

BOOK REVIEWS

At the Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700–1763. By JANE T. MERRITT. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003. ix, 338p. Maps, illustrations, tables, notes, appendices, index. Cloth, \$39.95; paper, \$19.95.)

Mapping the metaphorical roads that linked, and eventually divided, the native and settler populations of colonial Pennsylvania, Jane Merritt ponders the significant question of whether the familiarity of prolonged intercultural contact between these two peoples ultimately bred contempt. In her insightful and richly textured analysis, she traces the historical changes that led Indians and white people to develop and, after 1750, to express intense mutual racial hatred. Informed by skillful use of English- and German-language archival sources, Merritt sheds important new light on the extent and fate of interpersonal relations between natives and nonnatives in colonial Pennsylvania.

Early in the eighteenth century, according to Merritt, native and settler frontier inhabitants in Pennsylvania possessed a crucial common interest: reducing the influence of distant “colonial” governing bodies (especially of the colony’s proprietors and the Six Nations Confederacy) over their lives. This shared concern for autonomy facilitated a diverse array of negotiated religious, economic, and cultural interactions that led, prior to 1750, to considerable blurring of boundaries between native and nonnative communities. As the lines demarcating these two cultures grew less visible, their constituents increasingly grappled with similar concerns, such as: the challenges of a trans-Atlantic market economy, shifting social and gender relations within households, and religious revitalization.

Yet, as Merritt demonstrates, these creative and accommodative relations lasted only as long as settlers relied on interactions with Indians for survival on the frontier. As settler numbers increased, the ties that bound them to native communities frayed, and Indian warriors vented their frustration and anger in a wave of frontier attacks in 1755–1756. Far from the random actions of bloodthirsty savages, Merritt portrays the actions of the Delawares and Shawnees as communication of their legitimate anger over land loss and the abandonment by nonnative partners of obligations entailed in intercommunity alliances. Still, the violent and highly personal frontier warfare of the 1750s marked a fateful turning point, as each side constructed collective public memories of the other that ultimately proved irreconcilable.

Merritt’s novel and intriguing investigation of the power of memory and tradition in colonial Pennsylvania’s frontier history sets her work apart from much of the scholarship in this field. In convincing fashion, she shows how the

diverging interests of Indians and settlers led to the creation of “conflicting memories of the past” (p. 10), which representatives of each culture utilized to advance their own agenda in the postwar diplomatic effort to restore “roads” of communication. These efforts failed, in Merritt’s view, because natives’ efforts to force the settler population to confront the disparity between their own actions and the “golden past” (p. 301) of William Penn’s generous friendship could match neither the powerful stereotype of the “bad Indian” (p. 282) that emerged from the Seven Years’ War, nor the collaborative efforts of Pennsylvania’s proprietary officials and the Iroquois Confederacy to deny, in treaty councils, the “Delawares’ past of political independence and autonomy” (p. 235).

The strengths of Merritt’s innovative, sensitive, and nuanced portrayal of the Delawares, Shawnees, Mahicans, and other indigenous peoples in Pennsylvania are not, unfortunately, extended to her analysis of the Iroquois Confederacy. Although Merritt maintains that the Iroquois were not “reduced to the role of retainer, playing henchmen for British colonial aspirations” (p. 303) until after 1760, she nevertheless considers the Six Nations in large degree culpable for the progressive alienation of Pennsylvania’s native population from both their land base and their negotiated relationships with the colony’s settler population over the course of the eighteenth century. Yet, as Merritt and other historians have so convincingly established, both the nature and the rate of cultural change experienced by Pennsylvania’s native population during the eighteenth century, occasioned by an exceptionally rapid rate of settler immigration, were unique in eastern North America. Blustery (and, it should be noted, Euramerican-translated) public rhetoric notwithstanding, the Six Nations consistently offered Pennsylvania Indians the opportunity to follow roads to new towns to the north and west, where they could maintain an aboriginal existence at what then might have seemed a safe distance from the throng of immigrant peoples. Whether these efforts on the part of Iroquois leaders represent colonialism of the same order as that envisioned by certain nonnative officials remains a point worth further consideration.

This single caveat aside, Merritt’s study represents an important contribution to the rapidly growing body of scholarship on colonial-era Native American history. The author breaks new ground with a spirited interpretation which will certainly encourage other historians of early America to think carefully, not only about the function of public memory in the context of Indian-settler relations, but also about the origins of cross-cultural conflict in cross-cultural coexistence.

Religious Pluralism in America: The Contentious History of a Founding Ideal.

By WILLIAM R. HUTCHINSON. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003. xi, 276p. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95.)

Professor Hutchinson, who teaches at the Harvard Divinity School, here offers his scholarly views on the ideal of religious pluralism. Derived from a series of lectures delivered in Sweden, this book retains the informed yet informal feel of a public presentation, laying out a simple but compelling trajectory for the ongoing history of religious pluralism in the United States.

The great value of this book is Hutchinson's sensitivity to American pluralism as an evolving ideal. More than just the fact of religious diversity, the pluralism Hutchinson describes is an ideal that embraces and promotes religious diversity within a single nation. He rightly dismisses current criticisms of pluralism as complete moral relativism (i.e., since all forms of belief are equally valid, none is or need be held sincerely). As an individual morally engaged in the issues he writes about, Hutchinson ends his work arguing for the present potential and future benefits of an advanced form of pluralism, one that permits individuals to choose their identities while also providing them all with coherent (yet mutually compatible) moral codes. But this current ideal is only the latest of three distinct phases in the evolution of American pluralism: toleration, inclusion, and, finally, participation (the advanced form of pluralism that Hutchinson advocates).

Since the eighteenth century, American pluralism has emerged in relationship with a dominant religion. Though no church has ever been established in the United States, the prevailing ethos of the country was Protestant into the twentieth century. Initially, this informal Protestant establishment was able to indulge some religious diversity because it never risked losing its dominant grip on American society and institutions. As America, and America's involvement with the world, became more complex by the late nineteenth century, inclusion became the new ideal. Willing to allow Jews and Catholics to share in the dominant ethos, pluralism as inclusion was confident that these religions would only ratify the superiority and universality of the Protestant ethos, not challenge it.

Pluralism was always controversial, both within and without the Protestant mainstream. Debates and struggles over how to relate to pluralism kept the ideal and reality moving on. The twentieth century eventually saw a tripartite establishment of Jews, Protestants, and Catholics provide the moral architecture of American society. But even this is changing. Fundamentalists constantly strive for a sort of Protestant establishment that never was, while the increasing diversity, and diversity of opinions, undercuts any hegemonic establishment at all. What is now emerging (despite the resistance of the Religious Right and others) is a pluralism of participation, one in which all religious groups have a say without having to succumb to the normative ethos of any other religion.

As the history of an ideal, this book cannot help but be preoccupied with the

history of ideas. Politics and social experience are alluded to but not dwelt upon. Representing the mature reflections of a distinguished scholar of American religion, it marks the latest intellectual contribution on an ideal still in the making.

