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Kenneth J. Winkle, *Lincoln's Citadel: The Civil War in Washington, DC*. New York: Norton, 2013. Pp. xvi, 486. ISBN 978-0-393-08155-8.

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The thesis of *Lincoln's Citadel* is that “Washington was a microcosm of the Civil War” (xv). The book begins with Abraham Lincoln’s one-term stint in the House of Representatives (1847-49), when the future president stayed at a boardinghouse dubbed “Abolition House,” after antislavery patrons like Joshua Giddings, and concludes with his assassination. Kenneth Winkle (Univ. of Nebraska) describes how events in Washington reflected the changes shaping the country, changes culminating in emancipation. He “invites readers to peer through” the president’s “most personal and poignant ‘window on the war’” (xvi).

Lincoln resided at Mrs. Spriggs’s boardinghouse during a heady period in the history of antebellum Whiggery. The territorial expansion of the United States in the wake of the Mexican-American War exacerbated a rift between “Conscience” Whigs, who favored restricting slavery, and “Cotton” Whigs, who viewed slavery as an integral part of the Southern economy. The Wilmot Proviso, which would have forbidden slavery from the Mexican Cession, was hotly debated both in Congress and at Abolition House in 1846-48. Relying on the testimony of Dr. Samuel Busey, a fellow boarder, Winkle notes that “Lincoln’s highest priority was always to keep the discussion civil” (10). Thus, his introduction to Washington politics entailed reconciling congressmen with conflicting views about slavery.

Lincoln’s southern Illinois origins prepared him for this role. For the region had been settled, on the one hand, by southerners migrating northward along the rivers and, on the other, Northern evangelicals arriving via the Great Lakes. Hence, Winkle writes,

Lincoln’s greatest political asset was his ability and willingness to negotiate the social and cultural divide between the nation’s two dominant and increasingly conflicting cultures, a skill that he quickly cultivated and eventually mastered. By the time he came to Washington, negotiation, moderation, and compromise were his second nature.... By the time he left Congress, Lincoln was keenly aware of his pivotal geographical situation on the dividing line between North and South—and the political value of his experience practicing politics on this ambiguous middle ground. (56-57)

Lincoln’s hard-earned reputation as a moderate, argues Winkle, helped gain him the nomination as the Republican presidential candidate in 1860. His main contenders—Salmon Chase, William Seward, and Charles Sumner—represented distinctively Northern states that were Republican strongholds. By contrast, Lincoln, a Kentucky-born congressman from Illinois, “hailed from an important ‘doubtful’ state that he could virtually guarantee to the Republicans” (64). Winkle’s analysis contests that of Doris Kearns Goodwin,¹ who stresses Lincoln’s political brilliance and the activity of his associates at the Chicago convention as decisive.

The debate over slavery in the Mexican Cession took place as the institution was losing its foothold in the Chesapeake region. By 1830, as tobacco plantations had become less lucrative than the sprawling cotton plantations of the Gulf states, regional slaveholders put their slaves to work cultivating wheat in spring and summer and then “hired them out” in fall and winter. Some slaves were allowed to keep a portion of their wages, with the prospect of one day purchasing their freedom.² All this created a perception among Chesapeake slaveholders that their control over their slaves was being weakened. Winkle describes how these social and economic trends influenced Virginia’s eventual decision to join the Confederacy. “As slavery de-

1. In *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 2005).

2. Winkle follows here the argument of William Link’s *Roots of Secession: Slavery and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: U North Carolina Pr, 2003).

clined in Washington and the city moved increasingly toward a wage-labor model ... southerners grew all the more aggressive in defending it.... When the Civil War began nearly four-fifths of Washington's African American residents were free. Slavery's weakening position in Washington reflected its more general decline in the Chesapeake region" (18, 127). Lincoln's innate virtues as a politician and slavery's fading hold on the region around Washington are leitmotifs of the first half of Winkle's book.

