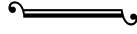


Introduction

Scott Eastman and Stephen Jacobson



Many who pick up this book will have known Christopher Schmidt-Nowara (1966–2015) as a colleague, mentor, or friend. Others will have read his work and may have come into contact with him at conferences, lectures, classes, or other academic settings. For these readers, the volume will serve as a notice or even as a catharsis—to remind us of his early death and formidable intellectual legacy, and of our obligation to reread his books and articles so that they may continue to inform the fields of Atlantic and Iberian history. At the same time, the editors and contributors also seek to reach another audience. We hope that new and young readers will discover his work, take up his suggestions, and come away with fresh ideas. One of Schmidt-Nowara’s greatest attributes was to suggest paths forward for future researchers and to proffer new historical methods to interrogate older claims. Hopefully, all readers will be pleasantly surprised with the breadth of his oeuvre addressed in this collection. Even those most familiar with his work should discover writings and interpretations of which they were unaware. If there is one lesson that we the editors have learned, it is that Christopher addressed a multiplicity of publics, and he had an unmatched ability not only to blaze trails but also to cross fields and integrate academics of various disciplines and area specialties into a common cause.

The common cause was to rethink Spain’s Atlantic empire in the nineteenth century. He embarked upon this project in the 1990s when this area of study was still the subject of speculation and generalization if not indifference. Within the field of modern European and world history, Spain’s nineteenth-century empire—centered on Cuban slavery and sugar—rarely figured in accounts. Many scholars considered it an anachronism, a holdover from previous European possessions in the Caribbean that had abolished slavery and had abandoned the plantation system. Within the field of modern Spanish history, the empire

also received uneven treatment. While historians paid due attention to the Latin American Wars of Independence (1810–1825), they cast a blind eye to the fate of the remaining colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. Within general and even specialist histories, the overseas territories generally reappeared in 1898, when the “loss of the colonies” reverberated in domestic politics and caused a crisis of conscience in intellectual life. Within the field of Cuban and Puerto Rican history, scholars had shown only a vague interest in exploring shared colonial and metropolitan spaces where politics and identity were negotiated and disputed. All in all, the Spanish empire had been deemed essential to the early modern period but peripheral to the modern one.

No historian is alone when pursuing such ambitious endeavors, and Christopher Schmidt-Nowara was a dynamic participant in a worldwide academic network of scholars who were undertaking parallel projects in diverse but interrelated historical contexts. He was eager to imbibe the teachings of his mentors and older colleagues, including Rebecca Scott, Seymour Drescher, Josep Maria Fradera, Ann Stoler, Fred Cooper, and Dale Tomich. He participated in an “imperial turn” that demonstrated how a renewed focus on empire could complement colonial studies without returning to the older and stigmatized imperial histories of pith helmets, jodhpurs, and khaki shorts.¹ He collaborated with scholars who showed how “second slaveries” in the southern United States, Brazil, and Cuba were not remnants from the past, but technologically advanced systems of production in a world economy driven by industrialization.² In Spain, various historians also turned their attention to Spain’s “second empire” in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines in the nineteenth century.³ Within this milieu Schmidt-Nowara brilliantly melded his diverse interests together into a coherent academic project and, by so doing, integrated Spain and its empire into Atlantic and world history. In collected volumes of comparative history, he was the scholar to whom many turned to contribute the requisite chapter on Spanish slavery, abolition, and empire in the liberal age.⁴ In the words of his colleague Pamela Radcliff, he truly was one of “our community’s most eminent scholars.”⁵

Above all, Christopher Schmidt-Nowara was a historian of slavery, abolition, and antislavery. His first book, *Empire and Antislavery: Spain, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, 1833–1874* (1999), remains the best study of abolitionism (and anti-abolitionism) in Spain and its empire.⁶ He demonstrated how the fear of “race war” conditioned opinions on both sides of the Atlantic and explored the moral, political, and economic strands of the abolitionist movement. The chief innovation of the book was its transnational (or in this case, transcolonial) focus, a methodology that

would characterize his work for the following two decades. Before his publication, few historians were aware that the Spanish Abolitionist Society originated in Puerto Rico, and no one had understood how the abolitionist experiment in Puerto Rico in 1873 came to reverberate from Havana to Madrid. More than a decade following the publication of the monograph, Schmidt-Nowara revisited his core subjects in a well-received volume coedited with Josep Maria Fradera, *Slavery and Antislavery in Spain's Atlantic Empire* (2013), published by Berghahn Books.⁷ Among its many virtues, the book demonstrated just how far the field had evolved since the 1990s.

