contraception and a major contribution to our understanding of the broader American Catholic history in the twentieth century.

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Landon Carter's Uneasy Kingdom: Revolution and Rebellion on a Virginia Plantation. By Rhys Isaac (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. xxiv + 423 pp.).

Runaway America: Benjamin Franklin, Slavery, and the American Revolution. By David Waldstreicher (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004. xv + 315 pp.).

Rhys Isaac and David Waldstreicher reconstruct the stories of two men who experienced the American Revolution toward the end of long lives. One—Benjamin Franklin—signed the U.S. Constitution to cap an illustrious career as scientist and diplomat. The other—Landon Carter—was a wealthy slaveowner in Virginia and might like Franklin have become a so-called Founding Father had he not died in 1778. Of the same generation, although from starkly different social origins, Carter and Franklin shared a similar set of hesitations when confronted by the turbulence of the American Revolution. As historians, Isaac and Waldstreicher do not share the same generation, and their interpretations of the American Revolution are dramatically divergent. Yet their microhistories are fruitful to juxtapose because they are so similar in subject and method, and because together they beg major questions about the meaning of the American Revolution.

Isaac sees the American Revolution as "the first comprehensive promise to mankind of freedom and equality in this world." "It accomplished the symbolic pulling down of patriarchal monarchy as the keystone of the cosmic arch of public and private authority" (p. xi). Isaac depicts this transformation through the eyes of a Virginia planter who would remain invested in patriarchy even as he grudgingly turned his back on monarchy. Landon Carter would see his whole world turn upside down, when he wanted only half of it to do so. Imagining himself to be a firm moderate in public and private life, Carter came to embrace political revolution in Virginia even as household rebellions by his children and his slaves brought him copious headache and heartache.

Isaac is at the height of his powers in conjuring the poignancy of Carter's situation as it was swept up into escalating political tensions and household strains in the 1760s and 1770s. His great fortune is that Carter left behind a diary marvelous in quantity and quality; it is both extensive and expressive, and it is the vivid centerpiece of Isaac's microhistory. Among Early Americanists Laurel Thatcher Ulrich launched the trend of microhistory in 1990, in her case in the classic social history mode of reconstructing subaltern experience.[1] There is nothing remotely subaltern about Landon Carter, owner of thousands

of acres and hundreds of slaves, and Isaac is more interested in reconstructing outlook than experience. To capture that outlook, however, Isaac also reconstructs Carter's social environment, especially the lives of his adult children and his slaves, with a richness and deftness quite worthy the attention of social historians.

In the 1760s and 1770s Landon Carter struggled with children who moved away and children who stayed home, and with slaves who ran away and slaves who stayed on the plantation. Isaac painstakingly draws out the vicissitudes of all these struggles over the years of the diary, and yet he reconstructs considerably more than that: a typical year in the working life of a plantation, the contents of Carter's vast library, the practice of plantation medicine, the administration of colonial government—indeed, every dimension of Carter's world. Isaac does this in masterly fashion over the course of the book, alternately thickening the context around Carter and narrating the passage of time as the tensions and strains built up and then exploded with the outbreak of the American Revolution.

This yields a page-turning account, replete with father-son disputes, master-slave conflicts, imperial war, and colonial resistance. Isaac accomplishes one main agenda, to lend contingency to the American Revolution—to render it a history of uncertainty and anxiety. In politics, Landon Carter tried to find a middle path between obsequious loyalism and radical resistance. At home, he pursued the same instinct, softening his patriarchal authority with dollops of sensibility. Ultimately, however, Isaac must recount the story of an elderly patriarch whom the world was passing by, alienated from his headstrong children, irritated by his defiant slaves, and outmaneuvered by younger politicians. It is this "tragic" point-of-view (Carter is limned as a King Lear figure) which impels Isaac to trumpet the end of patriarchal monarchy as a historically significant outcome of the American Revolution, already so by the time of Carter's death in 1778. Isaac credits two maverick English politicians, William Pitt and John Wilkes, with igniting a spirit of democratic revolution in the early 1760s, and implies that it was in the British North American colonies declaring independence in 1776 that this democratic revolution would triumph. Yet the reader registers the epic quest for democracy not from the determination of its proponents, but from the laments of a wealthy white patriarch who seemed eerily attracted to victim status, and less beholden to public principles of equality or freedom than to the private task of self-justification. Isaac's microhistory delivers the raw poignancy of one patriarch's flinching outlook on the American Revolution, even as it cannot explain the full impetus behind equality or freedom in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world.

