

explore further how the hungry and delectable black male body can open new possibilities for survival and community. Chapter 5 positions James Baldwin's defense of Styron as a locus for finding alternative models of black masculinity beyond the "simplistic dyads" articulated by Styron's most vocal black (male) critics (206). The final chapter uses Morrison's novel as a touchstone for recognizing how the black male "anus and the oral cavity" enable "productive and reproductive relationships to land, landscape, place, home, and homeland" (226). For Woodard, recognizing the "site of black male erotic and emotional hungers . . . as a regenerative space of black cultural formation" (226) can produce new, queerer modes of "continuity and recalibration" (235) across the diaspora. To quote E. Patrick Johnson's foreword to the book, Woodard's theories are nothing short of "fierce" (xii).

There are a number of questions I would like to ask Woodard: Does the hungry black *female* body also enable the kinds of social and theoretical possibilities that he sees in male homoeroticism? (He only begins to address this idea in his chapter on Jacobs.) How would he read contemporary gay interracial relationships in connection to his theory? Can or should he do more to challenge the homophobia of Styron's critics and male black power leaders more broadly? How would he respond to other readings of the empowering potential of race and homosexuality, such as my own reading of Styron? How would he respond to other critical works that intersect so richly with his, such as Kyla Wazana Tompkins's *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century* (2012)? It is a great loss that Woodard cannot continue the conversation about slavery and homoeroticism that he has begun, for he died before his book was published. But luckily his vision has come to us through the careful work of his editors, Justin A. Joyce and Dwight A. McBride. The book is itself a product of the collaborative, fluid community that Woodard advocated, and its powerful insights will continue to generate new lines of important inquiry for years to come.

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CORINNE T. FIELD. *The Struggle for Equal Adulthood: Gender, Race, Age, and the Fight for Citizenship in Antebellum America*. (Gender and American Culture.) Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014. Pp. xiii, 243. \$32.95.

Historians have long struggled with the best way to understand the relationship between two key social movements in the nineteenth-century United States: the movement for women's rights and the movement for black rights. The two struggles were contemporaneous, often intertwined or allied, but more memorably thrown into bitter conflict by white racism. Corinne T. Field offers a new way to think about these black and women activists and thinkers within the same frame, by suggesting they both aimed to achieve the same thing, "equal

adulthood." The idea is that white male children could, in time, grow into all the privileges of adult citizenship, such as voting, but white women and all black people were permanently confined to the status of children, treated as minors, dependents, and inferiors. The paradigm of equal adulthood not only highlights the underlying commonality in the goals of these two movements, but also moves historical analysis past the overworked spatial metaphor of public and private "spheres." Developing her theme biographically and chronologically, Field considers how individual reformers and thinkers carried on an implicit and evolving conversation about rights and adulthood. She often finds evidence of their mutual awareness and uses the lens of age to discover illuminating ways to look at familiar persons and events. She ranges back into the eighteenth century to consider Abigail Adams, Phillis Wheatley, and Mary Wollstonecraft, and discusses antebellum thinkers like Margaret Fuller, Harriet A. Jacobs, David Walker, and Frederick Douglass. Sometimes Field skates over thin evidence, and her effort to cover all sorts of age discrimination, from disrespecting older women to sexualizing young girls, remains underdeveloped. But on the whole, *The Struggle for Equal Adulthood: Gender, Race, Age, and the Fight for Citizenship in Antebellum America* is an admirable contribution, refreshing, strongly argued, and insightful.

Despite her subtitle, Field follows Frederick Douglass, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Frances E. W. Harper into the troubling controversies of postbellum America, when activists in the two movements abandoned their previous insistence on equal adulthood and universal human rights and fought about whose claims had priority. Douglass buttressed claims for black men's rights by pointing to their status as fighting men—Civil War veterans who needed the vote to protect their dependent wives and children—while Stanton made racist arguments that positioned white women as more deserving of voting rights because they were more educated, refined, and mature than degraded, childish "Sambo." The controversies of the Reconstruction era were both fierce and complex, but Field's new paradigm of adulthood helps to clarify their dynamics, especially when she deftly moves Harper to the center of the conversation. As Field shows, Harper argued that Christian faith positions all of humanity as "'God's children'" (128). It would have been helpful if Field explored that argument's implications a bit further, since Christian humility does not necessarily empower activists. Regrettably, a few inaccuracies creep into this section of Field's book, about, for example, the implications of the Fourteenth Amendment, or the party affiliation of George William Curtis. But she provides an exceptionally lucid exploration of the way the requirement that voters be aged twenty-one served conservatives who were determined to defeat activist claims. Conservatives pointed to age twenty-one as an "arbitrary" dividing line between childhood and adulthood because it implied that the privileges of adulthood were a gift of the state, rather than a natural right. States that could arbitrarily discriminate

against twenty-year-old white men versus twenty-one-year-old white men could also discriminate against women or black men. When Susan B. Anthony was prosecuted in 1873 for illegal voting, her attorney Henry R. Selden felt obliged to rebut this claim, although the judge was clearly determined to rule against Anthony regardless of the merits of the argument.

