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Paul E. Lovejoy Prize

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Citation

Pargas, D. A., Montana, I., Burnard, T., & Müller, V. F. (2024). Paul E. Lovejoy Prize. *Journal Of Global Slavery*, 9(3), 373-382.
doi:10.1163/2405836X-00903008

Version: Publisher's Version

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Paul E. Lovejoy Prize

The editorial team of the *Journal of Global Slavery* is pleased to announce the winner of the fifth annual Paul E. Lovejoy Prize for excellence and originality in a major work on any theme related to global slavery published in 2023.

The Paul E. Lovejoy Prize is named after the esteemed slavery scholar and distinguished professor of African Studies and African Diasporic Studies at York University in Canada. The author of more than thirty books and a hundred articles, Lovejoy pioneered new approaches to the historical study of slavery in West Africa and its diasporic communities, and played a critical role in revealing the interconnectedness between various African, Atlantic and Islamic systems of enslavement in the early modern and modern periods. He was the founding Director of the Harriet Tubman Institute for Research on the Global Migrations of African Peoples and a former board member of the International Scientific Committee of the UNESCO Slave Routes Project “Resistance, Liberty, Heritage” from 1996 to 2012.

The jury received several outstanding monograph submissions this year, all of which demonstrated excellence in their originality, thorough research, and contribution to the field of slavery studies. Ultimately, the jury considered seven fascinating books, which consisted of the following illuminating works.

Thomas Mareite, *Conditional Freedom: Free Soil and Fugitive Slaves from the US South to Mexico's Northeast, 1803–1861* (Leiden: Brill, 2023).

Conditional Freedom presents a thorough and innovative social and political history of fugitive slaves escaping from the US South to Mexico's Northeast amidst the increasing tension between Mexico's free-soil policy and the westward expansion of slavery beyond the Mississippi Valley during the nineteenth century. While the existing literature on slave flight in nineteenth-century North America has primarily concentrated on fugitive slaves (or refugees from slavery, as recent studies have begun labelling them) fleeing to the U.S. North and British Canada, *Conditional Freedom* provides new insights into the social and political geography of freedom and slavery in nineteenth-century North America by examining the development of southern escape routes from slavery in the U.S. South and exploring the experiences of self-emancipated slaves in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

Drawing on extensive research from US, Mexican, and Spanish archives, *Conditional Freedom* contends that Mexico emerged as a land of conditional

freedom for self-emancipated slaves crossing the border from the US South. Before and during escape endeavors, the enslaved individuals' ability to achieve freedom in Mexico was profoundly influenced by a complex interplay of demographic, socioeconomic, environmental, and political factors. On the Mexican side of the border, the capacity to sustain freedom was contingent upon violent incursions by slaveholders and mercenaries into Mexican territory, as well as the inconsistencies in Mexico's free-soil policy.

Through this particular intervention to existing scholarship, *Conditional Freedom* intersects with the historiography of slavery and resistance in North America as well as the growing literature on forced migration and exile in the Americas, while engaging with studies on people of African descent in Latin American history. Moreover, by introducing the concept of "conditional freedom," this book makes a meaningful contribution to broader historiographical discussions—both within colonial history in the Atlantic world and beyond—regarding the varying degrees of freedom that refugees from slavery (and formerly enslaved people in general) encountered and shaped while navigating the transition from slavery to formal freedom.

David Stefan Doddington, *Old Age and American Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

This fascinating and very well written book focuses on the US, but Doddington's emphasis on age as a category of analysis that runs alongside, intersects with, and sometimes supersedes, the exhaustively-studied categories of race, class, or gender, surely enhances scholarship on slavery in both the Atlantic world and further afield. Studying slavery, or slaving as practice, is near-always a study of power relations—of the contests between, and within, slavers and the enslaved—as well as the internal logic that animated the system. Doddington's work seeks to upturn historiographical positions on resistance, survival, and solidarities in slavery; it forces us to think about age as a vector of power, a contested identity, and as a social and cultural construct that shaped the dynamics of, and the most personal experiences in, slavery.

