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# More *Time on the Cross*? An Evaluation of Robert William Fogel's *Without Consent or Contract*

By PETER KOLCHIN

THE APPEARANCE IN 1974 OF *TIME ON THE CROSS*, BY ROBERT WILLIAM Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, ignited a major historical controversy. Following in the footsteps of Alfred H. Conrad and John R. Meyer, who beginning in the 1950s had used econometric techniques to put forth a revisionist view of the antebellum slave economy, Fogel and Engerman expanded the scope of their study far beyond the quantitative analysis of southern economic performance to offer a sweeping reinterpretation of antebellum slavery. Maintaining that the South's slave-based economy was more efficient than the North's free labor system, they also issued judgments on a host of other matters, including the slaves' material treatment (generally good), sexual values ("prudish"), and work ethic (Protestant). Presenting their conclusions as objective "findings" or "discoveries," Fogel and Engerman lambasted what they saw as the hopelessly outmoded "traditional" interpretation of slavery, which—through advanced scientific techniques—they were now able to disprove.<sup>1</sup>

Initial reaction to *Time on the Cross*, especially among nonhistorians, was generally favorable. Indeed, Fogel and Engerman became instant celebrities, featured in stories and reviews in the popular press and invited to explain their discoveries to the public on radio and television talk shows (including NBC's "Today"). The early consensus seemed to be that *Time on the Cross* constituted a scholarly breakthrough of almost unprecedented proportions. As economist Peter Passell put it in

<sup>1</sup> Alfred H. Conrad and John R. Meyer, "The Economics of Slavery in the Ante Bellum South," *Journal of Political Economy*, LXVI (April 1958), 95-130; and Conrad and Meyer, *The Economics of Slavery and Other Studies in Econometric History* (Chicago, 1964); Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (Boston and Toronto, 1974); and *Time on the Cross: Evidence and Methods—A Supplement* (Boston and Toronto, 1974). For the early controversy see Hugh G. J. Aitken, ed., *Did Slavery Pay? Readings in the Economics of Black Slavery in the United States* (Boston and other cities, 1971). A complete citation of the book being reviewed here is Robert William Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery* (New York and London, 1990).

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the *New York Times Book Review*, "Fogel and Engerman have with one stroke turned around a whole field of interpretation and exposed the frailty of history done without science."<sup>2</sup>

Historical counterattack, however, was not long in coming. Critical econometricians disputed Fogel and Engerman's quantitative analysis, offering statistical adjustments of their own.<sup>3</sup> Other scholars questioned basic assumptions underlying *Time on the Cross*, including the primacy of "rational" economic motivation, and challenged the way the authors interpreted their own data. Many critics deplored Fogel and Engerman's assertion of scientific invulnerability, their uncharitable attacks on "traditional" historians of slavery, and their obscure method of historical documentation.<sup>4</sup> Although some of these attacks were ill-tempered and exaggerated and produced only minor revision of Fogel and Engerman's statistics, the more fundamental criticisms of their basic historical approach left *Time on the Cross* with few defenders among professional historians. Within a few years of its publication, the prevailing view of the book had become one of almost bemused condescension: it was a flash in the pan, a bold but now discredited work that added little to the important stream of slavery revisionism that welled forth in the 1970s. Terming it "a book which deprives blacks of their voices, their initiative, and their humanity," Kenneth M. Stampp expressed the judgment of many historians when he concluded that "*Time on the Cross* replaced the untidy world of reality . . . with a model of a tidy, rational world that never was."<sup>5</sup>

That view was not, of course, shared by Fogel, Engerman, and the formidable group of their co-workers and disciples who continued to toil in the econometric vineyards. Defending *Time on the Cross* against mounting criticism, they continued to refine (and at times modify) their computations, even as they unfurled new evidence to buttress the book's central arguments. For example, analysis of records on height, historically closely related to diet, suggested that southern slaves were

