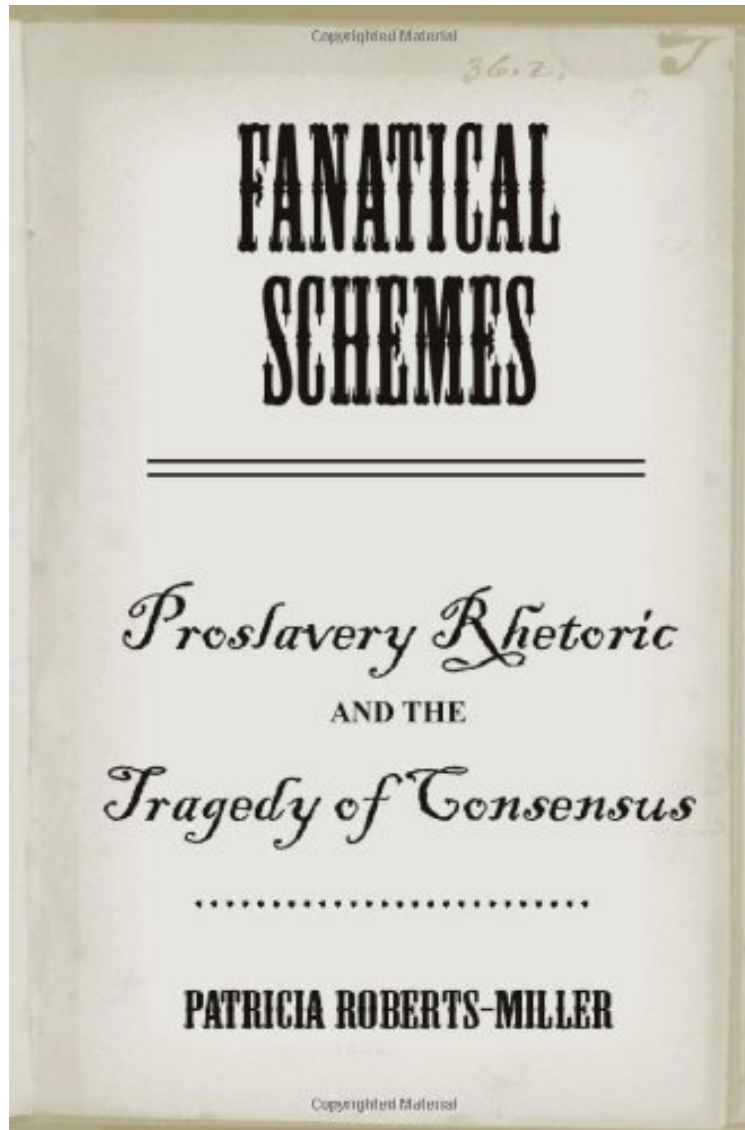


Fanatical Schemes: Proslavery Rhetoric and the Tragedy of Consensus

Patricia Roberts-Miller

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Patricia Roberts-Miller : Fanatical Schemes: Proslavery Rhetoric and the Tragedy of Consensus before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Fanatical Schemes: Proslavery Rhetoric and the Tragedy of Consensus:

What was the relationship between rhetoric and slavery, and how did rhetoric fail as an alternative to violence, becoming instead its precursor?

"Roberts-Miller (rhetoric and writing, Univ. of Texas, Austin) presents incisive critical analyses, firmly based in theory, of the communication of southern proslavery rhetors during the 30 years prior to the Civil War. She provides extensive examples of a variety of forms of communication to support her conclusion that the South became trapped in its own extremist rhetoric. Systematic suppression of any discussion of slavery both in the South and, thanks to gag rules, in Congress magnified the difficulty; as a result, decisions were made without deliberation. The author points out that an underlying feeling of moral ambiguity about slavery may have led to the alarmist, hyperbolic, and irrational pronouncements about (nonexistent) threats to the 'Southern way of life.' And she even suggests that the mind-set produced by these excesses led to secession and the Civil War. Rational thought would have led to the conclusion that Lincoln was a weak, lame-duck president, with little support in Congress, who could be ignored for four years. The book includes extensive in-text annotation and substantive endnotes. Summing Up: Highly recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty; general readers." —CHOICE "Fanatical Schemes makes a vital contribution to rhetoric studies. This book will certainly change how rhetoric scholars and Americanists look at abolition as a cultural and rhetorical movement. The command that Roberts-Miller has over this material is authoritative and absolutely convincing."