Even though Christopher Schmidt-Nowara was best known as a historian of slavery and abolition, his second monograph addressed a different theme and reached an even wider audience. *The Conquest of History: Spanish Colonialism and National Histories in the Nineteenth Century* (2006) appealed not only to historians of modern Spain and the Antilles but it also received a great deal of attention from Latin Americanists, early modernists, and literary scholars of colonial and postcolonial studies.⁸ By focusing on symbols, monuments, commemorations, and exhibitions, it made contributions to diverse fields, from the history of nationalism to historiography.⁹ Like his previous work, Schmidt-Nowara stressed the importance of transatlantic dialogues and clashes in imperial spaces. He focused on how “history” was used and even “ransacked” in metropolitan, colonial, and postcolonial contexts. In the nineteenth century, intellectuals, aficionados, and nationalists on both sides of the Atlantic strove to commemorate and come to terms with figures such as Christopher Columbus, Ponce de León, and Bartolomé de Las Casas. Cubans and Puerto Ricans revived the precolonial history of lost Caribbean cultures as an antidote to the racially complicated world of immigration and slavery. Many contributors to the present volume have indeed chosen to focus on this book and its companion, *Interpreting Spanish Colonialism: Empires, Nations, and Legends* (2005), coedited with John M. Nieto-Phillips.¹⁰

Because Schmidt-Nowara had seen that some innovations in the field of Spanish and Caribbean history had not reached broader academic publics, many of his articles included a historiographical component. To be sure, Spanish history has for centuries been burdened by the legacy of the Black Legend—the idea that Spaniards were racially inferior to northern Europeans due to their mixed blood and Moorish past. Accordingly, Spain’s African and “Mohammedan” legacy had been blamed for the despotic Catholicism of the Inquisition, the cruel repression of Protestants in Holland, and the bellicose evangelizing of Indians in the New World. In the nineteenth century, the “Black

Legend” had been replaced by what Richard Kagan has labeled as “Prescott’s Paradigm,” named after the Harvard historian William H. Prescott, who had analyzed the Spanish conquest of Latin America.¹¹ Prescott had reworked similar generalizations in order to explain the different institutional developments of North and South America. In the twentieth century, the racial elements of the Black Legend began to fade away, but the notion that Spain was different from the rest of Europe persisted. This difference also had a romantic component, popularized by Hispanic Orientalists like Byron and Bizet. To borrow a popular expression used by tourism promoters in the 1960s, many still believed that “Spain was different.”

In much of his academic work, Schmidt-Nowara attempted to show how the “Black Legend” was a product of historical processes and of Anglo-American and continental political traditions that had depicted Spain as an empire in decline and a state that “failed” to develop in consonance with the rest of Europe. He took a similar critical approach to the “White Legend”—the myth that Spanish colonialism was less damaging and oppressive than its Anglo-Saxon counterpart given that its conquest was supposedly less genocidal, its slave-system presumably less exploitative and more open to manumission, and its colonial administration more tolerant of racial mixing (*mestizaje*).¹² In 2004, he and Monica Burguera coedited a special edition for *Social History*, entitled “Backwardness and Its Discontents.”¹³ In the introduction, they observed that “backwardness” was the latest incarnation of the Black Legend and Prescott’s Paradigm. The postwar poverty and isolation of Spain during the Francoist dictatorship (1939–75) had given rise to the myth of a “backward” country that struggled to keep pace with “modern” democracies. Extended to his own research, this notion posited that a supposedly illiberal country had sustained slavery and the slave trade for decades after Great Britain and France abolished them.

