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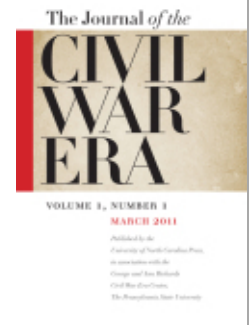
U. S. Grant: American Hero, American Myth (review)

Nina Silber

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against African Americans. The historical focus on the 1863 draft riots, as well, centers on Irish American animosity toward African Americans. But Samito shows a number of confluences and interactions among African Americans and Irish Americans. Samito demonstrates that at times Irish Americans and African Americans expressed concern for one another's plights. Samito is never blind to tensions between these groups, although he may downplay them in an effort to show what the two groups shared.

There is one facet of citizenship, however, that Samito neglects, and this arena is too important to ignore. Gender plays no role in his study, even though issues of gender are crucial to the secondary literature of the time period and to those who lived through it. When feminists like Elizabeth Cady Stanton opposed the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments and when social reformers like Frances Willard defended women's rights with anti-immigrant claims, they tapped into the gender bias of this new American citizenship. If military service was a prerequisite for establishing new parameters of citizenship, then women—whether African American, immigrant American, or native—were put in a bad position. Moreover, the rhetoric of citizenship was laced with masculine language, such as Frederick Douglass's claim that African Americans would achieve their manhood by taking up arms. Scholarship by Nina Silber and Louise Newman could have been included to point out the gendered bases of the citizenship Samito finds constructed.

Overall, this is an outstanding book. It offers a terrific bottom-up approach to citizenship debates in the Civil War era and demonstrates the powerful role played by Irish American and African American men in creating new forms of American citizenship and nationalism in the mid-nineteenth century. It would be extremely useful in any course on the Civil War.

EDWARD J. BLUM

EDWARD J. BLUM, associate professor of history at San Diego State University, is the author of *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism, 1865–1898* (2005).

U. S. Grant: American Hero, American Myth. By Joan Waugh.
(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009. Pp. 384.
Cloth, \$30.00.)

Joan Waugh has written precisely the kind of book historians, especially Civil War historians, need right now. Not strictly a biography of

Ulysses Grant, *U. S. Grant: American Hero, American Myth* seeks to understand the Civil War general and eighteenth U.S. president in terms of his own life experiences, the fame he enjoyed during his lifetime and upon his death, and the dramatic fluctuation in Grant's reputation since then. In this book, suited for both scholars and general readers, Waugh wonders how Grant, once considered to be as vital to the American nation as Washington and Lincoln, could have sunk so suddenly and dramatically into oblivion, making him, even today, one of the lowest-ranked presidents in U.S. history.

Given Waugh's concerns, her book is really more a cultural history, especially a history of American memory, than a biography. In this way, her work stands amid a burgeoning scholarship on historical memory, and more specifically on the place of Civil War memory in American life. Like other scholars, Waugh sees memory as socially constructed, often shaped to serve the particular needs of various groups and individuals in the present. Regarding the Civil War more specifically, Waugh, along with scholars like David Blight, is interested in how late nineteenth-century political and economic imperatives allowed the narrative of white reunion and sectional reconciliation to gradually overwhelm the memory of slave emancipation and the Union victory. But while numerous historians have emphasized how "the South won the peace," at least with respect to post-Civil War American culture, Waugh reminds us just how crucial the memory of the Union victory remained, at least through the end of the nineteenth century. In this regard, Waugh's most important contribution is her discussion of the immense interest, regard, and affection that so many Americans, and the world's inhabitants more generally, showered upon Grant, especially in his postpresidential years and, later, as his death approached. Equally important, Waugh shows how much Grant himself resisted the conciliatory trend and consistently refused to rank the Confederate cause as anything other than treasonous, narrow-minded, and unjust. Although, as Waugh shows, even Grant's memory was gradually linked with the spirit of conciliation, countless Americans recalled Grant as the triumphant leader of the Union cause.