Tufts University

EVAN HAEFELI

Samuel Adams: America's Revolutionary Politician. By JOHN K. ALEXANDER. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002. xii, 247p. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$35.)

Recent paeans to founding fathers and brothers have favored the social conservatives among them, stressing the remarkable courage and fortitude of not-very-wild-eyed revolutionary nationalists like Washington, Hamilton, and John Adams, even to the point of ridiculing the comparative failings of peace-loving dreamers like Jefferson. In such works, the social question that the American Revolution raised—who should rule at home?—usually becomes as invisible, and seems as anachronistic, as the words “race” or “gender.” What, then, happens when an accomplished historian of the neoprogressive school takes on a substantial biography of one of the more democratically inclined founding fathers?

John Alexander's *Samuel Adams* certainly has the virtues of his earlier works on class, politics, and the press during the late eighteenth century. In a straight-forward way, with ample examples, Alexander argues that Adams rose to prominence because of his ability to voice, as well as shape, popular grievances. Ever caucusing and writing for the press, he was perhaps the first modern American politician. Taking issue with older approaches to Adams as a propagandist, Alexander documents a serious, thoughtful activist with a flair not just for controversy but also for substantial argument, on paper. Leaving the oratory to his cousin John, he did his work in meetings and in his study. Ever attentive to timing, he found creative and admirable ways, as he put it himself on many occasions, “to put & keep the Enemy in the wrong.”

This book is part of a series of shorter biographies, sans footnotes and ostensibly aimed at students, but actually breaks the genre: it is chock full of original research and fresh observations on moments in Massachusetts's revolutionary struggle. (It also contains many—too many—words on each page, so its seeming brevity is just that.) The war years and the 1780s get equal time too, as we are reminded that Adams played important roles in the Continental Congress, in Massachusetts politics, and in the controversies surrounding the ratification of the federal constitution. Interpretively, there are important correctives here: Adams looks more like a typical democratic republican than the advocate of a “Christian Sparta” depicted in some works. Apparently Adams only used the

latter term once and that in a nostalgic voice.

And yet the genre limitations of founders' biography still hold. Adams does almost nothing wrong here: this is a defense of his character as well as his career. Alexander is crafty enough to find revealing quotations from the likes of mortal enemies like Thomas Hutchinson that speak to Adams's real virtues, but the result is that their criticisms are not taken seriously. Perhaps they have until now been taken too seriously, so that Adams has served as the American Revolution's representative demagogue, rather than the Harvard-educated public servant he was; but the critiques of demagoguery, indeed of modern politics, voiced by his opponents were an essential part of the political battle of the time. It is odd that a scholar who wrote so convincingly about the manipulation of the press (in his *The Selling of the Constitutional Convention: A History of News Coverage* [1990], an underappreciated study) during the ratification debate would depict a similar process of manipulation twenty years earlier by Adams in such a benign fashion. Historians of ideas and ideology will also be disappointed in the author's disinclination to weigh in on just exactly how Puritan or republican or Lockean Sam Adams was, or whether his political thought changed over time.

The people—the constituents—are regularly present in Alexander's narrative, as concise paragraphs introducing various controversies explain why ordinary Bostonians supported Adams's radical stances against British authority. The subject's personal life appears mainly in the beginning chapters and in scattered passages on his high-quality relationship with his second wife, Elizabeth—who turns out to have been a helpmeet in politics as well as a testament to her husband's basic goodness. So Alexander both bucks and follows recent loving caresses of founding characters. This is best seen with respect to the problem of slavery: it is raised only where it makes Adams look good, as when in the mid-1760s he freed Surry, a slave given to the family as a gift, in a principled gesture designed to shield patriots from criticism of their hypocrisy for bewailing their political enslavement. Alexander proceeds to give Adams some of the credit for Massachusetts's subsequent moves to discourage slave importation and enact gradual emancipation. He missed, however, the opportunity to engage the recent work of Joanne P. Melish, which points out the self-serving and extremely gradual aspects of emancipation in New England: surely a relevant issue since Surry remained a domestic servant in the Adams household, subsidizing Sam's refusal of remunerative—and compromising—offices. (See *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780–1860* [1998].) Perhaps more importantly for Adams's reputation, Patricia Bradley has argued in *Slavery, Propaganda, and the American Revolution* (1998) that his mediation of the Boston patriot movement involved an outright denial of the black presence in patriot protests. As in other cases of founders' biography, one longs for the ambiguity and paradox that has marked the historiography of the Revolution (and of slavery) at its best. Sam Adams the

politician is rendered very likable and very real, but perhaps there are depths yet to be plumbed.

University of Notre Dame

DAVID WALDSTREICHER

Republic of Debtors: Bankruptcy in the Age of American Independence. By BRUCE H. MANN. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002. viii, 344p. Notes, index. \$29.95.)

This ambitious monograph uses commercial bankruptcy as a window on culture, politics, and law in the late colonial and revolutionary eras. Bruce Mann grounds his narrative in an incisive overview of debtor-creditor law in the eighteenth century, surveying both the mechanics of ordinary debt collection and those pertaining to cases of outright insolvency, including imprisonment for debt. He then traces pivotal shifts in how American elites understood and depicted commercial failure across the eighteenth century, relating this cultural evolution to key legislative reforms. The book culminates in a detailed consideration of the nation's first national bankruptcy law, enacted by Federalists in 1800 and repealed by Jeffersonians three years later. Along the way, readers encounter numerous fascinating vignettes of failure, including the commercial and legal travails of such key historical figures as Robert Morris and John Pintard. The book has a geographic tilt toward the financial and mercantile hubs of New England and the Middle Atlantic region, which Mann explains as a consequence of extant sources.

At the heart of Mann's narrative lies the waning, at least among America's commercial elites, of the beliefs that insolvency necessarily involved sin and that pecuniary debts constituted inviolable moral and religious obligations. Such religious conceptions of indebtedness held sway in the early eighteenth century, and they buttressed a legal system that gave creditors throughout America the power to send debtors to prison while maintaining the legal validity of debts even after debtors had given up all of their assets. By the turn of the nineteenth century, however, Mann demonstrates that commercially inclined Americans increasingly viewed bankruptcy as an economic problem calling for governmental policies of relief and regulation.

The most significant roots of this cultural transformation, Mann argues persuasively, were the general expansion of trade and the eighteenth-century wars, both of which acquainted growing numbers of Americans with the financial impact of market gyrations and the risks associated with business ventures. But he also stresses the consequences of revolutionary ideology. After independence, formerly prominent bankrupts tended to portray themselves as unjustly forced into positions of abject economic dependence to their creditors, with some going so far

as to compare their situations to those confronted by chattel slaves. The pleas of debtors for some route back to republican independence increasingly found favor in state and federal legislative halls, especially after the bursting of a financial bubble in the 1790s left large numbers of influential, heavily indebted merchants and speculators in debtors' prisons, clamoring for relief. The result was a spate of state experiments with bankruptcy discharges and the 1800 Federal Bankruptcy Act.

