that Nery saw the seventeen years between 1871 and 1888 as adequate in preparing Brazil for an economy based on wage labor, and his tone in this essay is decidedly optimistic, aligning him more closely with Michaux-Bellaire.

It becomes clear in the following section that Nery is projecting this optimism in part to encourage further migration to Brazil from Europe. This source should be read overall as a form of advertising that the *Comité Franco-Brésilien* put forth to the people of Europe about the excellent state of affairs in the South American empire, particularly with regards to agreeable working conditions and a high demand for labor. It is no coincidence that the work was published in French and that the editors pushed to release the book just before the 1889 Exposition Universelle, a World's Fair. Nery only briefly mentions Portuguese migration to Brazil, perhaps because the colonial link makes that stream too obvious for investigation, and focuses instead on Italian migration. He uses the Italians to drive home three points. First, he states that the number of arrivals had increased dramatically in recent years (11,000 total between 1855 and 1882, and 164,000 since 1882, with over 100,000 in 1888 alone); second, emigration was actually good for the home country as demonstrated by Italy's annual receipt of 10 million lire in remittances over the course of the 1880s; and third, Italians tended to prosper in Brazil and therefore to remain there, in contrast to their countrymen in the United States and Argentina (between 1883 and 1886, 39,000 Italians returned to Italy from Argentina, 14,000 from the United States, and 994 from Brazil – according to Nery).

Nery's final substantive point helps to illustrate his opinion that the Law of the Free Womb allowed for a more gradual transition away from slavery, but that by the end of the 1880s

total abolition had become an “urgent reform.”⁶⁷ He argues, citing statistics from coffee production, that overall agricultural output increased dramatically during the Free Womb era and offers the following explanation:

...either this progress was realized by freed slaves and by *ingenuos*, still attached to the soil, and, in this case, their work was more fruitful than when they were enslaved, and we have done well to emancipate them; or these marvelous results were obtained by the gradual intervention of the free and remunerated work of immigrants, and thus it is proved that the national agriculture can henceforth, without too much suffering, transition from forced labor.⁶⁸

Nery’s statement is “either/or” but it could be argued that he credits both categories of wageworkers – freed slaves and immigrants – with more productive labor than enslaved workers. In suggesting that freed slaves are capable of productive labor, Nery explicitly disagrees with Couty’s ideas on the matter laid out some five years earlier. Finally, Nery acknowledges that some former slave owners may suffer from the loss of their slaves without indemnity, but insists that these “partial disasters” are “promptly rectified by the individual and largely compensated by the increase of general well being,” a well being that will stem from the investment of European capital and the flow of European workers.⁶⁹ This essay by Nery is remarkable in that it entails both the humanitarian rhetoric typical of abolitionists but also a nuanced economic argument backed by thorough statistics.

IV – Conclusion

Nery’s piece along with *Considerations* and the articles of *Le Revue Sud-Américaine* demonstrate that by the middle of the 1880s those who would support further adherence to the

⁶⁷ Nery. 210. “... une réforme devenue urgente.”

⁶⁸ Nery. 210. “... ou ces progrès ont été réalisés par des esclaves affranchis et par des *ingenuos*, demeurés attachés au sol, et, en ce cas, leur travail a été plus fructueux que lorsqu’ils étaient asservis, et l’on a bien fait de les émanciper; ou ces merveilleux résultats ont été obtenus par l’intervention graduelle du travail libre et rémunéré des immigrants, et alors il est prouvé que l’agriculture nationale peut se passer dès maintenant, sans trop de souffrances, du travail servile.”

⁶⁹ Nery. 210. “... ces désastres partiels, promptement réparés pour l’individu et largement compensés par l’augmentation du bien-être général.”

Law of the Free Womb and gradual abolition were largely excluded from the debate, particularly at the international level. These sources also have a larger implication. They demonstrate that the Atlantic world paradigm can be fruitfully applied to nineteenth-century processes of abolition, especially post-1850, where few historians have ventured. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, similar evidence could be marshaled to support this hypothesis in the Spanish Caribbean or the Southern United States. As the article by Mason shows, the intersection of “Atlantic world” and “abolition” has traditionally resulted in a focus on the important actions of Great Britain. This essay has attempted to show that the flow of ideas across the Atlantic, particularly between Paris and Rio de Janeiro, fits well with Habermas’ notion of a public sphere, where intellectual debate impacts popular sentiment and government action. If considered in this light, the sources that shed light on the ideas of Nery, Michaux-Bellaire and many of their countrymen deserve further historical analysis.

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