

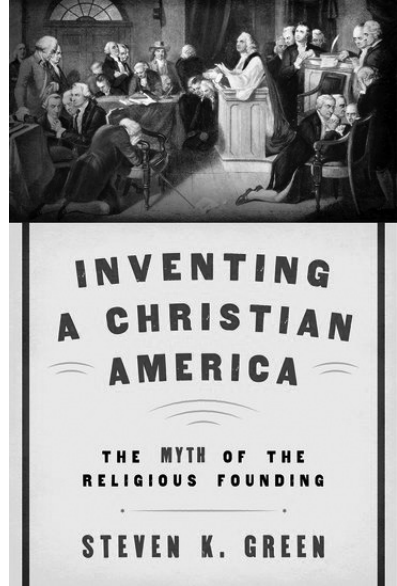
BOOK REVIEWS

***Inventing a Christian America: The Myth of the Religious Founding.* By Steven K. Green. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 295 pages. \$31.95 (hardcover).**

It ain't necessarily so, argues Steven K. Green in a reflection of George Gershwin. Majorities can be wrong. Facts may not match belief. Case in point for Green, the currently common belief about the philosophical underpinnings of American society and government. This book is a history of a myth.

America is a Christian nation. So we believe, at least a goodly portion of us. From the *Mayflower* through the Constitution until today, our history affirms the Christian underpinnings of our Bible-based exceptionalism. Although politicians of every stripe and majorities of average Americans in poll after poll believe that to be the case, the evidence—including an unambiguously non-religious near-revered Constitution—overwhelmingly says otherwise. America the secular—with toleration for if not acceptance of other religions—is the reality. But reality does not negate myth. As Green explains, myth is not fable or fantasy but a comforting interpretation of the past that we create to make the discomfort of today more tolerable and explicable.

Until fairly recently, the consensus among scholars, a consensus not particularly surprising to non-academics, was that the founding generation established an enlightenment constitution in accordance with the great clockmaker Deist views of the leading members of the revolutionary generation. The enlightened revolutionary impulse led to the disestablishment of state churches and the acceptance of formerly disparaged or persecuted minority sects, and to a wall-separated state and religion, like all walls not impenetrable but sufficient to allow religion to flourish in its realm, and government in its separate sphere. Indicative of the consensus that religion



was separate were the occasional efforts to legislate a Christian America into being where none existed.

Now, and for at least a generation, an ongoing debate in American history deals with the question of what the founding generation believed. At times the argument moves beyond academia and into the world of politics in a manner similar to the argument about creation science having equal standing with evolutionary theory or the denial of the science underlying climate change. In all cases, and this is no exception according to Green, the careful scholar faces an agenda-driven foe with tendencies toward cherry picking and disregarding evidence, shall we say facts, that weaken or deny the argument.

Green spends a great deal of time in his prefatory section debunking those who see the founders as lineal descendants of the *Mayflower* Pilgrims in their commitment to the development and perpetuation of a Christian government for a Christian society. These are the cherry pickers who want, to one extent or another, contemporary America to reestablish its roots—and, in some instances, hope to relegate non-Christian America to second-class status if not worse. This form of history, Green argues, may be good politics but it is not good history.

Having weakened if not destroyed the purveyors of highly profitable popular myth passing for serious history, Green develops a counter narrative of greater complexity and greatly reduced religiosity, beginning with the Puritans and their non-Puritan fellow passengers and the development of the historically insignificant Mayflower Compact, a document forgotten for generations until the time came for the creation of a founding myth. Green notes that the second generation attempted to redefine the colonizing generation after the city on the hill began to look more like a commercial home for materialists. Periodically, revivals attempted to spark religious fervor, but they fizzled quickly.

But all that predated the iconic founding generation, the Christians who established a new nation based on the Bible as a new Jerusalem, a new beacon for a decadent world. Green, not surprisingly, debunks that myth, too. Some founders, as some of the first generation in Massachusetts, were strongly Christian. Think Patrick Henry for one. But as traditional scholarship has it, Jefferson and Franklin and others of the first American generation were enlightenment thinkers who probably were religious rather than atheist or agnostic but tended toward Deism with a belief that religion was good for the people, any sort of religion.

Then came the change. The undercurrent of emphasis on the Christian underpinnings was never absent, but enlightenment ideas and commitment

to some degree of religious toleration ran strong through the revolutionary era. But, as with the second generation in Massachusetts, the American generation after the founding fathers felt a need for something more than material success or at least worldly striving. And the enlightenment rationalism fades as a more romantic mindset came to the fore—that and a second great awakening or at least a reemergence of the religious impulse.

The time was right for the emergence of something expressing the longing for something stronger, a unifying myth in an age of the individual in the midst of worrisome changes. Parson Mason Weems was not alone, merely the most widely read of the hagiographers who built a mythological founding generation to make the United States a special place of evangelical Christians. The early nineteenth century, with anniversaries as well as the deaths of Jefferson and Adams on the anniversary of independence, saw the rise of devotion to Plymouth Rock, the Mayflower Compact, and other sites and symbols. And the new interest in the old symbols had a cloak of Christian belief that redefined the colonial and revolutionary eras in ways more suited to what Americans were starting to believe they had lost. Thus the birth of Christian America, not in Plymouth or Boston or Philadelphia but in the Jacksonian age when the old nation was full of foreigners, alien religions, and discord among sections.

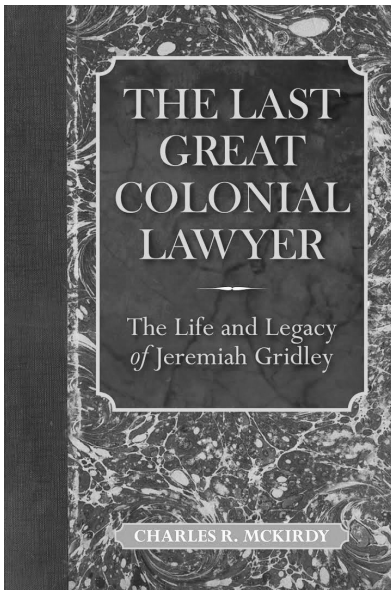
Myth matters, but it is not the same as history. The purpose of history is to recapture the past for its own sake while myth more commonly selects and edits history for purposes of the present day. Myth is not history, and it should never replace history. Green makes that clear. Implicit in his work is a caution that we should be careful to differentiate between what we want our past to be and what it appears actually to have been. The distinction between myth and history is not always to our taste, but that one is not the other is a lesson that we need to relearn periodically, perhaps especially now when we are debating the appropriateness of Confederate symbols that came into being as a means for later generations to mythologize a historical era that was much more complex and not necessarily deserving of worship in a secular sense.

Green will not end the debate. It has largely moved away from the academy along with those over climate change and evolution. It is now in more contested territory, popular history and politically motivated scholarship and bestseller lists. It will continue indefinitely. Note that the Alamo remains a battleground for historians and mythmakers, and no resolution is likely. Myth matters. But so does history. The one gives us words to live by, beliefs to help make sense of what we are and to allow us to measure ourselves against something greater. History offers a more accurate but far from

infallible yardstick that should reassure us that we are not fallen from grace and that, as did our forebears, we can overcome our circumstances, ourselves, and make history ourselves.

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***The Last Great Colonial Lawyer: The Life and Legacy of Jeremiah Gridley.* By Charles R. McKirdy. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018. 292 pages. \$32.95 (paperback).**



Charles R. McKirdy, an attorney who holds both a Ph.D. and a law degree from Northwestern University, has written a book about Lincoln—*Lincoln Apostate: The Matson Slave Case* (University Press of Mississippi, 2011)—as well as several articles and book chapters about lawyering in Massachusetts during the colonial period. His decades of research, not to mention his numerous publications, make him, in other words, an expert on law in colonial Massachusetts. *The Last Great Colonial Lawyer: The Life and Legacy of Jeremiah Gridley* examines Jeremiah Gridley (1702–1767), a man who was quite famous in

his day but who is often ignored by scholars. If studies of colonial America mention Gridley, it is usually to talk about the fame of his students, a talented group that included John Adams and James Otis Jr. Nevertheless, McKirdy contends that Gridley “was the greatest lawyer of his generation” (x) and deserves a biography that introduces him to a wider public. Although Gridley left little evidence about his life, McKirdy has produced an effective life-and-times biography that utilizes many different sources to examine both Gridley’s life and his impact on society.

Gridley was born in 1702 in Boston and attended Boston Latin School. His family was of relatively humble origins and his father died when Gridley was young, so Jeremiah’s brother John financed his college education at Harvard University. As McKirdy notes, “the Harvard that Gridley entered in 1721 was

a far different institution than just a few decades earlier; Massachusetts itself had undergone a series of significant changes” (5). McKirdy describes those changes and admits that little evidence exists to shed light on Gridley’s time at Harvard. After Harvard, Boston Latin hired Gridley as a tutor. McKirdy asserts, quite reasonably, that “Gridley must have received very positive recommendations from the Harvard faculty” (9). Gridley taught at Boston Latin for six years, married Abigail Lewis, and edited the *Weekly Rehearsal*, a literary newspaper. In sum, before age 30, few signs existed of the man who would become the greatest lawyer of his generation.