The Wilmot Proviso reflected a change in focus on the part of antebellum congressmen opposed to slavery. Led by Giddings's political mentor John Quincy Adams during the 1830s and 40s, the opponents of slavery had concentrated on abolishing it in Washington and undermining the congressional "Gag Rule" forbidding discussion of petitions against the institution. After the presidential election of 1848, the relative popularity of the Free Soil Party, dedicated to preventing the spread of slavery into the Mexican Cession, convinced Lincoln and many of his colleagues that focusing on antislavery activity within the nation's capital was counterproductive (the Free Soil candidate, Martin Van Buren, won 10 percent of the popular vote). Attention shifted to the territories.

This explains why Lincoln voted to table resolutions that promoted the abolition of slavery in Washington during his second session in Congress. "Far from signaling a proslavery stance or even ambivalence on the part of Congressman Lincoln, as some critics have argued, his negative votes in the second session reflected a shift in his priorities away from ending slavery where it already existed, which increasingly appeared futile and counterproductive, and toward nonextension as a more effective method for undermining the institution" (46-47). Complementing the emergence of the Free Soil Party was the Compromise of 1850, which outlawed the slave trade in Washington as a sop to Northern politicians who objected to the act's strengthening of the Fugitive Slave Law.³

This development did not, however, diminish the difficulties that blacks confronted in the nation's capital, most notably an underfunded and racist police force. The spacious avenues of Pierre L'Enfant's city plan and the exemption of government-owned property from taxation diminished the revenues available to the municipal government. The constables the city did manage to deploy relied for their income on the ten-dollar "commutation fee" exacted from blacks caught outside after the city's 10:00 p.m. curfew. "[T]he city used the Black Code as a vital source of revenue," writes Winkle, and the police arrested blacks three times as often as whites in the decade before the Civil War. "Rampant arbitrary arrests turned the county jail, the infamous 'Blue Jug,' into a veritable slave pen" (78). The 1860 mayoral election further politicized the Washington police. After Democratic candidate James Berret defeated his Republican opponent Richard Wallach, he immediately staffed the police department with political sympathizers. Armed mobs disrupted Republican Party meetings, prompting William Seward and Stephen Douglas to conclude, "life is not safe in this city at present" (80).

The politicization of the Washington's security apparatus was not an exclusively Democratic phenomenon in the months preceding Lincoln's inauguration. Collaboration between the Democrat Edwin Stanton, attorney general of the outgoing Buchanan administration, and Seward, Lincoln's appointee as secretary of state, focused on treasonous activity within the capital. Thus, when general-in-chief Winfield Scott detected hints of a plot to assassinate Lincoln in Baltimore during his trip from Springfield to Washington, he communicated this information directly to Seward and Stanton, circumventing Buchanan entirely. "[T]he newly forged triumvirate of Seward, Stanton, and Scott solidified Republican control of Washington's security apparatus under the nose of the Buchanan administration before Lincoln even reached the capital" (90).

The Lincoln administration and its Republican allies in Congress codified their control over Washington's police force with the creation in August 1861 of the Metropolitan Police District, modeled on the New York Police Department, which was in turn modeled on Scotland Yard. Five presidential appointees administered the service, subject to the approval of the Senate. The Democratic mayor of Washington, James Berret, served only as an ex officio member of the Board of Police, with "no direct authority" over it (189). In this way, Republicans neutralized a source of irritation that had plagued them before and immediately after

3. Winkle suggests that the effect of the prohibition was cosmetic, as slave traders simply moved their operations to the adjacent city of Alexandria: "The national capital correspondingly declined as an arena of contention between slavery and abolitionism" (60).

Lincoln's election. "With the passage of the Metropolitan Police Act, Mayor Berret had lost his authority over Washington's police force, and his chief political rival was now president of the Police Board. Republican control over security in the District of Columbia was nearly complete" (190).