When Christopher Schmidt-Nowara had come on the scene, at least two or three generations of scholars had already helped rid Spanish history of both romantic and pejorative stereotypes. Most famously, Richard Herr, Raymond Carr, Joan Connelly Ullman, and Nicolás Sánchez Albornoz examined the Spanish Enlightenment, liberalism, anticlericalism, and industrialization as imbricated phenomena that developed in tandem with trends and ideologies across other European countries.¹⁴ Later, the historian Adrian Shubert (featured in the volume) performed a similar task with respect to Spanish society in his *Social History of Spain*.¹⁵ Schmidt-Nowara added the final piece of the puzzle by showing that Spain’s nineteenth-century empire was intertwined with similar empires in the age of abolition, free trade,

proconsular despotism, and second slavery.¹⁶ This was not to say that Spain and its empire did not have its “peculiarities,” but only that such peculiarities needed to be understood in their proper historical and geographical contexts rather than be subjected to a measuring stick of modernity. Although Chris contributed to many comparative volumes, he preferred a transnational approach. As he noted on the second page of his first book, he sought to explain “how transatlantic political struggles” affected both colony and metropole. His goal, he continued, was to show “how the actions and ideas of locally situated historical actors intersected with and transformed the broader political economy of slavery and colonialism in the Atlantic world.”¹⁷

Colleague, Teacher, and Friend

One might assume that a scholar who was so intent on questioning assumptions and embracing novel approaches might have had to fight many intellectual battles. However, Schmidt-Nowara showed great respect for academic traditions and trenchant scholarship. For the most part, his publications did not digress into extended debates, nor did he single out scholars to criticize. To take an illustrative example, Schmidt-Nowara frequently cited Raymond Carr’s magisterial work *Spain 1808–1975*. Even though Carr had brilliantly demonstrated the similarities and differences between Spanish and British liberalism, Carr barely mentioned slavery, abolitionism, and empire. Rather than pointing out this glaring omission, Schmidt-Nowara let his work do the talking by tacitly showing the necessity to reconsider early approaches and adopt different emphases and methods. Another example of this was a cogent essay from 2010, in which he explained how George Reid Andrews had come to reexamine questions of popular participation in revolutions and independence movements, especially by enslaved people. Social and cultural history, he wrote, had offered a generation of historians the opportunity to establish a new paradigm in place of earlier structural explanations of continuity between the late colonial and early national periods in the Americas.¹⁸ With dependency theory and Marxism losing explanatory power, a consensus had emerged that early nineteenth-century politics had indeed, in many cases, fostered revolutionary ideals and practices.¹⁹ He elegantly quoted Reid Andrews at different points in his academic career to highlight the significant historiographical disruptions that had undermined older theoretical constructs.

To cite a good example of just how insightful even passing references in a Schmidt-Nowara publication are, it is worth taking a look

at Luis A. Figueroa's book on sugar and slavery in Puerto Rico. Toward the end of Chapter 4, Figueroa notes that Schmidt-Nowara had written about the presence of black men and women in abolitionist rallies in Madrid and Seville in the 1870s.²⁰ Figueroa concludes that the events represented a microcosm of the entire Atlantic system and speculates as to who these Afro-Hispanics might have been. Although we likely never will know, he insists that their very presence must have spoken loudly, showing for all to see the transatlantic ties and solidarity of the movement. Throughout the present volume, many of the contributors make similar comments, noting how many of Chris's brilliant observations, casual asides, and suggestions for further research avenues piqued their curiosity and in fact inspired their research.

In her chapter in this volume, Elena Schneider has poignantly observed that historians—who strive toward “objectivity”—are reluctant to talk about how personality affects scholarship. However, as she notes, it is worth breaking down this taboo with regard to Christopher Schmidt-Nowara. Like many scholars in the field, the contributors and editors got to know Chris in the archives, libraries, and cafés of Madrid and at annual meetings of the Society for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies (now the Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies or the ASPHS) or the Latin American Studies Association (LASA). There, he would chat about the discipline of history, sports, or novels. The dates of the ASPHS would often coincide with the NCAA men's basketball tournament, and Chris could be found in the hotel bar watching his graduate alma mater, Michigan. Still, his greatest passion was history, and he would eagerly take time out to urge fellow Hispanists and Latin Americanists to adopt a more nuanced and globalized history of Spain and the Antilles. Younger contributors came to know him as a senior scholar in the field but would meet him at the same places and chat about similar themes. All came to hold him in the highest regard not just as a mentor and colleague but also as a friend and teacher. Many of the contributors to the present volume include personal anecdotes to show how his insights and generosity helped inspire their work.

