

## Reviews

*Paris and The Cliché of History: The City and Photographs, 1860-1970*, by Catherine E. Clark. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. 328 pages. \$74.00, cloth. \$72.99, electronic.

In this social history of photography, Catherine E. Clark demonstrates that the visual discourses and methodologies used to document the historical and urban landscape of France's capital were constantly being reconceptualized over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Journalists, curators, city officials, amateur and professional photographers, and societies contributed to a history of Paris that was inextricably linked with a history of photography. Woven into the book's narrative is an institutional history of the Bibliothèque historique, the Musée Carnavalet, the Fédération nationale d'achats des cadres (FNAC), and the Vidéothèque de Paris vis-à-vis the local/national initiatives and photography contests they sponsored that punctuated, but also commemorated, larger historical shifts such as Haussmannization, the Occupation and Liberation of Paris, Americanization, and "les trente glorieuses." By examining photographic collections spawned by these events, Clark presents a colorful portrait of how the French, but also foreign tourists, saw the city and interpreted its past, present, and future amid urban transformation.

The book begins with the overarching question: What is the history of preserving, writing, exhibiting, theorizing, and imagining the history of Paris photographically? (p. 1). These concerns are deftly addressed together in each of the five chapters, tracing the way in which understandings of the photographic image—its purpose, function, and the history it purported to communicate—shaped and were shaped by commercial and non-commercial interests. Building on earlier scholarship produced by cultural theorists such as Guy DeBord, Roland Barthes, and Susan Sontag, who view visual spectacle as a metaphor for changing relationships within the city, Clark adds her own original interpretation, arguing that the production, preservation, and use of photographs influenced, informed, and determined how people thought about Paris as a museum city and engaged with it physically (p. 216).

Chapter 1 focuses on Haussmannization, a city works project that precipitated the first major effort to document the destruction of “Vieux Paris.” Through the process of modernization, municipal authorities, archivists, and museum directors slowly shifted their reliance on more traditional forms of visual historical documentation (e.g., maps, paintings, and sketches) to the photograph as they discovered its inherent value as a piece of “objective” historical evidence. A method of scientific visual history, as Chapter 2 illustrates, came to the fore and introduced new “modes of seeing history” by the turn of the century (p. 2). Now considered “an objective eyewitness to history,” the photograph gave rise to photo-histories that were more didactic in their narration of historic events, providing explanations to viewers of how they should interpret the image. Chapter 3 shows how the Occupation and Liberation of Paris engendered different “mode[s] of reading the photo” (p. 3). Through the practice of repicturing, heavily censored yet seemingly innocent photo-histories of famous Parisian landmarks kept the French revolutionary tradition alive by including a combination of visual forms that would recall acts of resistance embedded in viewers’ historical imagination. Seven years later, the Bimillénaire de Paris of 1951 reduced the photographic image to a visual cliché, and the subjects who figured in those pictures to typologies. Celebrating the last 2,000 years of French history, the Bimillénaire assumed a political bent and “appealed to those who sought to promote Paris as the commercial capital of Europe, backed by centuries of culture and history, not as an intellectual capital of revolutionary political thought” (p. 132). Chapter 4’s discussion of the city’s attempt to promote Paris as modern and futuristic in promotional posters, traveling exhibits, and magazines depended upon older models of seeing history and reading representations that attested to both change and continuity. Chapter 5 examines “C’était Paris en 1970,” a photo contest commissioned by the store FNAC that involved over 15,000 amateur photographers photographing everyday life within Paris (p. 174). Yet the very title of the contest underscored more of what had changed in the last 110 years of photographic documentation and collection rather than what remained the same. Whereas the historical value of a nineteenth-century photograph had taken decades to appreciate, historical value was immediately conferred the moment the photo was taken by the last third of the twentieth century.

This well-researched book will be of interest for those studying urban history, the history of Modern France, visual culture, and archival management. With over eighty illustrations, there is no lack of material with which to engage students. Its slim size and readily accessible prose is appropriate for both upper-level undergraduates and graduate students, as it complements more in-depth theoretical discussions and debates on the politics of memory and the effects of technology in shaping national and local identities. Its interdisciplinary treatment of photography, publishing, the history of Paris, and the recording, preservation, and promotion of that history makes this an intriguing and indispensable text.

