been rightly conceived” (33). The Puritans’ unwillingness to compromise in the face of perceived threats to their identity truncated their political viability and with the Great Awakening they were finally splintered.

Succeeding chapters (e.g. “The Uncompromising Patriots” and “The Compromising Confederates”) provide a rich exploration of the legacy of the people’s two bodies for conflict and compromise in subsequent American political and religious history, to which the limited space allotted here cannot do justice. For example, that the Constitution for generations came to be understood as “the greatest of all compromises” is because its ambiguous language regarding “the people” successfully formalized the paradigm of the people’s two bodies. The notion that elected representatives were a natural aristocracy of the virtuous endured well into the eighteenth century, and the author shows how patriots made appeals to both the social and the political compacts. Reviving the forgotten notion of the people’s two bodies, this book demystifies much of the seemingly contradictory notions of individualism and the common good in the political philosophy of the founding—once identified by scholars as liberalism and republicanism. As well as the nature and history of compromise, this work sheds light on contemporary debates on elitism and populism. Future scholarship would do well to incorporate its insights into the precarious balancing act between the people’s two bodies.

Columbia University

CHRISTOPHER L. BRENNAN

Journal of American Studies, 55 (2021), 2. doi:10.1017/S0021875821000074


Ever since James Cone published his Martin and Malcolm and America (1991), scholars have been familiar with the argument that over time the views of these two iconic figures in the classic phase of the African American freedom struggle converged. The wider public, however, has tended to retain the media-fed framework that stresses the dichotomy between Martin, the nonviolent integrationist, and Malcolm, the black nationalist critic of nonviolence and advocate of armed resistance. Joseph has aimed his work at this wider public at a time when mass resistance to racial injustice provides a compelling context for understanding the continuing demand for dignity and full citizenship for African Americans.

Across ten chapters, Joseph offers a largely familiar story. His title offers a clue to his interpretive bias. The revolutionary life of Malcolm, with its demand for radical dignity (25–54), blazes the trail and ultimately shapes Martin’s demand for radical citizenship (55–80). The sharp incisive critique and stern militancy of Malcolm is the sword that can elicit concessions from white America, and Martin’s compassionate appeal for interracial friendship and espousal of American values serve as a shield for the movement’s militancy. By the time of his break with the Nation of Islam, Malcolm had become more appreciative of King’s ability to bring pressure to bear on America to advance the cause of African American citizenship. Simultaneously, by 1965, Martin was becoming more aware of the need to nurture African American dignity which the systemic racism of northern ghettos denied. He also appreciated that Malcolm was a comrade in arms in the quest for human rights, and that white liberals rarely delivered on their promises in full.
Predictably as Stokely Carmichael’s biographer, Joseph sees the radicalism of King’s final years as being strengthened and sustained by the black power challenge that was Malcolm’s legacy. King’s decision to denounce US policies on Vietnam in 1967 and his embrace of the economic components of racial justice through the Poor People’s Campaign in 1968 flow, according to Joseph, from the example of SNCC and of urban ghetto militants. Other scholars such as Thomas Jackson and Michael Honey would alternatively see King’s condemnation of militarism and colonialism and his insistence on economic justice coming much earlier in the development of his thought.

Some problems of scholarly interpretation go largely unexplored here. Partly to sustain the equivalency that is key to his comparison, Peniel relies on Malcolm’s and Martin’s speeches and many of Martin’s publications. There is, however, little unpacking of the rhetorical pressures that shape their messages and complicate the task of ascribing significance to their words. There is an acknowledgement but little discussion that most of the works published in King’s name were written by one or more ghost-writers. There is similarly an acknowledgement that the pointed words of Malcolm’s public persona sometimes stood in contrast to his generous and relaxed personal charm “offstage,” so to speak. There is no probing of Alex Haley’s presentation of Malcolm in the famed Autobiography or of the sections that Haley was able to exclude after Malcolm’s death. Hence some interdisciplinary opportunities are spurned.

For historians, a further problem is Joseph’s liking for hyperbole and tendency to advance his argument by repeated assertion rather than painstaking causal logic. Although he acknowledges that Malcolm’s expulsion from the Nation of Islam depleted his organizational resources, Joseph still announces that in the spring of 1964 Malcolm is regarded in some quarters as “black America’s unelected prime minister” (177, 209). This metaphor of preeminence continues as Joseph recounts Malcolm’s international travels. But there is not enough critical analysis: the Nkrumah that Malcolm encounters in 1964 is less clearly a force for democracy than the man Martin met in 1957, and the fact that several of his meetings are hosted at the Chinese embassy (192–93) is a sign of why Malcolm’s international image, referred to as his “sole asset” (188), might appeal to specific regimes at certain times. Neither the politics of the Middle East, such as the tensions between Nasser’s Egypt and Saudi Arabia in the context of Islam, nor the politics of Africa, where US aid was both denounced as an instrument of neocolonialism and yet courted as a means of development, are discussed as the context for Malcolm’s reception. Martin’s blending of biblical allusions to the sword in early speeches (“he who lives by the sword dies by the sword,” etc.) and his celebration of nonviolence as “the sword that heals” go undiscussed. Sometimes the sword of advocacy needs the shield of academic rigour.

University of Nottingham

PETER LING


When Fannie Lou Hamer started a Freedom Farm near Ruleville, Mississippi, the farm’s Pig Bank provided families with a rolling supply of meat, combating hunger...