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The Missouri Compromise and Its Aftermath: Slavery and the Meaning of America, by Robert Pierce Forbes

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(Wilkes). For too long, Berry believes, historians writing about slave labor have defined skilled work as trade or craft labor—work largely done by men. By altering the definition to mean "the ability to do any form of work well" (p. 9), women become more visible and everyone gains a better understanding of the gendered work patterns that prevailed on Georgia's plantations and farms. Slaveholders valued skilled workers and put their talents to use in ways that often (especially outside of domestic settings) discounted cultural expectations about gender. As a result, women as well as men obtained the rewards that accrued to skilled laborers, including opportunities to travel off the plantation and to better their material condition of living.

Not everyone will be satisfied with Berry's definition of skilled labor. Although she succeeds in demonstrating that those slaves of both sexes who worked well at owner-assigned tasks achieved greater mobility, increased protection, and more material goods, it is less clear that slaves with extensive and expensive training in trades (largely men) were not a class apart from other slaves. In addition, some readers will be left to wonder how enslaved women and men who failed to perform their jobs satisfactorily fared in Glynn and Wilkes county communities. Also unanswered is why and how certain slaves gained the ability and desire to perform work better than others.

The author mines a wealth of plantation records, certain slave narratives, and the accounts of the Freedmen's Saving and Trust Company (which make reference to slave family networks) to distinguish work patterns on large, self-contained slaveholdings in Glynn County from those on small, more open, slaveholdings in Wilkes County. Herein lies Berry's most valuable contribution to the literature on work and slavery because work and economic trends spilled over to shape many aspects of a slave's life. Large economic forces loomed large in decisions about who was hired out to work for others and who stayed home, and who could participate in informal market activities and who could not. The lowcountry's larger work forces ensured greater stability in family life. In both the lowcountry and the upcountry, enslaved men and women "became victims of reproductive abuse" (p. 79) as owners sought to increase the labor force. The "working social," which Berry defines as certain types of work performed in groups such as quilting, corn shucking, and fence repair (p. 3) brought men and women together where they could meet, court, and enjoy each other's company. In short, Berry's book contributes to our understanding about how slaveholders attempted to control slave labor and what men and women did to shape family lives within the confines of enslavement.

Marie Jenkins Schwartz
University of Rhode Island

Robert Pierce Forbes. *The Missouri Compromise and Its Aftermath: Slavery and the Meaning of America.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 2007. Pp. 369. $45.00.

Robert Pierce Forbes has written an important book offering the first systematic reinterpretation of the Missouri Compromise and its aftermath in more than a generation. Forbes's work is revisionist history in the best sense of the term, challenging hoary historiographical maxims with new evidence, new points of view, and new interpretive sophistication. Forbes sweeping re-examination of the Missouri controversy and its larger meaning for the future of the republic holds that the issue of slavery controlled and directed early national and Jacksonian politics even when such control and direction were not immediately visible. The "black hole of slavery," Forbes argues, "drew everything near within its gravitational field." For example, the "massive southern resistance to slavery restriction" that surfaced during the Missouri controversy, Forbes contends, illustrated "how narrow the parameters of national politics had become as a result of the influence of slavery" (p. 9).

In Forbes's account, James Monroe emerges as an imaginative and skillful president whose archaic eighteenth-century appearance and manners disguised both a political cleverness and a strong nationalism that have long eluded historians. Monroe's political skills and his desire for a strong Union were masked by an unprepossessing style and a penchant for couching bold and innovative policies within plain, traditional rhetoric, positioning the Virginia planter as formidable chief executive consistently underestimated by friend and foe alike. Moreover, Monroe actually sought "a sweeping expansion of federal power in the service of programs designed to promote national unity and prosperity, including a radical campaign to eliminate slavery and the African presence" (p. 15) from American life.

The Missouri crisis emerged, Forbes argues, not, as Thomas Jefferson and many other southern Republicans believed, as a latter-day Federalist gambit to revive the first American party system along new sectional lines, but from a genuine northern disdain for slavery and a growing northern frustration with the disproportionate political influence enjoyed by the slaveholding states through the Constitution's three-fifths clause. Hence, most northern politicians, regardless of prior party affiliation, expressed a reluctance to create additional slaveholding states. The Missouri crisis brought northern opposition to slavery and the political clout of slaveholders suddenly into plain view. The unpremeditated southern response to the surprise proposal by New York's James Tallmadge to deny Missouri admission to the Union as a slave state revealed the extent to which the South was committed to slavery, though not yet as a perpetual institution or a positive good. Above all, the South in 1820 asserted that it should not be stigmatized for sustaining slavery and that no quick solution to the problem of slavery lay at hand. It took all of Monroe's considerable skill, misdirection and patronage to convince just barely enough northern Republicans to support the compromise. The President succeeded by making the Missouri issue one

of party loyalty rather than one concerning the future of slavery in the American republic.

