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Slaves and Englishmen: Human Bondage in the Early Modern Atlantic World. By Michael Guasco (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014) 315 pp. \$45.00 cloth and e-book

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Slaves and Englishmen: Human Bondage in the Early Modern Atlantic World. By Michael Guasco
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Michael Guasco's study reframes the history of English slaveholding by placing it in the context of human bondage in the early modern English world. Bondage and slavery were, he argues, familiar as ideas and experiences to Englishmen of the period: the early development of slavery does not represent a radical shift, but adaptation of existing models and experiences.

Guasco builds his argument over six chapters. The first argues that the English were familiar with slavery through the Bible and Protestant theology; through the history and laws of Rome as taught in England's grammar schools and universities; and through narratives of English history which identified conquerors – Danes or Normans – as enslaving the English. Even more, serfdom continued to limit the freedom of a significant number of English men and women in the sixteenth century, and the use of penal slavery was part of the government experiments of the mid-Tudor period. The second chapter moves out, exploring English encounters with slavery around the world, particularly in the Mediterranean: the English (however disingenuously) prided themselves on their freedom, but enslavement, particularly of war captives, was familiar. In the third chapter, Guasco turns to the ways in which English privateers attempted to use alliances with Africans against the Spanish in the Americas: the Africans, however, did not see the English as natural allies, but used them strategically to gain freedom from the Spanish. A fourth chapter examines the experience of, and narratives about, the "thousands" of English sailors enslaved in the early modern Mediterranean; far more, he suggests, died than returned; but those who did return were often treated as apostates, having converted to Islam rather than embrace martyrdom. The final two chapters look at the way slavery was transplanted into English America, from the earliest days onwards. Here, Guasco emphasizes the multiple models of slavery available to colonists, its practice in the Spanish

colonies, and the ways early colonies adapted bondage as a method of controlling behavior, and debates about the enslavement of Indians. When the early colonists began to acquire African slaves, they only gradually moved away from Spanish models, with high levels of manumission; at the same time, they treated Africans as slaves before they had legal structures to do so. The book thus provides a wide view, which demonstrates that English men and women were familiar with slavery, and that the structure of plantation slavery that ultimately emerged was not a foregone conclusion.

Guasco focuses on the role of slavery and freedom in the English imagination. The English did not have to be or have actual slaves to have a concept of slavery. He also points to the ways in which freedom was seen to make England uniquely humane involved self-deception if not outright hypocrisy. Guasco has read widely, and produced a rich account of the English cultural experience of slavery in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. However, as in any project, there are blind spots: by looking for forms of bondage and slavery, the wider context of these is often less clear, particularly the ways in which the forms of bondage, real and imagined, intersect with other historical developments in English society. Is it more important that there were still attempts to enforce villeinage in the sixteenth century, or that such attempts met with broad resistance from all levels of English society? How were ideas about slavery connected to ideas about gender and sexuality? More importantly, given the political resonance of the concept of slavery in England, what are the political uses of such language, and how should that shape our understanding of it? This is primarily a cultural history, and its structure is episodic, so change over time on the English side is less visible; yet few historians of England would move as seamlessly as Guasco from the 1540s to the 1640s. Guasco is not, in general, reflective about his methods, or his sources. Penn Press has done Guasco and his readers a disservice by not providing a bibliography.

Such caveats, however, do not detract from the significance of Guasco's work. *Slaves and Englishmen* is an important book, which provides a persuasive account of the place of bondage in English experience that will challenge historians of both colonial America and early modern Britain.

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