As Mann correctly observes, however, such experiments did not go unchallenged—the issues raised by bankruptcy gave politicians and social commentators yet another platform on which to tussle over the meanings of postrevolutionary liberty. For most Jeffersonians, a national bankruptcy system compromised valuable state legal protections for property holders, unjustly proffered benefits on large-scale commercial operators, and perhaps most significantly, fostered a dangerous expansion of federal judicial power. And among the rural majority, the preferred means of debtor relief continued to be state-mandated moratoria on debt actions in the face of widespread economic downturns, not a national bankruptcy law that gave urban creditors the power to haul far-flung debtors into federal court. This analysis of the early Republic's politics of bankruptcy reinforces prevailing understandings of the Federalist-Jeffersonian divide.

Mann's most important contribution lies in his masterful reconstruction of "law in action"—of how creditors and failing debtors made use of legal procedures and requirements, both within and outside the formal institutions of the law. Relying deftly on court records and the correspondence of merchants and lawyers, he shows that throughout the eighteenth century, debtors often sidestepped their creditors' legal actions, either through adroit reliance on procedural delays and common-law protections for property holders, or by simple flight. These counterweights to creditors' legal power made debtor-creditor relations a matter of ongoing negotiation and adjustment. In similar fashion, Mann astutely assesses life within New York City's late-eighteenth-century debtors' prison, as well as the operation of the 1800 Bankruptcy Act. In the former context, he illustrates the depth of legal consciousness among America's commercial class, as imprisoned debtors created a surprisingly elaborate constitutional order to govern themselves, one infused with common-law values. In the latter, he reveals pervasive collusion between debtors and friendly creditors that regularly transformed the federal bankruptcy law, which ostensibly created an involuntary system that sought to protect the interests of creditors, into a voluntary mechanism for the provision of bankruptcy discharges.

Elegantly written, *Republic of Debtors* serves as a model of how to situate legal developments within their intellectual, social, and political contexts. It will undoubtedly command a broad audience among historians of colonial America, the revolutionary era, and the early Republic.

John Marshall and the Heroic Age of the Supreme Court. By R. KENT NEWMYER. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001. xviii, 511p. Illustrations, bibliographical essay, index, list of cases. \$39.95.)

In 1995, at New York University Law School's conference on judicial biography, John Phillip Reid predicted that, despite the need for biographies of state judges, the next major judicial life would deal with Justice Holmes—and the one after that—and the one after that. For once, Reid was wrong. John Marshall, not Holmes, has been the focus of at least four biographical studies since 1995—including the one now under review.

As fourth chief justice (1801–1835), Marshall played a pivotal role in the development of American constitutional law and of the Supreme Court in the constitutional system. Thus, he has commanded attention from a wide array of scholarly disciplines and professional communities, among them lawyers and jurists, legal and constitutional scholars, political scientists, historians, and biographers. Indeed, he casts so long and broad a shadow that iconoclastic scholars have taken hammers to his legend as a means to justify study of the Court before Marshall's appointment as chief justice in 1801.

In recent years, the “documentary editing” revolution has influenced rethinking of Marshall and his times, challenging the long-reigning Federalist-flavored, Marshall-centric interpretation by Senator Albert J. Beveridge. Documentary histories of the ratification of the Constitution and the federal judiciary before 1801 have fostered more nuanced views of Marshall and of the institution whose leadership he assumed. And the editors of *The Papers of John Marshall* (1977–) have presented the surviving primary sources dealing with Marshall and his career. Not the least of the reasons for the importance of the book under review is that its author has made full use of these resources.

R. Kent Newmyer, professor of law and history at the University of Connecticut at Storrs, is a premier scholar of the early Court, as shown by his 1968 monograph, *The Supreme Court under Marshall and Taney*, and his 1985 biography, *Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story: Statesman of the Old Republic*. Newmyer pays close attention to the political, legal, and historical contexts in which the justices lived, thought, worked, and wrote. In many ways, his long-awaited life of Marshall is the capstone of his work.

In his life of Marshall, Newmyer synthesizes two leading biographical approaches, chronological and thematic. Although this book generally follows Marshall's life over time from his origins to his death, its eight long chapters are built around key themes and range back and forth in time to explore and illuminate them. Readers will find this approach useful, though those coming to the subject for the first time would be well-advised to study a chronology of Marshall's life beforehand.

Marshall was indifferent to a concern to which such men as John Adams and

Thomas Jefferson gave highest priority—preservation of their papers as a means to shape posterity's understanding of them. Thus, Newmyer's book is built like an igloo—a comparatively brief (pp. 1–145) examination of the years between Marshall's birth in 1755 and his appointment as chief justice in 1801, and a denser (pp. 146–490) review of Marshall's service on the Court from 1801 to 1835. The two chapters devoted to Marshall's pre-Court career ably situate him in the complex contexts of the American Revolution and the continuing struggles to preserve its achievements and define its meaning and legacies. Newmyer portrays Marshall as a rising member of the frontier gentry, a hard-bitten veteran of the Revolutionary War convinced of the need for a vigorous national government, a shrewd and skilled member of the Virginia bar, a talented diplomat, and a committed supporter of George Washington, John Adams, and the moderate wing of the Federalists of 1789–1801.

Newmyer also provides a lucid synthesis of Marshall's work on the Supreme Court and on various federal circuit courts. Instead of presenting Marshall's great opinions in the manner of a "greatest hits" CD, Newmyer sets the cases within intellectual, political, and legal contexts with skill and grace, drawing connections and highlighting themes while ensuring that a reader lacking legal training will understand what is going on. While admiring Marshall, he rarely lets himself slide into idolatry—save that he seems to have adopted Marshall's jaundiced view of his distant kinsman and political adversary, Thomas Jefferson, and the conventional villainous take on Aaron Burr.

Newmyer puts the distinction between law and politics at his book's core; in his view, Marshall embraced that distinction and built his constitutional jurisprudence around it, shifting the resolution of constitutional questions from the political realm and reserving it for judges, specifically those sitting on the Supreme Court. While mostly a plausible reading, this view raises questions when Newmyer acknowledges that the realms of law and politics drew together more closely in Marshall's jurisprudence than one might suppose from Newmyer's central theme. Whether dealing with *Marbury v. Madison* (1803) (for the most part one of this book's most useful and successful sections), or with Marshall's decisions interpreting the clause of the Constitution barring states from impairing the obligations of contracts, Newmyer leaves the reader with the uncomfortable feeling that Marshall honored the distinction between law and politics as much in the breach as in the observance.