His sociability made all of us better and more collaborative scholars. In one of the many tributes written in memoriam, Josep Maria Fradera has observed that Christopher's greatest attribute was empathy—the quality most important for any historian.²¹ He understood the preoccupations and pressures of others, be they historical actors, colleagues, or students. In this volume, students and younger colleagues—now accomplished scholars—comment on his qualities as a mentor. Louie Dean Valencia and Anne Eller share how Chris person-

ally helped them, through his open-mindedness, unconventionality, encouragement, and careful, critical readings, with their dissertations. He influenced many from afar. Emily Berquist Soule stresses that her entire “career as a historian and an academic” changed after reading Schmidt-Nowara’s *Empire and Antislavery* for a graduate seminar.

Many of the contributors and readers of this volume have used Professor Schmidt-Nowara’s books in their graduate seminars, but it must be stressed that he loved and thrived at undergraduate teaching. He dedicated one of his most ambitious books to his students—*Slavery, Freedom, and Abolition in Latin America and the Atlantic World* (2011). Although the book is perfect for undergraduate surveys, it also stimulates seasoned scholars to rethink earlier constructions of slavery, freedom, and abolition. It brilliantly succeeds in inserting the diversity of experiences in the Iberian world into discussions that have often been dominated by historians of French and British plantation societies. Combining his knowledge of the Lusitanian and Hispanic Atlantic worlds with the latest research on entangled histories, he demonstrated a tremendous ability to tie together disparate stories and blend the political, social, and cultural into one seamless, lucid narrative.

Many of the “great scholars” of the field of imperial history have lauded Schmidt-Nowara’s achievements. If his life had not been tragically cut short, there is no doubt that he would also have come to be included in their ranks. These scholars have not only relied on his work but have also frequently thanked him for helping them integrate the Spanish empire into broader narratives. The foremost expert on British abolition, Seymour Drescher writes of his “deep appreciation” to Chris and his colleague Josep Maria Fradera “for providing me with the opportunity to participate in analyzing the process of Spanish imperial abolition in comparative perspective.”²² Frederick Cooper has spoken of his former graduate students, including Schmidt-Nowara and Ada Ferrer, as “influential contributors” to the field of colonial history “in its key stage of development.”²³

Chris had extended contact with the editors and the contributors to the volume, as well as numerous other colleagues, right up to his passing in 2015. One of the editors, Scott Eastman, met him for a panel on the Age of Revolution for a conference in North Carolina that year. While the presentation did not draw a large crowd, his discussion of the intriguing figure of George Dawson Flinter impressed those who did attend, showing the breadth and depth of his understanding of the dissolution of the Spanish Monarchy within a transnational framework.²⁴ He always presented cutting-edge scholarship in terms of method and subject, whether the backdrop was nineteenth-century

Cuba or British-occupied Curaçao. In the summer of 2015, Scott had made plans to meet him in Madrid to chat about life and to discuss some recent promising findings in the foreign affairs archive outside the Puerta de Sol. Scott had received an encouraging email from him:

Hi Scott: cool. I'm sure that material will be rich. I might be in Madrid for a couple of days in June. Will keep you posted. Chris

Later that month, Christopher sent a number of emails out to colleagues explaining that he was ill and could not travel from Paris to Madrid where he was to attend a conference. Shortly thereafter, at the age of forty-eight, he tragically passed away in Paris.

