

opposition" to overt racism (p. 202). In any case, the interplay between the essays in each section is as intellectually stimulating as the individual essays themselves. Taken together they suggest that Lincoln's great virtue lay in something deceptively simple, as Benjamin Quarles once concluded: treating human beings "as human beings" and not as objects of charity (p. 103).

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Contesting Slavery: The Politics of Bondage and Freedom in the New American Nation. Edited by John Craig Hammond and Matthew Mason. Jeffersonian America. (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2011. Pp. [xx], 313. \$49.50, ISBN 978-0-8139-3105-0.)

Just thirty years ago, historians writing about slavery in the United States invariably focused on the great cotton plantations of the late antebellum years. A few lonely scholars produced important studies of the colonial South and the gradual eradication of unfree labor in the decades after the Revolution. But for the most part, even when book jackets were emblazoned only with the word *slavery*, readers could safely assume that the contents merely covered what was in fact the final stage of North America's peculiar institution.

No longer. Over the past decades, scholars have investigated a number of questions about slavery between 1783 and the 1840s, including some for which slavery itself appears as an almost hidden subtext. Specialists continue to publish significant works on the Missouri debates and the nullification crisis, but a rapidly growing shelf of creative monographs on whiteness, slave resistance, gender and childhood, and antislavery reform outside the Garrisonian circle now outnumber classic studies of the cotton era.

Readers who wish to catch up quickly on this scholarship will find much to ponder in the fifteen new essays in *Contesting Slavery: The Politics of Bondage and Freedom in the New American Nation*. As James Oakes observes in the anthology's concluding commentary, these essays complicate older narratives of the emergence, disappearance, and eventual reemergence of antislavery activism in the wake of the U.S.-Mexican War. The American Revolution, he writes, always had contradictory implications for unfree labor; and for every white or black reformer who embraced the egalitarian rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence, there was a planter who pointed to his property rights as protected by the Constitution. Fights in the nation's capital, these essays make clear, did not erupt only in 1819 and 1833. Always present as Federalists sharpened their attacks on the Virginia dynasty, or as black reformers lobbied state and federal assemblies, these tensions simply grew more visible when politicians squabbled over the criminalization of Atlantic slave trading or attempts to undo restrictions on slavery in the northwestern territories.

Although all the essays here are fresh, well documented, and clearly written, two are particularly thoughtful and important. Where specialists of the 1850s have taken free wage labor ideology as a given, Eva Sheppard Wolf turns to the 1750s to investigate the cultural origins of that philosophy. Wolf notes that early antislavery essayists typically conceded that slave labor was cheaper than waged workers and emphasized instead a moral or Christian duty to manumit enslaved people. But in 1751 Benjamin

Franklin, himself once indentured as an apprentice, published an essay on population increase that touched on free labor. The ownership of slaves, he reasoned, increased the desire for luxuries even as it feminized masters and rendered them less productive. Within decades, Adam Smith and Benjamin Rush added their voices to the debate. Rush especially insisted that slave labor was not merely less efficient; by enriching a small number of masters, it also promoted an unequal distribution of property. By the 1790s, as Americans of all political stripes theorized that only a republic made up of moral citizens dedicated to the collective economic welfare might long survive, free wage labor advocates argued that their system supported republicanism, just as slavery undermined it. Since all these early national writers, Wolf concedes, focused on the labor of white men, this discourse was gendered, racially based, and linked to emerging notions of "manliness and republican citizenship" (p. 43). That, as the Republican Party's often openly racist campaign of 1860 would prove in later years, was what made the ideology so deadly to the slave South.

In an equally insightful piece, Richard Newman reexamines the brief correspondence between Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson and black mathematician Benjamin Banneker. Where earlier scholars have emphasized Banneker's efforts to convince Jefferson of his scientific abilities, and therefore also those of other black Americans, Newman reverses the picture; his story is one in which Banneker and his white allies attempted to overturn the "moral crisis at the heart" of southern society and provide white masters, rather than black slaves, with much needed "moral uplift" (p. 70). Banneker's challenge to Jefferson, Newman convincingly suggests, was crafted to resemble earlier dialogues, a classic literary form dating back hundreds of years in which readers were presented with two arguments and debaters, one of whom eventually vanquished the other. Not willing to be drawn into this discussion, Jefferson scribbled a brief and somewhat disingenuous reply. Banneker not only forged ahead and published the exchange, but he also leveraged the correspondence into considerable fame, as southern reformers came to regard the industrious mathematician as "the perfect embodiment" of black potential (p. 82). Yet for Banneker and his black readers, it was not former slaves but rather Jefferson and his planter brethren whose moral rehabilitation was necessary for the preservation of the republic. Tragically, as the essays in *Contesting Slavery* demonstrate, by the time of Jefferson's death in 1826 a racial consensus had emerged that permitted the nation's two major political parties to either tacitly accept slavery or openly support it.

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Southern Society and Its Transformations, 1790–1860. Edited by Susanna Delfino, Michele Gillespie, and Louis M. Kyriakouides. New Currents in the History of Southern Economy and Society. (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, c. 2011. Pp. [x], 260. Paper, \$40.00, ISBN 978-0-8262-1918-3.)

Little more than a half century ago, antebellum southern history focused on the exploits of planters and politicians. Subsequently, remarkably rich