Ocala, Florida

Lela F. Kerley

*Porous Borders: Multiracial Migrations and the Law in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*, by Julian Lim. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017. 320 pages. \$32.50, cloth. \$24.99, electronic.

Borderlands history, already a crowded field, has found a new, multiracial, multinational narrative in Julian Lim's *Porous Borders: Multiracial Migrations and the Law in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*. In her introduction, Lim sets out clearly what she intends to do: mitigate the history about erasure and reveal the history of the multiracial past that "has become so hidden, erased from geographical and historical landscape of the borderlands and the nation itself" (p. 5). Spanning the 1880s to the 1930s and using rich archival sources from both sides of the Mexican-American border, she shows how the borderlands was never just a space where people of two opposing nationalities vied for dominance. Instead, it was a complicated place that saw the intersection of Native Americans, white (or more white) Mexicans and Americans, black peoples, and Chinese peoples. Lim looks mainly at the border town of El Paso, Texas, tracing its foundation as a small backwater to its growth into a thriving commercial metropolis, thanks to the arrival of the train. As a border town, El Paso proves an effective window into larger ideations of race, class, and nationalities from both the United States and Mexico. She also examines the sister city of Ciudad Juárez, just on the other side of the border, to illuminate similarities and differences in the two countries.

For a large portion of her work, Lim draws upon legal evidence to substantiate her claims. Some of what she draws upon is well known, like the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the Chinese Exclusion Act. But in her assessment, she adds a layer of complexity by showing not only how those in power expected their legislation to function, but also how everyday people circumvented them or, indeed, used them to their own advantage. The Chinese, she explains, were able to flout the Exclusion Act by trickling into El Paso through Mexico. They also used, for a time, racial blending to avoid detection, successfully masquerading as Mexican to cross into the United States. She also makes use of more everyday court cases, like those of miscegenation, workers compensation, and race classification. Though the prohibition of black/white relationships in twentieth-century America is well known, Lim adds to the interrogation of interracial relations by investigating the way the courts attempted to regulate intermarriage between Chinese, Mexican, and African Americans. In doing so, she shows how socio-cultural norms translated into legal proceedings, and vice versa.

Additionally, Lim's commitment to showing a well-rounded, inclusive narrative produces an analysis that shows how racial and national identity intersect to create complicated lives. One of her strongest points to this effect is her analysis of how African Americans, after finding themselves rejected by Mexico as either immigrants or tourists, identified even more strongly as proud Americans, even as conditions in the Jim Crow South continued to deteriorate for them. She also carefully traces agency for each group across the entire period she assesses. She opens her work with a detailed assessment of the role Native Americans had in constructing the borderlands, showing that their patterns of commerce, travel,

and living in fact set the stage for how the borderlands developed. Rather than abandoning their narrative after both Mexico and the United States forcibly displaced them, however, she then follows their story through the rest of her work. For example, in 1916, the Apache acted as scouts for the U.S. military during the retaliatory Punitive Expedition in response to the feared invasion of Pancho Villa. Thus, importantly, Lim asserts the continued presence and role of Native Americans at the border.

With clear, well-written prose, *Porous Borders* provides an illuminating narrative that would be useful for both undergraduate and graduate students looking to understand more about the evolution of the Mexican-American border into what it is today. For secondary school teachers, Lim's complex understanding of landmarks in history, like treaties and major immigration legislation, can be used to help students understand the difference between intentions of those in power and the realities of everyday life. Overall, Lim provides a fascinating insight into a period and a narrative that too often faces neglect in borderlands history. Her balance of cultural and legal history in the borderlands provides insight into how large-scale events play out at the local level—a useful conceptualization neatly applied and worth copying.

*California State University, Long Beach*

Chloe Bell-Wilson

*Unredeemed Land: An Environmental History of Civil War and Emancipation in the Cotton South*, by Erin Stewart Mauldin. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. 256 pages. \$35.00, cloth. \$23.99, electronic.

