Indigenous, and Black people; the marriage patterns of women of European origin; and intermarriage with Indigenous and African women. Schultz also provides a pertinent analysis of legislation known as the *Diretório dos Índios* (Indian Directorate; 1758), highlighting the degree to which royal authorities subjected Indigenous and African or Afro-descendant populations to differential treatment. This becomes evident in the legal (but not de facto) equating of white people and Indigenous people living in colonized areas, or in the incremental emergence of a more favorable opinion toward marriage between natives and Europeans. It was not coincidental that advocacy for even deeper investment in enslaved African labor in Brazil, and laws to bring this about, intensified and proliferated precisely during this period. Schultz likewise presents a cogent evaluation of legislation issued in the 1760s and 1770s related to the abolition of slavery and its trafficking in mainland Portugal, laws that had significant reverberations in Brazil, particularly among the African and Afro-descendant population. Black individuals in Brazil, whether enslaved, freed, or free, protested the fact that they were relegated to an inferior position compared with people of color who were native to or residing in mainland Portugal. By way of an epilogue, the book concludes with a highly suggestive reflection on the discourses that marked the Age of Revolutions concerning political economy and its reformist application in Brazil. Schultz observes that, despite some criticisms of the excessive use of enslaved individuals, full-throated calls for the abolition of slavery were conspicuously absent throughout this epoch.

Fundamentally, Kirsten Schultz shows that eighteenth-century Brazil played host to a more absolutist view of royal authority, one that was particularly inclined to regard Brazil as a "colony." Schultz's thorough analysis unravels this process with precision and nuance, making it an excellent contribution to the historiography of Colonial Latin America.

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SLAVERY AND EMANCIPATION IN ARGENTINA

Una historia de la emancipación negra: esclativud y abolición en la argentina. By Magdalena Candioti. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2021. Pp. 270. $18.60 paper. doi:10.1017/tam.2024.147

Argentina's Museo Histórico Nacional, in Buenos Aires, is home to an 1841 painting titled *Las esclavas de Buenos Aires demuestran ser libres y gratas a su noble libertador*. The artist, credited as one D. de Plot, depicts a somewhat bifurcated scene. On the left side of the canvas, which measures nearly 5 feet wide and 3 feet tall, is an assemblage of dozens of dark-hued figures, with some holding aloft flags that read (from left to right): "*Mueran los salbajes unitarios*," "*Viva el [sic] restauración de los leyes*," and "*Viva la libertad*." On the right, is the figure of Governor Juan Manuel de Rosas, holding an unfurled scroll

proclaiming: "*Libertad, no a los tiranos*." A few paces behind him stands a man, perhaps a servant or attaché, holding the lead to a horse that is standing at attention on the fringes of the canvas. Hovering in the clouds above the scene, as if to unite the two sides of it, is an angel trumpeting out a message depicted by an overlay of text: "*Ya no gemirá en el Plata, en cadenas ni un esclavo. Su amargo llanto cesó, desde que Rosas humano. De su libertad ufano, compasivo y generoso. Prodigó este don precioso, al infeliz africano*."

It would be easy to read the painting as a kind of artistic commemoration of abolition in Argentina, particularly given its title, embedded texts, and placement within a national museum, as well as the lack of comprehensive studies on the latter subject. Indeed, as Magdalena Candiotti makes clear this lack of comprehensive studies has contributed to a sense of "the nonviolent character of abolition [that was] concurrent with the rise of a liberal and democratic culture" (16).[1] A sense, in other words, that freedom was a gift graciously bestowed upon and gratefully received by enslaved people. Instead, Candiotti shows, abolition was a gradual process that began with the Free Womb Act of 1813 and culminated in legislation in 1853 and 1860 that prohibited the entry of enslaved people into Argentina. In intervening years, it was marked in the by constant struggles over the meaning of slavery and freedom.