The book offers substantial interventions in a number of ways. First, it provides a comprehensive assessment of how the aging process affected the dynamics of slavery, with particular attention to the continued exploitation of elders, or the efforts of enslavers to rid themselves of responsibilities and costs by selling, abandoning, or neglecting the aged. It offers a deeply human study, where the author underscores the exploitative nature of American slavery from cradle-to-grave, emphasizes the self-interest that drove slavers, and firmly reiterate how slavery constituted a robbery that consumed enslaved people's entire lives.

Second, this book complicates scholarly understandings of unity within slave communities and communal support—or even reverence—for Black elders. Doddington shows how peers viewed enslaved elders in more complex ways than much of the previous historiography allows, and that elders themselves did not always feel that they received reverence. Moreover, “respect” granted on account of advanced age could seem condescending, being based on a perception of reduced abilities or accommodation on account of age. This work thus forces us to look beyond surface-level observations to as unity among the enslaved, to think about positionality and methodology—given how often scholars’ views on the treatment of the aged come from those who were not elderly in slavery themselves—and to note how age, as much as gender, race, or class, shapes how people conceptualize of themselves and others.

And third, this book looks directly at enslavers themselves and seeks to challenge static narratives of mastery and control, revealing how elderly enslavers were not always able to command the control they craved. Doddington demonstrates how the pressures associated with aging—whether real or imagined—could wreak havoc on enslavers’ public and private claims of dominance, and it underscores the effect of this for both enslaver and enslaved.

Doddington’s work challenges not only the Atlantic social history of enslaved communities but forces scholars of slavery in all contexts to reconsider the effects of aging on institutions and practices of bondage.

Nicholas Radburn, *Traders in Men: Merchants and the Transformation of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023).

Traders in Men is a timely and meticulously researched work that seeks to answer a key question in world slavery studies: why did the transatlantic slave trade, which was geographically and numerically small prior to 1700, explode in size during the eighteenth century? Radburn answers this question by examining the thousands of slave trading merchants across the Atlantic World who drove the trade’s dramatic transformation. His case study is the British Atlantic—British traders, along with African traders in British-visited parts of the West African coast, and the British Americas. His research, however, is relevant for—and specifically connects with—research on transatlantic slave trading and the development of Atlantic slavery in a broader sense.

By analyzing the records of enslavers, he demonstrates that they developed malevolently effective new methods of enslaving people during the eighteenth century. These new techniques underpinned the trade’s expansion because they made the business a more accessible and less risky investment. Radburn also demonstrates the catastrophic consequences of slave traders’ new businesses methods on their enslaved victims, shedding important new light on the

slave experience. The book follows the development of slave trading chronologically, beginning with the making of West African slaving ports and the sale of enslaved people in Atlantic Africa, then moving on to European merchants and the Middle Passage and the forced migrations of enslaved people within the Americas.

Radburn's book examines Atlantic (writ large) networks and interdependencies that gave rise to transatlantic slave trading and even slave trading within the Americas. In its chronological and geographical sweep, focus on interconnections between systems of world slavery, and the use innovative use of primary source material and digital methods, *Traders in Men* embodies the qualities of Paul Lovejoy's own pathbreaking work.

Ana Lucia Aurajo, *The Gift: How Objects of Prestige Shaped the Atlantic Slave Trade and Colonialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

Ana Lucia Aurajo's masterful book *The Gift* illuminates the complex mechanisms of the Atlantic slave trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the rise of colonialism through the lens of material culture. In this innovative monograph Araujo follows the trajectory of an eighteenth-century silver sword fabricated in the port of La Rochelle, given as a gift to a West Central African slave trader in the port of Cabinda (then part of the Kingdom of Ngoyo in twenty-first century Angola), brought to Abomey (the capital of the Kingdom of Dahomey in twenty-first century's Republic of Benin), and then carried back to France. The book interrogates how the French slave traders from La Rochelle, the African traders from Cabinda, and the rulers of Dahomey invested this object with economic and symbolic value. By fabricating, manipulating, transforming, and displacing the silver sword, these various agents also gave to this object new meanings.