In 1732, however, the Massachusetts Superior Court admitted Gridley as an attorney. It became clear that Gridley was doing more than tutoring students at Boston Latin and editing newspapers. Gridley did not prepare for a law career by clerking with an established attorney because that would not have allowed him to support his family. Rather, he “had to teach himself the law” (20), and McKirdy illuminates Gridley’s ambitious, and daunting, program of study. Interestingly, Gridley joined the profession at an opportune moment because “not only was there a growing demand for lawyers, but also there was an increased need for those lawyers to be skilled practitioners” (25). Given the competition, his gradual progress climbing the ladder of his profession is not surprising. In his first decade of practice, “most of Gridley’s clients were solid middling sorts” (29), although he did have some well-to-do clients, and most of his cases “were routine debt actions” (29).

After ten years of practice, Gridley was “well on his way to becoming one of the leading lights of the Massachusetts bar” (33). In 1742, in the midst of a serious financial crisis, the Massachusetts General Court named Gridley Attorney General. This was an empty honor since the legislature and the royal governor feuded over who could make the appointment, but it was nevertheless a mark of Gridley’s abilities and “a clear indication that, by 1742, Jeremiah Gridley’s career was on an upward trajectory” (41). In 1747 Governor William Shirley appointed Gridley a justice of the peace. His star was on the rise, but Gridley also continued his intellectual pursuits, returned to journalism, and edited the *American Magazine and Historical Chronicle*, a literary magazine, from 1743–1746. In order to supplement his income and support his growing family, he became involved in an iron milling operation with Peter Oliver as well as land speculation, although the speculation did not make him any richer.

In 1755 Gridley moved from Boston to Brookline and the town elected him to the Massachusetts House of Representatives for several years. These were tumultuous times, due to the French and Indian War, but Gridley was right in the thick of things. He supported the British military commander, the

Earl of Loudoun, in Loudoun's battles with the colonials over the quartering of troops. Although he "sincerely attempted to do his best for Loudoun and the war effort," Gridley was "an eighteenth-century British politician" (103) and hunted for private preferment. Sadly, Loudoun proved the wrong horse to bet on, and Gridley received no offices or favors. Still, he had a thriving law practice, and McKirdy devotes chapter eight to analyzing some of Gridley's more important cases and to changes in the legal profession.

In the 1760s, the last decade of his life, Gridley became more and more involved in episodes stemming from the ever-growing dissatisfaction in the colonies with some of Great Britain's actions. In the Writs of Assistance case, which some regard as the first step toward the American Revolution, Gridley served as the attorney for the crown. Several years later, Gridley, John Adams, and James Otis Jr. were selected by a town meeting to meet with the Governor and the Council and convince them to open the courts during the Stamp Act crisis. At the very end of his life, in 1767, Governor Bernard named Gridley Attorney General, colonel of the First Suffolk Regiment, and helped him secure election to the Massachusetts House of Representatives as Brookline's representative. Bernard did this to gain leverage in a House that was increasingly dominated by radicals, but Gridley died on September 10, 1767, and was unable to enjoy the honors. Gridley's legacy became the young men he trained as lawyers—Benjamin Prat, Oxenbridge Thatcher, James Otis Jr., William Cushing, and John Adams. McKirdy concludes with speculation—how would Gridley have behaved had he lived to see the outbreak of revolution? Many of Gridley's students played critical roles opposing the crown, but Gridley seemed a less likely rebel. Thus, asserts McKirdy, "it seems unlikely that Jeremiah Gridley would have become an active partisan on either side of the issues that divided Massachusetts" (196).

One of the strengths of this volume is that it truly is a life-and-times biography. McKirdy does an excellent job illuminating the contours of Gridley's life as well as the society in which he lived. Furthermore, given his legal and historical training, McKirdy is not only able to successfully analyze a man who left little evidence for biographers, but also has a good understanding of the legal minutiae of Gridley's cases and can guide readers through difficult and obscure legal concepts. *The Last Great Colonial Lawyer: The Life and Legacy of Jeremiah Gridley* will appeal to anyone interested in law and society in colonial America and would make a good addition to graduate seminars.

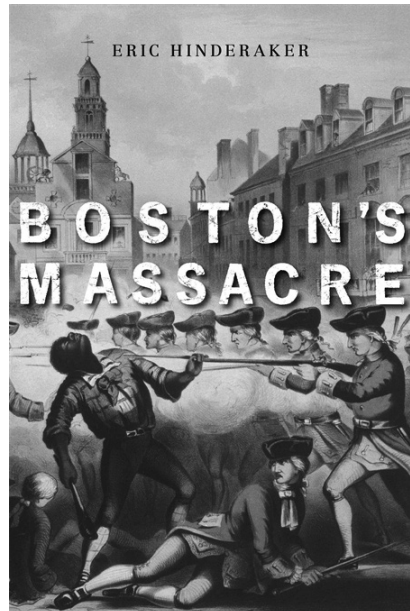
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***Boston's Massacre.* By Eric Hinderaker. Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017. 358 pages. \$29.95 (hardcover).**

Eric Hinderaker's *Boston's Massacre* takes a topic that is, on the surface, familiar to many, and introduces readers to it freshly in a variety of enticing ways. Hinderaker examines the story of the Boston Massacre through three themes. First, he explores how military and civilians discussed the nature of authority in Boston during the 1760s. Second, Hinderaker asks how the leaders of Boston gained and maintained a level of independence from royal authority in the years leading up to 1770. Third, he asks how the event itself became part of historical discourse and memory.

Hinderaker organizes his text by exploring the concepts of event, narrative, and memory, establishing this principle as a three-state model for how historical interpretation develops. He begins with accounts of the shooting that occurred March 5, 1770, explains the reasons why military occupation took place prior to the incident, and includes descriptions of the level of uncertainty hovering over Boston during the period in which the British soldiers awaited trial. The concluding sections address memory in great detail, challenging readers as much as unravelling in real time how much the event must have challenged contemporaries.

Beginning with the massacre after a brief introduction, Hinderaker uses newspaper accounts and extended pamphlets to describe the shooting. He counters British American colonial sources with the collected evidence presented by British officers. These primary sources indicate how the event was immediately labeled a bloody massacre or unhappy disturbance (10-27). These conflicting versions of the incident lent more confusion and impatience to the process of resolving the violence. Boston newspapers portrayed soldiers as unnecessarily aggressive, while British accounts (and some colonial eyewitnesses) indicated that the British American residents of Boston were the instigators.



Early pamphlets were delivered to a British audience in London, and these documents were intended to speak to both fellow subjects and government officials. What remains clear throughout Hinderaker's account is that uncertainty and confusion reigned after March 1770. Also, the collection of information from witnesses was problematic, as their memories and descriptions were often at odds with people who were in the same space at the same time.

From an organizational standpoint, Hinderaker makes a conscious choice to set the scene in 1770 and then move backwards to explain why the British military was in Boston in large numbers in the first place. To some readers this decision may prove problematic as the narrative does not move strictly chronologically. There is some purpose to this approach that is effective, however, particularly as Hinderaker emphasizes that while the tensions with the increased military presence in Boston were real, many people benefited as well. Merchants had very good profit margins thanks to expenditures as did blacksmiths, carpenters, private ship owners, and people who leased residences or space for barracks to the army. When read in concert with Cornelia Dayton and Sharon Salinger's *Robert Love's Warnings*, a vivid picture of Boston on the eve of revolution emerges. It was a crowded place with lots of competition for housing, extra jobs, and resources, all factors that increased tension between the subjects and the military.

It is the sections that explore the memory of the Boston Massacre, including the trials, that are most intriguing. The narrative of the event was spun in newspapers, pamphlets, in four different trials, and then in descriptions of the revolution that emerged in the late eighteenth century and continued throughout the nineteenth century. Every telling of the massacre seemed to focus on what Hinderaker calls "contested meanings." His discussion of how the symbolic power of the event was stronger than its details is fascinating. As the occupation of Boston took hold after 1774 and proceeded apace until March 1776, British Americans in the city consistently brought forth the specter of the massacre as a harbinger of additional violence at the hands of the British military.

Rather quickly, however, the victims of the massacre and the incident itself were cast as unworthy of remembrance (263). Hinderaker explains how the Boston Massacre was reshaped and reimagined in the following two centuries, beginning among abolitionists and leading to arguments regarding construction of a monument. Eventually, the incident was placed in the context of the shootings at South Carolina State, Jackson State, and Kent State in 1968 and 1970. Briefly, Hinderaker explores connections to the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989.

In *Boston's Massacre* Hinderaker has successfully offered students of the revolutionary era a compact examination of the shootings and the confusion over how to explain the controversy afterwards. Given other recent explorations of memory and history-shaping narrative, Hinderaker's final three chapters are of particular importance as he reminds us that history is constructed and then reshaped as evidence comes to light, or, in some cases, as generations wish to reconsider the past in the context of their present.