<sup>2</sup> *New York Times Book Review*, April 28, 1974, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> See for example Paul A. David and Peter Temin, "Slavery: The Progressive Institution?" *Journal of Economic History*, XXXIV (September 1974), 739-83; Richard Sutch, "The Treatment Received by American Slaves: A Critical Review of the Evidence Presented in *Time on the Cross*," *Explorations in Economic History*, XII (October 1975), 335-438; Gavin Wright, "Slavery and the Cotton Boom," *ibid.*, 439-51; Richard K. Vedder, "The Slave Exploitation (Expropriation) Rate," *ibid.*, 453-57; and Paul A. David *et al.*, *Reckoning with Slavery: A Critical Study in the Quantitative History of American Negro Slavery* (New York, 1976).

<sup>4</sup> Herbert G. Gutman, *Slavery and the Numbers Game: A Critique of Time on the Cross* (Urbana and London, 1975); Thomas L. Haskell, "Were Slaves More Efficient? Some Doubts About 'Time on the Cross'," *New York Review of Books*, September 19, 1974, pp. 38-42; and Haskell, "The True and Tragical History of 'Time on the Cross,'" *ibid.*, October 2, 1975, pp. 33-39. For my own preliminary attempt at a balanced evaluation of *Time on the Cross* see "Toward a Reinterpretation of Slavery," *Journal of Social History*, IX (Fall 1975), 99-113.

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Imperiled Union: Essays on the Background of the Civil War* (New York and Oxford, 1980), 101-2.

taller (and hence healthier) not only than Africans and Caribbean slaves but also than "members of many nineteenth-century European populations." Similarly, comparative research on slavery in other New World societies and on serfdom in eastern Europe seemed to confirm the economic viability of forced labor; consistent "with modernization and productivity change," slavery fell not because it was economically backward but only as a result of "political and military action."<sup>6</sup> *Without Consent or Contract* represents the latest salvo in this continuing historical engagement, the culmination of a twenty-four-year historical project that constituted a veritable cottage industry employing dozens of master craftsmen, journeymen, and laborers.

I would like in this essay to evaluate *Without Consent or Contract* in the light both of *Time on the Cross* and of recent work on slavery in the antebellum South. Such an evaluation provides an ideal opportunity for a comparison of these two major books, which contain both many differences and fundamental similarities. It also permits a more general stocktaking of a historical project of unprecedented proportions and what that project has contributed to our overall understanding of antebellum slavery.<sup>7</sup>

Let me begin with the differences. On the basis of fifteen years of continued research, Fogel offers minor revisions and qualifications of numerous arguments put forth in *Time on the Cross*. Most of these changes do not reverse directions previously established so much as provide less assertive insistence on those directions. Having received a heavy barrage of historical criticism for presenting arguments too categorically, Fogel now strives to moderate the stridency of his rhetoric and to recognize continuing diversity of scholarly opinion. Thus he admits that despite general agreement on the profitability of slavery, "cliometricians remain divided about the effect of slavery on the development of the southern economy" (p. 81). Similarly, whereas in *Time on the Cross* Fogel and Engerman boldly proclaimed that "about 84 percent of the slaves engaged in the westward movement migrated with their owners" (p. 48), Fogel now concedes the possibility that more slaves were sold west than he originally believed, noting that "cliometricians have not as yet been able to resolve the debate over the form of the interregional slave movement" (p. 67). This new humility

<sup>6</sup> Robert A. Margo and Richard H. Steckel, "The Heights of American Slaves: New Evidence on Slave Nutrition and Health," *Social Science History*, VI (Fall 1982), 516-38 (quotation on p. 533); and Stanley L. Engerman, "Slavery and Emancipation in Comparative Perspective: A Look at Some Recent Debates," *Journal of Economic History*, XLVI (June 1986), 329.

