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Reviews in My Networks

Brady on Fleming, 'Soon We Will Not Cry: The Liberation of Ruby Smith Robinson'

In: H-SAWH
Author: Cynthia Griggs Fleming
Reviewer: Marilyn Dell Brady


Reviewed by Marilyn Dell Brady (Sul Ross State University) Published on H-SAWH (March, 2000)

The Complexity of a Black Woman Activist's Life: The Story of Ruby Doris Smith Robinson

When I was in graduate school in the early 1980s, we were just discovering the absence of black women in historical scholarship. Interpretations of the Civil Rights Movement in the South during the early 1960s generally focused on the fight for "manhood." Scholars of women's history had begun to look at the white women who were involved in the movement, but they gave little attention to the impact and perspective of black women. Indicative of the state of 1980s scholarship was the title of the book All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave, edited by Gloria Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith.[1]

Now, historians are finally telling the stories of African-American women in the Civil Rights Movement, filling gaps and forcing us to rethink assumptions about gender. Cynthia Griggs Fleming's biography of Ruby Doris Smith Robinson, Soon We Will Not Cry: The Liberation of Ruby Doris Smith Robinson, is a valuable addition to this important development.
Robinson was an individual who merits our attention. Courageous and committed, she served as a prominent leader in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Unlike other black women whose leadership in the movement has been examined, Robinson was young, and, until her illness and death from cancer in 1967, she combined full-time organizing with the demands of a husband and infant. Ruby Doris Smith grew up within the warmth of her family and her African-American neighborhood in Atlanta, where blacks were seeking respectability and progress in the 1940s and 1950s. Spelman College initiated Doris into the graces and academic achievements expected of Spelman women and introduced her to the emerging Civil Rights movement. Hesitantly, she followed the lead of her older sister into activism. After her initial experience with protesting and going to jail with SNCC in 1961, Ruby Doris turned her attention to the administrative needs of the new radical organization. Gradually, she took on power and authority within SNCC. Meanwhile, marriage to Clifford Robinson and the birth of their son escalated her responsibilities. As SNCC expanded and internal conflicts increased after 1965, cancer struck Ruby Doris Robinson, ending her activism.

The strength of Fleming's biography lies in the detailed narrative she provides of Robinson's life. Challenging simple generalizations, Fleming shows us the conflicts and contradictions that Ruby Doris Robinson and her co-workers experienced within themselves and their organization. Particularly compelling is Fleming's depiction of the shifting gender roles among the black activists within SNCC. As Fleming describes, Robinson and her co-workers moved within the boundaries of their culture's definition of proper gender roles, but those definitions were being challenged. Fleming's treatment of Robinson's decision to wear neat skirts and an Afro makes the issues of self-image and womanhood very down-to-earth. Discussion of the practical, non-political advantages that Afros had for black women in the movement provides readers with a concrete sense of their daily choices. In addition, Fleming depicts Robinson's choice to marry and have a child as reflective of her sense that a woman's identity grew out of motherhood. Many African-American women in the movement were past childbearing age or chose not to become mothers, but the intensity of Robinson's work in SNCC was not enough for her. Perhaps she felt the need to balance her unusual leadership role with a more traditionally defined sense of womanhood.

On the question of whether sexism existed within SNCC, Fleming sets forth examples that show both the presence of sexism and resistance to it. Fleming portrays Robinson as both a victim of sexism and an active opponent to it. Fleming makes clear that the climate of SNCC was far from static, with the early sense of intimacy and experimentation fading as SNCC moved into the limelight and "macho" behavior increased. She describes Robinson's anger at Stokely Carmichael's lack of respect for women in the movement, but also points out that, unlike other Civil Rights organizations of the period, SNCC did allow women such as Robinson to move into positions of formal leadership.

Robinson held direct responsibility for managing workers and supplies spread out over a large area. Her position sometimes put her in conflict with the African-American men whom she supervised. At the mercy of her power to grant such desperately needed resources as money and available automobiles, the men's words reflected highly gendered complaints about their need to ask "Big Mama" and their resentment of her strict demands. In discussing these men, Fleming provides insight into gender roles for men as well as for women in SNCC.

According to Fleming, Robinson was outgoing and had a large group of male and female friends. Nothing, however, indicates that Robinson had the strong ties to other black women that often characterized women activists' lives. Ella Baker, for example, is mentioned as a leader in the creation of SNCC, but her relationship to Ruby Doris is not discussed. In fact, Fleming pays much more attention to Robinson's attitude toward white women in the movement than to black women.

For Fleming, the ambivalence and complexity of Robinson's relations with white women belie claims that she hated these women or was jealous of them. Robinson was near the peak of her power within SNCC in 1964, when the organization committed itself to Mississippi Freedom Summer. She feared that bringing black and white northern students into the state would create problems. Strongly committed to putting the movement first, she demanded that others follow her example. Because Robinson believed that interracial sexual relations threatened the movement, she was critical of white female workers. She also expressed indignation when black male leaders left wives and children to take white women as partners. Fleming criticizes the more simplistic assessments of Robinson by Sara Evans and Mary Rothchild, white historians of women in the Civil Rights Movement, and provides details that establish the validity of her position. The fact that both authors published a decade or two ago makes Fleming's comments somewhat dated, however.

Much of the abundant detail that Fleming supplies comes from oral interviews with those who knew Ruby Doris Robinson well. Fleming herself collected many of these, and others had been published previously. Use of the interviews provides the reader with an immediate, personal perspective on Robinson, as well as with anecdotes about her life. The perspective we get from these sources invigorates the narrative of the movement.

Fleming's heavy reliance on oral histories is, however, problematic as well. Many of those interviewed belonged to Robinson's biological and SNCC families. After her death, they were unlikely to be critical of her. Fleming provides little distance from or context for her sources' personal comments. More fundamentally, lack of historical and historiographical context weakens Fleming's analysis of causality, Robinson's motivation, and her impact. Although Fleming cites some of the work on the Civil Rights Movement, she seldom engages with current scholars. Her omission of the abundant scholarship on women's history, SNCC, and the movement generally excludes her from the conversations fundamental to the historical enterprise.
The story of Ruby Doris Smith Robinson certainly deserves a wide readership, but readers too young to remember the Civil Rights Movement may find Fleming's account difficult to follow. Key players and events are not always clearly identified in terms of the larger movement. Better editing and the removal of repetitive phrases would also have helped the book's readability. In addition, while Fleming asks important questions, she seldom gives explicit answers. Even the book's title lacks an explicit unifying explanation. Why does "Soon We Will Not Cry" epitomize Robinson's life? What constitutes her "Liberation"?

Fleming's biography is a narrative history, not an analytical book. She seldom uses the theoretical language of race and gender, politicalization and contextualization. Some readers may want more context and theory. Good stories, however, challenge neat categorizations and carry their own value. Through her use of narrative, Fleming shows us the complexities and contradictions of Robinson and her co-workers. In doing so, she enriches our understanding of African-American womanhood and the Civil Rights Movement.

Note

[1]. Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, eds. All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies (Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press, 1982).

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Bowen on Becker, 'Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk, 1930-1940'

In: H-Appalachia
Author: Jane S. Becker
Reviewer: Mike Bowen


Reviewed by Mike Bowen (Independent Scholar, Asheville, North Carolina) Published on H-Appalachia (March, 2000)

In 1944, James Agee wrote a piece for Partisan Review that protested the reshaping of American traditions. Agee contended that the traditional values Americans sought over the preceding decade ago and been transformed, modernized so to speak, into what he termed the "pseudo-folk." These were not traditional values, but watered down versions with which all Americans could identify with. Agee's article, as described in Chapter One of Jane Becker's Selling Tradition, sums up the author's purpose for the book. Becker examines the Appalachian handicraft industry of the 1930s and illustrates how, through good intentions, these products came to be constructed into an American folk culture that was very different from its original version.

The rise in interest in southern Appalachia as an American folk culture took place in the early 20th century, primarily as a response to the effects of modernization and the Great Depression. Examples of folk cultures were used to find a way of life that did not center on the acquisition of wealth. Images and descriptions of Appalachia and other such cultures, such as the Native Americans, began entering the homes of America through the writings of public intellectuals and later the art of musicians and painters who sought to popularize the notion of an American tradition. Leaders of the settlement movement (which had existed in the region since the Progressive era) saw this as an opportunity to bring economic relief to the mountaineers through the production and sale of traditional Appalachian crafts, such as tufted bedspreads and hand-woven baskets. In somewhat of a throwback to the Arts and Crafts movement, the middle-class women who led the settlement movement began to seek markets for these goods in such places as New York, Chicago, and Palm Springs. At first, the individual agencies achieved a limited success on their own. Then, in 1929, a number of these groups formed "a loose Federation of craft-producing centers and schools" (p. 73) known as the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild. The guild became the chief marketing agent for a majority of the craft-production facilities in the region. In the process, they became the primary factor in
handicraft production, controlling everything from design and materials to pricing and production methods.

The guild, and later the TVA-sponsored Southern Highlands, Inc., worked on a market-based philosophy. If the product was poor in design or made with inferior materials, it was rejected on the grounds that it would not sell. Both agencies hired experts in the fields of design and production to instruct the craft-producers on quality and good taste. Herein lies Becker's main thesis: that the traditional values and crafts of Appalachia were reconstructed to appeal to modern America. By taking such a prominent role, these agencies inadvertently reshaped the traditional handicrafts into something more modern. Production methods were changed to produce a larger number of goods in a faster amount of time and new techniques were taught to the producers that saved time and materials. The craft producers themselves were transformed from a people oppressed with poverty to a source of cheap labor. In the process, both Southern Highlands, Inc. and the Southern Highlands Handicraft Guild changed craft production from a leisure activity to an industrial task.

Becker presents a convincing case for her thesis. She cites example after example of reshaping of the traditional Appalachian craft into a modern domestic good and of the craft-producer into an industrial labor. The book is thoroughly researched but lacks good organization. The chapters are arranged thematically but often shift chronologically and geographically so quickly that the book becomes hard to follow. Becker would be better served to do more interpretation and present less detailed information to enhance her points and connect them to the rest of the book.

Jane Becker's Selling Tradition is a meaningful, yet sometimes confusing, look at the Appalachian handicraft industry of the early 20th century. The author contends that the traditional aspects of the crafts and their producers fell victim to the commercialization they sought to avoid, resulting in a devaluation of the producers, a loss of the uniqueness of the crafts themselves, and an “Americanizing” of the Appalachian culture to make it more acceptable to the American public. The study concludes that, while many of the external groups and individuals that promoted the creation and sale of handicrafts had good intentions, they actually subjected the mountaineers to the demands of the marketplace and turned them into industrial, rather than craft, producers.
The distinguished scholars who present their work in this volume are taking off their gloves, and some of them are throwing them to the ground.

The essays offered in this collection, which were all presented as lectures at SAWH or Southern Historical Association conferences, portray southern women's lives during several eras. In "Columbus Meets Pocahontas in the American South," Theda Perdue covers the colonial period by dramatizing the initial meeting of European men and Native American women. Columbus and Pocahontas, who of course never met, represent "invader and defender, man and woman" (p. 82). Perdue uses the device of a fictitious encounter to examine the misconceptions European men held of Native women based upon cultural expectations. Native women's clothing, adornment, and directness born of an egalitarian society signified for European men uninhibited sexuality. White men, blinded by sexual standards imposed by notions of ownership, could not see Native sexual prohibitions that were based upon spiritual beliefs and respect for the balance of nature.

