

Slavery and Forced Migration in the Antebellum South. By Damian Alan Pargas (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Pp. 281. Cloth, \$80.00. Paper, \$29.99.

Forced migration, especially that of the domestic slave trade, has become a prominent topic in the study of antebellum American slavery. Recent works by Walter Johnson, Edward Baptist, Calvin Schermerhorn, and Heather Andrea Williams, for instance, have focused on forced migration to explore issues ranging from the capitalistic nature of slavery to resistance among enslaved people to the emotional history of enslavement. Damian Alan Pargas's new book, *Slavery and Forced Migration in the Antebellum South*, enters this growing historiography to synthesize much of the last two decades of research on forced migration, moving beyond the concept that it was largely an interstate phenomenon to provide fresh insights into how enslaved people experienced multiple forms of coerced relocation. The book has three overarching purposes: to compare the different forms of forced migration (interstate, local, urban), to explore how enslaved migrants integrated into new communities, and to consider how forced migration affected identity formation among American slaves. In addition, Pargas also enters the perennial debate over paternalism. *Slavery and Forced Migration* is successful in much of what it sets out to do.

The book is presented in two parts. Part I comprises three chapters focused on migration itself, describing the different forms forced migration could take—interstate' slave sales, local auctions, hiring out, or moving with a slaveholder—and examining how slaves responded to forced migration and how they experienced migratory episodes. In these chapters, Pargas establishes his position on paternalism as decidedly anti-Genovese, arguing that “[d]espite claims that their slaves were natural extensions of their own families, slaveholders viewed their bondspople first and foremost as capital investments that could be liquidated when they...needed money” (28). Thus Pargas views forced migration as, above all else, a mechanism for transporting commodities from supply regions to demand regions. But his overall emphasis is on the lived experience of those affected, rather than the market forces driving forced migration. Using an impressive array of slave narratives, periodicals, and manuscript sources, Pargas recounts how slaves reacted to news of impending migrations that would tear husband from wife, child from parent, families from community. While some of what Pargas finds parallels other works, his comparative structure, in which he separates interstate, local, and urban migrations, provides a new and welcome level of analysis. Many historians have detailed the emotional toil of the interstate slave trade, but few have noted, as Pargas does, that a sale between plantations within the same county could sever a slave family just as absolutely. Likewise, while previous scholars have seen hiring out to urban areas as a boon for skilled slaves, Pargas approaches hiring out as a form of forced migration, suggesting that those hired out often faced levels of isolation and alienation similar to that of interstate migrants.

Part II of *Slavery and Forced Migration* turns to examining how enslaved migrants adapted to their new settings and assimilated into the new slave communities they found themselves in. The first two chapters in this section focus on slaves' adjustments to new work regimes and master-

slave relations. The final—and most interesting—chapter explores the processes and institutions through which enslaved newcomers integrated into slave communities. Here Pargas examines migration's effects upon identity and community formation, and in this effort he makes his most original contributions. Countering older revisionist histories of slavery positing a homogenous "slave community," as well as more recent work by Ira Berlin that suggests the domestic slave trade "attenuate[d] the regional distinctions" of seventeenth and eighteenth century slave life, Pargas contends that forced migration produced feelings of regional chauvinism and, at times, bifurcated slave communities into locals and newcomers.¹ [1] "Friendless, kinless, and carriers of regional cultures that sometimes appeared 'foreign' to outsiders... interstate migrants," argues Pargas, "were burdened with the awkward task of carving out a new place for themselves within existing slave communities where they did not yet feel at home and where informal social hierarchies relegated them to the bottom of the ladder" (220). Over time, however, through the shared struggle to resist their enslavement and through institutions such as marriage, family formation, and religious worship, migrants came to assimilate into their receiving communities. Therefore, migrants' ordeal did not end when they reached their destinations, suggests Pargas, but continued as they adjusted to the new conditions of their enslavement.

This is a valuable book that would be useful for anyone interested in the scholarship on forced migration and the slave trade. Pargas's writing is concise and clear, and he does an excellent job of synthesizing two decades of research. But some issues may distract readers. Perhaps most noticeably, Pargas's desire to enter the paternalism debate seems outdated and unnecessary, and it turns segments of the book into little more than a marshaling of Walter Johnson's *Soul By Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999) to respond to Eugene D. Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's *Fatal Self-Deception: Slaveholding Paternalism in the Old South* (New York, 2011). Most problematically, in countering Genovese and Fox-Genovese, Pargas does not even deliver his own arguments against paternalism, but quotes other scholars at length. While honest in acknowledging his intellectual forebearers, this approach steals nuance and sophistication away from Pargas's own findings. Placing this material in the footnotes or confining it to a brief discussion would have made for a stronger and more original work. Despite this odd counterargument-by-proxy, *Slavery and Forced Migration in the Antebellum South* is an important book, and it deserves attention from students of American slavery. For, as Pargas argues, "no other aspect of bondage occupied such an important part of enslaved people's memories as forced relocation" (57).

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¹ Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge, Mass., 2003), 170-71 (quote).