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Review of *War Stories: Suffering and Sacrifice in the
Civil War North*

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domestic developments and ten pages on Reconstruction—almost entirely to the war's military and political events. It is a skillfully told tale, brimming with striking prose: P. G. T. Beauregard's grandiose plans before the First Battle of Bull Run were "all moonshine and nonsense" (p. 52); Joseph E. Johnston was "the war's foremost retreator" (p. 110); William T. Sherman was the "war's master of turning movements" (p. 281). Benjamin Grierson's mounted raid had more of an impact on Ulysses S. Grant's Vicksburg operations against John C. Pemberton than did George Stoneman's comparable cavalry sortie on Joseph Hooker's Chancellorsville campaign against Robert E. Lee, explains Woodworth, because "Stoneman was not Grierson, Lee was not Pemberton, and, most of all, Hooker was not Grant" (p. 203). Woodworth also has a storyteller's gift for the interesting anecdote; this reviewer, for example, did not know that Albert Sidney Johnston, mortally wounded at Shiloh, had in his pocket the very tourniquet that could have saved his life.

Not surprisingly, given the focus of his previous scholarship, Woodworth insists that both sides devoted too much attention to affairs in Virginia. He pulls few punches when assessing military generalship, evidencing no sympathy for recent efforts to restore the reputation of George McClellan. Woodworth gives higher marks to Braxton Bragg, blaming the disappointments in the invasion of Kentucky, at Stones River, before Chickamauga, and at Chattanooga on the self-serving, conniving failures of his subordinates. In Woodworth's reckoning, Grant towered above all others, demonstrating an unusual grasp for the relationship between military and political events, overseeing an "operational masterpiece" (p. 200) at Vicksburg and grinding down Lee's Army of Northern Virginia in 1864–1865. Acknowledging that Grant could make mistakes, he attributes those errors to Grant's insistence on focusing on what he was doing, rather than worrying about the actions of his foes. "As long as he kept the momentum he was by far the most dangerous general of the war," writes Woodworth, "but when something happened to halt his momentum, whether enemy action or the orders of a superior, he became vulnerable" (p. 87).

In his forays into political matters, Woodworth takes great pains to destroy old shibboleths regarding slavery and states' rights. Consistent with the present scholarly consensus, he insists that slavery caused the war. He repeatedly points out inconsistencies in postwar southern assertions about the importance of states' rights, effectively noting the ironies of the South's determination to have a strong federal Fugitive Slave Act and willingness to use the central government to enact wartime conscription. Dismissing revisionist notions arguing that Abraham Lincoln was too slow to abolish slavery, he contends that the president "was . . . deeply committed to ending slavery as soon as he could do so in a way that would have a chance of surviving both politically and militarily" (p. 137). In so doing, he emphasizes Lincoln's fear that Roger B. Taney, the con-

servative chief justice, would overturn any premature federal action.

Woodworth has earned the right to write the book he wants to, and to deal with the subject matter he prefers to. Even so, this reviewer would have welcomed his greater engagement with recent scholarship. The text largely ignores, for example, any systematic examination of the reasons why Civil War soldiers fought, an issue which would seem to have been particularly relevant to the book's military/political bent. Discussions of the war's impact on American notions of the role of the federal government and on our collective historical memory are likewise absent. Woodworth's brief handling of the roles of women in the war harkens back several decades; while correctly pointing out that the overwhelming majority of women during the period considered soldiering to be "man's work" (p. 135), his failure to even mention debates regarding the expansion of their public roles seems striking, especially given his assertion that, in the twentieth century, "a constitutional right to privacy was to become a code word for abortion rights," just as "a constitutional right to property had in the mid-nineteenth century become a shibboleth for the defense of slavery" (p. 136).

In sum, those seeking a well-written, forcefully argued, traditional overview of military and political issues will find Woodworth's book a welcome addition to the literature. Those hoping for exposure to broader themes and the incorporation of more recent scholarship should look elsewhere.

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FRANCES M. CLARKE. *War Stories: Suffering and Sacrifice in the Civil War North*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2011. Pp. xiv, 251. \$35.00.

For more than a century, Americans have consumed realistic and bittersweet (often simply bitter) accounts of war and the effects of war. This has left many readers, including historians, unable to stomach, much less understand, the moralistic and overtly triumphal fiction and non-fiction produced during the American Civil War. In her excellent book, Frances M. Clarke offers a nuanced and moving interpretation of these sincere efforts to make sense of the carnage, sacrifice, and disappointment of war. Rather than seeing them as "mere curiosities" reflecting their "Victorian origins" (p. 3), Clarke argues that Civil War stories showed not only how northerners justified the unprecedented blood and treasure expended to preserve the Union, but also how they articulated the values that sustained them via stories of suffering and perseverance by soldiers and civilians.

