

INTRODUCTION

The Civil War saw the United States and the Confederacy create huge armies that waged some of the bloodiest and most famous battles in American history. The governments headed by Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis sought to make the most of their respective human and material resources and strove to achieve national unity. Yet on February 28, 1863, *Harper's Weekly* offered its readers a vivid portrayal of northern political dissent. The cartoon depicts a beleaguered yet defiant Columbia, her shield emblazoned with "UNION," determined to slay three copperhead snakes threatening the U.S. war effort. Three months later, a cartoon in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* showed southern women concerned with shortages of bread and other food rioting in Richmond's streets. Armed with clubs and pistols, the women strike belligerent poses in front of a store's smashed windows. Such acknowledgments of political and social conflict would not have surprised anyone at the time because both the United States and the Confederacy experienced internal dissent throughout most of the war. Union victory ensured reunion and emancipation, but heated disagreements over the war's meaning and memory remained bitter in the immediate aftermath of the war and have continued in various forms to the present day.

Civil War dissent sometimes has been obscured amid popular conceptions of the conflict as a tragic but ultimately triumphant testing of the nation. Celebratory views accurately capture the degrees to which the people of both sides sacrificed in the course of a struggle that exacted a terrible human and material toll. Bruce Catton's "Centennial History of the Civil War" and Shelby Foote's *The Civil War: A Narrative*, two beautifully written and widely read trilogies published between 1958 and 1974, exemplify this tradition, as does Ken Burn's immensely influential PBS documentary, titled *The Civil War* and first aired in 1990. Yet any account of the war

that diminishes the extent and severity of dissatisfaction, North and South, leads to a flawed understanding—a fact long recognized by historians. Works such as A. B. Moore’s *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy* (1924), Frank L. Owsley’s *State Rights in the Confederacy*, (1925), James G. Randall’s *Constitutional Problems Under Lincoln* (1926), Ella Lonn’s *Desertion During the Civil War* (1928), and, more recently, Mark E. Neely Jr.’s *The Union Divided: Party Conflict in the Civil War North* (2002), Armstead L. Robinson’s *Bitter Fruits of Bondage: The Demise of Slavery and the Collapse of the Confederacy, 1861–1865* (2005), David Williams’s *A People’s History of the Civil War: Struggles for the Meaning of Freedom* (2005), and Amy Murrell Taylor’s *The Divided Family in Civil War America* (2006) document the widespread disaffection and political disagreement that confronted both nations.¹

The contributors to *Wars within a War* explore internal stresses that posed serious challenges to each country’s viability, as well as some of the ways in which wartime disputes and fissures carried over into the postwar years and well beyond. Their twelve essays are not meant to offer a comprehensive treatment. Rather, they are designed to suggest some of the many forms of conflict that arose among civilians, soldiers, politicians, and military leaders during the war. The essays extend the discussion of controversies far past the death of the Confederacy in the spring of 1865, analyzing, among other things, Walt Whitman’s poetry, handling of the Union and Confederate dead, treatment of disabled and destitute northern veterans, Ulysses S. Grant’s imposing tomb, and Hollywood’s long relationship with the Lost Cause narratives. Reflecting disparate methodologies, the essays, as a group, provide a starting point for anyone interested in how Americans have argued about the prosecution, meaning, and memory of the war. They also underscore the variety of approaches adopted by current historians and convey, in several cases, arguments and evidence from recently published or forthcoming books.²

The essays can be placed in five broad categories. The first, comprising pieces by Stephanie McCurry and William Blair, deals with the respective home fronts. McCurry investigates the response of Confederate women, especially poor soldiers’ wives, to the hardships brought on by a war that witnessed enormous expansion of the Confederate state. Focusing on a series of sometimes violent demonstrations triggered by shortages of food, she finds examples of interstate political communication and organization among non-elite white women that suggests a major shift in the relationship between citizens and their government. Blair takes up the thorny issues of how the North (the United States) would define and punish trea-

son and handle the confiscation of Rebel property in a war that quickly assumed a scale and level of carnage no one anticipated in the spring of 1861. He offers a fresh interpretation of the Second Confiscation Act of July 1862, describing it as a moderate measure rather than a radical attempt to strike at Confederate slaveholders.

The second category, devoted to military affairs, offers three essays. James M. McPherson looks at the relationship between Abraham Lincoln and Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan, evoking the profound gulf that separated the two in terms of their approach to prosecuting the war. Despite his best efforts, Lincoln could do little to prevent McClellan from treating Republican politicians as a greater threat than the Rebel army—or from molding the Army of the Potomac in his own cautious image. Robert E. Lee, McClellan's great opponent on the battlefield, is the subject of Joseph T. Glatthaar's essay. Like McClellan, Lee put his stamp on an army, contending with a range of critics who lacked his vision and ability to improve discipline, morale, and military prowess in the Army of Northern Virginia. Three regiments of black soldiers serving in Florida take center stage in J. Matthew Gallman's essay. The battle of Olustee, fought on February 20, 1864, provides a point of departure for Gallman to highlight the varied experiences, positive and negative, of men in different U.S. Colored Troops (USCT) units. The essay provides a useful reminder that the heroes of the film *Glory* cannot stand in for all black men who donned blue uniforms.

