{essays in history}

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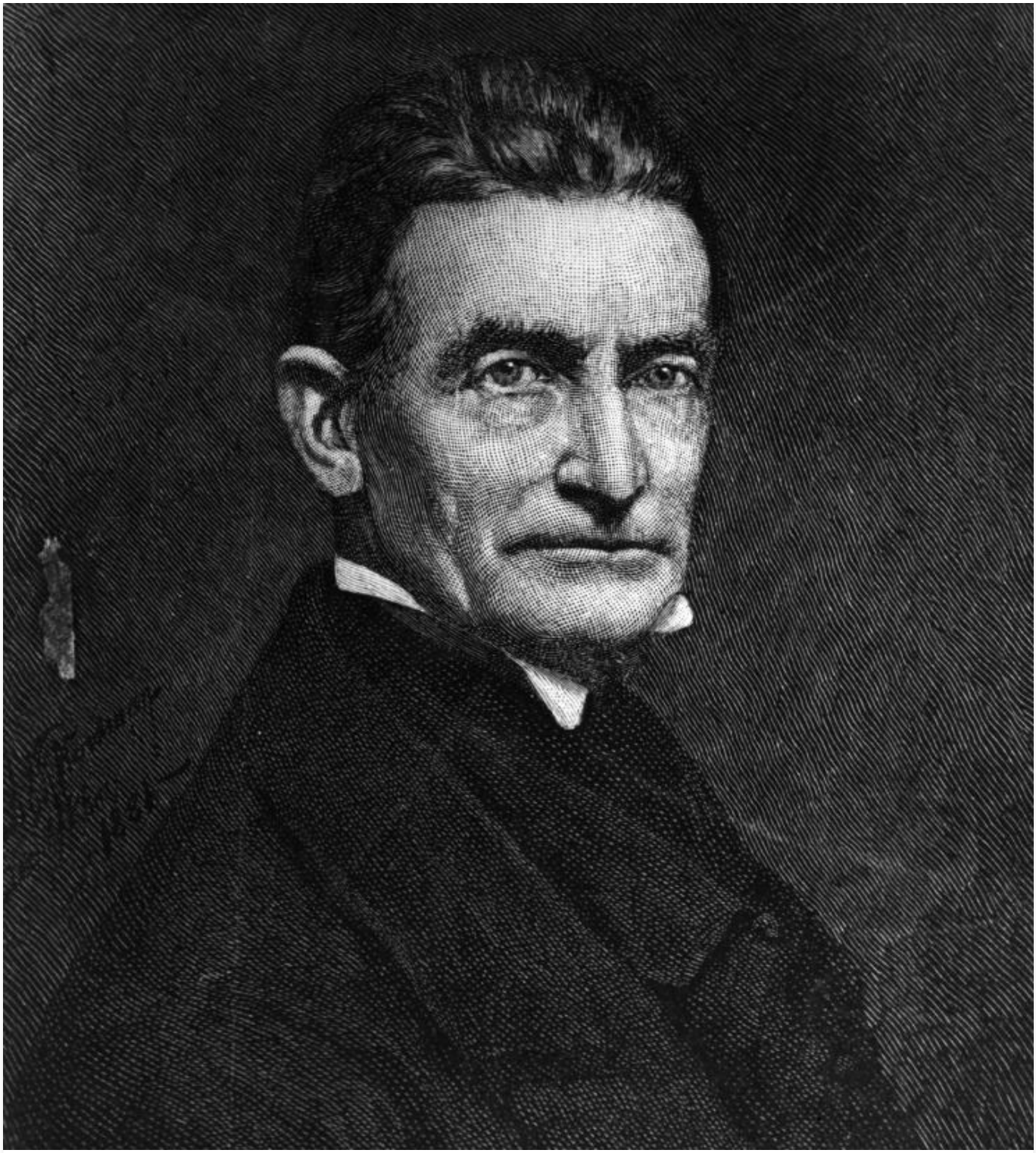
“How and in what balance weigh John Brown?”: The Current State and Future of John Brown Historiography



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Reviewed Work(s)

Midnight Rising: John Brown and the Raid that Sparked the Civil War. By Tony Horwitz (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2011). xiv + 370. Cloth, $29.00.

John Brown Still Lives! America's Long Reckoning with Violence, Equality, & Change. By R. Blakeslee Glipin (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011). xvi + 280. Cloth, $30.00.

