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Tamara Harvey, Greg O'Brien, eds. *George Washington's South*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004. x + 345 pp. \$59.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8130-2689-3; \$24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8130-2917-7.

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George Washington as Southerner, the Eighteenth-Century South as a Diverse Region, and the Struggle between Regionalism and Federalism

In a new interdisciplinary collection of essays inspired by a conference on the late-eighteenth-century South held in 1999—the bicentennial of George Washington's death—editors Tamara Harvey and Greg O'Brien endeavor to view “both the first president and this contentious zone in a new light [by] [p]lacing Washington in the context of the early-republic South” (p. 4). Owing to his iconic status for Americans from the eighteenth century to the present, Washington the man often seems “remarkably impenetrable” (p. 3). By blending regional and biographical history with other disciplines, including geography, literary analysis, gender, and Native American history, the work's thirteen contributors shed new light on Washington's southern identity and his relations with the region during a long public career. The volume seeks to “complicate 'great man' histories without simply rejecting [traditional historiography's insights on] Washington as man and symbol” (p. 13). The twelve diverse essays are organized into four thematic sections: the South as varied region, Washington as “person, symbol, and Southerner,” slaves and free blacks in the South, and United States-Indian relations. They delve into such topics as how Washington's persona and political views were shaped by his lowcountry Virginia gentry background, his interactions with women significant in his life, and his position as a slaveowner. Harvey and O'Brien conclude that “Washington better represents America as a whole than he does the South.” While the president's elite Virginia roots influenced everything from his ideas of civic virtue to his notions about

white-Indian relations, the early republic South was “a far more multifaceted and heterogeneous region than any member of the Virginia gentry could possibly represent” (p. 17).

Part 1 leaps smartly into illustrating the South's internal diversity with Daniel H. Usner Jr.'s piece, “Remapping Boundaries in the Old Southwest, 1783-1795.” Focusing on the region which became Mississippi soon after Washington's departure from the presidency, Usner examines three intertwined types of borders in an effort to correct the teleological pitfall of viewing the country's post-Revolutionary occupation of lands east of the Mississippi River as merely “a prelude to later periods of United States territorial expansion” (p. 24). Complex international and intercultural relations across the boundary between the new United States and the Spanish empire west of the river, between Native and Euroamerican societies, and among different ethnicities within colonial and indigenous territories (as exemplified by African slaves' attempts to flee across boundaries into Indian territory) all shaped the “cultural space” that later became the state of Mississippi (p. 37). Martin Brückner, using literary and cartographic analysis, brings to light another aspect of the early South's shifting regional identity in his innovative piece, “Mapping the 'American South.'” Brückner analyzes maps of the region ranging across the eighteenth century “as a text rather than as a mirror of history or geographic reality” (p. 44). Evolving styles of mapmaking furthered imperial, nationalistic, and ide-

ological agendas, whether to shore up the claims of European empires, to represent the South as a resource-rich, slavery-based, and eminently "colonial" region, or to weaken regional identity as part of the Federalist desire for national unity.

Part 2 is the most thematically coherent of the book's four sections: the three essays mesh well together, unearthing or reinterpreting various influences on Washington's public and private personas and tying them to the southern environment in which he matured. Don Higginbotham scrutinizes the "family factor" in Washington's character in light of the president's relations with three different women: his mother, Mary Ball Washington; his wife, Martha Dandridge Custis Washington; and Sally Cary Fairfax, his neighbor and friend. He observes that these women's roles in relation to Washington have often been cast into such stereotypes as the "shrewish mother," the "'plain Jane,'" and the "flirtatious charmer" (p. 122). Using Washington's correspondence as well as a background of feminist writings and scholarship on women in the early republic, this original and crisply written piece not only corrects such stereotypes, but contends that Washington's interactions with these women helped to elaborate his interpersonal and political skills. David S. Shields and Carla Mulford focus more directly on Washington's political personality. Shields emphasizes the "stage theory" behind the president's complex public image as soldier, virtuous gentleman, and valorous settler in the mold of "Roman colonist" in the agricultural war with nature" (pp. 146, 147). Mulford examines how the southern genteel qualities of honor, civility, and "self-mastery" influenced Washington's projected image of "martial spirit" and strong leadership during and after the Revolutionary War (pp. 158, 160). She finds similar values conveyed in patriotic poems about the general by Phillis Wheatley, though the black poet's rhetoric undoubtedly carried additional meaning for African Americans struggling for their own freedom during the war.