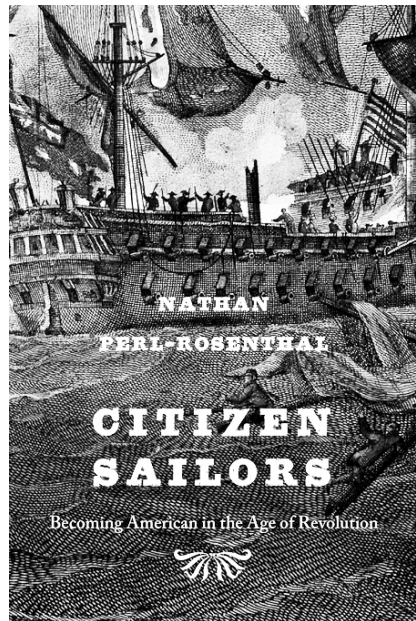
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***Citizen Sailors: Becoming American in the Age of Revolution.* By Nathan Perl-Rosenthal. Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015. 372 pages. \$29.95 (hardcover).**

Citizen Sailors: Becoming American in the Age of Revolution focuses on the nature of citizenship in the United States during the era of the early republic. Nathan Perl-Rosenthal's fascinating research describes the challenges facing the new republic regarding both the definition and the defense of citizenship. He uses a variety of personal narratives to illustrate the point, and by taking the time to include these case studies, Perl-Rosenthal is able to transform a complex and potentially dry examination of national and international policy into a much more vibrant account.

The United States did not define citizenship in the Constitution, instead depending on the states and a series of laws passed and reformed beginning in 1790. By 1802 these naturalization laws had been changed four times. In addition, the nascent republic faced severe challenges in terms of defending its citizens from foreign military forces. The nation's sailors, both in merchant fleets and the fledgling navy, were at the forefront of the struggle.

Bringing these sailors' challenges to life in vivid prose, Perl-Rosenthal is able to move eighteenth- and



nineteenth-century tensions off the page and into the readers' consciousness. New Englander Nathaniel Fanning's 1782 capture and trial frames the prologue, establishing the pattern and dread of those captured. As Perl-Rosenthal demonstrates, proving your national identity was literally the difference between life and death. This concept resonates throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as well.

Perl-Rosenthal is at his best in telling the stories of individual sailors that give the narrative its focus on national policy that illustrate how the weak republic could do little to defend its own people on the international seas. American sailors like Charles Lewis, the great-nephew of Martha and George Washington, make for fascinating character studies and explain how Americans tried to avoid being pressed into the service of the British or French governments. In the case of England, one problem faced by men like Lewis was that England still viewed them as subject to the crown, despite the war for independence, the Treaty of Paris, and the Jay Treaty. Lewis marked himself as American in many ways, including tattoos on his upper chest of MW and GW to represent his famous American relatives. The tattoos did not prove to be enough evidence to protect Lewis from initial impressment in the British navy.

The furious attempts of American officials to protect their country's citizens are described in layers. Sailors were constantly what Perl-Rosenthal calls "border crossers." In examining the lives of sailors, including Native Americans, enslaved and free people of color, and Loyalists and Patriots during the revolution, historians have tried to gain a better sense of identity in the era. Perl-Rosenthal succeeds chiefly because his subject, the transient sea-based laborer, lived and worked at the center of America's need to define and defend citizenship.

The forty-year period under study gives readers an in-depth examination of what and how status as an American citizen was defined. Sailors in the revolutionary era and the early republic imagined citizenship as something established by birth, granted by a nation-state, or chosen freely by an individual. The agencies attempting to argue the status of an individual used a wide variety of methods, including the study of sailors' bodies or paper certificates, demanding they recite oaths, or listening carefully to patterns of speech.

By the end of the era, it is clear to Perl-Rosenthal that one protector of citizenship status, determined and guided by the nation-state, is supreme. What is more remarkable is that in the early days of this process, the United States government was largely color blind, granting citizenship documentation to people of African descent and Native Americans alongside Euro-Americans.

In a working world where as much as 20% of seamen were people of color, this was a practical decision and one replete with consequences.

Perl-Rosenthal explores the role of Massachusetts in this process at the edges of his text, though some of the case studies are drawn from the Commonwealth and greater New England. Examples of how the state government dealt with citizenship during the Confederation period reveal a clever manipulation of the time that strove to protect potential Massachusetts citizens from French and British capture. In the era after the Constitution was adopted, Massachusetts was a leader in attempting to prove citizenship through the use of Customs House protection certificates. Massachusetts led the way between 1796 and 1802, issuing at least 13,132 such certificates. This represents one-third of all issued throughout the entire United States during the time period. To put this number in deeper perspective, Perl-Rosenthal points out that the State Department issued only about 22,000 passports to all travelers between 1800 and 1850.

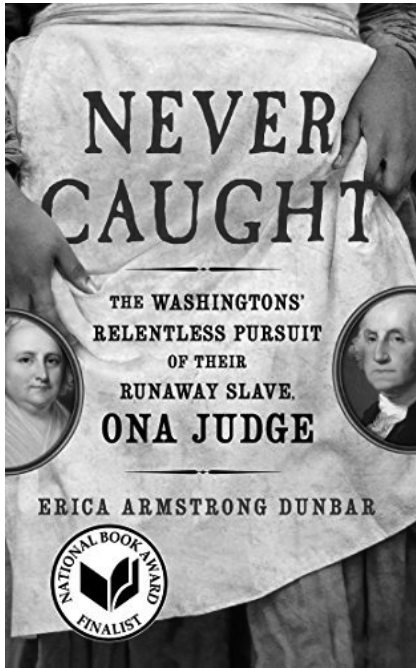
While the reader might desire some expansion of information in certain sections, Perl-Rosenthal has given students of United States citizenship a lot to consider. Reading the naturalization laws, the Louisiana Purchase Treaty, and books from Douglas Bradburn, Paul Gilje, Peter Kastor, and Martha Jones among other historians, provides ample room to expand knowledge of the struggle to document.

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***Never Caught: The Washingtons' Relentless Pursuit of Their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge.* By Erica Armstrong Dunbar. New York, NY: 37 INK Atria, an imprint of Simone & Schuster, Inc., 2018. Illustrations. 263 pages. \$16.99 (paperback).**

Never Caught: The Washingtons' Relentless Pursuit of Their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge offers a strikingly different view of President George Washington, who was privately ambivalent about the practice of slavery, and who sought to free his slaves upon his death. Having his efforts to find and return Judge to slavery explored and publicized allows the reader to explore his complex relationship with slavery.

Erica Armstrong Dunbar has documented the little-known story of a famous man's search for his runaway slave, providing details teased from an advertisement seeking the return of the president's fugitive slave and two personal interviews given by the slave herself, Ona Judge, years after she



emerged from the shadows, having lived her life in fear and secrecy in order to avoid capture and being returned to slavery. She explores the debates over slavery and abolition, and addresses the plight of fugitive slaves as she details the movements of the Washingtons and their enslaved servants to the north.

Dunbar provides well-researched biographical data on Judge's family, tracing her heritage back through her mother Betty, a Daniel Parke Custis (first husband of Martha Washington) family slave. Judge's story is intertwined with details of the lives of the Washington family, including the deaths of Martha Washington's husband in 1757 and young daughter Patsy in 1773, and

the impact of these tumultuous events on the family slaves. By weaving the story of the Custis and Washington families with that of their slaves, Dunbar is able to evoke the sense of vulnerability experienced by the enslaved servants in a way that is compelling and illuminating. With the marriage of George Washington and Martha Parke Custis, a new household was formed and slaves waited with trepidation to see if their family units would be affected by forced separation. Betty, a talented seamstress, accompanied Martha to her new home in 1759 and was allowed to bring her young son with her. In 1773 Betty's daughter Ona Maria Judge was born, and according to Dunbar, came to "represent the complexity of slavery, the limits of black freedom, and the revolutionary sentiments held by many Americans" (9).

Ona's father, Andrew Judge, was white and English born. He had come to America as an indentured servant, and his indenture contract was purchased by George Washington for thirty pounds. Andrew Judge worked as a tailor at Mount Vernon, bringing him into contact with Betty. Dunbar explores the scenario through which Ona was conceived, speculating that while the relationship may have been consensual, Betty's pregnancy might just as likely have resulted from an unwanted or forced sexual attack. Andrew Judge eventually left Mount Vernon, leaving Betty and his daughter Ona behind as slaves.

With George Washington's election as America's first president in 1789, he relocated his family to New York City, bringing seven slaves—Ona, then 16, among them. Her duties mainly included tending to the needs of the new first lady. As when the Washingtons married, the slaves they owned had no control over the manner their lives would now change. Though they were moving north to a state where slavery was under attack, they most likely did not anticipate escaping bondage. With the subsequent move of the capital to Philadelphia, however, anti-slavery and abolitionist sentiment became much more prevalent and free blacks more common in the Quaker city. Dunbar provides a vivid description of Philadelphia in the 1790s, the “epicenter of emancipation” (XVI), providing details about the ways that the worlds of free black entrepreneurs and slaves intertwined.