Erin Stewart Mauldin's *Unredeemed Land* is the latest addition to the vast body of literature that explains how the Civil War and emancipation transformed the rural South. Whereas previous scholars have highlighted the war's physical destruction, economic consequences, and sociocultural effects, Mauldin, an environmental historian, examines the profound ecological transformation of the Old South to the New. Using an interdisciplinary methodological approach, she argues that the Civil War exacerbated southern agriculture's environmental constraints and forced farmers—"sooner rather than later"—to abandon their generally effective extensive farming practices in favor of intensive cotton monoculture, which devastated the South both economically and ecologically (p. 10).

Mauldin contends that most antebellum southerners practiced an extensive form of agriculture characterized by "shifting cultivation, free-range animal husbandry, slavery, and continuous territorial expansion" (p. 6). Although the South's soils and climates were not suitable for long-term crop production, most farmers circumvented their environmental disadvantages by adhering to these "four cornerstones" (p. 6). Ironically, however, these very practices

made the South especially vulnerable to war. When the Civil War came, Union and Confederate soldiers demolished the fences that protected southern crops, slaughtered and impressed roaming livestock, razed the forests on which shifting cultivation and free-range husbandry hinged, and, most significantly, destroyed the institution of slavery on which southern agriculture was built. Mauldin's description of the Civil War's environmental consequences echoes those of Lisa M. Brady's *War Upon the Land* (2012) and Megan Kate Nelson's *Ruin Nation* (2012), but with an important caveat: in Mauldin's view, the war did not destroy southern agriculture so much as it accelerated and exacerbated the "preexisting vulnerabilities of southern land use" (p. 69).

After the war, southern reformers and northern officials urged southern farmers, white and black, to rebuild the South by adopting the intensive agricultural practices of northerners—namely, livestock fencing, continuous cultivation, and the use of commercial fertilizers as a substitute for crop and field rotation. Most complied, not because they admired "Yankee" agriculture, but because the "environmental consequences of the war—including soldiers' removal of woodland, farmers' abandonment of fields because of occupation or labor shortages, and armies' impressment or foraging of livestock—encouraged intensification" (p. 73). Interestingly, many southerners initially benefited from this change. Mauldin contends that the cotton harvests of 1866-1868 were probably more successful than they should have been, thanks to the Confederacy's wartime campaign to grow food and to the fact that so much of the South's farmland had lain fallow during the conflict. In the long run, however, this temporary boon created false hopes, as intensive monoculture "tightened ecological constraints and actively undermined farmers' chances of economic recovery" (p. 73). Mauldin argues that most of the southern land put into cotton after the war could not sustain continuous cash-crop cultivation without the use of expensive commercial fertilizers, which became a major source of debt for farmers. At the same time, livestock fencing exacerbated the spread of diseases like hog cholera, which killed off animals that debt-ridden farmers could not afford to replace. Finally, basic land maintenance—a pillar of extensive agriculture in the Old South—declined after the war, as former slaves understandably refused to work in gangs to clear landowners' fields and dig the ditches essential to sustainable farming. Tragically, many of those same freedpeople suffered from planters' restrictions of common lands for free-range husbandry and from the division of plantations into tenant and sharecropper plots, which made shifting cultivation more difficult. And, as other scholars have shown, many black tenants and sharecroppers got caught up in the crippling cycle of debt that plagued white cotton farmers in the late nineteenth century, too.

Mauldin's story of the post-war cotton crisis is a familiar one, but unlike previous scholars, she shows that the crisis was about more than market forces, greedy creditors, and racial and class conflict. It was also about the land. Despite diminishing returns, southerners continued to grow cotton in the 1870s, not only because it was the crop that "paid," but also because ecological constraints, which had been intensified by the war, encouraged it. Instructors interested in

teaching students how the natural environment has shaped human history would be wise to consider this argument. They should also consider adding “ecological disruptions” to the long list of problems that afflicted the New South, as Mauldin persuasively argues that the era’s racial conflict, sharecropping arrangements, and capital shortages cannot be understood apart from the environmental challenges that compounded them (p. 9).

In the 2005 *Environmental History* article, “The Agency of Nature or the Nature of Agency?”, Linda Nash urged historians to “strive not merely to put nature into history, but to put the human mind back in the world.” With *Unredeemed Land*, Erin Stewart Mauldin has done just that and, in the process, has offered one way in which history teachers might put the Civil War era back in its natural habitat in their classrooms.

