

Reviewer Brian Dirck is assistant professor of history at Anderson University. He is the author of *Lincoln and Davis: Imagining America, 1809–1865* (2001).

Many Americans would be surprised to learn that the exact text of the most famous political debates in the nation's history is a contested matter among historians. Newspaper accounts of the debates contain many discrepancies and inconsistencies, often colored by the political biases of the reporters in question. Democratic-minded correspondents slanted their record of the debates to shed the most favorable light on Douglas, while Republican reporters did likewise for their man Lincoln. For generations historians used the newspaper clippings saved by Lincoln himself — but, of course, Lincoln used Republican newspapers.

With the publication of this new edition of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, we now have a balanced and thorough edition of this crucial American political text. Rodney O. Davis and Douglas L. Wilson are eminently qualified for the task, having previously produced both first-rate scholarship on Lincoln and his career and superbly edited volumes of classic Lincoln primary source material. They bring a wealth of expertise to the Lincoln-Douglas debates, skillfully matching the competing Democratic and Republican accounts of the debates to produce a finely tuned text as well as a plethora of useful annotations for some of the more arcane and obscure references contained within the debates.

The debates themselves are rich, complex, and at times difficult for twenty-first century readers. But they reward the effort required to master their intricacies. Contained therein is a portrait not just of two famous midwestern politicians but also of an entire American age wrestling with the legacies of race, slavery, and public policy in what would prove to be a harbinger of a ruinous civil war.

John Brown's War against Slavery, by Robert E. McGlone. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. x, 451 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$35.00 cloth.

Reviewer Galin Berrier is adjunct instructor in history at Des Moines Area Community College. He is the author of "The Underground Railroad in Iowa," in *Outside In: African American History in Iowa, 1838–2000* (2001).

Robert E. McGlone justifies his contribution to the apparently endless stream of books about John Brown by arguing that none has yet achieved a persuasive explanation of either Brown's obsession with slavery or his plans for ending it: "Mystery still surrounds the origins of his fanaticism, his reasons for ordering the slayings at Pottawatomie Creek in Kansas, and why, at Harpers Ferry, he failed to pull his men out while he might

have done so or to surrender before the marines assaulted his position" (13). McGlone undertakes to answer these questions.

With respect to the origins of Brown's fanaticism, McGlone agrees with Stephen B. Oates — whose *To Purge This Land with Blood* (1970) he regards as the best of the many Brown biographies — that Brown saw himself in religious terms as a warrior chosen by God to free the slaves. But he parts company with Oates and other recent historians when they interpret what Brown's contemporaries called his "monomania" on the subject of slavery as a type of insanity or paranoia. After an exhaustive discussion of what is known of possible mental illness in Brown and his family, McGlone concludes that "it seems clear that Brown's moods fail to meet criteria of clinical depression or manic depressive illness" (197).

It is tempting to see Brown's direction of the brutal slaying of five proslavery settlers on Osawatomie Creek in Kansas as the act not of a madman but of a terrorist. McGlone concedes that in some respects Brown and his men may have been precursors of modern terrorism, but they also differed in significant ways: "It is anachronistic to speak of 'terrorism' in antebellum America. . . . Brown was no modern terrorist" (136).

One of the most original parts of McGlone's book is his analysis of Brown's ill-fated raid on Harpers Ferry. He argues that, although Brown's plan was admittedly a hazardous one, it was by no means ill considered. Although a military calamity in the short run, it ultimately led to a devastating blow against slavery: the Civil War. McGlone demonstrates that, although Brown seemed to fight suicidally to the last, he also called out to surrender, but was not heard. Brown had "two unpalatable choices: make a final, suicidal stand, or surrender. In the end, he chose both" (304).

Iowa readers will be disappointed that McGlone makes only a few passing references to events or locations in Iowa. This one is representative: "Despite the rigors of an Iowa winter that drove snow into their bunks and numerous 'hot discussions' among the man [*sic*], Brown's contingent was closely bonded and committed to the cause" (241n83). Brown's winter trip across Iowa in 1858–59 with 12 African Americans rescued from slavery in Missouri is referred to a half-dozen times. The most complete reference says only, "Crossing Iowa, the fugitives found refuge in towns and homes known to be safe for runaways and free-state emigrants. At Springdale, Quakers guarded them until they were concealed in a box car bound for Chicago" (211).

McGlone's apparent lack of interest in Iowans' encounters with John Brown may be explained by his reluctance to credit memories

recalled after the passage of many years: "Memories fade; sequences of events become confused. . . . Such accounts evince a considerable 'rescripting' of the past" (114). It might be illuminating to examine the reminiscences of Iowans who knew John Brown to discover if such "rescripting" did in fact occur, especially after Brown's role in the massacres on Osawatomie Creek became more generally known.

John Brown's War against Slavery is thoroughly researched and well reasoned. It will be of particular interest to readers already familiar with the extensive historical and biographical literature on the subject. Others might be advised to read first Stephen Oates's *To Purge This Land with Blood* or Evan Carton's recent *Patriotic Treason: John Brown and the Soul of America* (2006).

Navigating the Missouri: Steamboating on Nature's Highway, 1819–1935, by William E. Lass. Norman, OK: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2008. 464 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00 cloth.

Reviewer Annalies Corbin is the executive director of the PAST Foundation in Columbus, Ohio. She is the author of *The Material Culture of Steamboat Passengers: Archaeological Evidence from the Missouri River* (2000).

Since the 1962 publication of *Steamboating on the Missouri*, scholars have waited for the next epic installment of Missouri River history from William Lass. The wait is over; with the publication of *Navigating the Missouri*, Lass once again provides a visual and literary cornucopia of western history.

Navigating the Missouri essentially picks up where Lass left off decades ago with his work on the upper reaches of the Missouri River. With the latest installment, Lass completes the story. In 12 detailed chapters Lass chronicles the evolution of transportation history and industrial and technological development as it literally moved *upstream*. In chapter one, "Nature's Highway," he explores the Missouri River as a natural thoroughfare into the nation's deepest interiors. This chapter is nicely partnered with chapter two, "The Lure of Technology," which applies the advancement of steam technology to a growing demand further inland as the upper Missouri fur trade developed. In chapters three, "Establishment of the Steamboat Trade, 1820–1836," and four, "The Booming Trade, 1837–1845," Lass carefully examines the development and impact of the expansion of the American fur trade into the Far West.

Chapters five, "The Expanding Frontier, 1846–1854," and six, "Railroads and New Frontiers, 1855–1860," represent Lass at his very best.