Organization of the Volume

The book begins with Christopher Schmidt-Nowara's life and work, then moves to chapters inspired by his oeuvre, including his posthumous publications. Stephen Jacobson sets the stage with a biographical exploration of Chris's intellectual roots and how they affected his later work. He includes his formative family background, his upbringing in New Mexico, his doctoral studies at the University of Michigan, and his travels in Spain and Latin America. Specialists in modern Spanish history, Adrian Shubert and Joshua Goode tackle his major publications, beginning with his most cited work, *Empire and Antislavery*, then moving to the one that reached the most diverse audience, *The Conquest of History*. Shubert reminds us that Schmidt-Nowara truly was ahead of his time, anticipating some of the historiographical turns that have defined the field in recent decades. His essay in the collective volume *Más se perdió en Cuba* is a testament to this and to the fact that he already had made a name for himself in Spanish academic circles in the late 1990s.²⁵ Goode argues that Chris truly practiced what he preached in terms of reading sources against the grain. He explains how *Interpreting Spanish Colonialism: Empires, Nations, and Legends* brought Spanish colonial studies squarely into larger conversations on imperial histories. Dalia Antonia Caraballo Muller illustrates the continued resonance of the revisionist *Conquest of History* with regards to the origins and trajectory of nineteenth-century Hispanism.

The ensuing chapters consist of thematic essays, organized chronologically. Emily Berquist Soule asserts that Chris inserted himself into debates with significant ramifications when he criticized Frank Tannenbaum for minimizing the cruelties and brutality of slavery in

Latin America. Drawing on his intervention, she expands on the role of the Catholic Church and the Jesuits in particular vis-à-vis slavery and antislavery during the early modern period. Elena Schneider assesses Spain's transformation into a slave-trading empire in the late-eighteenth century, an era marked by the Bourbon Reforms. While many historians point to this period as a watershed in Spanish imperial history, reformist measures tend to be placed within the framework of a growing reaction against the metropole, the beginnings of separatist sentiments, and the coming of free trade. Anne Eller discusses how Spain's "special laws" and imperial policy, described by Schmidt-Nowara, explain the broader Caribbean context for her study on the Spanish reoccupation of Santo Domingo (1861–65). Lisa Surwillo contributes a fascinating essay on the influence in Spain of the translated versions of *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Harriet Beecher Stowe's defense of her use of fiction to depict the evils of slavery. As Surwillo shows, the Spanish "translation" removed all mention of Spain, but Stowe's passionate denunciation of slavery and accompanying Spanish illustrations nonetheless reverberated among readers inclined to abolitionism. In the last chapter of the second section, Valencia-García shows how Schmidt-Nowara's analytical framework has become foundational for students of twentieth-century Spain and Francoism as well as for those who work on earlier periods.

The last two chapters concern his posthumous work. In 2018, Louisiana State University Press published *A Spanish Prisoner in the Ruins of Napoleon's Empire: The Diary of Fernando Blanco White's Flight to Freedom* with an introduction by Christopher Schmidt-Nowara. Chris had unearthed and transcribed the diary and had nearly finished the introduction; he was in the process of hunting down accompanying illustrations. His graduate student, Matthew Ehrlich, and his colleague from Tufts University, Beatriz Manz, finished these tasks with elegance and precision and dedicated much time and effort to get the book into print. The diary and the introduction are important contributions to the history of the Napoleonic Wars and the Iberian world in general, as well as a welcome addition to the growing literature on captives and expatriates. This publication was to be the first installment in his new research project on Spanish prisoners of war and captives on both sides of the Atlantic during the age of revolution. In the present volume, the literary scholar Joselyn Almeida-Beveridge analyzes *Flight to Freedom* with respect to the genre of travel and captivity narratives. She supplements the text by discussing Fernando's letters, including those to his more famous brother, Joseph Blanco White, the Spanish abolitionist.²⁶ In the ensuing chapter, Juan Luis Simal reframes the

study of prisoners of war and refugees during the early nineteenth century, taking the diary of Fernando Blanco White as a case in point. Our volume concludes with a translated transcription of an interview conducted by Vicent Sanz Rozalén in 2014 for the radio program *Hablemos de Historia*. We also include a bibliography of Schmidt-Nowara's works.

In one of the various tributes published, Mónica Burguera emphasized that Christopher Schmidt-Nowara was ahead of his time. Beginning with his early work, he pointed to “truly transnational conceptions of national narratives, while placing race at the heart of that mutual historical interconnectedness between the metropole and its Antillean colonies.”²⁷ Thus this book series, which has been designed to address transnational issues and place Spanish and Latin American histories into a globalized historical framework, serves as a perfect home for a book honoring this memory. Professor Schmidt-Nowara served on the board of advisers for this series and had a strong influence on its creation and its historiographical direction. We all are in his debt for his collaboration and commitment to disciplined, stimulating, and path-breaking scholarship.

