

In sum, the interweaving of social, economic, medical, and legal history in the book is one of its strongest points. The book's emphasis on the role of the body in abolitionism and on the high importance of health, freedom of movement, and bodily autonomy underlines material aspects and makes for a humane historical narrative. Although some of the aspects of the history of slavery and abolitionism might already be familiar to readers, and some of the chapters contain too much detail, still the focus on the body serves to bring together elements of this history that are normally discussed apart from each other. This use of the body as a lens through which to view major developments in political, social, and economic history – rather than simply analysing the body as a topic in the history of medicine – promises to be a fruitful new approach. In addition to other recent books such as Charlotte Epstein's *Birth of the State: The Place of the Body in Crafting Modern Politics* (Oxford, 2021) and Hedwig Richter's, *Demokratie. Eine deutsche Affäre. Vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich, 2020), which take the body as a perspective to analyse modern politics and democracy, Brown's *Undoing Slavery* demonstrates how the body can serve as an approach to bring together the social, economic, political, and medical aspects of the history of slavery and abolition.

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CARMODY, TODD. *Work Requirements. Race, Disability, and the Print Culture of Social Welfare*. Duke University Press, Durham (NC) [etc.] 2022. 320 pp. Ill. \$104.95. (Paper: \$27.95.)

“This book is about why we assume all work is inherently meaningful and about how people on the social margins have been made to ensure that it is” (p. 221). So begins the Acknowledgments section of Todd Carmody's brilliant and original analysis of the print culture of US social welfare in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Carmody's Acknowledgments also shed light on the set of skills, inclinations, and circumstances that allowed him to write this wide-ranging, interdisciplinary book. From an education in “poetic form and literary history”, he derived “habits of focused close reading” and an ability “to trace the circulation of cultural forms across disparate contexts” (p. 221); from a “peripatetic” career in academia, he picked up tools and knowledge from colleagues across the often-siloed academic landscape (p. 222); and from engaging in years of scholarly labor “without the privileges and protections of stable employment” (p. 224), he gained purchase on the questions at the core of this book: How is a “work society” made and remade over time? What does it take to convince the gatekeepers of such a society that one belongs – that is, to be legible as a worker? And might it be possible to imagine a way of “being and belonging” that is “beyond work” (p. 22)? The answers *Work Requirements* offers are grounded in a particular historical era, decades removed

from the present, but they will be useful to anyone interested in the myriad ways in which work continues to organize social life.

*Work Requirements* begins with an introduction to the “work society” and then identifies the underappreciated facet of this society that the book explores. In brief, a “work society” is one in which work is not only essential to economic well-being, but also “the means by which individuals find recognition in the overlapping social, political, and moral communities that constitute the broader collective”; members of such a society “become a *we* first and foremost as workers” (p. 6). Carmody’s interest lies with the people who have inhabited the margins of “we”, or have been excluded altogether. Drawing on scholarship from disability studies, Black studies, and gender and sexuality studies, as well as from history, political science, and sociology, he observes that work societies often deny recognition to certain types of labor (e.g. the labor of social reproduction) and, in doing so, constructs an ideal “worker-citizen”. In the US, this “worker-citizen” has “typically figured as white, male, and able-bodied” (p. 6). People who cannot access this “worker-citizen” ideal have nonetheless provided essential labor for society. They have produced value for others to expropriate, and – Carmody’s focus – they have performed cultural service, doing the “ideological lifting” necessary to make all work “seem inherently meaningful” (pp. 7, 11).

