

with it systematically. His book therefore represents an important contribution to research into the Anabaptists and the Peasants' War. This given, I would like to make a critical comment or two. It would have been useful to examine, analogous to the treatment of the Peasants' War, the current state of research on the Anabaptists; it would vice versa have been sensible to examine the community of goods in greater detail in the light of the sources from the Peasants' War. And, a detail, a bibliography would have been a great help to the reader.

Marion Kobelt-Groch

LEVINE, BRUCE. *Half Slave and Half Free. The Roots of Civil War*. Hill and Wang, New York 1992. x, 292 pp. \$30.00. (Paper: \$11.95.)

—, —. *The Spirit of 1848. German Immigrants, Labor Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War*. University of Illinois Press, Urbana [etc.] 1992. xiv, 378 pp. \$34.95.

Bruce Levine has done what most historians can only dream about: publish in the same year two attention-getting and markedly different books, each a contribution to a well-regarded series sponsored by a reputable publisher. *The Spirit of 1848*, distilled from the author's doctoral dissertation completed in 1980, is a monograph *par excellence*: it is detailed, it relies heavily upon primary sources (many of them newspapers translated from German), and it conforms to scholarly expectations with its footnotes, appendices and bibliography. Levine's second work, *Half Slave and Half Free*, aims for a more general audience and draws upon much recent scholarship to advance the author's insights regarding the "roots" of the United States' Civil War. Taken together, these two books reflect Bruce Levine's solid skills as a historian and his wide reading in American history.

In *Half Slave and Half Free* Levine explores the social dimensions of antebellum politics through what he terms the "resynthesis of political and social history". In his title and throughout his book, Levine underscores a central paradox born of the American Revolution: this newly-minted republic stood simultaneously as one of the world's most free nations and as the "greatest" slaveholding power of the nineteenth century. The Civil War, in Levine's words, represented "the second act of America's democratic revolution", a conflict rooted in the differing economies of the free North and the slave South that created clashing perceptions about each region's aims and values. Throughout his narrative, Levine highlights the more glaring contrasts between Northern and Southern political leaders and cultures, distinctions that may be overdrawn given the country's enduring, if fragile, unity founded upon successive sectional compromises through 1861.

In the first chapter, devoted to the Southern slave economy, Levine contends that slavery was "first and foremost a way of obtaining and controlling the workers [. . .]" As Levine acknowledges in his lengthy, helpful bibliographical essay, he builds upon the work of Kenneth Stampp's *The Peculiar Institution*, published in 1956. This intellectual framework leads the author to emphasize the economic basis of slavery and its ties to expanding market economies, and to portray the slaveholding planter as a rational (but not always beneficent) manager of capital, human and other. When compared with elite counterparts in the North's dynamic economy, however, South-

ern planters ruled a “backward” province dependent upon the export of a single crop, cotton. Levine moves too quickly into his discussion of the cotton-based Southern economy that emerged in the early nineteenth century, and thus he neglects to explain the evolution of a racially-determined system of slavery that developed before “King Cotton” ascended to the throne.

One important consequence is that Levine does not adequately address the racial (and racist) underpinnings of North American slavery – and of American society more generally. By examining in more detail the pervasive, pernicious, and indeed *national* tenets of white racial superiority, Levine could have better explained how the United States remained “half slave and half free” despite political tensions and sectional discord. A similar problem surfaces in the author’s treatment of free labor in the North, for white workers often defined themselves and their values in contrast to black Americans, both slave and free. To be sure, Levine is attentive to class and ethnic stratification prompted by industrialization. “Natives and newcomers”, the author notes astutely, “– and among the newcomers, different nationalities – became increasingly identified with different kinds of jobs, conditions, and incomes.” The author notes that free black workers in the North suffered from occupational eviction at the hands of impoverished, “unskilled, desperate Irish laborers”, but insights such as these need more development.

Unlike political historians who narrowly focus on leaders, party machinations or electoral results, Levine scrutinizes cultural trends that shaped antebellum political life. He makes the excellent point that, for the disadvantaged poor, their “plebeian realities” could not possibly match the middle-class ideals that prescribed many facets of Northern life. The author offers some interesting observations about the influence of family values and gender roles upon men’s and women’s public activities. Apart from their roles as caretakers of the household, women emerge in Levine’s account as participants in religious reform efforts propagated by the Second Great Awakening. Despite a muddled exegesis of theological fine points, Levine is to be commended for attempting to tie both Protestant and Catholic religious beliefs to broader cultural and political currents.

