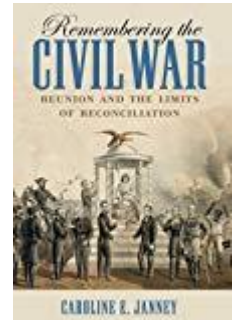


Caroline E. Janney. *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013. 464 pp. \$35.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4696-0706-1.



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Published on H-War (June, 2015)

Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

Any scholar writing about reunion and reconciliation after the US Civil War has to contend with David W. Blight's *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (2001). Blight's seminal book traces the development of the Emancipationist, Reconciliationist, and White Supremacist visions of Civil War memory in the half century following the Civil War. Blight argues that the Reconciliationist and White Supremacist memories pushed the Emancipationist memory of the Civil War largely out of the public mind and thus marginalized slavery and emancipation in favor of reconciliation and Blue-Gray fraternalism. *Race and Reunion* has stimulated a lively discussion among historians, and an ever-growing group of scholars has challenged Blight's argument.[1] Caroline Janney, professor of history at Purdue University, offers an important contribution to this discussion in *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation*. [2] Janney argues that the footage of old rebel and Union veterans shaking hands was the exception, not the rule. She also asserts that reunion and reconciliation were not the

same thing. Reunion, "the political reunification of the nation," was indeed the goal of the "overwhelming mass of loyal white citizens," but reconciliation was much harder to define (p. 5). While Janney concedes that reconciliation had, by the end of the nineteenth century, "evolved into a memory of the war that emphasized the shared American values of valor and devotion to one's cause," she nevertheless insists that reconciliation was never the predominant memory of the war (p. 6).

Janney begins by asserting that the Civil War transformed the disdain that each side felt for the other into hatred. This hatred did not wither, but instead flourished in the postwar period and hampered reconciliation. After Lee's surrender to Grant at Appomattox, a moment that allegedly fostered reconciliation, Unionists "underestimated the tenacity of Confederate bitterness and insolence" (p. 42). In General Orders No. 9, Lee set forth two tenets of the Lost Cause: rebel soldiers had been devoted and had been overwhelmed by superior numbers and resources. These state-

ments, combined with the celebrations by victorious Union soldiers, hardened rebel hearts. In addition, a few days after the surrender, northerners erupted in grief and fury at the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, and the initial calls for leniency toward rebels quickly morphed into demands for punishment and vengeance. In the face of display after display of rebel recalcitrance, northerners also grew infuriated. As Janney observes, these were not ideal conditions for reconciliation.

Janney contends that there was no hint of a reconciliationist tone in the dedication of battlefield monuments and cemeteries. Unionists refused to allow rebels into national cemeteries, which were to be reserved for loyal Americans. African Americans simultaneously mourned the loss of black soldiers, many of whom were buried in integrated national cemeteries, and celebrated emancipation. Rebels, in turn, utilized cemetery dedications and Memorial Day services to “maintain their continued defiance, create an identity separate from that of the North, and cultivate the Lost Cause” (p. 75). Rebel celebrations of Memorial Days, in turn, angered northerners. In an attempt to circumvent this anger, white southerners “framed their Memorial Day services’ blatant displays of Confederate patriotism within the domestic sphere of women in an effort to avoid cries of treason from northerners” (p. 96). White southern women, Janney argues, played an important role in both hampering reconciliation and safeguarding the Lost Cause. “No single vision of the war” Janney sensibly observes, “could encompass the range of meanings and understandings such a vast American public found in the conflict” (p. 75), and sectionalism festered in the cities of the dead long after the guns had fallen silent.

When analyzing the Union Cause and the Lost Cause, Janney argues, quite correctly in the mind of this reviewer, that the period from 1865 to 1880 was not a period of hibernation or incubation in Civil War memory. Both sides cultivated, advanced, and protected their own interpretations of

the Civil War. Union veterans may have regarded the preservation of the Union as preeminent, but they did not overlook the centrality of slavery to the war. Black and white Union veterans “agreed that Union and emancipation served as the dual legacy of their victory” (p. 105). By so doing, they assured that a reconciliationist interpretation of the war would not come to dominate the landscape of Civil War memory. In the South, the Lost Cause fostered “the extension of Confederate nationalism that would encourage resistance and defiance for years to come” (p. 134), and rebels angrily refuted northern claims about emancipation. Both sides, Janney asserts, could embrace reunion, but not reconciliation, and “the battleground of Civil War memory remained contested” (p. 132).