Posed initially in 1928 in his famous poem, *John Brown's Body,* Stephen Vincent Benét's question, "how and in what balance weight John Brown," reverberates throughout John Brown historiography.[1] Each generation of scholars and Brown biographers has found a different set of answers to this question. Brown's earliest biographer, James Redpath, portrayed Brown as a Christ-figure, whose violence was justified and righteous.[2] The next generation of Brown biographers was divided by divergent white and black visions of John Brown. Franklin Sanborn, a member of the Secret Six and a leading white biographer of Brown, spent decades constructing, guarding, and preserving the image of Brown as a Christian martyr. On the other hand, African Americans such as Frederick Douglass, who sought to combat both the Lost Cause and reconciliationism, cast Brown as an inspired revolutionary who took up the sword in the cause of freedom and liberty.[3] The debate between black and white images of Brown manifested itself most famously in the rivalry between W. E. B. Du Bois and Oswald Garrison Villard. Du Bois's biography, much like Douglass's address, sought to refute both Lost Cause and reconciliationist ideas and to show that Brown was ready and willing to shed blood and fight for the freedom of the slaves. Villard's biography, regarded by many of his contemporaries and subsequent historians as the best biography of Brown to date, was largely successful in providing a balanced perspective.[4] As a committed pacifist, however, Villard condemned Brown's violence without attempting to consider Brown's violent acts in the context of violence in Kansas.[5] The rivalry between Du Bois and Villard, exacerbated by their different conceptions of Brown and their divergent views of Brown's legacy, spoke to the enduring power of Brown as a symbol and an icon.

During the 1920s and 30s, however, Brown's power as a symbol was greatly reduced when he came under a dual assault by Robert Penn Warren and a cadre of revisionist historians. Warren's biography portrayed Brown as dishonest, hypocritical, and a common criminal, in Warren's words, a horse-thief.[6]This image of Brown, as a criminal and a fanatic, was accepted by both laypeople and academic historians.

Furthermore, this was the era of the "Revisionists." Under the able leadership of Avery O. Craven and James G. Randall, revisionist historians posited that the Civil War was a needless war caused by a blundering generation of politicians and extremists on both ends of the spectrum.[7] Brown, the very picture of the "Yankee fanatic," was one of the key villains in the Revisionist scheme.[8] Historiographical portrayals, however, never remain static and the image of Brown as the crazed fanatic was assailed by a group of scholars beginning in the 1970s. Benjamin Quarles, for instance, offered an excellent discussion of Brown's relationship with African Americans and Stephen Oates's biography of Brown, the best Brown biography since Villard, helped refute some of the incendiary charges lobbed at Brown.[9] In the past decade, historians have continued to refine our understanding of Brown. John Stauffer's exploration of Brown's efforts to abandon his white heart for a black one, Louis A. DeCaro's discussion of Brown's religious life, David Reynolds's superb analysis of Brown's life and legacy, and Robert McGlone's study of Brown's war against slavery all provide depth and nuance to our understanding of the "Old Man."[10] It is into this crowded field that Tony Horwitz and R. Blakeslee Gilpin stride. Ultimately, these two latest studies speak to the state of Brown historiography and suggest where historians can go from here.[11]

In *Midnight Rising: John Brown and the Raid that Sparked the Civil War*, Tony Horwitz departs from the successful formula he employed in works such as *Confederates in the Attic* and *A Voyage Long and Strange*.[12] Rather than writing an account of the memory of John Brown in modern America, or an account of the memory of slavery and abolition in modern America, Horwitz offers a narrative of the life of John Brown. Part of Horwitz's motivation in writing this book stems from his experience at the John Brown Memorial March held on October 16, 2009 at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. Horwitz asserts that, while he experienced a "little of the time-travel high that Civil War reenactors call a 'period rush,'" he nevertheless finds that "walking in the footsteps of history isn't the same thing as being there."[13] Horwitz also notes that he wrote the book because his son's ninth grade history textbook offered little more information about Brown than the textbook Horwitz used when he himself was in the ninth grade. *Midnight Rising,*therefore, is simultaneously an attempt to understand and fathom Brown and an attempt to educate, inform, and correct what Horwitz sees as

problematic modern interpretations of Brown, such as the question of Brown as a terrorist.[14] For all that Horwitz's aims were noble and well-intentioned, one can see from the beginning two issues. For one, Horwitz is not particularly engaged with the John Brown historiography. His bibliography suggests that Horwitz has read most of the standard works, but he does not seem to address his contribution or explore how other authors have dealt with important themes in the literature. Granted, Horwitz did not set out to write an academic monograph, but he might have addressed these questions, if not in the text, at least in the footnotes.[15] Second, at times Horwitz tends to magnify the role of Brown and downplay other sectional tensions. Hinton Rowan Helper, for instance, is never mentioned; Stephen Arnold Douglas makes a brief cameo appearance; and readers never do hear about the Lecompton Constitution. Surely there is as much danger in overemphasizing Brown's role as in underemphasizing it.