It is in fact here in Philadelphia that Ona Judge made her decision to flee, precipitated by the marriage of the Washington's granddaughter Eliza (Elizabeth Parke) Custic, and the news that Ona would be sent back to Virginia as a wedding gift to the young couple. Given Eliza's difficult temperament and the fact that her fiancé, Thomas Law, had three illegitimate children with different non-white women, this new life offered only hardship and perhaps sexual assault. Ona likely felt she had to act quickly or lose perhaps the only opportunity she had to escape.

By May 1796 Ona's decision was made, and she managed to flee. The text of a newspaper advertisement offering a ten-dollar reward for her capture and return provides a chilling example of the callousness with which the Washingtons sought the return of their property:

Absconded from the household of the President of the United States . . . ONEY JUDGE, a light Mulatto girl, much freckled . . . about twenty years of age. As there was no suspicion of her going off, and it happened without the least provocation . . . she may attempt to flee by water. (99)

Clearly, there was provocation, yet the family seemed oblivious to the situation at best, uncaring at worst.

Upon her escape, apparently with the assistance of free blacks in Philadelphia, Ona made her way north to begin her new life as a fugitive in the free state of New Hampshire. Dunbar describes the fears and difficulties experienced by fugitive slaves and sketches out what Ona's life would have been like. Though various attempts were made to locate and force her to return, they were unsuccessful, largely due to George Washington's fears of damaging his reputation through his nefarious attempt to kidnap a young

mother from a free state. Ona lived in the shadows throughout most of her life to avoid capture, but eventually gave the two interviews which provided Dunbar with many of the factual details needed to tell the story.

Throughout the book, Dunbar presents a nuanced portrait of George Washington, acknowledging his military and political accomplishments yet bluntly portraying his efforts to recapture his young slave. This is a side of the first president that few Americans are aware of and an important aspect of life in the Early Republic. Many of the founding fathers were slave owners and participated actively in the treatment of the people they owned as chattel. *Never Caught: The Washingtons' Relentless Pursuit of Their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge* explores in graphic detail Washington's attempts to track down, kidnap, and force Ona Judge to return to slavery, and vividly portrays the moral conflict engendered by slavery in the new nation.

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***Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom.* By David Blight. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018. 912 pages. \$37.50 (hardcover).**

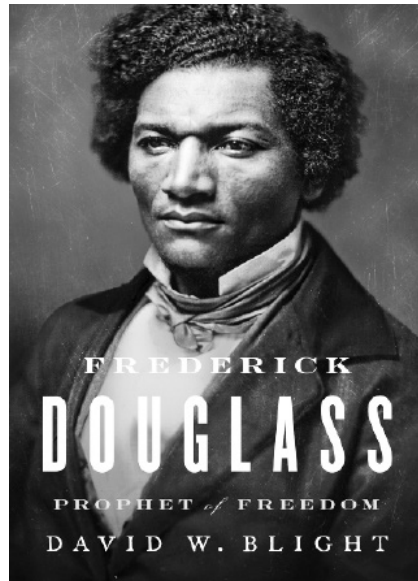
Perhaps no other person in American history has done more for racial equality in the United States than Frederick Douglass. It is equally unlikely that any living historian is more qualified to write about the profound impact that Douglass continues to have on American social progress than Yale scholar David Blight. In *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom*, Blight merges his unabashed passion for Douglass's legacy with the fortuitous discovery of an untapped cache of Douglass's private papers to compose an elegant, but complex, portrait of the civil rights warhorse in the post-Civil War era. Detailing Douglass's personal and political triumphs, struggles, and even heartache in the last twenty-five years of his life, Blight unveils a side of Douglass that has remained dormant since his death in 1895. Outstripping the well-known story of his incredible rise from slavery to freedom to American icon, the book delivers an unprecedented look at Douglass's transformation "from a radical outsider to a political insider" in the latter half of the nineteenth century (xviii). With this unvarnished view of the man—warts and all—*Prophet of Freedom* not only enlivens Douglass in ways never before seen, but most importantly, it reawakens his spirit as America's undeniable oracle of freedom.

At the center of Blight's study is the newly discovered archive of Walter O. Evans in Savannah, Georgia. Drawing on this collection of Douglass's

personal artifacts that embody the final chapter of his seventy-seven years on earth, Blight articulates Douglass's long-hidden inner voice. What Blight hears in those papers is a story of personal turmoil, recollection, doubt, inspiration, and intimate thought not usually associated with Douglass's life. Numerous themes such as his reliance upon the Bible to dissect and reconstruct American society, his antithetical vanity and insecurity as the nation's foremost civil rights spokesman, and the myriad perplexities that Douglass grappled with on his capricious journey from extremism to mainstream diplomacy all steadily emerge.

One of the many strengths of *Prophet of Freedom* rests in its narration. Having a rare talent for storytelling, Blight writes as though he knew Douglass personally. With a powerful plot, captivating characters, friction, and resolve, he gives readers an exclusive look at what made Douglass tick. As all good history should do, moreover, Blight leaves the story just short of complete catharsis. In so doing, he not only translates the history of Douglass's life into a compelling tale of human bondage, racism, and determined heroism, but he challenges readers to question the past and contemplate what Douglass's words and existence mean in the here and now. Resonating from every page we feel Douglass's presence, and with each turn we come to believe that we knew him too.

Of particular note is the powerful role that several women played in Douglass's life and the many conflicts that arose from his relationships with his children. His first wife, Anna Murray, was a free black with whom Douglass had five children and dozens of grandchildren over the course of their forty-four-year marriage. Although Douglass's travels kept them separated for much of that time, there is no doubt that Anna played an integral part in his rise to national prominence. His second wife, Helen Pitts, a well-educated white abolitionist and suffragist, anchored the final ten years of Douglass's life as he crisscrossed the country speaking as an elder statesman of racial equality. The close bond that Douglass formed with Julia Griffiths and Otilie Assing—both of whom were white females—further demonstrates his



deep trust in women and his reliance upon them throughout his adult life. However, we also learn that the rigorous monetary and emotional demands placed upon him by family and friends, coupled with the pressures of his celebrity, took a heavy toll on Douglass. Consequently, as he grew older Douglass suffered from debilitating anxiety and depression on several occasions. Yet exposing Douglass's flaws does little to diminish his stature as America's prophet of freedom. Blight's unrestrained portrait only adds color and depth to Douglass's already remarkable story and reminds us of the innumerable lessons his unparalleled life yields.

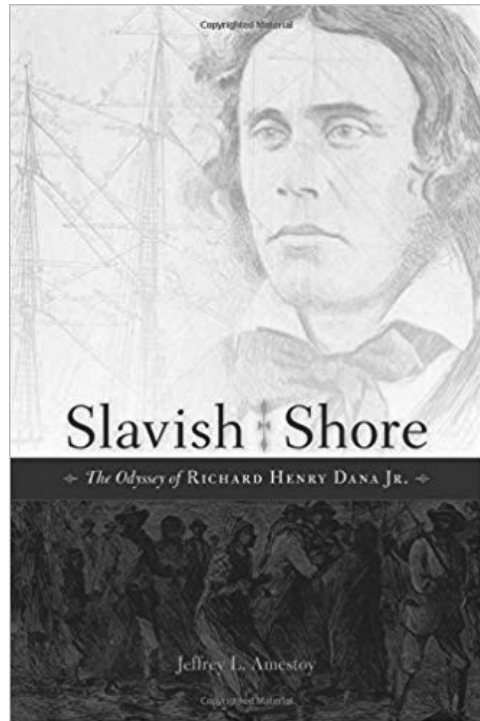
At 764 pages *Prophet of Freedom* is a dense treatise to be sure. Divided into thirty-one chapters with a twenty-page epilogue, this is not your typical monograph and certainly does not qualify as light reading. It is here that one could find fault in Blight's approach. Although he professes to expose an unknown side of Douglass later in life—and he clearly does—the first half of the book is spent rehashing his childhood, escape to freedom, and ascension to fame. Having written extensively on Douglass's life in the past, Blight's familiarity with his subject might prove to be a detriment in *Prophet of Freedom*. Rather than retell much of what is already known about Douglass, Blight may have better served his audience by including only a succinct introduction to Douglass's early life. Not only would this have provided readers with the requisite background on his legendary place in American history, it would have made the book far less daunting, and most crucially, it would have better underscored the invaluable revelations found in the Evans Collection. After all, it was the discovery of the Evans archive that prompted Blight to write *Prophet of Freedom*, and is also what distinguishes it from all other works on Douglass.

The book's formidable length notwithstanding, *Prophet of Freedom* is an extraordinary piece of historical scholarship. With nearly one hundred pages of notes, Blight marries his gift for storytelling with meticulous research and an unbridled enthusiasm for Douglass's life and enduring legacy. The result is an exceptional amalgamation of superb biography and narrative history that vividly illustrates Douglass's freedom prophecy fulfilled. A must-read for academics and graduate students of United States history, *Prophet of Freedom* cements Douglass's place as one of the most significant figures in American race relations. As such, it will also appeal to history buffs and biography enthusiasts alike—should they dare accept the challenge of picking it up.

