

of a donut, these structures often go unrecognised. *Red-Hot and Righteous* is a tasty treat, but it leaves the reader hungry for more sustenance in its analysis.

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Christopher Waldrep, *Roots of Disorder: Race and Criminal Justice in the American South, 1817-1880* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

Christopher Waldrep delivers an intriguing study of southern whites' tense dance with multiple partners of race, class, and the law in Vicksburg, Mississippi. By the end of the Reconstruction era, race trampled all over the law and managed to push class nearly off the floor.

During the antebellum era, Warren County whites typically controlled slaves either outside the legal system or in the lower courts, where justice was informal and determined more by public opinion than formal legal process. This fit within southern white legal culture that tolerated dueling and occasional mob action to uphold community standards. When Warren County officials began interpreting the law as a tool for promoting and protecting the public good — a nationwide trend by the 1830s — some unsupervised slaves who seemed to threaten public order did begin appearing in the higher courts. But because jurists and lawyers were beholden to an ideology of the law as impartial, autonomous, and immutable, the formal procedure of the higher courts sometimes benefited slave defendants. Not only did this imperil slaveowners' previously autonomous control of their slaves on the plantation, it also reinforced whites' perception of the law as an inefficient tool for managing the black population.

After the severe disruptions caused by the Civil War, Vicksburg whites, spurred in part by white women's calls for protection from menacing black men, began to unify across class and ethnic lines. In the midst of a crime wave after the war, whites, who exaggerated black men's criminality and minimized white banditry, became more convinced of the law's inability to manage blacks. Even the Governor called for extralegal "patrols" to maintain order. Whites also believed that the law abetted misrule: it enabled black men to serve on grand juries and step into other positions of power. The specter of black men wielding power became a catalyst for white solidarity, and in 1873 white dissatisfaction targeted the newly elected black sheriff. Warren County whites — rich and poor, Republican and Democrat, Irish and native-born, southerners and northerners — came together in the face of black rule to harass, brutalize, and murder dozens of freedpeople, forcing the sheriff's resignation. Southern whites had concluded that their vision of order required lethal disorder.

Warren County whites did not abandon the law entirely. They reconstructed an informal law, backed by a regular pattern of disorder, that would govern race relations well into the twentieth century. But Waldrep, perhaps in order to avoid lengthening an otherwise tight monograph, does not address how the formal law still applied to whites. This is an important point that could have clarified his argument and heightened its import. Waldrep, arguing that the law was not simply a tool of the elite, opens by situating his work against Genovese's seminal work on the hegemony of the law. Waldrep reveals the law's dependence on public choices and opinion. When the white public — not just the elite — saw the law as not just ineffective but as usurping their vision of social order, which placed all blacks at the bottom, whites acted outside the law and successfully reestablished that social order. Ostensibly, this had the radical potential of unmasking the ideology that the law was impartial, thus opening the door for further disruption of the rule of law. But Warren County whites did not challenge the legal system other than its ability to manage race relations. The legal system presumably remained the same for whites. One question that Waldrep's study raises, but he does not deal with, is how and why whites managed to maintain the fictions of the law's impartiality, autonomy, and immutability when it applied to white society after they had destroyed those fictions as the law applied African Americans. Or did they sustain those fictions at all? If not, many other questions need to be answered. In short, *Roots of Disorder* raises important questions, ones that Waldrep or other scholars will hopefully answer.

Another caveat to this study is that the title claims too much: this is a study that narrowly focuses on Warren County's legal culture. Southern whites in other areas may have formed distinctly different legal cultures; South Carolinians had a relatively low rate of lynching despite a black majority — though homicide is not the only effective form of disorder. But Waldrep at times implies that Warren County may be representative for the entire South without sufficient support.

But despite these reservations, *The Roots of Disorder* makes a significant contribution. As any good monograph should during this time of growing specialization, Waldrep's insightful research connects to several important fields and is therefore useful for scholars of race relations, racial violence, the construction of whiteness, the Reconstruction era, and legal historians studying the law and questions of how the law sustains its authority.

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