Scott Eastman is professor of transnational history at Creighton University. He is the author of *A Missionary Nation: Race, Religion, and Spain's Age of Liberal Imperialism, 1841–1881* (University of Nebraska Press, 2021) and *Preaching Spanish Nationalism Across the Hispanic Atlantic, 1759–1823* (LSU Press, 2012). He coedited *The Rise of Constitutional Government in the Iberian Atlantic World: The Impact of the Cádiz Constitution of 1812* (University of Alabama Press, 2015). He has published articles in *European History Quarterly* and *Historia y Política*, among other journals, and has received major funding from the Latin American Studies Association and the Fulbright Commission. A member of the Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies since 2003, he served as the president of the organization from 2018–20. His research interests focus on the intersection of identity, colonialism, and culture across the nineteenth-century Hispanic Atlantic World.

Stephen Jacobson is associate professor of history and the former director of the Institut d'Història Jaume Vicens Vives at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona). He is the author of *Catalonia's Advocates: Lawyers, Society, and Politics in Barcelona, 1859–1900* (University of North Carolina Press, 2009) and the coeditor of *Endless Empire: Spain's Retreat, Europe's Eclipse, America's Decline* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2012).

Notes

1. Schmidt-Nowara, "After 'Spain': A Dialogue with Josep M. Fradera"; and Jacobson, "Empire: Rises, Falls, Returns, and Divergences."
2. The trailblazer in this regard was Dale Tomich who in 1988 published the influential "The Second Slavery." For Schmidt-Nowara's take, see "A Second Slavery?"
3. Notable early works in this regard include: Roldán de Montaud, *La hacienda en Cuba*; Maluquer de Motes, *Nación e inmigración*; Naranjo Orovio and García González, *Racismo e inmigración*; and Fradera, *Gobernar colonias*.
4. See, for example, Schmidt-Nowara, "Continuity and Crisis"; "Slavery, Antislavery, and Christianity"; "Spain and the Politics of the Second Slavery"; and "From Aggression to Crisis."
5. Radcliff, *Modern Spain*, xvii.
6. Schmidt-Nowara, *Empire and Antislavery*.
7. Fradera and Schmidt-Nowara, *Slavery and Antislavery*.
8. See, for example, the reviews of the *Conquest of History*, authored by Fritze, Kaptcia, and Unzueta.
9. Lisa Surwillo has pointed out his contribution to cultural studies in her *Monsters by Trade*.
10. Schmidt-Nowara and Nieto-Phillips, *Interpreting Spanish Colonialism*.
11. Richard Kagan, "Prescott's Paradigm."
12. Schmidt-Nowara, "'This Rotting Corpse'"; and "Specter of Las Casas," in *Conquest of History*, 130–60.
13. Schmidt-Nowara and Burguera, "Backwardness and Its Discontents."
14. Herr, *Eighteenth-Century Revolution*; Carr, *Spain, 1808–1939*; Ullman, *Tragic Week*; and Sánchez Albornoz, *Economic Modernization*.
15. Shubert, *Social History*.
16. In this respect, his research dovetailed with scholars of the British Empire who were also demonstrating that Britain's supposedly liberal empire was not so different than its continental counterparts given that it was also characterized by proconsular despotism and featured much forced and semi-forced labor. See Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*.
17. Schmidt-Nowara, *Empire and Antislavery*, 2.
18. Schmidt-Nowara, "Politics and Ideas."
19. See, among many other works, Guerra, *Modernidad e independencias*; Rodríguez O., *Independence of Spanish America*; and Guardino, *Peasants, Politics and Time of Liberty*.
20. Figueroa, *Sugar, Slavery, and Freedom*, 119.
21. Fradera, "Christopher Schmidt-Nowara."
22. Drescher, "From Empires of Slavery to Empires of Antislavery," 312.
23. Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, x.
24. A related article was published posthumously: Schmidt-Nowara, "Entangled Irishman."
25. Schmidt-Nowara, "Imperio y crisis colonial."
26. For Chris's work on Joseph, see Schmidt-Nowara, "Wilberforce Spanished."
27. Burguera, "Christopher Schmidt-Nowara."

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