

Continental Origins of Insular Proslavery: George Dawson Flinter in Curaçao, Venezuela, Britain, and Puerto Rico, 1810s–1830s*

Origens Continentais da Ideologia
Escravocrata Insular: George Dawson
Flinter em Curaçao, na Venezuela, Reino
Unido, e Porto Rico, nas décadas de
1810–1830

Christopher Schmidt–Nowara

Professor in the History Department
of Tufts University (Medford/USA)
e-mail: Christopher.Schmidt_
Nowara@tufts.edu

Abstract

This article traces the career and migrations of George Dawson Flinter, a naturalized Spanish subject of Irish origin, who became a prominent apologist for slavery and Spanish colonial rule in the Caribbean in the 1820s and 1830s. It argues that Flinter's experiences in the revolutionary Americas, especially in Venezuela, shaped his attitudes toward slavery, freedom, race, and social order, which he promoted on behalf of the Spanish regime as a propagandist in Britain and in Puerto Rico. Flinter's writings, loyalties, and migrations throw new light on the sources of proslavery thought, not only in the Spanish Caribbean, but also in the broader Atlantic world during the consolidation of the second slavery.

Resumo

Este artigo acompanha a carreira e as migrações de George Dawson Flinter, um indivíduo naturalizado espanhol, de origem irlandesa, que se tornou um proeminente defensor da escravidão e do domínio colonial espanhol no Caribe nas décadas de 1820 e 1830. O artigo argumenta que as experiências de Flinter no continente americano em revolução, especialmente na Venezuela, deu forma às suas posições em relação à escravidão, liberdade, raça e ordem social, que ele propagou em nome do regime espanhol no Reino Unido e em Porto Rico. Os escritos de Flinter, seus tratos de lealdade, migrações, lançam uma nova luz sobre as origens do pensamento escravocrata, não só no Caribe espanhol, mas também em todo o Atlântico, durante a consolidação do período da segunda escravidão.

Keywords

violence, fear, second slavery, independence, refugees, revolution

Palavras-chave

violência, medo, segunda escravidão, independência, refugiados, revolução

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artigos

¹ GATTEL, Frank Otto. *Puerto Rico in the 1830's: The Journal of Edward Bliss Emerson*. *The Americas* 16 (July 1959), 79. Edward was the younger brother of Ralph Waldo Emerson. He moved to the Caribbean in 1831 for his health. He passed away in 1834.

² *Ibidem*, p. 68.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 70.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 73.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 75.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 71.

Edward Bliss Emerson, a New Englander sojourning in Puerto Rico to alleviate his suffering from tuberculosis, wrote letters to his family in Boston and kept a journal, in both of which he described scenes from the island and the city of San Juan, his acquaintances, and the economic and political news of the colony and the Spanish metropolis. On April 19th, 1832, he noted his encounter with slaves being punished, shocking for a man from an abolitionist milieu: "Today I have seen 3 negroes with fetters & a huge log on their shoulders attached to them to prevent their running away & to punish the repeated attempts to do so; - two others I saw in the stocks, sitting easily but with one foot made fast".¹ Not all encounters with slaves described such violence. More frequent in his journals were reports of festive life in the city, such as the Day of Saint John and the Day of the Kings. On June 23rd, 1831, around the Day of Saint John, he reported that: "The noise of the negroes with their jingling instruments & songs & laughter aroused me very early long before light this morning. They continued to make pretty good music also by merely clapping the hand in accordance with the drum or congo".² A month later, on July 25th: "The negroes seemed to be at their dances all night for at day break their ching-ching music was still heard; - & from this I suppose they go to their toils".³ Official celebrations also appear in his journal. For example, on October 1st, 1831: "Today powder was put to work & reminded us that 8 years ago today Ferdinand VII was restored to his dominion over Spain. - The cannonading was repeated at Sunset".⁴ Emerson was referring to the restoration of absolutist rule in 1823, when Ferdinand, aided by an invading French army, overthrew the short-lived constitutional regime (1820-1823), of which he was the nominal head, and introduced a period of bleak political reaction in the metropolis, brought to an end by his death in 1833.

Emerson had a good guide to his new home, George Dawson Flinter, an Irishman by origin who had become a naturalized Spanish subject and now served as an officer in the Spanish army. Flinter and Emerson visited sites around San Juan together and discussed Puerto Rican history. On April 23rd, 1832, Emerson noted that he was reading Fray Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra's *Historia geográfica, civil y política de la Isla de San Juan Bautista de Puerto Rico* (1788), a work most likely given to him by Flinter.⁵ Several months earlier he wrote that: "talk with Col. Flinter who is alive with the encouragement he has recd from the Govt. to go on with his projected work on P. Rico-for wh. the historical materials (he says) are scanty; or rather that there has been but one hist of the Island &c. & that quite ant. by Padre -".⁶ In several other entries, Emerson indicated Flinter's preoccupation with his work.

Flinter's copious writings are the subject of this article. The work he was composing during his acquaintance with Emerson was a history of the island and description of its present state, at the heart of which was a cunning defense of sugar and slavery in Puerto Rico. Printed in Spanish and English, his writings were meant to deflect abolitionism from Puerto Rico, especially British abolitionism on the eve of the suppression of slavery in the West Indies. Some of the content and tropes of his proslavery arguments were familiar by the 1830s, recapitulating themes developed by Cuban proslavery writers in the 1810s and 1820s during their contests with both Spanish and British antislavery, though given the important differences between the two islands' economies and social structures, Flinter made significant adaptations, emphasizing, for example, the prevalence of free labor throughout the economy, even on the sugar plantations. In a nutshell,

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FLINTER, George Dawson. *An Account of the Present State of the Island of Puerto Rico*. 7. London: Longman, 1834. But Francisco Scarano has found that his observations on the sugar plantations were especially disingenuous; slave labor predominated. See SCARANO, Francisco. *Sugar and Slavery in Puerto Rico: The Plantation Economy of Ponce, 1800-1850*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984. p. 25-34.

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FLINTER, George Dawson, Op. Cit., p. 6.

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MARQUESE, Rafael and PARRON, Tâmis. *Internacional escravista: a política da Segunda Escravidão*. *Topoi*, n. 12, Jul/Dec/2011. p. 97-117.

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Recent studies of refugees and revolution include: PYBUS, Cassandra. *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and Their Global Quest for Liberty*. Boston: Beacon, 2006; SCHAMA, Simon. *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves, and the American Revolution*. New York: Ecco, 2006; WHITE, Ashli. *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010; JASANOFF, Maya. *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World*. New York: Knopf, 2011; SCOTT, Rebecca and HÉBRARD, Jean. *Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011; and SPIELER, Miranda Frances. *Empire and Underworld: Captivity in French Guiana*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012.

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On Spanish refusal to recognize the independent republics until after the death of Ferdinand VII (and much later in some cases, such as Santo Domingo), see: VAN AKEN, Mark. *Pan-Hispanism: Its Origin and Development to 1866*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959; COSTELOE, Michael P. *Response to Revolution: Imperial Spain and the Spanish American revolutions, 1810-1840*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986; NAVARRO GARCÍA, Jesús Raúl. *Puerto Rico a la sombra de la independencia continental, 1815-1840*. Seville and San Juan: CSIC and Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, 1999; _____ (ed.) *Insurgencia y republicanism*. Seville: CSIC, 2006.

