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John A. Casey Jr. *New Men: Reconstructing the Image of the Veteran in Late-Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Culture*. Reconstructing America Series. New York: Fordham University Press, 2015. Illustrations. 248 pp. \$65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8232-6539-8.

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The American Civil War has generated veritable mountains of scholarship, and yet the trope remains that it was an “unwritten war.” Unlike World War I, which is often understood to have inspired a generation of writers to make sense of the war through novels and poetry, scholars have long argued that no such wave of literature followed the Civil War. Where, literary scholars bemoaned, were the Hemingways and Fitzgeralds of the late nineteenth century? Of course, plenty was written about the Civil War, but it was easily dismissed as sentimental tripe, with nothing substantial to add to our understanding of the conflict or its aftermath.

John A. Casey’s book, *New Men: Reconstructing the Image of the Veteran in Late-Nineteenth Century American Literature and Culture*, demonstrates quite the opposite. In this book, we see how literature became the landscape in which veterans worked to find their identities as “new men,” forever changed in ways both positive and negative by their military service. For the first time in American history, Casey argues, men began to understand their military service as an “experience” rather than an “event,” and war service transformed from just one moment in a man’s life to its central, defining occurrence (p. 9). Literature became the space in which veterans and civilians alike tried to understand, defend, and in some cases, reject that new identity. *New Men* aims to bring a literary perspective to Civil War veteran studies. While the field has been burgeoning in recent years, it has not as yet included a work that has focused specifically on analyzing literature by and about veterans, and so this new work is a welcome addition. Casey’s analysis of both well-known

and less-studied novels in particular will be useful for historians of the Civil War era.

Casey uses both fiction and nonfiction sources. In one sense, this is enormously useful, allowing him to compare the ways that veterans explored issues within the safety of fictional worlds in contrast to the ways that veterans described their experiences in realistic terms in memoirs. This also serves to further explode the idea of an “unwritten war,” as the inclusion of nonfiction sources shows just how much postwar Americans turned to the written word in their attempt to understand the experience. However, the inclusion of nonfiction does bring up the question of choice. What does Casey believe “counts” as war literature? What might the addition of Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel’s edited collection *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (1884), or the many articles written by former soldiers and officers published in popular magazines, or the publications of veterans’ organizations and regimental historians, or even the massive two-volume postwar project edited by Joseph K. Barnes, *The Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion* (1870-1888), have added to this study? This is perhaps less a weakness than an opportunity for further study.

Some chapters of *New Men* are more successful than others. The third chapter, in which Casey explores the ways that some veterans grappled with traumatic experience in literature, feels out of step with Civil War trauma scholarship. This is partly a timing issue—the book was published in 2015, just as a major historiographical con-

versation about trauma studies was taking place among Civil War scholars. Casey relies largely on literary scholarship regarding trauma and fails to include important historical work, such as that by Diane Miller Sommerville, David Silkenat, and Frances Clarke.[1] Since Casey is a literary scholar, this decision is justifiable but detracts from the chapter's ability to make a serious historical intervention. Further, while Casey's reading of *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman* (1889) does convincingly demonstrate that Sherman saw himself and his soldiers as fundamentally different from the civilians they encountered, the argument that this is evidence of Sherman narrating traumatic experience is less persuasive.

Chapter 4, which focuses specifically on Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage: An Episode of the American Civil War*, is arguably the strongest chapter in the text. In this section, Casey offers an innovative and fascinating new interpretation of the famous war novel. Of course, this most famous novel of the Civil War was not a war novel at all but was written decades after the war by a civilian journalist. By analyzing *The Red Badge of Courage* alongside its sequel *The Veteran* (1896) and Crane's war reporting from the Spanish-American War, Casey offers a new take on this strange fact, suggesting that Crane actually used his novels to express his frustration at the monopoly that Union veterans claimed to have on American manhood. Rather than a realistic account-

ing of combat, Casey argues, *The Red Badge of Courage* was an attempt to demonstrate that Union veterans were just men, and, given the chance, younger men cowed by the oppressive weight of their fathers' war would fight with just as much glory. Crane's writing as a war correspondent shows how exultant he was when a younger generation of American men got their chance to tap into the masculinity wellspring that was war at the close of the nineteenth century.

Overall, *New Men* is an interesting and creative new addition to Civil War veteran studies. Historians of disability will find interesting and useful analyses of disabled veterans in literature and printed images, but the experiences of disabled veterans is not the primary focus of the text. Readers might be left wanting a more solid historiographical foundation for Casey's literary analysis, but the book nonetheless brings a fresh new perspective to the study of the men who fought the Civil War.

Note

[1]. Diane Miller Sommerville, "A Burden Too Heavy to Bear: War Trauma, Suicide, and Confederate Soldiers," *Civil War History* 59 (December 2013): 453-491; David Silkenat, *Moments of Despair: Suicide, Divorce, and Debt in Civil War Era North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); and Frances Clarke, *War Stories: Suffering and Sacrifice in the Civil War North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

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