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***Slavish Shore: The Odyssey of Richard Henry Dana, Jr.* By Jeffrey L. Amestoy. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015. 365 pages + ill. \$35.00 (hardcover).**

Richard Henry Dana, Jr., the son of a Boston Brahmin family, shipped out from Boston aboard the brig *Pilgrim* for the coast of Mexican California at just nineteen years of age. The two-year voyage, recalled by Dana in *Two Years Before the Mast*, altered the course of his life. Publication of his memoir made him a household name and fixture of Boston's transcendentalist literary scene. Yet the real effect of the journey was to convince him to dedicate his life to aiding those deprived of rights and dignity by men in positions of authority. Jeffrey L. Amestoy argues, in his biography *Slavish Shore: The Odyssey of Richard Henry Dana, Jr.*, that the commitment to justice guided Dana's distinguished legal career in antebellum Boston. Amestoy follows the twists and turns of Dana's life with aplomb and demonstrates conclusively that his adult life had drama every bit as worthy of historical consideration as his *Two Years Before the Mast*.



Slavish Shore, at its center, focuses on Dana's efforts in the Fugitive Slave Act rescue cases, the Prize Cases, and the Jefferson Davis trial. Dana served as chief legal counsel for two of the most famous fugitive slave rescues of the 1850s—Shadrach Minkins, who escaped to freedom, and Anthony Burns, who did not. Dana's stirring defenses for the two fugitives and subsequent defenses of those allies who sought, by extralegal means, to free them, provided him fame and recognition in Boston's abolitionist and free black communities. They also brought him to the attention of the Republican Lincoln administration during the Civil War. His commitment to the Republican cause and experience in maritime law pushed Dana to the

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center of the Prize Cases in 1863. The case combined four cases that asked whether a U.S. ship's crew was entitled to a share of the sale of cargo seized from a ship caught attempting to run the naval blockade of the Confederacy, as stipulated by international law. The case questioned whether international and military law applied since the Confederacy, in the view of the United States, was not an independent, belligerent nation. Dana's argument in the Prize Cases ensured that the existing law applied to the Confederate rebellion as well, likely forestalling other legal challenges to the federal government's use of military law central to its ability to fight the Civil War. Finally, Dana's performance in the Prize Cases led his co-counsel from that case, William Evarts, to seek his assistance on behalf of the federal government in the treason trial of Jefferson Davis. He again stepped forth into the fray and argued against trying Davis for treason, ultimately successfully. His efforts ensured that the charge of treason rested on sound constitutional principles, as opposed to a desire for retribution.

Dana's choice of legal cases often brought him into sharp contrast with Boston's Brahmins and significantly hurt his career. As owners of merchant vessels and cotton factories, the Brahmins maintained significant financial interest in the work of the common seamen and fugitive slaves defended by Dana. The Brahmins respected Dana's abilities in court, often settling cases quickly simply because he signed on as counsel. They declined, though, to bring significant business to his practice like they had for Daniel Webster and Rufus Choate. Dana, as a result, was forced to supplement his income on the lecture circuit and from sales of his writing. His lack of material success reflected his lack of success in politics. Without the backing of the Brahmins, he struggled to establish himself as a leader at the bar and ballot box. His principles, it appears, negatively affected his professional advancement and kept him from achieving the type of recognition heaped on his contemporaries.

Amestoy's great accomplishment is his recovery of Dana's starring role in efforts to combat slavery, win the Civil War, and preserve the Union. He has successfully shown that Dana's life after *Two Years Before the Mast* is worthy of historical recognition and research. His attention to Dana's legal strategy, particularly in the rescue cases, adds nuance and understanding to critical efforts in the antebellum struggle against slavery. The question of enslavement, as Amestoy demonstrates, was put on trial before a court of law a decade before it was decided on the battlefield. Dana's force of personality and convictions shine through the pages of *Slavish Shore* and demonstrate the importance of personal sacrifice for the greater good.

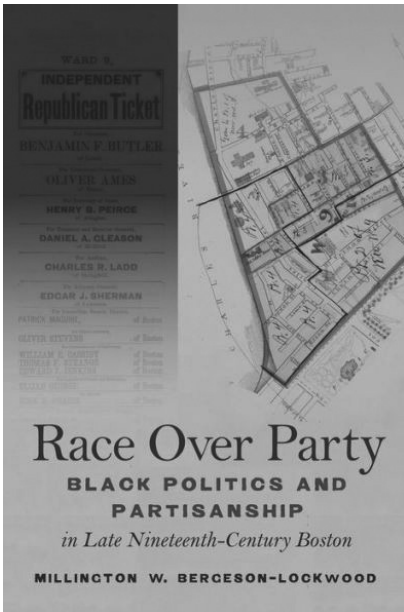
Though Amestoy's accounts of Dana's legal cases are vivid and detailed, he is less clear about the contradictions and tensions in antebellum Boston. The focus on legal strategy reflects, in part, Amestoy's previous position as Chief Justice of the Vermont Supreme Court. Yet the historical context surrounding Dana's legal career stands in need of greater nuance. Dana, after all, was hardly a pariah among the Boston Brahmins as often argued in *Slavish Shore*. Brahmin and transcendentalist society commonly toasted Dana as one of their own, particularly as a founding member of the Saturday Club dinner society. He turned down numerous opportunities to run for public office throughout the antebellum period, indicating that he had substantial support in Massachusetts's political circles. He was, also, hardly alone in sacrificing social or financial position within Boston society for antislavery principles. Wendell Phillips and Edmund Quincy both suffered derision for their consistent, full-throated support of abolitionism. James Russell Lowell, Samuel Joseph May, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Robert Gould Shaw, and John Quincy Adams were all scorned due to their antislavery views. Charles Sumner, though willing to mold his beliefs to public opinion for the sake of professional and political advancement, suffered substantial physical injuries in a brutal attack on the floor of the U.S. Senate for his rhetorical assault against slavery. The Brahmin aristocracy, therefore, was far from united in support of the slave system, and Dana was seldom a lone voice crying out for justice.

Amestoy's biography has proven, more than anything, the importance of further research into Dana and his world. The division of Northern public opinion on the question of slavery, attempts to rescue fugitive slaves, and legal challenges to the Union war effort all deserve careful attention from scholars. Amestoy has ensured that Richard Henry Dana, Jr. will be a necessary part of that conversation.

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***Race Over Party: Black Politics and Partisanship in Late Nineteenth-Century Boston.* By Millington W. Bergeson-Lockwood. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018. 262 pages. \$29.95 (paperback).**

For Frederick Douglass, the choice between voting Republican and voting Democrat was no choice at all. As Douglass noted in 1872, the Republican Party was the ship—the safe party for African Americans—and everything else was the sea. It is hard to argue with Douglass. Democrats frequently



employed paramilitary terrorism and voter fraud to overthrow Republican governments. Furthermore, while Jim Crow did not begin immediately after the end of Reconstruction, it did not take Democrats long to disfranchise African Americans and create a society based on the pernicious dogma of “separate but equal.” The situation was somewhat different in the northern states. To be sure, numerous historians, from Leon Litwack to Brent M. S. Campney, have illustrated that the North was not an enlightened and egalitarian paradise. That said, African Americans could and did vote in the northern states long after their disfranchisement in the South. The central question becomes,

did northern African Americans follow Douglass and vote Republican, or abandon the Republican ship for another party?

Many historians have argued that African Americans largely stuck with the Republican Party, at least until the 1930s. After the election of 1932, black people began to vote Democrat with greater frequency; a trend that accelerated during the 1950s and 1960s. Historian Millington W. Bergeson-Lockwood, however, has a different idea about black voting patterns in the four decades after the end of the U.S. Civil War. He focuses on the city of Boston and contends that some African Americans, such as Edwin Garrison Walker, promoted black independent politics. In other words, rather than voting in lockstep with the Republican Party, Walker and other black independents “advocated African American voters withholding support from the Republican Party, and even supporting Democrats until major party platforms reflected black interests and party members protected and expanded black rights” (1). Ultimately, the story of black independent politics is a tragedy, because independent politics failed to change either party. However, tragedies sometimes have silver linings. This failure “led black activists more firmly toward strategies of race-based organizing outside of the formal two-party political system” (3).