In a subsequent chapter that surveys Southern culture, Levine employs paradox as an explanatory concept. He suggests that the “hybrid” slave system in the American South – part capitalist and tied to the larger world, part traditionalist and provincial – laid the foundation for a culture riddled with contradictions. Given the author’s emphasis upon the role of planters in shaping Southern politics, particularly in their defense of slavery after 1820, his summary of planter life could describe in more detail how these men ruled their plantations, their families and their communities. Levine’s overview of the African-American slave community is satisfying and thorough, demonstrating, for example, how slaves appropriated and re-shaped Christianity for their struggle against bondage and debasement.

An ensuing chapter assesses the contested meanings of liberty and democracy, and here Levine displays considerable skill in delineating the ideological contours of a political culture that sanctified the right of suffrage for white males. As an aside, Levine states that “northern society was riddled” by racism, but he fails to explain adequately how racism shaped the political system. A subsequent chapter on antislavery reform efforts also downplays the racism of even those committed to ending slavery and tends to overstate the influence of radical antislavery activists. Although the author does note that racism and fear of economic competition from emancipated slaves reduced the antislavery ardor of many white working men, he

provides a romanticized view of white working-class hostility to slavery. Here Levine could have benefitted from David Roediger's recent book, *The Wages of Whiteness* (1991), in which Roediger explores such concepts as "white slavery" and "wage slavery" while emphasizing the racist foundation of white working men's worldviews in the antebellum United States. Levine's work would be strengthened through greater attention to issues of race and racism because these were salient features of antebellum life.

Three chapters toward the end of the book weave a chronological narrative of major events and issues that led to war, beginning with sectional disputes over the admission of Missouri to the Union in 1820. Readers wade through much detail to learn that the issue of *slavery expansion* – not necessarily slavery's existence – became significant as the United States acquired lands through purchase or conquest. In discussing political battles, Levine occasionally gets entangled in thickets that only specialists could hack their way through, yet, in all fairness, politics during the 1850s were chaotic, complex and contentious, no easy story to tell. He devotes much attention to the Kansas-Nebraska controversy of 1854 since it helped to bring about the rise of the Republican party and the demise of the Democrats, and culminated in the 1860 election in which the Republican candidate, Abraham Lincoln, was elected president. In a concluding chapter, Levine offers brief and mundane appraisals of sectional compromise, Southern secession, the Civil War and emancipation. Apart from mentioning that nearly 200,000 African-Americans served as an "army of emancipation", Levine does not really get at the heart of popular mobilization on both Union and Confederate sides that pushed them through four years of unremitting war.

Half Slave and Half Free is an ambitious work, and Bruce Levine has broadened the range of vision for those studying the causes of the Civil War. But because this book is a synthesis of limited length, Levine does not always provide the depth of field necessary to understand significant events and issues. On the positive side, Levine skillfully depicts two separate societies within one nation moving inexorably toward civil war, and he intelligently assesses religion and other components of culture that shaped antebellum political life. In drawing liberally from his storehouse of quotations, Levine pays ample attention to dissenters and revolutionaries – including the African-American pamphleteer David Walker – to illustrate the breadth of antebellum public opinion, which makes for some interesting reading. Historians may generally applaud Levine's prose and his assured interpretations, but college students and other non-specialists may find Levine's book to be dense, if not difficult.

In *The Spirit of 1848*, Levine explores and explains how radical German-born immigrants shaped the development of the working class and political culture in the mid-nineteenth-century United States. Levine focuses upon German workers for a number of significant reasons, among them the sheer size of the German transatlantic migration and the timing of that migration during the onset of large-scale industrialization and urban growth. More significantly, German-born immigrants carried to the United States a variety of beliefs that Levine crystallizes around the concept of "radical democracy". The values and actions of the radical democrats help to explain revolutionary fervor in Germany and political party battles in the United States. Eschewing a strict focus upon either ethnicity or class as an explanation for German workers' beliefs and actions, Levine sifts through many levels of political, economic and cultural influences that shaped the historical development (and consciousness) of German emigrants.