Flinter wrote a widely read and commented upon work in favor of diplomatic recognition soon after Ferdinand's death in 1833. See his *Consideraciones sobre la España y sus colonias, y ventajas que resultarían de su mutua reconciliación*. Madrid: Imprenta que fue de Bueno, 1834. The works cited above treat its reception.

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See KNIGHT, Franklin. *Slave Society in Cuba during the Nineteenth Century*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970; CARRIÓN, Arturo Morales. *Puerto Rico and the Non-Hispanic Caribbean: A Study in the Decline of Spanish Exclusivism*. Río Piedras: University of Puerto Rico, 1974; _____. *Auge y decadencia de la trata negrera en Puerto Rico (1820-1860)*. San Juan: Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe/Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1978; MORENO FRAGINALS,

Flinter, like the Cuban architect of sugar and slavery, Francisco de Arango y Parreño, argued that Spanish colonial slavery differed significantly from slavery in the French and British islands because of wise and benevolent Spanish legislation that made slavery there more humane, more stable, and less likely to provoke rebellions like Tacky's Revolt, the Haitian Revolution, or, most recently, the Baptist War. The many free people of color in Puerto Rico, who worked in every branch of the economy, were proof that Spanish slave laws tended toward freedom and incorporation into Spanish civilization: "every species of tropical productions may be cultivated by free labour. It is my delight to indulge in prospective views of liberty and happiness for the unfortunate slaves; and I fondly anticipate that much good may ultimately be effected by their progressive emancipation".⁷

What I will explore here is an aspect of Flinter's background that influenced his views on slavery, freedom, abolition, and political loyalty: his experiences as a self-described man of property, including in slaves ("both on the continent of America and in the islands, I have myself possessed landed property and slaves"⁸), and political servant of the Spanish monarchy in Venezuela during the violent struggle for independence. I will argue that living through the profound social transformations wrought by revolution and counter-revolution in Venezuela led him to defend slavery not only as the best form of labor to serve Puerto Rican and Cuban prosperity, but also as the bedrock of social stability and civility, the alternative to which was the anarchy and barbarism that had forced him, and other Spanish loyalists, to abandon his home, family, and property. Thus, unlike earlier proslavery writers in the Spanish Caribbean such as Arango y Parreño, what concerned Flinter was less the political economy of slavery than the role of slavery in maintaining political order and social hierarchy in a post-revolutionary era. Finally, I will conclude the article by arguing that Flinter represented an important but still not understood element of the "proslavery international" in the nineteenth century:⁹ the role played by loyalist émigrés and other refugees in the politics of slavery and freedom as they circulated through Atlantic societies.¹⁰

The combination of slavery with noisy displays of political loyalty that Edward Bliss Emerson captured in his diary was apt. Puerto Rico and Cuba were the last remaining Spanish colonies in the Americas by the time of Emerson's visit, even though Ferdinand's regime refused to recognize the independence of the Spanish American republics, and even mounted futile invasions of Venezuela and Mexico from the Antilles.¹¹ As revolution shook the empire from Mexico to the Río de la Plata in the 1810s and 1820s, the two islands remained firmly in the Spanish orbit in no small part because of the way in which they were being transformed by sugar and slavery. Beginning in the later eighteenth century, the Spanish crown had gradually deregulated the slave trade to its Caribbean colonies until it finally threw the trade wide open between 1789 and 1791. Cuban planters and slavers were the major beneficiaries, as the colony became by far the largest slave society in the history of Spanish America.¹² Though Puerto Rico always had a much smaller slave population than did Cuba, and slaves also made up a much smaller percentage of the overall colonial population, this period was one of dramatic economic and social change nonetheless (see table

Manuel. *El ingenio*: complejo económico social cubano del azúcar. Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1978; FRADERA, Josep M. La participació catalana en el tràfic d'esclaus (1789-1845). *Recerques* n. 16, 1984, p. 119-139; DORSEY, Joseph C. *Slave Traffic in the Age of Abolition*: Puerto Rico, West Africa, and the Non-Hispanic Caribbean, 1815-1859. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003; and DELGADO RIBAS, Josep M. *The Slave Trade in the Spanish Empire (1501-1808)*: The Shift from Periphery to Center. In: FRADERA, Josep M. and SCHMIDT-NOWARA (eds.) *Slavery and Antislavery in Spain's Atlantic Empire*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2013, p.13-42.

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SCARANO, Francisco, op. cit.; CUBANO IGUINA, Astrid. *El hilo en el laberinto*: claves de la lucha política en Puerto Rico (siglo XIX). Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1990; and FIGUEROA, Luis. *Sugar, Slavery, and Freedom in Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

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For a good recent summary of the changes brought about in Puerto Rico by the 1815 *cédula de gracias* see CHINEA, Jorge Luis, *Race and Labor in the Hispanic Caribbean*: The West Indian Immigrant Worker Experience in Puerto Rico, 1800-1850. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005, p.1-27. On immigration and its impact, see MALUQUER DE MOTES, Jordi. Inmigración y comercio catalán en las Antillas españolas durante el siglo XIX, *Siglo XIX*, n. 2, 1987, p.160-181; PÉREZ VEGA, Ivette, El efecto económico, social y político de la emigración de Venezuela en el sur de Puerto Rico (Ponce), 1810-1830. *Revista de Indias*, XLVII, n. 181, 1987, p. 869-885; and SCARANO, Francisco A. (ed.) *Inmigración y clases sociales en el Puerto Rico del siglo XIX*, 3. ed. Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1989.

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GONZÁLEZ MENDOZA, Juan R. Puerto Rico's Creole Patriots and the Slave Trade after the Haitian Revolution. In: GEGGUS, David P. (ed.), *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001, p. 58-71; GONZÁLEZ-RIPOLL, Maria Dolores et al., *El rumor de Haití en Cuba*: temor, raza, y rebeldía, 1789-1844. Madrid: CSIC, 2004; and FERRER, Ada, Cuban Slavery and Atlantic Antislavery. *Slavery and Antislavery in Spain's Atlantic Empire*, p. 134-157.

16

CORWIN, Arthur, *Spain and the Abolition of Cuban Slavery, 1817-1886*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967; MURRAY, David. *Odious Commerce*: Britain, Spain, and the Abolition of the Cuban Slave Trade. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980; and PAQUETTE, Robert L. *Sugar is Made with Blood*: The Conspiracy of La Escalera and the Conflict between Empires over Slavery in Cuba. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988.

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See REID ANDREWS, George. *Afro-Latin America, 1800-2000*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, chs. 1-3; and BLANCHARD, Peter, *Under the Flags of Freedom: Slave Soldiers and the Wars of Independence in Spanish South America*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008.

