H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Ruth C. Carter, ed. *For Honor Glory & Union: The Mexican & Civil War Letters of Brig. Gen William Haines Lytle.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999. xiv + 244 pp. $27.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8131-2108-6.

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Published on H-Ohio (October, 2000)

An Ohio Soldier's Experience: Reading Beyond Letters Home

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Ruth C. Carter's edition of the letters of William Haines Lytle gives readers insight into the experiences of an elite member of Cincinnati society during the Mexican and Civil Wars and will certainly appeal to all readers interested in soldiers' experiences or the history of Ohio in the antebellum era. In editing Lytle's letters, which span the years 1848 through 1863, Carter's faithfulness to Lytle's own prose provides readers with a sense of intimacy and immediacy often lost in modernization of nineteenth?century collections. The inclusion of Mexican War letters also provides readers with a glimpse into how antebellum Americans approached, and in this case, experienced, the southwestern frontier. Lytle's Civil War letters are significant for what the reveal about conditions in the Army of the Ohio and the officer's personal experiences, especially in camp. This volume is a welcome contribution to the growing scholarship that focuses on the neglected western theater of the war.

Carter's introduction to the letters shows a masterful understanding of Lytle's personal history and that of his family, as well as the Lytles' importance in the settlement of southern Ohio and the growth of Cincinnati. However, her evaluation of Lytle's life is problematic as it relies heavily on William R. Taylor's venerable, but somewhat outdated, *The Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (1961). Carter concludes that Lytle was more akin to a southern cavalier than a yankee. This analysis of her subject seems forced and fails to capture important nuances in the history of the antebellum west and Lytle's place within it. Carter bases her argument on Lytle's romantic nature, his rejection of the pursuit of wealth as an end in itself, had a zest for military service, and a political activism, all of which made him a "cavalier." Yet, the same characteristics are more apt to make Lytle a product of the burgeoning and vibrant western city in which he was raised and a participant in the political culture that characterized the second party system. Lytle's romantic poetry and leisurely lifestyle were typical of both his class and antebellum culture, and cohorts abounded in both northern and southern cities in the decades before the Civil War. Lytle's affinity for military service can be attributed to the glorification of military prowess that was part of the cult of Andrew Jackson. Finally, Lytle's aspiration for political office situated him in a culture dominated by politics and led by those elite men who best presented themselves as champions of popular interests. As a devotee of the northern branch of the Democratic party and a supporter of Stephen A. Douglas, Lytle had far less in common with the cavaliers of the south, most of whom supported southern Democrat John C. Breckenridge in 1860. Indeed, it is Lytle's support for the Democratic party in the north that best explains the nationalism that spurred the Cincinnati native to fight in two wars.

The pressing silence on race, however, is the greatest weakness of the edition. We learn from Lytle's letters that he believes the war was caused because the south mistook "the true sentiments of the northern masses on the subject of slavery"(pp. 118). Lytle is accompanied to war by his black servant, John Wilson and his sparse comments pertaining to his servant reveal Lytle's elitism as well as his sense of racial superiority. In one passage, Lytle refers to Wilson as "the Professor" and writes, "The professor is in his element, as we have quite a lot of niggers about the kitchen who seem to regard him as a nigger Solomon"(pp. 97). Lytle also writes home condescending descriptions of "the very mixed theological notions of the darkies"(pp. 95). We also learn from Lytle's writings of his esteem for the wealthy and gracious lifestyle of southern slaveholders (pp. 108). As part of the force that occupied Huntsville, Alabama, in 1862, Lytle fails to mention either slaves or the army's interaction with them, save for an anecdote intended to illustrate slaves' ignorance (pp. 95). However, the editor fails to

probe the significance of Lytle's paltry considerations of race. William Haines Lytle, as a Democrat from southern Ohio, held views on race that were typical of the conservatism of many people in his region. The lack of concern for free blacks in the Union or slaves in the Confederacy was common among people raised along the Ohio River, in close proximity to slave holding states. Indeed, by the outbreak of the Civil War, Cincinnati and its large free black community had experienced bloody race riots. Seen in this context, Lytle's racial conservatism ties him to people of all classes in southern Ohio who avoid troubling racial issues, save when they offered political advantages.

However, as soldiers and civilians throughout the Union pushed for a more aggressive policy toward Confederate civilians and their property, slavery was undermined. Yet Lytle clung to a belief in limited warfare, derived largely from his elitist esteem for southern planters. At the same time guerilla warfare plagued his soldiers, he wrote home in the summer of 1862, "Wise and paternal treatment can I think bring this people back to their allegiance"(pp. 118). In addition, Lytle was blind to the significance of the large band of refugees that followed the army, save as a military nuisance (pp. 143). However, northerners, especially those in southern Ohio, feared the ramifications as slaves left their masters and Democrats predicted an influx of freed slaves into Ohio and the subsequent degradation of free labor. Indeed, "negro immigration" became the key political issue in many southern Ohio communities in 1862 and the issue effected Democratic gains throughout the region. Against this backdrop, Lytle's silence on slavery reveals the discomfort many northerners felt as the war to save the union became inextricably linked to the destruction of slavery.

In September, 1863, William Haines Lytle was killed in the battle of Chickamauga. Had he survived, he would have seen the advent of a different Union, one in which the effects of emancipation and Republicans' dominance of politics transformed American society. His letters leave us to speculate on how Cincinnati's elite, Democratic, racially conservative son would have responded.

Citation: Christine Dee. Review of Carter, Ruth C., ed., *For Honor Glory & Union: The Mexican & Civil War Letters of Brig. Gen William Haines Lytle.* H-Ohio, H-Net Reviews. October, 2000.
URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=4624