Jean B. Lee's lecture calls for historians to shift from a telescopic to a microscopic focus in order to "Experience the American Revolution." Lee argues that the true experience of the Revolution has been remolded by successive generations until it has become "more imaginatively celebrated than authentically remembered" (p. 101). Nineteenth-century patriots used the Revolution to forge a nation splintering under the crush of change generated by industrial capitalism. Late twentieth-century historians have submerged the human story of the American experiment under lofty studies of ideology and debates over the social and economic causes of revolt. For Lee, the Revolution can be resurrected best by studies that are site-specific, such as her own work on Charles County, Maryland, an area shaped by the war even though no actual battles occurred there.

Catherine Clinton's "Sex and the Sectional Conflict" focuses on the "sexual politics" leading up to the Civil War (p. 44). As northern abolitionists stepped up their pressure against the South's stubborn retention of slavery, rhetorical debates between the sections increasingly used feminine metaphors to tinge the opposing region with weakness. In this context, Clinton argues, the South viewed northern abolitionists as unmanly individuals led by female reformers who had turned from their proper sphere to participate in public agitation, even speaking to "promiscuous audiences" of both women and men (p. 60). On the other hand, Clinton interprets John Brown's raid on the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry in western Virginia as a sexual assault on a weakening South. Indeed, she asserts that the "sexualized language" adopted by the South to describe Brown's raid is evidence that southerners viewed his attack as a "figurative 'rape'" (p. 60). According to Clinton, Brown had to be executed for his crime "not in spite of but because of white southern admiration" for Brown's manly and courageous act (p. 62). Furthermore, Brown's crime against the South offered northern male abolitionists "an opportunity to break free of the feminization of abolitionism" and heralded the "dawning of an era of martial virtue" (p. 61).

Suzanne Lebsock's lecture on the suffrage movement in Virginia acquires southern white women suffragists of Aileen Kraditor's well-known charge of "expediency" and issues a lesser indictment of "not-so-bad" (p. 40).[1] For "Woman Suffrage and White Supremacy: A Virginia Case Study," Lebsock searched through suffrage meeting records and editorials in Virginia newspapers from 1912 to 1920, uncovering few racial arguments by either side in the suffrage debate. In fact, when race did surface in the dialogue, it was the antisuffragists who raised it, while the suffragists deemed "white supremacy...a bogus issue" (p. 34). In Virginia, as in the rest of the country, the suffrage "argument came straight from the national book," focusing on the rights and/or privileges of voting, rather than the argument that the votes of white women would counter black men's ballots (p. 32). Lebsock argues that Virginia's failure to pass either a state suffrage amendment or the federal Anthony Amendment stemmed less from racism than from the state's "opposition to feminism" (p. 37).

Other studies in the volume reveal that even without the vote southern women have been politically active. Taking Off the White Gloves illustrates women's history's integrative approach to studying the past, blending economic, labor, political, and social history with oral history, literary analysis, and cultural history to find the half of the human story that has been missing. Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore's article, "But She Can't Find Her [V. O.] Key": Writing Gender and Race into Southern Political History," is a prime example. Gilmore argues that a study of events leading to the armed attack against black citizens in Wilmington, N.C., in 1898 demonstrates that the rapid political fall of male white supremacists cannot be understood "until we write about" their experiences "by gendering and racing politics" (p. 127). When white supremacists editorialized their views that whites were superior, that black women were morally inferior, and that black men lacked the qualities necessary to vote responsibly, black women responded by not only refusing to show deference to white women but striking "back in the language of the streets" (p. 131). Unlike political historians such as V. O. Key, Gilmore argues that the white supremacists knew that "they did not act with impunity in a lily-white male world" (p. 134).

Mary Frederickson's essay, entitled "'Sassing Fate': Women Workers in the Twentieth-Century South," illustrates the use of both cliometrics and "life histories" to better understand the economic struggles of southern working women during the first decades of the twentieth century (p. 18). Analyzing the limited job opportunities available to both white and black women who rarely, if ever, enjoyed the luxury of wearing white gloves, Frederickson argues that these women slowly left agricultural and domestic employment to enter the industrial work force. As a backdrop to the women's rough working lives, Frederickson illustrates the conflicts these female workers faced in their personal lives, from living in poor conditions on subsistence farms or in cramped apartments to enduring abusive relationships. These very struggles, however, gave women familiarity with "survival strategies" that "primed women for collective action...when the opportunity to participate in collective protests" against unfair employment practices arose (p. 22).
On the path to political expedience.

Amended by calling yourself a bolshevik (p. 30). Lebsock argues that there is a wide range between right and wrong, including actions of black women's expression, including autobiography, art, dance, quilting, body language, oral histories, and fashion. Even the way black women adorned themselves, Hine argues, loudly communicated their self-identification when their voices were threatened into silence. Hine urges us to listen.

One trend apparent in Taking Off the White Gloves is that when scholars find ways to locate women's experiences in the past, they discover innovative avenues for research and abandon the stale, dichotomous searches for right and wrong, good and evil, oppressor and oppressed. Instead, as these essays exhibit, the free use of historical imagination and close analysis of subtle documents shed light on the gray-shaded areas where human beings really live. Lebsock's analytical approach to the suffrage movement in Virginia, for example, helped her “rehabilitat[e] the reputation of the white woman suffragists” because she understood “that bad and not-so-bad are worth distinguishing from one another” (pp. 30, 40). Likewise, Clinton mixed power and status with gender in her term “penach[ry]” to explain the control elite white men in the antebellum South had over not only women and blacks but white men of the lower classes as well. Lee's study of Revolution-era life in Charles County, Maryland, required her to apply several approaches, both traditional and social, to create “a coherent narrative of revolution and war” that included all segments of society (p. 104). Gilmore discarded the “Balkanization of history” that she believes is separating subfields and obscuring the gray-shaded areas of the past (p. 139). Her willingness to study less-chronicled incidents leading up to the Wilmington massacre “expand[s] the site of political places where African Americans practiced resistance” to public sidewalks, thus applying cultural anthropology to a political history of the postbellum South (p. 139).

Another thread unifying this volume is “the insistence by so many of [the] authors that the personal is political” (p. 4). Although true of the scholarly studies, this maxim is even more apparent in the lectures that focus on women's efforts to gain a place in the historical profession. Virginia Van Der Veer Hamilton's piece, “Clio's Daughters: Whence and Whither,” begins with the rather droll observation that at least women historians have been granted the title “historian” and haven't had to fight off a label like “historianness” (p. 64). Hamilton's look at women's entrance into the profession begins with Mary Beard, who, although an academic in her own right and one of the first to apply an integrative approach to historical research, was considered merely her husband's assistant by his peers. Hamilton goes on to discuss “the academic wife as typist,” proofreader, illustrator, researcher, and ghost-writer (p. 70). These wives, Hamilton argues, were “like sharecroppers...perform[ing] hard physical labor on someone else's property” (p. 70).

Women's entrance into the profession was difficult, stymied by the gender-based assumption that academe was "too hard on a woman's nervous system" and "they can't take the pressure" (p. 72). As Hamilton notes, however, the pressure was stepped up a few notches for the women who tried. Work that women did had to be their "absolute best," not just "passing quality" (p. 74). In graduate programs, grade discrimination faced even those whose work raved that of male students. Once women did obtain teaching positions, their own gender assumptions often impeded their professional lives, as many "felt obliged to defer to male peers" (p. 75). Women faced salary discrimination and were often thwarted in their attempts to serve as department chairs because faculty did not believe "that first-class male scholars could...be recruited by a female department head" (p. 76). Challenges such as these "burned themselves" into Hamilton's nervous system, and, fortunately for the profession, she found the strength to overcome them (p. 74).

Likewise, Anne Firor Scott's "Unfinished Business" examines women's historical consciousness. Women who understood that their experiences had historical significance -- such as westering pioneer women, women who suffered through the Civil War, and women involved in the suffrage movement -- began to record their personal histories. The first female scholars who, in the 1920s and 1930s, began to write histories of such southern women, however, met with little acclaim. Despite "excellent" work, "theirs was an area not yet recognized by the gatekeepers as a legitimate field of study," writes Scott (p. 118). That would have to wait until the 1970s, for the young female graduate students who "had been exhilarated and energized by the civil rights movement." In Scott's view, historians of southern women have advanced professionally up to the present, as "the field continues to grow both in substance...and in theoretical sophistication" (p. 119).

Carol Bleser's "Tokens of Affection: The First Three Women Presidents of the Southern Historical Association" complements the professional retrospectives of Hamilton and Scott. Bleser honors the three women who first pushed past the "gatekeepers" and gained recognition in the field of southern history, exemplified by their election to the presidency of the SHA: Ella Lonn (1946), Kathryn Abby Hanna (1953), and Mary Elizabeth Massey (1972). Although only Massey worked in the subfield of southern women's history, all three women broke down barriers that had slowed women's entrance into the profession.

As this volume illustrates and Scott argues, since women have entered the profession in great numbers "women's history has followed a separate track from the grand narratives of the American past created by male historians." This brings us back to the metaphor of taking off the gloves and throwing them to the ground as a challenge. None of these scholars shows any reticence about declaring where adjustments to traditional scholarship need to be made. Nor are the historians shy about the way they phrase their opinions of past mistakes. In response to Kraditor's thesis that white women suffragists leaned to the right to gain support, for instance, Lebsock answers: "Of course the suffrage movement made itself more respectable; you do not get the Constitution of the United States amended by calling yourself a bolshevik" (p. 30). Lebsock argues that there is a wide range between right and wrong, including actions on the path to political expedience. For her part, Lee also throws down the gauntlet, squarely facing off against the "near obsession
with the role of ideology" in studies of the American Revolution and dubbing the debate over ideological origins "the kudzu of Revolutionary scholarship" (p. 102). Perhaps the volume's most outspoken challenger to a dichotomous approach comes from Gilmore. She laments that the sad assumption that southern white males existed in only two classes -- elite and yeoman -- was propagated by Wilbur S. Cash, who "ironically...ignored the man he was: an urban, middle-class reporter harnessed to wage labor by a New South rag; a commuter, living with his mamma" (p. 137).

Despite the rich scholarship and fine humor displayed in Taking Off the White Gloves, the collection suffers from a few problems. Since the articles are arranged chronologically by the dates the speeches were delivered, the focus of scholarship seems rambling, with the eras out of sync. This causes some confusion. It would have been more coherent if the chapters had been organized into parts, with research lectures organized chronologically by topic in one section and the professional perspectives in another.

There are also times when southern distinctiveness, promised in the introduction, is missing. For instance, Frederickson does not make clear what is distinctively southern about the financial problems faced by the women in her study, other than that these women moved out of an agricultural economy later than women in the Northeast. Throughout the country, women who struggled economically early in the twentieth century faced similar difficulties. What, besides timing, made southern women's challenges distinct? The same can be asked of Lee. What was distinctively southern about the Revolutionary-era experiences of Charles County, Maryland? Since one-third of the population has been considered "disaffected" by the Revolution, it is likely that communities in northern colonies experienced similar transformations.

