

**W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed..** *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000. xi + 366 pp. \$49.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8078-4886-9.



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## One South, and Many Memories Thereof

The South bears, with either grace or clumsiness depending on one's view, the stereotype of being more "traditional" than other regions in the United States. Why? Even undergraduates at urban northeastern institutions think they know the answer: "They can't forget losing the War." Consequently, the old ways – whether that pertains to morality, religion, politics, or even food – stick around longer "down there." While introducing *Where These Memories Grow* W. Fitzhugh Brundage warns against the facile acceptance of such images. He comments that these "southern" memories came about because southerners themselves made them that way (2-3). *Where These Memories Grow* therefore seeks to understand the various expressions of collective memory in the South. The resulting anthology successfully lays bare the motivation for, and construction of, many different Southern collective memories. In doing so the contributors acknowledge the unending competition over control of the public sphere. More than "just history," *Where These Memories Grow* squarely faces the ways in which southern-

ers have made their particular histories public, whether in stone, newsprint, or community events.

*Where These Memories Grow* presents a stimulating multidimensional study of collective memory in the South. Eight of the twelve essays examine collective memory within a specific state. The focus seems to land on the Carolinas and Virginia. Texas, the upland South, southwestern Louisiana, and the Deep South all receive consideration as well. The different methodologies employed equals the diverse subject matter: treatments of race, class, and gender share space with ethnicity, sexual orientation, oral history, architecture, and religious studies.

Four chronologically arranged sections address the different uses collective memory has served southerners: "Varieties of Memory in the Old South," "Finding Meaning in History during the Confederacy and Reconstruction," "The Past in the New South," and "Memory and Place in the Modern South." As the varieties of southern experience changed, so, too, did the memories of those experiences. The resulting expressions could, de-

pending on the group and the situation, change significantly. In the conclusion David Blight remarks that the book's essays "demonstrate that a great deal can be at stake in conflicts over memory." Therefore, "those who can create the dominant historical narrative, those who can own the public memory, will achieve political and cultural power" (both from p. 349).

Brundage's introduction merits special mention, for it superbly delineates the importance of studying collective memory. "Historical memory . . . transmits selective knowledge about the past" (p. 5). This interpretative character prompts a dialectic "between the willfully recalled and the deliberately forgotten" (p. 6). To assure their recollections, southerners have memorialized their selected pasts in many forms. This joining of memory and public display contribute to "deliberate forgetting" by deflecting memories considered deviant or spurious. Collective memory involves both political and economic concerns. The study of southern collective memory, therefore, includes all those identifying themselves as "southerners". Brundage suggests this recognition might lead to "an inclusive civic culture in the South" (p. 16). Important questions remain, specifically whether or not competing memories could coexist in the same public arena. As southerners struggle with their own memories as well as with those of other southerners they provide an example for other regions facing the same conflicts and concerns (p. 21).

"Varieties of Memory in the Old South" includes two such attempts. Michele Gillespie explains that artisans in Georgia used the memory of participation in the Revolution to create a unique class identity. Gillespie notices a crucial shift in this identity, as economic success enabled many artisans to join the burgeoning planter and merchant classes (p. 47-49). Gregg Kimball shows that the complexity of competing memories and attitudes only increases when considering the African-American antebellum experience. The

Revolutionary War fostered images of freedom among black Virginians, just as it did among white Georgia artisans. This compounded their struggle to maintain memories of their African heritage. The difficulty of balancing these claims leads Kimball to conclude "that African-American remembrance was and is not monolithic; rather it is a complex and evolving web of experience, culture, and memory" (p. 74).

The Confederacy and Reconstruction extended some collective memories while adding new ones. Anne Sarah Rubin supports this in her study of Southern claims to inherit the mantle of the nation's Revolutionary War spirit. Confederates repeatedly stressed those elements of America's Revolutionary heritage that emphasized southern uniqueness and sovereignty. Here the past legitimized the present: Confederates "had no doubts the Founders would be with them" instead of the North (91). In contrast, the African-American Emancipation Day celebrations studied by Kathleen Clark faced the daunting task of creating a public black presence in the face of white ostracism. The celebrations still included gender distinctions. While black women "were engaged in many aspects of commemorative culture, men largely controlled the proceedings that occurred in church halls, on city streets, and in town squares" (p. 122).

"The Past in the New South" certainly includes the most diverse essays in terms of content and method. Catherine Bishir discusses the creation of a particular architectural vision of North Carolina's past and future. Bishir focuses mostly on Wilmington and Raleigh, two cities which profited significantly from the North Carolina Monumental Association's claim that "a land without monuments is a land without memories" (p. 143). Reminiscent of Anne Rubin's essay, this commemorative zeal perceived the Revolutionary War as a precursor to the Civil War. White supremacist concerns exerted a significant influence in determining which heroes were honored (p. 157).

An African-American counterattack emerged in the "race histories" published by black authors in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Laurie Maffly-Kipp examines these conscious attempts to rework the American past in order to change present perceptions. Since many of the authors were born and educated in the North, though, their publications occasionally created more distance than intimacy with the black community they sought to serve (p. 174). Still, progressive confidence dominated the histories. Emancipation signaled the dawning of a new dispensation. African-Americans, as legitimate heirs of the Revolution's ideals, would initiate a reversal of race hierarchies (p. 180-1).

