

Magazine. Simms asserted that even if slavery was morally wrong (certainly not one of the typical pro-slavery positions that linked slavery with a strong moral and religious certitude), the issue of regionalism superseded it. States' rights trumped issues of morality. "If slavery be the sin and evil they conceive it to be, it is all ours," Simms wrote.

Serious students will not gain many new revelations. But Linden's general organization of materials and the precise attention given to details in the documents, embellish and deepen the reader's understanding of the "Gathering Storm." The historical vignettes preceding each document also help to provide what Stephen B. Oates has called the "warmth of a life lived" during those critical years.

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Ralph Peters

Clarence E. Walker. *We Can't Go Home Again: An Argument about Afrocentrism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Pp. 172. Cloth, \$25.00; ISBN 0-19-509571-5.

The factual flaws in much of the writing about Afrocentrism have been exposed in the past. Clarence Walker does so again in *We Can't Go Home Again*, and does so effectively. In this regard he focuses particularly on the Afrocentric assertion that Egyptians were black and the wellspring of Western civilization. He makes very clear that the modern concept of race as identity simply does not apply to the variegated population of Egypt and would not have been understood there. The importance of his book, however, does not lie in renewing and expanding the critique of the factual and analytical content of Afrocentric literature.

Walker refers to Afrocentrism as "therapeutic mythology" asserted as a way to promote the self-esteem of African Americans (a term he does not like) "by creating a past that never was." He understands it as black nationalism; in fact he argues that the origins of Afrocentrism lay in black nationalism of the Romantic era, but rejects it as history. Were Afrocentrism a means of creating African American community and thus empowering a minority, it would be comparable to such mythologies used by other minorities. Such mythologies, however, have been grounded in historical thought, while Afrocentrism is factually errant and theoretically flawed.

By urging black Americans to seek empowerment in a misconstrued Egyptian history, Afrocentrists not only mislead, opening their students to ridicule, but they also assert that culture is "transhistoric"—that is, it can be transferred through time and space intact. Culture, Walker asserts, is always changing and will be different as a result of any transfer, willing or unwilling, on the part of those living it. African Americans have created a culture of their own—a culture of which to be proud, but not an Egyptian or African culture. To Walker's way of thinking, Afrocentrism turns African Americans into helpless victims whose ancestors created a glorious culture and then for thousands

of years accomplished little. They became the dupes and victims of Europeans, enslaved and exploited, and now their descendants must look to a mythical African past for purpose and meaning. Such a denigration of the African-American struggle, which Walker regards as a triumph, clearly angers him.

Given the popularity of Afrocentrism and its spread through the academic community and popular culture, anyone teaching history or otherwise interested in the nature of historical methodology should read Walker. The manipulation of history to create a particular attitude or support a political point of view is, as Walker acknowledges, sometimes a way of creating unity and gaining power. To deny a people the heritage they and their forefathers built is not acceptable. Walker shows that historians should help African-American students to appreciate their own real history and not pursue distortions of the past in the name of identity, especially since their actual past offers them an identity worthy of enormous pride.

Walker's prose conveys his ideas and passions effectively, despite a painful tendency to fall into the jargon of social science. His arguments are clear, thoughtful, and easy to read. His concern for the discipline and its practitioners comes through forcefully. Even those who disagree with his conclusions will be engaged and will find much to think about if they are sincerely interested in historical scholarship and how it influences those who study it.

The value of this book for courses in historiography and methodology is obvious. It offers useful examples of how historians analyze material, and historical knowledge can shape our understanding of contemporary culture. Its applications go beyond metahistory, however. Students of modern American society and education will find much to explore in its pages, and anyone investigating African-American history should examine Walker's conclusions. Walker will help such students understand not only one way African Americans have come to view themselves but also an element in their contemporary efforts at gaining a sense of identity within American culture. Thus, although the title might not suggest it, this book can be a valuable part of a variety of courses.

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Don Nardo, ed. *The Great Depression*. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, Inc., 2000. Pp. 223. Cloth, \$24.96; ISBN 0-7377-0231-1. Paper, \$15.96; ISBN 0-7377-0230-3.

The Great Depression, part of the Turning Points of World History series published by Greenhaven Press, suffers from several glaring weaknesses despite its inclusion of essays by notable New Deal historians and some usable primary source documents. The major weakness is that, in spite of being part of a series on World History, it focuses solely on the United States. One current goal of historical literacy is to help students understand the broader global context of events and, based on this