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## The Alchemy of Slavery: Human Bondage and Emancipation in the Illinois Country, 1730-1865

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a skilled translator and experienced diplomat, west to seek peace with tribes there.

Jung concludes with a wide range of questions: who went with Nicolet, which route they used, even what year the expedition occurred. To answer these queries, Jung examines and usually discounts earlier scholarship and shows how it contributed to existing misperceptions of the diplomat's actions. He carefully dissects the myth that shows Nicolet awing the Indians in his Chinese silk robe, suggesting that it was a mere silk cape that would have been used in France as a mark of his rank. In dismissing that image, Jung points to studies of public memory and how historical reproductions develop.

The scholarship here is wide-ranging and thorough but offers no gripping narrative. Instead, Jung offers a detail-laced prose in which he admits that "Jean Nicolet's journey did not make any great impact on the larger community of New France" (149). That being the case, one wonders how much the study contributes to any new or expanded understanding of midwestern history.

*The Alchemy of Slavery: Human Bondage and Emancipation in the Illinois Country, 1730–1865*, by M. Scott Heerman. America in the Nineteenth Century Series. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. 239 pp. Maps, illustrations, graphs, notes, bibliography, index. \$45 hard-cover.

Reviewer Sharon E. Wood is professor of history at the University of Nebraska, Omaha. The author of *The Freedom of the Streets: Work, Citizenship, and Sexuality in a Gilded Age City* (2005), she is writing a life history of Priscilla Baltimore, a slave who liberated herself and became a leader in the free black community of St. Louis and southern Illinois.

This is a book for anyone interested in the history of the Midwest in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries or the history of slavery in North America. Drawing together political, legal, and social histories, Heerman traces the practice of human bondage in a place often considered a "free" state. Although common wisdom assumes that Illinois, carved out of the Northwest Territory, was closed to slavery under U.S. law, historians generally understand that the practice of enslavement persisted in the state at least until 1845. Heerman offers a clear and detailed history of slavery's tenacity — and why only the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution actually ended slavery in the Land of Lincoln.

Heerman builds his argument on a framework of empires: Indigenous, French, British, and American. The "alchemy" of his title captures the way migrants into the Illinois country successfully maintained

bondage by transforming their laborers from one legal category to another, depending on the requirements of the ruling power.

Early in the eighteenth century, French fur traders and Jesuits found the Mississippi Valley rich in arable land and built an economy based on provisioning New Orleans and the sugar colonies. Plantations grew and milled vast quantities of wheat flour for bread, which they shipped south via convoys on the Mississippi. The demand for workers led the French to tap two sources of unfree labor: enslaved people of African descent and Indian captives, mostly women, acquired through diplomatic engagement with the indigenous empires that surrounded and vastly outnumbered them. Although they came into the system via different paths, by the late eighteenth century the two classes of captives merged into the category "French Negroes."

When, in 1778, George Rogers Clark invaded and quickly took command of the Illinois country, he declared it a district of his home state of Virginia. Among his first acts was to issue a slave code. Although Virginia's control of Illinois was brief, those years reinvigorated the slaving culture of the region, and Virginia's cession to the United States in 1781 included protection of the "possessions and titles" of the "French and Canadian inhabitants" (68).

The Ordinance of 1787, which organized the Northwest Territory, banned slavery from the region, but that proved no hindrance to the slaving culture of Illinois. Governor Arthur St. Clair interpreted the law to protect title in "French Negroes," and migrants to Illinois found other ways to bring their enslaved laborers along. One form of alchemy involved bringing enslaved people from Kentucky to the salt mines of southeast Illinois but returning them across the Ohio just before they had served a full year—thus rendering them temporary sojourners, not permanent enslaved residents. Another strategy was to compel the enslaved to sign contracts for long-term indentures, magically transforming the dross of prohibited slavery into the gold of "voluntary" servitude.

Although the first migrants into Illinois in the Early Republic were committed to a slaving culture (and repeatedly attempted to reverse the antislavery provision of the Ordinance of 1787), by the 1830s and 1840s, they were joined by more migrants from New England, who brought a suspicion of slavery—and often of free people of color as well. White migrants attempted to exclude free blacks by adopting particularly punitive Black Codes. The first, passed in 1819 after Illinois became a state, profoundly circumscribed the citizenship of African Americans and included the requirement that black migrants register their freedom papers at the county courthouse and post a \$500 (later \$1,000) bond. The Black Codes were another means by which the alchemy of slavery op-

erated in Illinois. Under the law, a person of color who migrated to the state and failed to post bond was subject to arrest and sale at public auction. As late as 1863, when former slaves came into Illinois to fill war-related labor shortages, that provision was still enforced. The Emancipation Proclamation did not apply to Illinois, so free people could still be sold into slavery.

Heerman is especially good when exploring the ways people of color attempted to resist enslavement in Illinois. He considers how they learned to use the courts to establish their freedom, an analysis that will be especially useful to historians examining slavery in early Iowa. His stories are often filled with engaging detail, drawn especially from court records. His final chapters trace the “freedom practices” of communities of color, who assisted those fleeing slavery, and the political movement organized by African Americans to overturn the Black Codes. This is an important contribution, one that will comfortably share a shelf with Robert Dykstra’s *Bright Radical Star* (1993) and John Craig Hammond’s *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion in the Early American West* (2007).

*Return to the City of Joseph: Modern Mormonism’s Contest for the Soul of Nauvoo*, by Scott C. Esplin. Urbana, Springfield, and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2018. xi, 199 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$99 hardcover, \$24.95 paperback.

Reviewer Anna Thompson Hajdik is a senior lecturer in the English Department and Film Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin–White-water. She is working on an image-based exploration of Iowa’s identity as it relates to the American cultural imagination.

In *Return to the City of Joseph*, Scott Esplin thoroughly examines the fraught religious history of Nauvoo, Illinois, and how it evolved to become a modern-day “Mormon Mecca” on the banks of the Mississippi River. The story of Nauvoo is one that combines historic preservation, outsider investment, and the role commemoration plays in the shaping of history and, perhaps more significantly, religious heritage. Esplin is also interested in exploring the underlying tension between the two branches of the Mormon faith—the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints (RLDS, recently renamed Community of Christ). A central narrative thread of the book traces how that tension has both flared up and simmered just beneath the surface of the community as a group of wealthy, prominent Latter-day Saints took an increasing interest in the town during the second half of the twentieth century. Esplin draws primarily from archival sources and in particular church records to tell this story. He also dives deep