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Kenneth W. Howell, ed. *Still the Arena of Civil War: Violence and Turmoil in Reconstruction Texas, 1865-1874.* Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2012. 480 pp. $34.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-57441-449-3.

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Terror as a Means of Resisting Change

Resistance to government Reconstruction efforts was not unusual in the aftermath of the Civil War. Defeated Confederates, immersing themselves in Lost Cause mythology rather than accepting the reality of a post-slavery culture, resisted efforts to impose new laws and ways of life. Across the South, Black Codes became the norm, and white Southerners confronted Northern carpetbaggers and local scalawags with organized opposition ranging from passive embargoes to violent raids by the newly formed Ku Klux Klan. The government tried, with varying measures of success, to curb the growing resistance, creating a political and racial divide throughout most of the South for the better part of two decades. The difficulty of containing the resistance offered by whites in the postwar South were magnified to an even greater degree in Texas, where particular circumstances made finding peaceful change a virtual impossibility.

The book's essays provide a sweeping overview of a violent Texas countryside riven by political and racial rivalries unlike any other in the South. In addition to the hostility against former slaves by disgruntled former Confederates, Texas residents fought each other over other issues and identities. Unlike other Southern states, Texas had sizeable Tejano and Native American populations, adding to the racial discord as these nonwhite groups pressed for a clarification of their legal status. Texas also had a sizeable number of Unionists who opposed the state's secession in 1861, and who manifested their opposition by resisting state government efforts to wage war, making them traitors in the eyes of their pro-Confederate neighbors. Lastly, the erstwhile rebels opposed the arrival of outsiders in their midst after the war ended. Texas, unlike most Confederate states, had not had its territory invaded by Union armies to any great extent. The armies on its soil had not been defeated in battle, but rather just went home when the Confederate government in Richmond, Virginia, collapsed in 1865. This circumstance made white Texans defiant of outside authority, and former Confederates found enemies among occupying military forces (especially black troops in positions of authority); the Freedmen's Bureau; or Northerners who migrated to Texas in the postwar years.

Divided into four parts each discussing topics ranging from law enforcement to victimhood, the book paints a dismal picture of violence and abuse on the Texas frontier. Common among the essays are depictions of the difficulties authorities faced in rooting out resistance to Reconstruction, especially by isolated officials who were often outnumbered by their enemies. Often taking refuge in the rugged countryside, anti-Reconstruction offenders preyed upon helpless individuals, especially former slaves, by denying political rights, enforcing a prewar view of racial status, and killing anyone who opposed them. In addition to violent and armed adversaries, Reconstruction officials found themselves the victims of anti-Reconstruction newspaper editors, intimidated local judges, and hostile juries who protected those defying the law. The only support Reconstruction agents had was a relative handful of outnumbered army troops whose efforts to use force brought forth cries of unconstitutional abuse from those guilty themselves of perpetrating far worse and more violence abuses. The violence generated by an increasingly futile effort to impose Reconstruction led to an early end to the process, leaving former slaves and those deemed the enemy at the mercy of local insurgents. The violence of Reconstruction led to even more violence as Texas emulated the other Jim Crow states by the end of the nineteenth century.

Still the Arena of Civil War provides a definitive view of how Reconstruction failed in Texas specifically and how Texas was a typical example of defeated white Southern attitudes in general. It fills a broad niche in Reconstruction history by exploring the racial intricacies of a region not considered a "typical" part of the

Confederacy, revealing the additional racial dynamic of a Latino population amid the already tense black/white antagonism, and projecting those problems into the future as population migration transformed the West in the decades after the Civil War. Those looking for an outstanding example of Reconstruction history will find it in *Still the Arena of Civil War*.

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