Horwitz does not offer a cradle to grave biography of Brown and those so interested would do well to look elsewhere.[16] Horwitz's brief foray into Brown's early life is troubling because of assertions like the following: "almost from the beginning he was marked in ways that would set him on the road to rebellion at Harpers Ferry."[17] By way of justification for this statement, Horwitz explains that traumatic episodes in Brown's childhood, such as the loss of a yellow marble, a pet squirrel, and his mother, provoked prolonged episodes of mourning and these episodes, coupled with other aspects of his upbringing, placed Brown on a path to Harpers Ferry. These assertions are problematic for several reasons. Horwitz should have analyzed Brown's bouts of mourning alongside other figures in the antebellum United States, Lincoln in particular, who suffered from similar episodes.[18] Doing so would have linked Brown to a larger group of people who suffered from similar depression or melancholy and might have prompted a reassessment of his assertion about Brown being marked for Harpers Ferry.[19] After all, numerous people suffered from loss, depression, and mourning, but did not follow Brown's course of action. Similarly, Brown's failures as a businessman did not have to lead him to Harper's Ferry. If Brown was a victim of or disaffected by the market revolution, what was to stop him from rebelling in a different way, for instance, emulating Robert Matthews and founding his own patriarchal kingdom?[20] Nothing was predestined about Brown's raid.

If Horwitz's analysis of Brown's youth and motivations is less than convincing, one of the virtues of this book is that it is eminently readable. Horwitz offers an accessible narrative, including a clear and straightforward account of Brown's time in Kansas, his preparations for the raid, and an extended discussion of the details of Brown's October 1859 raid on Harpers Ferry. Readability aside, once Horwitz turns from the raid to the aftermath; his narrative offers almost nothing new. *Midnight Rising* considers the important theme of Brown's martyrdom, but engages little of the secondary literature and few primary source materials; offering instead sparse analysis of Brown's infamous meeting with Senator Mason, Governor Wise, Congressman Vallandigham, and J.E.B. Stuart. Additionally, Horwitz's discussion of Brown's trial and sentencing hit all the major points (Brown lying injured on a cot, the question of treason, the question of insanity, and Brown's speech to the court) without offering a new interpretation.[21] Once Brown was executed, Horwitz almost seems to lose his concentration and the analysis suffers. The discussion of the debates in the Senate over the Harpers Ferry raid are so-so and do not acquaint the reader with the Mason Committee or the efforts to secure the testimony of many of Brown's friends and acquaintances. Lincoln, who appears at the tail end of the book, and really only as an oblique figure, is portrayed as a peripheral actor. Horwitz also reduces the Lincoln-Douglas debates to Lincoln's now infamous quote from Charleston ("I am not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races") thus ignoring the nuanced positions that Lincoln took throughout the debates.[22] Horwitz certainly offers a readable narrative and a straightforward account of the raid, but the book will most likely prove dissatisfying to many readers.

While Horwitz focuses on Brown's life, raid, execution and martyrdom, and devotes a few pages to Brown's memory, the same cannot be said of R. Blakeslee Gilpin's *John Brown Still Lives! America's Long Reckoning with Violence, Equality, & Change*. Gilpin does offer some discussion of Brown's life, focusing mainly on his time in Kansas and the raid, but spends the bulk of the book analyzing the course of Brown's memory, image, and legacy over the past one hundred and fifty years. Notably, writing nine years after the publication of Merrill Peterson's excellent study of the memory of John Brown, *John Brown: The Legend Revisited*,

Gilpin finds different subjects to analyze and makes an original contribution.[23]

Gilpin begins with a discussion of the early life of John Brown which is more nuanced than Horwitz's analysis and asserts that "although Brown presented himself as destined from an early age for his raid on Harpers Ferry, his life was far more complicated."[24] Still, Brown's early life is not a major focus of Gilpin's analysis and the reader will find greater payoff in his discussion of Bleeding Kansas. Gilpin argues that Brown's evolution into a symbol is critical to understanding his place in American memory, that Brown's embrace of violence in 1856, the massacre at Pottawatomie Creek, has to be understood in the context of the conflict in Kansas, and that Brown's actions only make sense in the violence of Kansas, not as the "vanguard of a sequentially coherent narrative."[25] Gilpin therefore critiques the interpretations of James C. Malin, David Potter, and Nicole Etcheson,[26] and, if his argument that Brown has to be understood in the context of Kansas is not particularly novel, the other portion of his argument seems more original. Originality aside, Gilpin's argument assumes a certain inertness on the part of Brown before 1856, yet historians have shown that Brown embraced violence before 1856.[27] Gilpin contends that Brown's actions spoke to an eastern audience because "readers wanted dramatic events like those reported on June 6, 1856."[28] Furthermore, the Pottawatomie Massacre had enormous symbolic power, a power that Brown did not prove reticent to tap.