Crowder College

G. David Schieffler

*Jim Crow Capital: Women and Black Freedom Struggles in Washington, D.C., 1920-1945*, by Mary-Elizabeth B. Murphy. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018. 280 pages. \$90.00, cloth. \$29.95 paper. \$22.99, electronic.

The recent historiography of the Civil Rights Movement has closely examined the extent to which that struggle for equality had its origins in the nineteenth century. Those studies transcended the traditional focus on the active phase years after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) by returning to the roots in the aftermath of the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the early 1900s. *Jim Crow Capital* is a welcome addition to that scholarship, providing an in-depth history of the activities of African American women in the nation’s capital in the formative years of what became the twentieth-century civil rights protests. At the same time, the book places important emphasis on the intersectionality of race and gender, delineating that nexus as articulated by critical race theorists. In doing so, the author brings to light the contributions of women in combating all forms of discrimination and segregation, thus expanding the contours of that history.

Fittingly, the work centers on the nation’s capital, where segregation and racism were rampant both locally and federally. The title of the book itself is a direct reference to the perceptions of African Americans living in Washington, who argued “that the discrimination in their city resembled the worst practices of the U.S. South” (p. 144). There were many manifestations of abuse that supported their contentions. Murphy begins with organized protests in support of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill, which started in the 1920s and culminated during the Depression decade. She underscores the critical importance of the Silent Parade of 1922 and the Rope Protests of 1934, in which “African American women succeeded in generating national attention to the crisis of lynching” (p.

71). Significantly, she argues that women in Washington were ideally suited for these types of protest activities, because “their charged location” allowed them to focus on local and national issues at the same time, and with direct access to the federal government.

Beyond those forays into anti-lynching campaigns, black women also organized protests against police brutality in the city, rioted for economic justice at a time when they were discriminated against in employment, petitioned for voting rights, and engaged in sit-ins and boycotts of department stores that maintained segregationist policies. Surprisingly, in that regard, Murphy only mentions in passing the critical work of women after Woodrow Wilson’s 1913 decision to segregate all offices of government civil service. Early on, she notes that “while activists worked tirelessly with the NAACP to protest segregation, they were unable to integrate the federal government” (p. 6). Yet women, such as Mary Church Terrell, were deeply involved in that effort. Working with Neval H. Thomas, American history teacher at Dunbar High School and NAACP branch president in Washington, D.C., they fought an intensified desegregation campaign in the 1920s and 1930s. The pressure they brought to bear on the federal government achieved some small victories, such as the integration of the Department of the Census and the Bureau of Pensions in the late 1920s. Murphy acknowledges that U.S. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes desegregated his bureau in the late 1930s, which created the impetus for the full government civil service desegregation to come, but does not contextualize that achievement within the earlier activism of the Washington branch.

*Jim Crow Capital* represents an important addition to the “long history of the civil rights movement” revisionism, appropriate for any course on the struggle for black equality. Reaching back into the immediate post-World War I period, when disillusionment among African Americans was fueled by segregation, lynching, and the Red Summer of 1919, it underscores the birth of the “New Negro,” so poignantly described by Howard University philosophy professor Alain Locke. The black women in Washington, D.C. epitomized his belief that African Americans adopted a “vibrant new psychology” that made civil rights activism a sacred mission. Accordingly, Murphy’s contribution is critical in teaching that African American women were major actors on the stage of civil rights organizing, protesting, and leadership, well before the active phase. They navigated the boundaries of race and gender in their pursuit of racial justice. Mary McLeod Bethune, Nannie Helen Burroughs, Mary Church Terrell, and countless others in the nation’s capital were significant forerunners in the critical crusade for racial justice. It was their inspiration and commitment that passed the torch to Fannie Lou Hamer, Jo Ann Gibson Robinson, Ella Baker, Diane Nash, and others, whose collective activism was a fitting tribute to their legacy. *Jim Crow Capital* brings that critical significance to light, while also confirming Martin Luther King Jr.’s belief that “the moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”

*Accounting for Slavery: Masters and Management*, by Caitlin Rosenthal. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019. 312 pages. \$35.00, cloth. \$18.95, paper. \$35.00, electronic.