To study slavery and freedom in Latin America is, on one level, to work within an established nomenclature for people of African descent. Across a range of notarial, civil, criminal, and ecclesiastical records (among others) appear labels such as *esclavo/a* to describe the enslaved and *libre* or *liberto/a* to describe those born into freedom or granted it through manumission or self-purchase. Such labels have always concealed the individuality and lived experiences of those who carried them. Chapters 1 through 3 of Candiotti's book show us that, in the years between 1813 and 1860, they were also far from straightforward or stable. In 1833, for example, when a woman named doña Petrona Salvatierra de Escobar sent Petrona Salvatierra from Tucumán to Buenos Aires to be sold by the former's son, Simón Salvatierra, it seemed to be a brutally ordinary transaction: here was an enslaver exercising her right to sell off her human property to whomever she saw fit, wherever she saw fit. But just as the transaction neared completion, Petrona brought it to a stop by insisting that she was free ("*aseguró ser libre*"). According to her testimony, a lawyer (*defensor de pobres*) had told her as much when Salvatierra de Escobar first tried to sell her in Tucumán (76–77).

Petrona's claim rested on a matter of timing: she was born following the Free Womb Act. However, as with many people of African descent born in the days, weeks, months, and years following this watershed legislation, Petrona lacked a birth certificate or baptismal record affirming her date of birth, which in and of itself would have proven free status.

1. The original Spanish reads: "*el carácter no conflictivo de la abolición, consecuente con una temprana cultura liberal y democrática*." All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

Further complicating matters in this case was that Salvatierra de Escobar had intentionally sent Petrona away from her birthplace of Tucumán to Buenos Aires, effectively cutting her off from any witnesses (such as the lawyer or any family members or kin) who could have supported her claims, while also thrusting her into a new environment. Simón Salvatierra, a young law student himself, assembled a team of witnesses who unanimously claimed that "they knew [Petrona] as a slave and did not know she had been emancipated" (77). Petrona denied knowing any of the witnesses, whose assertions seemed to rest on the mere fact that Simón Salvatierra and his mother had described, treated, and sought to sell Petrona as a slave. This, transitively, proved her status as one.

Part of what further stymied Petrona's claims (and others similar to hers) was the patronage system that accompanied the passage of the Free Womb Act. The system, Candiotti notes, placed children born after 1813 under the authority of their mothers' (or parents') enslavers, during which time they lived and worked under conditions indistinguishable from slavery until they came of age to be freed. These conditions were filled with obstacles that served enslavers' interests above all others: a baby could be labeled in baptismal records as "*esclavo*" or "*hijo de esclava*," or sold with their mother, both of which naturalized slavery as the condition of children born to enslaved mothers, despite legislation meant to ensure their freedom (75). Patronage thus functioned as a right to children's labor that could extend into adulthood (as well as operate within the transactional universe of slavery, as evidenced by newspaper advertisements posted by prospective buyers and sellers of patronages; 95). The patronage system also relied on the discretion and largesse of enslavers to grant said freedom; therefore, it resulted in a system in which those born after 1813 were not free (*libres*). Instead, they were freed (*libertos*) and often not free.

Petrona's case encapsulates two tendencies that run throughout Candioti's book and were always at cross-purposes: just as surely as people of African descent were committed to understanding and using every tool at their disposal to assert their rights to freedom, so too were enslavers committed to preserving their claims to property, no matter how legally flimsy or questionable those claims may have been.

Candiotti also looks at the broader landscape of freedom struggles in Argentina and the Rio de la Plata region. Chapter 4 examines nineteenth-century wills and gratuitous manumission records (in which enslavers promised freedom without the expectation of monetary compensation) to highlight how enslavers wielded the promise of freedom in ways that demanded gratitude in exchange for their purported generosity. Gratitude, in these cases, took many forms, including expectations of deference, periods of continued (often indefinite) service to the children and heirs of enslavers, and promises of what enslavers decided constituted acceptable behavior (105–128). They allowed enslavers to

preserve the prerogative of continued dominion over enslaved people even as they advanced claims to goodness and moral rectitude and ensured their enshrinement in documentation.

