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Nina Silber. *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. xi + 213 pp. $75.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-517445-8; $19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-19-517444-1.

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Identity Crises at Every Turn: Updating the Scholarship on Gender and the Civil War

One of the first books I read as a graduate student was *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* (1992). That book, Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber's first edited collection, examined not only women's participation in the war, but also how the conditions of war helped to challenge and even alter many Americans' understanding of gender roles. I remember it well, because it brought to light for me the great variety of human experiences that grew out of the conflict and the important factors–age, sex, race, class position, region, and political loyalty–that combined to shape how Americans lived through the war and postwar years. *Divided Houses* also exposed me to some of the newest scholarship in the field, demonstrating how far historians had come in marrying women's and gender history with the study of the American Civil War.

Battle Scars, Clinton and Silber's second edited collection, attempts to do much the same for the field in the early twenty-first century, and it does so with much success. It is smaller and more manageable than its predecessor, with only ten chapters compared to eighteen in the earlier collection. The editors have chosen their selections wisely, providing a range of articles that address gendered conflicts in diverse circumstances. While the majority of the scholarship showcased in *Battle Scars* focuses on aspects of the war experience or its legacy in the South, Clinton and Silber are careful to include significant chapters that assess the impact of the war on gender norms in the North. Moreover, all the articles address, on some level, the critical combination of race and gender in the shaping of identity.

While the collection is organized chronologically, the editors also seek to connect the essays thematically. In an introductory chapter, Nina Silber ably explains the structure and logic of the collection by reviewing what important historical questions generated the initial social history research on the Civil War, how those questions and some new ones have shaped the field in the last fifteen years, and how they inform the work of the scholars included in *Battle Scars*. Several of the following chapters, for example, address women's wartime actions and how those actions conflicted with established standards for female behavior, while other essays examine how men and conceptions of manhood were just as vulnerable to change as a result of the war. Despite such fluidity, many of the essays note that adhering to antebellum notions of gender roles and racial authority allowed people in power–including Union government officials, Klansmen, and Confederate memorialists–to restore a particular kind of order and limit the options of certain groups in the wake of emancipation and Confederate defeat. The stories generated here are diverse, but every one of them seems to revolve around a crisis in gender in one form or another. Virginia Gould's essay, "Oh, I Pass Everywhere: Catholic Nuns in the Gulf South during the Civil War," adds a new twist to an old question: did the war create opportunities to improve women's status? By examining the work of Catholic nuns, a group previously overlooked in the larger scholarship, Gould complicates our understanding of what was possible for white southern women during the war. She shows that in the midst of harrowing wartime circumstances, nuns proved incredibly capable of keeping their religious missions alive and serving the embattled civilian populations around them. They taught, they nursed, they made dangerous journeys to aid and provision others, and they even secured the release of a captured priest, all of which suggest that the chaos of war created ways for these nuns to escape from the traditional gender constraints of their faith. But before we can use this story to claim a victory for southern women, Gould cautions that the nuns' similarity to the majority of white southern women only went so far. The nuns' motivations and actions were not centered on home and family; instead, they were focused on fulfilling a larger and more public role than most southern women could have imagined pursuing in secular society.

Elizabeth Leonard and Catherine Clinton also evaluate women's public presence during the war. Like Virginia Gould, Leonard examines women who stretched the bounds of appropriate behavior. In "Mary Walker, Mary Surratt, and Some Thoughts on Gender in the American Civil War," Leonard uses two extreme examples of northern women, both of whom gained public attention for their strange behavior, to demonstrate the limits of social change for women. Unlike the women whose wartime nursing or soldiers' aid activities modestly expanded Victorian notions of what women could and should do, Dr. Mary Walker's insistence on being treated as a professional surgeon within the Union military's medical department proved unsettling to her superiors, despite the flexibility that the war emergency created. Leonard uses Mary Surratt, the only woman convicted and executed as an accomplice in President Abraham Lincoln's assassination, to show that while unwomanly behavior made it easy to convict Suratt of a capital crime, her status as a woman, a member of the subordinate dependent sex, also created anxiety and regret among northerners for executing her.

Catherine Clinton identifies a similar unease with women's public actions in the South. In "'Public Women' and Sexual Politics in the American Civil War," she examines three well-known public acts of female protest within the Confederacy (in New Orleans against Union General Benjamin Butler's men, in Richmond during the Bread Riot, and in Roswell, Georgia, in response to General William Sherman's forced march) and asks how government officials sought to rein in the women. In evaluating their tactics, Clinton concludes that men in positions of authority invoked gender roles to discredit or disarm the troublesome women. Like Leonard, Clinton shows that the options available to women in wartime were still pretty limited and that those who engaged in behavior too bold, too challenging, and too far beyond the private sphere ran the risk of being tainted as "public women" who were loose, disorderly, and immoral. This was a stigma that horrified most women and that proved useful in keeping them in their place.