Scholars have written extensively concerning the Trans-Atlantic slave trade's intricate financial regime promoted through multi-lateral treaties, slaving licenses, nation states, private companies, and slavers, proprietors, and bankers who financed and insured this barter in human commodities. In *Accounting for Slavery*, Professor Caitlin Rosenthal outlines municipal slavery business structures primarily in the West Indies; with slaveowners at the highest rank, followed by overseers and attorneys who were property managers. Using the terms "proprietor," "balance," "tally," "middlemen," and "employees," Rosenthal transposes this verbiage with "plantation owner," "bottom line," "slaves," "skilled workers," "overseer," and "watchmen"—demonstrating the level of accounting practices slaveowners developed.

Interlaced with technical nomenclature, the author includes historical events that affected plantation operations, such as the Maroon Rebellion in Jamaica and more frequent occurrences of sabotage of production output and plots to escape slavery's brutality. She furthers her analysis by discussing crimes against humanity such as branding and torture as false incentives to increase labor production and compliance. Thus, enslaved people were forced to work against their will and were also chastised for fighting against a system in which human rights violations were systemically committed against *them*.

The author also discusses how slave codes encouraged plantation owners to maintain accurate records of their slaves' whereabouts. Local authorities fined slaveowners for failure to abide by these laws, which only complemented their accounting practices. Both municipal and transnational law reflected Europeans' desire to maintain control of their extended empire through hierarchies that negotiated with established Maroon communities of formerly enslaved people. Although these communities were not acknowledged as a nation state, they had authority to enter a bi-lateral treaty with England in 1739 to preserve their autonomy with a condition precedent to not accept any additional runaway slaves.

Rosenthal then examines the impact of absentee proprietorship, in which plantation owners returned from the West Indies to England, seeking to maintain accountability of both land and slave. Consequently, these slavers authored plantation manuals (accounting guidelines) to track slaves, harvest, land, and productivity, referred to as "quantification." Arguably, these standards were the financial antecedent to generally accepted accounting practices used to evaluate professional standards of modern bookkeeping for Western corporations. The slavers also furthered transnational law through lobbying with the British Parliament, securing their interests in sugar markets and a form of anti-dumping preventative measures under international trade law, as well as opposing the nascent trend in public international law to abolish the slave trade. The author argues that their records had a mitigating effect on the regulation of plantation slavery enforced by local officials, requiring slavers to adhere to graduated punishments that they recorded as evidence in their own defense.

Thereafter, Rosenthal dissects the methodology of plantation accounting, including ledgers, balance sheets, sticks used by slaves to account for livestock tallied annually, and eighteenth-century slaveowners' advent of pre-formatted forms and double bookkeeping. These written records became evidence for British abolitionists to use against West Indian slavers since they not only detailed the loss of productivity, but also the loss of slaves' lives resulting from the violence and torture they bore at the hands of slave masters.

Rosenthal then assesses rating systems based on historical records that affected the price of slaves as further evidence of their commodification. For instance, she employs the usage of "depreciation" in relation to an enslaved person's decline due to disobedience, age or health. Value and (human) capital reinforced the disparity of rights between the enslaved and the master, with one person determining the other person's worth based on what could be extracted by force or used as collateral for purchase of other tangible property.

Lastly, the author discusses the effects of the Civil War and Reconstruction on both slavers and enslaved. Slavers had the ability to quit the land and negotiate. However, the agreements enslaved people signed were usually under duress, and former slaveowners had a greater bargaining position due to literacy, land ownership, prior financial gain from their former slaves, and the use of black codes to keep freed peoples subordinate.

The author uses primary sources to illustrate the development of accounting practices, through organization, law, and politics, making the text valuable for historians and graduate students specializing in those matters. With assiduous care, Rosenthal successfully depicts municipal slavery's evolution from scattered processes to maintain control of slaves and land into a sophisticated, individual business venture that documented crimes against humanity and ironically supported the institution's inevitable extinction.

*Independent Researcher*

Patricia M. Muhammad

*The Mexican Press and Civil Society 1940-1976: Stories from the Newsroom, Stories from the Street*, by Benjamin T. Smith. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018. 382 pages. \$90.00, cloth. \$37.95, paper. \$27.99, electronic.

