

# Civil War Book Review

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Fall 2019

Article 1

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## **Editorial**

**Barber, Tom**

**Fall 2019**

This issue past and present collide in Tony Horowitz's *Spying on the South: An Odyssey Across the American Divide* and *Confederate Statues and Memorialization*, which includes contributions by Catherine Clinton, Jim Downs, W. Fitzhugh Brundage, Karen L. Cox, Gary W. Gallagher, and Nell Irvin Painter. Premised on Frederick Law Olmsted's effort to understand North-South antagonisms in the 1850s, journalist Tony Horwitz toured the modern American South to comprehend today's political fissures. Reviewer Daniel Crofts recommends *Spying on the South* not only for its premise, but also for its even-handedness. In his journey, Horwitz interviewed a wide variety of people scattered from Texas to West Virginia whose diverse ethnic, religious, social, and political backgrounds shows the region as anything but the monolithic block captured on recent electoral maps.

History and present-day politics continue in Gaines Foster's review of *Confederate Statues and Memorialization*. In addition to featuring some of the most important recent articles about Confederate memorialization, the book hosts a roundtable discussion with leading historians who consider what the statues meant to their creators and deliberate on contemporary removal efforts. Far ranging, and poignant, Foster agrees that the book is an excellent effort to combine scholarship and public discussion.

Two other important books confront issues of race and slavery, which inform contemporary debates about Civil War memory. Jack Trammell reviews *Exposing Slavery: Photography, Human Bondage, and the Birth of Modern Visual Politics in America* by Matthew Fox-Amato. Trammell applauds Fox-Amato for carefully reconstructing how pro-slavery forces tried co-opting photography in order to project southern paternalism.

Stanley Harrold's *American Abolitionism: Its Direct Political Impact from Colonial Times into Reconstruction* surveys the long struggle against chattel slavery. Reviewer Fred C. Johnson found the book convincing for Harrold's attention to the diversity of solutions and alliances abolitionists formed over time. Regardless of agenda, abolitionists dealt with an ever-shifting political terrain fractured by white supremacy and violence.

For the *CWBR*'s author interview, I talked to Elizabeth D. Leonard, Gibson Professor of History emerita at Colby College, about her new book *Slaves, Slaveholders, and a Kentucky Community's Struggle toward Freedom*. In the interview, we discuss southern unionists, black soldiers, and the historical process itself. For more coverage of Leonard's book be sure to read Jennifer Harbour's review of it in tandem with the interview.

Our resident Lincoln expert, Frank J. Williams, reviews *All the Powers of the Earth: The Political Life of Abraham Lincoln, Vol. III, 1856-1860* by Sidney Blumenthal. According to Williams, Blumenthal enriches our understanding of Lincoln's career with spell-binding accounts of his political rivals. Combining brilliant storytelling with thoughtful analysis, Williams finds the third installment just as compelling as Blumenthal's previous entries.

Civil War Obscura returns with a fresh look at another "old" book that's recently reappeared throughout the country: Zora Neal Hurston's *Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo."* Hurston's study of Cudjo Lewis, thought to be the last living person enslaved in Africa and transported to the United States, remained unpublished until 2018. In her essay, Meg Groeling explains both the book's troubled road to publication and considers the implications of Lewis's story.

Finally, I am graduating in December, which means this is my final issue at the *CWBR*'s helm. I am pleased to announce that Luke Hargroder will take over as editor next year. As a scholar of military history and Reconstruction, I am confident the journal will soar to new heights under his lead. In my three years as editor, I have had the good fortune of working with talented and kind scholars, publishers, and librarians. I cannot thank these folks enough for their patience with me and their unwavering support of the journal. See you in February!