These are minor complaints about a volume that has a great deal to offer. What better way to celebrate thirty years of the Southern Association for Women Historians than to display the work, methods, criticisms, and professional struggles of some of the most distinguished scholars in the field? Any student who intends to focus on this specialty would be well served to read Taking Off the White Gloves first. Although many of the volume's exhortations to approach southern women's history from a new perspective have been taken up, the book still provides a wealth of exciting ideas for innovative scholarship. Taking Off the White Gloves demonstrates that the work of southern women's history is being accomplished by making use of any and all available tools, just as Gerda Lerner proposed a quarter of a century ago.[2]

Notes


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Kenzer on Rogers, 'Confederate Home Front: Montgomery During the Civil War'

In: H-CivWar
Author: William Warren Rogers, Jr.
Reviewer: Robert Kenzer


Reviewed by Robert Kenzer (Department of History, University of Richmond) Published on H-CivWar (February, 2000)

The First Confederate Capital Faces the Civil War

The initial question a reader asks about a book on Montgomery, Alabama, during the Civil War is whether the author determines if it
Montgomery, he simply notes, "Most whites did not own slaves" (66). Well, this fact was not unique to Montgomery; surely the slave and free schedules of the 1860 manuscript census reveal a fuller picture of the city's system of slaveholding as well as other socio-economic measurements. However, Rogers' goal is not to provide statistical portraits. Instead, his compelling narrative of how white and black Montgomerians faced the conflict transcends a narrow scholarly audience and reaches out to many more general Civil War readers.

While Montgomery would hold off the external threat of Union forces until the end of the war, Rogers ably uses the Southern Claim Commission records to prove that the community also faced a far less visible internal threat. Montgomery Unionists, who "transcended class lines" and were largely composed of men of "northern backgrounds," Rogers finds, "defied the local consensus but not openly" (105-106). Indeed, the Unionist Daniel Starr, a Connecticut native who had lived in Montgomery throughout the 1850s, paid the ultimate price when, as the result of being in an inebriated condition, he revealed his true allegiance. After holding him in jail for a brief period, "unknown parties seized and lynched" Starr (112).

Rogers' disclosure of the "unspoken and carefully guarded covenant" of Montgomery Unionists alone makes this book worth reading (115). Far too often reviewers criticize books essentially because they feel that the author did not write the book they would have written. Hence, it should be stated that this clearly is not the book this reviewer would have written. There are too many points where Rogers could have provided more specific information, particularly of a quantitative nature. For example, when discussing labor in wartime Montgomery, he simply notes, "Most whites did not own slaves" (66). Well, this fact was not unique to Montgomery; surely the slave and free schedules of the 1860 manuscript census reveal a fuller picture of the city's system of slaveholding as well as other socio-economic measurements. However, Rogers' goal is not to provide statistical portraits. Instead, his compelling narrative of how white and black Montgomerians faced the conflict transcends a narrow scholarly audience and reaches out to many more general Civil War readers. This achievement deserves commendation.

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It is impossible to read Mark Neely's *Southern Rights: Political Prisoners and the Myth of Confederate Constitutionalism* without thinking of his earlier book *The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties*, which won the 1992 Pulitzer prize in history. In *The Fate of Liberty* Neely examined the court and prison records of Americans arrested in the North for various antigovernment activities to determine whether or not Lincoln's rather dark reputation for suppressing political dissent was justified. He found that it was not, and in so doing was rightly praised for his meticulous research and careful, balanced arguments. In *Southern Rights*, Neely's purpose is different, but his methods are much the same. Whereas in *The Fate of Liberty* he wished to determine whether or not Lincoln deserved blame for the state of civil liberties in the North, in *Southern Rights* he tried to discover whether or not Jefferson Davis and the Confederate government rate the generally positive treatment afforded them by Confederate apologists—and many scholars—for their record in preserving Southerners' civil liberties. "Most interpretations assume that restrictions of constitutional liberty went decidedly against the grain of the white people of the South," Neely wrote, "despite their other disagreements, on that point the historians have reached a tacit consensus" (p. 7).

Neely challenged this consensus by examining the available arrest records, court opinions, and other documents related to Confederate wartime arrests of civilians; in other words, he applied basically the same methodology which worked so well in *Fate of Liberty*. Focusing particularly on cases involving suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, declarations of martial law, draft evasion, and other expressions of dissent, he found that the Confederate record was not much different from that of the Union. Confederate authorities, Neely argues, used much the same pragmatic, flexible approach characteristic of the Lincoln administration. "Though Confederate measures taken for internal security, when noticed at all, have been assumed to be necessary, and, if anything, too mild, there is evidence of political repression," Neely wrote (p. 132). People in the Confederacy were arrested for their political beliefs, jailed without benefit of the writ of habeas corpus, and subjected to the sometimes not-very-tender mercies of martial law and military rule.

Given the South's self-proclaimed role as a champion of individual rights, one might have expected an outcry of protests, or at the very least a robust conversation about civil liberties among Southern politicians, lawyers, and newspapermen. But Neely argues that this was not the case. Most white Southerners quietly acquiesced in the suspension of the writ, declarations of martial law, and other such measures. Neely identified a "longing for order in the South, released by independence from the North and quite at odds with region's fabled desire for liberty or 'southern rights'" (p. 34). He was struck by the contrast with the North, where Lincoln's various attempts to curb antwar protests triggered a boisterous debate about civil liberties in wartime. "It seems remarkable that there are no celebrated cases challenging the power of the Confederate government to interfere with the daily lives of its citizens," he wrote, "Confederate history does not have its equivalent of *Ex parte Merryman* or of General Andrew Jackson's fine for contempt" (p. 62). The Confederacy was no different from the North; it wanted to win the war. "Southern society was, at bottom, American and much the same as Northern society. It consisted of people who valued both liberty and order. They did not bridle more than normally at restrictive measures taken by the government to fight a war for national existence" (p. 79).

At its heart, *Southern Rights* is about what Neely perceives as an overweening Confederate streak of hypocrisy; the very title of his book is a statement of irony. Neely is impatient with what he characterizes as the "strident" and "noisy" posturing of Confederates on matters of civil liberties and individual rights. He is also deeply distressed by a tendency among Confederate historians to take Southerners' declarations of libertarianism at face value. "Antebellum politicians exaggerated sensitivity about southern rights as a means of combating northern power," Neely wrote, "but historians should not exaggerate as well" (p. 79). There is merit in this argument, and in the book as a whole. Professor Neely should be commended for pursuing this subject matter in the first place. Many scholars of Confederate history, and certainly the lay public, would much prefer to discuss battlefields and generals. Even the admirable recent trend in the field towards studies of social and cultural topics tends to neglect matters of law and constitutionalism. There is also a real paucity of primary source materials available, and these are of a generally fragmentary nature. Arrest records for Confederate political prisoners, for example, are scattered throughout various archive collections, often with no index or other finding aids. Confederate legal and constitutional history is a neglected topic for a very good reason, and Neely should be commended for exhibiting the patience and resourcefulness necessary to pursue this evidence.

In doing so, Neely shed light on some very dark and musty corners of Confederate history. He wrote a brilliant little chapter on the relationship between the prohibition of alcohol and martial law in the Confederacy. He introduced the reader to the almost completely unknown office of "habeas corpus commissioners," quasi-legal government officials who acted as "the War Department's shadow courts" (p. 80). Neely also examined the careers of some obscure but fascinating individuals like Thomas C. Hindman, the irascible military governor of Arkansas who unabashedly proclaimed the need to take harsh measures against Southern dissenters, and North Carolina judge Richmond M. Pearson, who employed some very interesting legal arguments to block conscription in his state. It is also to Neely's credit that he does not shirk from pointing out what should have been obvious to any historian of the Confederacy, but which has been strangely overlooked; that the issue of civil liberties in the Confederacy should be seen as one involving black as well as white Americans. Neely points out that the vaunted Confederate concern for individual rights was a concern for white rights only. African-Americans didn't much enter the Confederate field of vision on this point. It is high time that Confederate history reconceptualize itself.
These issues were important, because much of what constituted a Confederate conversation concerning personal rights and government interference involved matters like sequestration and impressment, matters which have no direct counterpart in the legal history of the North. This might also have caused Neely to moderate his conclusion that the South had no real conversation about civil liberties. In fact, impressment cases raised serious concerns about individual rights in the South. And the Confederacy may well have had its version of Ex parte Merryman in a sequestration case called James Louis Petigru vs. The Confederate States of America, in which a South Carolina Unionist challenged the Confederate national government’s right to conduct sequestration investigations which impinged upon Confederates’ personal rights. Both impressment and sequestration involved property rights, and it is plausible to suggest that this question of property constituted a conversation about civil liberties which, while differing from the North’s debate over habeas corpus and martial law, was in its way quite robust.

I also wondered if Professor Neely was quite fair in his analysis of Jefferson Davis. He is annoyed with invidious comparisons between Lincoln and Davis where civil liberties are concerned, taking special umbrage with the suggestion by many historians that Davis was less reluctant to suspend the writ and declare martial law because of “habitual and consistent constitutional principles” which Lincoln lacked. On the contrary, Neely argued, Davis was willing to repress political dissent when he thought circumstances warranted such action. “Lincoln was no ‘dictator,’” Neely wrote, “and Jefferson Davis was no ‘constitutionalist’” (p. 172). Perhaps unwittingly, Neely is actually rehabilitating Davis’s reputation here, for the Confederate president has often been criticized for being so stiff and formal in his constitutional scruples that he lacked the necessary flexibility to meet Confederate war needs. Neely suggests that the opposite is true. But I think Neely presses this point a bit too far. He cuts Lincoln a great deal of slack, suggesting that, when Lincoln quickly moved to suspend the writ of habeas corpus in Kentucky and Maryland in 1861, he “recognized the realities of power.” On the other hand, he suggests that Davis rather cynically “opted for a pose of dedication to civil liberty as a way of attracting these states to his side” (p. 154). Perhaps this made sense as good political strategy for Davis; but why should we assume it was a “pose”? Perhaps Davis pursued a policy here that was, at least to his mind, both pragmatic and principled. Maybe he really believed himself to be both a defender of constitutional liberty and a flexible political leader. Lincoln scholars—Neely among them—have long suggested (and rightly so) that it is wrong to draw too cynical a distinction between principle and practical politics where Lincoln is concerned. Should it be less so for Davis?

Neely is impatient with the hypocrisy, in Confederates themselves and in much of Confederate history, which suggests an unusual anxiety for civil liberties in a Confederate nation which he believes was in fact all too comfortable with wartime violations of those liberties. On the whole this is laudable; it encourages scholars of Confederate history to press beyond the well-worn shibboleths of Lost Cause mythology. If such an approach can also strike a blow at the abominable history perpetrated (often all too successfully) by modern neo-Confederates, so much the better. Yet I wonder if those of us who write Civil War history might be better served by a more balanced, charitable point of view, suggesting that each side was afflicted not with hypocrisy, but with unresolved internal contradictions and tensions on a whole host of issues, including the proper balance between liberty and order. To this end, Professor Neely’s Southern Rights is a useful beginning, a starting point for a conversation we should be having about the intellectual underpinnings of the Confederacy, and the Union as well.