1). Encouraged not only by the newly deregulated slave traffic, but also by measures meant to attract planters and merchants with capital and slaves, the island experienced a significant expansion of sugar plantations and slave labor in the first half of the nineteenth century.¹³ Refugee planters from French and Spanish colonies where slavery and colonialism were under siege were welcomed in Puerto Rico, as were merchants and workers from various parts of southern Europe and the Caribbean with money to invest and skills to provide.¹⁴

Planters, merchants, and officials were carrying out plantation revolutions in the Spanish Caribbean during a period of crisis for slavery and the transatlantic slave traffic. Though the Haitian Revolution and British antislavery unintentionally set the stage for Cuba and Puerto Rico's take offs, they also made revolution and abolitionism permanent features of the geopolitical landscape. Fear of Haitian provocateurs or of a Haitian invasion recurred in the reports of Spanish governors in Cuba and Puerto Rico for several decades into the nineteenth century.¹⁵ In the 1830s, when Edward Bliss Emerson resided in San Juan, the international situation was especially unfavorable because Britain was on the verge of abolishing slavery in its West Indian colonies, a campaign closely followed in Spain and the Antilles. Relations with Britain were already tense because Spain had signed a bi-lateral treaty banning the slave trade in 1817, one that it very carefully and successfully circumvented for another 50 years, provoking great ire among British abolitionists and statesmen.¹⁶

The influx of refugees from places such as Santo Domingo and Venezuela also bolstered the Cuban and Puerto Rican sugar booms but the cost was in some ways terrific because the condition of their migration and investment was the loss of Spanish sovereignty in those colonies. Moreover, because Ferdinand's Spain refused diplomatic recognition, the threat of invasion by Bolivarian or Mexican forces was alive and real. As planters and officials from other colonies knew well, the wars for independence had turned societies upside down. One of the casualties was slavery, abolished (gradually) throughout Spanish America with the coming of independence.¹⁷ These redoubts of colonial slavery thus saw themselves surrounded by military, diplomatic, and ideological enemies on several sides for much of the nineteenth century.

In addition, we should not underestimate the political and intellectual dissonance in the colonies and in the metropolis created by the sugar revolutions. Spain was the first European colonial empire to introduce African slaves in the Americas but it differed significantly from Portugal and later England, France, the Netherlands, and Denmark because for centuries it placed strict quotas and controls on the slave traffic to its colonies.¹⁸ Among the consequences of these policies was that the plantation economy of Spanish America often struggled for a want of labor and thus remained comparatively marginal. Moreover, the total number of slaves, and their representation in the overall colonial population was much smaller than in rival colonial societies. That situation was dramatically reversed beginning in the late eighteenth century with the liberalization of the slave trade and the spread of slave-worked plantations through several of Spain's Caribbean settlements at the same time that they were being eclipsed or stagnating in the French and British colonies.

Opposition, criticism, and rebellions against the emerging plantation order spread though both the colonies and the metropolis, especially in the

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On the Spanish crown's policies toward the slave trade, see Delgado, "The Slave Trade in the Spanish Empire".

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See especially CHILDS, Matt, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle against Atlantic Slavery*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006. On Puerto Rico, see Guillermo Baralt, *Esclavos rebeldes: conspiraciones y sublevaciones de esclavos en Puerto Rico (1795-1873)*. Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1981.

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ANTILLÓN, Isidoro de, *Disertación sobre el origen de la esclavitud de los negros, motivos que la han perpetuado, ventajas que se le atribuyen y medios que podrían adoptarse para hacer prosperar nuestras colonias sin la esclavitud de los negros*. Mallorca: Imprenta de Miguel Domingo, 1811, p. 75. See also WHITE BLANCO, Joseph, *Bosquexo del comercio en esclavos y reflexiones sobre este tráfico considerado moral, política y cristianamente*. London: Ellerton and Henderson, 1814.

21

On the global framework of the "second slavery," see TOMICH, Dale, *Through the Prism of Slavery: Labor, Capital, and World Economy*. Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield, 2004. See also BERBEL, Márcia, MARQUESE, Rafael, and PARRON, Tâmis, *Escravidão e política: Brasil e Cuba, 1750-1850*. São Paulo: Editora Hucitec/FAPESP, 2010; and MARQUESE, Rafael and PARRON, Tâmis. Op. Cit.

22

See the overview in FRADERA, Josep M., Moments in a Postponed Abolition. In: *Slavery and Antislavery in Spain's Atlantic Empire*, p. 256-290.

early nineteenth century during the war against the French (1808-1814) and the Spanish American independence struggles. In Cuba, for example, slave rebellions on several plantations in 1812 were found to be part of a broader antislavery and anticolonial plan organized by free people of color in Havana who had seen their privileges and freedoms degraded and constricted with the surge in slavery.¹⁹ In Spain, patriots who were resisting the French occupation of the Iberian Peninsula formed a government of resistance in the southern city of Cádiz, where they openly debated the possibility of abolishing the slave trade and slavery, much to the horror of Cuban planters and their allies in Spain. During this period of relative intellectual and political freedom, other voices from outside the government joined in the conversation, expressing outrage over the burgeoning plantation complex in the Spanish Caribbean and the brutality of the Middle Passage into which Spaniards and Creoles had plunged with such gusto for the first time. The gist of antislavery tracts by Joseph Blanco White and Isidoro de Antillón was that Spain had never been a slave-trading colonial power and that it was making a terrible mistake by imitating its British and French rivals, whose own Caribbean settlements were sites of constant violence and disruption. They predicted the same for Cuba, Puerto Rico and other colonies unless the Spanish government abolished the trade immediately: "There can be no doubt. The blacks will one day find a valiant leader who will avenge them and assure their independence through force".²⁰

Thus, in addition to resisting foreign abolitionism, slavery's defenders in the Spanish Empire also faced considerable opposition of various kinds within the colonies and the metropolis. How did Puerto Rico and Cuba resist the apparently inexorable rise of abolitionism in Europe, the Caribbean, and Latin America? We know that the economic and, especially from the 1830s onward, technological conditions for slavery's persistence and resurgence were favorable. Cuban planters and investors harnessed steam-powered technology to the sugar plantation to increase the land under cultivation and the amount and quality of sugar that they refined (Puerto Rican planters also introduced steam-driven technology but on a smaller scale). They could do so in response to expanding demand for their product, especially in Europe and the United States, and were facilitated by the influx of capital, not only from peninsular migrants and circum-Caribbean refugees, but also by North Atlantic investors and entrepreneurs.²¹ Moreover, especially with the loss of the continental colonies by the 1820s, the metropolitan political class and colonial governors became fully committed to the defense of Cuban and Puerto Rican slavery and slave trading, in spite of its supposed ban in 1817. Their support was shared by the leading economic sectors in the peninsula, deeply implicated in all aspects of the colonial plantation economy.²²

At the same time, planters, officials, and their agents articulated robust and aggressive defenses of slavery, the slave trade, and the evolving plantation order. Sometimes they pitched their writings towards publics in Spain and the colonies, other times towards readers and critics beyond the imperial boundaries, particularly in Britain and the United States. For example, the most well-known defense of the new colonial social and economic order was penned by the Cuban planter and colonial official Francisco de Arango y Parreño, in 1811, directly in response to the debates in Cádiz over abolishing slavery. Arango not only emphasized the centrality of Cuba to Spain's now uncertain colonial economy, but also portrayed

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ARANGO Y PARREÑO, Francisco de. *Representación de la ciudad de la Habana a las Cortes, el 20 de julio de 1811, con motivo de las proposiciones hechas por D. José Miguel Guridi Alcocer y D. Agustín de Argüelles, sobre el tráfico de esclavos y esclavitud de los negros; extendida por el Alférez Mayor de la Ciudad, D. Francisco de Arango, por encargo del Ayuntamiento, Consulado y Sociedad Patriótica de la Habana*. In: *Obras de D. Francisco de Arango y Parreño*. Havana: Dirección de Cultura, Ministerio de Educación, 1952, t. II, p. 145-187. For more on Arango's views on slavery, see the extensive studies in GONZALEZ RIPOLL, Dolores and ÁLVAREZ CUARTERO, Izaskun. *Francisco Arango y la invención de la Cuba azucarera*. Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad Salamanca, 2009.