Benjamin T. Smith's *The Mexican Press and Civil Society* examines three and a half decades of journalism in mid-twentieth-century Mexico. Smith makes the argument that press readership increased significantly in the 1940s and 1950s, culminating in the 1960s, which saw a more literate Mexico of all classes read the press. In addition, Smith argues that control of the press was often heavy-handed and corrupt. Nevertheless, it varied regionally, and geography played a bigger role than previous historical accounts have posited. The press, Smith argues, was never truly free, but it was not controlled completely by a centralized Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) in Mexico City either. Rather, numerous

individuals and organizations worked within the rigid and corrupt system to reach out to many different types of social classes in civil society. Like most historians, Smith pays homage to past works, but he argues that some literature does not go far enough in truly explaining the nuances of the press. For example, Smith argues that Daniel Cosío Villegas's idea of Mexican newspapers having unimportant, national news is inaccurate because it ignores tabloids and the decentralized nature of the regional press (p. 6).

Smith's eight-chapter, 282-page book has three major sections and begins with "Part One: The Reading Public." The only chapter in this section is an important foundational piece, for it traces political, economic, and social elements of how newspaper readership rose in Mexico from 1940-1976. Smith brings up the role of Mexican presidents, U.S. surveys, censorship, specific national and regional newspapers, and important government bodies like Productora e Importadora de Papel (PIPSA). Smith then pivots to "Part II: The Mexico City Press." The three chapters in this section detail themes of how to control the press, how and why satire declined in newsprint, and how Mario Menéndez and the radical press functioned in and out of the capital. Smith's last major section, "Part III: The Regional Press," encompasses four distinct chapters, the first of which comes back to the theme of controlling the press (badly) from a regional perspective. The author then explores "gangster journalism" in context with Mexican press baron José García Valseca, and concludes the book with two specific geographic case studies in Oaxaca and Chihuahua.

Smith's book is highly recommended for upper-division and graduate students of history or journalism. However, it might be too much for 100-level students, for it is quite dense at times due to Smith's extensive research. For example, in "Chapter 2: How to Control the Press," Smith has almost eight pages on financial incentives. From a pedagogical perspective, this works, but an inexperienced student might get lost in all of the numbers. Conversely, Smith's book is most effective when driven by significant and interesting characters, which help attach the reader to a region or time. For example, in "Chapter 6: The Real Artemio Cruz," Smith breaks down the life of José García Valseca, examining themes of gangster journalism, government killings, shifting ideologies, and extortion. But the chapter also introduces potential historical connections to today's underworld of journalism and the "deep state" in Mexico, while bringing up unanswered questions such as how involved the Mexican government was in engineering García Valseca's bankruptcy. Moreover, the relationship "between business and journalism, regional editors and state governors," is very much alive today as well (p. 189). Therefore, Smith's book could arguably be more effective when used one chapter at a time, due to the fact that there is so much information to soak up in each chapter. At the very least, the book should be available in the library as a resource reference because of the thorough geographic nature of Smith's work.

*The Mexican Press and Civil Society* is well organized, has clever chapter titles (e.g., "The Taxi Driver"), and has useful acronyms at the beginning of the book for non-Spanish speakers. On the other hand, there were a few instances where Smith could have used more clarity. For example, in "Chapter 4: From Catholic Schoolboy to Guerilla," Smith begins by saying the Mexican government

“probably bombed” the offices of Roger Menéndez (p. 114). The reader is left wondering what evidence there is of this “probable” bombing. However, for the most part, Smith does a fine job interweaving primary and secondary sources with his own insight. Despite the fact that there are no pictures and very few graphs, Smith’s use of songs and humorous quotes add flavor to each chapter. For example, when delving into the alcoholic male world of journalism, Smith quotes an editor telling a journalist, “You write much better when you’re drunk” (p. 53). Overall, Smith’s book leaves one with a much greater understanding of the struggles and triumphs journalism went through, and gives the reader a desire to begin pouring over the archives of newspapers like *Por Qué?*

*Southwestern College (California)*

Zachary Cuddy

*An Empire of Print: The New York Publishing Trade in the Early American Republic*, by Steven Carl Smith. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017. 264 pages. \$99.95, cloth. \$29.95, paper.