Race Over Party: Black Politics and Partisanship in Late Nineteenth-Century Boston begins by examining how black activists used electoral politics in the years immediately following the U.S. Civil War. In Boston,

much of the city's black population lived in Ward Six, later Ward Nine. Black voters elected Charles L. Mitchell and Edwin Garrison Walker to the Massachusetts General Court and "embraced the ballot as a powerful tool for uplift" (22). Black voters could, and often did, criticize the Republican Party, but they tended to remain loyal Republican voters. However, cracks began to appear during the presidential election of 1872. Most black Bostonians refused to abandon President Ulysses S. Grant for Horace Greeley, but some did. This trend accelerated in the 1880s and 1890s as some black activists lost faith in the Republican Party. However, they continued to participate in electoral politics and created "their own brand of independent politics" (52). Black independents supported Benjamin F. Butler's attempts to win the governorship as a Democrat, although, by voting for non-Republican candidates, they sometimes "risked their jobs and reputations" (61). The executive council rejected Butler's nomination of independent Edwin Garrison Walker as a District Court Judge and, in so doing, "confirmed black independents' suspicions that the Republican Party was more interested in securing electoral victory than supporting African Americans" (78).

African American independents supported Grover Cleveland for President in 1884. Many lobbied aggressively for patronage appointments. Cleveland appointed James Monroe Trotter as recorder of deeds for the District of Columbia, but he did not appoint many black people to patronage jobs. Black support of Cleveland, thus, demonstrated the "misplaced optimism that a Cleveland presidency would bring with it a new black political ascendancy" (97). Although disappointed by Cleveland, black Bostonians attempted to build coalitions with the Boston Irish. Historians have emphasized tensions between African Americans and the Irish, so Bergeson-Lockwood's discussion of how the two groups sometimes cooperated for each other's benefit is quite fascinating. That said, cooperation with the Irish proved short-lived, another disappointment for proponents of black independent politics. African Americans channeled their feelings of betrayal and disillusionment into race-based organizing. They "turned from mainstream electoral campaigning and political appointment seeking to confront directly the rising tide of racial violence" (135). People lost their faith in party politics and used new organizations such as the Colored National League to promote antilynching measures. This turn inward had an important consequence: "without the burden of convincing white-dominated political parties to bend to their interests, black activists could better focus on issues of racial justice and advancing the cause of black freedom and equality" (181).

By analyzing Boston, Bergeson-Lockwood offers an intriguing story about independent politics. However, it should be noted that, even in

Boston, the epicenter of black independent politics, independent sentiment was never even close to unanimous. Sometimes it did not even appeal to a majority of the black community. At times, one wonders if the author overstates the importance of independent politics. Furthermore, the book would have benefitted from a wider scope. Did the independent politics that took place in Boston occur elsewhere, or was it a Boston phenomenon? If there were other areas that featured independent politics, did people attempt to cooperate across state lines?

This thought-provoking book also addresses contemporary issues. In recent years, people across the political spectrum have suggested that African American, Latinx, and other minority voters should split their votes rather than voting exclusively for one party. It was fascinating to see how some of this recent language closely parallels the quotations that Bergeson-Lockwood cites. Perhaps this book should be required reading for these pundits as an illustration of the perils of independent politics.

Race Over Party: Black Politics and Partisanship in Late Nineteenth-Century Boston will work well in upper-division undergraduate classes as well as in graduate seminars. Students will appreciate Bergeson-Lockwood's careful attention to detail and his historiographical contribution. Furthermore, this useful book will appeal to a scholarly as well as a popular audience.

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***Black Bostonians and the Politics of Culture 1920-1940.* By Lorraine Elena Ross. Umass Amherst and Boston Press, 2017. 227 pages. \$28.95 (paperback).**

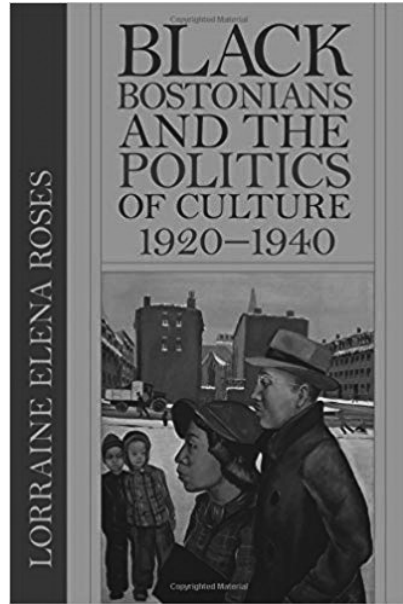
The author, Lorraine Elena Ross, is a literary scholar who specializes in the contributions of black peoples to the culture of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. She moved from New York to Boston, where her interest in exploring the history of the creative black peoples in the United States was stimulated by an encounter with Dorothy West, a survivor of the Harlem Renaissance.

In *Black Bostonians and the Politics of Culture 1920-1940*, Lorraine attempts to explore how the African American Community in Boston used cultural production as an avenue for integration and racial justice. In the 1920s and 30s, when the African American population in Boston was few in number to wield influence through electoral politics, it found alternative strategies to bridge the racial and economic divide. Such alternative strategies included

artistic works in the fields of creative writing, painting, sculpture, dramatics, music, photography, journalism, and independent scholarship, amongst others. Afro-Bostonian community leaders deployed culture as a vehicle to cross over the racial divide. Their goal, according to Lorraine, was to be fully involved in the broader sphere of the dominant culture, beyond the boundaries of the insular community. It was in fact a strategy, Lorraine argues, aimed at influencing the gatekeepers of mainstream art in an effort to elevate the status of Negro spirituals, literature, and historiography.

Several of the African American cultural leaders, according to Lorraine, were no fans of black separatist movements; rather, they were resolute integrationists who viewed their work whether on the stage, podium, concert halls, exhibitions, in literary magazines, etc., as an integral part of the larger struggle for racial equality. Lorraine also stated that although the “Boston Renaissance” flourished around the time of the New York Harlem Renaissance 1919-1935, it was not a copy of the latter. In fact, she used the word “Boston Renaissance” to differentiate it from New York City’s Harlem Renaissance. In her words, “Boston generated its own modest but significant body of work in response to the times. It was shaped at once by the cultural traditions of the city known as the “cradle of liberty and its Black Yankee roots” (i).

But unlike the Harlem Renaissance, the Boston cultural “renaissance” remained largely understudied. The dimension of black contribution to cultural production in Boston during the inter-war years have hardly been probed. According to her, “the scarcity of source materials and the disappearance of many key documents, has conspired with the ephemeral nature of musical and dramatic performance to obscure a virtual dimension of city life” (2-3). Therefore, Lorraine attempts to fill this gap in this new study using archival and oral sources. In this text, she presents evidence to show that black Bostonians in the inter-war years accumulated tremendous cultural capital to spark their own creative “renaissance,” and that Afro-Bostonians turned their cultural practice to an advantage in their war against



racial inequality. Therefore, art became a platform through which African Americans built activities in which men and women engaged to make their lives impactful and more meaningful.

The book is divided into several chapters. The first chapter, “Where is Black Boston?,” focuses on the city’s ethno-racial geography, its shifting boundaries, and how the close linkage of race, space, and places impacted cultural production. It also sheds light on efforts and achievements of black artists from the colonial era to the early twentieth century. These include artistes like David Walker, Maria Stewart, William Wells Brown, and Edmonia Lewis, amongst others. The efforts and activities of these artistes, Lorraine claims, became part of a larger framework to effect nonviolent reforms in the Boston area. The second chapter, “The Black Boston Elite: Color, Class, Culture and Family,” discusses some elite black families who provided leadership in the course of the Boston “renaissance.” Such families included the Ruffins and Trotters, amongst others. While an analysis of gender dynamics informs chapter three, “Gender and Culture: Black Women as Arts Organizers,” this section focuses on the crucial part played by women in promoting the well-being of the Afro-Bostonian artistic community—for example, organizations like the League of Women for Community Service (LWCS), who with meagre resources created infrastructures to support African American artistry.

The next four chapters are devoted to the emergence and growth of Black Theater in Boston. For instance, chapter four sheds light on Boston’s Little Theatre Movement led by folks like Maud Cuny Hare (once the fiancée of W. E. B. Dubois), who encouraged Afro-Bostonians to develop a productive synergy and an inclusive spirit by blending the classical with black themes. This attracted black and white crowds to theaters where African American performers had not previously been seen on stage. In chapter five, Lorraine explores the growth and development of creative writing in the Boston black theater movement—for instance, the activities of Eugene Gordon, a black journalist who organized a writing club for the training of aspiring black writers. Gordon published the *Saturday Evening Quill* collections to promote the works of talented Afro-Bostonian men and women writers; Dorothy West published the *Challenge Magazine* for the same cause.

The sixth chapter highlights the Boston Players and the task of creating a new cultural vision. The effort of Ralf Meshack Coleman to redirect the course of the Afro-Bostonian Little Theater Movement and attract a more broadly based audience received considerable attention. Coleman encouraged the use of black casts and went against the too-common practice of blackening up white actors with grease paints. Chapter seven focuses on

Black Boston Theater during the era of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. Lorraine argues that the establishment of the Federal Theater Project (FTP) during the era of the Great Depression provided Black Bostonians in theater some relief, as it afforded them the opportunity not only to produce, direct, act in, and technically manage their shows, but also to perform for audiences who came from a variety of socioeconomic and racial backgrounds across the Commonwealth.