<sup>7</sup> In the following pages, quotations from (and references to) *Time on the Cross* and *Without Consent or Contract* are documented parenthetically in the text; all other references are footnoted.

would be more impressive still if Fogel did not totally ignore important recent work on the subject by *noncliometricians*, including most notably Michael Tadman, who provides evidence to support a strikingly different appraisal of the extent of the interregional slave trade.<sup>8</sup>

Fogel pays new attention to the position of slave children, on whom, he suggests, the burden of bondage fell especially heavily. "Children began to enter the labor force as early as age 3 or 4," he asserts (p. 53); "by age 7, over 40 percent of the boys and half of the girls had entered the labor force, and the process was virtually completed by age 12" (pp. 54-55). Curiously, he offers no evidence to support this announcement, which implicitly challenges the prevailing historical view that children rarely felt the full weight of slavery and that "before the age of about eight most children did little or no work apart from looking after ('nursing') those younger than themselves."<sup>9</sup> More solidly documented is his suggestion, based on evidence that slaves were very small until their teen years but grew exceptionally fast during adolescence, that slave children, unlike adults, suffered widespread "protein-calorie malnutrition" (p. 142) as masters provided abundant food for workers but stinted on the idle young and on pregnant women. Although "adult slaves in the United States enjoyed relatively good health" (p. 144), slave children were small and sickly. (Curiously, Fogel does not consider the impact of childhood dietary deprivation on the health of *adult* slaves, who according to his account seem to have shown remarkable resilience in rapidly overcoming years of undernourishment.)

Some of the most significant (but tentative) modifications of previous arguments appear in the chapter entitled "Changing Interpretations of Slave Culture," which differs from the chapters preceding it not only in its historiographical focus but also in its general timidity in making historical judgments. After surveying historians' evaluations of slave sexuality, for example, Fogel carefully bypasses the opportunity to reassert the notion of slave prudery, concluding simply that "these unresolved issues call attention to the critical importance of quantitative consideration in the effort to construct a new paradigm on the slave family" (p. 167). Displaying a newfound reluctance to take strong stands on non-econometric issues, he points to similar "unresolved differences of opinion regarding the autonomy and the uniformity of slave culture" (p. 168). And whereas earlier Fogel believed that women tended to bear children at younger ages on large holdings than on small, now, on the basis of "a powerful statistical technique" (p. 182),

<sup>8</sup>Michael Tadman, "Slave Trading in the Ante-Bellum South: An Estimate of the Extent of the Inter-Regional Slave Trade," *Journal of American Studies*, XIII (August 1979), 195-220; and Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison, Wisc., and London, 1989).

<sup>9</sup>Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, 1974), 502.

he concludes the opposite.

In general, the gist of these revisions is to tone down rhetoric, not to repudiate basic positions. Despite some minor concessions to critics and more numerous adjustments to and refinements of previous arguments, on the whole *Without Consent or Contract* offers a reaffirmation of interpretations presented in *Time on the Cross*. Indeed, readers familiar with the 1974 opus will be struck by the overwhelming similarities between it and Part One of the new work.

These similarities are evident even in the mechanics of the two books. Both are divided into "primary volume[s]" designed for wide readership among those seeking "a nontechnical summary and interpretation of findings" and "companion volumes" (now expanded from one to no fewer than three) "for those who are concerned with [their] technical foundations" (p. 6); as a result, it is again almost impossible for most readers to evaluate the evidence used to support controversial assertions. Unfortunately, despite the publisher's repeated assurances to the *Journal of Southern History* of their imminent arrival (assurances responsible for the lengthy delay in this review's appearance), the companion volumes remain unavailable some three years after publication of the primary volume. Beyond this tardiness, however, for which W. W. Norton and Company must shoulder most of the blame, the decision to repeat a system of documentation that aroused such extensive unhappiness when used in *Time on the Cross* is symptomatic of Fogel's unwillingness to come to grips with basic criticisms of his approach.

