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### Review Of "Race And Manifest Destiny: The Origins Of Racial Anglo-Saxonism" By R. Horsman

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Review

Reviewed Work(s): Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of Racial Anglo-Saxonism by Reginald Horsman

Review by: Robert C. Bannister

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Webster, a side about which most general readers know little. These were particularly important years for Webster economically as well as politically. During 1835 and 1836, the senator borrowed heavily to finance a number of land purchases — only to be hurt badly by the Panic of 1837. By the end of 1839, Webster had seen his political dreams shattered and his financial dreams destroyed as well.

This volume offers the reader a multi-dimensional view of Jacksonian America through the eyes of one of its most important figures. It also provides numerous insights into the nature and development of American politics.

*Temple University*

HERBERT ERSHKOWITZ

*Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of Racial Anglo-Saxonism.* By REGINALD HORSMAN. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981. 367 p. Index. \$22.50.)

In this study of *Race and Manifest Destiny*, Reginald Horsman of the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee challenges the conventional view that antebellum myths of Anglo-Saxon superiority rested on a cultural, essentially "benign," conception of race, that only later in the nineteenth century yielded to more strictly biological and hereditarian definition. During the American Revolution, Anglo-Saxonism nourished the colonists' cause of freedom, Horsman argues. However, by 1850 this same myth, now with a racial twist, fed an aggressive nationalism. Faith in the virtues of free institutions thereby "became a belief in the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon branch of the Caucasian race" (p. 4).

Horsman's taxonomy of the racial idea, in outline at least, resembles that in such earlier studies as Thomas Gossett's *Race* (1963): the evolution of Anglo-Saxonism in Britain after 1530; its revival in the histories, literature, and philology of the Romantics; and its transformation in the "scientific" theories of polygenists and phrenologists. Although he also adopts the familiar theme of a change from a cultural-environmental to a biological-hereditarian conception of race, he pushes this analysis to new conclusions. Whereas others have assumed that the polygenist theory of Creation of the American school of ethnology was anathema to most Christian Americans, he argues that this scientific racism gained wide currency by 1850. He then proceeds to read all references to the "blood" of inferior and superior peoples, and to "innate" qualities, in this light.

In chapters dealing with Indian removal, the Mexican War, and the expansionism of the 1850s, Horsman further argues that white America applied this new racialism to any who stood in its way. Hints of the new

attitude can be found in the years immediately after 1815, spurred by the easing of Anglo-American tensions, the clash of settlers and Indians on the western frontier, and the south's desire to put slavery on firmer intellectual foundations. The social upheavals of the 1830s and 1840s completed the process, as "elaborate racial hierarchies" laid the basis for a "new aristocracy" (p. 301) of white Americans. In this regard (although Horsman does not explore the point), racial Anglo-Saxonism joined the cult of femininity as an antidote to potentially destructive tensions based on class, wealth, or section. In the case of race, the final payoff was conviction that inferior peoples not only must adapt to superior institutions but must finally be exterminated.

Although Horsman shows conclusively that Anglo-Saxonism was widespread and that many whites had little use for Blacks, Indians, and Mexicans (points few have doubted), his case seems weakest at its central point: the biologizing of the racial idea. On this issue he appears to undercut himself, arguing sometimes that the crucial issue is a stress on "innate racial differences," while at other times conceding that antebellum spokesmen continued to confuse "race, language, culture, and nationality" (p. 302). His insistence on the term "racialism" instead of "racism" itself seems to argue for differences between earlier and later conceptions. Nor do the many references to "blood" and "race" during the Mexican war clinch the point. Even if traditional Christian ideals were less a barrier to polygenist views of Creation than some have thought, these "scientific" arguments seem notably absent from policy debates, which continued to stress free institutions and a millennial mission. Nor also do these examples alter the previous conclusion (of Frederick Merk among others) that Anglo-Saxonism set limits to expansionism at least during the Mexican war. For these reasons among others, this well-written and extensively researched study of antebellum racialism should stir considerable debate.

*Swarthmore College*

ROBERT C. BANNISTER

*The Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement, 1861–1865.* By ARNOLD M. SHANKMAN. (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1980. 236 p. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$15.60.)

For those with a well-developed and lovingly nurtured interest in the American Civil War, Professor Shankman's apologia for publication of this study is probably quite unnecessary. For the rest of us, the statement that "there are many aspects of the conflict yet to be examined" seems a prelude to yet another of those Civil War studies that traverses all too familiar ground