

as sites of environmentally-responsible economic development. This note of optimism about the future of degraded rivers continues in Thomas Lekan's study of the Rhine, where post-World War II German scientists developed rational responses to water pollution earlier than typically recognized.

The collection concludes with two essays concerning rivers and tourism. Ute Hasenöhrle explains how post-World War II German conservationists struggled against hydroelectric power companies whose dams and reservoirs satisfied tourists' visual expectations of Romantic pre-Alpine gorges. Steven Hoelschers describes how Gilded Age photography, particularly the work of Henry Hamilton Bennett, effectively cleansed Wisconsin's working rivers of ethnic, environmental, and class tensions that might otherwise deter white Victorian tourists. These essays, though insightful, are too narrowly focused to encourage easy comparison. What's more, Hoelschers' skillful demonstration of the power exerted by ordinary people on the cultural meaning of rivers highlights the absence of this observation elsewhere in the volume. Jacky Girel's exacting description of how nineteenth-century French and Italian engineers converted Isere River valley wetlands into habitable communities, for example, leaves us wondering about the responses of people whose homes were destroyed in the process. Similarly, this volume would have benefited from some discussion of the ways that rivers have shaped race and class identities over time.

Although *Rivers in History* may fall short in this regard, its editors have done well to select an array of essays that remind us just how long rivers and humans have been shaping and reshaping one another. In this light, we must wonder if there is such a thing as a "natural" river. Can rivers, like historic buildings, really be restored to some purer, more authentic version of themselves? Within these questions lies a path toward a new comparative river history that promises special rewards for devotees of Pennsylvania's rich riparian past.

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Mary Niall Mitchell. *Raising Freedom's Child: Black Children and Visions of the Future After Slavery*. (New York: New York University Press, 2008. Pp xii, 324, illustrations, notes, index. Cloth, \$49.00.)

Mary Niall Mitchell has produced a book that is nuanced and yet simple in its argument. In the years immediately before and after the Civil War, all the

hopes and fears of a society without slavery were encapsulated in the image of the African American child. In this graceful book, Mitchell divides her argument into five chapters: Emigration, Reading Race, Civilizing Missions, Labor, and Schooling. These disparate chapters all reinforce each other and present different aspects of her central thesis.

Mitchell begins her analysis by introducing a primary piece of evidence: the *carte-de-visite*. These postcards often portrayed the son or husband in his military uniform just before leaving for battle, but during the 1860s, they were also used to convince northern audiences of the urgency of ending slavery. One of the most famous *carte-de-visite* was a portrait of two children, Isaac and Rosa. Isaac was obviously black, but Rosa looked white. The caption read: "Emancipated Slave Children." According to Mitchell, the meaning was obvious. Children who looked just like the children of white northerners were being enslaved and could be enslaved in the future. Isaac's fate was regrettable, but not feared. It is this ambivalence about race and the potential of racial equality that Mitchell explores throughout her book.

Prior to the Civil War, some African American children had the opportunity for education. At the Catholic Institution in New Orleans, free children of color exchanged letters with imaginary and real correspondents. By analyzing these letters, Mitchell is able to demonstrate that these children were very aware of the maelstrom surrounding them and hoped for a future in some exotic place, but one that offered a chance at equality. Once such student, Andre Gregoire, provides nice bookends to Mitchell's argument. Gregoire, as a young student, dreamed of establishing himself in a trade in a place of more opportunity and equality than antebellum New Orleans. He and his fellow students considered northern cities, Mexico and Haiti. Gregoire apparently was intrigued enough by Haiti to try emigration. He shows up in the records of Louisiana again during Reconstruction after he has returned to teach in a freedmen's school in Housma.

