

Out Of Ashes

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Editorial

OUT OF ASHES

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The Golden Age of Roman literature occurred during the last years of a century of civil conflict and the immediate collapse of the Roman Republic. Out of the Republic's last embers and funeral ashes came the military autobiography of Julius Caesar, the great political speeches of Cicero, and Virgil's epic poem, *The Aeneid*. These works and others of the period would describe and define what it was and was best of about being Roman. Virgil was especially deft at presenting the Roman spirit, embodied by the title character, the duty-bound Aeneas. Virgil clearly illustrates the promise and purpose of Roman empire, To spare the conquered and beat down the proud.

Likewise, the American Civil War itself spawned great literature, much of which helped to define what it is to be American. The poetry of Walt Whitman, Stephen Crane's great American novel on the war, and Abraham Lincoln's speech that spoke of a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal are a few examples. Two other authors that arise out of this tradition are featured prominently in this issue of the *Civil War Book Review*. Mark Twain wrote his classic novels of the Mississippi and the South in the decades following the war and Ulysses S. Grant wrote one of the few books truly comparable to Caesar's *Conquest of Gaul*, the *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant*. David Madden, in his *Rediscovery* column, takes a look at the relationship between Grant and Twain illustrated in *General Grant* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1966) by Matthew Arnold. This slim volume contains an assessment of Grant by one of the Victorian era's most important critics, Arnold, and a speech by Twain critiquing it. The relationship between Grant and Twain is also the explicit subject Mark Perry's modern work, *Grant and Twain: The Story of a Friendship that Changed America* (Random House, ISBN 0679642730, \$24.95, hardcover). Brooks Simpson, of Arizona State University, examines this grand assessment of the friendship of these two luminaries. In this issue's interview, Shirley Samuels discusses her new book, *Facing America: Iconography and the Civil War* (Oxford University Press, ISBN 0195128974, \$49.95, hardcover), which details how authors and artists of the Civil War era

embody American identity within books and images. Her work examines how the images used to represent the nation change over time.

In addition, the Review offers its staple of diverse perspectives on the Civil War. Especially prominent is Chandra Manning's review of *Diary of a Christian Soldier: Rufus Kinsley and the Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, ISBN 052182334X, \$30.00, hardcover) by David C. Rankin. Kinsley fought fervently against slavery on moral grounds and his story undercuts many assumptions about soldiers fighting primarily for economic reasons. Another book that examines men's reasons for fighting is *Union Jacks: Yankee Sailors in the Civil War* (University of North Carolina Press, ISBN 080782870X, \$34.95, hardcover) by Michael J. Bennett. Retired naval commander and author, William H. Roberts tackles this extensively researched book on the Yankee mariner. George C. Rable, of the University of Alabama, investigates the new found interest of Southern Unionists in his review of *Loyalty and Loss: Alabama's Unionist in the Civil War and Reconstruction* by Margaret M. Storey.

Two of this issue's reviewers hail from my alma mater, Berea College. Historian David Nelson examines a massive study on Southern intellectual history. Michael O'Brien's two volume study, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860* (University of North Carolina Press, ISBN 0807828009, \$95.00, hardcover), argues that antebellum Southern thought was a part of and contributed to the intellectual movements of the day. Richard Sears, Chair of Humanities at Berea College, takes an in-depth look at Stanley Harrold's *The Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism: Addresses to the Slaves* (University Press of Kentucky, ISBN 0813122902, \$35.00, hardcover). This book details the transformation of the Abolitionist movement from one dedicated to pacifism to one that employed violent civil action.

Also, in this issue, are books on politics, economics and the press before, during, and after the war. In this month's Perspectives column, Ian Crowe, the director of the Edmund Burke Society of America, reviews Mark Wahlgren Summers's *Party Games: Getting, Keeping, and Using Power in Gilded Age Politics* (University of North Carolina Press, ISBN 0807855375, \$22.50, hardcover). Summers's well-researched and crafted book teases out the political corruption of this dark period of American political history. Hailing from the National University of Ireland, Galway, Erico Dal Lago traces the economic arguments of David Carlton and Peter Coclanis. These two experts on southern economic history have co-authored *The South, the Nation, and the World:*

Perspectives on Southern Economic Development (University of Virginia Press, ISBN 0813921856, \$19.50, softcover). Finally, *For Free Press and Equal Rights: Republican Newspapers in the Reconstruction South* (University of Georgia Press, ISBN 0820325279, \$39.95, hardcover) by Richard H. Abbott is reviewed by Grand Valley State University's Steve Tripp.

I hope that you enjoy the Fall 2004 Issue of the *Civil War Book Review*. It is with regret that I must report that I am crossing my own Rubicon and moving on to new and different challenges next fall. I am very grateful for all the kindness and support that I have received from reviewers, readers, and staff during my time as editor and have learned much from my experiences producing this publication for you. I leave the stewardship of the *Review* in the capable hands of our new editor Frank Hardie, an M.F.A. candidate in the LSU Department of English, and the continuing care of Civil War Center Director Leah Jewett. I am sure with their expertise and your continuing support this most recent casting of the die shall be a fortunate one. Thank you and goodbye.