Thus, unmoved by scholarly dismay at the scientific pretensions of *Time on the Cross*, he again contrasts his "discoveries" and "findings" with the subjective "interpretations" of "traditional" historians. Once again, too, he protects himself from historical criticism by co-opting most of the profession: like *Time on the Cross*, *Without Consent or Contract* contains an excessive list of acknowledgments—in this case Fogel mentions (aside from his collaborators who coauthored the companion volumes) 26 students, 37 scholars from whom he learned in debate, 19 who read the penultimate draft, 56 who read parts and/or made suggestions, 7 editorial assistants and typists, an administrator, and Stanley L. Engerman, with whom Fogel has continued to collaborate "on scores of projects and papers" (p. 418).

*Without Consent or Contract* resembles *Time on the Cross* in far more than mechanics: the two books present a remarkably similar portrait of antebellum slavery. Once again, Fogel begins with a good brief overview of slavery in the New World, putting the South's "peculiar institution" in the broader context of slavery elsewhere in the

Americas. He confirms preliminary estimates of slave occupations set forth in *Time on the Cross*, providing additional detail on the high proportion of slaves engaged in specialized skilled and semiskilled jobs other than fieldwork. Then he gets down to the heart of the matter: slavery as a profitable, highly efficient capitalist institution under which masters succeeded "in transforming [slaves] into metaphoric clock punchers" (p. 162) who internalized the industrial work ethic.

Antebellum southern slavery, Fogel writes, constituted "a flexible, highly developed form of capitalism" (p. 64) that made possible participation in the labor force by an exceptionally high proportion of the population. Whereas about one-third of the population worked in both the North and in the "free economy" of the South, "among slaves the labor force participation rate was two-thirds" (p. 52). As a result, although large slaveholdings were more efficient than small, slave agriculture was simply more efficient than free, and farms in the South were "about 35 percent" (p. 76) more efficient than those in the North. The superior efficiency of slave agriculture was not a consequence of slaves working more, Fogel continues, for northern farmers actually worked four hundred hours more per year than slaves did; slaves worked harder, not longer—or as Fogel puts it, "the principal function of the gang system was to speed up the pace of labor, to increase its intensity per hour" (p. 78).

Although it is hardly surprising that masters could wring more work out of labor with than without the compulsion of the lash, Fogel's conclusion that the rate of labor participation among slaves was twice that of free workers is problematical because he is inconsistent in defining the free and slave labor forces. Fogel evidently recognizes part of the problem: buried at the end of a long note is the observation, characteristically ignored in the text, that "in estimating labor force participation in the free economy, only production of goods for sale is considered. The labor of white farm women, since it was mostly non-field work and produced goods primarily for the family's consumption, is, therefore, seriously underestimated" (p. 431n30). But equally serious, in calculating the proportion of the free population that "worked," Fogel counts only paid laborers, effectively discounting the *unpaid* labor of large numbers of women and children. (Applying this method to slaves would yield a rate of labor participation of zero, since all slaves were unpaid laborers.)

Despite his grudging recognition of continued scholarly debate over slavery's impact on southern economic growth, Fogel concedes virtually nothing to critics on this subject; indeed, he largely reiterates and defends assertions made in *Time on the Cross*. The late antebellum South was richer than any European country except England, and its

economy—measured in terms of per capita production—grew faster than that of the North. What is more, this growth would have continued had it not been interrupted by the Civil War, because “by 1890 the world demand for cotton was more than twice as high as it had been on the eve of the Civil War” (p. 98). Although conceding that the South lagged behind the North in industrialization, Fogel again insists that this lag actually represented a sign of the enormous vitality of the South’s agricultural sector, whose intense demand for labor cramped the development of southern industry.

