



2014-052

Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation*. Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2013. Pp. xii, 451. ISBN 978-1-4696-0706-1.

Review by Stacy W. Reaves, Tulsa Community College (reavessw@gmail.com).

Museums, documentaries, and books often show grainy black-and-white photos and film of Civil War veterans shaking hands on a battlefield. With their gray hair and full, white beards, they look old and fragile as they smile for the cameras while shaking hands, laughing, and talking. To viewers, it appears the two sides have forgotten the past, made peace, and happily reunited, with no signs of bitterness. In *Remembering the Civil War*, Caroline Janney (Purdue Univ.) challenges this comfortable image with a corrective investigation of just how the nation came to understand and remember the Civil War between 1861 and 1939. The book is organized both chronologically and topically. The goal throughout is to illuminate how the interpretation of the war by both sides changed over time; evidence is adduced particularly from memorial dedications, letters, memoirs, and histories, and the activities of veterans' groups.

Janney begins by exploding the prevailing opinion of historians that the immediate postwar period saw little development in the remembrance of the Civil War. She detects significant changes in both sides' views of the war in the form of memorial days, monument dedications, the creation of veteran organizations, and the writing of histories. She shows that the North accepted southerners back into the Union, but was not ready to forget the war or what had caused its carnage; northerners accepted the move to reconciliation, but blamed the South for starting the war over the issue of slavery. They believed their own soldiers had fought to preserve the Union and emancipate slaves, rather than solely to crush the rebellious South.

The mythology of the "Lost Cause," Janney writes, fostered a separate sectional identity for the South, a vestige of the nationalism that fueled southern resistance and defiance. Popular veterans organizations memorialized the Confederacy and General Robert E. Lee. Janney argues that Lee unknowingly laid down the basic tenets of the Lost Cause immediately after Appomattox by portraying Confederate soldiers as devoted, honorable, and chivalric men who had lost the war due to their enemy's overwhelming advantages in manpower and material. Sharply contradicting the North's memory of the war, southern veterans groups claimed slavery was not the cause of the war and that secession was a constitutional right. This allowed southern men to reclaim their honor and their manhood and to exonerate themselves of treasonous behavior. They "felt entitled to honor their cause and the sacrifice of their soldiers as honorable, worthy, just, and purely American" (87).

By the late nineteenth century, as reconciliation muted the most divisive memories of the war, northerners, Janney contends, allowed the South's Lost Cause theory to flourish. In addition, the Spanish-American War of 1898 smoothed over bitter feelings. The belief that America fought for Cuban autonomy and liberty provided a common rallying point for both North and South in their justifications for the Civil War, since it, too, had been fought for such objectives. The war with Spain also enabled southerners to vindicate their personal honor and loyalty to the United States, while yet promoting the South's proud heritage.

Drawing on her earlier work,¹ Janney treats in detail the role of women in the postwar period. Women of both sides were the first to observe memorial days and erect war monuments. Janney demonstrates that southern women controlled the terms of reconciliation, initiating and perpetuating the Lost Cause myth well into the twentieth century. Because women had little direct political influence and were not charged with treason during Reconstruction, they could more easily honor the memory of the South without at-

1. See her *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: U North Carolina Pr, 2007).

tracting much criticism from northerners. After Lee's death, Confederate veterans, too, began publically supporting memorialization and the Lost Cause interpretation.

As reconciliation gained momentum between 1900 and the 1930s, Janney writes, southern women shifted the emphasis from the war to Reconstruction, pushing for rejection of national reconciliation in favor of a unique southern identity and heritage. The United Daughters of the Confederacy were ardent proponents of the Lost Cause in the late nineteenth century. They continued to build monuments and host memorial observances throughout the South well into the twentieth century. Janney argues that, owing to the efforts of southern women, "a whitewashed reconciliationist memory of the war dominated" (309) by 1939.

Historians have only recently begun looking at the post-civil war era in relation to veterans and the memory of the war, discarding the conventional notion that the two sides made peace, forgave each other, and reunited as one happy nation. Monument dedication speeches made at battlefield parks reveal the persistence of bitter feelings between both sides. As Janney shows, the initial appearance of reconciliation was only a façade. In addition, the mistreatment of POWs during the war, especially at Andersonville Prison in Georgia, continued to enrage Union veterans many years afterward.²

One problem in *Remembering the Civil War* is the unnecessary overlap between the dedicated chapters on women and the Lost Cause and discussions of the same subjects elsewhere in the book, which somewhat muddles the chronology. But this does not seriously detract from a discerning and significant contribution to studies of the Civil War and the evolution of its remembrance. Both specialists and general readers will learn much from it.

2. Janney's argument here seconds the findings of, e.g., David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard U Pr, 2001), and Benjamin G. Cloyd, *Haunted by Atrocity: Civil War Prisons in American Memory* (Baton Rouge: LSU Pr, 2010).