

found to be unacceptable by all civilized human beings. Otherwise, Achebe's undoubted outrage at such racism is totally overshadowed by his love of humanity and of his own people.

Achebe's mission is justice—a justice that will enrich us all. If the literary racism Achebe has found in such authors as Huxley is but a literary corollary to the white colonialist occupation of Africa, then the true independence of Africa requires the emergence of the truth, the truth as seen by Africans from within Africa. In his third lecture, called "Today: The Balance of Stories," Achebe states his own mission: "My hope for the 21st [century] is that it will see the first fruits of the balance of stories among the world's people. The 20th century, for all its many faults, did witness a significant beginning, in Africa and elsewhere in the so-called Third World, of the process of 're-storying' peoples who had been knocked silent by the trauma of all kinds of dispossession. I know that such a tremendously potent and complex human reinvention of self—calling, as it must do, on every fac-

ulty of mind and soul and spirit; drawing as it must, from every resource of memory and imagination and from a familiarity with our own history, our arts and culture; but also from an unflinching consciousness of the flaws that blemished our inheritance—such an enterprise could not be expected to be easy. And it has not been."

That has been Achebe's life work, not simply carried out to redress a terrible wrong, but by using the art of literature to bring forth the universal truth of Africa. As a reader of Achebe's works will discover, the story is not simple but extremely complex. Don't look to Achebe to glorify all African culture and relegate to the trash bin the Western culture of "dead, white males." Don't look to Achebe to reject Christianity, while exposing the bitter divisions and conflicts the imperialist-framed evangelization of Africa wrought. Don't look to Achebe to defend Africa's neo-colonialist rulers who accepted the compromise of corruption as being simply victims of imperialist norms. Don't look to Achebe to reject the old culture and

ways, in favor of total absorption into a universal Western civilization, as some exiles have done. Don't look to Achebe for simple answers. But look to this noble writer if you seek to navigate through the swirling and treacherously shifting waters of Africa with a compass that is truly human.

### Poetic Elegance

Achebe's passionate commitment to the universalization—if you will—of the African spirit and history, has made him one of the finest writers in the English language. His short stories and well-known novel *Things Fall Apart*, convey the truth with a concise precision and elegance of structure that make these works poetical. These are books that should not only be on the reading list for "Africa Studies" courses, but should be required reading for courses in modern English literature.

Achebe has been nominated five times for the Nobel Prize for Literature—it is about time he received a recognition long overdue.

—Linda de Hoyos

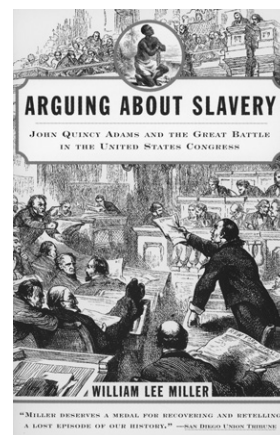
## Standing Shoulder with 'Old Man Eloquent'

This book by Professor Miller is a rare and delightful volume of American history. Rare in that it is about an almost forgotten, yet incredibly important, period in this nation's development. Even rarer, and therefore delightful, is that it is a passionate and truthful attempt at conveying that importance.

First published in hardcover a few years ago and now available in paperback, *Arguing About Slavery* covers the period of the critical debates on slavery between 1835 and 1848; as Miller accurately puts it, debates that were "nation-defining." This is the period in which Southern slaveholders, and their Northern allies, used the so-called "gag rules" in the U.S. House of Representatives, to silence slavery's critics, sparking a battle for free speech and the right to petition which these tactics provoked. The

leader of this fight was John Quincy Adams, the only American President to ever return to the Congress after leaving the White House.

What makes this book so enjoyable to read is that, unlike so many academics, William Miller has captured the spirit of this period, and the absolutely unique role that it played in shaping the character of the anti-slavery fight, and thus the future of this nation. There is a wonderful tension and excitement, as we watch the battle unfold. There is also an awe-inspiring admiration for Adams, who almost singlehandedly, defined the issues in this fight from the highest, most principled standpoint. A great deal of this comes from Miller's liberal use of excerpts from the debates themselves. Through these, in his own words, we also develop a love for "Old Man Eloquent," as Adams came to be known, as



**Arguing About Slavery:**  
**John Quincy Adams and the**  
**Great Battle in the**  
**United States Congress**  
by William Lee Miller  
New York, Vintage Books, 1998  
577 pages, paperback, \$17.00

he wages this fight with a wit and humor that is contagious.