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ARANGO y PARREÑO, Francisco de. Op. Cit. p. 167.

25

SCHMIDT-NOWARA, Christopher. Spain and the Politics of the Second Slavery, 1808-1868. Review: *Journal of the Fernand Braudel Center*, forthcoming.

26

Flinter recounted his exploits in *A Letter to His Most Gracious Majesty, George the Fourth, King of Great Britain and Ireland*, Trinidad: Port of Spain Gazette, 1829; and in his *Hoja de servicio*, Archivo General Militar de Segovia (AGMS), sección 1a, legajo 1493, which is dated 15 June 1836.

27

The list of officers dated 4 March 1816 noted that Lieutenant Flinter was absent "with leave". The British National Archives, War Office (BNA/ WO), 1/117.

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Flinter said that his father-in-law, Don Francisco Aramburco, was "one of the wealthiest landed proprietors and ship-owners in Caracas," who had fled with his family to Curaçao in 1813 and then, after a brief return to Caracas, to Spain in 1817. See *An Account*, 242.

29

On mercenaries and the recruitment, see BROWN, Matthew. *Adventuring through Spanish Colonies: Simón Bolívar, Foreign Mercenaries and the Birth of New Nations*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006; and on British responses to the foreign enlistment, see WADDELL, D. A. G. *British Neutrality and Spanish American Independence: The Problem of Foreign Enlistment*. *Journal of Latin American Studies* 19, 1987, p. 1-18.

slavery there as humane and benevolent, governed by wise laws that make a repetition of the Haitian Revolution impossible. The slave trade was a form of rescue that plucked African captives from a horrible fate and introduced them to the benefits of Christianity and Spanish civilization.²³ Such views, praising the benefits of colonial enslavement and casting aspersions upon Africa and Africans ("in all of the centuries past and probably in all of the centuries to come, the benefits that the blacks receive by being left on their native soil are imaginary"²⁴), became staples of the proslavery arguments voiced through much of the century, even into the era of emancipation in the late nineteenth century.²⁵

Flinter washed ashore in Puerto Rico in 1829, amidst the political, economic, and social changes taking place in Spain's last American colonies. According to his own accounts of his travails, he had lived in Gran Colombia (which encompassed the territory that would soon separate itself and become Venezuela) during the previous six-and-a-half years, trying to make the properties of his wife's family profitable. However, as a known sympathizer of the loyalist cause, he suffered persecution and discrimination and had to abandon the family estates and flee to Isla Margarita where he worked a rented sugar plantation. Finally, he decided to leave independent Spanish America altogether and made his way to the British colony of Trinidad, before finding refuge and security in Puerto Rico.²⁶

His pamphlet addressed to George IV clearly shows that he was a man in between sovereigns. A native of Ireland, Flinter served for 9 years in the British army (7th West Indian Regiment) between 1810 and 1819. He spent several years (1812-1815) in British-occupied Curaçao during the initial phases of the Venezuelan independence war, the Dutch island serving as a refuge of Venezuelans in flight from one band or the other and as a listening post for London on the trajectory of the wars in Caracas and Cartagena. Flinter likely would have learned of the conflicts in detail through the ebb and flow of refugees from Tierra Firme who would come and go according to the shifting fortunes of war on the mainland, and from other sources of raw intelligence that coursed through the island, its commanding officer's reports to London, and the local newspaper. Interestingly, at the end of the Napoleonic wars, Flinter went on half pay when his regiment evacuated Curaçao and turned it over to the Dutch.²⁷ He arranged to enter into service in Venezuela where he worked as a translator for Spanish and British officials. He traveled widely through the country and soon married into a well-to-do loyalist family.²⁸ By 1819, he had resigned from the British army and become an agent for the Spanish monarchy.

His duties took him back to his homeland with the goal of thwarting Venezuelan recruitment of British and Irish mercenaries to serve in Simón Bolívar's armies (I will discuss his public interventions and the Spanish government's support for them below).²⁹ He also claimed to be organizing an Irish Legion to fight for the loyalist cause but his efforts came to an end with the unexpected change of government in Spain. In 1820, a Spanish army gathered at Cádiz ready to embark for an invasion of the Río de la Plata mutinied and forced Ferdinand VII to recognize the 1812 constitution, which he had suppressed in 1814. What later became known as the Liberal Trienio (1820-1823) in Spain led to an abrupt shift in attitude

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His efforts are recounted in Archivo Histórico Nacional, Estado (AHN/E), legajo 5511, expediente 1, which collects his letters requesting compensation, naturalization, and a military commission, as well as reports and letters of support from his Spanish patron the Duke of San Carlos, Spain's ambassador to London, with whom he worked hand-in-glove to head off the mercenary expeditions.

31

FLINTER, George Dawson, *A Letter*, Op. Cit., p. 12.

32

Ibidem, p. 15.

33

Ibidem, p. 6-7. For a similar monarchist, counter-revolutionary perspective on the Americas and the impact of revolutions, see Gabriel Paquette's study of the Brazilian political economist and official José da Silva Lisboa: PAQUETTE, Gabriel. José da Silva Lisboa and the Vicissitudes of Enlightened Reform in Brazil, 1798-1824. In _____ (ed.) *Enlightened Reform in Southern Europe and its Atlantic Colonies, 1750-1830*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2009, p. 361-388.

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See the report from the Ministry of State praising Flinter's earlier service to Ferdinand VII and his letter to George IV, as well as a letter on the Spanish American revolutions addressed to the Duke of Wellington that the Puerto Rican government published in the *Gaceta de Puerto Rico*, Madrid, 21/oct/1830, Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Estado, legajo 94, n. 99.