These reforms notwithstanding, Winkle stresses the inadequacies of Washington's security apparatus in the weeks after the firing on Fort Sumter and Lincoln's decision to summon 300,000 state militiamen to Washington. En route to the capital, the Massachusetts Sixth Regiment met resistance in Baltimore, after which saboteurs destroyed the railroad line connecting Washington to Philadelphia, preventing the New York Seventh Regiment from reaching its chief executive and creating a sense of isolation in the capital. Winkle criticizes Winfield Scott's "singular inability to gauge the precise nature of the threat" and his reliance on the newspapers in lieu of salaried detectives. "If still capable of managing the army, he still showed no inclination to assemble a covert security apparatus within the War Department and blithely turned that responsibility over to Lincoln" (144). A congressional committee headed by John F. Potter (R-Wisconsin) subsequently assumed responsibility for ferreting out disloyal federal employees and required them to take an increasingly stringent loyalty oath. "Admitting that much of the testimony [it heard] 'amounted to mere opinions or impressions,' the committee justified the secrecy and sweep of the[ir] allegations [by noting that] the government should feel constrained to remove [the disloyal] from public employment at a moment when its very existence is imperiled by treachery and violence" (193).

Just how important control over Washington's security apparatus was to Lincoln's safety became evident upon the president-elect's approach to Washington. Lincoln had affected a dismissive attitude toward the magnitude of the secession crisis and his own personal safety during his journey from Springfield to the national capital. Several independently verified reports of the assassination plot in Baltimore, however, forced him to travel through the city secretly, with only his close personal friend Ward Hill Lamon (armed with a "brace of fine pistols, a huge bowie knife, a black-jack and a pair of brass knuckles") and private detective Allan Pinkerton as a security detail. "At the beginning of [Lincoln's] journey, security was a mere distraction from 'the task before me' that he identified in his Farewell Address at Springfield. By the time he reached Washington thirteen days later, security had become an indispensable dimension of the task" (107).

In light of the capital's beleaguered state in April 1861, Lincoln permitted general-in-chief Scott to suspend the habeas corpus rights of those suspected of sabotaging the railroad link between Washington and Philadelphia, a coercive action he would expand and defend before Congress as the war continued. "In the struggle between military justice and the civil authorities in Washington, the military ... won out, at Lincoln's behest. In February 1862, Provost Marshal Andrew Porter decreed that he had complete authority over all infractions of military regulations in Washington, whether committed by soldiers or civilians, and that he considered Washington 'a military encampment, and therefore subject to military laws'" (187). Winkle's elucidation of the degree to which the imperatives of military justice overrode the standards of civilian jurisprudence in Civil War Washington is a notable feature of his book.

Before railroads had emerged as the primary method of extending American commerce westward, George Washington had hoped to connect the Ohio River with the Potomac via the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, converting Washington's native region (and the nation's capital) into a commercial entrepôt. The last leg of the waterway, dubbed the Washington Canal, ran just south of the White House. "Overlooking the fundamental principle that water flows faster through a narrow channel, the final plan produced a canal that was 160 feet wide, four-times the width of the Erie Canal" (122). This made for a stagnant and pestilent body of water in the middle of the capital, a feature that would come to haunt the Lincolns after their son Willie succumbed to typhoid fever. Ultimately, Baltimore captured most of the commercial traffic with the Ohio River by completing the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, lending a fatalistic tone to Willie's death that the president may have appreciated. Winkle sees the architectural ambitions of the nation's capital as problematic: "Key components of the government's war machine were remote from Capitol Hill—the White House a mile and a half to the west, the Arsenal a mile to the south, and the Navy Yard a mile to the south-east" (170).

Lincoln arrived in Washington's First Ward—the racially and economically diverse neighborhood surrounding the White House—whose residents comprised politicians and clerks, on the one hand, and freed blacks, enslaved servants, and white immigrants, on the other. The Irish immigrants' "primary economic role was providing unskilled labor for the growing city" (137). Reporting the observations of a Union soldier patrolling Tin Cup Alley Winkle writes, "White citizens, resident aliens, naturalized immigrants, free blacks, mixed-race African Americans, and slaves all occupied unique social and economic niches but were geographically 'all mixed up together'" (130). Winkle's account of how the weakening of slavery in the Chesapeake region contributed to this diverse environment is another strength of the book.

