ern states “passed resolutions claiming to have the right of interposition and declaring the Supreme Court’s decision ‘null and void’” (179–80).

Baker has written a fabulous book about slavery and the conflict of laws. Its analysis of the legal arguments is sound, and its breadth impressive. His respect for African Americans possessing the inherent right to act as agents in asserting personal sovereignty and the pursuit of happiness is apparent throughout the treatise; however, there are a few cultural slights that will annoy critical readers. Some readers will wonder why the phrase “fugitive slaves” is not criticized more forcefully, and when appropriate, replaced with “freedom seekers” or “refugees.” Other readers will flinch when Baker writes “Slaveholding states threatened secession if their citizens’ slave property was not protected when it fled northward” (xi). If there is a logical explanation for Baker to use the pronoun it when referring to the antecedent that referenced an enslaved African American, that reason is not clearly stated.

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Reviewed by John Craig Hammond

How did white Americans move from their “post-Revolutionary consensus concerning the evil of slavery and sanguine expectations of its rapid demise” to their “Jacksonian-era rejection of abolitionism and acquiescence in the institution as ineradicable and not incompatible with the principles of the Union”? (2). The Missouri Controversy and Its Aftermath only begins to address this important question. According to Robert Pierce Forbes, the Missouri Controversy made slavery’s future the central political issue of the 1820s. A decade of political conflicts over slavery ended only with Martin Van Buren’s deliberate creation of
the Second Party System, which expressly served “the mutual goal of slaveholders to defend slavery from national attack and of Democratic leaders to mobilize slaveholders as a political bloc” (8). By the 1830s, Van Buren and the Democratic Party had pulled off one of the great ideological coups in American history: They redefined the meaning of both slavery and America by creating a new, conservative narrative of American history that protected slavery by denying its significance and by placing any criticism of it beyond reproach.

Forbes begins his account with the controversial claim that James Monroe entered the presidency intent on strengthening the bonds of union through internal improvements and reform, including “a radical campaign to eliminate slavery and the African presence from American life” (15). Like many other white Americans, Monroe was committed to a program of compensated emancipation and forced removal that would eradicate slavery from a progressive, reform-minded, postwar America. When set against the undeniable growth of slavery after 1815, this broad reformist, nationalist, and antislavery agenda set the stage for the Missouri Controversy that began in 1819.

Thus, when New York Congressmen James Tallmadge proposed restrictions on Missouri slavery, a simple question of Missouri statehood immediately became “a referendum” on the meaning of slavery in America (43). Forbes provides a detailed survey of the sectional positions for and against restrictions, along with the political, partisan, and ideological considerations that informed them. Northerners expressed their opposition to slavery on a variety of pragmatic, constitutional, ideological, and political grounds. Though southerners found themselves on the defensive, most remained reluctant to articulate or embrace a “positive good” defense of slavery. Ultimately, the Missouri Crises and Compromises would lead to two ominous developments. “At once rendering slavery more racial and racism more national” (119), they demonstrated that the “issue of slavery could not be discussed publicly without exposing unbreachable fissures in the Union, and thus, to preserve the Union, nothing should be said about slavery at all” (120). It would take moderate antislavery white Americans over a decade to learn this lesson.

In Forbes’s analysis, political conflict in the 1820s involved struggles between three groups seeking to determine slavery’s future. Led by James Monroe, Henry Clay, and John Quincy Adams, reformers and nationalists remained committed to a federally sponsored program of emancipation and removal. Historians tend to dismiss colonization, but
Forbes ties it to other issues, explaining why it fired the imagination of reformers and nationalists through the 1820s. The tariff and the sale of the national domain could finance the compensated emancipation of slaves as well as the building of canals. Monroe’s “amalgamation” of parties would allow nationalists to build broad coalitions of voters and politicians to support improvement and progress. The economic stagnation of slavery in the Upper South made whites there open to proposals for compensated emancipation and removal, while skeptical Upper South politicians might support emancipation if it came with the promise of federal funding for a new road or canal through their district. Finally, the election of John Quincy Adams in 1824 and his appointment of Henry Clay as Secretary of State and heir apparent to the presidency promised nationalists sixteen years of presidential power to enact their heady visions of reform and improvement. In the early 1820s, many voters and politicians appeared ready to commit themselves to nationalism and progress, including the eradication of slavery.

