

by men like Prentis. Not surprisingly, the culture of slave trading receives sustained attention, and Winter stands on the shoulders of experts in the field, notably Steven Deyle, whose *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (2005) she cites extensively. As a result, readers might wonder why Winter did not synthesize more secondary material and digest more of her primary sources in the service of a seamless narrative.

The personal narrative and network of Prentis's associations tend to be more illuminating than the political frame in which they are cast. Fleshing out the world Prentis inhabited, Winter attempts to bring to life women and enslaved people who appear only obliquely in the archival record. "Searching for people who have vanished from history . . . requires an active quest through lights and shadows, facts and imagination," she argues (pp. 173–174). Winter's historical imagination is accordingly vivid. Perhaps the most anguished of the contradictions is who Prentis was. He oscillated between a self-understanding as a "mechanick and slave dealer" and a gentleman (p. 135). He built wealth by dismantling families yet also valued his own immensely, even recognizing enslaved people (one likely a son) as heirs.

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JOHN CRAIG HAMMOND and MATTHEW MASON, editors. *Contesting Slavery: The Politics of Bondage and Freedom in the New American Nation*. (Jeffersonian America.) Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press. 2011. Pp. xvii, 313. \$49.50.

Reviewing anthologies often presents the challenge of finding overarching themes through which to make sense of the essays as a whole. In this case, the challenge is different. These fine essays on the role of slavery and antislavery in the politics of the early republican United States open with a foreword by Peter Onuf, in which he offers one frame of reference within which to think about the essays. In their subsequent introduction, the volume's editors, John Craig Hammond and Matthew Mason, offer another. In his concluding remarks James Oakes provides a third perspective. All argue that the essays that comprise the bulk of the volume represent an important new departure in our understanding of the politics of the early republic and the contribution of those politics to the coming of the American Civil War. The reviewer's challenge, then, is to decide how and even whether to do more than summarize the views that the book itself offers.

The thirteen essays that Onuf, Hammond and Mason, and then Oakes discuss were written by scholars who, collectively, have worked in recent years to revitalize the political history of the period. They are far from monolithic in approach or emphasis, but they agree that their predecessors have been inclined either to see slavery and antislavery as being at the heart of American politics and state formation, or as largely peripheral to the founding of the United States. In dis-

cussions that range from the place of racial bondage in the ideologies of the revolutionary era to its role in early republican processes of state formation to the nature of partisan politics, these scholars reject the idea that the founding generation was fixated on creating a republic that would be safe for slaveholders, and they are equally unwilling to accept claims that slavery all but disappeared from public discourse between the inauguration of Thomas Jefferson and the rise of Garrisonian abolitionism. They suggest instead that the citizens and politicians of the era had strong and consistently expressed beliefs about slavery; that they advocated policies in line with those beliefs; but that they did so in political disputes that centered on questions that were not *only* about slavery. Slavery was central to the economy and society of the United States, so questions about slavery arose unavoidably as part of a whole array of political questions that implicated but often did not center on debates over the morality of bondage.

The essays contribute to this general point in different ways. Mason highlights a distinction between belief and action to explain the real but limited importance of the revolution's antislavery impulses for the early republic. Eva Sheppard Wolf looks back to the period following the revolution to untangle the roots and contradictions of free labor ideologies that are conventionally seen as antebellum. Robert G. Parkinson insists that African American agency during the Revolutionary War helped weaken white American opposition to slavery in a way that explains the defensive nature of antislavery efforts during the Jeffersonian period. Richard Newman unpacks the epistolary non-relationship between Jefferson and Benjamin Banneker, finding an implicit debate about race and moral degradation. Edward B. Rugemer concludes the book's section on ideology by applying Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action to argue that slave rebellions in the Caribbean pushed participants in the antislavery movement from opinion formation to will formation. Although the essays in this section differ, all argue that the kinds of questions that would roil the United States in the antebellum period were present and important, if less visible, much earlier in the nation's history.

Part two moves from ideology to state formation. George William Van Cleve sees the Constitution as a proslavery document, but not because the Founders set out to make it one. Instead, he argues that the Founders' rejection of the British model, in which slavery was a status created by positive law in a specific jurisdiction, in favor of one in which slaves were property and protected by natural law was crucial to the creation of a proslavery republic. John Craig Hammond sees an important evolution in the relationship between the state and slavery; during the first decades following the framing of the Constitution, most agreed that the federal government had the authority to regulate slavery in the territories, but it lacked the power to enforce that authority. By the 1820s the government had grown strong enough to enforce its will, but white southerners began to argue that constitutional authority over slavery was

extremely limited. Brian Schoen argues in a complementary vein that politicians from the Deep South sought a strong federal government immediately following the Revolutionary War, seeing in it a bulwark in support of slave property, but that in using the federal government to protect slavery, they strengthened an institution that opponents of slavery could and ultimately would turn against them. David Ericson also sees the federal government's engagement with slavery prior to 1840, especially in regard to regulating trade, returning fugitives, and repressing potential insurrection, as important to state formation. Whether implicitly or explicitly, all of these essays show slaveholders' roles fostering the increased federal powers that they would later come to rue. They contribute to the rapidly growing body of histories of unintended consequence.