The Chesapeake region's slaveowners increasingly hired out their slaves to generate a monthly cash income rather than putting them to work in their own homes. Many of the "rented" slaves were hired out by the Virginia and Maryland planters who were shifting from tobacco production toward wheat and other grains. In an urban setting, hiring out, as the slaves at "Abolition House" had demonstrated, facilitated freedom through either self-purchase or flight, further eroding an already beleaguered institution. (131)

Lincoln was forced to adjust to the First Ward's intricate racial hierarchy when the White House's staff objected to the darker hue of his personal servant William Johnson (traditionally, domestic servants in the White House had lighter complexions). In response, Lincoln secured Johnson a position as a messenger for the Treasury Department, where his meager salary compelled him to seek added employment, like so many black government workers of the time. Lincoln had "labored to forge a pragmatic solution, quelling the White House staff's 'almost' rebellion by bowing to the capital's prevailing racial hierarchy, yet finding a way to retain William Johnson as his half-time valet and confidential messenger" (141).

Winkle provides a thorough description of Washington's mobilization for what he calls "total war." The three thousand women who worked at the Washington Arsenal received scant compensation (from fifty cents to a dollar a day) due to the Victorian prejudice against women in the workforce, the assumption being that their primary compensation should be their pride in furthering the war effort. Their working conditions were often abysmal: "In June 1864, after a long series of fatal arsenal accidents at the Washington Arsenal, 250 women and girls were charging cartridges in a massive shed when an explosion left 21 workers 'mangled, scorched, and charred beyond the possibility of identification' and 30 others burned, blind, or disfigured" (168).

By contrast, Winkle praises the head of the Quartermaster's Department, Montgomery C. Meigs for his success in the "gargantuan" and "herculean" task of supplying the Union army. Meigs adopted the "basic strategy [of] letting out many contracts to smaller firms, which increased competition, lowered prices, and kept a steady stream of provisions flowing into Washington's supply depots" (169), even if the many colors of cloth used by private suppliers initially created confusion and precipitated friendly fire incidents at the First Battle of Bull Run. Meigs also completed a twelve-mile aqueduct Congress had undertaken in 1853 in the wake of a fire at the Library of Congress. Intended to supply clean water from the Potomac for consumption and firefighting, it was a "masterpiece of hydraulic engineering" (176).

Much of the second half of *Lincoln's Citadel* is devoted to military hospitals in and around Washington. Learning from the experiences of the English and the French during the Crimean War, Union officials favored the construction of "pavilion" hospitals to meet the demands of wartime. The capital's proximity to early battlefield defeats such as First Bull Run and the Seven Days created a pressing need for hospital facilities for the Army of the Potomac's wounded. Ad hoc masonry structures, among them Mrs. Spriggs's old boardinghouse, were ultimately used as holding cells for fugitive slaves; they were poorly ventilated and difficult to repair. By contrast, pavilion hospitals were "inexpensive wood-frame buildings that could be constructed quickly where they were needed and proved far more sanitary than the existing masonry structures" (215). Twenty-five-foot wide by 150-foot long pavilion hospital wards "collected foul air up to fourteen feet above the floor and released it through a vent that ran the length of the building." The medical director of the Union army commented that "They admit of more perfect ventilation ... can be kept in better police, are more convenient for the sick and wounded and their attendants, admit of a ready distribution of patients into proper classes, and are cheaper." "In the wake of the Peninsula Campaign," writes Winkle, "a to-

tal of twenty-two hospitals, including thirteen converted churches, sprang up virtually overnight and operated until January 1863” (292).