Lorraine surmises that Afro-Bostonian cultural leaders were not only idealists but also pragmatists who set out to counter demeaning stereotypes by investing their seemingly boundless energies and substantial cultural capital in contesting the color line through art. In her words, "Black Bostonians harnessed the power of the word, the image, the paint brush and the instrumentality of music to advance the struggle for racial justice in their divided city" (8).

This study by Lorraine Elena Ross definitely fills a gap in the history of Boston. It also sheds some light on the creative ingenuity demonstrated by the African American community in Boston in the inter-war years. Afro-Bostonians in spite of their limited numbers were not a docile and unimaginative community. Lorraine further amplifies the power of the creative arts as a vital tool for social justice, liberty, and freedom. This is a qualitative addition to the growing literature on African American agency in the Massachusetts Commonwealth and the United States. The author has greatly enriched our knowledge and understanding of Massachusetts History, African American studies, and the History of America in general.

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Our Stories: The Jews of Western Massachusetts. By The Republican. Pediment Publishing, 2013. 168 pages. \$39.95 (hardcover).

The book relates a history of Jewish life in Western Massachusetts through personal stories of various individuals from communities in Holyoke, Springfield, Longmeadow, Northampton, and Pittsfield. The chapters are organized by themes including Rituals, Caring for the Community, Family Business, The Old Times, The Holocaust and its Aftermath, Schuls and Schools, Jews and the Arts, Athletes and Sports, and Doctors, Lawyers and City Chiefs. Articles are written by multiple contributors, and Jane Kaufman from the Springfield newspaper, *The Republican*, is the principal editor of the volume.

The chapter “The Old Times” is very informative and provides important historical background, although it is not an introductory section. Sephardic Jews of Spanish and Portuguese origin lived in America during the Revolutionary period. A Sephardic Jewish merchant from the Netherlands arrived in Boston in the seventeenth century, and unfortunately the Puritan colonial government asked him to leave on the next ship. Rhode Island was the more tolerant of the colonies and allowed Jews residence. Jews have resided in Western Massachusetts since the 1860s. German Jews arrived in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. A number of them, Jewish merchants, established themselves in Western Massachusetts as it industrialized.

In “Family Business,” the writer delineates the large number of businesses that flourished in Springfield during a good part of the twentieth century, including clothing stores, jewelry stores, dress shops, furniture stores, and bakeries. The retail stores were very successful and critical to the economy of the region. Holyoke was at one point a haven for manufacturers, retail stores, and wholesalers. The famous State Line Potato Chips Company thrived in the region. In the late 1880s, the August brothers emigrated from Lithuania to the growing Jewish community in Northampton. A series of Anne August retail clothing stores opened in the area. The author does not mention Osgood Textile in West Springfield, an enormous warehouse space that displays and sells a large collection of fabrics.



The rise of the Jewish community in Springfield led to the growth of synagogues and reflects the prosperity and vibrancy of the Jewish community over the last century. The synagogues define traditional and liberal branches of Jewish practice, but recently, some synagogues merged, facing shrinking membership and financial hardships. Several synagogues consolidated to form B'nai Torah, an orthodox congregation in Longmeadow. Beth El, a conservative synagogue, incorporated worshippers from B'nai Jacob.

The chapter "Jews and the Arts" reveals that Jews have been significant contributors to the culture and arts of Western Massachusetts. Serge Koussevitzky, a Russian immigrant of Jewish heritage who headed the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and Leonard Bernstein, who studied with Koussevitzky, left great legacies in the Berkshires: namely the music venue Tanglewood. The artist Leonard Baskin taught at Smith College in Northampton from 1953-74 and his sculptures, watercolors, and prints are featured in major museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Joseph Brodsky, "the greatest Russian poet of his generation," taught for 15 years at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley.

We learn about a few luminaries in the area such as Aaron Lansky, president of the National Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, and Robert Meeropol, son of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were executed in 1953. Robert is the founder of the Rosenberg Fund for Children in Easthampton, MA. The philanthropist Harold Greenspoon founded the Harold Greenspoon Foundation to initially fund Jewish projects in Western Massachusetts, although the organization is now international in scope.

A number of Jewish agencies and organizations are committed to helping people of various backgrounds and religions, serving the community, schools, the underprivileged, and the elderly. Rachel's Table is a program of the Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts that battles hunger and supports social service programs for people in need. The concept of *Tikkun Olam* is critical to rabbinical teaching, and is defined by acts of kindness performed to repair the brokenness of the world. The Jewish Family Service in Springfield is instrumental in resettling refugees from around the world.

Our Stories: The Jews of Western Massachusetts richly portrays the complex, vast, and rich fabric of the Jewish community. The authors provide a wonderful collage and mosaic of Jewish lives and examine how the community evolved and continues to remain vibrant and significant in the areas of culture, the arts, commerce, and education.

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***Astral Weeks: A Secret History of 1968.* By Ryan H. Walsh. New York, NY: Penguin, 2018. 357 pages. \$27.00 (hardcover).**

In 2012 *Rolling Stone* magazine revealed their newly revised list of the “500 Greatest Albums of All Time.” Nested between Bruce Springsteen’s seminal *Born to Run* (1975) and Michael Jackson’s blockbuster *Thriller* (1982) was an album that was not particularly commercially successful or critically hailed upon its release in 1968. This record, Van Morrison’s *Astral Weeks*, is a strange, mysterious, and mystical folk record; it was—and is—an album that seems to defy explanation. Musician and journalist Ryan Walsh explores the creation of the album in his first published book, *Astral Weeks: A Secret History of 1968*. But how does one go about explaining the seemingly unexplainable? Biographies of Morrison have been written (e.g., Clinton Heylin’s *Can You Feel The Silence?* and Johnny Rogan’s *Van Morrison: No Surrender*), but these accounts bring us no closer to understanding this monolithic record. Walsh opts to embrace the magic rather than attempt to dispel it.

Astral Weeks: A Secret History of 1968 is less about Morrison’s album than it is about the cultural circumstances that led up to its creation. The book uses the album as an entry point into Massachusetts history: a creatively (and financially) frustrated Morrison fled New York City for Boston, where he began writing many of the songs that would later be recorded for *Astral Weeks* in 1968. Morrison’s perspective occupies only a fraction of the book; after Morrison moves to Boston, Walsh begins to explore the peripheries of the city in search of potential answers and influences. The structure of *Astral Weeks: A Secret History of 1968* is less that of a serialized narrative than it is an anthology, where each chapter features a strange, counter-cultural piece of Boston’s history. By the book’s finale, Walsh has weaved together a story about a new religious movement (the Fort Hill Community), an avant-garde television show, the proliferation of psychedelics, the “Boston Strangler,” and the manufacturing of the “Boss Town Sound.” Walsh makes no claims that these separate events had a direct impact on the creation of *Astral Weeks*, but rather, that Morrison’s record emerged from the same mystical morass that precipitated these rather strange occurrences.

A great deal of the mythology behind Morrison’s *Astral Weeks* was that it was written in Boston, a city not normally known for its vivid music scene. While Walsh’s own band, Hallelujah The Hills, is based in Boston, their story appears to be the exception to the rule, with many bands from Massachusetts migrating to New York or California; classic acts like Aerosmith, The Pixies, The Cars, Aimee Mann, and Jonathan Richman (who appears prominently in a chapter here), and more recent bands like Speedy Ortiz, Potty Mouth,

American Authors, and Guerilla Toss, got their start in the Bay State before relocating elsewhere. Morrison, like these other artists, stayed in the state for only a brief time, and Walsh is careful to point out that Boston's relationship with its own music scene has been bittersweet. On the one hand, bands like Orpheus, Beacon Street Union, and Ultimate Spinach were promoted by major labels as one of America's next big movements. On the other hand, Boston's local government attempted to censor some of its own artists, such as the magazine *Avatar*, the WGBH television show *What's Happening, Mr. Silver?*, the documentarian Frederick Wiseman, and venues



like the Boston Tea Party. Strains of this conflicting attitude towards emergent culture still exist today, with law enforcement cracking down on homegrown, independent, do-it-yourself music shows in Boston, Cambridge, and Allston. Walsh traces the origin of the “Censorship Central” reputation to the city's Puritan heritage and conservative Catholic population. This also explains the combative relationship the city would have with the new religious movement, the Fort Hill Community.

One of the most interesting choices Walsh makes in *Astral Weeks: A Secret History of 1968* is letting the Fort Hill Community and its religious leader, Mel Lyman, take the center stage. Parallels between Lyman and Morrison are left up to the interpretation of the reader, but they can be seen, in many ways, as separate sides of the same coin. Both men were enigmatic immigrants to Massachusetts, creating music that seemed to tap into a spiritual realm that resonated with people in a powerful way. Both men sought to reinvent themselves, but from that point, their paths diverge in dramatic ways. During this period in Boston, Walsh portrays Lyman as something of an antagonist and central nucleus around which several components of the city's pop-culture orbit. Through charisma, intimidation, and litigation, Lyman and his followers found themselves connected to Boston's most controversial magazine (*Avatar*), a hotly anticipated film by Michelangelo Antonioni

(*Zabriskie Point*), a bank robbery, and the folk music scene. The unlikely influences of this religious movement speak to the often bizarre connections between people during this point of the city's history.

