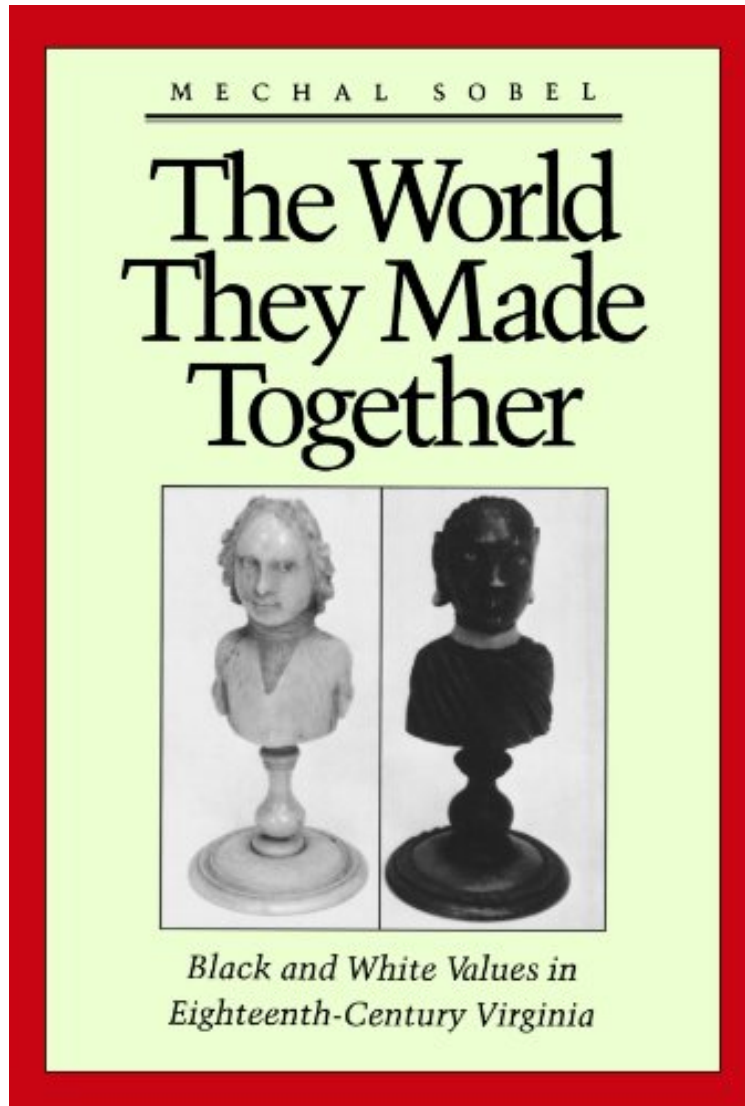


The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia

Mechal Sobel

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Mechal Sobel : The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy surfwood4This book provides a more detailed account some kinds of relationships that existed during slavery7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Black, white,

shades of grey, but just a little too rosy. By Dragonslayer Substantially, I agree with the other reviewer. Sobel argues successfully that there existed in the South (at any rate in Virginia) during the Antebellum period a culture that displayed African influences, and that these influences were visible not just among blacks but among whites, who increasingly were raised by slaves, learned to walk and talk from slaves, and in some cases were unable to function emotionally or physically without slaves. What's missing from the picture is the abuse and cruelty inherent to the slave system. And, one could argue, appropriately: it's not what the book is about. My concern would be that if this were the **only** book one read about the Antebellum South, one could emerge with a skewed picture. 10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. *The World They Made Together* By ggcon Sobel uses the concept of "world views" to support her argument that although the English and the different cultures in West Africa had separate world views, the close interaction between 18th-century Virginian whites and blacks resulted in these separate world views deeply influencing each other. In the 18th century, black and white children played together, white children often had a black woman as a "surrogate mother", and blacks and whites often worshipped together. This close interaction reinforced perceptions, values, and identities (world views) that were common between the two world view systems and, with time, the differences between the world views resulted in each world view being influenced by the other until they developed a symbiotic relationship.

In the recent past, enormous creative energy has gone into the study of American slavery, with major explorations of the extent to which African culture affected the culture of black Americans and with an almost totally new assessment of slave culture as Afro-American. Accompanying this new awareness of the African values brought into America, however, is an automatic assumption that white traditions influenced black ones. In this view, although the institution of slavery is seen as important, blacks are not generally treated as actors nor is their "divergent culture" seen as having had a wide-ranging effect on whites. Historians working in this area generally assume two social systems in America, one black and one white, and cultural divergence between slaves and masters. It is the thesis of this book that blacks, Africans, and Afro-Americans, deeply influenced white's perceptions, values, and identity, and that although two world views existed, there was a deep symbiotic relatedness that must be explored if we are to understand either or both of them. This exploration raises many questions and suggests many possibilities and probabilities, but it also establishes how thoroughly whites and blacks intermixed within the system of slavery and how extensive was the resulting cultural interaction.

"Ms. Sobel's book is a work of great importance, and not only to the scholars who will be its primary audience. . . . Ms. Sobel's assertion that--as C. Vann Woodward once put it--black and white southerners 'shared and molded a common culture' represents a bold departure from recent trends. . . . A stunning reinterpretation of colonial Virginia's culture."--Jan Lewis, *New York Times Book* "The trend in modern studies of slavery has been . . . to emphasize the survival of the African heritage and the autonomy of black culture even under slavery. Sobel takes the trend a step further in contending that attitudes and casts of mind carried from Africa penetrated and altered the dominant English culture. . . . Most significantly Sobel finds black and white patterns of religious experience meshing and merging in the evangelical denominations that swept up lower- and middle-class Virginians in the last half of the eighteenth century."--Edmund S. Morgan, *New York of Books* "Mechal Sobel offers a revisionist look at the culture of the American South before 1800. Her approach presents a perspective on the South not found in comprehensive general histories. . . . In chapters woven with anecdotes, Sobel describes striking similarities and peculiar differences in the ways black and working class white Virginians spent their days, how they worshipped, where they lived, and how they saw themselves in relation to the rest of the world."--Mary Tabor, *Christian Science Monitor* About the Author Mechal Sobel is Associate Professor of History at the University of Haifa.