Gilpin follows Brown from Kansas to New England to Harpers Ferry, which would serve not as a "portent of America's Civil War," but rather as a "launching pad for Brown's immortality."[29] Gilpin offers an abbreviated description of the town of Harpers Ferry, the raid, and the defeat of the raiders and a reasonably standard discussion of the aftermath of the trial with the bizarre assertion that "the beleaguered Virginia governor, Henry A. Wise, conducted the trial with fairness and considerable equanimity."[30] The trial was conducted with something, but "fairness" and "equanimity" hardly spring to mind.[31] The discussion of Brown's last month is fairly standard, but after Brown's death, when the contestation of Brown's memory began, Gilpin hits his stride. The first voice in that struggle was James Redpath, Brown's friend, who published, roughly a month after Brown's execution, *Public Life of*

Captain John Brown, which portrayed Brown as a Christ-like figure whose fight was righteous and justified. Redpath was the first to harness the symbolic power of Brown, thereby transforming him into a living myth.

Gilpin contends that this harnessing of Brown's symbolic power continued throughout the rest of the nineteenth century. During the Civil War, the memory of Brown was evoked through the song "John Brown's Body." In some senses, the song furthered two ends. Charlotte Forten and regiments of African American soldiers recognized the importance of the song in contesting and preserving the memory of John Brown the militant radical. On the other hand, "the song, with its explicit Unionism, was most popularly understood and embraced without any endorsement of revolutionary violence in the service of freedom."[32] The sanitized vision of Brown, as a peaceful Christian martyr, was fast becoming the currency of the realm and presented a sharp contrast to the vision among black Americans about John Brown. Henry Highland Garnett and Frederick Douglass, for example, invoked Brown's violence and radicalism repeatedly in an effort to combat the Lost Cause and the forces of reconciliation, but their vision of Brown was generally not accepted by white Americans.[33] The John Brown that prevailed in American memory, however, was the passive Christian martyr portrayed in Thomas Hovenden's *The Last Moments of John Brown*, which depicted the apocryphal story of Brown kissing a black infant on his way to the gallows. Franklin Sanborn, a member of the Secret Six, was the primary defender of the saintly Brown image. Gilpin asserts that Sanborn's Brown was no longer "a principled and visionary revolutionary. By 1871, for Sanborn and others weary of bloodshed, Brown simply became a principled and peaceful visionary. Sanborn's portrait defined late nineteenth-century white attitudes toward Brown, aggressively minimizing the man's morally questionable acts."[34]

While Gilpin finds in Sanborn an effective way to contrast the white image of John Brown with the black image of John Brown, there are two problems with his analysis. First, can we speak of one image of John Brown prevailing in the white community? One suspects that there was greater diversity of opinion in the white community. For instance, Gilpin devotes very little attention to the critique of John Brown by white people during this period. Leaving aside John Nicolay and John Hay,

Lincoln's former secretaries and biographers who had very few nice things to say about Brown, would William Dean Howells or James Redpath have agreed with the sanitized depiction of Brown as a passive martyr? This is a persistent flaw in Gilpin's book: the use of one or two examples to comment on broad patterns in American memory and leads him to avoid discussing dissension within communities. Second and more importantly, one wonders if Gilpin's characterization of Sanborn's Brown is accurate. In *The Life and Letters of John Brown*, Sanborn wrote, "He [Brown] looked forward, no doubt, to years of conflict, in which the blacks, as in the later years of the Civil War, should be formed into regiments and brigades and be drilled in the whole art of war,— like the black soldiers of Toussaint L'Ouverture and Dessalines, in Hayti."[35] Is this an invocation of a "peaceful visionary?" Gilpin might have benefitted from thinking about Charles Dew's discussion of the fears of insurrection, amalgamation, and apocalypse in the South as well as Matthew Clavin's discussion of John Brown and Haiti.[36]