This book's historiographical underpinnings also provoke some qualms, for they seem dated as to what is there and what is missing. Newmyer invokes the famed republicanism-vs.-liberalism debate of years past, although many historians have set it aside as a false choice and a historiographical distraction. At the same time, one wishes that Newmyer had taken note of the "new political history" written by such scholars as Joanne B. Freeman, Jeffrey Pasley, and David Waldstreicher. Freeman's elucidation of the politics of self-presentation suggests

that Marshall's famed habits of casual attire and democratic manners might have been more consciously selected and deployed than habitually indulged. Pasley's work might have offered illumination of the ways that newspapers and printers conveyed reactions to, and increasing criticism of, the Marshall Court's jurisprudence. And Waldstreicher's work on public parades, celebrations, and demonstrations might have cast revealing light on such matters as the triumphant reception given Marshall on his return from France in 1798.

Despite these quibbles, Newmyer's life of Marshall is a worthy companion to his study of Joseph Story, and a valuable model for those practicing the exacting art of judicial biography.

New York Law School

R. B. BERNSTEIN

The Revolution of 1800: Democracy, Race, and the New Republic. Edited by JAMES HORN, JAN ELLEN LEWIS, and PETER S. ONUF. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002. xix, 431p. Notes, notes on contributors, index. Cloth, \$59.50; paper, \$22.50.)

Did the election of 1800 result in a "revolution" in American politics and society? Historians have mulled over this question for almost two centuries, and another disputed election exactly two hundred years later made a conference dealing with 1800 especially timely. James Horn, Jan Lewis, and Peter Onuf, the editors, have organized the sixteen resulting essays into three discrete topics: the first analyzes the events of the 1800 election; the second considers the impact of the resulting "revolution" on American politics and society; while the third examines the relationship of the 1800 election to developments throughout the world. The conference participants do not agree that the events of 1800 constitute a "revolution," but they all discover that the election and change of administration in 1800–1801 had important results that affected both the United States and the world.

Three authors, James Lewis Jr., Joanne Freeman, and Michael Bellesiles, in some portion of their presentations, address the possibilities of a violent confrontation in 1800–1801. Lewis argues that although politicians had organized parties and remained uneasy about the legitimacy of a party system, many key leaders negotiated a peaceful solution. Joanne Freeman, with great detail, describes how behind-the-scenes negotiations by four leaders who foresaw a disaster defused a potentially violent situation. Bellesiles argues that the weakness of the militia would have prevented any armed resistance by the Republicans to a Federalist coup. Two others place 1800 in a broader context. Jack Rakove, in an excellent introduction to the politics of the 1790s, relates party development to the president's role in foreign policy. Jeffrey Pasley concludes this section with a careful analysis of the development of the media and increased voter turnout

before, during, and after the 1800 election.

Despite the absence of a violent reaction to the 1800 election, many historians have argued that major changes in society and politics resulted from a change of administration. The six authors dealing with this second topic analyze change in terms of the usual defined divisions between Federalists and Republicans, claim that change had little relevance to the two parties, or argue that the so-called revolution may have actually contributed to the expansion of slavery. Joyce Appleby supports the "liberal" interpretation of Jefferson when she argues that he conducted an effective campaign as president against the aristocratic ceremonies that had crept in during the Federalist era. James Oakes shows how Jeffersonian-era efforts to relate the happiness of slaves to their material possessions led to a racist argument based on African inferiority that prevented them from being fully qualified citizens whose happiness would result from freedom of choice. Robert McDonald notes that after the conservative, Congregational, Calvinist attack on Jefferson and his supposed deism, both sides lost out to the rapidly growing American evangelicals. James Sidbury makes an excellent case that Republican victory in 1800 led to the Louisiana Purchase, the rapid expansion of a slave empire, and the movement of slaves from Virginia to the southwest. This movement, according to Sidbury, destroyed the sense of African community and identity that had played such an important role in Gabriel's "real" rebellion of 1800. Jeanne Boydston and Gregory Dowd find the events of 1800 producing much less change in the gender relationships of elite New Englanders or of Cherokee men and women.

A similar division affects the five contributors in the final section. Bethel Saler argues that the new administration, in its territorial and Indian politics, favored local power, with a limited national government in charge of the "empire" of the territories and Native American policy. Seth Cotlar uses the career of Joseph Gales Sr. to illustrate how a middle-class British radical could become a happy, middle-class Jeffersonian conservative after his arrival in North Carolina. Laurent Dubois gives us an overview of the French in the Caribbean during the period and leaves us with the suggestion that an alliance between Napoleon and *Louverture* might have produced really revolutionary results. Douglas Egerton notes that an Adams administration in the 1801–1805 period would have been much less likely to have given Napoleon a blank check in Haiti and might have been much more willing to prevent a further expansion of slavery in Louisiana. Like Sidbury, he perceives 1800 in negative terms. Alan Taylor gives us an essay in which he illustrates the enormous difference between speculative activity in Canada and the western United States, and underlines the fact that the Jeffersonians simply had no interest in exporting the American Revolution to Canada.

As usual with such collections, different readers will have varied opinions of these sixteen offerings. The essays by Rakove and Pasley give solid, concise

overviews, and due to my own parochial interests I enjoyed those by Sidbury, Egerton, and Taylor. My overall evaluation is that this is a good collection of sometimes provocative essays, which should be read by all scholars and students interested in the early Republic.

University of Pittsburgh

VAN BECK HALL

The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History. Vol. 3. Edited by MICHAEL J. CRAWFORD. (Washington, DC: Naval Historical Center, 2002. x1vi, 874p. Maps, illustrations, notes, appendix, index. \$70.)

On the evening of August 24, 1814, flames from burning buildings illuminated the faces of shocked Washingtonians. Embers climbed into the night from the president's mansion, leaving a gutted ruin that screamed the military impotence of the globe's youngest nation to an uncaring world. Red-coated soldiers warmed their evening brew amid the wreckage on Capitol Hill, grinning in triumph and certain that this war was as good as over. To some extent, those veteran warriors were correct—the war would end in less than five months, but not in the overwhelming victory that their rape of the American capital seemed to promise.

Historian Donald R. Hickey once characterized the War of 1812 as “A Forgotten War,” yet over the past two decades scholars have turned their attention increasingly to this pivotal era in America's past. Within that proliferation of scholarship, no work has been more important to understanding the maritime aspects of the war than the Naval Historical Center's *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*. Completed under the editorship of Michael J. Crawford, the third book in this four volume series is truly superlative. Some 450 documents culled from the thousands of still extant letters, reports, and log entries relate the story of Anglo-American conflict in 1814 and 1815. Supported by over thirty illustrations and fourteen maps, the documents cover three segments of the last months of the War of 1812—the British Chesapeake campaign, the critical struggle on the Great Lakes, and Captain David Porter's escapades in the Pacific. Essays introduce each section, carefully considered paragraphs tie the diverse documents into a coherent whole, and frequent notes illuminate obscure expressions and tangential references in the primary sources themselves.

The strength of this volume may well reside in the words of Crawford's editorial team. Their essays and paragraphs link the diverse documents so clearly that as smooth a narrative emerges as one could find in any well-written history. The result is a research tool that is a sheer pleasure to read for the story alone.