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Recalling Midwifery as Both a Source of Pride and a Sign of Deprivation

University of Virginia anthropologist Gertrude Jacinta Fraser has written an absorbing, provocative account of the gradual elimination of African-American midwives from a county in Virginia's Piedmont between 1920 and 1960. Central to the story is Fraser's exploration of how residents in the 1980s and 1990s recalled this transition and attempted to make sense of a past that simultaneously evoked pain, warmth, and nostalgia for a more interdependent community.

Fraser's study is based on a combination of archival sources and fieldwork, including more than 100 interviews with African Americans in a county of 12,000 residents. Interestingly, Fraser spoke to only four women who called themselves midwives and five who delivered babies but rejected the title. The county's lone public health nurse represents her profession. The small sample of midwives makes the book more a narrative about how a community remembers midwifery than a first-hand history of African-American midwifery in the South. That said, Fraser's subtitle, which best describes her work, is a fascinating subject in its own stead.

As a historian, I'm more comfortable with oral history "sources" than Fraser's anonymous "informants" and with a named place than pseudonymous "Green River County." Lacking appendices, transcripts, place names, or the actual names of interviewed individuals, readers must accept or reject Fraser's interpretations of her fieldwork without historians' customary level of documentation. (She proves herself a sound interpreter of sources in the book's first half, which is largely based on traditional archival and secondary sources.) Disciplinary quibbles aside, anthropologists have added a great deal to our understanding of how people interpret the past, and medical anthropology in particular has taken the lead in articulating women's selective compliance with and resistance to the process of medicalization in the twentieth century.[1]

*African American Midwifery in the South* is especially strong on a conceptual level. Fraser highlights the refusal of southern whites to emphasize environmental and structural causes of maternal and infant mortality among blacks. Her research illuminates the unidirectional lines of authority that marked midwives' relationships with public health nurses and obscured possible models of health-care delivery that would have blended access to scientific advances, affordability, and succor. Fraser correctly points to hospital births as a marker of status among some African Americans and as an indicator of progress among others. Characteristic of Fraser's ability to explain county residents' often ambiguous responses to midwives is her assertion that "their involvement in birth and death, their supposed ability to mediate between the real and supernatural world, and their authority in spheres of knowledge closed off to ordinary persons meant that midwives had been regarded with what might be described as awe." As a result, public health officials' campaigns to discredit midwives "may have overlaid existing ambivalent attitudes toward these women" (p. 143).

In Chapter Eight, Fraser provides a highly original explanation of why older women in the county, who still admire and respect the midwives who delivered their own children, consider the medicalization of childbirth "inevitable and not necessarily detrimental" (p. 165). While refusing to condemn the old ways, "Green River County" residents believe that women's and children's bodies have changed along with changes in the community. They don't expect traditional practices to be salient to an new generation. For example, some women with knowledge of medicinal herbs refused to treat their grandchildren with them because "younger bodies did not work according to the principles with which they were familiar" (pp. 170-71).

Fraser positions her work as an alternative to narratives of "great men" and those of "midwifery on the rebound." Such interpretations portray midwives as retaining or regaining their autonomy despite public health officials' denunciations. Some also promote a romanticized image of cooperation between black midwives and white doctors and nurses. Fraser advocates a third strategy that "stresses the gradual destruction of the African American midwifery tradition over the first half of the twentieth century" (p. 40). Although she recognizes that these approaches need not be mutually exclusive and includes a study of Virginia's influential state registrar, William Plecker, in Chapter Three, Fraser's historiographic preference for the "suppressed midwifery" narrative is clear and a bit strident. This may be the result of her focus on a particular county in Virginia and the public health personnel involved at both the state and county level. Certainly, Fraser's descriptions of Plecker, a eugenicist who directed midwives to maintain racial distinctions and "basically controlled public health in Virginia through most of the first half of the century," and "Mrs. Stewart," the county's long-time public health nurse, who thought black women "ignorant" for relying on older women from their own community, make anyone contemplating a top-down study pause (pp. 38, 222-23).

Still, individual policy makers and medical personnel made/make a difference. For example, the value of a study of public health...
Fraser sets forth some of her most compelling conclusions in Chapters Ten and Eleven. Interview subjects spoke in detail about African-American women's efforts to define and control risks during pregnancy and midwives' influence and admonitions during the postpartum period. The interviews demonstrate that midwives' models for the delivery of the placenta and treatment of the umbilical cord differed from those of public health officials. According to Fraser, "incidents of resistance to the educational agenda of medical personnel often occurred over these explicitly noninvasive methods of treating the body or maintaining its health" (p. 235). In contrast, interview subjects had very little to say about the actual delivery of a child—a situation in which a midwife's abilities, traditional practices, or the exigencies of a medical emergency might require that she put her hands into the birth canal. Both older women and older men interviewed by Fraser knew of the legal prohibitions against midwives doing so. The subjects' unwillingness to describe techniques used by midwives or recall details of deliveries are insightfully interpreted by Fraser as less obvious signs of resistance. As a fourth-generation midwife told Fraser on the subject of entering the birth canal, "They [midwives in her grandmother's time] knowed how. . . . I know how too. But I am not allowed to do it. And I wouldn't do it for nothing cause its against the law." This insight, along with county residents' silence on the subject, indicates that Fraser is correct to read between the lines (p. 155).

In conclusion, Professor Fraser treats readers to a well-written study, impressive both conceptually and in its execution. Her ability to interpret her subjects' silences, as well as the information they provide, makes this volume useful to historians and social scientists studying women's health, southern history, African-American communities, and professional rivalries among practitioners. In addition, Fraser's intellectual honesty when the residents of "Green River County" refused to tell her what she wanted to hear confirms her credibility and provides an excellent model for graduate students.

Notes


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At the outbreak of the American Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln assembled his civil and military leaders to discuss strategy for opening the Mississippi River to commerce and for ending what he termed a "rebellion" in the Southern states. Seated around a large table, examining a map of the nation, Lincoln made a wide sweeping gesture with his hand then placed his finger on the map and said: "Vicksburg is the key. The war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket." More and more historians have come to accept the validity of Lincoln's statement and believe that the Civil War was won in the West. In response to the growing interest generated by the combined army/ navy operations for control of the Mississippi River, their research and writing have resulted in a fury of publications on the Vicksburg campaign in recent years, including an array of works for children such as *Cobblestone*.

Award-winning author Mary Ann Fraser, whose *In Search of the Grand Canyon* was awarded a School Library Journal "Best Book Award," joins the ranks of those attempting to unravel the complexity of the operations for Vicksburg. Fraser, who has written and illustrated more than forty books for children, including several other highly praised books for Henry Holt and Company, has produced a marvelous account of the struggle for Vicksburg. Appealing to students on the Third- through Sixth-Grade reading level, she provides young readers with a cogent and fast-paced narrative that is clear, well-written, and easy to digest. *Vicksburg* is a moving account of this decisive campaign that weaves the experiences of citizens and soldiers alike into a gripping narrative that is a delight to read.

Assisting the readers to gain a better understanding of the events and people involved in the struggle for control of the Confederate Gibraltar, the work is beautifully illustrated with forty contemporary drawings, five maps, and a dozen photographs. An added bonus is a glossary of terms to aid young readers and the bibliography provides sources for additional reading.

Fraser's work will compliment any child's library and help instill a thirst for history in young readers.
The biographies begin with six Marines who made various contributions in Hollywood, then, in alphabetic order, 22 others - some well known to film or television devotees. The authors lead off with Dale Dye, an enlisted who served two tours of duty in Vietnam (Bronze Star and three Purple Hearts), became a Chief Warrant Officer, attended OCS, and was a Captain in Beirut in 1982-1983. Dye has written five military novels, and because of his expertise became a motion picture technical advisor for Oliver Stone, Brian DePalma, and Steven Spielberg, and also appeared in more than 15 films -- notably Platoon (1986). The Last of the Mohicans, (1992), Forrest Gump (1994), Outbreak (1995), and Saving Private Ryan (1998). Sterling Hayden (1916-1968), a schooner commander at age 22, was established film star and a graduate of the British Commando Training School, but was injured in a parachute jump and discharged. He then enlisted as a boot in the Corps in 1942, changed his name to John Hamilton, and served in the Balkans during World War II commanding 400 Yugoslav partisans in guerrilla warfare against the Nazis. A flirtation with Marxism nearly ended his movie career but he cooperated with the House Unamerican Activities Committee, and had a distinguished career in motion pictures, including the role of General Jack D. Ripper in Dr. Strangelove (1964).

Louis Hayward (1909-1968), a star of swashbucklers in the 1930s who became a naturalized American citizen on 6 December 1941, joined the Corps in 1942 and became a combat cinematographer, filming With the Marines at Tarawa (1944), the Academy Award best documentary for that year. The trauma of that invasion led to depression and a complete physical collapse, but Hayward starred in twenty films and three television series. Child actor Brian Keith served as a rear gunner in a SBD Douglas Dauntless dive bomber during missions against the Japanese naval base at Rabaul during World War II, and returned to the stage, radio, films, and television. He has made fifty films and starred in nine television series.

Lee Marvin (1924-1987), a true "wild one," enlisted in August 1942, served in the Marshall Islands (Eniwetok and Kwajalein), and was in the June 1944 Saipan invasion force. His company was ambushed and only six of 241 men survived. Marvin was, as he stated "shot in the ass" (a 9x3x3-inch wound), hospitalized 13 months, and discharged. Disabled and underemployed, he discovered summer stock and progressed to Broadway plays, and motion pictures. For Cat Ballou (1965) he earned the best actor Academy Award, starred in television's M-Squad, and the classic war films The Dirty Dozen (1967), director John Boorman's Hell in the Pacific (1968) with Toshiro Mifune, and The Big Red One (1979). He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery beside Joe Louis, the world heavyweight boxing champion.

Multilingual Pierre "Peter" Ortiz (1913-1988), of French-Spanish parentage, had an extraordinary military record and was the most decorated man to serve in to OSS. He spent five years with the French Foreign Legion in North Africa in the 1930s and rejoined the Legion in 1939, although his ship was torpedoed in the Atlantic before he reached Morocco. Captured by the Germans in North Africa in 1941 he became a POW in Austria, escaped, made his way through Portugal and back to the United States, enlisting in the Marine Corps in June 1942. Ortiz was sent to Morocco where he was wounded and promoted to Captain before being sent to France by the OSS to work with the maquis in 1944. A German battalion at Centron, France trapped Ortiz and four of his men, but he negotiated his own surrender in order to spare retribution by the Gestapo against the village. Again he escaped, was recaptured, escaped again and finally "liberated himself" in April 1945. Ortiz was in training for OSS work in Indochina when the war ended. Two films (13 Rue Madeleine, 1946, starring Jimmy Cagney, and Operation Secret, 1952) were modeled after his exploits, and he worked in a dozen films prior to his death in 1988.

World War I Marine veteran and comedian Bob Burns (1891-1956), inventor of an unusual musical instrument he called the "bazooka," had that name "commandeered" by the U.S. Army in 1943 to designate its new, portable antitank rocket launcher. Macdonald Carey (1913-1994), known in the post-war era as a stage, radio, and television soap opera star, appeared in the 1942 film Wake Island. Inspired, he and other cast members actually joined the Corps immediately thereafter, and he served in the South Pacific. Barry Corbin, son of a Texas state senator, served as a Marine from 1962-1963 but "never left California." His distinguished theater, film, and television career as an actor is enhanced by his screenwriting abilities, and he has fond memories of the Corps. Brian Dennehy, a
student-athlete at Columbia University, joined in 1962 and served on Okinawa; he later discovered acting in theater, motion pictures, and television. Actor and writer Bradford Dillman, a Yale literature and drama graduate, enlisted in the USNR in 1948, was selected for OCS, and as a Marine 2nd Lieutenant was assigned to teach communication skills to Marine veterans rather than being sent to Korea in 1951.