In his first two chapters, the author lays out the European background that eventually prompted some 1.5 million German-born individuals to emigrate to the United States between 1840 and 1860. The bulk of immigrants, particularly after 1845, were “small cultivators, handicraft workers, and laborers” who were caught in a transitional process from small-scale, decentralized industrial production to a system of increased scale, scope and centralization. “Ultimately, simple wage labor and significantly altered methods of production would hold sway”, Levine writes, “but in the short run it was the transition process itself that conditioned the experiences and responses of most laborers, including most emigrants.”

Although Levine is unable to offer a “comprehensive social profile” of radical German workers during the 1840s, he does provide a solid assessment of their social and political beliefs. Levine relies upon public pronouncements made by the *Allgemeiner deutscher Arbeiterkongress* (or the ADA), the General German Workers’ Congress that convened in the summer of 1848. Mobilizing, in Levine’s words, for a “more humane, stable, and cooperative society”, the ADA called for universal manhood suffrage, a progressive tax system, tariff protection, minimum wage and maximum hour laws, and insurance provisions for the unemployed, sick and widowed. The ADA, in addition, urged that financial assistance be granted to German individuals who sought to purchase land in North America. Levine treads on the sacred turf of religion to offer insights about battles between radical democrats and the more conservative churches in German states. Religion, Levine demonstrates, was no opiate for many of the emigrating masses who either embraced so-called free congregations or repudiated the Protestant and Catholic faiths. Levine’s background chapters on the German context for emigration in the 1840s are clear, convincing and interesting.

The second part of *The Spirit of 1848* is composed of three chapters that outline immigrants’ adjustment and adaptation to their adopted homeland. Levine provides an overview of industrial changes and occupational clustering in cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Newark, Chicago and Milwaukee. Unfortunately, this summary is neither systematic nor tightly organized. So, while Levine shows that (male) German-born workers often clustered in occupations like boot and shoe manufacturing, he does not explain clearly how individual workers came to be located within a specific industrial matrix within a particular city. Although the author adeptly provides an intellectual framework for understanding German-American ideology in the antebellum period, he is less forthcoming about the realities of daily life – particularly those at work – that created the working-class *Weltanschauung* he terms “radical democracy”.

Levine does examine associations that bonded together German-Americans, most notably the *Turnvereine* (Turners). Formed initially as a group devoted to physical exercise, the Turners later became infused with “an increasingly radical democratic content” which provided an outlet for varieties of secular political opinion. Levine looks at a welter of other groups formed by German-born workers, including Free Congregations, Free Thinkers and Communists, all of whom tended to embrace the views embodied in the “Louisville Platform” of 1854. This document, reprinted in thirty German-language newspapers, expressed both German and American political sentiments. Its signers favored political reforms such as direct election and recall of all public officials, separation of church and state, and liberalization of naturalization laws. The platform went even further, advocating women’s rights, free public education, and state support of working-class demands.

The best-received plank centered on land reform. To broaden their appeals to native-born Americans, the radical democrats linked Thomas Paine and the ideals of the American Revolution of 1776 with the German experience of 1848. In illuminating the contours of such political debate, Levine skillfully weaves together material from various newspapers and other sources, both English and German.

Levine describes in another chapter the labor organizations favored by German-American workers. At the heart of the labor ideal lay producer cooperatives in which craftworkers displayed their economic might and met their collective needs. The author is convincing – and at times riveting – in replaying strikes led by Germans in various cities, particularly in New York City in the 1850s. Levine briefly discusses craftworkers' efforts to exclude women, a tangent that demands more attention given the radical proclivities Levine assigns to German workers and their own public pronouncements regarding equal rights for women. Women do not feature in Levine's account, save for an occasional reference to Mathilde Giesler Anneke who herself was subjected to sexual discrimination by German printers in Milwaukee. While Levine recognizes that "German labor organizations commonly proved readier to reach across barriers of language and ethnicity than across gender lines", he could offer a more nuanced analysis of the masculine world and prerogatives of German craftworkers, since his book is really about German-born immigrant men.