*Without Consent or Contract* resembles *Time on the Cross* not only in many of its basic arguments but also in its approach to history. One of the most striking elements of this approach is an almost touchingly—but also maddeningly—unsophisticated understanding of the relationship between morality and history. In *Time on the Cross* Fogel and Engerman denounced virtually everyone else—from historians to abolitionists—as racists, perhaps in part as an oblique way of defending themselves against similar charges from those bothered by the implications of their assertion of an efficient slavery that provided relatively good material treatment. Now, Fogel confronts the moral issue head-on. He, too, is profoundly troubled by the “discovery” that an oppressive system could be technologically efficient—as if technological progress and exploitation have not gone hand in hand throughout history—by what he presents as the apparent “paradox” that a “retrogressive” slave system could be “quite advanced by the standards of the time in its technology and economic organization” (p. 10). Resolution of this “paradox” forces Fogel to confront a simple truth that comes to him almost as a revelation: technological efficiency can be put to both good and bad purposes and is not in itself a sign of superior morality. (Who would argue that “efficient” gassing of death camp inmates was a sign of the high moral development of the Nazis?)

It also leads him to append a thirty-page afterword entitled “The Moral Problem of Slavery” in which he seeks to show that even though slavery was efficient, it was still bad. Fogel’s “new indictment” of slavery, which he asserts is “more consistent with the known facts about slavery than is the abolitionist indictment” (p. 400), rests on four “counts.” These consist of “denial of economic opportunity” (p. 395), “denial of citizenship” (p. 396), “denial of cultural self-identification” (p. 398), and, most important of all, that “slavery permitted one group of people to exercise unrestrained personal domination over another group of people” (p. 394). In a peroration reminiscent of *Time on the Cross*’s conclusion that “it’s time to reveal . . . the record of black achievement under adversity” (p. 264), Fogel displays the economist as convert: “The time has come . . . to cut the tie between economic

success (or failure) and moral virtue (or evil). . . . Efficiency is not a synonym for good and it is a disservice to the struggle for a moral society to make it a synonym" (pp. 410-11).

This embarrassingly sophomoric tone is one earmark of the curious combination of technical sophistication and historical naiveté that *Without Consent or Contract* shares with its predecessor, *Time on the Cross*. Put most simply, this book will appear ahistorical to many readers. For all the historical research that went into it, Fogel still does not think like a historian. Although he sometimes responds to his cliometric critics, he almost totally ignores the criticisms of noncliometricians, evidently because he and they are on such different wavelengths that there is little common ground on which to meet. At no time does he come to grips with questions about his basic assumptions—for example, that economic rationality characterizes human behavior—or consider that whether or not one categorizes slavery as an advanced form (or any form) of capitalism must depend a great deal on one's definition (whether made explicit or not) of capitalism. As in *Time on the Cross*, he ignores any possible distinction between quantitative economic growth (as measured by per capita output) and qualitative economic development (as reflected in such areas as industrialization, urbanization, immigration, transportation, literacy, and educational infrastructure); if the South kept pace with the North by the first criterion, it certainly did not by the second. The reader of this book would hardly imagine that a significant number of historians, rather than seeing antebellum slavery as a particularly successful version of American capitalism, stress instead the degree to which slavery set the antebellum South apart as a noncapitalist society dominated by a paternalistic planter class.<sup>10</sup> In short, although Fogel has modified some specific arguments, he is largely blind to the broader criticisms that have been made of his approach, methodology, and assumptions.

Like *Time on the Cross*, *Without Consent or Contract* has a static quality that results from its organization around what can be measured. Fogel tells us what percentage of slaves were "elite," but he does not address what it was like to be an elite slave or explore the relationship between elite and non-elite slaves. Indeed, any sense of the *relational*

<sup>10</sup> The most influential proponent of this interpretation has been Eugene D. Genovese, most recently in collaboration with Elizabeth Fox-Genovese. See Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York, 1965); Genovese, *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* (New York, 1969); Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll; and Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism* (New York and Oxford, 1983). The most vigorous criticism of Genovese's interpretation is to be found in James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York, 1982), but in his most recent publication Oakes substantially modifies his position; see Oakes, *Slavery and Freedom: An Interpretation of the Old South* (New York, 1990).

aspect of slavery—either between slaves and masters or among the slaves themselves—is almost totally absent from this book. It is this absence that perhaps represents the book's most crucial failing.