For example, the Chesapeake campaign opens with the misery inherent to blockade, as Captain Robert Barrie of HMS *Dragon* writes, “I am tired of blockading . . . here we are very cold & entres nous very dissatisfied at doing

nothing" (p. 19). But Barrie's boredom ends with the appointment of Vice Admiral Alexander F. I. Cochrane to command British forces on the American coast. Cochrane orders his subordinates "to act with utmost Hostility against the shores of the United States" (p. 51), and concentrates available resources in the Chesapeake. As the campaign unfolds, myriad grim and fascinating tales emerge, among them the heroic yet doomed struggle of American commodore Joshua Barney's Flying Squadron, the recruitment by the British of former slaves into an auxiliary corps of Colonial Marines, the devastating raids by the Royal Navy along the bay's creeks and rivers, and the three major amphibious operations against Washington, Alexandria, and Baltimore. Success at Washington and Alexandria seemed to guarantee a successful campaign for the British, but the actions allowed time for Baltimore to prepare its defenses. Cochrane's land and naval forces suffered a severe check (and the young United States gained verses that would become a national anthem).

As Cochrane scrambled to justify the repulse, events in the Great Lakes theater hammered British morale at home. There, Master Commandant Thomas Macdonough's American squadron won the Battle of Plattsburg on Lake Champlain, ending the threat of British invasion from Canada in 1814. Baltimore and Plattsburg, coupled with the continuing depredations of American naval raiders (such as David Porter's *Essex*) in what Cochrane admitted was a "most destructive War" (p. 51) against British commerce, would, by the dawning of the new year, wipe the grins from the faces of those British soldiers who had gulped their tea as they watched the public buildings of Washington burn.

From the nuts and bolts (or should that be spikes and treenails?) of readying ships for war to the actual clash of arms and the political decisions that led to both, this documentary series is a necessary reference that must adorn the bookshelves of any serious student of the War of 1812 or, for that matter, of naval history. Recently, the North American Society for Oceanic History (NASOH) gifted Michael Crawford and *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, Vol. III with its John Lyman Book Award for Reference Works and Published Primary Sources. Well done! Now give us the next volume.

East Carolina University

WADE G. DUDLEY

Mortal Remains: Death in Early America. Edited by NANCY ISENBERG and ANDREW BURSTEIN. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003. viii, 253p. Illustrations, notes, notes on contributors, index. Cloth, \$49.95; paper, \$18.95.)

If ever there was a human universal, it is this: we are mortal; we die and we know that we die. But causes of death, patterns of death, ways of death, ideas and

norms about death, and the uses to which death is put are diverse and specific: contingent, historical, geographical, cultural.

Death is big. Personal relations, economies, societies, governments, religions, transient and long persistent cultural formations of all sorts, have been, and are, structured around death. Without theorizing it, almost all historical scholarship is the study of dead people. And death has always played a central role in the big-ticket stuff we write about: wars, assassinations, famines, epidemics, catastrophes, accidents. Yet for a long time historians paid scant attention to the changing epidemiological and environmental regimes of death, the changing economics of death, the changing ideals, rhetoric, and performance of death, and changing understandings and technologies of death. Death was remanded to epidemiologists, anthropologists, sociologists, theologians, physiologists, progressive reformers, art historians, and antiquarians who concerned themselves with tombstones, coffin fixtures, and graveyards.

That changed in the 1970s and 1980s. Under the influence of the *Annales* school, the New Left, the new historicism, cultural anthropology, British cultural studies, and feminism, historians were inspired to write about matters previously considered trivial or obvious. Death has never been trivial, but perhaps its very universality, its timelessness, obscured its potential as a topic for historical investigation. But in the 1970s and 1980s, death was a-changing in our society, disappearing behind veils of professionalization, medicalization, and commercialization. As it did so, it reappeared as a luminous subject for scholarship, an unexplored niche in an increasingly saturated ecology of academic subjects.

In the past twenty years, the scholarship on death has become increasingly interdisciplinary and increasingly sophisticated. *Mortal Remains*, a collection of twelve essays on death in English-speaking America from the late 1600s to the middle decades of the 1800s, offers a sampling of current cultural historical scholarship and concerns. There are essays on tropes and narratives of death in Christian homiletics, crime literature, political satire, the sentimental novel, revolutionary-era eulogies, and early national poetry. There are essays on personal and rhetorical responses to yellow fever, smallpox, measles, and other devastating epidemics. There are essays on the political and ideological uses of human and other remains to memorialize, naturalize, instate, or subvert national and racial regimes. There are essays on the changing discursive, theological, literary, and architectural fashions of death: angels, mausoleums, deathbed conversions, and redemptions.

The study of death inevitably intersects other important fields of study, and the essays here could just as easily have been included in collections on slavery and racism, white settlement and conquest, American national identity and political culture, personhood and self formation, romanticism, etc. In a short review it is impossible to respond with the extended dialogue that each article calls for, and deserves. A few essays are marred by overly broad claims, unsup-

ported speculation, or contentious politicking. Matthew Dennis's "Patriotic Remains: Bones of Contention in the Early Republic," for example, lurches into the Kennewick Man controversy, asserting that "scientific racism . . . lingers in the efforts of some physical anthropologists to assert their control over Native remains" (p. 138). This, it seems to me, is irrelevant and unfair. One can disagree with the claims and actions of the anthropologists, and still credit them with good faith. But all of the articles, including "Patriotic Remains," are worthwhile in some way, add to our knowledge, or can serve as departure points for further scholarship, debate, or class discussion.

No collection can do everything, and this one scants material culture and historical archaeology, historical epidemiology, the performance of death, funerary economics, the funeral/deathbed as public space, and medical history (e.g., the history of resuscitation, the history of anatomical dissection). Moreover, with its concentration on the political, social, and cultural uses of representation, the collection in some ways seems an evasion of death. The experience of death receives far less play here than discourse and representation. Death is compartmentalized and distanced by its translation to the registers of satire, journalism, correspondence, rhetoric, the memorial, and autobiography—and finally to the historical essay that restages and interprets them. This perhaps is an occupational hazard: the academic studies death, but death is uncontainable, and in some ways unnarratable, a reproach to the scholar and scholarship, and every other human endeavor. But we carry on, and *Mortal Remains* is a welcome addition to the growing shelf of works on the history of death discourse and practice.

National Library of Medicine

MICHAEL SAPPOL

A Traffic of Dead Bodies: Anatomy and Embodied Social Identity in Nineteenth-Century America. By MICHAEL SAPPOL. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002. xii, 430p. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.)

Anatomy came alive in nineteenth-century America, breathing new flesh and blood into medicine, the marketplace, and popular culture. In his well-crafted and superbly researched book, Sappol takes us on a fascinating and morbid journey through the powerful and expansive world of anatomical medicine, foregrounding its centrality to the making of modernity. Michael Sappol challenges a predominant narrative in the history of American medicine, namely that medical professionalization began in earnest at the turn of the twentieth century, only after bacteriology had revolutionized health and disease, the laboratory had begun its ascendance, and the hospital had been transformed from catacomb to temple. Instead, Sappol argues, it was during the antebellum period that anatomo-

my—at once a hands-on practice and a knowledge system—played a leading role in the modernization of medical practice and education. The secular and scholastic aspects of anatomy merged with lingering notions of the human body as sacred and transcendent to confer science with a new aura of authority. This made the corpus of anatomy both legitimate and desirable in the eyes of health practitioners and ordinary citizens.