In contrast to the attention that white women's actions received from wary men, black freedwomen could barely elicit any response from government officials or recognition of their plight. In an excellent essay entitled, "The Other Side of Freedom: Destitution, Disease, and Dependency among Freedwomen and Their Children during and after the Civil War," Jim Downs argues that even as Union forces brought the promise of emancipation with them into Confederate territory, the reality of freedom for black women was different than it was for black men. He demonstrates in tragic detail how freedwomen were doubly disadvantaged. Black women were more inclined to suffer from starvation and disease, which made them weak, unemployable, and destitute. In addition, their gender identity rendered them largely useless in the view of a government that privileged "able-bodied men" to serve as laborers and soldiers for the military. As a result, enslaved black men held considerable value to Union forces, value that was deserving of emancipation and some semblance of citizenship, whereas freedwomen did not. In fact, Downs finds that freedwomen and their families became nothing but a burden in the eyes of the federal government.

Just as military service enhanced the standing of freedmen in Downs's essay, scholars Stephen Kantrowitz and John Stauffer show how connected martial values were to northern conceptions of manhood during the Civil War. Kantrowitz's essay, "Fighting Like Men: Civil War Dilemmas of Abolitionist Manhood," is one of the best in the collection. It demonstrates that men's work as soldiers began well before 1861, when black and white male abolitionists waged their battle against slavery and the effects of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. These Massachusetts reformers valued their manly service to the cause and considered their violent encounters with slave-catchers as part of the American male revolutionary tradition, but making that case to white northern society was much easier for white men than for black men. Black abolitionist men struggled for years to gain legitimacy by the state and respectability in society. Is it any wonder then that once the war came, these black men were reluctant to risk their lives in military service to a society that had consistently refused to accept them as martial men?

Abolitionists, of course, were not alone in understanding how central militarism was to manhood in wartime. John Stauffer's article, "Embattled Manhood and New England Writers," examines popular literary figures in the North during the war to assess how their conceptions of manhood changed as a result of the conflict. In analyzing their wartime writings, Stauffer argues that male authors–including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and John William De Forest–experienced a crisis in gender, which resulted in their rejection of feminine virtues and a strong turn toward manliness in their fictional characters. But Stauffer also suggests that male writers were not the only ones altering the definition of manhood in their writings. Female authors, most notably Louisa May Alcott, also embraced the martial spirit of the time and masculinized their female characters.

The power to dominate an enemy physically, which became so necessary as the war dragged on and so essential to definitions of manhood, was also the most useful tool used by intransigent southern whites to restore social and political order after the war ended. In "Sexual Terror in the Reconstruction South," Lisa Cardyn argues that white males' attempts to subdue newly emancipated blacks took a particular form, that of sexual terror. This strategy, which targeted and violated the sexuality of freedmen and freedwomen, struck at one the most basic elements of their gender identity in order to degrade and dominate them. Cardyn examines the tactics of the Ku Klux Klan and other postwar white terrorist groups and determines that the sexualized nature of their attacks were not unlike the sexual domination that slave owners employed in disciplining their slaves or that marauding soldiers sometimes used to traumatize enemy civilians during the war. She concludes with an interesting observation, that while white supremacists claimed to detest freedpeople and were disgusted by what they considered blacks' inferior physical qualities, white men chose a method of domination that put them in incredibly close, even intimate, contact with the very people whom they deplored.

Anne Rubin's essay "Politics and Petticoats in the Same Pod: Florence Fay, Betsey Bittersweet and the Reconstruction of Southern Womanhood, 1865-1868," explores another, less alarming way that southern whites channeled their postwar frustrations. Rubin finds that the newspaper columns of Betsey Bittersweet and Florence Fay served as a humorous forum for white southerners to express their concerns about the social and political effects of emancipation and Reconstruction. These fictional women writers, only one of whose identity Rubin can verify as female, used male language and tone to criticize northern government officials as well as freedpeople. In fact, Rubin argues that when white men chose to publish the vitriolic perspectives of Bittersweet and Fay, they were engaging in a sort of "political ventriloquism," using these hot-headed female figures as fronts to express their resentment of northern rule without appearing, as men, to be disloyal (p. 171). Bittersweet and Fay also denounced northern and southern women who sought to expand their power beyond their households, which, according to Rubin, helped to resolve the gender crisis that the war had created within southern households. Even so, Rubin suggests that the presence of Bittersweet and Fay in the southern press, taking stands on important political and social matters of the time, represents a small expansion of southern women's authority in the postwar years.

Rubin's research is especially valuable in its analysis of gender within the postwar political culture. Like Rubin, Tom Brown also identifies gender as a significant factor in the reshaping of southern culture, only his investigation falls later in the postbellum period and focuses on Confederate memorial efforts. In "The Confederate Retreat to Mars and Venus," Brown showcases the tension that developed between female memorialists and Confederate veterans over the building of commemorative statues in Columbia, South Carolina. Women erected a statue to the state's fallen soldiers in 1879, and men followed suit with a statue honoring the wartime contributions of women in 1912. Brown argues that through these monuments, men and women crafted competing images of gender roles during the war and within southern society. Most at issue was the feminine ideal that veterans embraced in their design of the 1912 statue. They chose to celebrate the antebellum standard of woman rather than one that acknowledged the social changes wrought by the war. In this way, Brown asserts, southern men attempted to resolve the postwar gender crisis in their favor.

From the beginning of this collection to the end, the editors and authors have demonstrated that the Civil War left an indelible mark on Americans, altering for many their sense of their own gendered identity. *Battle Scars* is an excellent resource for engaging the growing scholarship on gender and the Civil War. It should also work well in the classroom, with its size and composition fit for consumption on both the undergraduate and graduate levels. I certainly plan to incorporate the exciting work of these authors in my own courses.

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