Across four chapters, Carmody analyzes different facets of this enduring but under-acknowledged “representational project” – the project of “shoring up the non-economic value of work”. Each chapter is set loosely between Reconstruction and the Great Depression, which Carmody identifies as the period when “social welfare became a specifically textual undertaking” (rather than one that tended to take place in person, without the mediation of the written word) (pp. 17–18). Social welfare is an apt arena to study, of course, because it so directly implicates the concept of work: in a “work society”, the nature and extent of a person’s access to social provision depends on that person’s demonstrated or ascribed relationship to work. Chapter One is about the claimsmaking that followed from the Dependent and Disability Pension Act of 1890, which extended Civil War pensions beyond veterans injured in the line of duty to include the much larger group of veterans, who, for various reasons, had become incapacitated for manual labor. Carmody explores “the peculiarly narrative genre of the pension claim” and its crucial (but also anxiety-producing) ability to “transform [...] pain or suffering” into a kind of labor that the state could see and compensate (p. 35). Chapter Two shifts “from public provision to private giving” (p. 79): it interrogates “the novel mode of bureaucratic documentation and evaluation that would come to be known as social casework” (p. 77), as well as the fundraising appeals that strategically transformed resource-seekers into “cases”. These sources illuminate the tight and constantly re-produced connection between “deservingness” and willingness to work, as well as the efforts by charity workers to make their labor legible as a form of work. Chapter Three turns to “turn-of-the-century visual archives of work”, with a focus on motion studies (p. 120). Producers of these motion studies imagined many uses for their handiwork, Carmody shows, including diagnosing pathological and inefficient locomotion, deconstructing work tasks into particular movements (which could, in theory, be performed in “the one best way” by interchangeable laborers), and fitting particular

bodies to particular jobs (thereby avoiding “vocational waste”) (p. 145). But these studies never managed to show the non-economic value of work (e.g. its “rehabilitative power”) and, in that sense, were failures (p. 169). Chapter Four shifts from the visual to the aural and shows how African American work songs “were pressed into service by reformers struggling to justify the coercive practices of social welfare provision” (p. 172). In work songs, reformers sought evidence that institutional labor (in settings like workhouses and prisons) “could be made truly meaningful for all parties concerned” (p. 174). They also attempted to use work songs to the same ends as many of the other cultural products that Carmody studies: “to determine whose work ethic was sound and whose wasn’t” (p. 175).

Each chapter also hints at ways in which a “work society” might be rendered more inclusive and humane, or perhaps might collapse under the weight of its representational burdens. For example, in Chapter One, Carmody shows how the expansion of the pension system offered the opportunity for formerly enslaved people to “articulate [...] grievances” and “seek appropriate remuneration” (p. 58). If the physical injuries of Civil War veterans could be transformed into “compensable labor”, why not “the physical, psychological, economic, and even ontological injuries of slavery” (p. 59)? Similar insights emerge from Chapter Four, where Carmody highlights the contributions of the disabled sociologist Annie Marion MacLean. MacLean derived from Black work songs (as well as her own physical limitations) “an appreciation of the body’s role in determining the pace and substance of one’s work” (p. 195). Drawing on her experiences with correspondence teaching and her observations of Black washerwomen, MacLean also painted a portrait of communal life in which labor might be less about producing things of economic value (or coercing others to do so) and more about participating in “networks of exchange” (p. 195). Throughout the book, meanwhile, there are examples of how difficult it was for social welfare reformers to find a place for everybody “in the world of work” and the high impossibility of representing all work as inherently meaningful.

There is much more to say about *Work Requirements* and too little space. But I would be remiss if I did not try to capture the dazzling breadth of sources that Carmody draws upon and the range of historical actors that appear in the pages of this book. Texts that Carmody analyzes include legal affidavits, medical records, political cartoons, application forms, portraits, sheet music, fundraising mailers, personal correspondence, still images from films, poems, transcriptions of songs, and more. Historical actors that Carmody discusses range from such well-known figures as Booker T. Washington to a bevy of lesser-known researchers, bureaucrats, institutional administrators, labor consultants, and filmmakers. Where possible, Carmody also speculates about the perspectives of the individuals conscripted into cultural work, such as the “reluctant workman” whom researchers “pressed [...] to the task” of singing a work song for a phonophotographic study (pp. 206–208). This rich array of sources and actors helps the reader understand the urgency and magnitude of the “representational project” that *Work Requirements* seeks to illuminate, and why that project was always incomplete.

In closing, *Work Requirements* is a creative, persuasive, and well-crafted analysis of the representational labor undergirding our “work society”. It is essential reading for anyone seeking to contest this mode of social organization. It will also be valuable for

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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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