For physicians in training, mastering anatomy meant creating boundaries between the dissector and dissected, between the self and other, that were reflected in the racial, class, and gender composition of medical schools and society at large. Defined as a rational and male act, anatomy was seen as dangerous to the delicate sensibilities and constitution of the “weaker sex.” Indeed, once a woman had dissected a body she was seen as unsexed and unfit for marriage. Metaphorically and while under the knife, the anatomical body was, more often than not, a poor or nonwhite body, frequently supplied through an underground economy of cadavers that linked public cemeteries, grave robbers, and midnight train rides. Indeed, from the mid-eighteenth to the late nineteenth century, raucous anatomy protests against body snatching and the less than savory ways in which medical colleges obtained cadavers erupted across the country.

Deadly serious for its practitioners, anatomy was also the site and object of humor. In the homosocial worlds of medical laboratories, it was common for male students to pull pranks in the dissecting room, usually involving body parts or enjoying recess by playing cards with a cadaver holding a lit cigarette in its mouth (p. 83). After graduation, this all-male “anatomical fellowship” could continue at “for gentlemen only” anatomical museums, which were established from coast to coast during the nineteenth century. Inside, men could escape the sentimentality of the female parlors and confront “the horrors of the pathological body” while gazing at wax models and dry preservations that juxtaposed “normal” bodies and monstrosities (p. 295).

Audiences for popular anatomy abounded in the nineteenth century, and anatomical medicine circulated in lectures, pamphlets, home manuals, and newspaper articles, often with graphic illustrations. Much of this “pulp anatomy,” such as the magazine installment entitled *The House I Live In*, was geared towards teaching children about the anatomical self, the importance of cleanliness, domestic hygiene, and Christian morality (p. 178). One of Sappol’s most engrossing analyses focuses on the twelve-hundred-page children’s story *Sammy Tubbs, the Boy Doctor and “Sponsie” the Troublesome Monkey*, published in 1874, in which race, primatology, anatomy, and minstrelsy intermingle to tell a story that is simultaneously about the importance of corporeal knowledge and discipline, the unnecessary racial divides in America, and the inappropriate hilarity of an infantilized black child acting as a bonafide anatomical dissector. *A Traffic in Dead Bodies* is replete with similar interpretations of the intersections of anatomical medicine, class and racial politics, and emergent notions of the

contained modern self. It is an impressive and engaging work of cultural history that greatly enhances our understanding of society and medicine in America's long nineteenth century.

University of Michigan

ALEXANDRA MINNA STERN

The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race. By JOHN STAUFFER. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002. 367p. Illustrations, notes, index. \$29.95.)

This unusually imaginative book swarms all over the brief but intense alliance among four 1850s radical abolitionists whose "Bible politics" perfectionism formed the background of John Brown's raid on the federal arsenal in Harper's Ferry. Brown is one of the two white men in the interracial quartet; the upstate New York philanthropist Gerrit Smith is the other, and a key figure in the story. To produce an American studies dissertation at Yale, John Stauffer deciphered Smith's difficult handwriting in the hundreds of letters in "the largest extant biracial correspondence in antebellum America" (p. 3), letters exchanged with the other three men. Bringing Gerrit Smith's life into fuller view is one of the values of the book. Another is the introduction of James McCune Smith, the first professionally trained black physician in the United States, educated in Scotland, "the most learned and broad-ranging intellectual" (p. 65) in the group, and a success in New York with an interracial medical practice. Frederick Douglass is the fourth member of the group; it tells something about the book's angle of vision that Douglass's later political role, somewhat nearer to the center of American politics and culture, is assumed to be a retrogression, a falling off, from the peak reached when these four came together in 1855 at Syracuse to form a Radical Abolition Party. The party never won anything, got few votes, and has been largely forgotten, but Stauffer's interest is not in pedestrian mainstream politics but in the cultural significance of these men transcending race to an extent that Garrisonian abolitionism, with its white paternalism, and certainly the larger society, with its deep "racism," did not approach.

The four men had been brought together originally by a philanthropic plan of Gerrit Smith back in 1846 to give 120,000 acres in the Adirondacks near Lake Placid to three thousand black New Yorkers, to make an independent and self-sustaining black community, "North Elba," or, as the settlers called it, "Timbucto." James McCune Smith, stunned by Gerrit Smith's generosity, was one of three black New Yorkers who selected the settlers. Frederick Douglass, already a leader with his own newspaper, received a deed for forty acres in Timbucto, began his association with Gerrit Smith, and left Garrisonism and nonresistance for "Bible politics." John Brown, on hearing about Timbucto, left behind his most recent

business failure and settled there with his family. There is interesting material about the photographs of the four principals, in which John Brown appears darker than some photographs of the “black” members of the group.

This book is so rich with the story of these four that perhaps one should not complain about what is not in it, but this reader would like to have had at least a little more exposition of the central terms: “Bible politics,” its theology and Christian ethics and its connection to religious currents; and “Black Heart,” which seems to mean the white men come to look at the world as black persons do. And then one would have liked the connection of these to violence made explicit—a main point as it turns out. Gerrit Smith astonished everyone including himself by being elected to Congress on a bit of a fluke, served in 1853–1854 during the debate over Stephen Douglas’s Kansas-Nebraska Act, and resigned in something like despair when President Pierce signed the act into law. John Brown was already committed to violent means; now the other three came to be also. “For Gerrit Smith, McCune Smith, Douglass, and Brown, this kind of savagery [the opening of Kansas and other territories to slavery by the Kansas Nebraska Act] needed to be fought with savage means” (p. 181).

One may suspect the book of being a projection back into the nineteenth century of the political correctness and identity politics of some parts of the academy in the late twentieth, and sure enough there are chapters about learning from Indians and about gender.

John Brown’s raid in 1859, here given a little more moral credit than it is usually given, unhinged Gerrit Smith, sending him into a mental breakdown and then into a more moderate antislavery politics, the description of which in this book is flavored with disapproval. The moment celebrated here is the brief time when these four men transcended race and joined in a program clear outside the slow boring of hard boards that marks the politics of this world.

University of Virginia

WILLIAM LEE MILLER

An Uncommon Time: The Civil War and the Northern Home Front. Edited by PAUL A. CIMBALA and RANDALL M. MILLER. (Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press, 2002. xi, 362p. Notes, index. \$45.)

The past decade witnessed an explosion of research into the social experience of the Confederate side of the American Civil War. This fine collection of essays indicates that scholars of the Northern experience are generating similarly valuable scholarship. The dozen essays collected in *An Uncommon Time* are all impressive pieces of research and writing. Each is well documented, persuasively written, and intelligently argued.