The third section turns to partisan politics. Rachel Hope Cleves and Padraig Riley both provide nuanced arguments that support those who see the Federalists as guarded opponents of slavery and the Republicans as sometimes uneasy but decisive supporters of the institution. Andrew Shankman uses the evolution of Henry Clay's and Mathew Carey's respective positions on slavery in the wake of their formulation of the American System to shed light on the way the division between slave and free states complicated their nationalist economic vision. Daniel J. Ratcliffe seeks to upend conventional interpretations of the rise of immediatism, seeing William Lloyd Garrison's radical turn as a desperate attempt to revive the dying embers of a once vibrant antislavery movement. The role of the emerging second party system in stifling antislavery action is crucial to his story, as it is to Shankman's.

Space does not permit a detailed discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the different essays. Each makes a contribution to discussions of the place of slavery in nineteenth-century American politics, and each of those contributions is significant enough that some readers will take serious issue with the author's emphases or interpretations. That is, of course, a sign of the strength of the essays, and no one is likely to question their quality. Some may be more inclined to question whether the deeper understanding that this work gives us concerning the conflicts over slavery that ran through the early republican period constitutes a fundamental change rather than support for one of the two contending schools of interpretation that have shaped discussions for several decades. Nevertheless, their collective effect supports Oakes's concluding exhortation to use the essays in this volume to "recalibrate the relative significance of conflict and consensus in the history of the early republic" (p. 302).

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BRIAN R. DIRCK. *Abraham Lincoln and White America*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas. 2012. Pp. xiii, 213. \$29.95.

This book is a new contribution to a huge literature on the subject of Abraham Lincoln's racial attitudes. Many historians, this reviewer included, have offered their views in a debate that will probably never end due to an ambiguous evidentiary base. Brian R. Dirck is a member of a school of thought whose most prominent champion was the late George M. Fredrickson. Fredrickson believed—and argued from the 1970s on—that Lincoln was a tortured and conflicted soul who fought a long and increasingly successful battle to overcome his own deep racism, a racism caused in his earliest years by the things that he heard in his environment and then, as the psychologists say, internalized as feelings.

Dirck concludes that Lincoln "was in many ways a product of the predominant white culture of his time, and he was far less willing or able to transcend the limitations of that culture than I would have wished . . . There were troubling moments in his life during which he seemed to cater to white America's worst instincts" (p. x). Nonetheless, Dirck writes that "Lincoln's approach to these matters was better than that displayed by most whites of his day" (p. x). He acknowledges the steady growth in Lincoln's public and behind-the-scenes support for racial egalitarianism.

This general interpretation is common for reasons that are quite understandable: it seems to make sense and do justice to the evidence. The problem for some of us is a body of evidence that leads in a different direction, suggesting that Lincoln was a political strategist and tactician whose statements on race should not necessarily be taken at face value. The evidentiary base is the key to speculation on Lincoln's state of mind and innermost feelings.

There are very few passages in Lincoln's own writings that suggest any visceral aversion to those whose pigmentation and other physical characteristics were different from "whites." On the few occasions when the written record does contain documented statements by Lincoln that appear to support white supremacy—most of them deriving from his long political battle against Stephen Douglas in the 1850s—there is reason to suspect that Lincoln at the time was insincere. He was often deceptive in his presidential years, and the evidence of this is decisive. So on earlier occasions when he uttered what appeared to be racist clichés, the strong possibility exists that he was saying what he felt he simply had to say if he wished to sweep aside the racial demagoguery of Douglas and focus the minds of his listeners on the moral wrong of slavery.

This is not the time or place to present the case for this theory. But it seems appropriate to argue that we will never know for sure what Lincoln's intuitive feelings on race might have been, since the source material that suggests Lincoln was to some extent a bigot may be questioned by interpreting the strategic context of his speech. The late Don E. Fehrenbacher sketched the overall case for this point of view in the 1970s.

Fehrenbacher also pointed out that in many arguments concerning Lincoln's attitude toward race, a great deal of the evidence is anecdotal, which presents