Gilpin follows the tensions between the black and white images of John Brown into the twentieth century and explores the rivalry between W. E. B. Du Bois and Oswald Garrison Villard and the early years of the NAACP.[37] Du Bois, on the one hand, "used John Brown to engage the past as a means to make sense of the present and put forth plans for the future." [38] He also drew on many of the salient aspects of the black image of Brown: that Brown had advocated the use of violence to strike at oppression and would advocate violence to secure freedom from slavery and oppression. Like Frederick Douglass and Henry Highland Garnett, Du Bois attacked Lost Cause ideas and Brown hagiography and demonstrated that Brown was ready and willing to shed blood and fight for the freedom of the slaves. Villard, who was completing his own Brown biography, did not approve of Du Bois's biography and labeled it a "most inferior and faulty piece of work."[39] Fundamentally, Villard disagreed with Du Bois's depiction of Brown and his use of history to advocate for change, rather than writing objective history. Gilpin probes the inner recesses of Villard's character, noting that his "private correspondence at the time captures the disturbing condescension and subtle racism of Villard's noblesse oblige philanthropy."[40] Nevertheless, with considerable help from his research assistant Katherine Mayo, Villard authored a measured biography, if at times overly influenced by both his pacifism and his desire to vindicate his grandfather, William

Lloyd Garrison. The rivalry between Du Bois and Villard was more than a mere personality conflict, because both men approached and answered the fundamental questions of United States history in different ways. Gilpin's analysis of Du Bois and Villard's different interpretations of Brown was subtle and penetrating, making this chapter one of the stronger sections of the book.

Tensions between black and white conceptions of Brown do not, however, remain Gilpin's focus, as he turns to a consideration of negative conceptions of Brown, in Stephen Vincent Benét's *John Brown's Body*, Robert Penn Warren's biography of Brown, and John Steuart Curry's mural of Brown in the Kansas statehouse. Gilpin finds in his analysis of Benét, that *John Brown's Body* served as a mediator of sectional differences and that Benét placed Brown in a "broader narrative of reunion and patriotic display."[41] *John Brown's Body* celebrated the rationales and heroism of both sides and thus, like much of the reconciliationist literature, ignored African Americans, both their role during the Civil War and the impact of the war on their lives. Gilpin briefly discusses Margaret Mitchell and *Gone With the Wind*, but he does little to contextualize the sentiments of Benét within the larger climate described by David Blight in *Race and Reunion* and thus does not explore the roots of the thought Benét enunciated. This tendency to focus on Benét and failure to contextualize Benét's thought reaches its full flower when Gilpin comments that "The very act of enshrining North and South marginalized the role of black Americans and trivialized the nature and impact of American slavery." [42] This was hardly new to Benét and it would not be fair to place the onus of this trend exclusively on *John Brown's Body*.

Gilpin continues to a discussion of John Brown, the Vanderbilt Fugitives (an influential group of writers and intellectuals based at Vanderbilt University), and Robert Penn Warren. Warren's biography of Brown, written at the beginning of his career, was directly informed by the Fugitive project. This project, a response to H. L. Mencken's gibes about the South, revolved around a romanticized Confederacy and an engagement with the mythology of the Lost Cause. What could be more conducive to such a project than a depiction of Brown as a fanatic and a representative of northern fanaticism? Warren cast Brown and the North as responsible for the Civil War and painted a picture of Brown as shifty,

hypocritical, a dishonest businessman, a horse thief, a common criminal, insane, and "victim 'to meanness, to chicanery, to bitter querulous intolerance, to dishonesty, to vindictive and ruthless brutality.'"[43] Warren's biography was successful insofar as it disseminated the propagandistic goals of the Fugitives and helped to convince the nation that an imagined South was real. For all that Gilpin offers an excellent discussion of Warren's Brown, he tends to exaggerate the success of the Fugitive project. His statement that "our insistence that the Civil War was a valorous tragedy without blame owes much to Warren and his compatriots. This is the legacy of the Fugitive imagination"[44] magnifies the importance of the Fugitives and, like the discussion of Benét, ignores context.

From the discussion of Warren's Brown, Gilpin next examines the art of John Steuart Curry, to explain how the artist built upon the product of the Fugitive imagination and portrayed Brown as a fanatical extremist. Curry, most famous for his mural "The Tragic Prelude" in the Kansas Statehouse depicted Brown as a wild-eyed, trigger-happy, fanatical traitor with a Bible in one hand and a rifle in the other. Ironically, although Curry embraced a vision of Brown that was fast becoming canon, and although Kansans agreed with these ideas about Brown, many Kansans were upset about Curry's seeming celebration of Brown, the violent fanatic. Gilpin contends that the central lesson of this episode was that "No matter what the timing, Brown's memory could still have dangerous and unpredictable consequences."[45]