Gene Hackman, a high-school dropout who served two hitches in the Marines and left as a PFC in 1954, had the distinction of serving in China in 1948-1949 keeping Japanese war materiel out of Communist hands. He later aspired to the office of U.S. Secretary of State in the film No Way Out (1987). George Roy Hill, a Yale history and music graduate, joined the Corps in 1943, earned aviator's wings, and piloted transports in the South Pacific. Recalled to duty in 1951, he flew F4F Panther jet fighters during the Korean War. As a story editor and film director, he is known for his stellar direction of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (1969) and The Sting (1973). Harvey Keitel was a Marine enlistee in 1956 and served in Beirut before embarking on his film career (15 so far, including Taxi Driver, 1976, and Pulp Fiction, 1994). Bill Ludigian (1914-1975) had been a pre-law student and radio announcer, and was a film star before joining in 1943. He became a combat photographer and served in the bloody invasions at Peleliu and Okinawa, where the Marines experienced "staggering casualties." Renowned stunt man Jock Mahoney (1919-1989) was a civilian instructor in the U.S. Army Air Corps but enlisted in the Marines in 1943, earned his wings, and flew F4U Corsairs but missed out on actual combat. He worked in many film and television Westerns, and is known for starring in two Tarzan films (1962, 1963).

Better known as an announcer, straight-man and/or sidekick initially for TV's Dick Clark and then for Johnny Carson (1958-1992), silvery-voiced Ed McMahon started his career in the Navy's V-5 Program, transferred to the Marines, and was a flight instructor in F4U Corsair fighters prior to his discharge in 1946. While at Philadelphia's WCAU radio and television he was recalled to active duty and Captain McMahon flew 85 reconnaissance missions in an unarmed Cessna 180 observation plane in Korea (1951-1952). Steve McQueen (1930-1990), a wild and rebellious farm boy from the Midwest who had worked in brothels as a youth, enlisted in the Marines in 1947, was a crewman on tanks and amphibious tractors, and served in the guards assigned to President Truman's yacht, Sequoia. Odd jobs and Actor's Studio led to Broadway and television (Wanted Dead or Alive, 1958-1961), a distinguished career in motion pictures, and respect as a professional motorcycle and racecar driver. The Magnificent Seven (1960), The War Lover (1962), The Great Escape (1963), Bullitt (1968), and Papillon (1971) are among his well-known films.

Hugh O'Brian, born Hugh Charles Krampe, son of a Marine captain, enlisted in 1943 and became a Drill Instructor at age 18 when he met John Wayne who became a life-long friend. O'Brien has the distinction of being the last man Wayne "killed" in cinema (The Shootist, 1976), but had also starred as television's Wyatt Earp (1955-1971) and is respected widely in Hollywood for establishing HOBY - the Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership Program - in 1958.

Gerald O'Laughlin enlisted in 1942, was a commissioned officer, trained for the invasion of Japan, and served in the occupation forces in Nagasaki (1945-1946). Completing a degree in mechanical engineering, he attended Actor's Studio and became a distinguished actor, director, and teacher. George Peppard (1928-1994) enlisted in the Corps in 1946 and took amphibious training. His interests in civil engineering were sidetracked for drama and the Actor's Studio, leading to memorable television series (Banacek 1972-1974, and A-Team, 1983-1987) and films (Breakfast at Tiffany's with Audrey Hepburn in 1961, and Operation Crossbow, 1965). Lee Powell (1908-1944), who was the first Lone Ranger in pre-war serial films, enlisted in 1942, served in the South Pacific as a Sergeant in the 2nd Marine Division, but died of acute alcohol poisoning at age 35 on the island of Tinian.

Tyrone Power (1914-1958) was already a Hollywood megastar (A Yank in the RAF, 1942, and Crash Dive, released in 1943) when he joined the Corps as a boot in April 1942. He, qualified for OCS, received his commission, became an aviator, and served as a command transport pilot flying R4D Dakotas and C47s in the Pacific, notably, Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Returning to his film career, he made Captain from Castile (1947) with former Navy Chief Boatswain's Mate Cesar Romero, and a dozen other motion pictures (Abandon Ship, The Sun Also Rises, Witness for the Prosecution, all 1957) but died of a heart attack at age 44. Television's Lawman (1958-1962) at six feet four inches, John Russell (1921-1991) was initially rejected for service because of his stature, but he served on Guadalcanal as a Marine 2nd Lieutenant in 1942 before a medical discharge, and would make a dozen motion pictures - many with Clint Eastwood. Holding a degree in English literature, Dartmouth College-educated Robert Ryan (1909-1973) was also a heavyweight boxing champion for four years before enlisting and becoming a Camp Pendleton Drill Instructor. A committed pacifist after 1945, he starred in films including The Dirty Dozen (1967) with fellow Marine Lee Marvin, and Sam Peckenpaugh's classic, The Wild Bunch (1969).

George C. Scott's service on Arlington National Cemetery's grave detail in the mid-1940s made a lasting impression. Graduating from the University of Missouri, Scott taught at nearby Stephens College, and then moved from stage to memorable screen and television appearances - especially as General Buck Turgidson in Stanley Kubrick's Dr. Strangelove (1964), as the lead in Patton (1970), and portraying Hemingway in Islands in the Stream (1977). Tad Van Brunt (1921-1977) was born and raised in Japan of Dutch-American and British parentage so that his fluency in the Japanese language led to assignments in Guam and Okinawa as an interrogator of enemy troops. He was so popular among the native Okinawans that they asked that he be allowed to stay as governor of their island in 1945. This, of course, did not happen, and he had bit parts in three films before rejoining the Marines in 1948 and participating in the Inchon, Korea landings as an intelligence officer in 1951. A career in advertising and sales preceded his death from alcoholism. Comedian Jonathan Winters served on the Marine Detachment on the aircraft carrier Bon Homme Richard off the coast of Japan in 1945 and was in the occupation force at Yokosuka. After finishing high school and graduating from Dayton Art Institute in Ohio, Winters parlayed a local humor contest into features on the Jack Parr, Steve Allen, and Gary Moore television shows and success in films and as a writer.
The authors also include brief essays on a number of Corps-related topics: Parris Island, Saipan, Camp Pendleton, Peleliu, Okinawa, Camp Elliott, and "Learning Japanese." The four appendices also provide enlightening information. "A Few More Good Men" lists 36 other actors who served in the USMC - quite a few comedians - from Don Adams to Burt Young, with surprises such as Drew Cary, Bob Keeshan (Captain Kangaroo), and former "presidential candidate" Pat Paulsen, to the not so surprising television and cinema actors Mike Farrell (M*A*S*H), Glenn Ford, Scott Glenn (The Right Stuff, 1983), Warren Oates, and Bo Svenson. James Whitmore is also on this list but your reviewer wishes that he had been accorded a full profile -- could anyone forget "Mac" in Leon Uris's Marine Corps classic film Battle Cry (1955)? A second appendix, "Lillian Russell and Women in the Marines" documents World War I Recruiting Sergeant Russell and traces the history of women in Corps through 1997, noting that Marine second lieutenant Sarah Deal became the first woman naval aviator in 1995. (What ever happened to Ensign Casey "Sugar Britches" Seeger from the 1982 film An Officer and a Gentleman who wanted to "fly jets"? She must have washed out.) Another addition is "The Swinging Sounds of Bob Crosby's Bands" profiles George Robert "Bob" Crosby, band director of the Fifth Marine Division in the South Pacific, 1944-1945. Lastly, "Entertaining the Troops includes 21 images and captions illustrating Hollywood stars who assisted or visited the troops - from Marion Davies in World War I through Charlton Heston in Vietnam. Mary Pickford, Joe E. Brown, Gary Cooper, Randy Scott, Danny Kaye, Jane Russell, Bob Hope, Martha Raye, and even John Wayne are among these luminaries.

The book is well written and very entertaining, and the biographies are compelling, often revealing little-known facts, and are accompanied by many never-before-published photographs, making the volume a worthy companion to Stars in Blue as another "Who's Who" in Hollywood and the USMC. A trip to the videotape rental store will be in order for some film buffs, but scholars of military history will find much to enjoy and to inform.

[Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this review are those of the author and not of his employer or any other federal agency.]

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**Mills on Neely and Jay, 'The Marble City: A Photographic Tour of Knoxville's Graveyards'**

In: H-PCAACA
Author: Jack Neely, Aaron Jay
Reviewer: Cynthia Mills


**Reviewed by** Cynthia Mills (University of Maryland) **Published on** H-PCAACA (November, 1999)

*The Marble City* is one of a growing number of publications that record the appearance and diversity of regional graveyards. This slender picture book is the result of a collaboration between a newspaper columnist (Neely) and free-lance photographer (Jay), who worked together for a Knoxville weekly and share an enthusiasm for local history. Neely also is the author of *Knoxville's Secret History* (1995), and in his eight-page introduction he comments that cemeteries are the best places to find “strong, tangible hints of the city's past.” Yet, he notes, "Knoxvillians don't visit them regularly, following modern America's paradoxical attitude toward graveyards." He and Jay attempt to inspire some new interest.

Neely's introduction offers a general history of Knoxville's graveyards, beginning with accounts of Native American burial mounds and the establishment of the first permanent Euro-American graveyard, a turnip patch turned over to the city by Captain James White as a site for burials and a church. Today there are more than forty burial grounds in Knox County in various sizes and states of repair, containing slaves and slaveholders, paupers and professors, people of many religions, victims of plague and major disasters, and
veterans of every war America has fought. Neely points out that these dead do not rest in any chronological or orderly fashion, but graveyards serve as a "nonlinear, often astonishing course in American history, and a testament to the diversity found in an urban community." A "nonlinear" selection of pictures from area graveyards make up the remaining fifty-five pages of the book. The images are accompanied by descriptive text, which samples such loosely organized themes as the accomplishments, era and diversity of the deceased and stylistic features of their markers.

Jay's sixty black-and-white photographs are clear and careful testimonials to the old stone monuments he captures, a project that required patient enterprise and the right light. Mostly focused on individual markers or monuments, they are well-displayed in the book, which was attractively designed by Todd Duren.

The book makes no pretext of being a comprehensive scholarly study. Lacking in footnotes, the text offers little indication as to exactly what sources were plumbed for its content. A handful of general book titles are listed in a bibliography and reference assistance at area libraries is acknowledged. There are no captions for the photographs. Like many books on regional cemeteries, the focus mostly rests on pictures and on biographical information about the dead, providing limited information about monument patronage, makers or reception. The authors might have increased the book's usefulness by including a map, or by listing cemeteries and their addresses as well as the location of pictured monuments.

Despite its opening assertion that cemeteries can be an important on-ramp to the study of history, the book does not provide as much evidence as it might have about the history of monument-making, stylistic preferences or the process of commissioning specific monuments. But the authors' goal clearly was not to create a definitive resource. Rather they sought to tweak our interest, and to encourage Knoxvillians to revisit their graveyards and explore their lessons.