The Gift shows how material culture and luxurious artifacts produced in Europe facilitated and sometimes also complicated the relations between African and European social actors during the era of the Atlantic slave trade. Throughout the book, Araujo sheds light on how West Central African and European agents took decisions and how they positioned themselves when negotiating the terms of the Atlantic slave trade. The book allows readers to understand how material culture shaped the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism, and how cultural artifacts were also modeled by the trade in enslaved peoples and the rise of European colonial rule in Africa. Spanning West Africa, West Central Africa, France, and to some extent Saint-Domingue, Araujo draws on written archival documents in English, French, and Portuguese, visual images, and African and European artifacts and artworks housed in museums in Europe and the Americas, to argue that objects of prestige gradually embodied the new

power acquired by African agents, because of the intensification of the Atlantic slave trade in the eighteenth century.

The Gift makes an important contribution to the historiography of the Atlantic slave trade and the African diaspora by connecting West Central Africa and the Bight of Benin, two regions that historians have usually examined separately. By doing so, she interrogates how societies of the Loango Coast and the Kingdom of Dahomey conceived ideas of sovereignty as, unlike other ports such as Luanda and Benguela (south of the Congo River), the ports of Loango, Malembo, and Cabinda, remained under the control of their respective local rulers, therefore often challenging European attempts to dominate the trade in the region. *The Gift* illuminates how the rise and fall of the Atlantic slave trade in West Africa and West Central Africa paved the way for European conquest and colonization of the continent. Ultimately, recognizing the complexity of the continuous circulation of gifts of prestige *The Gift* also contributes to a better understanding of the current calls for restitution and repatriation of African heritage that was plundered during the colonial era.

Claire Bourhis-Mariotti, *Wanted! A Nation! Black Americans and Haiti, 1804–1893*, trans. by Jon Delogu (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2023).

Wanted! A Nation! Black Americans and Haiti, 1804–1893 situates the Haitian republic firmly within recent Atlantic and global historiography by examining the history of Haiti through the complex relationship between the Black American community and the Black Republic in the nineteenth century. In this excellent work, Claire Bourhis-Mariotti demonstrates that before the Civil War, the Black republic was considered by free people of color as a place where full citizenship was at hand. Haiti was essentially viewed and concretely experienced as a refuge during moments when they lost hope of obtaining rights in the US. While some prominent Black American leaders then firmly opposed emigration and denounced the American Colonization Society and its African project, others advocated relocation to closer places. Gradually, more and more Black emigrationists started promoting the virtues of emigrating to Haiti, which they considered as a “promised land” where their diasporic, separatist or nationalist ideals converged; as the place where they could build and maintain a “Black nationality”; and as the nation where the Black community might fight for the emancipation and the equality of the Black race all over the world.

Thousands of free people of color thus settled in Haiti before the Civil War, mostly on the occasion of two waves of emigration initiated by the Haitian government, in the mid-1820s and the early 1860s. During the Civil War, while fighting to save the Union, Lincoln considered sending Contrabands and free people of color to various colonies, and even sponsored a project deporting about 500

of them to a Haitian island, Île-à-Vache, in early 1863. After the war, Haiti gradually became a diplomatic partner, to which the US nominated mostly Black diplomats after 1869. However, Frederick Douglass's mission as the American Minister Resident to Haiti between 1889 and 1891 reveals the ambiguities of US policy towards the small Black republic, at a moment when the United States was trying to impose itself as a dominant power in the Caribbean and as a leading imperialist nation, notably by attempting to establish a military base in Haiti (at the Môle Saint Nicolas).