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See VILLAR GARCÍA, María Begoña (ed.) *La emigración irlandesa en el siglo XVIII*. Málaga: Universidad de Málaga, 2000.

toward the insurgent colonies. More interested in consolidating liberal rule at home than in waging brutal wars overseas, the new governing class withdrew support from colonial counter-revolutionaries like Flinter. Deprived of Spanish assistance in Britain and Ireland, Flinter journeyed to Madrid, trying to recoup the expenses incurred during his anti-mercenary campaign and to gain some recognition and reward for his labors, including a commission in the Spanish army.³⁰ His petitioning came to naught in Madrid's new political climate, "my representation to the Constitutional Government was treated with coldness and neglect",³¹ so he returned to Britain but unable to find an office there, he was forced to return to America:

I found myself therefore reduced to the humiliating alternative, of placing myself under the lash of the Colombian Government, which I had opposed from principles of truth, and conviction: a sense of duty towards my creditors, and of affection towards my children, subdued every other feeling. I sailed with my family for Caracas. – King Ferdinand of Bourbon, these were my sufferings for having supported your cause with honor – this was the reward of all my services!³²

Such was the account of his trajectory when he reached Trinidad in 1829. Implicit in his appeal to George IV was the uncertainty of his future – which monarchy would he serve, the British or the Spanish? In his appeal, he fashioned himself as a staunch monarchist and steadfast opponent of all revolutions, speaking of the "spurious fungus of the French revolution", and denouncing the revolutions that had followed in its train: "The rebellion of 1798 in Ireland, in which my family suffered much, from its unshaken loyalty, was present to my imagination; the horrors of St. Domingo struck forcibly on my mind". Venezuela was one more victim: "every social tie is now burst asunder; anarchy, and confusion, bloodshed, and rapine, are diffused over the country, and identified with the people. A horrid and evil precedent has been established, pregnant for danger, to every monarchy in the world".³³

In the end, it was the monarchy of Ferdinand VII that plucked him from oblivion, bestowing upon him the rewards that had escaped him in 1820: naturalization and the rank of colonel in the Spanish army (he would eventually achieve the rank of Field Marshal but that is another story), serving for several years in Puerto Rico, Trinidad's eastern Caribbean neighbor, where he penned his apologies for slavery and sugar plantations.³⁴

Flinter fit in well in Puerto Rico for several reasons. First, he had provided service to Ferdinand VII and demonstrated his loyalty to Spain and the monarchy both in Europe and the Americas ten years earlier when he effectively headed off mercenaries destined for Venezuela. Second, Puerto Rico was awash with immigrants in this period as the government sought to attract capital and expertise to the island to further its sugar boom. Flinter of course arrived destitute but he had considerable expertise to provide: he was a native English speaker, was familiar with British politics and British abolitionism, and had an intimate knowledge of politics in the newly independent republics of South America. Third, there was an especially deep history of Irish military and bureaucratic service to the Spanish crown, both in the metropolis and in the colonies (for example, one of the most cogent evaluations of the Puerto Rican economy was written by the military man Alejandro O'Reilly in the aftermath of the Seven Years War).³⁵ Finally, the colony was not only a loyalist redoubt in the 1820s and 1830s, but also one with a particularly strong connection to Venezuela, where

See the essays on Díaz in NAVARRO GARCÍA, Jesús Raúl. Op. Cit.; and _____ *Insurgencia y republicanismo*. On Díaz and Venezuelan loyalism, see STRAKA, Tomás. *La voz de los vencidos: Ideas del partido realista de Caracas, 1810-1821*. Caracas: Comisión de Estudios de Postgrado, Facultad de Humanidades y Educación, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 2000; _____ (ed.) *Contra Bolívar: Una selección y un análisis de los terribles artículos de José Domingo Díaz contra El Libertador*. Caracas: Libros Marcados, 2009.

Díaz's correspondence in 1821 with de la Torre from Madrid indicates that even as he planned their transfer to Puerto Rico he believed that Ferdinand VII and loyalists like themselves would never abandon the hope of subduing New Granada. For example, see the letter dated Madrid, 18 December 1821, AHN/E, legajo 8739, expediente 242, número 1323, in which Díaz reports to de la Torre that news of Mexico's independence, negotiated by the Spanish general O'Donjú, had hardened Ferdinand's resolve. Moreover, when Flinter left Puerto Rico for Spain, he soon found himself slightly out of step with the colonial reactionaries who had embraced him upon his flight from Venezuela. De la Torre, his erstwhile benefactor, banned from Puerto Rico his 1834 pamphlet urging Spain to recognize Spanish American independence after Ferdinand VII's death even though it was far from being pro-revolutionary. See NAVARRO GARCÍA, Jesús Raúl. *Control social y actitudes políticas en Puerto Rico (1823-1837)*. Sevilla: Diputación Provincial de Sevilla, 1991, p. 272. Likewise, when Flinter arrived in Puerto Rico in 1829, Díaz, in his capacity as editor of the official organ *La Gaceta del Gobierno de Puerto Rico*, heavily edited Flinter's article on the Spanish American republics, removing any hint of conciliatory policies towards them. See NAVARRO GARCÍA, Jesús Raúl. *Un ejemplo de censura en el Puerto Rico decimonónico: la Carta al Duque de Wellington de Jorge D. Flinter*. In _____ *Puerto Rico a la sombra*, Op. Cit., p.143-156.

37

FLINTER, George Dawson, *An Account*, Op. Cit., p. 12.

38

Address to the British Subjects, going out in the Expedition to South America. By a British Officer, Who has been on the Scene of Action since the Commencement of the Revolution. In: AHN/E, legajo 5511, expediente 1; and *A History of the Revolution of Caracas; comprising an impartial narrative of the atrocities committed by the contending parties, illustrating the real state of the contest, both in a commercial and political point of view. Together with a description of the llaneros, or people of the plains of South America*. London: Printed for T. and J. Allman, 1819.

39

These foreign legions are the subject of Brown's *Adventuring through Spanish Colonies*.

40

In fact, in the 1820s, several independent Latin American governments defaulted on loans from British banks and the expected commercial bonanza fizzled. See COSTELOE, Michael, *Bubbles and Bonanzas: British Investors and Investments*

Flinter's fortunes had risen and fallen. The Captain General was Miguel de la Torre (1823-1837), the Count of Torrependo, the right-hand man of Field Marshall Pablo Morillo during the counter-insurgency campaign in New Granada that commenced with Ferdinand's restoration in 1814. De la Torre would succeed Morillo as the supreme military commander in the region. Also present in Puerto Rico was José Domingo Díaz, the colony's intendant. Díaz, who served in various offices in Caracas before and after the revolution, was well known as the most violently critical opponent of Simón Bolívar. Even in the late 1820s, he was plotting an invasion of Venezuela from Puerto Rico, which he had always seen as a temporary retreat from Tierra Firme before the ultimate success of a renewed Spanish counter-insurgency.³⁶

Flinter's experiences of continental political violence and social inversion flowed easily into his defense of insular loyalism and slavery. His writings on those experiences ten years earlier formed the dystopian subtext of his utopian representations of Puerto Rican social and political harmony, preserved by slavery and monarchy:

[...] although it is certainly very painful to reflect that the prosperity of one country should be built on the ruins of another, yet it is a consolation to know, that the inhabitants of this privileged spot have read in the fate of their neighbours a lesson of experience. They have seen practically in what manner, and to what extent, social order, peaceful industry, and submission to the laws, have contributed to individual and general prosperity.³⁷

What did their neighbor teach them, according to Flinter?