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Jackson on Block, 'Amy Beach, Passionate Victorian: The Life and Work of an American Composer 1867-1944'

In: H-PCAACA
Author: Adrienne Fried Block
Reviewer: Millie Jackson


Reviewed by Millie Jackson (Grand Valley State University) Published on H-PCAACA (November, 1999)

At the conclusion of her biography, Adrienne Fried Block writes that she "hopes she has neither diminished Amy Beach nor blown her up to superwoman size but rather shown her as a fallible girl and woman who exhibited courage in the face of obstacles..." (298). She succeeds in her task by weaving the scores of Amy Beach's (1867-1944) music with the narrative of her daily life to tell the story of this remarkable Victorian woman. Though the work is primarily about Beach's life as a composer, the book is by no means only for those interested in music. Discussions of Victorian society and gender roles make this biography of interest to a broader audience. Readers interested in music will be pleased with the detailed descriptions of Beach's compositions and the facsimile scores while readers interested in women's lives and the changes in society between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries will find a fascinating study of a talented woman who refused to be limited by the time she lived.
Amy Beach's music is the main focus of the work and Block rightly identifies Beach as an American composer instead of just a female composer. Born Amy Marcy Cheney, the "fair-haired child with large blue-violet eyes," (4) created music from a young age, composing by the age of four. Her musical family did not want to recognize her natural talents at first but finally had to acknowledge them. Beach's musical development and training are traced through a number of examples of her works. Expectations about Beach's life as a composer and musician are described from the perspectives of her family and from the musical society of Boston. Analysis of the politics of being a female and a composer in the Victorian era is often at the heart of the sections on Beach's adult life. At age 27, Beach began to compose a symphony, the ultimate test of skill for a composer, especially one without much formal training. She kept a fresh perspective throughout her musical career: she "claimed that song writing was recreation for her" (146). Beach performed widely and composed music until nearly the end of her life in 1944.

Description of the role Beach played as a daughter, wife and friend add to the interest of this biography. These gender roles are particularly important in the context of the age Beach lived in and the length of her life over two centuries. As a daughter, Block imparts the story of a child raised by a strict Victorian mother who taught her daughter discipline along with the piano. As most women of her era, she was not being raised to be a professional musician though she enjoyed high praise from Boston musical society in her teens. Like many other women of the age, Amy Cheney married. In 1885 she wed Henry Beach, a physician who was slightly older than her father. This essentially ended her public performance for years, and again, the reader learns about the standards for Victorian marriage through descriptions of Henry Beach's expectations for his wife. With marriage her identity was "obliterated" as Amy Cheney and as a promising performer to become Mrs. H.H.A. Beach. When she withdrew from performance and was forced to refuse "fees when she did so" (51), she was "deprived her ...former status as a professional pianist" (52). Block relates the reality of Beach's life as a wife of a prominent physician who "had considerable authority over his wife" (50) through her narrative. While she carried out her role as a physician's wife, Beach did not settle to play just to entertain friends. She continued to challenge herself as a musician, fighting the norms for the day despite the obstacles she faced. One can only imagine what Amy Beach's life would have been like if she had been male.

The Amy Beach of the early- to mid-twentieth century was an independent woman who traveled, performed and moved around when she desired. During her travels and performances in Europe she reclaimed her identity as Amy Beach. This freedom gained after her husband's death reflects both the changes in society and the respect that came with her age and reputation. Her role as a resident and supporter of the MacDowell Colony are included in detail.

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**Zimmermann on Kammen, 'American Culture, American Tastes: Social Change and the 20th Century'**

In: H-PCAACA
Author: Michael Kammen
Reviewer: Ulf Zimmermann


Reviewed by Ulf Zimmermann (Department of Political Science and International Affairs, Kennesaw State University) Published on H-PCAACA (November, 1999)
Kammen shows us how concepts of culture as well as its production and consumption have changed over time. Though glancing back to colonial times, he focuses on how these changes occurred hand-in-hand with economic, political, and personal developments in the twentieth century and on how they can be framed in distinct phases.

While many see “mass” culture beginning with, say, the spread of newspapers in the eighteenth century, he sees it as really coming into its own with the advent of modern mass media, most signally television. But as he stresses, when TV was invented is not what matters; what's important for mass culture to come into being is the leisure time and disposable income to consume it. That came only after World War II and really took off in the late 1950s when practically every American family had a television.

Preceding that, he sees what he terms a “proto-mass” culture beginning with the mass consumption of necessary goods as offered in Sears catalogues and burgeoning in the 1920s with the increasing consumption of leisure goods and activities, ranging from arts to sports. Standardization of food in packages and in restaurants likewise illustrate these trends. And as Henry Ford realized, for his mass production of automobiles to succeed, he also had to have mass consumers. These were soon created by modern advertising and “PR.”

Preceding that, in turn, is what Kammen calls “popular” culture which he distinguishes from mass culture by stressing its participatory, interactive nature. Even though radio is a mass medium, for example, it still required listeners to construct their own “theatre of the mind” while TV presents everything to us ready-made. And because to watch it, we can't do other things as we can while listening to the radio, we are thus rendered more passive.

Popular culture came into its prime between 1885 and 1935 when leisure time expanded and organized entertainment reached new heights and unprecedented audiences. Occurring at the same time was an increasing blurring between high and low brow culture. While cultural stratification or taste levels have persisted they've become more widely shared across classes—superbowl fans may listen to symphonies, and the “three tenors” sing for World Cup soccer. The marriage of Marilyn Monroe and Arthur Miller in 1956 personifies this merging of cultures.

A corresponding issue and change Kammen addresses is that of cultural authority and cultural power. Americans have taken their cultural cues from a shifting series of “cultural authorities.” In colonial times these were the clergy and in the nineteenth century various reform figures. In the late Victorian era cultural “professionals” emerged and authority gradually became institutionalized in museums and musical and theatrical venues. After World War II academics briefly held sway. But partly because of these academics’ tiresome disagreements and partly because of the growth of public opinion polling, people tuned them out and paid more attention to the cultural authority the country’s Gallups now granted the public itself.

The relationship between cultural power and cultural authority also changed considerably. Earlier, movie studios and ad agencies might have been said to wield cultural power while museums and critics wielded authority. But today cultural authority is the province of large corporations which produce and promote culture (think Time/Warner and Disney). Books become bestsellers and movies blockbusters despite critics’ “authority.” Entertainment entrepreneurs have been able to combine their cultural power with authority by a savvy straddling of taste levels—what might be “elitist” leadership modified by responding to public demand. Corporate leaders did not, for example, like rock ‘n’ roll but could not long refuse the bottom-line benefit of its mass appeal.

“High” and “low” culture are equally in pursuit of the dollar, Kammen aptly reminds us, and there's been as much low culture rising to influence the high as that latter has trickled down to the former. Andy Warhol is perhaps the best example of the conflation of mass production, mass culture, and elite art. Accordingly, correlations between social class and taste which seemed fairly clear between ca. 1870 and 1945 have become much less so since the 1950s. (Where we used to talk about taste and refinement, we began in the late fifties to talk about “lifestyle.”) Efforts to make these high/low distinctions in the U.S. emerged to some extent from Americans’ insecurity vis-à-vis Europeans whom they had emulated so long. But when they realized that Europeans saw ragtime and jazz as American culture, American pretenders to cultural arbiterdom were forced to reconsider their concepts of culture. Some have therefore argued that high culture is in decline, others might say it's being redefined. Either way we've become increasingly “bicultural” in the sense that even if we have elite tastes we also enjoy other entertainments.

Why was anybody worried about this? Because of the same insecurity cited above. Often in the twentieth century European critics asked, Why did the U.S. flourish politically and economically but not culturally? Why did American avant-garde art, literature, and music continue to depend on European models or even imports and immigrants? One answer Kammen offers is that throughout much of the century Americans put their emphasis on the “common man.” This was demonstrated in that ultimate public poll, the presidential election, which rejected an elite “egghead” like Adlai Stevenson. By now, of course, the American cultural problem is the opposite: The world is awash in American mass culture, with people around the globe both reveling in the consumption of it and raging against its destruction of their own cultures and values.

Why have taste levels become less meaningful? The postwar spread of affluence and education made it more difficult to maintain “lower” distinctions. He sees the consequence as an increase in cultural populism accompanied by a decline in elitism and worries about a loss of “guidance.” Others worry, with Tocqueville, that if in a democracy everybody's taste is equally valid we'll end up with complete mediocrity (they're confusing art with politics). But I'd argue, and I think Kammen ultimately agrees, that democracy affords more opportunity for the expression, and dissemination, of genius and its products— as well as for the greatest production and consumption of junk of course.
While some may not agree with Kammen's definitions and periodizations, they provide valuable points of departure. Important to me are his efforts to relate these definitions and periods to those other economic, political, and social phenomena, which he does in rich detail. What's missing? Is there a definition of culture? Well, if there is one, it's an all-embracing one that ranges from what the Germans call "Alltagskultur" ("everyday culture") to the most elitist arts. And while the "public" has to some degree become a cultural authority, we still look to cultural authority figures. Irma Rombauer and Julia Child, Alex Comfort and Ann Landers, Amy Vanderbilt and Martha Stewart--and Oprah of course--are names he reels off only partly tongue-in-cheek. And when it comes to art we still defer to the expertise of museum directors as the Mapplethorpe case illustrated.

Kennesaw State University Ulf Zimmermann


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Gundersen on Cynthia A. Kierner, 'Beyond the Household: Women's Place in the Early South 1700-1835' and Kierner, 'Beyond the Household: Women's Place in the Early South, 1700-1835'

In: H-SAWH
Author: Cynthia A. Kierner
Reviewer: Joan R. Gundersen


Reviewed by Joan R. Gundersen (Department of History, Elon College) Published on H-SAWH (October, 1999)

Rethinking Gender and the American Revolution

Cynthia Kierner's interpretive monograph is part of a new wave of scholarship on women in the revolutionary and early national period that is forcing us to rethink the relationship of gender to ideas of public and private.[1] While carefully delineating gender ideologies and the shifting limitations and opportunities for women during these transitional years, Kierner does not use the idea of patriarchy as the main causal force in a story of women's oppression. This clearly distinguishes her work from that of Kathleen Brown, Jean Friedman, and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese.[2]

Kierner lays out evidence of a shifting gender ideology in the South (defined as Eastern seaboard areas from Virginia through Georgia). Before the revolution, southern women had access to certain public roles, especially through economic actions and rituals of sociability which required female participation. This pre-revolutionary world blurred lines between public and private. For example, hospitality in one's home was a public demonstration shaping one's public image, but the setting was private. Women's roles, however, were changing and being redefined in ways that increasingly substituted the symbolic participation of women in a genteel culture for more direct public participation at the courthouse and as economic managers. Deepening racial and class lines were a factor in this shift.

The stresses of the revolutionary era redrew the lines of public and private. Women were excluded from many of the new rituals demarking revolutionary politics, while the small elegances of sociability appeared decadent and wasteful to a virtuous republic, especially during war. As republican ideology developed in ways inclusive of white males by contrasting them to dependent classes of females and slaves, evangelical religion recast the religious landscape with a new emphasis on domestic life as the locus of virtue and
Kierner argues that the reshaping of gender ideology to correspond to a public-private dichotomy was the work of a conservative counter-revolution in both political and religious thought. As women's presence in public decreased, however, the new importance assigned to domestic roles resulted in unprecedented growth in opportunities for women's education and a rationale that would let women stretch the boundaries of the private sphere to encompass a growing set of philanthropic activities. Thus the first quarter of the nineteenth century saw southern women, like their northern counterparts, create an impressive array of benevolent societies, Sunday schools, and church societies. *Beyond the Household* places southern white women in the mainstream of trends that women's historians have long associated with the northern experience.

