

mentioned. Porter includes a short but excellent annotated bibliography of reference works, anthologies, and key secondary works.

Like Porter's volume, Thomas Munck's social history dwells on the enigmas and contradictions of the Age of Reason, although he focuses on the communication of enlightened attitudes rather than the genesis of Enlightenment ideas. Munck deals with northern Europe, where literacy was widespread, and the period between the publication of the Enlightenment's first great satire, Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, and the abandonment of Rousseauian principles in the French Revolution after the fall of the Jacobins.

As the eighteenth century progressed, modes of expression grew in number and diversity; Munck discusses a range from newspapers, pamphlets, and books through prints, debate societies, theater, and street entertainments. He convincingly demonstrates the interpenetration of elite and popular cultures, and he shows how the public and private spheres overlapped considerably. Even the dividing line between enlightened and traditional perspectives was vague. The era played host to prejudiced *philosophes* and open-minded religious establishments both. Less clear is what audiences made of the Enlightenment mindset. Change was glacial in this society dominated by the past, and the reforms that were instituted came late in the century. Typically such measures came not through the bold actions of enlightened rulers but as a result of hesitant princes striking compromises with bureaucrats, intellectuals, and sundry vocal constituencies to meet the growing demand for some governmental accountability. The excesses of the French Revolution indicated the limits of such alliances.

Munck's book is an excellent investigation of what we can presently say about the impact of the Enlightenment beyond its prominent spokesmen. As is true of the works by Jacob and Porter, it would have merit for those already familiar with the outlines of the Enlightenment. All three studies indicate the distance we have yet to travel before we can arrive at a fresh and comprehensive understanding of this era, the progenitor of modernity.

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Michael A. Morrison. *Slavery and the American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny and the Coming of the Civil War.* Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1999. Pp. xii, 396. Cloth, \$49.95; ISBN 0-8078-2319-8. Paper, \$19.95; ISBN 0-8078-4796-8.

Secession remains a vexing problem to understand and an even more troublesome issue to explain. Undergraduates often seem to seize upon the issue of states' rights for the South and are less certain why northerners tended to oppose the

extension of slavery. In *Slavery and the American West*, Michael A. Morrison seeks to clear away some of the mystery behind why the American political system failed in 1860 and 1861.

Morrison focuses his attention on the future disposition of federal territory, primarily after the Mexican War. He argues persuasively that both sides in the expansion debate drew upon the same set of principles. The notion of republicanism as filtered through the lens of the Jacksonian political culture was the primary paradigm in the debate. Whigs, who generally opposed expansion, tended to think that slavery undermined morality because it limited human freedom. Democrats, who normally favored expansion, believed slavery's expansion held out the promise of regeneration, individual liberty, and freedom. Both sides in the debate, then, harkened back to a shared set of beliefs that they interpreted in different manners. In this sense, Morrison is arguing that the North and South were more similar than different because of their common heritage. He is at his best in describing the different and shifting factions as they groped their way through the 1850s.

The author believes in the paramount importance of the territorial issue to the Civil War, but also notes that the expansion of slavery had little practical importance. "If access to the territories was the principal demand of the South, why did the slave states secede from the Union? If, however, the primary object of the Republican party and the North was to keep slavery out of the territories, why did it not acquiesce in secession?" Morrison sees expansion as a powerful symbol rather than a practical reality. Indeed, the book deals mainly with symbolism, perception, and political rhetoric; it treats what politicians had to say in a serious fashion. In this vein, it is reminiscent of Lawrence Kohl's *The Politics of Individualism: Parties and the American Character in the Jacksonian Era*.

While this is a useful and interesting book, it is not without its flaws. Early in his narrative, Morrison describes the issue of whether or not slavery would expand into newly acquired territory as a "new" one. He is certainly mindful of the Missouri Debates, which he dismisses as a red herring when it comes to the issue of territorial restriction. Morrison paints the debates of 1819–1820 as primarily touching on the power of the federal government and the nature of federalism rather than on the expansion or restriction of slavery. His portrayal here is not persuasive. Perhaps a more important issue that Morrison could have considered is not why territorial expansion was so problematic but why the 1850s compounded the difficulties.

The book, nonetheless, is useful in understanding the interrelation of slavery and territorial expansion. Morrison lays out the issues in a clear manner that makes the book highly readable and understandable. It could be used effectively in an upper-division course that deals with the issues of the 1850s and secession. If assigned, however, it would be prudent to pair it with a book that balances the wholly political viewpoint.