The most striking departure of *Without Consent or Contract* is in its inclusion of four chapters devoted to the antislavery movement, grouped together as Part Two under the heading "The Ideological and Political Campaign Against Slavery." Comprising almost one-half of the volume, this section indicates Fogel's growing recognition of the importance of ideas in shaping human development.

Fogel begins by devoting an entire chapter to the British abolition movement. He follows the lead of recent authorities<sup>11</sup> in rebutting Eric Williams's once dominant interpretation that Caribbean slavery fell when it became uneconomical, maintaining instead that abolition, undertaken largely for "moral" reasons, destroyed a flourishing slave economy. Fogel's survey, based on the major secondary sources, is perfectly adequate as far as it goes, although it strikes me as rather simplistic in assuming that abolition must have been *either* economically or morally motivated. Fogel never really makes clear, however, why this chapter's inclusion is appropriate in a book on slavery in the antebellum South. Such inclusion would make sense if one wanted to argue that British abolitionism led to—or even substantially shaped—American abolitionism, but this argument does not appear in *Without Consent or Contract*.

The strengths and weaknesses of this chapter on British abolitionism remain the strengths and weaknesses evident throughout the entire second half of *Without Consent or Contract*. In contrast to Part One, Part Two is, bluntly put, "old-fashioned" narrative history, based almost entirely on a small number of leading secondary sources. Fogel presents their interpretations competently, although not especially elegantly, stressing the religious motivation of the abolitionists of the 1830s and 1840s, "mystics" (p. 10) who had little impact on the American mainstream until the politicization of antislavery in the mid-1850s. He follows recent scholars like Michael F. Holt and William E. Gienapp in playing down slavery as a cause of the political realignment

<sup>11</sup> R. Keith Aufhauser, "Profitability of Slavery in the British Caribbean," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, V (Summer 1974), 45-67; Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810* (Atlantic Highlands, N. J., 1975); Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (Pittsburgh, 1977); and Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Popular Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (New York, 1987); and David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York and Oxford, 1987). For the debate on the "Williams thesis" see Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, 1944); and the essays in Barbara L. Solow and Stanley L. Engerman, eds., *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery: The Legacy of Eric Williams* (Cambridge, Eng., and other cities, 1987).

that saw the rise of the Republican party, stressing instead the destabilizing effects of urban poverty, immigration, and ethnic tensions that swept the North during the 1850s.<sup>12</sup> To these Fogel adds his own original ingredient: the "hidden depression" (p. 354) that struck native-born skilled manual workers even as most Americans prospered during the late 1840s and 1850s, leading those workers to be newly receptive to economic attacks on the "slave power" as inimical to the well-being of free white workers. Under these conditions, the abolitionists, whose insistence on slavery's *sinfulness* had moved few Americans, discovered the power of attacks on slavery's economic backwardness, and a new ideological movement was born.

There are two problems with this generally conventional account of antislavery triumph. First, Fogel exaggerates the rapidity and totality of the shift from moral to economic arguments among antislavery leaders, insisting that "the shift took place between 1854 and 1856 and the political success was immediate and spectacular" (p. 60). In fact, economic arguments against slavery were common well before 1854, and moral condemnation of the peculiar institution was hardly unknown after 1856. Second, and related, economic and moral arguments were by no means entirely distinct or mutually exclusive. To many Republicans, the economic argument against slavery was so powerful precisely because it *also* constituted a moral argument; the genius of the free labor challenge lay in its ability to combine economic, social, and moral arguments into an indictment of slavery as backward and degrading.<sup>13</sup>