Staffing the hospitals proved an easy task. Twenty-one thousand Northern women—fired by the example of Florence Nightingale during the Crimean War and the presence of the famous reformer Dorothea Dix—offered to serve as nurses. In addition, “During the first year of the war, seven thousand soldiers’ aid societies, most of them organized by churches and led by women, emerged in towns and cities across the North” (216). To help coordinate this outpouring of popular support, Elizabeth Blackwell, America’s first (and, at the time, only) female physician, created the Woman’s Central Association of Relief, while Dix used her high profile to spur the recruitment of female nurses. Women like Dix, Blackwell, and Concord’s Louisa May Alcott

idolized Florence Nightingale, the English nurse who had worked unrelentingly during the Crimean War to improve sanitary conditions in the British Army and lend a feminine dimension to the care of sick and wounded soldiers. [Nightingale’s] popular medical manuals, *Notes on Hospitals* and *Notes on Nursing*, had swept America just before the war began, and her declaration that “every woman is a nurse” became a call to action that inspired the wartime generation of women to emulate her by volunteering to serve in the Union’s army hospitals. (217)

Like Nightingale, Dix entertained a romantic notion of “the inherent value of [women’s] moral qualities and reputations more than their medical expertise” (219). By contrast, Blackwell—“a physician with a medical degree”—“prescribed formal training for skilled nurses as a prerequisite for hospital service” (220). She also championed a more generous salary for nurses to elevate them above the status of volunteers to that of professionals. Dix’s “reputation as an effective reformer,” however, “carried the day,” though eventually she “became increasingly marginal to the war effort as the army’s male-dominated medical bureaucracy developed” (222). Like the city’s justice system, Washington’s medical facilities were characterized by the encroachment of the military upon civilian prerogatives: “The army’s Medical Department had its own priorities and gradually assumed nearly complete control over wartime nursing at the expense of the civilian Sanitary Commission and the female volunteers” (224).

Winkle also chronicles in the second half of his book the gradual emergence of abolition as a Union war aim. Northern, Republican control of Washington made the capital an appealing refuge for fugitive slaves. The reform of the Metropolitan Police had eliminated the fee system that afflicted black residents disproportionately. The provost marshal system favored the administration of military justice at the expense of civilian law enforcement officials, a contrast that was embodied by the antagonism between Gen. James Wadsworth, the military commander of Washington and an abolitionist, and the civilian marshal Ward Hill Lamon, Lincoln’s fervently loyal bodyguard. Finally, “Mayor Berret’s removal in August 1861 and his replacement by [Republican] Richard Wallach also eliminated a powerful Democratic obstructionist” to liberation (232). These developments, alongside Gen. Benjamin Butler’s designation of fugitive slaves as “contrabands of war” and the Conscription Acts passed by Congress meant that “Throughout the conflict, Lincoln and his administration faced the conundrum of accepting 40,000 fugitive and newly freed slaves into the capital without promoting social and political disruptions that would impair the efficiency of the war effort or diminish support for the Union. This balancing act between freeing slaves and winning the war dominated Lincoln’s unfolding emancipation policy throughout his presidency” (233).

Lincoln’s “balancing act” was initially manifested in the liberation of slaves belonging to disloyal Virginians as opposed to the return of Maryland captives in line with the Compromise of 1850’s Fugitive Slave Law (Maryland was a loyal, albeit slaveholding, state for most of the war). A turning point in the status of slaves and the definition of Union war aims came in July 1862, when Congress passed a supplemental act to the Second Confiscation Act, granting freedom to slaves without compensating their owners, “a principle that infused the long overdue blanket emancipation of slaves embodied in the Emancipation Proclamation that Lincoln issued eight months later, and ultimately the Thirteenth Amendment, ratified two and a half years later” (275). The supplemental act was also extraordinary as the first instance of the federal government allowing African Americans to testify as both petitioners and witnesses in a formal judicial proceeding. The act therefore set a precedent that soon resulted in the admission of African Americans to federal courts as plaintiffs, witnesses testifying against whites, and jury members, promising not only freedom but eventually legal equality.