To form this narrative, Walsh pulls from a wealth of research and interviews. While his own position as a songwriter informs some of the subjective elements of the book (mostly in the book's beginning, when describing *Astral Weeks*), the great bulk of his information is pulled from archival records, such as the Allan MacDougall Popular Culture Archive at UMass Boston. Many of these records, such as episodes of *What's Happening, Mr. Silver?*, have been hard to come by, and Walsh's curation of these elements on his author's website allows readers to sift through the evidence along with him. Walsh occasionally enters the first person as he details present-day interviews with some notable figures, but these are rarely distracting. Instead, these moments provide a chance to see how this "secret history" continues to affect people from that era. Morrison himself was not interviewed for the book, but the producer of *Astral Weeks* and many of the musicians who performed with Morrison in 1968 offer interesting perspectives.

In *Astral Weeks: A Secret History of 1968*, Walsh keeps the magic of Morrison's album intact. Morrison's use of automatic-writing techniques may make it appear that *Astral Weeks* leapt from the songwriter's head fully-formed. Walsh shows that the strange days of 1968 Boston used Morrison as a medium to channel the city's own counter-cultural ideas, and in return, Morrison's very presence in the music scene would go on to influence the city's own spirit and mythology. This explains why *Astral Weeks* occupies a singular place in Morrison's discography—after he left Massachusetts, that connection faded, and Morrison's style changed. Even though some of the songs he wrote in Boston (such as "Moondance") would appear on subsequent albums, they weren't as dreamlike, spiritual, or cosmic in their tone. One of the main impetuses for this book was answering the question "How could a record like *Astral Weeks* have come from a city like Boston?" Walsh answers this question in a roundabout way, filling in the details surrounding the album in a way that is much like Morrison's own lyrics, which are ambiguous and vividly oblique. By the end of the book, however, with its tangents into the occult, psychedelic drugs, and rebellious spirit, the question has changed. No longer are readers wondering how *Astral Weeks* could come from Boston, but rather how could a record like that *not* come from a city like Boston?

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***Between City and Country: Brookline, Massachusetts, and the Origins of Suburbia.* By Ronald Dale Karr. Amherst and Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018. 243 pages. \$32.95 (paperback).**

Anyone taking even a fleeting look at the cultural landscape of southern New England will notice that its dominant form is suburban, pejoratively known as urban sprawl. Cities, with their intensively built environment, remain important, though they occupy a relatively limited territory. True rural landscapes are scarce, especially if defined as having a genuinely rural economy. Much of what is perceived as rural is in actuality a low-density suburb.

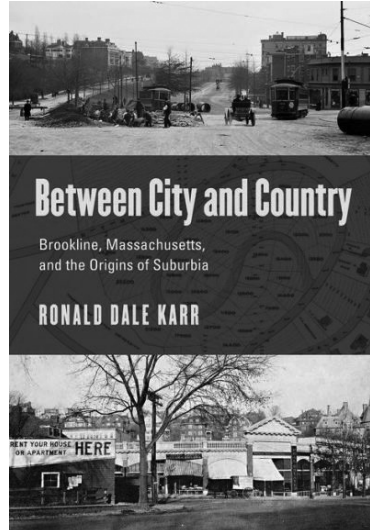
Considering its prevalence, the suburban phenomenon has received surprisingly little scholarly attention, perhaps because it is so ubiquitous and also intentionally bland and uninteresting.

Several classics have been produced over the years, notably Sam Bass Warner, Jr.'s *Streetcar Suburbs* (1962), Kenneth T. Jackson's *Crabgrass Frontier* (1985), John R. Stilgoe's *Borderland* (1988), and, emphasizing the sprawl aspect, James Howard Kunstler's *The Geography of Nowhere* (1993).

In this intensive study of Brookline, Ronald D. Karr has produced a worthy addition to the literature of suburbia. Karr, a retired UMass Lowell reference librarian, is well-positioned to address the subject: he lived in both new and established suburbs as a child before moving at age six to Levittown, Pennsylvania, widely considered to be the epitome of the postwar suburb. In 1970 he moved to Brookline, and in becoming familiar with it, realized that "It would be hard to find a better place to examine the origins of American suburbanization" (5).

Karr could have emphasized either Brookline's similarity or distinctiveness. He notes that the neighborhoods in the inner ring of Boston suburbs (Dorchester, Chelsea, etc.) tend to look interchangeable. Brookline, he argues, followed a different course; even now it retains a distinctive appearance and character. This book represents his effort to explain the enduring divergence.

Lightly settled as Muddy River, an outlying hamlet of Boston, and not established as a town until 1705, Brookline occupies less than seven square miles. Beginning as an agricultural community, like nearly all others in



Massachusetts, Brookline retained that character through much of the eighteenth century. Its location next to the rising metropolis dictated that the town could not follow the typical course of rural agricultural communities. By the mid-eighteenth century, it was developing a market-based economy, with truck farming directed toward Boston consumers and a cluster of shops and tradesmen in Brookline Village. At that time, no one recognized the first suburban movement.

The 1840s proved to be a critical period in Brookline history. Its population nearly doubled as the first railroads arrived, giving rise to the first commuters. It is significant that the first subdivision was approved in 1843. Also, a major influx of poor Irish, victims of the Great Hunger, altered the previous nearly uniform Yankee Protestant character of the town. Whether by preference or prejudice, these immigrants were largely confined to small sections of Brookline Village.

Another spurt of population growth occurred between 1885 and 1900, inspiring intense soul-searching about Brookline's future. In portions of the town some development followed the pattern of "streetcar suburbs." In an important insight, Karr asserts that "streetcar suburbs" were really a form of linear urban development extended along streetcar routes (initially horse-drawn, later electric-powered). This development, which resembles the dense nodes of town centers strung along the earlier steam railroads, should not be considered truly suburban.

Earlier population surges laid the foundation, but only in the second half of the nineteenth century did Brookline actively debate its future as a suburban town. A turning point came in 1873 when voters resoundingly defeated a proposal for annexation to Boston, a course taken by several of Brookline's neighbors. Subsequent efforts fared no better and proponents eventually gave up, leaving Brookline as an odd geographical wedge plunged into the larger city. Karr concludes: "The defeat of annexation was a major step toward defining a distinctly suburban vision" (107).

A noticeable increase in density of development aroused concern among many residents, related to the wider old-stock reaction to the growing presence and influence of immigrant groups. This led directly to the first attempts to regulate land use, adoption of the first building codes, and forceful objection to a proposed small-lot subdivision in an area of large estates. This movement led to a ban on three-deckers in 1915 and the adoption of the first zoning law in 1922.

As a result of these measures and the consensus they represented, Brookline gained a national reputation as a model suburb by the end of the nineteenth century. It demonstrated, as Karr writes, that "it was possible to

enjoy a uniquely suburban lifestyle that maintained the advantages of urban living without the drawbacks” (187). This ideal, rarely achieved, influenced American life throughout the twentieth century. It is fascinating to realize that the model was defined and accepted before the automobile drove onto the scene. Noted proponents of managed suburbanization such as Frederick Law Olmsted and Henry M. Whitney obviously believed that their suburban paradise could be attained by reliance on public transit, supplemented by private carriages. Karr observes that “[i]n a sense the nation became the victim of Brookline’s success” (188), but one wonders how much of the negative consequences of suburbanization can be attributed to Brookline’s example, as opposed to the dominance of the automobile and its manufacturers.

Brookline’s population peaked at around 58,000 in 1950 and has remained so. This figure seems to be the maximum that can be accommodated in such a small area without succumbing completely to urbanization. The town’s ability to retain its separate character despite relentless outside pressure forms the thesis of this book. Karr explains that Brookline succeeded in its different track because at several critical junctures, such as the annexation controversy, elite residents resisted the all-too-familiar tendency to wring maximum profit from real estate transactions. They restrained the generally accepted emphasis on individual greed in order to act for the long-term community benefit, and the results remain visible more than a hundred years later.

If Brookline can serve as a model of suburbanization, this book may be a model on the subject. It may well join the small cadre of books essential to understand the process and problems of suburban development. It is apparent that the author has thought deeply on the subject over many years, extending back to graduate school and informed by his own varied experiences in the realms of suburbia. He has accomplished a rather rare feat in examining his subject successfully through both macro and micro lenses. He is, thus, able to place Brookline within broad socioeconomic trends and, at the same time, to show how these large movements played out in individual property transactions. The sources he draws on are accordingly diverse, ranging from nationwide statistical studies down to particular real estate deeds. All this is tied together in a smooth chronological narrative in which individual personalities and behavior are never neglected. A number of maps and illustrations help convey the physical reality of Brookline to outsiders who, except for recognizing the names of stations on the MBTA “D” line, might not know they were passing through a nationally recognized model suburb.

Larry Lowenthal, a retired National Park Service Historian and Planner, is a historical researcher and author.

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