Part III, devoted to "Slavery and the People's Land", mainly focuses on reaction to the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. Levine's significant contribution is to demonstrate the interaction between German radical democratic thought and the components of Republic Party ideology. The author examines two cities in the East, New York City and Newark, New Jersey, and two in the Mid-West, Chicago and Cincinnati, to depict local German-American reactions to the Nebraska bill proposed by Democratic Senator Stephen Douglass. These chapters get to the heart of Levine's thesis about German influence upon political realignment in the pre-Civil War United States. It must be said, however, that some of Levine's data is wanting. For example, in analyzing a public rally of Newark's German-American craftworkers who opposed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Levine states that "perhaps 60 percent of the March 9 immigrant artisans were employed journeymen and 40 percent were masters – another indication of the socially heterogeneous composition of the anti-Nebraska movement". Levine bases this conclusion upon a sample of ten, and he uses disparate information drawn from the 1850 and 1860 census population schedules in his comparisons of wealth. Other methodological problems include the author's lack of rigor regarding occupational classification, and his reliance upon archetypes that purport to represent working-class individuals. Gustav Körner, for example, serves as the "archetype *Dreissiger liberal*", while "the left wing of the German anti-Nebraska coalition was personified by Eduard Schläger". Leaders like these may have espoused working-class values, but, judged by their occupations, they were not of the working class. Finally, Levine's work would be strengthened by more detailed analysis of other cities with substantial German-born populations – Buffalo, New York, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for example.

Part IV of *The Spirit of 1848*, entitled "The Second Fight for Freedom", is devoted to the political culture in which German-Americans found themselves in the 1850s. Most significantly, Levine contends that "German-American radicals became intimately involved in this process of party realignment." Although he is

reluctant to delve into the quagmire of interpreting electoral results, Levine states that "support for the Republican party grew significantly among German working people between 1850 and 1860", and that "most organized German craftworkers and other radical democratic organizations evidently supported Lincoln in 1860". The radical nature of German-American views over slavery expansion and land reform helped to solidify Republican platforms and electoral success.

Levine makes a brief and rather unconvincing effort to explain the experiences of German working men during the Civil War. Although he notes correctly that about one-tenth of the Union army were German-born soldiers and that many served in all-German ethnic regiments, he does not adequately explain how war-time experiences were tied to pre-war beliefs. He could have benefitted from reading William Burton's recent book, *Melting Pot Soldiers, The Union's Ethnic Regiments* (1988), that succinctly demonstrates how the German regiments were an outgrowth of partisan politics and were led by some of the more radical German-Americans. Levine's concluding chapter attempts to assess the impact of the Civil War upon working-class militancy and ethnic identity through and after the war, but this discussion is much too brief to be informative or persuasive.

In his concluding comments, the author complains that the militant, pre-war craft traditions of German-born individuals were erased by previous "sanitized" treatments in which "German-American history became a sort of ethnic Horatio Alger tale". Bruce Levine has undoubtedly resurrected the German-born radical democrats of the antebellum period, and he has certainly fleshed out the rhetorical and ideological dimensions of their lives. In the end, *The Spirit of 1848* is more successful in depicting a *Zeitgeist* than in describing the workers who created it. Perhaps, in his next book, the prolific Bruce Levine will render a more complete account of the actual lives of German-born craftworkers who helped to transform American politics during the turbulent nineteenth century.

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Liquor and Labor in Southern Africa. Ed. by Jonathan Crush and Charles Ambler. Ohio University Press, Athens; University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg 1992. xvi, 432 pp. Maps. \$39.95.

This is an important collection on a neglected theme in southern African (and African) labor history, covering the period from around the onset of the "mineral revolution" in the 1870s to the recent past. It brings together fourteen well-documented case studies, plus a solid introduction by the editors laying out the major issues around which the struggle between capital and labor over alcohol has revolved. The contributors range from more seasoned students of the subject like Paul la Hausse, Patrick McAllister, Christian Rogerson, Steven Haggblade and the editors themselves on the one hand to younger scholars (or at least scholars newer to the field) such as Pamela Scully, Richard Parry, Julie Baker, Ruth Edgecombe and Sean Redding on the other. The three other contributors, Dunbar Moodie, Philip Bonner and Helen Bradford are well-known students of South African labor history who are basically expanding on their previous and ongoing research.