Janney concedes that some veterans chose to embrace their former foes and accepted a white-washed memory of the war. However, Janney sharply contends, most veterans did not subscribe to this vision of sectional harmony. Even veterans who seemed to seek a spirit of sectional cooperation and comradeship did not forget why they had waged such a sanguinary conflict. Reconciliation, according to Janney, did not mean forgetting. Janney also posits, in marked contrast to Blight’s argument, that “debates about slavery proved to be among the most powerful obstacles to reconciliation” (p. 199). Unionists, Janney posits, did not forget that slaveholders brought on the Civil War. Although the vast majority of Union soldiers had not enlisted to destroy the peculiar institution, emancipation nevertheless became “entrenched as a central achievement of Union victory” (p. 202). Janney is particularly careful and does not paint all white Union veterans as racial egalitarians who urged racial equality and civil rights. Rather, her contribution comes from illustrating how Union veterans could embrace both emancipation and reconciliation. Northerners contended that the slaveholding oligarchy manipulated the vast majority of rebels and that rebels could be forgiven, even if their cause could not. Language like this, however, infuriated rebels and caused

them to verbally savage Unionists, who quickly replied in kind.[3]

In a fascinating chapter, Janney discusses the theme of women and reconciliation. Southern white women not only provided cover for cemetery dedications in the early postwar years, but also failed to facilitate reconciliation in later decades. They “actively sought to hinder the love-fest propounded by veterans” (p. 233). Southern white men placed women at the heart of the rebel cause to illustrate that they had fought a defensive war against invaders. In contrast, northern men were, by and large, silent about the role of northern women during the Civil War, and many perceived them as indifferent or tangential to the war effort. Janney attributes these attitudes to the fact that rebel women controlled Memorial Day celebrations where Union celebrations were “the province of men and the federal government” (p. 237). Northern and southern women also played different roles in the postbellum era. Many northern women focused on charity and relief work and were thus less noticeable than their southern counterparts who played an incredibly important role in preserving the memory of the Civil War. Janney does not stop at 1913, as Blight does, but extends the narrative into the 1930s to illustrate the rise of a new generation. Janney argues that women’s organizations continued to grow rapidly and that Civil War memory became more feminized and even more hostile to gestures of reconciliation. Janney concludes by noting that “reunion may have triumphed in 1939, but a white-washed reconciliationist memory of the war had not” (p. 305).

There is much to recommend about Janney’s book. Janney might not overthrow Blight’s interpretation, but her book is, on a variety of points, more persuasive. By insisting on the difference between reconciliation and reunion, by demonstrating the deep-seated and lingering bitterness that hampered reconciliation, and by highlighting instances of interracial cooperation between black

and white Union veterans and black and white women, Janney makes important historiographical contributions. She is also to be commended for the tremendous amount of research and the variety of sources she brings to bear. This reviewer would have appreciated more discussion of electoral politics and at times felt that the scope of the work meant that Janney ended up rushing or glossing over certain events. Nevertheless, this well-researched and compellingly written book will prove useful in the classroom, particularly when read in conjunction with Blight, and will appeal to a lay audience.

Notes

[1]. For a few examples see Gary W. Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, and Forgotten: How Hollywood and Popular Art Shape What We Know about the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Gary W. Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Barbara A. Gannon, *The Won Cause: Black and White Comradeship in the Grand Army of the Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Brian Matthew Jordan, *Marching Home: Union Veterans and Their Unending Civil War* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2014); and M. Keith Harris, *Across the Bloody Chasm: The Culture of Commemoration Among Civil War Veterans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014).

[2]. Janney’s first book, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies’ Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), is also well worth reading.

[3]. For an excellent example of the embrace of both emancipation and reconciliation see George Kimball, *A Corporal’s Story: Civil War Recollections of the Twelfth Massachusetts*, eds. Alan D. Gaff and Donald H. Gaff (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014).

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Citation: Evan C. Rothera. Review of Janney, Caroline E, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation*. H-War, H-Net Reviews. June, 2015.

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