



## Slavery, Freedom and Contract: Blurred Lines and Historical Resistance

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### Summary

Hendrik Hartog's *The Trouble with Minna* complicates the binary between freedom and unfreedom in American history by probing the mixture of slavery and contract in antebellum New Jersey's regime of gradual emancipation. This Essay argues that if Hartog's narrative is read for more general patterns—in addition to everyday lived experiences which Hartog emphasizes—it also reveals resistance to such line-blurring, and historical efforts to construct conceptual boundaries that would separate slave relations from capitalist ones. That resistance should assume a more central conceptual place within the current tide of historiographical emphasis toward blurred lines.

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