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Reviewed Work Educating the Disfranchised and Disinherited Samuel Chapman Armstrong and Hampton Institute, 1839-1893 by Robert Francis Engs

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William Hannibal Thomas was born in 1843 in Ohio to mulatto parents. His light color distinguished him from ordinary “Negroes,” whom he considered his inferiors, and Thomas, according to Smith, was “energized” by this circumstance. That obsession with color would bring about his ultimate downfall. As Smith demonstrates, Thomas did not begin his career as a bigot. During his numerous endeavors as a minister, educator, Civil War soldier, and politician, Thomas worked initially to elevate the race. Like many members of the black middle class, he believed that education, hard work, property ownership, and religiosity would prove that Negroes were the equals of whites. Unfortunately, Thomas and other black spokesmen were to be disappointed in this expectation. The post-Civil War strategy of cultural belonging pursued by blacks did not eventuate in equality.

Why did Thomas stop being a racial advocate and become a racist? Although he preached and wrote about morality, Thomas was not a paragon of Victorian bourgeois respectability. Throughout his career there were charges of peculation and sexual impropriety. Smith suggests that these shortcomings resulted from a number of traumas—both physical and psychological—that Thomas suffered. These problems, according to Smith, pushed Thomas over the “edge” and led him to publish his racist book, *The American Negro*. But a combination of mental and physical debilities is not a completely satisfactory answer to the issue of racial self-hatred. Most minorities do not hate themselves, as Smith notes. Why did Thomas opt for this form of identity? Smith struggles with this problem and, given the material he worked with, has handled his subject judiciously. Smith’s analysis of William Hannibal Thomas’s career is jargon-free and not psychologically reductive. There are no speculations in this text about the nature of Thomas’s toilet training as the source of his self-loathing. Nor are there ruminations about Thomas’s relations with his parents or siblings. In short, Smith has taken a difficult subject and handled it splendidly.

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Educating the Disfranchised and Disinherited: Samuel Chapman Armstrong and Hampton Institute, 1839-1893. By Robert Francis Engs. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999. Frontispiece, preface, acknowledgments, introduction, illustrations, tables, notes, selected sources, index. Pp. xx, 207. \$32.50.)

In the post-Civil War era, as the nation attempted to solve the “Negro problem,” Hawaiian-born Samuel Chapman Armstrong assisted in the establishment of a school where African Americans would be trained to teach their people the “civilizing” ways of white men. Founded on Virginia’s Lower Peninsula, Hampton Institute, under the guidance of Armstrong as its first principal, committed itself to elevating black men and women through Christian teachings, a strict code of conduct, and training in manual labor. Robert Engs’s worthy study seeks an understanding of Armstrong’s educational philosophy and racial attitudes from the perspective of his missionary background in Hawaii, education at Williams College, and his experiences as a commander of black troops during the Civil War. Engs posits that these influences shaped Armstrong’s perceptions of “backward” people and informed his views on the place of African Americans in the larger society.

Engs rejects the simplistic notion that Armstrong was either savior to poor and uneducated blacks or singularly responsible for their inability to advance in the waning

years of the nineteenth century. Instead, the Samuel Chapman Armstrong of this work is a complex figure whose unparalleled paternalism and belief in black inferiority are balanced by a sincere concern for the freedpeople and confidence that eventually they could become equal beneficiaries of America's promise. Eng's Armstrong is a consummate politician, innovative administrator, and risk-taker: he deftly dispels the fears of southern whites while soliciting the financial aid of northern philanthropists, accesses federal funds for his school by expanding its mission to include Native Americans, and anoints a black "spiritual heir" in the form of Booker T. Washington, who implements the Hampton model at Tuskegee Institute. Although Armstrong's belief in the ability of white men to determine what was best for black people and his need to enjoy the approval of society's elites limited his ability to assist blacks, Hampton "represented a way up and out of poverty and ignorance" for its students, who made Armstrong's philosophy "suit their own needs."

Engs successfully places Hampton and Armstrong within the larger context of late-nineteenth-century racial thought, political considerations, and educational initiatives for African Americans at the national level. But discussion of the institution's and its leader's relationship with the local community of Hampton, Virginia, and its environs is less satisfying. There is intriguing mention of early black opposition to Armstrong's program, and Engs refers to the later establishment of temperance societies and folklore clubs that attempted to reach out to the local population. But such matters are treated in too cursory a manner.

Still, *Educating the Disfranchised and Disinherited* makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of industrial education and one of its principal champions. This is a balanced assessment of the man whose philosophy not only inspired Booker T. Washington to accommodate to whites but also instilled in him a desire to uplift his people. The tragedy, Engs concludes, is that the mentor, like his disciple, could not bring himself to revise his philosophy even when faced with the reality that old assumptions were no longer valid.

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Dangerous Donations: Northern Philanthropy and Southern Black Education, 1902-1930. By Eric Anderson and Alfred A. Moss Jr. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999. Foreword by Louis R. Harlan, acknowledgments, introduction, illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. Pp. xv, 245. \$34.95.)

No major studies of northern philanthropy and southern black education have emerged since James Anderson's well-acclaimed *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (1988). That book remains the most comprehensive statement on the subject, but Eric Anderson and Alfred Moss Jr. offer a fresh look at some familiar white philanthropists and reconsider the significance of regional fault lines in the story of southern black education. While James Anderson suggested that whites in the North and South cooperatively created a system of separate (and unequal) schooling for southern blacks, Anderson and Moss argue that white northern philanthropists "had a vision of race relations (and black potential) that was significantly different from the ideas of the South's white majority."

This study begins in 1902, when the Rockefeller family organized the General Education Board (GEB), a New York-based foundation that became the major clearinghouse for black