Flinter wrote at length about the revolution and counter-revolution in Venezuela during his work in Britain to cut off the flow of mercenaries to South America. He wrote in English, publishing a broadsheet and a lengthy study as counterparts to his lobbying, bribing, and legal challenges.³⁸

Bolívar's active recruitment of demobilized British soldiers for service in New Granada was what brought Flinter back home.³⁹ The situation was unusual. There was clearly widespread support for South American independence in Britain, while the government and business interests believed that they would benefit tremendously from emancipation.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, several factors led the British Foreign Office to insist on a policy of neutrality in the Spanish American revolutions: the wartime alliance between Britain and Spain, efforts to coax Spain into a treaty banning the slave trade to Cuba, anti-revolutionary preoccupation with the overthrow of monarchy in favor of republics, and, at root, the conviction that Britain could afford to bide its time without forcing the issue of independence.⁴¹ Thus, for a while, the government turned a blind eye toward the migration of mercenaries to New Granada and Venezuela but it also compromised with Spain by passing legislation that prohibited the recruitment of British troops for service in Spanish America.⁴² Flinter's mission was to see that the government did indeed enforce such measures, especially in light of a large contingent being recruited by the Irish adventurer John Devereux, by pressing a suit in court and by actively propagandizing against the promises of wealth and the ideals of liberty and emancipation that attracted recruits and swayed public opinion. For Flinter's Spanish supporters, the moment was especially sensitive. Pablo Morillo's counter-insurgency

in Mexico, 1821-1860. Landham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2011. Joselyn Almeida's work shows the widespread British interest in Latin American revolution and independence, as expressed in the literature of the era. See ALMEIDA, Joselyn. *British Romanticism and Latin America, 2: Atlantic Revolution and British Intervention. Literature Compass*, n. 7, 2010, p. 1-22.

41

The scholarship on this topic is immense but see the cogent discussion in BROWN, Mathew. *Adventuring through Spanish Colonies*, op. cit., p. 13-38.

42

See WADDELL, D.A.G. *British Neutrality*, op. cit."

43

On the course of the independence movements and the Spanish counter-insurgency, especially in Venezuela, see STOAN, Stephen K. *Pablo Morillo and Venezuela, 1815-1820*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1974; LYNCH, John. *Simón Bolívar: A Life*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006; and GÓMEZ, Alejandro. *La revolución de Caracas desde abajo. Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos*. On line. Débats, mis en ligne le 17 mai 2008, consulté le 24 avril 2014. URL : <http://nuevomundo.revues.org/32982>; DOI: 10.4000/nuevomundo.32982.

44

Address to British Subjects, Op. Cit., p. 1.

45

See ADELMAN, Jeremy. *Colonialism and National Histories*: José Manuel Restrepo and Bartolomé Mitre. In SCHMIDT-NOVARA, Christopher and NIETO-PHILLIPS, John. (eds.). *Interpreting Spanish Colonialism: Empires, Nations, and Legends*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005, p. 163-186.

46

Address to British Subjects, Op. Cit., p. 4.

47

Ibidem, p. 2.

48

Ibidem.

49

Ibidem.

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Ibidem.

had chased Bolívar from Spanish America into a Caribbean exile, but by 1819, the Libertador had returned and gained the upper hand in Venezuela. Coupled with the successful invasion of Chile by José de San Martín, independence leaders seemed poised for victory throughout the continent, though loyalist resistance proved tenacious.⁴³

Flinter acknowledged that the allure of the independence movements was great but that he would dispel the hopes that had accrued to them:

All eyes are directed towards South America. From the prospect of independence which that country presents, thousands indulge the hope of seeing laid out, a wide extended field for commercial speculation, and others view, in the present struggle, an opportunity of obtaining military renown. Far be it from my intention to attempt to damp the sober calculations of the one, or the enthusiasm and romantic chivalry of the other; . . . I am well aware of the many obstacles I have to encounter; I have to combat the very general feeling which exists in this country in favour of South American patriots; the decided predilection to every thing which bears the smallest semblance of freedom; and the rooted prejudice to every circumstance connected with the Spanish cause. But great as these difficulties may appear, they will dwindle, like the mist before the noon-day sun, from the touch of impartial investigation [...]⁴⁴

To counter the support for the patriots, Flinter revived the debate over the Black Legend of Spanish violence and cruelty, enjoying a renaissance during the wars of independence, by trying to demonstrate Spanish benevolence and Creole cruelty and perfidy.⁴⁵ He also made a special appeal to the Irish who, like himself, had benefited from Spain's generosity: "she received them into her bosom, and adopted them as her children".⁴⁶

But the main thrust of the broadsheet was the clash between blacks and whites unwittingly unleashed by the revolutionaries, who proved unable to tame the furies they had freed: "no man, great and disinterested, rose to reconcile these clashing interests, and to unite, in one irresistible mass, the whole population".⁴⁷ Instead, the Creole insurgents like Bolívar had sown the seeds of their own destruction: "When long protracted warfare shall have exhausted the power of Spain, internal discord will destroy the few surviving Creoles, and the blacks will be the undisputed masters of all the country. . . Scarcely is a white person to be seen; . . ."⁴⁸ The fear and influence of the Haitian Revolution echoed through his violent denunciation of the independence movement: "the day is not far distant, when the Caracas will be swayed by a sable chieftan; for since the introduction of the St. Domingo blacks in Caracas, in 1816, by the sanguinary BOLIVAR, a general spirit of destroying the whites pervades the slaves and people of colour".⁴⁹ What this meant for the British and Irish would-be liberators was that they were furthering this social revolution, which would also engulf them:

[...] when they have proceeded too far to retrace their steps, when those very persons who have employed them (as has already happened in more than one instance) holding out to them such flattering prospects, will abandon them, leaving them a prey to the horrors of want, privation, and sickness, in an unfriendly clime, to the inexorable fury of a horde of savage blacks.⁵⁰

At the end of his broadsheet, Flinter promised that "*in a few days, will appear, written by the author, an exact History of the Revolution of Caracas*", a work in which he spoke in more specific detail about the revolutionary furies and who had freed them. Again, he portrayed Venezuela as a site of violent racial conflict and social disorder, laying the blame on not

On the use of political violence and terror in this phase of the war and in the Spanish American revolutions more broadly, see THIBAUD, Clément "Coupé têtes, brûlé cases": peurs et désirs d'Haïti dans l'Amérique de Bolívar. *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 58, n. 2, 2003. p. 305-331; _____: *The Rites of Statehood*:

Violence and Sovereignty in Spanish America, 1789-1821. *Hispanic American Historical Review* 90, Aug/2010. p. 391-422; and RACINE, Karen. *Message by Massacre: Venezuela's War to the Death, 1810-1814. Journal of Genocide Research*, 15, n. 2, 2013. p. 201-217.

