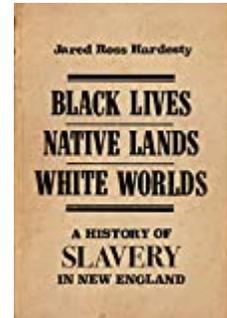




Jared Ross Hardesty. *Black Lives, Native Lands, White Worlds: A History of Slavery in New England.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2019. Illustrations. xx + 175 pp. \$22.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-62534-457-1.



Reviewed by David Hunter (University of Texas at Austin)

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Commissioned by Andrew J. Kettler (University of California, Los Angeles)

Black Lives, Native Lands, White Worlds offers on its back cover that it is a work intended as an introduction to “the story of slavery in New England [which] has been little told.” By focusing on “the individual stories of enslaved people,” Jared Ross Hardesty aims to bring “their experiences to life.” He also explores “larger issues such as the importance of slavery to the colonization of the region and to agriculture and industry, [as well as] New England’s deep connections to Caribbean plantation societies, and the significance of emancipation movements in the era of the American Revolution.” That would indeed be more than enough to fill the 153 pages available, not counting the “Further Reading” section.

Hardesty believes he can accomplish the broad tasks he lays out in six chapters and an epilogue. In the first chapter, “Origins,” he provides a perhaps inadvertent framework for what is to come by highlighting the English settlers’ “need” for slaves. He claims that “as England embraced liberty at home, it could not escape the world of slavery,” thereby suggesting that slavery was inev-

itable (p. 5). Hardesty correctly points to the Caribbean colony of Barbados as the incubator of the African slavery system for North America, but he makes little of the settlers’ desire to capture Native Americans to be traded for Africans.

In the second chapter, “Trafficked Peoples,” Hardesty offers glimpses of “the New England slave trade” by means of four case studies. He states that “nearly twenty thousand enslaved Africans and Indians poured into the region between 1700 and 1775” but makes no estimate of the numbers of Indians who were “poured” out of the region then or during the previous century (p. 48). In chapter 3, “Slave and Society,” Hardesty deals with subtitles that offer topics on the “culture of control,” slaves being “under household government,” and “governing slavery,” meaning legislative and community efforts of control. In chapter 4, Hardesty provides a summary of “working worlds” during which scholarly debates over such issues as the relative cost of “free” versus enslaved labor, the size of the New England “population ... beholden to slavery,” and the classification of

slaves as consumers are rendered invisible (p. 75). His conclusion that slavery “offered some protections and opportunities, such as the ability to self-hire and earn wages,” is either naive or insulting (p. 92).

In chapter 5, “Kin and Community,” Hardesty attempts to take down the concept of “social death,” elaborated upon in 1982 by Orlando Patterson, by arguing that it “reflects the letter of the law and popular attitudes ... rather than reality” (p. 93). Patterson’s point is that no matter how hard a slave might have or must have struggled to free themselves from bondage, they were “illegitimate” in the societies where they were bound. “Indeed, the struggle itself forced upon him a need that no other human beings have felt so acutely: the need for disenslavement, for disalienation, for negation of social death, for recognition of his inherent dignity.”[1]

In chapter 6, “Revolution and Emancipation,” Hardesty attempts to summarize the changes wrought by rebellion and the establishment of independence. He highlights the role Black soldiers played in the Continental army but provides a single, and hardly representative, example of one who sided with the British. He provides figures on the gradual reduction in the numbers of slaves based on the federal censuses of 1790 and 1800, but only for two states, and makes no comparisons with neighboring New York. In the epilogue, he states that “Emancipation in New England is a story of whites’ marginalizing, displacing, and segregating people of color all while distancing themselves from the institution of slavery” (p. 143). He makes no mention here of the elimination of Native peoples that was not part of slavery or the seizure of Native lands.

The dissonance between the book’s self-description and its title will be obvious to discerning readers. If *Black Lives, Native Lands, White Worlds* was about Native lands—as well as Black lives and white worlds—the reader would expect to learn about how those lands and other resources were

taken and used/abused by whites (and Blacks on their behalf), how Native peoples were used and abused alongside Blacks, and how the problems of racial distinctions involved differing concepts of lives, lands, and worlds. As it is, we are treated to what the author claims is “one central theme: connections,” with the “wider world of slavery and colonization in the Americas” (p. xv). It is these connections that “shaped the everyday lives and lived experiences of New England’s enslaved population” (p. xvi). Numerous historians would argue that it is the disconnections between the peoples in terms of racism, economic practices, resource management, legal and ethical tenets, music and dance, religion, and governing that offer greater insights into the settler colonial project and its legacies. For a volume published in a series that offers “accessible and entertaining books about New England,” the amount of content devoted to music, cooking, religion, consumerism, architecture, agricultural practices, schooling, tobacco, clothing, or even accounting is surprisingly low (p. v).

These lifeways of the three categories of race in question, which bound and separated the peoples, are hardly present. Archaeological evidence is negligible. There is nothing on the establishment of reservations. The relationships between expulsion from land and the need for enslaved Africans and between the expropriation of land and the enslavement of Indians go unexamined. The index lacks an entry for “land.” The continuing presence of Native Americans through the end of the period in question (1860), let alone to the present, goes unremarked, thus illustrating the canard castigated by Jean M. O’Brien in *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (2010). Anyone in search of further reading on the topic of Native Americans and land will have to go elsewhere as the five and a half pages included here only offer a single reference, to Margaret Newell’s *Brethren by Nature: New England Indians, Colonists, and the Origins of American Slavery* (2015).

Dennis Del age’s *Bitter Feast: Amerindians and Europeans in Northeastern North America, 1600-64* (1993), David Murray’s *Indian Giving: Economies of Power in Indian-White Exchanges* (2000), Daniel Richter’s *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (2001), James Axtell’s *Natives and Newcomers: The Cultural Origins of North America* (2001), Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney’s *Captors and Captives: The 1704 French and Indian Raid on Deerfield* (2003), Jenny Hale Pulsipher’s *Subjects unto the Same King: Indians, English, and the Contest for Authority in Colonial New England* (2005), Diana DiPaulo Loren’s *In Contact: Bodies and Spaces in the Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Eastern Woodlands* (2008), Alan Gallay’s edited collection *Indian Slavery in Colonial North America* (2009), David Preston’s *The Texture of Contact: European and Indian Settler Communities on the Frontiers of Iroquoia, 1667-1783* (2009), Ann Morrison Spinney’s *Pasamaquoddy Ceremonial Songs: Aesthetics and Survival* (2010), and Colin Calloway’s numerous titles or those of Kathleen Bragdon, to mention just a few of the most pertinent authors and titles, whose hard-won efforts to demonstrate the shaping role of Indians, may as well not exist for this analysis. The opening sentence of the “Further Reading” section provides a tell-tale clue for the striking absence of these works, their ideas, and Native Americans: the book’s title is misquoted as “*Black Lives, White Worlds.*” No *Native Lands*, enough said.

Note

[1]. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 340.

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