

As Edwards demonstrates, enslaved people in South Carolina became more entrepreneurial and inventive because antebellum slaveholders saw their agricultural ventures entirely as businesses devoted to cotton production. That demanded squeezing every bit of profit out of the land and out of the laborers who made the crop. Taking greater control over the economic activities of the enslaved and reframing that domination as benevolence was a key strategy for doing so. Slaveholders who preferred to pay as little as possible to provision their workforce with food and clothing could skimp and thereby effectively coerce the enslaved to provide more for themselves. Claiming they offered incentives to work and lessons in capitalist diligence and thrift even as they tracked the independent production of the enslaved in their account books and folded it into their own operations, slaveholders hedged against the risks of their single-minded capital investments in cotton by preying on the aspirations of those they already held in bondage.

Centered on how the enslaved themselves shaped and were shaped by both slavery and capitalism, *Unfree Markets* also never loses sight of the shifting politics of the slaves' economy, the ambivalence and divisions it caused among white Carolinians, and the contradictions it presented for white supremacy in a society grounded in slavery and capitalism alike. Ultimately, though, for all of its clear and important contributions to the literature on slavery and capitalism in the United States, the book's most potent question may be a larger and more freighted one about whether capitalism and freedom have any necessary correlation at all.

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They Were Her Property: White Slave-Owning Women in the American South. *By Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019. 320 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Paperback, \$18.00. ISBN: 978-0-300-25183-8.

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Reviewed by Marie S. Molloy

Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers's masterful new book, *They Were Her Property*, marks a turning point in the historiography of white womanhood and slavery. Her specific focus on white, married women from non-

elite families, who owned on average five to ten enslaved people, draws on a wealth of research that reconstructs their lives in relation to slave ownership. Jones-Rogers's innovative research draws upon a plethora of primary sources from the Federal Writers' Project (FWP) slave interviews, financial and court records, the census, newspaper advertisements, and military and government correspondence. This eclectic fusion of sources, expertly cross-referenced and analyzed, provides compelling evidence that resituates white women at the financial center of slavery. As a result, the reader is presented with a powerful and at times disturbing new narrative that challenges previous stereotypes in which white women were viewed as benevolent bystanders, seldom considered as slaveholders, and therefore excused from the worst excesses of slavery.

The book is divided into eight chapters, in addition to an introduction and epilogue. Each chapter title takes the form of a quotation, either from the enslaved or from another source, that successfully captures the essence of what the chapter is about. The structure of the book is logical, and each chapter builds on the last. From the outset, Jones-Rogers differentiates her work from the previous scholarship by viewing mistresses as slave owners in their own right. These women were "the master's equivalent" rather than fictive masters or deputy husbands acting at the behest of the male patriarch. The book reveals that some mistresses proved to be *even more* cold, brutal, and calculating than their male counterparts in the family.

The first section of the book explores the process of female socialization into a violent world marked by racial difference, which began from birth. Chapter 1 ("Mistresses in the Making") demonstrates how white women were born, raised, and socialized against a backdrop of violence that was so normalized it was part of everyday life. Girls learned about slave ownership in a myriad of ways, modeling behaviors on their parents and being "gifted" slaves to mark important milestones in their lives (birthdays, Christmas, coming of age, and marriage). This taught them "the power of whiteness" in a process in which "they [themselves] became slave owners" (p. 17).

Chapter 2 ("I Belong to de Mistis") further exposes the ways in which white women used slave ownership to safeguard their own financial security, separate from that of their husbands. Jones-Rogers departs from much of the earlier scholarship by arguing that marriage, rather than constituting civil death for white women, actually "marked another important life transition" that, if carefully navigated by setting up separate estates and trusts, could ensure women retained property ownership in marriage. While scholars (Suzanne Lebsock, Jane Turner Censer, and Marie Molloy) have highlighted the collaborative familial

and kin effort to protect white women's legal title to property, Jones-Rogers adds a further layer to the argument by highlighting the profound impact this had on female slave ownership. White women held tight to their property despite the enormous challenges they faced from husbands and creditors who tested their authority, and they often won.

Chapter 3 ("Missus Done Her Own Bossing") illustrates the autonomy and power that female slave owners exhibited. Was it the same or different from southern men's power over the enslaved? And how were women involved in ritualized forms of violence? Jones-Rogers argues that the vector of authority in slave ownership was racial, not gendered, which was reflected in the community, courtroom, and marketplace. Fathers nurtured their daughters' independence, the courts held white women accountable for their slaves' misdemeanors, and husbands left wives for being too violent in their management of their enslaved property—all of which marked them out as slave owners.

Chapter 4 ("She Thought She Could Find a Better Market") builds on Thavolia Glymph's earlier work *Within the Plantation Household*, which demonstrates how the plantation was not just a domestic and working space but a marketplace for slavery and an economic system. Chapter 5 ("Wet Nurse for Sale or Hire") demonstrates how women defined the contours of the market in deciding on whom to hire or buy for this uniquely gendered form of labor. Women used informal networks and even placed advertisements in the local paper, revealing the intersection between the household and marketplace. Chapter 6 ("That 'Oman Took Delight in Sellin' Slaves") examines female enslavers as key traders in the market, in both formal and informal marketplaces.

In the final few chapters, the spotlight shifts to the Civil War and its aftermath, as Jones-Rogers analyzes how female slave owners fought just as hard as men to protect their households and property during the conflict. Women refugeed enslaved people, hid them in their wardrobes, and deliberately withheld telling their enslaved property that freedom had come, in a last-ditch attempt to salvage their financial assets. The aftermath of war is further discussed in the epilogue, which demonstrates how women's "complex investment in slavery" helped "construct the South's [postwar] system of racial segregation" (p. 205). This section was a welcome addition that could have been expanded upon; most likely it will provide a springboard for further research.

In summary, *They Were Her Property* is a must-read book for scholars interested in race, gender, and slavery studies. It challenges commonly held stereotypes of benevolent white women who stood on the margins of slavery and places them firmly at the economic center of the peculiar institution.

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The Material Fall of Roman Britain, 300–525 CE. By Robin Fleming. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021. 296 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. Hardcover, \$45.00. ISBN: 978-0-81229-736-2.

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Reviewed by Adam Rogers

This is an entertaining and accessible book on an interesting period in the history of Britain, 300 to 525 CE, as it moved from being part of the Roman Empire to entering the early medieval world. Its focus on materials is narrow but provides a stimulating perspective on the nature of life in Britain at this time. The title has echoes of Edward Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, which might suggest a book describing the end of Roman civilization in Britain, but there is more nuance to the issues it examines.

The book's approach to materials takes a clear overall economic theme—"marking change in Britain as the Roman state and economy receded" (p. 8)—and it starts by setting out a vision of the economy of Britain in the later Roman period including a focus on the *annona* system. The book is then organized over a series of chapters, each taking a different category of material or find type, that describe how the evidence changed from the late Roman to early post-Roman periods. The choice of themes allows for an interesting discussion of the material world of the period addressing the issues of industry, production, skills, trade, and commerce but also, as the author states, "not just that people make things, but that things make people" (p. 175). Drawing on a range of theories connected with materiality, including the work of anthropologist Danny Miller (p. 44), author Robin Fleming shows that there are social as well as economic implications to understanding the material and that there is a need to consider both together.

The first material category is plants and animals (chapter 2), and Fleming conjures an evocative image of not only the food that became available in Roman-period Britain but also the invasive species resulting from connectivity across the Empire. There could have been more on how lives in many rural sites differed from those in urban and military