is less clear. The introduction makes it difficult to tell where Everill stands in relation to Williams, Davis, or Haskell. Only Haskell receives any sustained engagement from Everill, who essentially agrees with the "principle that spreading marketplace interactions . . . were important for shaping the abolition movement" (p. 12). The closest she comes to making a clear intervention in this debate is when she suggests that "the flow of commodities around the Atlantic World illuminates a shared consumer revolution in Africa and other parts of the Atlantic World that generated a shared moral backlash at the end of the eighteenth century" (p. 27). At other points, however, her argument seems merely to be that "the rise of industrial capitalism" led people throughout the Atlantic World to explore "new ways of thinking about the relationships between producers and consumers, between colonies and metropoles, between laborers and capitalists, and between personal and national economies" (p. 244). As she herself acknowledges, this claim "should not be too surprising" for the reader (p. 44).

As I finished the book, I got the sense that the author was really interested in a different question. How can individuals behave ethically under global capitalism? Everill ponders this question in the conclusion, and it is an important one to ask but not one that is easily answered historically or that has clear historiographical stakes. In some ways, this helps explain the shortcomings of *Not Made by Slaves*. The book repeatedly and effectively demonstrates that creating "ethical capitalism" was "nearly impossible" in the nineteenth century, a point which most scholars would already consider indisputable (p. 24). It does less, as a result, to illuminate the origins of abolitionism in the Atlantic World.

Samantha Payne is a historian of the United States and Latin America, with particular interests in slavery, emancipation, race, and capitalism. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate in History at Harvard University. Her dissertation explores the Atlantic history of Reconstruction in Cuba, Brazil, and the United States, the last slave societies in the American hemisphere.

. . .

Men Is Cheap: Exposing the Frauds of Free Labor in Civil War America. *By Brian P. Luskey*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020. 296 pp. Halftones, notes, bibliography, index. Hardcover, $34.95. ISBN: 978-1-4696-5432-4.
doi:10.1017/S0007680521000945

Reviewed by Matthew E. Stanley

Brian P. Luskey's *Men Is Cheap: Exposing the Frauds of Free Labor in Civil War America* is an original and expertly crafted work that seeks to

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007680521000945 Published online by Cambridge University Press

understand how two of the most transformational forces in nineteenth-century America, capitalism and the Civil War, shaped each other. Free labor ideology provides the book's connective tissue as Luskey analyzes how a war fought for ostensibly high-minded principles—the preservation of democratic government and the liberty of millions of enslaved people—enriched some people, victimized others, and became a watershed in the history of U.S. capitalism.

The free labor ideal was, at its essence, an ideology of small-scale utopian capitalism. It offered a searing critique of slaveholding society and its emphasis on a fixed social hierarchy that propelled the fledgling Republican Party to victory in 1860. Rather than acknowledging social classes as distinct and antagonistic categories, free labor held that workers and owners could achieve a "harmony of interests" that benefited both. In this view, wage labor was not a permanent condition rooted in exploitation but a form of "capital in the making." What Abraham Lincoln termed the free labor system's "right to rise" promised that the dependency of wages and non-ownership need only be temporary because upward mobility was achievable to any worker who demonstrated sufficient hard work and thrift. Meanwhile, those who did not attain independence were not victims of an inequitable system but the bearers of character defects and poor habits, or so went the theory.

The reality of free labor was quite different. *Men Is Cheap* contends that the war set off new forms of commodification, as well as competition for capital and credit, creating a "crisis for free labor" (p. 7). Examining recruitment advertisements, intelligence office operations, army contractors, black market transactions, and various types of speculation by labor agents, bounty brokers, merchants, and soldiers, Luskey illustrates how the wartime commercial climate provided fresh opportunities for profit. Owners and entrepreneurs found unprecedented ways to take advantage of those without capital. Attempting to walk the fine line between patriotism and profit, businessmen and policymakers reshaped, created, and cornered economic markets under the guise of "free labor." Making money out of war led to new debates over which profits were undue and which commercial acts were legitimate, as well as over the proper balance between choice, obligation, persuasion, and force in a wage labor economy. The scramble to cash in also generated popular anxieties about the meaning of republican citizenship as monetary rewards and the threat of conscription, rather than democratic principles, induced "hireling" soldiers to enlist. In a seeming inversion of free labor standards, fighting for an economic system that espoused independence necessitated the creation of armies of soldiers who were dependent wage laborers. Taken together, the war "unmade the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007680521000945 Published online by Cambridge University Press

promise of free labor for workers and upheld the promise of free labor for those with capital" (p. 5).