Southern extremists would have none of it. They spent the decade of the 1820s developing strategies to counter not only the persistent attacks against slavery but also the whole spirit of reform and improvement. Still hesitant to use a “positive good” defense, the extremists developed different means to protect slavery from both northern and southern interference: a retreat into trenchant conservatism, various religious defenses, strict construction, states’ rights, and disunionism, all of which receive nuanced treatments. Despite their bellicose efforts to protect slavery, however, the extremist opposition might have been marginalized in national politics had it not been for Martin Van Buren.

Van Buren arrived in Washington in 1821 committed to reviving the conflict of the First Party System. As he lacked any ideological grounds for his commitment to partisanship, “Van Buren’s real motivation for engaging in politics was the love of a game which he played better than practically anyone else in the nation’s history” (137). To play that game, Van Buren needed southern politicians, who could be made to vote as a bloc if they believed that slavery was threatened. By 1826, Van Buren’s alliance with southern extremists could neutralize Adams on issues only tangentially related to slavery. Yet Van Buren and his allies remained concerned about the potential presidency of Henry Clay, who was politically far more adept than Adams. Stopping Clay required defeating Adams in the upcoming 1828 election. Van Buren’s chosen candidate Andrew Jackson won, but debates over slavery’s future could not yet be
silenced. In Virginia, a constitutional convention, a failed slave rebellion, and a two-year debate over emancipation pointed to the weaknesses of slavery in the Upper South, while the emergence of immediate Abolitionism signaled a new external threat to slavery. By the early 1830s, southern extremists had become even more aggressive in their defense of slavery, their opposition to expanding federal powers, and their threats of disunion.

Ultimately, it would take the Webster–Hayne debates on the nature of the Union, Andrew Jackson’s showdown with South Carolina over the tariff, an upsurge in popular violence against nonwhites, and the strengthening of the two-party system to silence conflicts over slavery. By 1833, the two gravest threats to Union, abolitionism and southern extremism, had been largely discredited in a political atmosphere that celebrated Union as the most sacred of American political values. A durable, two-party system would contain the consensus forged out of the Missouri Controversy whenever slavery threatened to disrupt national politics. That consensus would hold for a generation, until Stephen A. Douglas, as unprincipled as Van Buren, tore it down to let slavery into Kansas.

This is an important book that only begins to untangle the shifting political alliances, issues, and ideologies that sustained debates over slavery during the 1820s. Unfortunately, it retains many of the problems found in the widely read PhD dissertation ("Slavery and the Meaning of America, 1819–1837," Yale University, 1994) on which it is based. Too often, Forbes’s evidence and analysis fails to sustain his bold claims and overstatements. For example, the assertion that James Monroe was committed to eradicating slavery demands better evidence than Monroe’s support for the American Colonization Society (which many slaveholders believed would strengthen the institution), his having read Montesquieu and the Scottish enlightenment philosophers (as had Virginia’s most ardent defenders of slavery), his commitment to national unity through internal improvements (much like John C. Calhoun), and the supposed antislavery leanings of his Secretary of the Navy (a claim based on documents no longer available at the American Bible Society website; see 296n.34).

Other problems undermine the force of Forbes’s claims and argument. Quotations of primary sources are frequently taken from secondary sources, and too many of those secondary sources are unreliable, hagiographic, and filiopietistic works dating anywhere from the 1850s through
the 1950s. Additionally, argument by demonstration frequently replaces analysis. Chapters 2 and 3 contain seven and nine block quotations respectively, while too many paragraphs consist of extended quotations strung together (see, for example, pages 76–80). Finally, the book overlooks much of the excellent scholarship on politics, race, and slavery that has appeared over the past decade. Despite these problems, Forbes’s basic thesis, that the Missouri Controversy made slavery the central political problem of the 1820s and that its resolution fundamentally changed how white Americans understood the problem of slavery, deserves greater attention from historians.

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Reviewed by Thomas Augst

How was the emergence of modern nation–states mediated by the development of print culture? Oz Frankel’s *States of Inquiry* explores what it terms “print statism,” the “field of communication between the state and its constituencies,” in which governments sought to manage and influence public opinion throughout the nineteenth century through the production and dissemination of formal inquiries, social surveys, and official reports on a host of issues. Frankel demonstrates how Great Britain and the United States developed a new kind of politics, by which “official reportage facilitated the representation of the centralized, modern state to its publics and, in turn, the representation of the nation by (and to) the government itself” (2). In the extraordinary detail and breadth of its research, *States of Inquiry* offers important arguments about the state’s role in the transformation of the public sphere and print’s role in the imagination of national communities. In its acute discussion of particular