

History, Biography, And Character

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Editorial

HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY, AND CHARACTER

Freeman, Christopher S.

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I am proud to present to you the *Civil War Book Review's* Fifth Anniversary Issue. Conceived by David Madden and Michael Zibart of Book Page, materialized by Leah Jewett and the Book Page Staff, supported by Louisiana State University Libraries, under the stewardship of four different editors (Morgan Knull, Laura Ng, Coleen Fava, and myself), in both print and digital forms, the *Review* has annotated or reviewed over 1500 books about or set in the Civil War era. Out of the hundreds of reviews, columns, and interviews the *Review* has published since the first issue in the summer of 1999, we have compiled our very best in a special highlights section. These highlights reflect the great diversity of material and high quality of scholarship the *Review* seeks to bring to you with every issue. In addition, we are including a special feature called "Traditions and Transformations: Five Years of Civil War Books." Within are interviews on the past and future of Civil War publishing with preeminent historians James McPherson and Edward Ayers, literary scholar Randal Allred, novelist Thomas Dyja, and editor Sylvia Frank Rodrigue.

The Summer 2004 Issue of the *Review* provides rich examples of the multiple lenses through which the Civil War continues to be viewed in history and memory. From epic poetry to marine archaeology, we seek a fuller conception and interpretation of this seminal conflict. One method in particular plays a prominent role in this issue: biography. What insights are to be gained from in-depth analysis of historical characters that cannot be gained in more general histories? Plutarch, the great biographer of the ancient world, argues in his life of Alexander, I am not writing history but biography, and the most outstanding exploits do not always have the property of revealing the goodness or badness of the agent; often, in fact, a casual action, the odd phrase, or a jest reveals character better than battles involving the loss of thousands upon thousands of lives, huge troop movements, and whole cities besieged.

Appropriately, two of the biographical entries in this issue use Plutarch's own method—parallel lives. Both of these books feature Lincoln; in one he is

paired with a literary contemporary and in the other he is compared to a subsequent statesman. In Daniel Mark Epstein's *Lincoln and Whitman: Parallel Lives in Civil War Washington* (Ballantine Books, ISBN 0345457994, \$24.95, hardcover), Whitman's life is chronicled with that of his Captain. Michael F. Bishop, of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, reviews this parallel treatment of Civil War Washingtonians. Naval War College professor Mackubin Thomas Owens examines *Franklin D. Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln: Competing Perspectives on Two Great Presidencies* (M.E. Sharpe Inc., ISBN 0765610353, \$26.95, hardcover) edited by William D. Pederson and Frank J. Williams. This collection of essays covers the legacies, leadership, and place in history of those two great presidents.

In addition to these comparisons of historical actors, this issue has several stand alone biographies. Paul D. H. Quigley, of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, meditates on this long overdue biography, *Bound for the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of An American Hero* (Ballantine Books, ISBN 0345456270, \$26.95, hardcover) by Kate Clifford Larson. Little known and peripheral figure George Bent is also the subject of a biography, *Halfbreed: The Remarkable True Story of George Bent: Caught Between the Worlds of the Indian and the White Man*(Da Capo Press, ISBN 0306813203, \$30.00, hardcover) by David Fridtjof Halaas and Andrew E. Masich, reviewed by Professor Barbara Cloud of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Lincoln is the sole subject of another important work, *Lincoln at Cooper Union: The Speech that Made Abraham Lincoln President* (Simon & Shuster, ISBN 0743224663, \$25.00, hardcover) by Harold Holzer. Frank J. Williams, Lincoln scholar and Rhode Island Supreme Court Justice, takes an in-depth look at this new entry into the extensive Lincoln bibliography. Historical figures, however, are not the only subjects to be found within this addition of the *Civil War Book Review*. In the *Perspectives from Afield and Afar* column, Temple University historian Wilbert L. Jenkins reflects upon the life of a modern scholar in *Tribute to John Hope Franklin: Scholar, Mentor, Father, Friend* (University of Missouri Press, ISBN 0826215041, \$24.95, hardcover).

Biographies are not the only items of note within this Issue. Professor Kent Gramm takes on a new work in a much begrudged and abused form of expression, the lyrical poem. John Grey's *Davenport's Version* (Portals Press, ISBN 0916620581, \$20.00, softcover) is a 235 page narrative poem set in Civil War New Orleans. Historian Paul Christopher Anderson of Clemson University reviews a collection of diverse essays edited by Winfred B. Moore Jr., Kyle S.

Sinisi, and David H. White Jr. *Warm Ashes: Issues in Southern History at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century* (University of South Carolina Press, ISBN 1570035105, \$49.95, hardcover) is a compilation of essays originally presented at the 2000 Citadel Conference on the South; it spans a wide variety of topics such as slavery, religion, memory, education, and segregation. In his *Rediscovery* column, David Madden provides a polemic against the disservice done to Civil War photographers by publishers and historians. Closing out this issue is an interview by Leah Jewett of anthropologist Paul Shackel about his new book *Memory in Black and White: Race Commemoration and the Post-Bellum Landscape* (Alta Mira Press, ISBN 0759102635, \$26.95, softcover). Dr. Shackel tackles many complicated contemporary issues such as public memory, commemoration, and the role of the National Park Service in interpretation of battlefields.

We hope that you enjoy this Fifth Anniversary Issue of the *Civil War Book Review*. With your support we can continue to serve as a guide to the most recent Civil War books and scholarship for another five years to come.