

naval cruise off the West African coast to gallant service in the Mexican War.

Kane's signal fame, however, rests upon his arctic expeditions of 1850–51 and 1853–55, when he traveled north in search of Sir John Franklin's lost crew and, at the same time, the Open Polar Sea, a supposed ice-free passage connecting the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans. A prolific author of arctic narratives, McGoogan provides a gripping account of these arduous journeys, doing an admirable job of extracting the drama out of long dark months spent ice bound between frigid decks, warmed only by the heat of conflict among the crew. The real strength of *Race to the Polar Sea* lies here, in the rolling narrative that runs at the pace of Kane's life: brisk, breathless, and always engaging. Navigating the rigors of early arctic exploration, delivering a clear exposition of the complex geography—fictional and real—and the equally complex geography of relations between Americans, English, Inuit, and Greenlanders, McGoogan does credit to Kane's perseverance and resourcefulness in the face of extraordinary odds.

Yet, like Kane's expeditions, there is room for dissent. Many biographers seem either to love their subjects or despise them, and there is little doubt as to where McGoogan stands. Throughout his account of the trouble-filled second arctic expedition, in particular, McGoogan comes across as a partisan, arguing in favor of Kane's interpretation of events. His depiction of Kane's relationship with the Spiritualist medium Margaret Fox comes across as even more one-sided and can be thin and biased when one considers the equally efflorescent literature on the Fox sisters. More problematic, McGoogan does too little to interpret Kane within the rich context of antebellum American culture, an approach pioneered with particular success by Sawin and Chapin and that helps to explain Kane's motivations and attitudes toward everything from his crew to his grand hopes for the ice-bound north.

Cavils aside, the narrative sweep and intrinsic power of McGoogan's Kane saga make it an essential introduction to one of the most arduous antebellum exploring expeditions.

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Abolitionists Remember: Antislavery Autobiographies and the Unfinished Work of Emancipation. By JULIE ROY JEFFREY. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008. 352 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95.)

Over the decades, historians have produced a rich literature full of shifting interpretations that have assessed antebellum abolitionists, their activism, and their role in moving the nation toward Civil War and emancipation. Julie Roy Jeffrey takes the study of abolitionists in a new direction by concentrating on

their autobiographical writings in the several decades after emancipation. In doing so, she demonstrates that most abolitionists remained deeply concerned about the freed people, the nation's collective memory of slavery, and the growing popular image of themselves as misguided and irrelevant fanatics.

Moving chronologically from Samuel J. May's 1869 *Some Personal Recollections of Our Antislavery Conflict* through Thomas Wentworth Higginson's 1905 *Cheerful Yesterdays*, Jeffrey analyzes the writings of a wide range of former abolitionists—black, white, men, women, easterners, midwesterners, politicians, Garrisonians, and underground railroad conductors. Some prominent figures include William Still, Jane Swisshelm, Levi Coffin, Parker Pillsbury, Frederick Douglass, Laura Haviland, George Julian, and Henry Stanton. In addition to published autobiographies, Jeffrey also discusses more abbreviated reminiscences from newspapers and magazines, as well as what she terms “ritual remembrances”—gatherings of former abolitionists to disband anti-slavery societies and later meetings to commemorate key events like the 1875 centennial of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society or the 1883 semicentennial of the American Anti-Slavery Society (8).

Particularly interesting are Jeffrey's observations contrasting the autobiographers' material and approach. While Coffin, Haviland, and Still all wrote about underground railroad activities, Still emphasized the courage and travails of the fugitives, whereas Coffin and Haviland, while presenting black fugitives in a positive light, tended to place themselves at center stage. These narratives all contrasted with May's work, which focused solely on the Garrisonians, implying that they were the driving force behind a unified movement. Julian, on the other hand, organized his story around slavery's impact on American politics and on the emergence of political abolitionism.

But they also shared common ground. Jeffrey demonstrates that virtually all the abolitionist autobiographers expressed the need to continue their work. Despite emancipation and the constitutional guarantees protecting black citizenship rights, the abolitionists recognized the realities of continuing racial prejudice and oppression. The dissolution of their formal organizations by the early 1870s left them without any organized means to address contemporary issues or even to publicize their views. At least part of their motivation to publish their memoirs was to call attention to the need for continued activism. The task was difficult, as popular magazines projected demeaning caricatures of blacks, nostalgia for the good old plantation days, and characterizations of abolitionists as either wild-eyed troublemakers or inconsequential moralizers.

In their writings, abolitionists critiqued the dominant reconciliationist narrative in American cultural memory by emphasizing the horrors of slavery, its causative role in the Civil War, and the sober commitment and courage of antebellum abolitionists. This effort to refocus the nation's memory of slavery, abolitionism, and war was futile. Popular interest in abolitionists faded rapidly, and

publishing houses simply did not see a market for their reminiscences. Most autobiographies that did make it into print sold poorly.

Some readers may get bogged down in the detailed treatment of each autobiographer, but Jeffrey's analysis adds significantly to our understanding of abolitionists and their postbellum commitment to their antebellum ideals. She offers insightful commentary on the nature of late nineteenth-century publishing, the writing of autobiography, and the largely frustrated attempts of the abolitionists to shape American historical memory between the 1860s and the turn of the twentieth century.

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Welsh Americans: A History of Assimilation in the Coalfields. By RONALD L. LEWIS. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008. 408 pp. Illustrations, tables, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$49.95.)

In most respects this is an excellent book; it is beautifully written, deeply researched, and shows all of the other qualities that have made Ronald Lewis the dean of scholars of the history and culture of America's coal miners. Essentially, Lewis does for the Welsh immigrant miners in Pennsylvania and the Midwest what Rowland Berthoff, Mildred Beik, Anthony Wallace, myself, and others have done for the other skilled, Anglo-Saxon pick miners who provided the labor force for the U.S. coal industry between 1850 and 1890. Proud men whose prior subordination to English mine owners in South Wales made them politically liberal as well as eager to enjoy higher wages on this side of the Atlantic, these Welsh miners moved up easily in the social hierarchy to become mine managers, mine inspectors, and civic leaders in their respective communities. Like other immigrant groups, the Welsh at first cherished their own churches and institutions like the *Eisteddfodau*, which were cultural festivals conducted in their own language. But because their numbers were relatively small compared to the number of English, Scottish, and Irish miners in the coalfields, and because their Methodism and desire for respectability fitted in easily with American values, the Welsh lost their separate language and culture more quickly than most other immigrant groups.

Lewis analyzes this acculturation process with authority and skill, devoting the right amount of space to social, cultural, and political developments. Like other immigrant miners during this period, the Welsh had to struggle against powerful coal and railroad bosses, and they made a major contribution to the founding and development of the Workmen's Benevolent Association in Pennsylvania and later of the United Mine Workers of America (1890). Some of the Welsh fought pitched battles with the Irish immigrants in the mining camps