The essays themselves invite the reader to seek a synthesis of the Northern

experience, to identify the “common purpose” (p. xx), as the editors phrase it, that sustained the Union war effort. Exploring the points of contact among the pieces provides a good sense of the state of Civil War history today, although brief summaries cannot do justice to the richness of the essays. Two important essays that focus on women prove the irrelevance of the old idea that most Northerners experienced the war only at a distance. Both Alice Fahs’s essay on “sensational” literature and Rachel Filene Seidman’s essay on women’s dependence show that Northerners far removed from the battlefield recognized the serious changes wrought by the war. Fahs’s careful reading of popular writing and Seidman’s analysis of Philadelphia sewing women reveal that noncombatants fully understood that the context of war created opportunities to rethink issues of race, class, and gender. Two essays on churches and the war, by the late Peter Parish and Bryon Andreasen, reveal the deep commitment to the cause of the war, including emancipation, among Northern religious leaders.

While Parish and Andreasen identify ministers who encouraged, or forced, an acceptance of the Lincoln administration’s policies, Melinda Lawson’s essay on Jay Cooke reveals another approach to spurring loyal behavior. In one of the most thoughtful recent discussions of patriotism, Lawson shows the hidden dimensions of Cooke’s war-bond sales; though they helped the Union war effort and involved people directly in the war, they also emphasized self-interest over self-sacrifice and expanded the slippery idea that the nation was “first and foremost . . . a source of economic well-being” (p. 119). Lawson’s work, along with that of Michael Green on Republicans’ wartime ideology and Adam Smith on partisanship and patriotism, creates a much fuller and more compelling picture of Northern politics and nationalism during the war. In showing the flexibility in the idea and the practice of nationalism and national loyalty these authors’ conclusions echo much of the recent work in Confederate history.

The remaining essays are less easily categorized under a single rubric, but all offer valuable perspectives on the Civil War North. Lex Renda’s essay on the battle for black suffrage in Connecticut and Kyle Sinisi’s essay on Kentucky’s efforts to secure war claims reveal that despite the massive changes in Northern life during the war, old racial beliefs and old political habits died hard. John Syrett, in his detailed exploration of the Confiscation Acts, chronicles how slowly attitudes on race changed among Republicans in Congress and the Lincoln administration. Earl Hess, in his investigation of how noncombatants came to know the experience of battle, finds that personal experience rather than newspaper or magazine reporting brought the war home for most civilians. Michael Conlin’s study of Smithsonian director Joseph Henry offers insights into the difficulty of managing a national institution while maintaining personal opposition to national policies.

In their introduction, the editors assert that despite the diversity of experiences within the North during the war, the crisis helped forge “a national

consciousness" (p. xx). Proving or disproving this contention has been one of the major challenges for historians of the Confederacy for at least the last twenty years, so it is little surprise that scholars of the North would ask similar questions. No definitive consensus has been reached for the Confederate experience, but many recent scholars of the Southern home front have argued, as Paul Cimbala and Randall Miller do, that the war experience helped forge a nation. Although not every essay bears directly on this question, most demonstrate the persistent, almost overwhelming, effort of defining and regulating loyalty and disloyalty in the Civil War North. If not every Northerner fully supported the war effort, and several essays reveal new contours to Northern dissent, many citizens and institutions strove to enforce compliance with Republican policies. The dilemmas and complexities of patriotism, social change, and nationhood remain with us today, and this study offers readers a unique opportunity to understand how nineteenth-century Northerners confronted these questions.

University of North Florida

AARON SHEEHAN-DEAN

Theodore Roosevelt: A Strenuous Life. By KATHLEEN DALTON. (New York: Knopf, 2002. x, 708p. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.)

The public's fascination with Theodore Roosevelt has seen a resurgence over the past decade, and there is an ever-widening body of literature on the former president. In the crowded field of Roosevelt biographies, Kathleen Dalton's *Theodore Roosevelt: A Strenuous Life* stands out as a worthy addition to the literature. At the core of Dalton's work is an ambitious effort to integrate the personal and political development of the man with the dramatic changes that occurred in the United States during his lifetime. A secondary concern is to present the true Roosevelt, not the mythical figure commonly encountered. In order to accomplish this, Dalton seeks to present more than the myths or "heroics" of Roosevelt and, instead, examine the man and his family against the broader currents of American history. Through the author's narrative, the reader follows both the formation and implementation of Roosevelt's strong principles and ambitious political agenda, all based on the future president's pursuit of the "strenuous life."

Dalton divides her work into three broad sections. The first deals with Roosevelt's formative years and consists of three chapters. While this is the shortest of the three sections, it is especially significant in that Dalton provides extensive detail on Roosevelt's early life. The author makes use of new primary sources that provide great insight into Roosevelt's youth. A sickly and weak child, Roosevelt transformed himself physically and spiritually. Dalton notes that Roosevelt identified with Robert Browning's "feckless" duke, the central character of "The Flight

of the Duchess.” Like the duke, Roosevelt perceived that he suffered from a lack of purpose and ability because of his sheltered and privileged upbringing. Determined to transform himself, the young Roosevelt would embark on a rigorous program to improve both body and mind. Dalton recounts that Roosevelt still spoke of the personal impact of this poem some fifty years later.

The second section of the book is the longest, with seven full chapters, and presents the rise of Roosevelt, culminating with his tenure as president. Dalton aptly demonstrates that Roosevelt demanded more of himself than most and attacked public service with a zeal seldom seen before or since. Yet the rising politician also realized the importance of public perception and of history. As a result, he was not above self-promotion and often engaged in heroic acts not necessarily out of selflessness, but in a calculated manner designed to bolster his image and prestige. For instance, Dalton contends that Roosevelt participated in the Spanish-American War primarily because of his personal need to prove his courage and conviction. Yet, at the same time, Roosevelt was keenly aware of the impact that the war could have on his political future. By developing these twin, interrelated motivations, Dalton is able, not only to portray the complexity of the future president, but also to explain how Roosevelt’s pursuit of the strenuous life affected his political fortunes.

The third set of chapters examines Roosevelt’s postpresidential years. These four chapters vividly capture the personal and political struggles that the former president faced. Roosevelt left the nation’s highest office at the age of fifty-one. His energy and zest for life could not be reconciled with a quiet retirement, and Dalton presents a fresh examination of Roosevelt’s efforts to recapture the presidency in 1912 and his campaign to serve in World War I. The author concludes her work with an excellent epilogue that briefly details the lives of Roosevelt’s family and siblings and that explores the problems of writing about the former president; mainly, the need to separate the facts of his life from the image created for and beloved by the American people. Throughout the book, the text is complemented by a collection of wonderful pictures and bolstered with extensive notes and a thorough bibliography.

