Ironics of abolition

J. Morgan Kousser

DAVID BRION DAVIS

Slavery and Human Progress

Slavery and Human Progress (1975) was a major work in the field of slavery studies. Davis's research contributed to a deeper understanding of the impacts of slavery on human societies and the economies of the societies that practiced it.

The book is widely regarded as one of the most important works in the field of slavery studies and has been influential in shaping the way historians think about the institution of slavery.

The following is an excerpt from the book:

"The history of the rise and fall of a world institution is not simply a history of events. It is a history of ideas, of societies, of the relations between them. It is a history of the way in which different peoples have seen and understood the world around them. It is a history of the way in which they have acted upon that world. It is a history of the way in which they have thought about themselves and about their relations to others. It is a history of the way in which they have tried to bring about the world they wanted. It is a history of the way in which they have tried to understand the world they lived in. It is a history of the way in which they have tried to make the world better.

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Building the artisan republic

Mari Jo Buhle


Sean Wilentz aptly describes his Chants Democra­ tic as "an extended historical essay on capital­ ism and democracy in the United States". A lengthy, detailed study of "class formation" during the 1830s, following the Amer­ ican Revolution, the book is less a narrative than an interpretation of the re-ordering of social conditions, from the decline of the anti­ Slavery movement to the rise of the American Aboli­tion movement. Wilentz's enterprise provides an excellent overview of the possibilities and limitations of studying the working­class movement in this period.

Wilentz argues that the working­class movement of the 1830s was a "layered" activity, with different groups and organizations working for various goals. He contends that the movement was shaped by the interplay of economic, political, and social forces, and that it was not simply a product of the firm commitment of the working class to socialist principles. Instead, the working­class movement was a "composite" phenomenon, with different groups and organizations pursuing different goals.

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