

Civil War Book Review

Spring 2002

Article 1

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Recommended Citation

Ng, Laura (2002) "Looking Forward To The Past," *Civil War Book Review*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 2 .
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cwbr/vol4/iss2/1>

Editorial

LOOKING FORWARD TO THE PAST

Ng, Laura

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For me, the New Year embodies a sentiment best expressed by President John F. Kennedy: "We must use time as a tool, not as a couch." And while the turning of the calendar begs for a nostalgic mental journey into the past, it is the historian and history lover that truly understand the power of this pivotal point. It is not the comfort of the familiar that they seek; rather it is the contemplation of the one watershed moment that will simultaneously create a new moment while redefining the original. This mental exploration brings to light new factors that transform understanding something that even the sweetest moments of Proustian remembrance fail to do.

This transforming perception keeps events like Lincoln's assassination vital and in the forefront of study. More than a century after the fact, works such as Edwards Steers Jr.'s *Blood on the Moon* (University of Kentucky Press, ISBN 0813122171, \$29.95, hardcover) inspire our inner detectives to investigate the complex historical web surrounding it. Like a phoenix, Lincoln continually emerges from the ashes, forever resurrected in our minds.

And there are others. Ted Alexander reviews *The Mosby Myth* (Scholarly Resources, ISBN 084202929x, \$17.95, softcover) and uncovers the many layers of the Gray Ghost and the flesh-and-blood man at the center.

Like history, literature captures instances that transform. Kent Gramm looks at Robert Penn Warren's re-released Civil War novel, *Wilderness* (University of Tennessee Press, ISBN 1572331348, \$19.50, soft cover) and illustrates that classic tales continue to fascinate and entertain. David Madden brings to light Civil War works of both fiction and non-fiction, including Allen Tate's *The Fathers* (Swallow Press, ISBN 0804001081, \$9.95, soft cover), that reveal insights into men and war with provoking clarity. Rounding out our literature section is a review of *Faulkner's County* (University of North Carolina Press, ISBN 0807849316, \$49.95, hardcover) that deals with the intense influence history has upon great writing.

In the spirit of continued revelation, Barbara Cloud speaks out about the Civil War and the Cherokee Nation. Through her work we can begin to understand that pain and politics transcend national, cultural, and religious borders.

Our first experiences with transforming moments happen when we are young, and inhabit both real and imaginary landscapes. Carolyn P. Yoder's review of *Ghost Soldier* (Henry Holt, ISBN 0805061584, \$16.95, hardcover) unearths the tale of a young boy who draws strength from the ghosts of the Civil War in order to deal with the trials of contemporary life. Novelist Faith Baldwin wrote, "Time is a dressmaker specializing in alterations." Our little army of offerings is made up of revised memories and revisited moments, embellished over generations. Try some on and see what fits.

-Laura Ng