Private grief could become a public spectacle in moments when funerals and commemorations of certain people go viral. Sarah J. Purcell, the L. F. Parker Professor of History at Grinnell College, suggests that the nineteenth-century process of going viral was no accident, and she makes the case that studying public burials and memorials as a "spectacle of grief" is an important way to understand the cultural and political milieu of the American past. This is not a new approach as Katherine Verdery makes a similar case for postsocialist nations in *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change*, published in 1999. While Verdery's study focuses on reburial, Purcell focuses her attention on the burial of famous and infamous Civil War personalities, ranging from Elmer Ellsworth to Robert Lee and from Frederick Douglass to Winnie Davis. Purcell argues that the commemorations of what must be described as so-called great men and women showcase an American identity rooted in both national and Confederate ideals. American identity, the author argues, is a hybridization of the Confederate nationalism that morphed into the Lost Cause ideology and the US national identity that underpinned a victorious Union. She contends that this fusion began not in postbellum Reconstruction but in the earliest days of the conflict when the foundations of reconciliation and reunion were being laid even as destructive conflict consumed the nation. Public funerals of notable figures, in other words, helped Northerners and Southerners begin the process of forgetting the emancipatory cause of the war even before they could cultivate a memory of it. Although limited in some ways, Purcell's exhaustive research and storytelling ability make this book an important contribution to the study of memory and the American Civil War.

*Spectacle of Grief* begins with a telling of Henry Clay's funeral in 1852. Clay died in Washington, DC, and was the first person to lay in state in the US Capitol before being transported back to Kentucky via train, via riverboat, and overland. People came out in droves to commemorate "The Great Compromiser" along the way. But his death signaled the end of compromise and even the na-
tional grief over his death could not create a collective memory strong enough to withstand the rabid sectionalism infecting the minds of many Americans.

The second chapter initiates a series of comparative studies, in this case, between the wartime deaths of Elmer Ellsworth and Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson, while chapter 3 compares the post-war commemorative rituals surrounding George Peabody and Robert Lee. The author argues that Americans commemorated Ellsworth's death (at the beginning of the war) and Jackson's (in the middle) in ways that already anticipated interlocking national and Confederate identities into a memory of reunion. Ellsworth, one of Abraham Lincoln's former law students and important presidential campaigner, died at the hands of James W. Jackson, the innkeeper at the Marshall House hotel in Alexandria, Virginia. Jackson shot and killed Ellsworth when the US soldier seized the Confederate flag affixed atop the Marshall House. Commemorations surrounding Ellsworth's body as it was transported to upstate New York incited an early form of US nationalism that described Ellsworth as an early martyr for the American cause. Strangely, Purcell describes Stonewall Jackson's death as a martyrdom comparable to Ellsworth's even though the Confederate general died from pneumonia after being shot by his own men. Her analysis of Jackson's traveling funeral as it made its way to Lexington, Virginia, describes mourners as inventing a similar kind of nationalism that Northerners created in response to Ellsworth's death but inverted it into a kind of Confederate nationalism. This, she argues, was a precursor to the Lost Cause mythology. The analogy that "Ellsworth's and Jackson's twinned martyrdoms set the precedent for one of the strongest strains of Civil War memory" sometimes seems forced and even disjointed (p. 64). This is perhaps one of Purcell's most controversial claims as, for example, Lincoln (whose death is not examined) had not yet delivered his Gettysburg Address at the time of Jackson's death. The author suggests that commemora-

The last chapter compares Frederick Douglass and Winnie Davis, the postwar socialite and daughter of Confederate president Jefferson Davis. Douglass's memorial, the author asserts, could be used by Northerners and Southerners as a "symbol of Black achievement and a symbol of white achievement." When Americans remembered
Douglass, they “seemed to be fighting for their own version of the United States and its racial order” (p. 204). Davis’s commemoration, meanwhile, symbolized the postwar memory of a fully matured Lost Cause and successful reconciliation. Her memorialization, suggests Purcell, demonstrated that “some forms of U.S. national identity were reconstituted out of strands of Union and Confederate memory” (p. 219).

Purcell’s research for this book is impressive. She consulted nearly three hundred periodicals that make up three-and-a-half double column pages in her bibliography. She also created her own maps, with the help of Grinnell student Emily Hackman, charting the routes that these traveling funerals took. Despite these accomplishments, there remains a historiographical void concerning the history of memory. Purcell, like many other recent US historians of memory, dutifully cites David Blight’s Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory (2002) and Pierre Nora’s multivolume work, Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past (1996). But memory studies have advanced considerably over the past twenty years since these important works were first published. Jan Assmann’s Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination (2011) and Aleida Assmann’s Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, and Archives (2011) on cultural memory, Michael Rothberg’s Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization (2009), and Marianne Hirsch’s The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust (2012) on post-memory could add valuable interdisciplinary (and periodization) insights to how Americans shaped their memories of the Civil War around the spectacles that notable nineteenth-century funerals created.

Purcell’s work does bring up interesting questions for others to explore, especially surrounding the choices the author made of people to include who tended to be figures of consensus rather than figures of contestation. Not only does Lincoln’s funeral entourage not appear, but other notable figures are also missing, such as John Brown, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, and Lucretia Mott. Their funerals were perhaps attended by smaller numbers, but the media presence surrounding their deaths was just as significant a spectacle as many others that the author details. Funeral trains, such as the one Brown’s body took, threaten to destabilize Purcell’s thesis and add more contingency as Brown’s memory suggests that another strand of national identity existed even before the Civil War, and continued after it, that was radical and abolitionist. Certainly these strands of memory made it into national identity too even if as a counter-memory. Some US historians will be disappointed that no one from the Trans-Mississippi West or the Pacific coast region was included. Historians who embrace the transnational turn, such as myself, would argue that reunionism and the Lost Cause mythology accompanying reconciliation had significant roots in the imperialistic behavior associated with American expansion during and after the Civil War. Spectacle of Grief, regrettably, makes no significant effort to decolonize American memory and its imperialistic connections to the Lost Cause falsehood. Finally, some may ask different questions about whether “great men” as spectacle shape national identity or if the intimate funerals of more common people, such as slaves, immigrants, Native Americans, or even soldiers, affect the hearthstones of American families across the nation more meaningfully.

Spectacle of Grief provides an interesting model for scholars, graduate students, and the general public interested in the Civil War, Reconstruction, and Gilded Age America to think about the culture of grief that the conflict caused. Purcell’s research methodology and storytelling ability are clearly in top form even if she poses more questions for her readers than she answers.
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