David Waldstreicher associates the American Revolution with principles of equality or freedom only to undermine this notion as a presentist myth distorting American history and thus to be overthrown. Like Isaac, Waldstreicher chooses the intensive work of microhistory to capture the outlook of his historical subject, in his case someone who left not two decades of diary, but six decades of letters and publications. Two other notable biographies of Benjamin Franklin have recently been published, one by Edmund Morgan in 2002 and the other by Gordon Wood in 2004, but neither plumbs the theme at the center of Waldstreicher's account, that of slavery. Morgan and Wood joined the historian Joseph Ellis in writing erudite versions of what has been called "Founders Chic" over

the last decade or so, an approach that generally seeks to humanize various of the Founding Fathers, and to apologize for their moral flaws by attributing them to a broader cultural context.[2] That context can no longer serve as refuge, however, not after what Waldstreicher has wrought in this closely researched and fiercely reasoned book.

Perhaps the most stunning analytical move Waldstreicher makes is to be intensely mindful of not only what was recorded in historical documents, but what was seemingly willfully forgotten. This brings to mind the truism that history is as much about forgetting as it is about memory, a truism particularly apt when it comes to American history and its relationship to slavery. If, say, Japan has not yet come to terms with the history of its atrocities during World War Two, the United States certainly has not yet come to terms with its history of slavery; in 2006 there are powerful head-in-the-sand impulses to forget history in both these countries. Waldstreicher is thus ever vigilant for revealing silences as well as statements in the documentary record. And whereas Isaac dramatized Landon Carter's anxieties, Waldstreicher focuses above all on Benjamin Franklin's choices. Franklin is a perfect case study because he is often paraded as one of the least racist of the Founding Fathers.

In important intervals of his life Benjamin Franklin was involved with anti-slavery organizations and he did testify in print against slavery. The documentary record is undeniably there to establish Franklin's anti-slavery credentials. Yet rather than quoting from these documents selectively, Waldstreicher situates them very carefully in context. Sometimes the context concerns silence, since, for instance, Franklin did not anywhere discuss when he first bought slaves, and Waldstreicher finds the evidence not in Franklin's voluminous writings but in a shoemaker's bill. Other times the context concerns statement, since Franklin repeatedly voiced a racialized contempt for blacks in his writings, typically in the form of brisk, unthinking assumptions. Other times, Waldstreicher juxtaposes public alongside private statements made by Franklin, which expose Franklin's ambivalences concerning the anti-slavery movement. This is most telling at the end of his life, when Franklin was willing to support the Pennsylvania Abolition Society even as he toiled to keep the issue of slavery hidden within the U.S. Constitution.

Waldstreicher's analysis is too densely packed to summarize, but he traces Benjamin Franklin's every intersection with the reality or the issue of slavery from the beginning of his working career as a printshop apprentice in the 1720s, to the end of his life when he functioned as a statesman in the 1780s. Waldstreicher makes another analytical move that will especially resonate with social historians in doggedly linking Franklin to the question of runaway unfree labor. Franklin was once such a runaway, and he may have been willing to mention his humble social origins in his famous autobiography, but his entire life and almost the entire autobiography seemed devoted to forgetting his connection to runaway unfree labor.

Waldstreicher does the remembering for him, to raise an absolutely key point about American history, one that renders Benjamin Franklin quite similar to Landon Carter. Carter ultimately accepted colonial resistance against imperial Britain, but he rejected any thought that political revolution licensed household rebellion. Franklin shared Carter's self-appointed "moderate" stance, accepting

political revolution even as he resisted any moral or political connection between the legitimacy of colonial resistance and the imperative of opposition to slavery. In the colonies and especially in Britain where Franklin was stationed in the 1760s and 1770s, politicians were making the connection between new impulses to expand political liberty and new impulses to end slavery, but in public debate Franklin chose otherwise. This is the crucial contribution of Waldstreicher's book, to demonstrate that Franklin made a willful choice to evade and forestall any connection between colonial white liberty and enslaved black liberty.