Field's paradigm of equal adulthood is illuminating but it can also seem like a conceptual exercise. Yes, in some cases, reformers expressed resentment at being treated like children; and Field has canvassed the literature so thoroughly that she seems to have found every such case. But because the historical actors themselves referred to race or gender much more than they referred to childhood and age, Field's argument remains rather abstract. Today, when young people must be eighteen to vote but twenty-one to buy beer, we may want to be extra cautious about examining age-related public policy for logical consistency or ideological legibility. Perhaps comparing adult white women and all black people to children was more a rationale than a reason, a cover story for white men who did not want to give up their privileges. As activists argued, the perpetual subordination of black men and all women could be seen "as the very mechanism by which white men assured themselves that they were independent adults, not dependent children" (9). In any case, as Field has shown, much was at stake when nineteenth-century Americans spoke of adulthood.

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J. BRENT MORRIS. *Oberlin, Hotbed of Abolitionism: College, Community, and the Fight for Freedom and Equality in Antebellum America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014. Pp. xiii, 332. \$34.95.

In his book, *Oberlin, Hotbed of Abolitionism: College, Community, and the Fight for Freedom and Equality in Antebellum America*, J. Brent Morris focuses on the vital role that Oberlin had as the center of western abolition in antebellum America. Morris redirects the lens of abolitionist studies away from the East to disclose the importance of Oberlin activists. Drawing on a plethora of primary sources and secondary literature, Morris provides an insightful analysis of a college and community at the vanguard of abolition. As such, Oberlin attracted faculty, students, and community members who shared the goal of fostering emancipation.

The book examines the origins of Oberlin as a utopian community established by the Reverend John Jay Shipherd and Philo Penfield Stewart who created an intentional community in the wilderness of the Western Reserve where members would live simply under a covenant with God. The establishment of the Oberlin Collegiate Institute would be a major component and offer an education for both men and women. Although the founders had a sweeping vision for the community, the lack of funds threatened its existence. Morris analyzes the Lane Seminary rebellion, which brought desperately

needed financial support to the endeavor and cemented Oberlin's connection to abolitionism. The arrival of the antislavery students and faculty from Lane, in addition to the acceptance of a professorship by the Reverend Charles Grandison Finney, secured Oberlin's place at the forefront of reform and evangelicalism. Furthermore, the events of the Lane rebellion led Oberlin to become the first college to allow for the coeducation of men and women of all races.

As a leading evangelical, abolitionist, and reform center, the Oberlin community had far-reaching influence on national issues. The author explains the pragmatic part that Oberlinites played in fostering the transition of the abolitionist movement from one of moral suasion to practical politics. Unlike Garrisonians, abolitionists of the Oberlin variety undertook any endeavor possible to achieve the ends of emancipation and racial equality. Oberlin reformers, although immediatists, did not allow commitment to ideology to limit any gains that led to the ultimate goal of eradicating the sinful institution of slavery. Morris elucidates the controversy and debates that emerged between abolitionists of the Oberlin camp and those of the Garrisonian strand. This pragmatic approach set an example for abolitionists outside the college and community. Morris incisively notes that none other than Frederick Douglass split from his mentor William Lloyd Garrison after participating in antislavery discussions in Oberlin in 1847. Further, the author explains the role of Oberlinites in the Liberty Party and Free-Soil Party and the manner in which Oberlinites utilized the political system to achieve their goals.

The book emphasizes the efforts of African American abolitionists from Oberlin and notes that the college boasted the highest number of African American students in the antebellum period. It explores the contributions of Oberlin notables including William Howard Day and brothers Charles and John Mercer Langston. Oberlin welcomed African Americans who became the "radical conscience" (5, 122) of the community and influenced many Oberlin students to commit themselves more fully to abolition and equality. As its founders desired, Oberlin became a community for others to emulate as the college and community attempted to live the example of egalitarianism. Morris examines Oberlin's legacy regarding the Underground Railroad: "In fact, more than any other aspect of Oberlin society, the operations of its Underground Railroad station were disproportionately controlled and led by its black residents." Their actions constituted "a powerful political statement against the Slave Power" (205). The author recounts many exciting episodes of fugitive slaves passing through Oberlin aided by its students, faculty, and residents who mastered the art of subterfuge to help ferry fugitives to freedom.

This book also provides a detailed account of Oberlin's role in the critical decade of the 1850s in which sectional controversy escalated over the issue of slavery's expansion. Oberlin students answered the call and took part in the emigrant movement to Kansas so that it