The strengths of Dalton’s work lie in the author’s comprehensiveness. Her biography may not be the longest or most specific, but it incorporates the broad patterns of Roosevelt’s life and his impact on the United States in a way not seen heretofore. For instance, Dalton was able to access new source materials and analyze the relationship between Roosevelt and his wife Edith in a way that redefines the importance of the marriage to the political fortunes of the president. In addition, Dalton probes deeper into Roosevelt’s influence on social movements and causes than other biographers. In the end, this work is a necessary read for any serious Roosevelt scholar and a fascinating portrait of the man for the general public.

Behind the Backlash: White Working-Class Politics in Baltimore, 1940–1980.

By KENNETH D. DURR. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003. x, 284p. Maps, illustrations, tables, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$55; paper, \$19.95.)

Most Americans who lived through the civil rights struggle initiated by the *Brown* decision share a plethora of memories of the era. One of the more enduring visions is that of white residents of the northern cities violently protesting against black “blockbusters” and forced busing. Press accounts represented these people as uneducated, blue-collar, working-class folks. The men were skilled and unskilled factory workers; the women did not work outside the home. Indeed, it was often the women who were at the forefront of the protests. They had watched in horror as Jim Clark’s and “Bull” Connor’s troopers turned fire hoses and police dogs on civil rights demonstrators. Yet, when the movement “came north,” these working-class white men and women, seemingly motivated by the same visceral racial hatred, reacted in much the same manner as had their southern counterparts, albeit without the police and their dogs.

Behind the Backlash is an attempt at a far more nuanced explanation for the reaction of white blue-collarites in Baltimore to residential and school integration in the postwar years. Durr traces the development of Baltimore’s ethnic neighborhoods from their beginnings in the early twentieth century. These were places where people lived for generations, often in the shadows of the factories that gave employment to successive generations of neighborhood boys. The residents’ sense of commitment to family, church, and community was extraordinarily strong and informed by “the Roman Catholic principle of subsidiarity . . . [, which] held that society was best understood as a hierarchy extending from church and state at the top to neighborhood and family at the bottom, and what is most significant, [held that] no higher level entity was expected to undertake a responsibility properly belonging to a lower-level association” (p. 54).

It was the responsibility of the federal government to insure the continued well-being of family and community. This the New Deal did, promising “social security rather than social change.” Thus it was supported by Baltimore’s white working class (p. 31). In the postwar years, however, the agenda of the liberal wing of the Democratic Party changed, while the “fundamental concerns of the urban working class” remained the same. Consequently, while blue-collarites retained their Democratic Party registration, they rejected the liberal Democratic nominees for state and national office who supported integration, busing, and the elimination of prayer in the schools by “nondemocratic—administrative and judicial as opposed to legislative”—means (p. 204). They increasingly gave their support to conservative “populist” candidates who railed against an intrusive federal government and promised to reemphasize “those vital communities like the family, the neighborhood, the workplace” (p. 201).

While white working-class concerns did not change, the rhetoric did; appeals to the rights of the working class replaced appeals to the rights of white people. As Durr states it: "In 1954 protesting parents were condemned by nearly all community leaders, who could easily discount their arguments on the grounds of racism. By the early 1970s, though, racial language had been effectively removed from white working-class protests. Even though the issue of busing ultimately revolved around race, opponents effectively argued that the real problems were class bias and the insensitivity of bureaucrats. . . . With the 'racist' label removed, white working-class arguments gained new legitimacy" (p. 175).

At the same time, the rhetoric of civil rights activists moved in the opposite direction. King's generation of leaders espoused civil rights—"rights that commanded universal respect." But, as black militants adopted the rhetoric of black rights, "it put working whites' counterclaim on firmer ground. They would speak for 'working' people, not just whites" (pp. 110–11).

Rhetoric aside, however, Durr's point is that between 1940 and 1980, the concerns of urban, white working-class Americans remained consistent, and it was that consistency that led them to support such ideologically disparate leaders as FDR, Joe McCarthy, Robert Kennedy, and George Wallace. FDR's New Deal promised economic security without threatening family, church, and community. McCarthyism promised to guard against communist domination of organized labor. Kennedy opposed a war that many blue-collarites came to see as "illegitimate," and Wallace promised to protect the working class from an increasingly intrusive federal government. Working-class Baltimore's opposition to integration and busing was not simply a racist backlash to the gains of the civil rights movement. Clearly there was a significant element of racism that cannot be defended. But at the same time there were other elements that made their opposition if not laudable, at least understandable. There was the unfairness of a judicially mandated program for racial equality conceived by suburban middle-class liberals but shouldered disproportionately by the white, urban working class. There was the rejection of the rule of law, social responsibility, and the value of work displayed by civil rights activists. And there was the desperate need to preserve those institutions—family, church, and community—that had been central to their way of life for nearly a century.

Durr's work is thoroughly researched, logically organized, and reasonably argued. His thesis—that Baltimore's white workers were far more than a collection of insecure, racist "Joe Six-Packs" and, more generally, that "it is possible to oppose affirmative action in principle without being a racist or a determined defender of white skin privilege"—is more problematic (p. 191). Whether or not he proves to be persuasive will depend largely on the ideological sensibilities of the reader.

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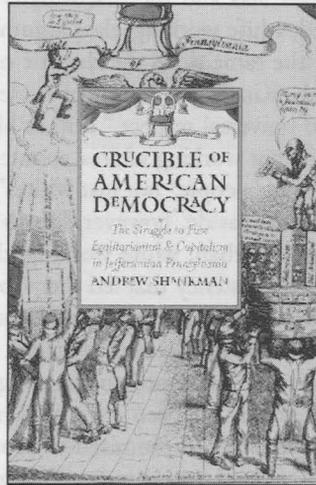
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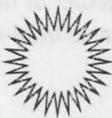
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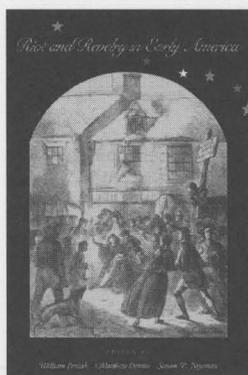
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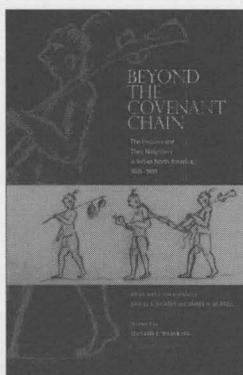
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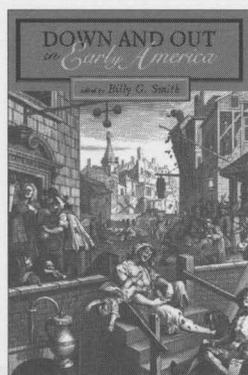
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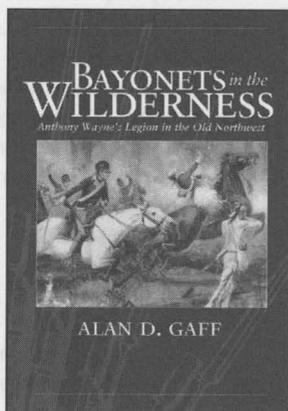
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