From these negative conceptions, Gilpin devotes a chapter to an analysis of the Jacob Lawrence's series on John Brown. Lawrence's Brown was not the wild-eyed fanatic of Curry's murals or the insane horse-thief of Warren's biography, but neither was he an uncomplicated hero. Lawrence deliberately made Brown a "tormented soul and interrogated his martyrdom."[46] In his skillful analysis of Lawrence's paintings, Gilpin finds that Lawrence constantly engaged open questions and skillfully forced people to confront the nature of religion, violence, and interracial partnership. For instance, in the first image, Lawrence portrayed Brown as both Christ and disciple, thereby calling into question his religiosity and complicating his mythic stature. In other images, Brown often appears small and frail alongside the free black men who joined him in his raid, suggesting something about Brown and the

black men as well as the nature of resistance and interracial cooperation. Indeed, throughout the series, Lawrence offers a complicated version of Brown and paints more than antislavery triumphs. Gilpin's chapter on Lawrence, like his chapter on Du Bois and Villard, is one of the stronger chapters in the book.

In his epilogue, Gilpin rushes to bring his study up to the present. He treats, in a rather cursory fashion, the use of Brown by men like Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. It would have been interesting to see Gilpin spend more time on the trajectory of Brown's image in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the more recent appropriation of Brown by anti-abortion activists. The epilogue, however, focuses almost exclusively on the art of Kara Walker and Barack Obama's invocation of Brown in *The Audacity of Hope*. Walker is most famous for her controversial silhouettes, but her images of John Brown are troubling and one might even say nauseating. Walker's art is disquieting not for her rejection of Brown as a heroic figure, certainly that has been done before, but because of the way Walker depicts Brown (in one painting Brown performs fellatio on a black infant). Gilpin errs in placing such a heavy focus on Walker's art. The shock value of the paintings obscures the fact that Walker's depiction of Brown seems fundamentally an aberration, especially considering the trajectory of the memory of John Brown among African Americans. In the past one hundred and fifty years, as Benjamin Quarles has demonstrated, Brown's stock has remained high among African Americans.[47] During the 1960s, when many African Americans embraced Black Power and rejected interracial movements, Brown was nevertheless invoked in a positive way by Malcolm X, H. Rap Brown, and Floyd McKissick. When one considers the use of Brown's image by African Americans, Obama seems more aligned with the trends set by Douglass, Du Bois, Reverdy Ransom, Lawrence, and Malcolm X, because Obama draws on Brown as a catalyst who forced the nation to confront the contradictions of slavery and freedom. Gilpin should have emphasized how Obama drew on these ideas about Brown rather than on Walker's provocative and unusual images. Nevertheless, *John Brown Still Lives* is a thought-provoking monograph that will undoubtedly inspire discussion.

Both Gilpin and Horwitz illustrate that though much work has been conducted on John Brown, there is room for further study. The most

promising new direction in Brown historiography seems to be the international angle. With the exception of David Reynolds and Seymour Drescher, historians generally do not consider the international dimensions of Brown's life, legacy, and image.[48] This is a particularly problematic trend when one considers that historians of the United States are becoming much more cognizant of the need to utilize transnational and comparative frameworks. Indeed, historians as diverse as Richard Blackett, Robert May, Mark Neely, Matthew Clavin, Edward Rugemer, Michael O'Brien, Eugene Genovese, Sven Beckert, and Enrico Dal Lago all offer useful and compelling monographs dealing, in one form or another, with the internationalization of the Civil War Era and a more international and global United States history.[49] Why then have historians proved so reluctant to do so when analyzing Brown? Placing Brown in an international context could help to move the historiography to the next frontier, but also help to answer vexing questions. Why, for instance, did Brown continue to have such faith in the politics? What was Brown doing in Europe on his European tour? What were the sources of Brown's opinions about slave militancy? These questions loom large in the historiography, but have not yet been answered satisfactorily. An international analysis should help historians reframe these questions and think about new answers. In addition, thinking about Brown in an international or Atlantic world context will help historians consider the current temporal bounds of Atlantic world history and may compel them, as Douglas Egerton has suggested, to widen these bounds to encompass the nineteenth century.[50]Internationalizing the historiography will move historians one step closer to answering the question W.E.B. Du Bois posed in 1909: "Was John Brown simply an episode or was he an eternal truth? And if a truth, how speaks that truth today?"[51] By thinking about Brown solely in the context of the United States historians only have half the story, and, until we explore Brown's world in all of its complexity, we will neither be able to answer Benét's question nor that of Du Bois.

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[1] The quotation in the title is from, Stephen Vincent Benét, *John Brown's Body* (1928; repr., Chicago: Ivan R. Dee Inc., 1990), 47. The author would like to thank Professors Mark E. Neely, Jr. and Matthew D. Norman for their helpful comments and suggestions.

[2] James Redpath, *The Public Life of Captain John Brown* (Boston: Thayer and Eldridge, 1860).