Flinter was still in Curaçao during this period of the war in Venezuela but news of atrocities by loyalist and patriot forces began to appear in dispatches from the island by the end of 1813. See, for example, the dispatch in which the governor Hodgson informs the minister Bathurst of the massacre of Spanish prisoners held in prison in La Guaira, dated Curaçao, 12 April 1814, BNA/WO 1/115: "this horrid act of was carried into execution in the most cruel and horrid manner. I transmit an Extenuating Manifesto published by the Independent Government but it will be very difficult to wipe away the foul stain, this barbarous action has so indelibly stamped on that Government". See Flinter's rendering of the event below.

52

FLINTER, George Dawson. *History of the Revolution of Caracas*, Op. Cit., p. 148.

53

On the long trajectory of the Las Casas-Sepúlveda debate, see ADORNO, Rolena. *The Polemics of Possession in Spanish American Narrative*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007. On nineteenth-century renderings of the Black Legend that inflected its meanings toward backwardness and away from violence, see KAGAN, Richard. *Prescott Paradigm: American Historical Scholarship and the Decline of Spain. American Historical Review*, n. 101, 1996, p. 423-446.

54

FLINTER, George Dawson. *History of the Revolution of Caracas*, Op. Cit., p. 86.

55

MELLOR, Anne E. *Making a 'monster': an introduction to Frankenstein*. *Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley* ed. Esther Schor. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 12. Paraphrasing David Punter, *The Literature of Terror*.

56

MALCHOW, H. L. *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 3.

57

FLINTER, George Dawson. *History of the Revolution of Caracas*, Op. Cit., p. 43 and 66-67.

58

Ibidem, p. 58-59.

59

Ibidem, p. 90.

only Bolívar and the revolutionaries, as he had done in the broadsheet, but also on the preeminent royalist warlord of the counter-revolution between 1812 and 1815, the Spaniard José Tomás Boves.⁵¹ In his narrative, Flinter appropriated the characteristic elements of the Black Legend, describing in painful detail acts of extreme, and apparently gratuitous, violence and cruelty, with great emphasis on dismemberment and torture, a sort of "Short Account of the Destruction of the Spaniards". In doing so, he was turning the tables on Creole patriots and their European sympathizers who were easily convinced of Spanish cruelty. He especially sought to tarnish the image of Bolívar, to show his British readers that the Liberator "will find it difficult to liberate his own name from the well earned title of a vile assassin", becoming a latter day Pedrarias Dávila in Flinter's hands.⁵² While he borrowed from these Spanish literary and historical polemics, dating from the sixteenth century,⁵³ he also wrote as a Briton for British readers. In treating Boves ("a monster"⁵⁴) and his irregular army of *llaneros*, Flinter presented the destructive counter-revolution in gothic tones, the gothic being a form that "deals centrally with paranoia, the taboo, and the barbaric, everything that a given culture most fears and tries hardest to repress".⁵⁵ The gothic's "reiterated evocation of terror, disgust, and alienation"⁵⁶ suffused Flinter's treatment of the race war unleashed by the unscrupulous, monstrous Boves.

Flinter filled his history with accounts of atrocities committed at Bolívar's orders (for example, the commander Brizeño sending to Cartagena a bag full of severed heads as a sign of his victory in Barinas in 1812, or Bolívar executing prisoners by taking them to sea and having them walk the plank⁵⁷), flipping the Black Legend discourse of Creole patriots. Inscribed in this telling of acts of incredible violence was the racial conflict and social inversion set in motion by the revolution, especially after Bolívar had declared war to the death against the Spanish (in retaliation for Spanish atrocities, though that goes unsaid in Flinter's history):

[...] the most despicable character, even freemen of color and slaves, might satiate their revenge on persons of the most unblemished integrity. What a heart-rending spectacle, to behold decrepit old men, whose grey locks and venerable appearance would have excited compassion in the hearts of the most obdurate villainy, brought in from the country, and marched through the streets, tied on the backs of asses, amidst the sights and tears of their children, their grandchildren, and domestics, exposed to the insulting sneers of an unprincipled mob, and destined to languish their few remaining days, in misery and chains.⁵⁸

Such carnivalesque scenes in which the colonial world was turned upside down became more common with the triumph of the counter-revolution headed by the humbly born Spanish immigrant Boves (in Flinter's account true order and civility were restored only with the arrival of Pablo Morillo's expeditionary force from Spain, in 1815). By portraying Boves as an unprincipled opportunist, a resentful outsider ("when the dire spirit of rebellion inverted order, [...] Bobes [sic] formed the bold design of occupying that exalted station which was denied him by birth, fortune, and education"⁵⁹), Flinter could deflect away from Spain the responsibility for the unequivocal cruelties committed during the counter-revolution and place them squarely on the shoulders of the plainsman and his irregular forces of cowboys recruited from the southern *llanos* of Venezuela: "these were the soldiers, for whose atrocities, the press of every country in Europe

60
Ibidem, p. 137.

61
Ibidem, p. 86.

62
Ibidem, p. 146.

63
Ibidem, p. 148-149.

64
Ibidem, p. 178-179.

65
Examen del estado actual de los esclavos de la isla de Puerto Rico bajo el gobierno español: en que se manifiesta la impolítica y peligro de la prematura emancipación de los esclavos de la india occidental. New York: Imprenta Española del Redactor, 1832, p. 7-8.

66
The intent of his *Account of the Present State of the Island of Puerto Rico*. In hindsight, a patent falsehood as the growth of slavery until mid-century demonstrates but one well accepted in the British press, which reviewed Flinter's work widely.

67
DRESCHER, Seymour. *The Might Experiment: Free Labor versus Slavery in British Emancipation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 120.

has groaned beneath the weight of publications, fulminating the thunder of horror and destruction against the Spanish name [...]"⁶⁰

Who were the *llaneros*? In Flinter's history, they were equivalent to the masses of free people of color mobilized by Bolívar but conditioned by their rough life as cowboys on the southern frontier and by their mixture with unvanquished Indians (Flinter alternately called them Sambos and people of color). Boves could rally them by promising plunder and vengeance upon the colonial white population that they hated and resented: By these means, he soon collected a formidable force of these lawless savages, who, regardless of every law of justice, and devoid of every humane feeling, bore down everything before them, with fire and sword. Men, women, and children, all who had the slightest tinge of European blood, fell indiscriminately victims to their fury.⁶¹

The consequence of Boves' victories was to plunge Venezuela even further into social conflict. Faced with route, Bolívar responded with similar violence, in one instance unleashing his colored supporters on his Spanish prisoners held in the dungeons of port city La Guaira (which was in close contact with British-occupied Curaçao, where Flinter was stationed at the time): [...] for this purpose a number of people of color and soldiers entered the dungeons, armed with sabres, knives, and lances; and shocking to relate, in place of putting them to immediate death, they were mangled in a most horrid manner, whilst the unfortunate captives begged and prayed to be put out of torture after which they were burned alive.⁶²

Perhaps echoing early Spanish chroniclers and apologists of Spanish conquest, Flinter recalled witnessing the traces of this event: "A few months after this shocking massacre took place, I visited the dungeons where the Spaniards suffered martyrdom; the walls and floors were still clotted with blood, and the chains and rings which secured them to the ground still remained there".⁶³ The arrival of Pablo Morillo at the head of thousands of metropolitan troops in 1815 "restored confidence and order, and checked the power, which the people of color had assumed",⁶⁴ but Bolívar's gains in the eastern part of the country after he returned from exile in Jamaica and Haiti promised to return Venezuela to that chaotic state when he and Boves and their followers had run amok.