Haiti and its leaders are also at the heart of this book. Haitian leaders, in particular, encouraged and sponsored Black American emigration to Haiti, opposed the American geostrategic and diplomatic diktats in the second half of the nineteenth century, and offered an international platform to Frederick Douglass at the 1893 Chicago Fair, thus helping Black Americans both to fight against slavery and the slave trade, and to fight for their rights. The closing chapters of the book, which deal with the events that revolved around the Haitian pavilion at the 1893 Chicago Fair, fully illustrate the emancipatory role of the Black Republic. By naming Douglass as the First Commissioner of its pavilion—a fact rarely discussed in historiography—Haiti allowed him to use the small building as the “headquarters” of Black American activists. Douglass employed the international platform provided by Haiti to denounce the Republicans' abdication to the “values” of the Southerners advocating segregation, denying Black people the right to vote, and debasing them to the position of second-class citizens. The Black Republic effectively gave Black Americans the opportunity to make their voices heard by providing them with the platform their own country had refused them.

By spanning the entire nineteenth century, this book presents a complex panorama of the emergence of Black American identity and posits that Haiti should be considered as an essential prism to understand how Black Americans forged their identity in the nineteenth century. Drawing on a variety of sources, *Wanted! A Nation!* goes far beyond the usual framework of national American history and contributes to the writing of an Atlantic and global history of the struggle for equal rights.

Jennifer Lofkrantz, *Ransoming Prisoners in Precolonial Muslim West Africa* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2023).

In this pioneering study—the first to cover ransoming, or the release of a prisoner prior to enslavement for cash or kind, in African regions south of the Sahara—Jennifer Lofkrantz focuses on a broad temporal and geographical area ranging from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries and including present-day Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Morocco. The work concentrates particularly on the nineteenth-century jihad era and on the Sokoto Caliphate and the Umar-

ian States. The overall period was a time of intense intellectual debate over the questions of who was and who was not a Muslim, how Islamic law could and should be implemented, what rights and protections recognized freeborn Muslims should have, and what role governments should play in ensuring those rights especially during a time when slavery was legal.

Ransoming discourses and procedures expose Muslim West African answers to these questions as well as providing a lens on broader issues and ideas on slavery, freedom, and religious and ethnic identity. Based on research conducted mostly in Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and France and on Arabic-, French-, and English-language archival sources, treatises, personal correspondence, oral sources and testimony, biographical data, travel reports, and early colonial documents, this study approaches the question of ransoming of captives through an examination, first, of intellectual debates among pre-nineteenth-century West African scholars on issues of ransoming; second, of nineteenth-century policies based on understandings of those intellectual debates in the context of the jihads; and, finally, of West African practices of ransoming in the nineteenth century.

With this excellent book, Lofkrantz has developed a pathbreaking study that is not only relevant to scholarship on West African slavery and Islamic slavery specifically, but also the scholarship on the relationship between captivity, slavery, and ransoming writ large. Her work provides a welcome analysis of transitions into and out of enslavement, as well as the intellectual debates on the conditions and principles that governed such transitions.

Gunja SenGupta & Awam Amkpa, *Sojourners, Sultans, and Slaves: America and the Indian Ocean in the Age of Abolition and Empire* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2023).

Finally, *Sojourners, Sultans, and Slaves*, co-written by Gunja SenGupta and Awan Amkpa, is a wonderful and meticulously researched study that seeks to cross-fertilize and connect North Atlantic slavery histories with the rich scholarship on the Indian Ocean world. Focusing in particular on the Anglo-Atlantic (especially the United States) and the British expansion into the Indian Ocean World of East Africa and Asia, they provide the field with a shining example of how truly global analyses of interconnected systems of slavery and bondage could and should be undertaken.

This book recounts how the Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds “hemorrhaged” into each other in a moment of transition. The sun had set on British colonialism in continental North America’s thirteen colonies even as it began a sharp ascent over Britain’s expansion in Afro-Asia. This shift produced a common discursive context, bound by empire, for wrestling with the leading issue of political economy, international relations, and human rights in the nine-

teenth century, namely slavery. However scholars may define “human rights” movements and periodize their origins, many nineteenth-century Anglo-Atlantic abolitionists traced something akin to that concept to Protestant and Enlightenment impulses to endow “human nature with ... new capacity for reason, benevolence, ... moral choice, and ... inherent rights.” But what happened to these Atlantic perspectives when Anglophone bureaucrats and diplomats, reformers and missionaries, and merchants and aspiring planters traversing the row encountered an immense variety of types of bondage divorced in some cases from formal ideas about race, and defying binary constructs of slave and free, market and family?

