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The Divided Family in Civil War America (review)

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King as an abstraction that all Americans are presumed to worship; before the letter 'X' was transformed from the mysteriousness of that which is long gone into just another bit of merchandise; before culture and lifestyle and politics became synonymous, each and all commodities neatly organized and readily available for convenient browsing; before all that, a similarly conceived artifact from the dawn of mass-market selling enjoyed its own extended vogue" (1).

Even though this is a book that might better have been conceptualized and developed in a shorter journal article, it nevertheless is one that advanced readers and scholars who want fresh and challenging theories of race relations, African American history, and the roots of the contemporary civil rights movement will want to review. The author's philosophical construct of Washington's developmental period, including copious references to Washington's birth in Franklin County, Virginia, and multifaceted early formal and informal education in Malden and the Kanawha Valley of West Virginia, challenges readers to reconceptualize Washington's inner-clockwork and his infatuation with the idea of race relations. In conjunction with the latest edited work discussing the nature of Washington and his legacy, Rebecca Carroll's edited *Uncle Tom or New Negro?: African Americans Reflect on Booker T. Washington and "Up From Slavery" 100 Years Later* (2006), West's study will provide both reworked and new insight into the historical figure under review.

In the end, although sometimes in a belabored fashion, Michael Rudolph West reminds contemporary America just how complex and intriguing are the psyches and souls of race leaders like Booker T. Washington and, by implication, how redundant and sanitized much of the literature has been in regard to analyzing such leaders' psychosocial development in and contributions to the American "democratic" drama.

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The Divided Family in Civil War America. By Amy Murrell Taylor. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005. Pp. xiv, 319.)

Where the North met the South during the Civil War, Amy Murrell Taylor tells us, "Americans paid close attention to one another's loyalties and tried to explain what induced people to take one side or the other" (127). Taylor, a former Edward L. Ayers student, shows her scholarly kinship to

Ayers in a deceptively well-researched study of border-state families and novels dealing with divided loyalties.

Taylor's work, largely topical, makes a case that the Civil War was a public intrusion on closely guarded nineteenth-century families and shows how members of those families dealt with the intrusion in fact and in fiction. Placing the war's disruption in a private context helped families reduce the war to an understandable level, Taylor concludes. Her argument takes the reader through a series of family relationships. Taylor shows us Unionist fathers who treat their sons' Confederate service as rebellion against their own authority as much if not more than against the United States. Unionist women in the work seem to take a similar approach as fathers with their Confederate brothers and male cousins, readily chiding them for their disloyalty to family. With husbands, fathers, and even their own friends, women could be more reticent. Brothers and male cousins became the "outlet" (86) for emotions women could not share with other women who might sever relationships, or with husbands and fathers who might disagree with each other. Brothers and brothers, on the other hand, were accustomed to using political argument as a form of competition and debated secession freely--until the time came for them to choose sides.

Marriage and courtship offered their own dynamics. Marriages between Union and Confederate sympathizers were more accepted than similar courtships, Taylor argues. Taylor shows varying interactions, with wives feeling caught between fathers and husbands, some husbands feeling upset that women had opinions of their own, or, in one case, a woman convincing a fiancé fighting for the opposing side to resign his commission.

Taylor's public-private theme reaches its peak in a chapter that discusses the most obvious intrusions beyond the violence upon everyday life: problems with mail service and with travel. As people tried to get passes to cross the border between the United States and the Confederacy, or tried to get mail past "flag of truce" censors, they worded their letters or pass requests in innocuous, family-related terms in order to avoid airing private matters for strangers to read.

In one of her more interesting chapters, Taylor discusses African American slave families and the tension caused by the decisions of slave men to fight for the Union and leave their families behind, as well as African Americans' attempts to find each other after the war was over. Taylor concludes, as she comes toward the end of the war, that "practical" and "personal" reconciliation were two different things. Practical reconciliation constituted material aid being given to family members of opposing sides and began before the

war ended, she argues. However, a more difficult, relational reconciliation was not always achieved among family members.

Taylor's discussions of sectional reconciliation themes in writings of the day, as well as of romantic and familial themes, offer a valuable overview of popular fiction published during the Civil War years. She makes a convincing case that the Southern view of African Americans as incapable of participating in republican society made its way into Northern fiction immediately after the war, not after the Reconstruction years.

Much of the book's research is relegated to the footnotes and the appendix, which makes it accessible without being overbearing. This does lead to one weakness: a bit of geographical murkiness that adds a little more haze to a work heavy on relationships and light on date and place. A map of the border areas Taylor describes might have been helpful for readers trying to place some of the more discussed families, such as Kentucky's Clay family, as well as the "new border between slavery and freedom" (193) that provides the setting for conflicted slave families in Taylor's chapter on emancipation. Her concentration on border areas also leaves, perhaps necessarily, some combinations of family conflict out of the picture; for example, what did Confederate fathers think of sons who fought for the Union? Still, *Divided Family* is a move into new territory, and Taylor herself suggests she is eager for others to follow in her footsteps.

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