In 1967 the historian Bernard Bailyn evocatively described the American Revolution in terms of a "contagion of liberty" extending from whites to blacks at some unspecified inevitable point in the future after 1776 and 1787.[3] This version will predictably be prolonged to satisfy the irrepressible hunger for myth in American society, but it is no longer sustainable from the historical evidence. Joanne Pope Melish effectively shattered it with respect to the Early Republic (when the scope of liberty shrank instead of expanded), and now Waldstreicher has shattered it with respect to the era of imperial crisis.[4] Whereas Bailyn omitted the topic of slavery from his analysis of the imperial crisis, postponing it for a later moment of contagion, Waldstreicher closely interrogates Benjamin Franklin's career to show that the question of slavery was present in political debate from the very outset, in 1764. Franklin toiled to subdue it as an issue, to remove it from the discussion of empire leading up to 1776, and then from the discussion of nation leading up to 1787. Between Melish and Waldstreicher, then, it is no longer tenable to argue that the cultural context of the time apologizes for the Founding Fathers' support of slavery. There were moral and political choices available in the 1790s, choices already available in the 1760s. Franklin was not merely a creature of his time, according to Waldstreicher, he was a person making choices.

In successfully segregating the issue of slavery from the question of political liberty, Founding Fathers like Benjamin Franklin perpetuated an institution that had destroyed generations of enslaved blacks, and would destroy generations more. They also inaugurated a cultural myth that damaged the principle of liberty, keeping it small and vulnerable in the world, and allowing "liberty" itself to become another justification for oppression. The unmistakable implication of Waldstreicher's book is that the prevailing impulse in American culture to forget the history of slavery continues in the present day to jeopardize the principle of liberty. Like Landon Carter, Benjamin Franklin sought energetically to confine his notion of "liberty" to whites in the era of the American Revolution. Isaac contains this inside a greater positive; Waldstreicher wields it as a biting negative. Either way, the moral of the story is that this fundamental legacy of the American Revolution must be confronted rather than forgotten, perhaps never more urgently than in the current moment of American empire so inimical to the principle of liberty in the world. Would that liberty were simply contagious, but it was not, and it is not. Would that the language of "liberty" could not be used to justify its opposite, but it has, and it is.

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ENDNOTES

1. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785–1812* (New York, 1990).

2. Edmund S. Morgan, *Benjamin Franklin* (New Haven, 2002); Gordon S. Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin* (New York, 2004). And see Joseph J. Ellis, *His Excellency: George Washington* (New York, 2004); Joseph J. Ellis, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* (New York, 2000); Joseph J. Ellis, *The American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson* (New York, 1997).

3. Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 1967).

4. Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780–1860* (Ithaca, 1998).

Bitter Fruits of Bondage: The Demise of Slavery and the Collapse of the Confederacy, 1861–1865. By Armstead L. Robinson (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005. vii plus 352 pp. $34.95).

Toward the end of November 1863, four months after the twin disasters of Vicksburg and Gettysburg, Confederate forces led by General Braxton Bragg followed up a bloody victory at Chickamauga by laying siege to William Rosecran's Army of the Cumberland in Chattanooga. Ulysses S. Grant rode to the rescue. He removed Rosecrans and rallied troops for an offensive to uncork the bottle. The Chattanooga campaign turned in the center of Bragg's stretched lines with a daring thrust that surpassed in effectiveness even Grant's own sizeable expectations. Missionary Ridge extends for several miles south of the Tennessee River, overlooking Chattanooga at more than 500 feet. Union soldiers seized the Confederate rifle pits at the base of the ridge with relative ease and to the amazement of Grant and his staff, the bluecoats scrambled up the rugged escarpment in a mad dash to the summit. The entrenched defenders at various levels, instead of mowing down the opposition like ducks in a barrel, broke rank and fled, leaving weapons and comrades behind. Bragg suffered an ignominious defeat, and with it, the gateway to Atlanta swung wide open for William Tecumseh Sherman.

Bragg reported on the debacle by labeling the Confederate performance at Missionary Ridge a disgrace, "a panic which I had never before witnessed seemed to have seized upon officers and men, and each seemed to be struggling for his personal safety, regardless of his duty or his character" (p. 268). When subsequently told that Confederate officers had thought their position on Missionary Ridge was impregnable, Grant himself retorted, "Well, it *was* impregnable."[1] To the mystery of Confederate incapacity at Missionary Ridge, Armstead Robinson offers a compelling explanation, which, in effect, forms the dénouement to his engrossing analysis of why the Confederacy lost the War between the States. Robinson identified many of the soldiers who occupied fortified positions