New York City has long been considered the center of the American publishing industry. Although scholars have examined the mid-nineteenth-century figures—titans like George Palmer Putnam and the Harper Brothers—who are often credited with establishing the Big Apple’s preeminence in the book trade, Steven Carl Smith offers a rewarding glimpse into the lesser-known figures who preceded them and laid the crucial groundwork for print culture to flourish in the United States. Tracing the rise of New York’s publishing industry from the 1780s through the 1820s, Smith demonstrates how those involved in the book trade (printers, publishers, and booksellers) built local, regional, and national networks that allowed them to supply domestically manufactured books to a “population that had an insatiable appetite for knowledge” (p. 5).

Smith accomplishes this task through five extraordinarily well-researched case studies, most of which are organized around a key figure in the industry. The first looks at Samuel Loudon, an on-again, off-again state printer, to illustrate how printers helped rebuild political communication networks following the Revolution. Next, Smith uses William Gordon’s history of the American Revolution and its roundabout path to publication in the United States to argue that the domestic publishing industry played a vital role in the project of nation building. His next chapter reveals the power of printers to divide rather than unite Americans by exploring the bookshop politics of John Ward Fenno, a devoted Federalist who challenged Republican competitors and reflected the growing partisan spirit gripping the country by the late 1700s. The next case study focuses on the literary fairs that proved pivotal in crafting the trade into a movement for national self-sufficiency, as printers and publishers convinced booksellers and consumers to buy American-made rather than imported texts. The final chapter surveys the emergence of a national book trade as exemplified in the work of Evert Duyckinck, an enterprising capitalist involved in the sale and distribution

of texts—especially cheap schoolbooks—that he solicited based on a keen understanding of what American readers wanted and needed. These examples demonstrate the key role played by early printers, publishers, and merchants in making New York’s publishing trade nationally significant.

Although *An Empire of Print* primarily offers an in-depth look at some major players in the emergence of a domestic publishing industry, Smith also provides a useful contribution to bigger debates over the rise of the market economy and the creation of a national print culture that connected Americans together through the act of reading. Indeed, he very successfully shows that the distribution networks built by men like Fenno and Duyckinck helped shape a national market for printed works well before 1830. Although it is intuitive that the creation of a national print market would entail the emergence of an “imagined community” of diverse readers, further examination of reception alongside distribution is warranted. In all, however, Smith’s impressive use of newspapers, personal correspondence, estate inventories, account books, and other financial records offers ample evidence to support his contentions.

While this monograph will prove essential reading to scholars interested in the history of the book in early America, it is probably not appropriate reading for most students at the secondary level or in college survey courses. I can imagine, however, that motivated educators would find much of interest and use in preparing lessons on the early republic. In particular, the chapters on print and ideology could be used as background for really excellent lessons incorporating primary sources into the classroom. For instance, Gordon’s *History of the Rise, Progress, and Establishment, of the Independence of the United States*, the topic of Chapter 2, is readily available in digitized forms and could be excerpted for students to explore how printers in the late 1700s “helped shape the new nation’s understanding of its history and its possibilities for the future by creating a national reading public attentive to its recent past” (p. 46). The third chapter on Federalist John Ward Fenno could likewise provide inspiration for educators interested in helping students explore the rancorous partisan print culture of the 1790s so readily apparent in periodicals from the time. Well-written and meticulously researched, this volume offers an important look at how New York’s publishing industry helped shape the social, economic, and political life of the early republic.

*Montana State University Billings*

Emily J. Arendt

*Frontiers of Science: Imperialism and Natural Knowledge in the Gulf South Borderlands, 1500-1850*, by Cameron B. Strang. Williamsburg, VA: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture and Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018. 376 pages. \$39.95, cloth. \$29.99, electronic.

