

scholars interested in citizenship, broadly construed; social welfare provision (public and private); carceral institutions; and the load-bearing role of the concepts of disability and race.

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doi:10.1017/S0020859023000317

COOK BELL, KAREN. *Running from Bondage. Enslaved Women and Their Remarkable Fight for Freedom in Revolutionary America*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge [etc.] 2021. viii, 248 pp. Ill. £18.99. (Paper: £14.99; E-book: \$19.95.)

With *Running from Bondage* Karen Cook Bell tells the story of enslaved Black women's struggle to be free before, during, and after the American Revolution. In a wide ranging, if short, work, she draws together neatly what has become a fairly rich secondary literature. Using notices, advertisements, and other source material, she also introduces newer scholarship to the study of enslavement in this period as well. Overall, this is a compelling work, which does a fine job of explaining the lived condition of escaping enslaved women at this time while also arraying for us the extant literature on the subject. And while I would have liked even more comparison with other regions for a wider context, the book is impressive as a synthesis of what we know.

I found the book to be well written in a bright, modern prose style that was engaging as it was accessible. The book was well laid out in five, logical chapters that followed each other chronologically. However, it was less clear what the specific themes were of those chapters.

The title of each chapter implies a study of one woman; this is then separated by a colon followed by a reference to the time period being discussed, not a theme. For example, Chapter Two is "A Mulatto Woman Named Margaret: Pre Revolutionary Fugitive Women". This I think misses an opportunity for these chapters to stand alone more clearly. I found Chapters Two and Three to be very similar to one another. This problem would have been mitigated with more emphasis on themes. The last chapter was, for me, the most effective, precisely because it was not really chained to the chronology. While before, during, and after is logical as a progression, it may conceal as well as reveal, in the sense that it homogenizes a huge variety of lived experience – far too much for a chapter. This emphasizes my point that the book is probably too brief for us to get a deep understanding of the war's complexity and its effects on fugitive, formally enslaved, women.

The introduction was clear, though I found the concept, or jargon, of "Fugivity" a little irksome. It was too nebulous an idea that was not explained effectively. Again, this was largely a fault of the book being too short to adequately give space to such a crucial concept. Is it, for example, the process of being a fugitive? Someone thinking about flight, or in flight, or living as a fugitive? Or all of the above? There were, on

occasion, other buzzwords that permeated the introduction in particular and that were not clearly explained in the context of the book. The jargon, however, was not too gratuitous and did not really extend into the body of the work. I felt, however, that peppering the introduction with these kinds of words weakened the prose, which, as I say, was otherwise very good.

As a general comment, I did not like a lot of the engagement with scholarship. While some work was attributed in-text and certain key scholars engaged with admirably, there were far too many instances where whole chunks of someone else's text or quote is used without any introduction or footnote. I would like to see in the text where these words originate, especially when they often accounted for entire sentences or several sentences of text. Finishing one's sentences with someone else's is also an aggravating habit. This is especially the case when dealing with an array of original source material and a multiplicity of secondary literature, as this book does. I found myself constantly flicking to the notes at the back to follow what was original and what was secondary. Too many times I thought I was reading original research only to find that it is the work of someone else mentioned in the endnotes. While everything was properly attributed, this style of engagement not only lacked clarity, it missed an opportunity to highlight both scholarship and sources in the text.

Chapter One is a general chapter on enslaved women in the eighteenth century. While it does a good job of bringing together much of what we know, I felt, throughout, that it was not really adding anything very new to the discussion. It was, as a chapter, remarkably stale. I felt I was reading the same information that has already been said before and repeatedly for some time. This is not to denigrate the work as a whole, for there were some good chapters here despite some flaws, but Chapter One, I think, was a dull start for a book that did get better.

The layout of these chapters was confusing. I felt, for example, that they promised a sustained focus on one woman's life but were, in fact, awkward entry points into a wide-ranging discussion often lacking focus. These women were not really engaged with to highlight what themes their lives may have represented, because the evidence for these women's lives is very thin, sometimes only just a notice or advertisement. I was surprised that taxation records were largely absent from the research. Those of Virginia, for example, known as the tithable records, tell us much about those that fled to Nova Scotia with the retreating British at the end of the war. Doing so may have also provided Cook with more to work with and more triangulation. A deeper investigation into the archive may have produced deeper results.

Chapters Two, Three, and Four were better and provide the main thrust of the book. Here, things became less general and a little more specific, which was welcome, but the book still needed more space to deal with the complexity of fugitive enslaved women's diverse lives. These chapters were also remarkably similar in style and structure, which left Chapters Two and Three somewhat flat. Clearer themes needed to be more prominent throughout the text, but their absence was most noticeable in these two chapters. Chapter Four was better. Here, the broad theme, articulated in the sub-header "overcoming obstacles to freedom in post-revolutionary America", provided a better grounding point to the chapter. I do wonder though whether Bell's existing work on the Civil War led her to push her analysis too far into the nineteenth century, especially with Chapters Four and Five?

Building on the best of Chapter Four, Chapter Five was, in my view, the most engaging of all the chapters in this book. “Confronting the Power Structures: Marronage and Black Women’s Fugivity” did a good job of explaining Fugivity in the context of those living outside of existing power structures and the varied responses women had to that power over what was often a sustained period of time. I found the analysis of the Great Dismal Swamp region of Virginia and North Carolina to be particularly compelling and well written. The chapter was let down somewhat by some poor scholarly engagement, which detracted from what was otherwise an effective, well-balanced analysis. As with Chapter Four, though, I was a little confused by the timescale of this chapter. Judging by the sources used, the chapter spanned a huge period from the early eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. Marronage changed considerably in this time, which needed to be factored more effectively into the analysis. Again, the problem of space emerged. The book is just too short for what it is trying to do.

In sum, *Running from Bondage* is a well-written monograph that brings together much of the scholarship on fugitive women’s lives in the North American context in this period. The book fills a much-needed gap in the scholarship by looking at fugitive women’s lives overall. An oddly neglected topic (although, as Cook demonstrates, smaller, localized studies have been undertaken). Students will find the book helpful in understanding broadly the idea of fugitive women’s lives. I felt the book was not well organised, however, and lacked thematic drive, especially in Chapters One, Two, and Three. The book was arranged in a fashion that concealed as much as it seemingly simplified, and it needed a better engagement with the scholarship within the text itself. Above all, this short book was just too brief to adequately cover such a complex subject. In short, the book tries to do too much and fit too much into a too narrow word count.

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doi:10.1017/S0020859023000329

GOOD, PETER. *The East India Company in Persia. Trade and Cultural Relations in the Eighteenth Century*. I.B. Tauris, London [etc.] 2022. xvii, 199 pp. Ill. Maps. £85.00. (Paper: £28.99; E-book: £26.50.)

In *The East India Company in Persia. Trade and Cultural Relations in the Eighteenth Century*, Peter Good of the University of Kent tells the story of the Company in Persia at a time when Persia was in great turmoil. Helpfully for the non-Iran specialist, Graves describes how 1700 to 1747 “saw the collapse of the 200-year rule of the Safavid Dynasty, the chaotic rise and fall of the Afghans and then the puppet rule of Tahmasp II and Abbas III, leading to Nader Shah’s reign” of extraordinary cruelty. While historians focused on the Company in India may describe the period 1710 to 1740 as “a glassy wave of unruffled tideway [which] invites no frantic recourse to the