The general outline of Kierner's book is persuasive, but the chapters on the colonial period are more creative than those on the revolutionary and antebellum eras in thinking outside of standard paradigms of public and private. Intent on showing growing domestication, Kierner treats some of women's formal public positions (such as nurse and regimental woman) as informal arrangements or extensions of domesticity. The revolutionary chapters are among the few where more middling women come to the forefront, because it is they who took more active roles in manufacture and in the military. This sets up a logical problem, because Kierner's discussion of the periods before and after the revolution focuses on how the experiences of the elite shaped gender roles for the upper and middling classes. The result is a disconnect between the class of those who shaped gender ideology before and after the revolution, and the class of those whose experiences are supposed to have provided that shaping during the war.

Similarly, Kierner sees post-revolutionary women's growing philanthropy and church work as expansions of a domestic sphere. Her work is a close fit with scholars such as Catherine Clinton and Suzanne Lebsock.[3] Such an interpretation allows Kierner to place southern women within the interpretative framework long used by women's historians for northern women. The later chapters of *Beyond the Household* should really be read in tandem with Elizabeth Varon's creative 1998 study *We Mean to Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia*. Both historians document women's widespread work in church organizations. Both see this as an expansion of women's opportunities and cite numerous ways that women were active shapers of their society. Varon, however, documents what Kierner did not find--political roles for women and opposition to slavery (as evidenced in their role in the colonization societies)--and argues, unlike Kierner, that philanthropy was a public/political act.

It is difficult when working with such a sweep of primary and secondary material not to overextend somewhere, and Kierner occasionally misreads her sources. At one point she claims that even the women of middling families had slaves dedicated to household production. As evidence, she cites the David and Elizabeth LeSueur plantation with seventeen slaves, of which she claims three were used full time for cloth production (p. 15). Unfortunately, her source actually only claims that slave women probably worked alongside Elizabeth in such tasks in addition to field work. In another place, Kierner moves Elizabeth Feilde from Kingston Parish, Gloucester County, to York County on the other side of the York River (p. 81).[4]

Despite these momentary lapses, this is a good book and one that deserves to be read by women's historians, southern historians, and historians of Early America. This book challenges women's historians to fit southern white women into the paradigms they too often have reserved for northern women alone. When combined with Varon's work, it is an antidote to the assumption that southern white women were too oppressed by the patriarchy to have public roles in the new republic. Finally, *Beyond the Household* continues the recent historiographic emphasis on women's losses as well as gains during the revolution. In total, this is a considerable accomplishment for a work with barely 218 pages of text.

Notes


Finley on Genovese, 'A Consuming Fire: The Fall of the Confederacy in the Mind of the White Christian South'

In: H-CivWar
Author: Eugene Genovese
Reviewer: Randy Finley


Reviewed by Randy Finley (Department of Social Sciences, Georgia Perimeter College) Published on H-CivWar (October, 1999)

**Genovese’s Genuflections**

Eugene Genovese is one of the foremost twentieth-century American historians. Both scholars and schoolchildren fashion their understandings of antebellum southern slavery, whether they know it or not, from his seminal *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World The Slaves Made*. In over thirty other books, Genovese has dissected the South and its penetration by the global economy. On or about 1995, Professor Genovese converted and exchanged Marxism for Catholicism. His subsequent writings, often jeremiads, reflect this *volte face*.

*A Consuming Fire: The Fall of the Confederacy in the Mind of the White Christian South* is Genovese’s most recent meditation on the demise of the rebelling South. Delivered in the Mercer University Lamar Memorial Lecture series, this important work joins others by various scholars of southern history who have participated in the series. In this work, Genovese contends that “thoughtful southerners writhed over the gap between the realities of slavery and an ideal system of servitude they considered biblically sanctioned” (p. 107). Their anxiety obsessed on festered scabs of the antebellum regime: the religious conversion and education of slaves and the legitimization of the slave family.

Ministers such as the Reverend H. N. McTyeire, a “rising star” in South Carolina Methodism, wrestled with Exodus 2: 26-27 which warned masters that abused slaves would be freed if injustices persisted. Genovese cites leading divines and planters who were deeply vexed about the inequities and iniquities inherent in their peculiar institution. Many prayed for a resolution of the conflict, so long as it was a “manly resolution. And they did go down in fire and blood” (p. 33).

The actual war proved most problematical for southern preachers. A few ministers exulted as the South won the first major battles; but even then, many ecclesiastics tempered bellicosity and urged caution. Increasing battlefield losses and home-front miseries prompted a deepening crisis of faith and a call for a reformation of slavery by religious leaders. Some even countenanced freeing slaves who fought for the Confederacy. As the war ended, southern Christians “struggled to read aright the signs of the times” and “could hardly escape the thought that, once again, a wrathful and inscrutable God had called upon the heathen to punish his disobedient people” (p. 71).

Defeat. A word unknown to nineteenth-century Americans, especially northern secular humanists or scientific racists, but a reality ground deep into the marrow of most southerners after Appomattox. Genovese argues that southern race relations plummeted in the 1890s, as exemplified by Jim Crow laws and brutal Lynchings which lasted until World War II because southern preachers capitulated to the market capitalists, scientific racists, and theological liberals. He believes that southern religious leaders abandoned their staunch defense of orthodoxy after the Civil War and accepted, heels dragging, segregation and ideas of black inferiority. “We may well find,” he contends, “that the retreat of the postbellum southern divines into that liberalism was organically related to their retreat from a coherent social theory and worldview” (p. 94). Unlike their previous dedication to amelioration of chattel slavery, they despaired of confronting Jim Crow. Instead of swaying public opinion, as they had nobly attempted before the Civil War; they cowered and followed in the postwar era, which Genovese describes as “one of the many joys of the democratization of the church” (p. 95). Even though he
insists that such behavior was inevitable because of the irresistible attraction of capitalism and the ensuing bourgeois social order; he chastises the church for silence and capitulation. "Not a mumbling word" was uttered by southern divines. The consuming apocalypse of Civil War had devoured more than just chattel slavery, it had silenced the prophetic voice of orthodox Christians.

As with any such slim volume, Genovese spurs us to study the subject further. How influential and numerous were these antebellum prelates, admired so by the author, who called for Christian reform of southern slavery? Did they really influence that many southern planters or white yeomenry? Does the author exaggerate their impact and importance? Isn't the South's slippery descent into modernity and theological liberalism more complex than being primarily caused by the orthodox minister's acquiescence after the despair of defeat?

For those of us who hum REM'S "Losing My Religion" a little too gleefully, it is impossible to demarcate "orthodoxy" with the precision and certainty of Genovese. Just how does he speak so surely for "the Lord"? Historically, we are on safer ground when we accuse the author of imposing himself--his thoughts and his arguments--into the nineteenth or early twentieth century. The author, like all good Biblical exegesists, counts the weight of the scripture against him. At various times, the author injects Deuteronomy 1:17 (p. 30) or Exodus 21:26-27 (p. 132) to support his contentions. In opposing the scientific racists of the postbellum North and South, Genovese insists "that any such vision could be reconciled with the Bible must be judged, to say the least, doubtful, and subsequent generations of imperialists who tried scripturally to justify their course plunged into rank bad faith" (p. 91). Just what is rank bad faith? Genovese also creates a fantasy reader who must have known, from his reading of Gibbon, that Muslims were prohibited from separating slave children from their mothers (p. 21). Ironically for such a conservative historian, authorial intrusions put him in the stylistic camp of postmodernists.

Genovese's divines had a superior vision, he believes, to the flawed and degrading chattel slavery of the antebellum world, to the flawed and degrading sharecropping and wage-earning slaves of the Gilded Age, and to the flawed and degrading consumption-slave of the post-modern world. Whether this is historically accurate is debatable; but what seems most laudatory about Genovese is his attempt to try to see the white antebellum South in all its complexity and richness and to reaffirm the importance of religion in the region during the nineteenth century.

In matters of the heart and of the bended knee, Eugene Genovese has decided he is not responsible to his guild, but to his God. His footsteps are, for many, inaccessible. But his passion, analysis, and integrity are, still, exemplary. The next time you despair, which will most likely be the next time you read the newspaper, take solace that Eugene Genovese most likely has three or four good books left to write before he takes leave for that which he has so long yearned: his destination, at long last, to the City of God.

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**Walker on Sharpless, 'Fertile Ground, Narrow Choices: Women on Texas Cotton Farms, 1900-1940'**

In: H-SAWH
Author: Rebecca Sharpless
Reviewer: Melissa Walker


Reviewed by Melissa Walker (Department of History and Politics, Converse College) Published on H-SAWH (September, 1999)
the attention given to the southern cotton economy, few historians have paid more than cursory attention to the lives of women on cotton farms. Sharpless fills that gap with this meticulously researched and readable work on the Texas Blackland Prairie before World War II.

In the preface, Sharpless sets forth two aims for her work: analyzing the physical conditions of women's lives on Texas cotton farms and discovering how these women coped with the harsh reality of their lives (p. xviii). She accomplishes this in chapters that examine the various roles women played: family member, housekeeper, domestic food producer, market producer, field worker, and reproducer of the labor force.

In general, women on Texas cotton farms, regardless of race, lived in a small world defined largely by their connections to family. They usually married in their late teens, had a child within a year, and bore children at two-year intervals until menopause. Most lived in nuclear families, except for a brief period after marriage and when caring for elderly parents and in-laws. Black and Mexican families were more likely to live in extended households because of financial difficulties. Women were expected to keep house, bear and raise children, and produce much of the family's food supply, as well as participate in the commercial cotton farming activities of the family. Although some families shared decision making, the husband was most often the dominant figure in the household.

Sharpless maintains that the crop-lien system was the central constraint in the lives of Blackland farm women. This system created a highly stratified society in which the conditions of a woman's life depended largely on whether she was the wife or daughter of a large or small landowner, a tenant who owned some of his own tools, or a sharecropper who depended on the landlord for nearly everything. In addition, women's lives were constrained by racial and ethnic prejudices, with African-American and Mexican women at the bottom of the economic ladder. Even white women faced prejudice: Czech and German immigrants suffered discrimination at the hands of Anglos. Social expectations of women's behavior as daughters, wives, and mothers and a lack of access to birth control also limited the personal choices of women on Blackland cotton farms. Still, Sharpless argues convincingly that women nevertheless managed to shape their own lives and those of their families in powerful ways.

The economic status of the family largely determined the material conditions of women's lives. Wives of landowning farmers enjoyed larger, better built houses than their poorer neighbors and were more likely to have modern household appliances, though few Blacklanders of any class enjoyed electricity or running water before the 1930s. Landowning women could also hire household help from among the wives of tenants and sharecroppers in the neighborhood. Housing for tenants and sharecroppers was almost always substandard, and families of agricultural laborers, usually migrant workers, lived in wretched conditions, complicating women's job of housekeeping.