This book reveals how, as the nineteenth century dawned, capitalism, empire, and technologies of print, transport and communication forged a global public square and common discursive framework for debating the meaning and merits of slavery and freedom in different parts of the world. The authors use multinational archives to flesh out the interface among the personal, domestic, and international politics of slavery by tracking the circulation of people, the echo of ideas, and the resonance of policy among nodes of commercial exchange, imperial power rivalries, and reform activism, extending from Anglo-America through the Swahili coast of East Africa, the Red Sea and Arabian/Persian Gulf into the South Asia. Among the many questions the authors explore are the ways in which subordinated peoples defined “freedom,” and asserted their claims to community, culture, mobility, and security from poverty and violence in different settings. The authors reflect on whether enslavement shaped a sense of diasporic consciousness in the Middle East and South Asia in quite the same sense as in the Atlantic world.

SenGupta and Amkpa do a truly amazing job of connecting global debates about the meanings and merits of freedom in both the Atlantic and Indian Ocean Worlds. Divided into four thematic parts, their book examines issues such as new ways of talking about slavery in both the East and West (Part I); global discourses that pitted antislavery ideals against ideals of a slaveholding republic in America and India (Part II); global migrations, imperial abolition, slave trading and subaltern subjects in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean Worlds (Part III); and Americans in various sultanates, including businessmen and slaveholders in the late nineteenth century (Part IV).

In the end, the jury decided to award this year's Paul E. Lovejoy Prize to **Gunja SenGupta and Awam Amkpa** for their book *Sojourners, Sultans, and Slaves*. This fantastic piece of scholarship is meticulously researched and draws from archival material all over the world. SenGupta and Amkpa masterfully reveal the connected histories of Atlantic and Indian Ocean systems of slavery and

freedom, as well as the global discourses that emerged about the very meanings of freedom and bondage in an era of global abolition and major social and geopolitical transitions. Finally, the jury commends the authors for their beautiful and engaging writing style, which make their book an absolute pleasure to read. *Sojourners, Sultans, and Slaves* is a worthy laureate for the Lovejoy Prize for its contribution to scholarship, its attempts to rethink the interconnected nature of systems of slavery and colonialism that are of particular relevance for scholars of global slavery, and its wonderfully written narrative. We extend our warmest congratulations to Gunja and Awam! Please see our interview with the winners in the present issue of the *Journal of Global Slavery*.

The jury members thoroughly enjoyed reading all of the submissions and would like to thank all of the Lovejoy Prize nominees and especially the seven above-mentioned finalists.

Submissions for next year's Lovejoy Prize for an outstanding work on any theme related to global slavery published in 2024 must be received by **Friday, 14 February 2025**. Submissions should be in English, but works in other languages that can be read by the jury members will also be considered (please consult Ismael Montana or Damian Pargas for more information). Submissions should also be accompanied by a cover letter that describes the submitted work and highlights its main contributions to the field. Please submit digital versions of nominated monographs (e-books or pdfs of final proofs), but also send one hard copy to: Ismael Montana, Professor & Assistant Department Chair, Department of History, Northern Illinois University, Zulauf 616, DeKalb, IL 60115, USA.

The *Journal of Global Slavery* will appoint a jury consisting of 3–4 members, who are all active and prominent scholars in their fields. The jury is headed by the managing editor of the *Journal*.

For more information and to submit your work, please contact Ismael Montana (montana@niu.edu) or Damian Pargas (d.a.pargas@hum.leidenuniv.nl).

By the Members of the Lovejoy Prize Jury:

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