

communities did or did not follow, that much nevertheless remains clear.

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The Man with the Branded Hand: The Life of Jonathan Walker, Abolitionist. By Alvin F. Oickle. (Yardley, Pa.: Westholme, 2011. Pp. xiv, 298. \$28.00.)

One of the most daring attempted slave escapes in American history began on 22 June 1844. Under cover of darkness, seven fugitives set sail from Pensacola, Florida, bound for the British Bahamas, eight hundred miles away, in a small boat piloted by a hardy Yankee sailor named Jonathan Walker. Their odyssey took them along the entire Gulf Coast of Florida, around the tip of the peninsula, and up the east coast. After seventeen days at sea, short of water, hungry, and ravaged by the sun, they reached Biscayne Bay, the future site of Miami, ninety miles from Nassau, just a half-day's sail from safety. There they were discovered and recaptured.

The fugitive slaves were quickly returned to their masters. Some, though not all, were flogged (no slave owner wanted to do lasting damage to valuable human property). Walker's tribulations, however, would be so memorably cruel that he would become, briefly, one of the most famous men in America.

Even though freedoms of speech, press, and assembly were routinely denied to critics of slavery, and violence against dissenters was commonplace in the South, southern paranoia wildly exaggerated the ability of abolitionists to operate in the region. Walker was the incarnation of their fears. Hailing originally from Cape Cod, thrice shipwrecked, and more than once left for dead, Walker had made a hardscrabble living in the coastal trade, carrying odd shipments between the Gulf ports. He was also a devoted abolitionist who had toiled alongside black sailors and willingly shared his table with black guests, shocking the mores of antebellum Pensacolans. He utterly loathed slavery and was dedicated to its destruction. "I am ashamed to acknowledge," he wrote, "that while enjoying the greatest social and religious privileges of any nation upon the earth, boasting of our liberal and free institutions . . . yet we cherish in our midst the most heinous, unjust, oppressive, and God-provoking system that ever cursed the dwellers of the earth" (p. 146).

Walker endured months of imprisonment in Pensacola's filthy jail, much of the time shackled so that he could hardly move. He was locked in public stocks and pelted with rotten eggs. And he was branded on the hand like a steer (or a slave) with the letters "SS" for "slave stealer." It is most likely the only branding ever ordered in a court under federal jurisdiction, Florida still being a territory at the time. In a notable irony, the United States marshal who did the branding, the slave-owning Ebenezer Dorr, a transplanted native of Maine, was the nephew of a man who had ridden alongside Paul Revere in 1776 to spread news to the Yankee patriots of the Redcoats' march.

It took nearly a year for Walker's northern friends to raise the money for his release. Once he reached New England, he became one of the country's first media stars, traveling from town to town on the abolitionist lecture circuit, telling his story and flourishing his scarred hand before shocked audiences as graphic proof of the barbarity of southern slavery. "Horrible, horrible beyond all expression," William Lloyd Garrison wrote of Walker's punishment in the *Liberator* (p. 135). So vivid a symbol was the hand that John Greenleaf Whittier made it the subject of a poem New England schoolchildren would memorize: *Then lift that manly right hand, bold ploughman of the wave! / Its branded palm shall prophesy, "SALVATION TO THE SLAVE!"* (p. 192).

Despite such recognition, Walker was a simple man and a less than electrifying public speaker, and his fame faded. By the time of his death in 1878 at the age of seventy-nine, he had been virtually forgotten.

In *The Man with the Branded Hand*, Alvin Oickle has delivered as thorough an account as we are likely to see of this crusty and unusual hero in a book that is rich with fine-grained research and helpfully attentive to the larger context of the abolitionist movement and to the political events that shaped Walker's time. Readers will be deeply moved by the sheer, lonely courage with which Walker carried on his struggle for freedom in slavery's heartland, many hundreds of miles away from his nearest allies. However, Oickle's often riveting narrative is marred by the presence of copious and sometimes inadequately digested chunks of research on subjects peripheral to Walker's story. Oickle also seems surprisingly unaware of new research on the Underground Railroad, which leaves him susceptible to occasional—though fortunately rare—errors, such as the unattributed (and unsupported) assertion that "the Michigan

lines of the Underground Railroad alone carried between 40,000 and 50,000 passengers into Canada” (p. 230).

In this 150th anniversary of the beginning of the Civil War, we will hear about the battlefield heroics of our ancestors. But it is important to remember that emancipation of the nation’s four million slaves would never have come about without the quiet, nonviolent work of men and women like Jonathan Walker, whose stories and sacrifices ought to be as familiar to us—and as well honored—as those of the men who fought at Shiloh, Gettysburg, and Cold Harbor. Walker’s branded hand was, for a time, one of antislavery’s most potent weapons. As Frederick Douglass declared, “I well remember the sensation produced by the exhibition of the branded hand. It was one of the few atrocities of slavery that aroused the justice and humanity of the North to a death struggle with slavery” (p. x).

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The Politics of Anxiety in Nineteenth-Century American Literature.

By Justine S. Murison. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. x, 218. \$90.00.)

In this fascinating study, Justine Murison investigates the various discourses surrounding the workings of and roles played by the nervous system in nineteenth-century literature and culture. In the course of tracing circuits of exchange between body and mind, individual and surrounding environment, she calls attention to a variety of applications for new, oftentimes contested, understandings of physiological integrity and vulnerability in the era’s cultural, national, and political movements. From discussions of abolitionism, democracy, and domestic ideology to motivations for associationalist reform, religious revivals, and the science of spiritualism, *The Politics of Anxiety in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* examines the ways in which authors, doctors, and reformers turned to the nervous system in their quests to make sense of the “open” body. “Because both body and mind were open to environmental pressures,” Murison explains, “they proved vulnerable to the political climate and the social world” (p. 2). Their attempts to parse the relationship of brain, spinal cord, and nerves and, more broadly, their relationships to internal organs and outer surroundings effectively reproduced and