than usurper, more impersonated about than impersonator. A man of many parts and causes, most of which were not his own” (136). What Louis-Bonaparte also becomes for Baguley is a perfect vehicle for a postmodernist biography organized around the variety of his representations.

Nonetheless, Baguley manages to present an interpretive perspective on Louis-Napoleon’s failed imperial project. Twice over the course of his political career, Louis-Napoleon made disastrous political decisions. Both sprung, according to the author, in keeping with the classic plot of tragedy, from failings intrinsic to Louis-Napoleon’s character. In 1852, he succumbed to his own Napoleonic myth by proclaiming himself emperor, when he might have remained as president in an authoritarian republic, introduced his program of social reform, and then exited with dignity, once the pressures for political liberalization forced a constitutional reform. Later, in 1870, trapped by his own Napoleonic legend once again, he yielded to popular anger and the Empress Eugenie’s insistence and declared war on Prussia, despite his own misgivings about the outcome.

According to Baguley, the first error set the conditions for the second. What was really at risk in 1870 if France did not go to war was the survival of the dynasty. Dynastic rule, in Baguley’s view, was the Achilles heel of the regime. He is certainly right to make that claim, but that the vacillating Louis-Napoleon was so deeply conflicted about his coup that he might have opted afterward for something less than dynastic rule strains credulity beyond reasonable limits. The persona that Baguley himself constructs is unimaginable without dynastic ambitions, and the massive repression of the democratic-socialist movement before the coup and of the secret societies responsible for the peasant insurrection after it, all of which Baguley leaves out of his account, hardly suggests a vacillating policy on the part of an ambivalent president. What historians may miss most in this imaginative spectacle of representations by opponents, supporters, and interested observers of Louis-Napoleon is the author’s disinclination to trace an evolution in those representations in any venue or medium. For most historians, convincing historical arguments still require linking evidence causally and temporally, even after the postmodern turn.

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Speaking of Slavery: Color, Ethnicity and Human Bondage in Italy. By Steven A. Epstein (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2001) 215 pp. $32.50

Epstein adopts a diachronic, and, by his own admission, even a polychronic, approach to the study of the Middle Ages and the issue of slavery in Italy. His study proposes to show “that the language used centuries ago to sustain a relatively unknown system of slavery still has pro-
found effects on the ways Italians use language and think about race today” (2). In four substantive chapters and a conclusion, Epstein examines the language of medieval slavery, the language of the law concerning slavery, the human behavior surrounding slavery, and the language of the Great Economy in regard to slavery. Each chapter sets up a dialogue between medieval language about slavery and language in more recent times—for example, in the Risorgimento, the anti-slavery movement in Italy, colonial experience, and fascism. Epstein concedes that the Italian contribution to slavery has been insignificant in global terms but that Italy’s medieval experience with slavery has colored modern language about color and ethnicity. He ends his study with this sentence, “So [for slaves] from bad luck to sin to force to color—the history and language of slavery in a nutshell” (197).

In chapter one, after reviewing the medieval words employed in Italy for slaves, Epstein turns to an analysis of the names that Christian owners chose for their slaves at baptism. Slaves were overwhelmingly women. Epstein notes that in fourteenth-century Genoa, 80 percent of all documented women slaves were named Caterina, Lucia, Maddalena, Margherita, Maria, and Marta. The author presents the stories or legends that circulated about each of these names that might have rendered them appropriate for slaves. For example, Santa Lucia, though noble-born, had the distinctive quality of stability in the account of her martyrdom, a trait that owners wished to encourage in slaves. The author sees such exemplary stories and ideals behind most choices for slaves’ names. Stories also reveal a growing fear of Moors from North Africa and illuminate the connection between slavery and color.

Chapter two explores legal definitions of slavery in Italy and pays special attention to the wills of slave owners who manumitted their slaves, noting, in particular, how emancipation often came with stipulations. In this chapter, Epstein treats color as both a linguistic and an economic barometer of status and price, which, in time, merged into ethnicity (104–105). The chapter ends with a detailed analysis of specific laws in the Genoese code of 1403 that related to the treatment of slaves. Epstein notes that this late medieval code remained true to the old legal principle that “[o]nly the express will of the master freed a slave” (97). Even the belief that Christian marriage somehow implied or granted freedom did not modify ownership, which meant that slave families could be broken apart.

The third substantive chapter deals with day-to-day life for slaves: the work that was expected of them, the treatment of slave pregnancy, cultural resistance from slaves, and other related issues. Epstein combs through notarial charters in search of language that is “personal” rather than formulaic in order to humanize this picture of domestic slaves’ daily life. This chapter and the following one on the Great Economy explore the heritage of medieval slavery for the plantation system in the New World, which will be of interest to those who study slave systems in the modern world. Throughout his study, Epstein pays attention to the
practice of slavery on the islands of the Mediterranean and in overseas colonies of Italian city-states.

The fourth chapter is a wide-ranging examination of slavery’s cost and of the teachings offered by the great legal minds of the Middle Ages on the place of slavery in the economy. The author notes that “[e]very word used to justify and continue practicing slavery as an acceptable part of the economy constitutes in our eyes an act of hypocrisy. But to the Italians under review here pretense was not an issue, they sincerely believed slavery to be part of the world as it was” (181). This monograph presents a case for a historical memory of slavery that colors modern discourse in Italy and carries important implications for perceptions of race and ethnicity.

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Aristocratic Hungarian childhood is a welcome addition to the rapidly expanding international field of children’s history. This collection of Hungarian articles translated into English beckons the English-speaking reader into a little-known, but fascinating world. Diaries, memoirs, personal letters, and wills of such magnate families as Esterhazy and Batthyány provide the bulk of the material. The book is divided into four chapters: “The First Ten Years of Life” (by Pe’ter); “Orphans of Noble Birth” (by Ildiko Horn); “Count A’dam Batthyány and his Children” (by Istvan Fazekas); and “The Marriage Policy of the Esterhazy Family after the Death of Palatine Miclos” (by Judit Fejes).

The richness of the sources is somewhat marred by lack of clarity about the ultimate purpose of the book, and this ambiguity makes it difficult to grasp the logic of the book’s organizational structure and the reasoning behind the choices of material in the individual essays. In her introduction, Pe’ters declares her firm desire to avoid the polemics that have tended to polarize the current field of childrens’ history: “Beloved Children has been written in the knowledge that parental care and social responsibility, like the responsibility of parents for the well-being of their offspring in this world and the next, are among the most ancient attitudes” (8). This unquestioning belief in the munificence of the Hungarian vision of childhood as a social construct is coupled with a refusal, in principle, to compare Hungarian childhood with its European counterparts: “As to the discourse on Europe, we preferred to leave that out of consideration. There seemed to be no sense in entering a debate that has become, as it were, a conversation among the deaf” (9). While comparative childhood studies is, indeed, a field of investigation in its own right, the lack of some comparative perspective impoverishes these es-