Following the Missouri controversy, New York Republican Martin Van Buren continued to nurture Republican strength (as well as his own personal influence) through a similar coalition of "plain republicans" of the North and the slaveholding planters of the South. Van Buren had internalized the lessons of New York politics and the Missouri crisis well. He believed that partisan loyalty remained strong only when perpetually threatened. Unlike Monroe, Van Buren yearned for no "Era of Good Feelings," no unity or consensus in the body politic; instead, the sly New Yorker wanted just enough competition to suppress differences over slavery among Republicans and just enough of a majority to keep his party in power. Yet Forbes points out (while also chastising other historians for failing to note) that during the first two years of his presidency, John Quincy Adams's nationalist agenda remained quite popular, both with Congress and voters. Had it not been for the extraordinary personage and career of Andrew Jackson, it is unclear that the Republican coalition Van Buren desired would have cohered. In his discussion of Jackson and other post-Compromise developments, Forbes winds his way intelligently and with originality toward a nonetheless familiar conclusion: that the politicians of the second American party system succeeded in preventing a sectional polarization over the issue of slavery as long as the role of the government in promoting economic growth and development remained the central issues in America political life, but could no longer contain polarizing forces once the expansion of slavery into western territories became a central public concern.

In the end, Forbes comes down emphatically in opposition to the idea of southern, or, for that matter, northern, exceptionalism. Slavery was "an American contradiction not a Southern peculiarity." Northerners and southerners "shared the same moral and intellectual worlds just as they shared the same nation" (p. 272) but they had differences, chiefly differences of interests concerning the issue of slavery. Abraham Lincoln was right, Forbes contends, to see the North as implicated in the moral tragedy of slavery and right to think such a tragedy required a national reckoning. But emancipation in 1863 was accomplished by military force and justified primarily as a military necessity with moral arguments filtering in only "around the edges" (p. 273). As a result, Forbes reasons, slavery in the United States was never so much discredited as "rendered obsolete by force," thus leaving the "pernicious theories of race" (p. 273) that had underpinned slavery free to flourish once again without the burden of slavery to weigh them down.

Ultimately, Forbes's book is a brilliant and an essential reconsideration of an important episode in American history. It is a work of thorough scholarship and penetrating insights. If the book disappoints in any way, it is only because Forbes's sometimes hurried and familiar exposition of the post-nullification events detracts from the tight focus and impressive specificity of earlier portions of the volume.

Lacy Ford
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Jeremy Neely. *The Border between Them: Violence and Reconciliation on the Kansas-Missouri Line.* Columbia: University of Missouri Press. 2007. Pp. xvi, 305. $39.95.

This book offers a narrative history of six counties that straddle the Kansas-Missouri border below Kansas City; the Osage River runs through the middle of the area. The area was the site of some of the bitterest violence and most drastic policies of the Civil War era. "Jayhawkers," "redlegs," and "border ruffians" became storied actors on a blood-stained stage. The notorious General Orders No. 11, which substantially depopulated the Missouri part of the region in 1863, remains unique in the Civil War for the thorough sweep of its application to civilians. Yet the counties—three in Kansas (Miami, Linn, and Bourbon) and three in Missouri (Cass, Bates, and Vernon)—did not witness traditional blue-gray conflict. There were slaveholders in the Missouri counties, all right, but, as Jeremy Neely puts it, "Most slave-owning households in the Osage valley bore little resemblance to the large plantations of the Deep South, where the intensive production of cash crops like cotton and tobacco relied on large numbers of slave laborers" (p. 31). And the Kansans likewise were not stereotypical northerners but might as easily be described as westerners.

Although the author has written a skilled and seamless narrative, the study is also a social history of the area from Zebulon Pike's exploration to the Populist era, based on painstaking research in census data. The argument in the book is that the dramatic differences that antagonists felt on opposite sides of the border in the "Bleeding Kansas" era of the 1850s (and in the Civil War guerrilla warfare that was a continuation of it) were socially obliterated soon after the war, for the most part by immigration of new settlers. In the end, the area became one borderless corn belt in economy and culture—but not in political culture. Kansas was markedly Republican and Missouri markedly Democratic. Only the Populists had the ability briefly to override some of those party loyalties based on "memory."

The material in this book will interest many kinds of historians. Neely describesthe economy, the military history of the Civil War, the roles of women (particularly in the "corn belt" culture of the postwar era), and the lives of African Americans. He also deals with religion, but religion does not lend itself to history based substantially on census records and is not as well treated as secular parts of the society in the six counties. Of course, political history cannot be ignored, but the political history is somewhat unevenly covered. I could not find treatment of the election of 1864, for example, although Neely highlights the contested elections of the 1850s in Kansas and the presidential election of 1860. The party developments in the Reconstruction era, es-