Most people, including most historians, would not necessarily associate Adams with the emergence of the abolitionist movement in America, leaving the field instead to the Lowells, Lawrences, Wendell Phillips, and William Lloyd Garrison. But Adams' role in shaping the anti-slavery impulse was central, as Miller documents, being, as he was, not only the point man in Congress up until his death in 1848, but the moral reference point for the movement, both during and after his service. After all, it would be the voice of John Quincy Adams that would resonate with Abraham Lincoln and the leaders of the Republican Party, when slavery was finally defeated in this nation two decades later. This would be on a far higher basis than mere abolition, but rather upon those universal principles which this nation had been founded upon, but which had been subverted by the institution of human slavery.

#### **Absolutists North and South**

Abolition in America, as much as every other question in this nation's history, was a battleground for those policies and ideals which represented something truly universal, as opposed to something far less, merely parochial. From the very beginning, this battle over the nation's character had this quality: Would we as a nation be a republic in form, yet not in substance; would we be nothing more than an ideological vassal of the very British Empire we sought independence from, and thus not really free at all? Slavery itself was a product of this fight, a poison planted upon our shores to foster a love of the very oligarchical and despotic system, "the British system," as Americans used to understand, that we had made a revolution against.

The opposition to slavery, which had existed with the Founders and continued to mature through the early years of the Republic, itself became a front in this battle, with such abolitionists as Garrison mere pawns of British oligarchical power. For Garrison's

stand, arguing to tear up the Constitution and Declaration, because they "were Covenants with the Slavepower," was little different from the states' rights zealots of the slaveholding South, who sought to destroy those same instruments by arguing that they did, in fact, justify the barbaric institution of slavery and the system that created it. In the end, both would destroy this nation, and the republican experiment it represented.

Recognizing that there was not much difference between the absolutists of North and of South, and steering the fight against slavery to more solid ground, was the great contribution of J.Q. Adams in this period. While his voice was raised in opposition, neither of these doctrines of disunion could prevail. What Adams did, which Miller demonstrates brilliantly through his depiction of this period, was to educate the nation in true anti-slavery, making clear that both slavery and its absolutist opponents hated the same thing: the universal principles of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence; and, that this nation was not one of oligarchs, nor were those horrid ideas and institutions which sustained it and slavery, any part of the founding spirit or law of this nation.

Thus, John Quincy Adams was one of those individuals unique in history. He was the indispensable advocate and interpreter of that set of principles which he had not merely been bequeathed by the Revolutionary generation of his parents, but for which he had become one of the proud standardbearers. As a result, he was able, in turn, to shape a generation that produced such as Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Thaddeus Stevens, with the ideals and principles both to end the abomination of slavery and to guarantee America's future. In allowing us to see this—allowing us, in a sense, to stand next to Adams, becoming part of the battle, and therefore to appreciate both this incredible period in our nation's history and its central figure—Professor Miller has done a great service to us all.

—Fred Henderson

## *Egypt Conference*

*Continued from page 111*

reviving the old Silk Road have been increasing. In this context there was the strong Chinese appeal, and also the call made by American economist Lyndon LaRouche," whose project was very ambitious, said Abdin. "Such a giant project would be very difficult to accomplish if political, and, at least, financial support were not provided by all the countries through which it will pass. It also requires support from the international organizations and the major powers, such as the U.S., Japan, and the European Union."

#### **'Locomotive of Development'**

Abdin detailed the diverse routes the Silk Road would take to connect Asia to Europe. "Therefore," he said, "it is obvious that the routes of the New Silk Road start in the Far East and end in Europe, and *vice versa*. This means that the two continents of Europe and Asia will be connected as one landmass through a network of routes. Movement from the far west of the European continent, to the far east of Asia, will take hours by land routes, and not air." This, he said, "is what motivated an economist such as LaRouche, to describe the New Silk Road project as a locomotive, which could achieve worldwide development, especially because it passed through major population and technology centers."

In arguing the superiority of LaRouche's conception, Abdin stressed the impetus it would provide for development of the whole world, and the way in which it would overthrow all geopolitical designs, concluding that, "Contrary to the European proposals, the proposal presented by American economist LaRouche on the Productive Triangle in Europe and its various extensions reaching to the Middle East and North Africa—even though they will mainly benefit the Europeans—he views as a basis for a renaissance in the world economy, as a model which should be moved to include every region of the Eurasian continent."