The Second Confiscation Act itself “granted freedom to fugitives from rebellious states, including Virginia [whence future Red Cross founder Clara Barton wrote Lincoln in favor of abolition], without requiring them to prove that they had been employed in the Confederate war effort” (305). Simultaneously, Congress passed the Militia Act, “which authorized Lincoln to recruit African Americans into the army and navy [which had long employed blacks as seamen] and to free them and their families—their mothers, wives, and children—if their owners were disloyal” (306). Lincoln distilled his thinking on emancipation and the recruitment of slaves in summer 1862 in a memo composed immediately after he signed the Militia Act: “To recruiting free negroes, no objection. To recruiting slaves of disloyal owners, no objection. To recruiting slaves of loyal owners, *with their consent*, no objection” (306).

This progression in congressional legislation and in Lincoln’s thinking about abolition and the recruitment of blacks, together with the influx of wounded soldiers and fugitive slaves into Washington in spring and summer 1862, bore fruit in the Emancipation Proclamation:

The Confederacy’s three million slaves represented its greatest economic and military resource. During the summer of 1862, Lincoln adopted what historians have labeled “abolitionist arithmetic,” the simple logic that “Every slave employed by the army or navy represented a double gain, one subtracted from the Confederacy and one added to the Union.” The hideous bloodlettings of the Peninsula Campaign and Second Bull Run, all too apparent within Washington’s overflowing military hospitals, produced a shortage of manpower as well as a growing popular disillusionment with the war. Lincoln believed that he had no constitutional authority as president to free slaves as a humanitarian measure, carefully distinguishing between his “official duty” and his “oft-expressed personal wish that all men every where [*sic*] could be free.” As commander in chief during wartime, however, he could emancipate the enemy’s slaves under the guise of military necessity. (318–19)

In Lincoln’s mind, military necessity intersected with moral right. The issuance of the final Emancipation Proclamation on 1 January 1863 expanded the breadth of the Militia Act to allow former slaves to enlist and serve at “garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts” (323). Sumner’s request that Lincoln include an appeal to God and Salmon Chase’s insistence that he refer to the military necessity undergirding the proclamation are reflected in the document’s final sentence: “And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.”

Winkle writes that this “grounded Lincoln’s actions not only in military necessity, familiar to Americans since General Butler’s decision to confiscate the contrabands at Fortress Monroe, but also in the justice that African Americans and abolitionists had striven for so long to achieve and a moral imperative transcending the limits of human events and mortal actions here on earth.” Lincoln elided his earlier appeals to voluntary colonization, ensuring that “[t]he final proclamation contained no hint of compromise with the rebels” (324), though loyal slaveholders in the Border States and Union-occupied portions of the Confederacy were exempted from the proclamation. “The crucial turning point for Lincoln,” Winkle concludes, “was the bloodletting in the Eastern Theater during the summer and fall of 1862, prompting his embrace of total warfare, conscription, and emancipation as essential ingredients of his military strategy” (328). The Enrollment Act of March 1863 confirms this analysis, as it “mandated the enrollment of all male citizens, without reference to race, between the ages of twenty and forty-five,” thus establishing “the principle of universal eligibility for military service as an essential obligation of citizenship” (340).

Lincoln’s Citadel persuasively demonstrates that the Union war effort as it unfolded in Washington convinced Lincoln of the need for emancipation. The rapid construction of military hospitals in and around the capital, the battles fought in the Eastern Theater, and the Republican takeover of Washington all pushed him toward adopting abolition as a Union war aim. Previous authors⁴ have focused on the “balancing act” Lincoln had to perform in reacting to these trends without alienating the Border States. Winkle’s particular emphasis on Washington’s reflection of the country’s drift toward emancipation between 1860 and 1863 makes his book well worth reading by the general public and specialists alike.

4. E.g., William C. Harris, *Lincoln and the Border States: Preserving the Union* (Lawrence: U Pr of Kansas, 2011).