[3] *The Life and Letters of John Brown: Liberator of Kansas, and Martyr of Virginia*, ed. F. Sanborn (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1891) and Frederick Douglass, *John Brown. An Address At the Fourteenth Anniversary of Storer College* (Dover, N.H.: Morning Star Job Printing House, 1881).

[4] See Stephen Oates, "John Brown and his Judges: A Critique of the Historical Literature" in *Civil War History* 17, no. 1 (1971): 5-24 and Merrill Peterson, *John Brown: The Legend Revisited* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 2002), 86.

[5] W. E. B. Du Bois, *John Brown* (1909; repr., New York: The Modern Library, 1996); Oswald Garrison Villard, *John Brown, 1800-1859: A Biography Fifty Years After* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1910).

[6] Robert Penn Warren, *John Brown: The Making of a Martyr* (New York: Payson & Clarke, Ltd., 1929).

[7] For examples of the revisionist school see Avery Craven *The Repressible Conflict*: 1830-1861 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1939) and J. G. Randall, "The Blundering Generation," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 27 (June 1940), 3-28.

[8] For additional critiques of Brown see C. Vann Woodward, "John Brown's Private War," in *America in Crisis: Fourteen Crucial Episodes in American History*, ed. Daniel Aaron (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952) and David M. Potter, *The South and Sectional Conflict* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968).

[9] Benjamin Quarles, *Allies For Freedom & Blacks on John Brown* (1974; repr., New York: De Capo Press, 2001); Stephen Oates, *To Purge This Land With Blood: A Biography of John Brown* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984).

[10] John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race*(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Louis A. DeCaro Jr., *Fire From the Midst of You: A Religious Life of John Brown* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005); Robert E. McGlone, *John Brown's War Against Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[11] My sketch of the historiography covers the major trends in the past one hundred and fifty years; other important works on Brown include O.P. Anderson, Anderson, *A Voice From Harper's Ferry: A Narrative of Events at Harper's Ferry* (Boston, 1861); Hermann von Holst, *John Brown*, ed. Frank P. Stearns (Boston: Cupples and Hurd, 1889); J. C. Furnas, *The Road to Harpers Ferry* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1956); Jules Abels, *Man on Fire: John Brown and the Cause of Liberty* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971); Truman Nelson, *The Old Man: John Brown at Harper's Ferry* (1973; repr., Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009); *His Soul Goes Marching On: Responses to John Brown and the Harpers Ferry Raid*, ed., Paul Finkleman (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1995); *Terrible Swift Sword: The Legacy of John Brown*, eds. Peggy A. Russo and Paul Finkleman (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2005); and Evan Carton, *Patriotic Treason: John Brown and the Soul of America* (New York: Free Press, 2006). See also *A John Brown Reader,* ed., Louis Ruchames (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1959); *Meteor of War: The John Brown Story*, eds. Zoe Trodd and John Stauffer (Maplecrest, New York: Brandywine Press, 2004); and Jonathan Earle, *John Brown's Raid on Harpers Ferry: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008).

[12] Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998) and Tony Horwitz, *A Voyage Long and Strange: Rediscovering the New World*(New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2008).

[13] Tony Horowitz, *Midnight Rising: John Brown and the Raid that Sparked the Civil War* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2011), both quotes on page 3.

[14] David Reynolds also covered this subject in his biography of Brown and elaborated, quite successfully, on the differences between Brown and Osama Bin Laden; see Reynolds, *John Brown*, 500-504.

[15] Horwitz might also have been a bit more attentive to the historiography of the antebellum United States. For instance, Horwitz's discussion of slavery, the constitution, and expansion would have been strengthened by the inclusion of Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1975); Leonard L. Richards, *The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination, 1780-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic: An Account of the United States Government's Relations to Slavery*, ed., Ward M. McAfee (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007). Additionally, Horwitz's analysis of abolitionism would have benefitted from a consideration of Paul Goodman, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) and Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

[16] For excellent biographies see Quarles, *Allies for Freedom*, Oates, *To Purge This Land With Blood*, Reynolds, *John Brown*, DeCaro, *Fire From the Midst of You*, and McGlone, *John Brown's War Against Slavery.*

[17] Horowitz, *Midnight Rising*, 9.

[18] This is a common theme throughout the Lincoln historiography. See, for instance, David Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1995), 27, 57, 67, 88, 94, 97, 118 and Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008) 1:6, 188.

[19] See also Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "'A Volcano Beneath a Mountain of Snow': John Brown and the Problem of Interpretation," in Finkelman, *His Soul Goes Marching On*, 10-38.

[20] Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias: A Story of Sex and Salvation in 19th-Century America* (New York: Oxford

University Press, 1994).

