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Lincoln's Proclamation: Emancipation Reconsidered (review)

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American response to Grant presents a particularly enlightening perspective on the Grant phenomenon, although I would have welcomed even more discussion on this front, especially how much black Americans continued to claim Grant, despite obvious setbacks during Reconstruction, as an emancipationist champion. More, too, might be said about southern white and northern Democratic opposition to Grant and just how much those rebukes, even in Grant's lifetime, corroded the hero image. Yet, overall, *U. S. Grant: American Hero, American Myth* represents a singular achievement in encouraging scholars, as well as general readers, to think anew about the place of this often-maligned, frequently misunderstood, but thoroughly remarkable leader in history and memory.

NINA SILBER

NINA SILBER, professor of history at Boston University, is the author of numerous publications, including *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (1993) and *Gender and the Sectional Conflict* (2008).

Lincoln's Proclamation: Emancipation Reconsidered. Edited by William A. Blair and Karen Fisher Younger. The Steven and Janice Brose Lectures in the Civil War Era. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009. Pp. 233. Cloth, \$30.00.)

Based on a symposium sponsored by the George and Ann Richards Civil War Era Center in April 2007, *Lincoln's Proclamation* presents essays by eight leading scholars on various aspects of the Emancipation Proclamation. Five of the contributions focus on the political context of the proclamation. In his schematic overview of the preconditions for emancipation, Paul Finkelman argues that Lincoln followed a "subtle, at times brilliant" strategy (13) by waiting to act until he developed a legal framework that authorized the proclamation, built political support for the initiative within the North, ensured that his policy would not drive the border states from the Union, and established a prospect of military victory that would realize fully his promise of freedom. Somewhat surprisingly, the legal historian highlights not the first but the last of these supposed preconditions, seeking to reverse the widespread view that military pressure forced the administration onto the moral high ground. Downright astonishingly, he simply declines to mention the failure of the Peninsula campaign as a possible element in Lincoln's decision-making process, noting only the important Union successes elsewhere in early

1862. But Finkelman prompts productive reflection on his provocative assumption that “if [Lincoln] attacked slavery and did not win the war, then he accomplished nothing” (27).

The other four essays on the political context of the proclamation are less celebratory, though not always unsympathetic to Lincoln. Richard Carwardine examines the president’s meeting with Chicago ministers in September 1862 as an example of Lincoln’s methods for keeping in touch with public opinion and furthering his thinking about the religious dimensions of the struggle over slavery he would later articulate in the Gettysburg Address and Second Inaugural Address. Louis Gerteis surveys the end of slavery in the border states, underscoring the extent to which the proclamation sacrificed conservative support for the Republican Party in the region. Steven Hahn emphasizes that slaves’ central role in the process of emancipation represented an achievement of communication, judgment, and courage that built on their long-term establishment of a political community. One of several contributors to situate American emancipation in comparative context, Hahn seconds W. E. B. DuBois’s characterization of southern slaves’ activities as a rebellion and identifies structural parallels with the path to freedom in Haiti.

Mark Neely’s “Colonization and the Myth That Lincoln Prepared the People for Emancipation” is one of the most powerful assessments of Lincoln yielded by the bicentennial observance, particularly when read alongside Eric Foner’s important essay, “Lincoln and Colonization,” in the volume edited by Foner, *Our Lincoln: New Perspectives on Lincoln and His World* (2008). Neely attacks the notion that the August 14, 1862, meeting at which Lincoln called on African Americans to emigrate represented shrewd political misdirection in anticipation of the Emancipation Proclamation. Neely joins Foner in observing that Lincoln’s prolonged devotion to colonization undercuts his historical image as a “pragmatist” and adds that his famous open letter to Horace Greeley similarly shows the president not as a systematic long-range strategist but as a politician forced to act by his inability to control news leaks about the draft proclamation. Neely also draws on wide-ranging research into racial violence in the North during the summer of 1862 to affirm Frederick Douglass’s judgment that Lincoln’s hesitation to accept the possibility of a successful biracial society was a failure of leadership that shared in the moral responsibility for a surge in attacks on African Americans.

The other three essays in *Lincoln’s Proclamation* center on questions of citizenship shaped by the Emancipation Proclamation. Michael Vorenberg describes the destruction of slavery as a point at which ideas about rights increasingly displaced the ideas about associational

membership that Lincoln typically understood as the foundation of citizenship. The essay also takes up the perspective of African Americans by considering the extent to which they expressed affective identification with the nation. William Blair's discussion of emancipation commemorations examines one practice related to such affective citizenship, as he sensibly focuses on the complex story of black attitudes toward collective remembrance rather than the more straightforward white hostility to freedom festivals in the South after Reconstruction. The military enlistment of African Americans that followed from the Emancipation Proclamation, important to the essays of Vorenberg and Blair, is at the heart of Stephanie McCurry's thoughtful contribution to the volume. In the political discourse of the 1860s, in popular culture, and in historical scholarship, she points out, "slave men took the martial route to emancipation, and slave women, apparently, the marital one, which is to say that women got freedom at second hand, by way of marriage and in relation to their husbands' rights" (122). That narrative has had crucial short-term and long-term consequences for citizenship in the United States. By exposing those implications and encouraging more attention to the experiences of women in the achievement of emancipation, McCurry adds another significant step toward the gradual coalescence of a Reconstruction synthesis centered on gender. Like the other fine essays in this volume, her stimulating prospectus indicates that the Emancipation Proclamation will long remain a pivotal event for our understanding of American history.

THOMAS J. BROWN

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Jayhawkers: The Civil War Brigade of James Henry Lane.

By Bryce Benedict. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009. Pp. 352. Cloth, \$32.95.)

Bryce Benedict's *Jayhawkers* is a history of the Kansas Brigade, or Lane's Brigade, commanded by U.S. senator James H. Lane early in the Civil War. The brigade, composed of the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Kansas Volunteer Regiments, existed for only about seven months, from June 1861 to February 1862. During that time, it earned a reputation as a band