Mitchell's most provocative and best argument is in her use of visual evidence to underscore the true ambivalence with which northerners approached slavery. Nineteenth century Victorians sentimentalized childhood, portraying their children, particularly their girls, as little angels. Mitchell is able to demonstrate that light-skinned slave girls were portrayed in the same manner. Not only were middle class Americans encouraged to see their own children in the pictures of the slaves, but abolitionists emphasized the likely future of such fair-skinned, attractive chattel. Using abolitionists' insinuations that "white" slaves could look forward only to a life as the

sexual property of white masters, Mitchell argues that these images disturbed middle-class northerners' sense of decency and propriety, raised the fear of miscegenation, and hence challenged their sense of racial purity. If both obviously black and seemingly white children were classified as "colored," then how are racial categories defined? And how would they be defined in the future?

The author's point is further supported when she examines the biographies constructed for dark-skinned and light-skinned slaves. Girls like Rosa and Rebecca and boys like Charlie, all seemingly white, received full-fledged back stories, full of tales of woe and, in the case of the girls, a foreboding of sexual exploitation. Dark-skinned children, like Isaac, received almost nothing.

Mitchell devotes considerable space to the attempts of white northerners to educate black children, and again the motivation differed based on the skin tone of the children. "White" children had to be protected; black children had to be civilized. American missionary organizations that sponsored schools in Union-controlled areas during the Civil War and Freedmen's schools after the war reported their activities in sectarian magazines. Often, as Mitchell notes, stories of freed children learning to read in the South were paired with stories about missionary activity in Africa. Unlike the sweet, angelic depictions of near white children, obviously black children pictured with their white teacher appeared in ragged clothes, barefooted and in dire need of the civilizing effects of the book that the teacher was always holding. The effects of civilization, however, did not merely apply to children, however. Mitchell presents evidence to suggest that white benefactors assumed that black mothers needed instruction in raising their own children.

Mitchell is successful in exploring the unconscious racism exhibited by northern philanthropists, and in so doing, emphasizes the potential economic value of black children. In an effort to provide job training for the freed children, the author details northern efforts to remove children from the South and apprentice them in northern cities. Under the guise of teaching these children the values of hard work—an irony that Mitchell highlights by letting her sources speak for themselves—some northern abolitionists actually participated in the separation of families. When parents could not be located, judges in custody matters often ruled against members of the child's extended family in favor of northern business interests or even the child's former master. In Maryland, for example, contests over who had actually

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“raised” the child were often settled in favor of the former master who then bound the child into service until age twenty-one.

Mitchell does an excellent job of explaining the profound ambivalence with which whites approached the reality of freed black children. There was a sense that black children needed to adapt to a life after slavery, but what did their future mean for a society in which slavery no longer exists? What place did these children have in a civilization that even the most sympathetic northerners saw as Anglo-Saxon? The organization of the book, which begins and ends in New Orleans, allows her reader to see both the promise and the ultimate failure of Reconstruction through the eyes of children. It is in the experiences of the Afro-Creoles of New Orleans that the ultimate failure of the dream of racial equality is most poignant. Dreams die very hard.

Mitchell has written an important book about a group of people that it is easy to overlook. It is meticulously researched and beautifully written, and her use of visual evidence will provide encouragement to other scholars to look at new caches of evidence in new ways. With luck, the publisher will reissue the book in paperback, making it suitable for undergraduate courses. Until then, however, scholars should and will mine Mitchell’s evidence and her insights.

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Jason Togyer. *For the Love of Murphy's: The Behind-the-Counter Story of a Great American Retailer*. (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008. Pp. 292, illustrations, index. Cloth, \$34.95.)

As with many McKeesport natives, the G. C. Murphy Company profoundly shaped the life of Dolores “Dot” Schmidt. Raised in the small city near Pittsburgh, Dot worked in the corporation’s main office until after she married J. Lowry Witherow, a buyer in the company’s warehouse, in 1948. Over the next thirty years, Dot and their children moved frequently as her husband rose first to assistant manager and then manager of Murphy’s stores in small cities and towns scattered throughout northern Appalachia. When he retired in 1980, Mr. Witherow was manager of one of the chain’s larger locations in downtown Wheeling, West Virginia. “Lowry really enjoyed his job because