[21] For an excellent account of Brown's trial see Brian McGinty, *John Brown's Trial* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

[22] Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010); Matthew D. Norman's "The Other Lincoln Douglas Debate: The Race Issue in a Comparative Context," J*ournal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 31 (Winter 2010), 1-21, would have helped Horwitz present a more nuanced version of Lincoln.

[23] Peterson, *John Brown: The Legend Revisited*.

[24] R. Blakeslee Gilpin, *John Brown Still Lives! America's Long Reckoning with Violence, Equality, & Change* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 9.

[25] Gilpin, *John Brown Still Lives*, 18.

[26] James C. Malin, *John Brown and the Legend of Fifty-Six* (Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, 1942); David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861*, completed and edited by Don E. Fehrenbacher (1976; repr., New York: Harper Perennial, 2011); and Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004).

[27] See, in particular, "perhaps it was after that same sermon that John Brown stood in the back of the sanctuary, distributing Bowie knives to congregants," DeCaro, *Fire From the Midst of You*, 190.

[28] Gilpin, *John Brown Still Lives*, 26.

[29] Ibid, 32.

[30] Ibid, 42.

[31] Here Gilpin echoes the analysis of William Dean Howells in his review of Villard's biography of Brown. Howells, informed by the trial of the Haymarket conspirators, wrote that "After a lapse of fifty years and our witness of the equally ludicrous spectacle of Chicago frightened from her propriety by the Haymarket incident, we ought to acknowledge, we young journalists and all the others who survive in the

youth of John Brown time, that in retrospect the Virginians seem to have behaved well," W. D. Howells, "John Brown After Fifty Years" *The North American Review* 193 (January 1911): 32.

[32] Gilpin, *John Brown Still Lives*, 59.

[33] Anyone who has read David W. Blight's *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), will not be surprised by this phenomenon.

[34] Gilpin, *John Brown Still Lives*, 71-72.

[35] *The Life and Letters of John Brown: Liberator of Kansas, and Martyr of Virginia*, ed. F. Sanborn, 122.

[36] Charles B. Dew, *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002) and Matthew J. Clavin, *Toussaint Louverture and the American Civil War: The Promise and Peril of a Second Haitian Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

[37] Gilpin here builds on Louis A. DeCaro, Jr.'s essay "Black People's Ally, White People's Boogeyman: A John Brown Story," in *The Afterlife of John Brown*, eds., Andrew Taylor and Eldrid Herrington (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) and might have considered Patricia Sullivan's discussion of the Du Bois/Villard rivalry in *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: The New Press, 2009).

[38] Gilpin, *John Brown Still Lives*, 79.

[39] Villard quoted in Peterson, *The Legend Revisited,* 101.

[40] Gilpin, *John Brown Still Lives*, 94.

[41] Ibid, 106.

[42] Ibid, 116.

[43] Ibid, 135.

[44] Ibid, 143.

[45] Ibid, 157.

[46] Ibid, 159.

[47] Quarles, *Allies For Freedom & Blacks on John Brown*.

[48] Reynolds, *John Brown* and Seymour Drescher "Servile Insurrection and John Brown's Body in Europe," in Finkelman, *His Soul Goes Marching On*, 253-295.

[49] R. J. M. Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall: Black Americans in the Atlantic Abolition Movement, 1830-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002); *The Union, The Confederacy, and the Atlantic Rim*, ed., Robert E. May (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1995); Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Civil War and the Limits of Destruction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Clavin, *Toussaint Louverture and the American Civil War*; Edward Bartlett Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation: The Caribbean Roots of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008); Michael O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004) and Eugene Genovese "The South in the History of the Transatlantic World," in *What Made the South Different*, ed. Kees Gispen (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011); Sven Beckert, "Emancipation and Empire;" Enrico Dal Lago and Rick Halpern, "Two Case-Studies in Comparative History: The American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno" in *The American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno: Essays in Comparative History*, eds. Enrico Dal Lago and Rick Halpern (New York: Palgrave, 2002); for additional examples see Don H. Doyle, *Nations Divided: America, Italy, and the Southern Question* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002); Leslie Butler, *Critical Americans: Victorian Intellectuals and Transatlantic Liberal Reform* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Brian Schoen, *The Fragile Fabric of Union: Cotton, Federal Politics, and the Global Origins of the Civil War* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); and Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

[50] See Douglas Egerton, "Rethinking Atlantic Historiography in a Postcolonial Era: The Civil War in a Global Perspective," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 1 (Spring 2011): 79-95.

[51] W.E. Burghardt Du Bois, *John Brown* (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs & Company, 1909), 374

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