

6-1-2017

Review of *Lone Star Unionism, Dissent, and Resistance: Other Sides of Civil War Texas* ed. by Jesús F. de la Teja

James Marten

Marquette University, james.marten@marquette.edu

Lone Star Unionism, Dissent, and Resistance: Other Sides of Civil War Texas. Edited by Jesús F. de la Teja. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016. Pp. 285. Cloth, \$29.95; paper, \$19.95.)

Texans have always set themselves apart. Their state's distinctive history, economy, and geography—geographies, really—mean that they are both southern *and* western, although not fully either. The state's role in the Civil War, most of it enacted a world away from most Texans' doorsteps, and the peculiar problems faced by Texas at the time (its continuing wars with Native Americans and the unrest along its long border with Mexico) has also created a somewhat different relationship between the state's residents and their past. In many ways, the war is a less central component of the state's narrative than it is for other Confederate states, although generations of Texans easily, even casually, adopted the Lost Cause mantle accepted by other southern states. Yet historians of the state during the era of the sectional conflict have often looked inward at the particular political, ethnic, and economic contours of Texas, rather than outward to the experiences of the rest of the Confederacy.

Jesús F. de la Teja brought together a number of senior and junior historians—most teaching at universities in Texas, many educated in Ph.D. programs in Texas—at a 2014 symposium to explore the experiences of

wartime Texans and the meanings of the war to subsequent generations. But the key question to ask of this nicely organized and clearly written volume, of course, is whether it provides original insights into the place of Texas in the war, and the place of the war in Texas.

The answer: it does and it does not. Each essay provides a useful account of an element of Civil War-era dissent and the vigilance against dissenters, from white Unionists, including Germans, to Tejano dissenters and African American slaves and refugees. A few stand out in their efforts at providing larger contexts—through space or time—for Texans' responses to disunion and dissent. Laura Lyons McLemore's opening essay on the "collective memory of a Confederate Texas" is not really about dissent, but it is a very effective look at the peculiar nature of the Lost Cause as articulated by Texans. Victoria E. Bynum's essay on anti-Confederate dissent in East Texas transcends typical portrayals of the armed resisters in backwoods Texas—most historians, including this reviewer, have suggested that most were fueled by self-interest and disaffection rather than politics—to show that at least one set of "Jayhawkers," as they preferred to be called, found inspiration in Unionism and other political philosophies (Bynum even finds family and political connections to the Mississippians she examines in her made-into-a-major-motion-picture book on the Free State of Jones!). Tejano Unionists were also more aware of the issues that drove them to resist the Confederacy than is commonly assumed; Omar S. Valerio-Jiménez suggests that historians have too often taken at face value the dismissive accounts of Anglo Confederates and landholders. The double jeopardy experienced by African American women under slavery—they were both black and female—is shown by Rebecca A. Czuchry to have continued into Reconstruction, when the racial violence for which Texas became infamous disproportionately burdened freedwomen.

But not all of the essays connect Texas to the larger issues and approaches explored by historians of other states or regions. Many reprise earlier articles or books, or address historiographical issues of interest largely to historians of Texas. In his introduction, the editor suggests "that the Civil War did not end in spring 1865 but continued through Reconstruction" (6). This is actually an idea that has come up in recent books and, inevitably, in blogs, but the editor does not explain how it shapes the conception of this particular book.¹ Some of the essays do deal with postwar issues, but not from the point of view of Reconstruction as a continuation of the war. Moreover, the essays seem to be addressed to different audiences. A few are straightforward summaries of previous work, one or two engage very specific historiographical questions, a few still bear the relative informality of conference papers, and some are quite academic in structure.

Having said all that, *Lone Star Unionism, Dissent, and Resistance* works as a sampler of the kinds of experiences and events that make the Civil War history of Texas unique. The state really does have a different history from the rest of the Confederate South, and historians of the era who work outside of Texas and general readers with an interest in the Civil War will find this précis of those differences to be a rich and rewarding look at the ethnic, racial, political, and economic diversity of the state and of the unusual conditions that prevailed in this far-western corner of the Confederacy.

James Marten

NOTES

1. See, for example, Gregory P. Downs, *After Appomattox: Military Occupation and the Ends of War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015).

JAMES MARTEN, professor of history and department chair at Marquette University, is a past president of the Society of Civil War Historians and the author of a number of books on the Civil War era, including *Texas Divided: Loyalty and Dissent in the Lone Star State, 1856–1874* (University Press of Kentucky, 1990) and *Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America* (University of North Carolina Press, 2011).