One other work, though it appears in part 1, would fit equally well in part 2. Advancing a point noted by the editors—that the South in this formative period was "west" as much as "south" due to rapid expansion across the trans-Appalachian frontier—Warren R. Hofstra shows how the young Washington's relations with settlers in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley as a militia commander during the Seven Years' War helped to form his later public image as a virtuous, self-sacrificing republican leader (p. 6). Hofstra finds that "[i]ronically, the germ of Washington's virtue began to sprout in his intense dislike for

the people under his charge" (p. 71). The young officer from the well-ordered Chesapeake society found most of the German and other non-English subjects he encountered to be uncouth at best, stubborn and intractable at worst—as when settlers resisted joining the militia or donating provisions to the cause. Mirroring Usner's conception of frontiers as areas of cultural and racial mixing rather than of simple national expansion, this fine article also explores the frontier dimension of southern life in the early republic—how the backcountry world of the subsistence-based exchange economy sometimes clashed with the more competitive, acquisitive world of tobacco and slaves.

Parts 3 and 4 illustrate two other important aspects of the South in this period: slavery, and United States-Indian relations. Philip D. Morgan and Michael L. Nicholls place Washington's slaveholding practices, specifically his experiences with runaways from the 1760s until his death, in the larger context of Virginia slaveholding in this period. Their research produces two interesting results: first, Washington's impeccable record-keeping provides scholars with invaluable stories of individual runaways, and reveals how zealous their erstwhile master was to recapture them. Second, his frustration with the issue—even as he took pains to avoid "public embarrassment" should news of his efforts to recover, and often sell, problem slaves become publicly known—helped to convince him that slavery had a dim future in Virginia (p. 202). Unfortunately, this article misses an opportunity to link its nuanced analysis of slave flight with further exploration of the fascinating issue of Washington's views on slavery. This piece also highlights an important theme which runs throughout the book: tensions between regionalism and federalism in the early republic. Just as Brückner demonstrates how maps were used in the early republic to stress the South's role in a national whole, denoting state boundaries but de-emphasizing topographical features, and Hofstra hints at how Washington's experiences on the southern frontier presaged his later clashes with western interests in Shays' Rebellion and other conflicts, Morgan and Nicholls remind us that slavery was at the heart of struggles over forming a new national government, and that the institution was as deeply rooted in Washington's private life as it was in his native Chesapeake.

In another twist on this theme of conflicts between a federal agenda and southern regional interests, Theda Perdue explores the cultural and gender assumptions underlying Washington's policy of "civilizing" southern In-

dians. This article—perhaps the most analytically rigorous in the volume—finds Washington’s concepts of republican virtue and appropriate gender roles reflected in his notions that Indians should practice sedentary agriculture, avoid reliance on hunting or “effeminate,” potentially corrupting trade, and eschew both their consensus-based style of decision making and allowing women influence in political affairs.

This wide-ranging interdisciplinary collection will prove rewarding to specialists in southern, early republic, and Native American history alike, and perhaps to the interested general reader. The editors’ introduction lucidly points readers toward important connections among the essays. Almost all the contributions are written in a clear, approachable style, though some—such as Bräckner’s

and Mulford’s—make for denser reading, with more emphasis on textual analysis. Most contribute effectively to the book’s stated goals concerning Washington’s interactions with the South, though at least one piece—Sophie White’s examination of fashion in French colonial New Orleans as a window onto consumer culture, gender roles, and the colony’s social evolution—seems somewhat peripheral to the collection’s themes. The four-part thematic organization is clear and helpful, but short introductions highlighting the main themes of each section might have further solidified the overall organization. *George Washington’s South* is an ambitious and, on the whole, successful effort at bringing together a diverse collection of scholarship on this critical period in the region’s, and the nation’s, history.

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