On the cusp of the nineteenth century, astronomers employed by Spain and the United States set out to survey the boundary between Spanish Florida and the

United States as negotiated in the 1795 Treaty of San Lorenzo. Armed with a variety of scientific apparatus and a bevy of enslaved black men, the two imperial parties—both, ironically, headed by men of British descent—began the arduous task of making the astronomical observations that would establish the new line between nations. Each side boasted of their astronomical prowess, and each side denigrated the other's supposed failures. However, it was not these imperially funded astronomers who ultimately decided the fate of this expedition. By their own admission, the surveyors never could have hacked their way through the dense foliage or persevered through the Mississippi River's swamplands without the involuntary assistance of the enslaved black men rented out from nearby plantations. Furthermore, the entire expedition came to a screeching halt in 1800, when the armed resistance of Creek and Seminole peoples forced the empires to abandon their boundary survey. This is but one of many fascinating case studies that historian Cameron B. Strang presents on the production of natural knowledge in the Gulf South in *Frontiers of Science: Imperialism and Natural Knowledge in the Gulf South Borderlands, 1500-1850*.

Taking cues from one of his mentors, the inimitable historian Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Strang joyously exhumed from the archives rich and entangled narratives on the production of natural knowledge in the Gulf South borderlands and presented these histories in all their glorious complexity. The positive influence of other mentors can also be seen in Strang's work: Jan Golinski's constructivism, James Sidbury's work on race, and Julia Rodriguez's histories of science in Latin America. In *Frontiers of Science*, Strang presents a mosaic of case studies highlighting a diversity of Gulf South borderlands places, voices, and branches of natural knowledge. Incorporating a variety of knowledge practices—including astronomy, cartography, conchology, now-debunked phrenology, botany, and ethnography—these case studies defy the myth that only Anglo-Americans in the original thirteen colonies participated in the production of natural knowledge in America, or that scientific knowledge merely diffused outward from metropole to periphery. Rather, Strang argues that “natural knowledge and imperialism evolved together” (p. 21) and that indigenous peoples; free and enslaved blacks; Europeans from France, Spain, and Britain; Anglo-Americans; and creoles all formed part of a rich, polycentric network of intellectual exchange often characterized by loyalties as malleable as political boundaries.

The case studies in *Frontiers of Science* could make worthwhile readings for undergraduate or graduate classes in the history of science, intellectual history, U.S. history, Latin American history, indigenous history, or black history, just to name a few. Although Strang regularly emphasizes the interconnectedness between imperialism and the production of knowledge, he also builds a strong case demonstrating the importance of free and enslaved blacks in the history of natural knowledge that could (and should) be included in any classroom, given appropriate professorial curating. Until U.S. imperialism ossified the United States' control over the region, blacks in the Gulf South participated at nearly every level of natural knowledge production. In addition, Anglo-American plantation owners who generously supported the advancement of science did so with wealth created through the labor of enslaved blacks—blacks who were actively oppressed

intellectually as well as physically. To this end, Strang presents evidence that white supremacists in the Gulf South wielded science to actively construct the lie of black intellectual “inferiority” in order to justify slavery. As Strang stated, “the routes that supported slavery and science were often one and the same throughout the greater Caribbean” (p. 178). Students at every age deserve to learn about the historical ways in which Anglo-Americans created and perpetuated the structural inequality that persists to this day.

One challenge with incorporating this book into a pre-existing curriculum is the fact that it defies easy categorization. While the book flows well through a variety of case studies, Strang does not oversimplify his narratives. Furthermore, the histories stretch from 1500 to 1850 and include multiple imperial, indigenous, and African or African-descended groups, which poses serious issues of periodization. This (much-needed) presentation of the entangled nature of knowledge production creates problems when trying to squash a round story into a square framework. If a curricular rewrite is not feasible, one suggestion might be to excerpt case studies where they fit into a pre-existing outline. Another suggestion is to change the frameworks within which we study and teach history.

Strang calls for diversity in places and voices, as well as a more inclusive understanding of what constitutes “science.” Apart from a dearth of female perspectives, this book achieves that goal. *Frontiers of Science* is an intellectual love song to the Gulf South’s forgotten histories of natural knowledge, a quilt of intriguing case studies that relish in their inability to be readily categorized and constrained within our narrow historiographic frameworks. Strang’s book is a solid contribution to a burgeoning field—the history of natural knowledge in the Atlantic World—a field perhaps not in the process of consolidation, but rather in the process of decolonization.

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