Implicit in Flinter's later writings about slavery, abolition, and political loyalty in Puerto Rico was the experience of revolution and social turmoil in Venezuela, fears that he shared with British and Spanish publics alike. In the midst of the British abolitionist campaign, Flinter, in a work addressed to the Duke of Wellington, warned that colonial slavery in the British Empire had left the enslaved unprepared and unfit for freedom, unlike in Puerto Rico, where laws made slavery more gentle and assimilative.⁶⁵ He quickly had to change tack when the British parliament did indeed vote to abolish West Indian slavery, arguing that even in the midst of slave trading and expansion of the plantation economy Puerto Rico was now moving toward emancipation, like its British neighbors.⁶⁶ He might also have been surprised to learn that Venezuela figured into the abolitionist campaign, but not in the way he would have supposed. As Seymour Drescher has shown: "Venezuela served antislavery well".⁶⁷ British abolitionists adduced economic growth in the independent republic as a positive example of how free wage laborers could assume the tasks of enslaved workers, even on

sugar plantations. If slaves could become free workers in Venezuela, they argued, the same could happen in the British colonies after emancipation.

Even though Britons drew different lessons from independence and emancipation in Spanish America, Flinter could be sure of agreement in the Spanish colonial world. Indeed, I would argue that aside from the immediate goal of influencing or countering the politics of British abolitionism, his writings show us much about the defense of slavery in the post-revolutionary Spanish Empire. By the time Flinter arrived in Puerto Rico in 1829, metropolitan and colonial elites had reconciled themselves to the urgency of the slaving and plantation complex that had taken shape beginning in the later eighteenth century. Through the era of the Cortes of Cadiz (1810-1814), the changes being wrought in the Caribbean settlements aroused considerable opposition, which would never completely disappear but which had little impact until the 1860s. The extant colonies were key markets and sources of revenue for metropolitan producers and the Spanish state, interests that heightened commitment to slavery and the new status quo.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, planters and merchants in the colonies remained bullish about the slave-worked plantations in a global economy hungry for tropical commodities, while the traffickers who smuggled human cargoes into the Spanish Caribbean, and their financial backers, amassed huge fortunes.⁶⁹

Flinter's experience and rendering of continental revolution hints at an important aspect of proslavery, not only in the insular colonies, but also in the Atlantic-world proslavery international formed in the United States, Brazil, and the Spanish Empire in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. As Rafael Marquese and Tâmis Parron have shown, the second slavery's defenders became more active, articulate, and cosmopolitan in the face of renewed challenges from British abolitionism and the British government, epitomized by the abolition of slavery in the West Indian colonies in the 1830s, continued legal and diplomatic innovations in the policing of the transatlantic slave trade, and the World Anti-Slavery Convention held in London in 1840.⁷⁰ Flinter certainly fits in that framework, as his rose-tinted portrayals of Puerto Rican society published in 1832 and 1834 were meant to influence British views on Spanish colonial slavery. At the same time, his continental background indicates another important source of proslavery sentiment and rhetoric: response to revolutionary violence and social change in slave societies from the American Revolution through the Spanish American Revolutions. During those decades, émigrés from revolutionary societies landed in places like Puerto Rico, Cuba, Sierra Leone, New Orleans, Charleston, and Jamaica. Some were formerly or re-enslaved people who continued to defend or claim their freedom, like the black loyalists from British North America in Sierra Leone or refugees from Saint-Domingue who fled their homes and then were chased from Cuba in 1809, ending up in the resurgent slave society of New Orleans. But others were slave owners who sought to find new ways of benefitting from their property in slaves.⁷¹ Flinter was undoubtedly acquainted with refugees who could recount stories and aspirations similar to his own when he settled in Puerto Rico at the end of the 1820s, those who fled from Santo Domingo and Venezuela, bringing with them not only slaves, but also "habits of industry and subordination."⁷²

Though he claimed to have married into a wealthy family in Venezuela, his pen, his loyalism, and his military background were his tickets to naturalization and promotion in Puerto Rico. He was a dependent figure

68

See MALUQUER DE MOTES, Jordi. *La burguesia catalana i l'esclavitud colonial: Modes de producció i pràctica política*, *Recerques*, n. 3, 1974, p. 83-136; FRADERA, Josep M. *Colonias para después de un imperio*. Barcelona: Bellaterra, 2005; and RODRIGO Y ALHARILLA, Martin. *Spanish Merchants and the Slave Trade: From Legality to Illegality, 1814-1870*. In: FRADERA, Josep M. and SCHMIDT-NOWARA (eds.) *Slavery and Antislavery*, Op. Cit., p. 176-199.

69

See especially the works by Tomich and Marquese et al., cited above; ZEUSKE, Michael and GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ, Orlando. *La Amistad: Ramón Ferrer in Cuba and the Transatlantic Dimensions of Slaving and Contraband Trade*. In: FRADERA, Josep M. and SCHMIDT-NOWARA (eds.) *Slavery and Antislavery*, op. cit., p. 200-228; and HARRIS, John. *Spies, Slave Traders, and Networks: The Illegal Atlantic Slave Trade, 1859-1866*. Unpublished manuscript, cited by the author's permission.

70

"International escravista."

71

See the works cited in n. 10.

72

FLINTER, George Dawson. *An Account*, Op. Cit. 14.

73

FLINTER, George Dawson. *History of the Revolution of Caracas*, Op. Cit., p. 19-20.

who did not necessarily share the same material interests as the planters, slavers, and merchants of the Spanish Antilles or their landed and manufacturing counterparts in the metropolis. His interest in defending slavery could certainly encompass the economic perspectives of those groups but I would argue that his proslavery views came from living through the Venezuelan revolution and counter-revolution, when the forces of Bolívar, Boves, and Morillo rent the colony. In his alternately gothic and lascasian rendering of the events of those years, slavery was not only a form of labor, but also a bulwark of the social hierarchies upon which political order and civilization were maintained. Revolution dissolved that order by promoting the desire for emancipation by the enslaved and, even more dangerously, for social and political equality, even preeminence, among the free people of color, who: had a deep sense of the importance of their own number and strength, and . . . were anxious to profit by this opportunity of laying prostrate every distinction of rank and color; they carefully availed themselves of every circumstance to evince their equality, by their insolence, and by taking the most signal vengeance on the Creoles".⁷³

Thus, at the root of his representation of Puerto Rican slave society as peaceful, bucolic, and harmonious was the deep anxiety about the conflicts latent within it that abolitionism and revolution could easily unleash.

Sources: Laird Bergad, *Coffee and the Growth of Agrarian Capitalism in Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico*; Jay Kinsburner, *Not of Pure Blood: The Free People of Color and Racial Prejudice in Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico*; Louis A. Pérez, jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*; John V. Lombardi, *The Decline and Abolition of Negro Slavery in Venezuela, 1820-1854*; Andrews, *Afro-Latin America*.