Chapter 5 takes up Argentina's fight for independence, subsequent border conflicts, and expansionist military campaigns, which brought with them the possibility for enslaved people to gain freedom through armed service. Governor Juan Manuel de Rosas declared slavery incompatible with republican ideals, and for more than 50 years people of African descent—*esclavos*, *libres*, and *libertos* alike—enlisted, not only as soldiers but also as camp aides and followers. Candiotti devotes a chapter-spanning microhistory to highlight the possibilities and limits of such strategies. The chapter focuses on a free man of African descent named Antonio Porobio. He purchased a young woman named Francisca Sebastiana in Montevideo and enlisted her as a camp aide during the independence war. Shortly thereafter, in 1814, Porobio freed Sebastiana in acknowledgement of her services (150). The matter seemed settled until Francisca lost the letter of freedom. By 1820, she had managed to obtain a second one but ran into trouble when Porobio's wife María Maza (herself a *liberta*) stole it from the home of one of Porobio's relatives who had been guarding it for safekeeping. She claimed that Francisca was her own property rather than Porobio's and insisted that the 1814 manumission documents were therefore invalid. Although Maza was not opposed, in principle, to Francisca obtaining her freedom, the latter would need to pay the former to do so. It was Maza's claim that fueled Francisca's attempt to secure yet another manumission record, but the documentation on the matter ended abruptly before reaching a conclusion.

The chapter provides a window onto Black life in nineteenth-century Rio de la Plata, where Porobio, Francisca, and Maza formed part of a larger, dynamic world of *esclavos*, *libres*, and *libertos* (and the enslavers among them). Candiotti uses the chapter as a springboard for varying reflections on the interrelated themes of racial formation, citizenship, and national belonging that comprise the latter third of the book. Though somewhat disjointed and lacking the narrative weight and coherence of the first two-thirds of the book, the author nonetheless manages to highlight the profound tension between the supposed egalitarian spirit of liberalism, on one hand, and the endurance of slavery and proliferation of political discourses and caricatures taking aim at Afro-Argentines' dignity and fitness for citizenship, on the other.

It seems fitting to conclude this review by returning to the 1841 painting referenced at the beginning. Candiotti's book helps to surface the many translation challenges, interpretive mis-directions, and acts of erasure layered upon the canvas. These are perhaps most clearly represented by the title itself: *Las esclavas de Buenos Aires demuestran ser libres y gratas a su noble libertador*. Is the painting, in fact, a depiction of *esclavas*? Or were some of them born after the Free Womb Act and therefore already *libres*? Why, then, would they

need to prove their freedom? Why would they, or should they, have expressed gratitude to their "noble liberator," or to anyone but themselves because it was their own labor, sweat, resilience, and maneuvering that made their freedom possible in the decades before abolition in the first place? Why does the narrative of freedom set forth in this painting loom so large in the country's national museum? Finally, and perhaps most importantly, what would a more accurate artistic commemoration of freedom, one that honors those who relentlessly fought for it, look like?

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GENDER, LABOR, AND US IMPERIALISM IN PANAMA

The Silver Women: How Black Women's Labor Made the Panama Canal. By Joan Flores-Villalobos. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023. Pp. 296. Notes. Index. $39.95 cloth.
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There is a vast body of literature about the Panama Canal and rightfully so. It stands as one of the most consequential construction projects in human history. This enormous undertaking, as well as the nearly century-long US presence in the Canal Zone, has been the subject of popular histories (for example, by David McCullough), diplomatic histories (Walter LaFeber), social histories (Michael Donoghue), and labor histories (Michael L. Conniff and Julie Greene). Scholars in recent years have directed a great deal more attention to the latter category. Joan Flores-Villalobos offers an insightful addition to this corpus with her examination of West Indian women's experiences as the canal was being built.

The book's title is an homage to Velma Newton's *The Silver Men*. That study shed light on the West Indian men who risked life and limb to build the canal yet were paid considerably less than the skilled (mostly white) workers who were on the more lucrative Gold Roll. Flores-Villalobos addresses an even-less-studied and underappreciated group crucial to the canal project. She makes a compelling case that West Indian women's stories and experiences are not just ancillary to the broader account of the Panama Canal but rather fundamental to the canal project itself.

Flores-Villalobos shows that West Indian women—perhaps some 15,000—who migrated to Panama at the turn of the twentieth century "built a provisioning economy that fed, housed, and cared for workers, in effect subsidizing the construction effort and its racial calculus" (2). These women served as cooks, cleaners, childcare providers, sex workers, and domestic partners. Without their work, she argues, the US imperial project in Panama would not have been possible.