Three essays on the war in literature and the visual arts comprise the third category. Harold Holzer offers a perceptive reading of political caricatures of Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, teasing out meanings that would escape many viewers. Slavery, emancipation, and race figure prominently in many of the cartoons, and the overall tenor of the images reminds modern Americans that politics has always been an arena in which national leaders come under brutal attack. Stephen Cushman uses Walt Whitman's *Memoranda During the War*, with its allusion to "the seething hell and the black infernal background of countless minor scenes and interiors" of the war, to underscore the tension between those who understand the conflict as a contest between generals and armies and those who prefer to highlight the common folk who shouldered the burden of killing and suffering. In Cushman's skillful analysis, Whitman emerges as a pioneer of the type of "bottom-up" history that would sweep the scholarly world more than a century later. However prescient Whitman might have been, he reached an infinitesimal audience compared to Hollywood's filmmakers. Gary W. Gallagher's essay traces the cinematic history of the heroic Lost Cause nar-

rative created by ex-Confederates in the postwar years. After a long ascendancy established by *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Gone with the Wind* (1939), argues Gallagher, the Lost Cause fell out of favor beginning in the mid-1960s—only to reappear in *Gods and Generals*, which was released shortly before *Cold Mountain* in 2003. Those two films revealed that competing memories of the Confederacy remained viable in a Hollywood that, just a few years earlier, seemingly had banished the Lost Cause.

A fourth category, consisting of a pair of essays, demonstrates that burying the war's dead and caring for its veterans prompted acrimonious disputes. Drew Gilpin Faust explains how efforts by the U.S. government to provide proper burials for the Union dead—a commitment that changed the definition of the nation's obligation to its citizen-soldiers—prompted former Confederates to complain that their slain men were being dishonored. As the federal government set up the national cemetery system, groups of southern women took up the challenge of establishing cemeteries for dead Confederates. Memorialization on both sides bristled with political meaning, stoking the fires of sectional enmity for many years. During those same years, as James Marten illustrates, the question of pensions for disabled veterans sparked sharp debate in the North. The debate revealed a chasm between former soldiers and those who had not served and, as with the discussion about national cemeteries, raised the issue of the role of national government in caring for men who had defended the republic. The creation of soldiers' homes brought other questions to the fore, including whether their residents gave up some measure of manhood in accepting governmental support.

Carol Reardon and Joan Waugh close the volume with essays on the memories of the Union's two greatest military heroes. It is a commonplace that William Tecumseh Sherman's "March to the Sea" provoked the enmity of generations of white Georgians—a view dramatically bolstered by *The Birth of a Nation* and *Gone with the Wind*. Reardon's essay suggests a more complex memory of Sherman among white Georgians, one that juxtaposed a bitter Lost Cause interpretation with a more conciliatory one influenced by the New South mentality and the rise of Jim Crow. Waugh explores the building of Ulysses S. Grant's famous tomb on Riverside Drive in New York City. A towering figure whose heroic and well-publicized struggle against cancer added further luster to his reputation, Grant stood as the most famous American of the postwar decades. Waugh reveals that Grant's death precipitated wrangling about where the tomb should be built (many veterans touted Washington, D.C., as the most appropriate site), what design should be adopted, and how best to raise the necessary

funds. Her essay provides an important reminder that public monuments, whether commemorating individuals such as Grant or national traumas such as the Vietnam War and the attacks on the World Trade Center, often ignite heated public debate.

Readers should keep in mind that the contributors to this volume could have selected different topics for their essays. Sources relating to virtually every aspect and episode of the Civil War can be mined for evidence of controversy. The key to understanding the conflict, as it played out between 1861 and 1865 and as it has been portrayed and remembered since Appomattox, lies in determining how disaffection and dissent fit within the overarching story of the North's success in saving the republic and the white South's costly effort to establish a new slaveholding nation.

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NOTES

1. There has been far more scholarly attention to dissent and disaffection in the Confederacy than in the United States. This phenomenon seems to stem, at least in part, from a belief that the losing side must have experienced greater internal conflict. Much of the story of political, social, and economic turmoil north of the Potomac and Ohio rivers remains to be explored.

2. Recent titles include Drew Gilpin Faust's *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 2008), Gary W. Gallagher's *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), Joseph T. Glatthaar's *General Lee's Army: From Victory to Collapse* (New York: Free Press, 2008), and James M. McPherson's *Tried by War: Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief* (New York: Penguin, 2008); forthcoming titles include Bill Blair's *With Malice Toward Some: Treason and Loyalty in the Civil War Era*, Stephanie McCurry's *Confederate Crucible: The Disfranchised and the Political Transformation of the Civil War South*, and Joan Waugh's *U. S. Grant: American Hero, American Myth*. James Marten's essay also represents part of a larger work in progress.