But not all suffering meant the same thing, and not all sufferers were equally noble. Indeed, members of the lower classes and African Americans were largely absent from the stories Clarke analyzes. The hardships they endured elicited pity more than admiration and, as a result, were thematically useless to middle-class au-

thors and readers. And while acknowledging that Confederates also suffered, northerners believed southern society was too corrupted by slavery for its suffering to have any redemptive value.

The book's chapters work outward from the ways in which individuals took meaning from sacrifice to the methods by which Americans sought to demonstrate to the world how their sacrifices represented the best in republican virtues. Clarke shows how the notion of "idealized suffering" (p. 25) developed by antebellum reform movements and evangelical Christianity played out in several different contexts: the service and death of a single middle-class officer, as preserved in the voluminous scrapbooks compiled by his father; the shared assumptions of wounded soldiers and medical workers that pain and death were meaningful when sustained in the service of a victorious Union; the insistence by civilian volunteers that their individual and communal efforts to aid soldiers contained a moral component; the North's vigilance in confronting European—especially British—contempt by showing that the Union's reliance on sometimes amateurish and innocent volunteers represented the strengths of American democracy rather than its weaknesses; and the ways in which Yankee amputees attempted to exert their masculinity and self-reliance in the years immediately following the war. Clarke's epilogue briefly but movingly follows these themes into the Gilded Age, when several cultural trends—veterans' growing emphasis on their unique experiences, the wretched state of race relations, and the rise of social Darwinism—would make "many of the assumptions that underpinned . . . tales of suffering and benevolence" (p. 176) seem rather antique and render their optimism rather naïve. During the latter part of the century, as industrialization, sectional reconciliation, and gender and class conflict came to dominate society, "tales of exemplary Union sufferers, selfless volunteers, and unprecedented benevolence would be few and far between" (p. 177).

These brief descriptions inadequately describe the book's finely reasoned, truly useful arguments. Clarke takes the popular culture of the Civil War North at face value, although that does not mean she accepts it uncritically. She effectively acknowledges the vast literature on civilian mobilization, soldiers' lives, memory, and other crucial components of the era's historiography, challenging, among others, George M. Fredrickson's interpretation of the Sanitary Commission as a harbinger of industrial-era bureaucracy.

It would have been instructive for Clarke to have investigated a little further how these same attitudes played out in the Confederacy. Many of the ideas that formed the basis for responses to suffering were American values, rather than merely New England values. That said, expanding the book's scope to include Confederate notions of sacrifice might have disrupted the tight focus of her argument, not to mention the symmetry of the evidence. Slavery did, of course, cast a long shadow over virtually every intellectual and social facet of the South, and the vast outpouring of war-time lit-

erary examinations of sacrifice that appeared in the North were less present in the resource-strapped Confederacy. A possible entry point for Confederate sacrifice might have been the epilogue; even as northerners began to reject the seemingly simplistic patriotism of the war stories that had so moved them in the 1860s, southerners made their versions a key component of the Lost Cause.

This is a tightly argued, superbly written, and convincing interpretation of an often overlooked slice of American culture. It really is a model for grappling with the issues raised by the cultural manifestations of war in any era. As such, it is a worthy partner to Drew Gilpin Faust's *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (2008), another book that looks at the meaning of the great cataclysm of the Civil War in original and intimate ways.

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JAMES MARTEN. *Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America*. (Civil War America.) Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 2011. Pp. xii, 339. \$39.95.

In this study of America's Civil War veterans in the Gilded Age, James Marten seeks answers to the questions "How did veterans live, and how were they seen to live?" (p. 5). The result is a sensitive, judicious, and thought-provoking book. Marten focuses on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but his conclusions raise further questions and invite comparisons to the experiences of veterans and their fellow Americans' attitudes toward them in other generations.

Marten entitles his chapter headings with phrases from Walt Whitman's 1867 poem "A Carol of Harvest," later republished as "The Return of the Heroes," a poignant treatment of the return of soldiers to their homes and their struggles in readjusting to postwar life. The chapters cover demobilization and homecoming; veterans' disabilities and the varying responses of civilians to them; the commodification of the war and of veterans' memories; "soldiers' homes" built with public funds for disabled or poor veterans; pensions and "veterans' preference" for government jobs; and finally veterans' self-identities as distinct and forever set apart from non-veterans who could never fully understand their experiences and perceptions. In each section, he describes a variety of white veterans' experiences and, even more fully, the profound ambivalence of other citizens toward the veterans themselves. In the chapter on soldiers' homes, for example, the public was torn between sympathy for the men in them and disgust for those who drank heavily and committed petty crimes. Moreover, by settling in their homes, veterans sacrificed most of their independence, "manhood," and status in a Gilded Age society that valued vigor, self-reliance, and prosperity. And while a large majority of the public and Congress often agreed that the disabled and impoverished saviors of the Union deserved pensions,