More problematical still is the nagging question of why Fogel chose to include this unit on antislavery at all. Nowhere does the author explain the purpose of attaching a conventional narrative of the northern antislavery movement to an econometric analysis of southern slavery (a question that would appear especially pressing in light of his argument that developments extraneous to slavery itself were most influential in bringing about that movement's ultimate success). Why not provide instead, one might ask, an account of the *proslavery* crusade undertaken by antebellum southern political, religious, and intellectual spokesmen, an understanding of which is surely more essential to creating a well-rounded portrait of slave society? *Without Consent or Contract* really consists of two books. Its second half seems oddly out of place, almost added as an afterthought, different not

<sup>12</sup> Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York and other cities, 1978); and William E. Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852-1856* (New York and Oxford, 1987). See also Joel H. Silbey, *The Shrine of Party: Congressional Voting Behavior, 1841-1852* (Pittsburgh, 1967); Silbey, *The Partisan Imperative: The Dynamics of American Politics Before the Civil War* (New York, 1985); and Ronald P. Formisano, *The Birth of Mass Political Parties: Michigan, 1827-1861* (Princeton, 1971).

<sup>13</sup> See Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York, 1970).

only in focus but also in style from the volume's first half: here one finds no polemical denunciations of "traditional" historians or assertions of new scientific "findings" and few references to supporting evidence located in the three supplementary volumes. Fogel's rendition of the ascendancy of antislavery forces is buttressed by heavy reliance on recent scholarship, but he is not an especially acute analyst of ideas. Part Two obscures this book's focus and detracts from rather than adds to its strengths.

Like its predecessor, *Without Consent or Contract* combines significant strengths with glaring weaknesses. Although both its supporters and its critics often missed the connection, *Time on the Cross* was in many ways part of the mainstream of 1970s slavery revisionism, the most salient element of which was a new focus on slaves as subjects in their own right rather than merely objects of white treatment (or mistreatment).<sup>14</sup> Based on monumental research, it provided a wealth of detail on diverse facets of antebellum slavery, ranging from slave occupational structure and slave nutrition to the workings of the southern economy. *Without Consent or Contract* is very much in the same mold. It updates, corrects, and elaborates upon arguments developed in *Time on the Cross* and presents a vastly expanded collection of supporting material in the supplementary volumes soon to be released. Historians of slavery—and of southern history in general—will use and debate this information for years as they continue their efforts to arrive at a multifaceted understanding of the peculiar institution.

At the same time, *Without Consent or Contract* is profoundly ahistorical and (because of its juxtaposition of two very different parts) curiously unfocused. Like *Time on the Cross*, it develops the art of specious accuracy to an exalted level, inundating the reader with an abundance of reified "findings," the apparent precision of which belie the often debatable evidence on which they are based. Indeed, overall, this book's strengths and weaknesses are—with the notable exception of the blurred focus—remarkably similar to those of *Time on the Cross*; my 1975 evaluation of that work as "a paradoxical book, the product of both sophisticated quantitative analysis and historical naivete" well expresses my judgment of this work as well.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> For some other leading works of this 1970s revisionism see John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York, 1972; revised 1979); Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*; Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York, 1976); and Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York, 1977). For historiographical treatments see Peter J. Parish, *Slavery: History and Historians* (New York and other cities, 1989); and Peter Kolchin, "American Historians and Antebellum Southern Slavery, 1959-1984," in William J. Cooper, Michael F. Holt, and John McCardell, eds., *A Master's Due: Essays in Honor of David Herbert Donald* (Baton Rouge and London, 1985), 87-111.

<sup>15</sup> Kolchin, "Toward a Reinterpretation of Slavery," 111.

Nevertheless, *Without Consent or Contract* is ultimately less compelling than its predecessor. The specific modifications of previous arguments are too minor to correct flaws that were not just of detail but of conception and historical approach. The lengthy narrative of the antislavery movement simply does not belong in this book. But most important, the interpretation of slavery is less novel—and therefore less exciting. *Time on the Cross* had enormous shock value in 1974; *Without Consent or Contract* has relatively little today. In short, although it is more temperate, it is also less significant. It will outrage less, but it will also have less of an impact.