Waugh begins her study with a relatively brief but compelling biographical portrait of the Ohio farm boy who moved from West Point to Mexican War soldier to financial ruin, and eventually to supreme military commander and Union hero. Interested as she is in the ever-changing picture of Grant's legacy, Waugh focuses particular attention on controversial aspects of Grant's career, including his alleged fondness for alcohol and some of his unsuccessful military decisions. Throughout, she reviews a wide range of scholarship and handles the evidence and the

assessments judiciously. Perhaps most important, she paints a picture of a distinguished army commander who accomplished truly remarkable military feats and understandably earned the intense devotion of millions of Americans.

Positive assessments of Grant's presidency have been far less plentiful than upbeat analyses of his generalship. Yet, as Waugh rightly suggests, many of the negative views of the Grant White House were rooted in a "tragic era of reconstruction" perspective, one that sympathized with the suffering of ex-Confederates and recoiled with horror from black political power. Grant, Waugh maintains, remained committed to the postwar Republican agenda of remaking the nation, enhancing federal power, and guaranteeing African American freedom. As Americans showed less willingness to support this agenda, so did their attachment to Grant gradually diminish.

Waugh occasionally strikes a slightly defensive tone in upholding Grant's presidential reputation, perhaps treating too lightly some of Grant's more questionable policies regarding foreign affairs and Native Americans. More generally, Waugh's arguments, and the narrative she unfolds, suggest she seeks not only to understand how Grant lost the standing he once had with the American people, but also to rehabilitate Grant's heroic place in the American pantheon. Toward this end, she quotes extensively from scholars, Grant's contemporaries, even present-day poets who pay homage to Grant's leadership in war and in peace. Yet, because Waugh's focus concerns the social construction of memory, readers may sometimes wonder how much the heroic portrait of Grant is itself a social construction. Thus Waugh concludes the section on Grant's presidency by quoting from a nineteenth-century Scottish scholar who placed Grant, along with Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln, at the "front rank" (153) of American presidents, but it is not clear if we should read his assessment as more "truthful" than others or if this analysis, too, gives its own spin on the Grant myth. After all, it seems likely that this appraisal, in its own way, reflects a particular intellectual and political agenda, rooted in certain principles regarding nationalism, political power, and even race.

Waugh's most significant contributions lie in the chapters that follow the discussion of Grant's presidency. Here, she does a superb job recapturing the gratitude and enthusiasm felt by many—Union veterans, northern citizens, African Americans, even workers around the world—toward Grant and his role in saving the Union. She provides a particularly moving account of the "death-watch," when regular reports circulated frequently regarding all aspects of Grant's decline. Waugh's discussion of the African

American response to Grant presents a particularly enlightening perspective on the Grant phenomenon, although I would have welcomed even more discussion on this front, especially how much black Americans continued to claim Grant, despite obvious setbacks during Reconstruction, as an emancipationist champion. More, too, might be said about southern white and northern Democratic opposition to Grant and just how much those rebukes, even in Grant's lifetime, corroded the hero image. Yet, overall, *U. S. Grant: American Hero, American Myth* represents a singular achievement in encouraging scholars, as well as general readers, to think anew about the place of this often-maligned, frequently misunderstood, but thoroughly remarkable leader in history and memory.

NINA SILBER

NINA SILBER, professor of history at Boston University, is the author of numerous publications, including *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (1993) and *Gender and the Sectional Conflict* (2008).

Lincoln's Proclamation: Emancipation Reconsidered. Edited by William A. Blair and Karen Fisher Younger. The Steven and Janice Brose Lectures in the Civil War Era. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009. Pp. 233. Cloth, \$30.00.)

Based on a symposium sponsored by the George and Ann Richards Civil War Era Center in April 2007, *Lincoln's Proclamation* presents essays by eight leading scholars on various aspects of the Emancipation Proclamation. Five of the contributions focus on the political context of the proclamation. In his schematic overview of the preconditions for emancipation, Paul Finkelman argues that Lincoln followed a "subtle, at times brilliant" strategy (13) by waiting to act until he developed a legal framework that authorized the proclamation, built political support for the initiative within the North, ensured that his policy would not drive the border states from the Union, and established a prospect of military victory that would realize fully his promise of freedom. Somewhat surprisingly, the legal historian highlights not the first but the last of these supposed preconditions, seeking to reverse the widespread view that military pressure forced the administration onto the moral high ground. Downright astonishingly, he simply declines to mention the failure of the Peninsula campaign as a possible element in Lincoln's decision-making process, noting only the important Union successes elsewhere in early