One of the most fascinating chapters in this work is entitled "Living at Home: Food Production and Preparation in the Blackland Prairie." As Sharpless points out, few southern historians have considered the importance of food in the lives of farm people, but the meaning, production, and preparation of food was central to the lives of farm women. After all, it was the most repetitive and unending of all their tasks; they prepared meals several times each day. Yet in spite of the drudgery of preparation, food was essential for survival. Moreover, food was part of the "credit matrix" (p. 110) of the crop-lien system: the more food families purchased instead of producing at home, the more likely they were to sink hopelessly into debt. Thus, many women devoted significant amounts of time and energy to growing gardens, raising livestock, and preserving food for their families. To many Blackland women, food preparation represented physical and symbolic nurturing. As one woman put it, "For Mama, preparing and serving food was synonymous with caring and nurturing" (p. 110). Some women also found a creative outlet in cooking. Though everyday meals might be utilitarian, women prepared elaborate spreads for Sunday dinners, for company, and for church and community gatherings.

Sharpless describes the details of household food production, pointing out that most rural people's diets depended heavily on corn products, pork, and molasses. She provides a vivid account of the procedure for killing hogs and preserving pork for the family's use, and she then examines the difficulties in safely preserving food without refrigeration. Before World War I, few women knew how to can at home or had access to the necessary equipment. With the appointment of large numbers of home demonstration agents during World War I, many Blackland women learned canning techniques, but not all women could afford to buy pressure canners, glass jars, and the other equipment they needed to use this preservation method. Some women pooled their efforts, sharing equipment and labor to take on the massive task of canning garden produce.

In her discussion of food production, Sharpless points to one of the supreme ironies of the crop-lien system. Landowners often discouraged their tenants from growing gardens or keeping livestock because they resented taking any land or labor out of cotton production; some explicitly forbade their tenants to do so. Even tenants whose landlords allowed them to produce their own food had few resources for seed or livestock. As a result, the landless people who were least able to afford it were usually forced to purchase large percentages of their food, often at inflated prices, from furnishing merchants (sometimes the landowner). Landowning families, on the other hand, had the land, the resources, and the time to produce much of their own food. Thus, the more prosperous a family was, the more they were able to save by producing their food at home, freeing up more cash for other purposes.

Although women were responsible for all of the family domestic chores, they were also expected to assist in cotton production. Several contemporary studies showed that the majority of women in all ethnic groups performed at least some field labor every year. Still, the practice and the outlook in individual families varied widely. Some women did all the field work while the men in the family performed wage work elsewhere. Ironically, women with small children were most likely to do field work; older children could often replace their
mothers in the fields so that women could devote more time to household responsibilities.

Although life on the Blackland Prairie could be isolating, farm women were part of larger communities. Most families lived within a quarter mile of neighbors, and visiting was a very popular activity. Women depended heavily on mutual-aid networks and were active participants in local churches. Families also had some contact with the outside world. Rural Free Delivery provided access to the world beyond the Blacklands through newspapers and magazines. By the 1920s many families also had access to party-line phones. Yet the automobile played the largest role in exposing rural Texas families to the wider world, providing easy access to towns and commercial amusements and transforming courtship rituals. Women eagerly embraced the automobile, recognizing its potential to broaden their lives. They learned to drive or encouraged their daughters to do so, and they began to make frequent trips to town, where they were exposed to the enticements of consumer goods and new employment opportunities.

This exposure to the temptations of an urban world, along with New Deal policies that pushed tenants off the land and the job opportunities created by World War II, helped lead to the depopulation of the Blackland Prairie in the 1940s and 1950s. Young people led the move to towns and cities, where they found jobs in textile mills, cottonseed oil plants, and other locations. Many had trouble adjusting to the loss of independence in the city, but they reveled in expanded economic opportunities and improved material conditions. Values changed, even for those who remained on the land. Neighborhood visiting declined as rural people gained access to other amusements. Yet the advent of improvements such as rural electrification and farm mechanization lightened the burden for farm women.

Sharpless's work is rendered more vivid by her skillful use of oral histories and personal memoirs. Her preface includes an honest and reflective meditation on the pleasures and responsibilities of using oral history. She supplements these first-person accounts with the statistics and reports of contemporary rural social reformers. She also mines popular cultural artifacts, such as songs, rhymes, and community rituals, to examine gaps between ideology and practice and to discover community expectations of women.

Not only does Fertile Ground, Narrow Choices help to complete our picture of life on southern cotton farms, but it complicates our understanding of the region we call "the South." As historian Robert Tracy McKenzie and others have pointed out, there are many Souths[1]. We often conflate "the South" with the Cotton South, but Sharpless shows us that even the Cotton South was full of variety. The Blackland Prairie region of Texas was more productive than the Mississippi Delta or other areas of the Cotton South, producing as much as 6 percent of the total U.S. annual cotton crop in the early part of the twentieth century. This productivity was largely due to the region's extremely fertile soil and its longer growing season. It was also more arid than the rest of the South, creating special challenges for farming and for maintaining households. Most important, the Blacklands displayed far more ethnic diversity than the rest of the South, because of the presence of Mexican, Czech, and German immigrants. All of these variations made life in the Blacklands Prairie different from life in other parts of the Cotton South. Understanding the diversity of the region we call the South will enhance our understanding of the impact of race and class in constraining the lives of farm families.

In summary, Fertile Ground, Narrow Choices is a fine contribution to the literature of southern history, rural history, and women's history.

NOTE


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Baker on Burlingame, 'Lincoln's Journalist: John Hay's Anonymous Writings for the Press, 1860-1864'

In: H-CivWar.
Author: Michael Burlingame, ed.
In recent years some students of the Civil War era have turned their scrupulous attention to the replication of important texts, some of which are have been inaccessible to all but the most dedicated researchers. Others have been available in printed form only in bowdlerized versions without annotations. All Americans have benefited, for example, from Harold Holzer's 1993 edition of the Lincoln and Douglas debates, while Douglas Wilson and Rodney Davis have provided a first version of those famously illegible Herndon papers. Even John Wilkes Booth's writings have been exhaustively collected and edited by John Rhodehamel and Louise Taper. Perhaps no scholar has been more indefatigable in this initiative than Michael Burlingame who has now edited and annotated three important Civil War sources--first the complete text of John Hay's previously casually edited diary and next an edition of Noah Brooks's diary. Burlingame's edition of John Hay's anonymous and pseudonymous dispatches and editorials, previously uncollected and unpublished, now joins this distinguished edited trilogy.

Certainly almost anything that John Hay wrote during the Civil War is worth reading. Not only did this moonlighting (mainly on Sundays) journalist hold the insider's job of assistant secretary to Abraham Lincoln throughout his presidency, but Hay was a perceptive and ironic observer of the war as well as life in Washington. (Technically Hay was not on the White House payroll--although Lincoln offered to pay his salary of $1600 a year. Instead he was detailed to special service to White House first as a clerk the Pension Office and later as an army officer.) Burlingame suggests in his title that Hay is Lincoln's journalist, and he implies in his introduction that Hay adopted the opinions of Lincoln.

The exact connection will remain unknown, but there is no evidence that in a nineteenth-century precursor to the presidential leak, Lincoln used his secretary to float his administration's agendas. On the other hand there is no doubt that Hay's anonymous sketches represented the administration's spin on the events and personnel of the war. Moreover Hay was privy to meetings and conversations (once a breakfast at Willard's Hotel with four Major-Generals) that most reporters were not, so that his occasional "it is not generally known" carried some authority.

Burlingame is persuasive on the issue that Hay authored these articles and dispatches. Most come from a scrapbook in the Hay Papers at the Library of Congress, and it is unlikely that a man as well published as Hay would take the trouble to keep a scrapbook file of someone else's dispatches. Moreover there is internal evidence that makes it probable that Hay wrote the 132 dispatches and editorials included in this volume, most published in 1861 and 1862 in the Missouri Democrat, Missouri Republican and New York World. Not only is Hay's wonderfully prolix, opinionated, adverb-filled style on parade throughout, but his predilection for classical allusions permeates all his writing, requiring of the hardworking Burlingame yet another concept for annotation.

The war never shook Hay's dreamy sentimentalism. In a 180-word description of Georgetown in October 1861 the young journalist notes "poor old Georgetown, looking as if all the clocks must have stopped at nine o'clock, some still, hazy Sunday morning, and the natives have been, ever since, under the delusion that every day was Sunday--along the banks of the placid canal, tinged by the thick overhanging foliage with a sombre green; past long lines of army wagons droning along the dusty road under the rays of the departing day--the dark Potomac overshadowed by the densely wooded heights . . . . on we went passing many groups of soldiers bivouacking on the road with stacked bayonets, . . . etcetera, etcetera" (pp. 111-112). (Buy the book if you want to get to the end of this quote.) Or writing on South Carolina after Union forces captured Beaufort, Port Royal, and Hilton Head in November 1861, Hay explained the earlier objections Southerners had to establishing a naval yard at Beaufort--"a fearful foreboding of the contingencies of Yankee association . . . and the blight of industry passed from the air at Beaufort--this castle of aristocratic indolence, this seat of the blackness of primal barbarism, this chosen home and realm of the Cotton-King" (p. 138).

Besides the pleasure of reading Hay, what is important about these dispatches is their contemporaneous representation of events and people. Among the noteworthy editorials are those covering Lincoln's pilgrimage to Washington in February of 1861. Granted that Hay, twenty-three years old at the time, already had a solid affection for Lincoln, still the reports filed, in this case primarily to the Missouri Democrat, suggest that this trip was an important element in solidifying the people's allegiance to the Union through the person of Lincoln. As few nineteenth century Americans ever did, those who stood along the railroad tracks from Springfield to Baltimore saw, and in some cases heard, their new leader who came to personify the nation and inspire fervent patriotism.

Once installed in the northeast bedroom of the second floor of the White House with Lincoln's other secretary John Nicolay, Hay observed Washington, the war, Congress, soldiers and their generals, and of course the president whom he and Nicolay privately called the "Tycoon." Hay reported on the death of Lincoln's friend Edward Dickinson Baker, on the early dashed hopes at Bull Run, on the slow movement of McClellan, whom Hay held hopes for longer than most, including his boss. "Let us not lose confidence in our brave young soldier for one such lapse," wrote Hay during the Peninsula Campaign, after the Army of the Potomac "sat down before Yorktown and entrenched themselves" (p.260-261). And at least in the first two years of the war Hay remained optimistic that one winning campaign would end the war, or "So we all think at Washington" (p. 219). Unflinchingly patriotic and devoted to Lincoln and the Union, Hay rarely broke ranks from the administration position. But his editorials, especially on the removal of Simon Cameron, suggest that he was not always privy to his close-mouthed president's intentions. His thumbnail sketches of generals and politicians presented his opinion,
informed as it were, on the abilities of the Union’s military leaders, and in one surprising example he continued to praise General Burnside. Ever sanguine, Hay is also much too optimistic about the progress of emancipation opinion in the border state of Maryland.

The significance of this material is that of any primary source. What we are privy to are one opinion-maker’s perceptions and views, which, like the war itself, change and modify in the face of events. John Hay may not be the most famous presidential secretary in American history. That distinction probably belongs to Betty Currie and Joseph Tumulty. But he surely is the best writer and most incisive observer among them and that alone makes his newspaper dispatches worth reading. Michael Burlingame deserves credit for making this possible.

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