John Howard's "The Talk of the County" breaks the silence surrounding gay and lesbian southerners in the 1890s as well as today. An 1895 murder in Brandon, Mississippi, stemming from accusations of "a low, mean, or disgraceful thing" serves as Howard's context for studying how such a highly public event could become so utterly erased in subsequent years. "How can we account for this social amnesia? Is it possible to speak of a queer collective memory? If so, how did it fail us? Or did it? And who are among the 'us' to which I refer? For whom are acts of reclamation important today?" (p. 197) The subjectivity of Howard's essay is palpable, as he interweaves his study of the murder with personal anecdotes (e.g., p. 198, 212). Nevertheless, his commitment to unearthing elements of southern life that others endeavored to suppress remains clear. "We historians are beholden to the communities that support us. We must be made to answer when we declare, 'I have no memory.'" (p. 215)

Tourism figures prominently in the final section, "Memory and Place in the Modern South." The development of such different locations as Charleston, South Carolina, and Gatlinburg, Tennessee, as self-promoting tourist destinations reveals much about southern self-perception. Stephanie Yuhl reveals that, much like the monu-

ment builders in Bishir's essay, Anglo-Saxon white supremacy motivated white elite women in Charleston to create their particular collective memory of antebellum Charleston's appearance (p. 238-42). On the other hand, C. Brenden Martin indicates that the hillbilly culture of Gatlinburg, Tennessee, was to some extent the product of the citizens themselves. The mythical image of the rustic mountaineer quickly became the only image tourists markets wanted to see. This in turn prompted the local embrace of such overblown hillbilly stereotypes as Snuffy Smith and Dollywood. The native Cherokee found themselves forced into, and occasionally accepting, native American stereotypes based more on Plains people than their own culture (p. 262-6).

Brundage's own contribution studies the emergence of the unique Cajun identity in southern Louisiana. This exemplified how collective memory created identity, for the Cajun revivalists stressed the tragic uniqueness of Louisiana's Francophone population. Doing so, though, involved as much creation as it did retrieval (p. 286-9). "Evangeline girls" became the preponderant image within Acadiana as well as what the Cajuns presented to the world as their identity. Holly Beachley Brear's study of the conflict surrounding the control of the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas, studies a similar conflict over the narrative concerning a site important to different collective memories. The Daughters of the Republic of Texas, a predominantly white Anglo group, maintains tight control over the site, despite the city's growing Latino population and the subsequent interest in diversifying the Alamo's history. While ethnic animosity never lurks far away, the Daughters stand well aware of the gender politics present. One Daughter remarks, "Some of the men attacking us just resent what has been a successful female venture since 1905" (p. 306).

The same issues surrounding the control of memory also affect Bruce Baker's study of memories of lynchings in Laurens County, South Caroli-

na. The lynchings themselves "serve as a starting point to ask questions about which lynching are remembered and by whom, how and in what forms such events are remembered, and to what uses the various memories and silence of memory have been put" (p. 320). Even though the last lynching took place in 1913, differences between black and white memories of the event persist even today. However, private recollections now enjoy the ability to become public, bringing to light events which previously seemed forgotten.

*Where These Memories Grow* is a carefully balanced anthology. The few absences seem to indicate further avenues for study instead of actual oversight or exclusion. The environment appears only in androcentric concerns. The South's image -- partially self-created, partially foisted upon it -- as "the natural state" (to borrow the Arkansas license plate motto) remains an important aspect of southern collective memory. The region also possesses its own industrial heritage, and the suburban expansion of Atlanta, Nashville, Charlotte, and other cities testify to what Brundage claims in his introduction: that the South in many ways has become a full and equal partner in mainstream American culture. The South's long-standing, and now overturned, relationship with the Democratic Party figures prominently in many essays, but does not receive any focused attention. With the exception of Maffly-Kipp's fine contribution no essay directly examines the region's religious diversity. Few collective memories of the South suffer more from overexposure and misrepresentation than "southern religion."

G. K. Chesterton once wrote that, "Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about." (1) In this sense, *Where These Memories Grow* stands as a thoroughly democratic, and thus traditional, work. It indicates that many memories, heretofore considered forgotten,

stand ready to exert their Chestertonian vote. The book recommends itself all sorts of audiences: general interest in southern history, graduate students, and researchers. Its broad accessibility does not detract from the serious issues surrounding the contested public character of collective memory. Brundage rightly deserves credit for mastering the difficult task of making intricate and provocative material accessible without sacrificing profundity.

A recent, and quite extensive, thread on H-History-and-Theory has discussed "facticity" at great length. *Where These Memories Grow* inaugurates a similar conversation over the "facts" of Southern history. Brundage acknowledges the possibility that the conversation might devolve into a shouting match. He and his contributors make it clear that the "facts" depend on whose memories one values. This will continue, Brundage notes, "so long as people imagine themselves as inheritors of a southern past" (p. 221). As the South changes, these memories necessarily will as well.

Notes:

[1]. G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (1908. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Image, 1959), 48.

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