

# Civil War Book Review

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Summer 2003

Article 1

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## Writing The War

Colleen H. Fava

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## Editorial

### WRITING THE WAR

Fava, Colleen H.

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Two segments included in this issue of Civil War Book Review directly address the fact that the Civil War has been the focus of an enormous amount of literary and scholarly attention. In his Rediscovering Civil War Classics column, David Madden takes a look at *The Unwritten War: American Writers and the Civil War* by Daniel Aaron (University of Alabama Press, ISBN 0817350020, \$26.95, softcover). Madden reiterates Aaron's and Walt Whitman's early claims that the real war will never get into the books or, more specifically, that no single volume could contain a complete account of this monumental event. Inspired by *The Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1862* edited by Gary W. Gallagher (University of North Carolina Press, ISBN 080782786X, \$34.95, hardcover), the eighth edition in the *Military Campaigns of the Civil War Series* from UNC, reviewer Kevin Levin addresses a theory pronounced by Bernard Bailyn in *Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Harvard University Press, 1976). Bailyn's text published in 1976, shortly after Aaron's text in 1974, poses a similar concern and seeks to find the real war in print. Madden and Aaron lament Whitman's prophecy that fiction and poetry will never quite contain the entirety of the war. Levin and Gallagher welcome the passage of time that has necessarily distanced writers from the events of the War, creating a climate that fosters analyses and that will culminate, as Levin says, in Bailyn's ultimate mode of interpretation. Whether or not some future, single, comprehensive text emerges, the sheer volume of publications and forums are testimony to the fact that interest in the War is alive and well.

The political landscape, from the antebellum through the Reconstruction period, is thoughtfully addressed in James D. Hardy Jr.'s examination of *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North* by Melinda Lawson (University of Kansas Press, ISBN 07006112076, \$29.95, hardcover) and in Ward A. McAfee's assessment of *Legacy of Disunion: The Enduring Significance of the American Civil War* edited by Susan-Mary Grant and Peter J. Parish (Louisiana State University Press, ISBN 0807128473, \$39.95, hardcover). While Lawson's text addresses a universal shift in American politics toward

patriotism for the Union, Grant and Parish expose the pervasiveness of political disruptions among the populace in a collection of essays.

On a more introductory level this issue offers two books with the adolescent student in mind: Carolyn P. Yoder assesses Norman Bolotin's *Civil War A to Z: A Young Readers' Guide to Over 100 People, Places, and Points of Importance* (Dutton Children's Books, ISBN0525462686, hardcover), while Julie Pfeiffer introduces *Naming the Stones: A Moment in Civil War History Witnessed by a New England Boy* by Clara Stites (Spinner Publications, Inc., ISBN0932027725, \$7.95 softcover).

Personal narratives, battle histories, home front studies, sociopolitical analyses, and biographical texts round out the Summer 2003 Issue of *Civil War Book Review* providing more material for inquiry in the ongoing quest to write the war. Floris Barnett Cash discusses an unlikely friendship between two women of drastically different socioeconomic backgrounds in *Mrs. Lincoln and Mrs. Keckly: The Remarkable Friendship Between a First Lady and a Former Slave* by Jennifer Fleischner (Broadway Books, ISBN 0767902580, \$26.00, softcover). John M. Coski explores the Southern white male psyche as presented in Stephen W. Berry's *All That Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South* (Oxford University Press, ISBN 0195145674, \$26.00, hardcover).

The variety of textual approaches and subjects contained in each issue of *Civil War Book Review* offers evidence that the entirety of the war has not yet gotten into the books. As historical methodologies become increasingly more inclusive it grows ever more unlikely that a single volume will, or could, ever include it all. Perhaps more significant than the lack of an epic novel or singular encyclopedic text, is the presence of intellectual veracity that prevents such a colossal topic from being contained in a solitary tome. In a work that explores this very issue, *Writing the Civil War: The Quest to Understand* (University of South Carolina, 1998) James McPherson and William Cooper make the following dedication: For All Participants in the Quest. We hope that Civil War Book Review offers a road map for these same intrepid explorers.