Luskey's discussion of the relationship between profit, slavery's demise, and the transition to free labor hits on a number of critical and overlooked themes—some of which cry out for full-length book treatment. Rather than embracing emancipation as an ideological project or act of military necessity, countless white Northerners, owners and workers alike, accepted emancipation because they thought it would benefit them materially, either in a general sense through the promotion of free labor or specifically through the mobilization of Black workers. This was true despite the fact that many white workers, especially the Catholic working class and workers along slavery's border, viewed Black freedom as threatening to their jobs and wages. In fact, certain racial, ethnic, and gender groups of workers, including Irish servant women and formerly enslaved people, were not expected to achieve economic independence at all and thus found themselves outside the (white) free labor model. Putting a free labor spin on James Henry Hammond's "mud sill" theory of a racially determined underclass, many pro-emancipation Northerners argued that white workers had nothing to fear from slavery's destruction because Black inferiority precluded formerly enslaved people from competing with whites in the capitalist marketplace's "race of life."

The stories Luskey relates were not aberrative; rather, they speak to the basic and practical contradictions of free labor ideology and of capitalism itself: that it involved both consent and coercion; that economic downturns inherent to the system were difficult to explain away; that the personal material interests of those with capital were often antithetical to both broader war aims and the collective good; that independence (independent proprietorship) for some required the dependence (wage labor) of others; that ostensibly anyone—but certainly not everyone—could "make it"; and that the necessity of intervening institutions, from charities to trade unions, exposed the system's deficiencies, particularly in its promise of steady upward mobility free from structural constraints.

Though convincing and engrossing, *Men Is Cheap* is (like any monograph) bounded by its topical and chronological parameters. In that sense, Luskey provides a basis for future studies of the genealogy between free labor ideology, which involved "validating one's own hard work and exploiting the labor of others while casting that exploitation as justice," and Gilded Age racial and class theories (p. 207). His book also offers a model through which scholars might explore how myriad wartime cracks in the free labor facade affected postbellum politics and social movements. It is only a short and logical sequence from

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007680521000945 Published online by Cambridge University Press

understanding free labor as a system predicated (in no small part) on fraud to identifying capitalism as a system based on the theft of surplus labor. However, Luskey does not address how the Civil War's exposure of free labor's shortcomings led Americans to attempt to adjust the system—to push back against "free market" wage labor—by either reconstructing and reifying hierarchies of race through Jim Crow and ethnic segregation or organizing along class lines through trade unions and radical politics. (It is telling that Luskey's crucial descriptor is "fraud" and not "exploitation.") Finally, Luskey only nods to the ultimate fraud of free labor (one not perceived as such by his protagonists): that its basic pledge of cheap farms in the West required genocidal war against Native people and the appropriation of Native lands. Put another way, the author's cogent emphasis on what we might deem certain microfrauds of a maturing economic system obscures at times—and only at times—a fuller consideration of that system's macroviolence and exploitation.

That said, *Men Is Cheap* is a splendidly written and remarkably well-researched study—one chock-full of fascinating vignettes, mini biographies, and insights. Its stories illuminate how a conflict fought in the name of freedom required the dependence and compulsion of millions and the ways in which the preservation of the Union and slave emancipation were bound to an emerging capitalist culture that countless Americans perceived as fraudulent. This is essential reading for students of capitalism and the Civil War era.

Matthew E. Stanley is an associate professor of history at Albany State University. He is the author or editor of three books, including Grand Army of Labor: Workers, Veterans, and the Meaning of the Civil War *(Illinois, 2021).*

. . .

Southern Scoundrels: Grifters and Graft in the Nineteenth Century. *Edited by Jeff Forret and Bruce E. Baker*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2021. 272 pp. Hardcover, $40.00. ISBN: 978-0-8071-7219-3.

doi:10.1017/S0007680521000878

Reviewed by R. Scott Huffard Jr.

The American South has always posed an interesting set of questions to business and economic historians. Over much of the twentieth century, scholars posited the dynamic growth of the North as the model for capitalist development, seeing the South as either a precapitalist entity outside the system or a warped version of or deviation from the true

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007680521000945 Published online by Cambridge University Press