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Wilma A. Dunaway. *Slavery in the American Mountain South.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. xi + 352 pp. $70.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-81275-7; $30.99 (paper), ISBN 978-0-521-01215-7.

Reviewed by Scott Hancock (Departments of History and African American Studies, Gettysburg College)

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Beyond Filling in the Gaps

Amid an unceasing flood of scholarship that one might think had inundated nearly every inch of ground, Wilma Dunaway finds mountains of dry land. This work does more than fill in a few overlooked gaps. Dunaway combines the personal and the economic by examining the lives of blacks and whites alongside the labor mechanisms of the Mountain South's plantations and businesses, and concludes that slavery's grip on the Mountain South was pervasive and intense. Dunaway defines the Mountain South as stretching from western Maryland to northern Alabama, and from the Appalachian foothills of western Virginia to their counterparts in eastern Kentucky and Tennessee. Small plantations–characterized by Dunaway as small slaveholding farms–were easily outnumbered by this area's non-slaveholding farms; nonetheless, by the antebellum era, slaveholders had established a firm hegemony over Appalachia's economic, social, and political resources. Comfortably ensconced within the southern capitalist market, slaveholders in many respects mirrored their contemporaries in other regions that were defined as slave societies.

But the Mountain South differed significantly from the rest of the South in more than just its variable terrain of extensive plateaus, long valleys, and rugged, worn mountains. African-American laborers, the vast majority enslaved, performed diverse tasks–a pattern ostensibly not unique. In most of the American South, slaves were found to have different vocations. But in the Mountain South, because of the relatively high proportion of small plantations–another distinctive characteristic–each individual slave often did far more than one job. Slaves were required to work in the field, frequently under the watchful eye of their master–as opposed to the more ubiquitous overseer typical in much of the South–before moving on, sometimes in the same day, to other skilled or unskilled tasks. Also atypical was the proportion of black workers allocated to nonagricultural labor, such as mining and tourism; despite being only about 15 percent of the adult population, black workers made up 30 percent or more of the nonagricultural workforce in many areas of the Mountain South. In all types of labor, slaves typically worked in the task system as opposed to the gang system. Dunaway's impressive geographical range and depth of research, which are brought out chiefly through statistics (which would have at times been more digestible in table form), are overwhelming evidence both for the distinctiveness and for the connectedness of the Mountain South relative to the whole of the American South.

The portion of the book examining the economic and labor aspects of slavery in the region builds a solid base for Dunaway's challenge to historians to rethink the list of attributes that has been constructed to delineate slave societies from societies with slaves. The Mountain South, according to Ira Berlin's definitions, does not exhibit the typical characteristics of a slave society, and in many respects does not fit with the rest of the American South. And yet, Dunaway convincingly demonstrates that the region was dominated by slavery. Her argument hinges in part on accepting that geology should be the critical variable deciding how historians define a region, as opposed to political, social, or other organizing constructs. For instance, many of the counties that are integral to her argument for slaveholding hegemony are on the periphery, such as in western Virginia. I find her argument reasonable. Geological differentiation did affect the world of antebellum farmers and laborers, and it is at least as justifiable, if not more so, as any other organizing features employed by historians seeking to uncover patterns and