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Texas Confederate, Reconstruction Governor: James Webb Throckmorton , and: Edmund J. Davis of Texas: Civil War General, Republican Leader, Reconstruction Governor (review)

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600,000 dead, cities in ruin, 4 million emancipated, southern violence on the rise. Their trauma was hardly imagined.

The conclusions Summers draws are most troubling. Although he acknowledges that “Klan violence proved over and over, there were conspiracies afoot, murderous plots to overthrow freedom and to subvert state governments,” he blames Radical Republicans. By creating panics and using them to “stretch” the Constitution, Radicals become responsible for white southerners’ violent responses, what he calls the “toxic side effects” of Radical Reconstruction (271). Contrary to what David Blight tells us about postwar struggles over memory,² Summers believes Confederate memorialization of the Lost Cause was benign. “Nostalgia was not a danger,” he writes (270). If Radical lawmakers went too far, so did freedpeople in their audacious demands for land, physical protection, and civil rights. From this perspective, Reconstruction was, indeed, much ado about nothing. While I am sure it was not Summers’s intention to reproduce a watered-down version of the “tragic era,” the reader is left with the sense that the last thirty years of historical work on Reconstruction has been for naught.

CAROLE EMBERTON

NOTES

1. Judith N. Shklar, “The Liberalism of Fear,” in *Political Thought and Political Thinkers*, ed. Stanley Hoffman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 3–20.

2. David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001).

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Texas Confederate, Reconstruction Governor: James Webb

Throckmorton. By Kenneth Wayne Howell. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. Pp. 196. Cloth, \$29.95.)

Edmund J. Davis of Texas: Civil War General, Republican Leader, Reconstruction Governor. By Carl H. Moneyhon. (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2010. Pp. 274. Cloth, \$27.95.)

The inaugural issue of this journal affords an opportunity to assess Reconstruction scholarship by means of two scholarly biographies of

Texas governors. Kenneth Wayne Howell examines the Presidential Reconstruction governor James Throckmorton, while Carl H. Moneyhon assesses his successor, the Radical Republican Edmund J. Davis. These are both good books, but one might term them Texas-centric, which makes the insights of less importance than they might otherwise be.

Throckmorton was elected governor in 1866, to be removed from office the following year by the military; he was perhaps the most racially reactionary of all the Presidential Reconstruction governors, a consistency that served him well politically after Redemption. This, however, is not Howell's primary point; he depicts Throckmorton as the development-minded tribune of the small farmers of the North Texas frontier. In the author's conceptualization, "class conflict" explains a lot; it generated "resentment toward slaves who represented the most visible sign of the planters' wealth" (3). Throckmorton nonetheless remained in step with white Texan attitudes toward blacks and Native Americans. One conspicuous exception bears mention: he stood with Governor Sam Houston against disunion, providing one of a handful of Union votes in the secession convention. Afterward, Throckmorton backed Confederate values with zeal, sanctioning the mass execution of forty suspected Unionist plotters in his vicinity in 1862 and the repression of freedpeople after emancipation. Here, too, the author reads Throckmorton's postwar racial animus as largely growing out of his distaste for planters; the argument is that he favored black codes to immobilize the freedmen and deter their migration to northern Texas.

Howell's biography does have the virtue of having something to say. The author emphasizes that Throckmorton's region was settled by small farmers from the upper South, and he interprets Throckmorton as reflecting their alienation from the planters' rule. I am not a specialist in North Texas history, but it seems to me this interpretive theme is being ridden hard. For example, the author emphasizes the strength of the Whig Party; but if that party generally racked up an anemic 30 percent of the region's vote, as Howell states (23), the point is that Throckmorton was successful before a predominantly Democratic electorate. There are other counterintuitive interpretations too. His discussion of the Texas secession declaration is accurate, but it understates the extravagant racist tone that makes it prosecution exhibit A in current controversies over the Confederate legacy. Howell flatly observes that "as a prewar Unionist, Throckmorton should have embraced the Republican party" (xiv), but all his antisecession viewpoint implied was prescience about what war would do to the slaveholding South. It seems odd to suggest otherwise, since Howell calls Throckmorton a white supremacist throughout the book. One suspects

the author wants to take a more sympathetic view of his subject but is brought up short by the necessity of periodic admission of his racism, and the effect is rather jarring.

On the other hand, Carl Moneyhon's biography of Throckmorton's successor displays no such ambivalence. In the introduction, Moneyhon refers to Governor Edmund J. Davis as "the hero he most certainly was" (xi), and in the book's final line, Davis's name is said to be "written on the 'brightest page' of Texas history" (274). One might be tempted to scoff at such statements, but the evidence sustains a favorable modern evaluation. Davis may have been the most morally admirable scalawag leader in the South. He progressed in straightforward fashion from antisecessionist, to Union officer, to Radical Republican governor. He was a brave man; even his resolute wife defied death threats for her refugee husband's Union stand. Davis demonstrated early and consistent support for something like legal equality and voting rights for the freedmen, though how he came to this position the author finds a mystery. If one disregards Davis's views toward Native Americans on the frontier, which tended toward the genocidal, his goals seem admirable. As governor, his priority seems to have been suppression of violence against the freedpeople, through militia and police measures, with substantial effect. Governor Davis, moreover, was personally honest and resistant to the corporate blandishments Republicans experienced elsewhere. Indeed, Texas's major railroad subsidies passed over his opposition, with the emphatic support of Democrats like former governor Throckmorton.

Beyond the basically plausible argument that Davis was an attractive person, the book has other virtues. Reconstruction politics in Texas was unusually complicated. Focusing on just one Radical Republican politician allows readers to grasp the intractable ab initio controversy, over the legal status of wartime legislation, and the proposal to separate Texas into several states; these two perplexing issues derailed the constitutional convention for a year, and the author simplifies the matter well. Moneyhon is fortunate in that Davis probably has more interpretive significance than Throckmorton. Here, however, is the major liability of this work. From such an experienced scholar, one expects more reflection on what Davis's career suggests about southern politics, scalawags, and the Reconstruction literature more broadly. If so admirable a leader received only hatred from the bulk of white citizens, the implications for a positive outcome seem grim. Texas represents a multiethnic variant on the Reconstruction saga, with a frontier time lag thrown in, and these aspects could have been mined for wider implications. Both books needed to engage with what these men's careers have to say about the Civil War era. Neither work seems inclined to

reach possible readers halfway; neither provides a map of Texas for readers, or its proliferating railroad network, despite the interpretive significance of geography for both arguments.

In sum, both of these good works would have profited from more intellectual ambition. Historians ought to be interested in Reconstruction Texas, but the authors might help them see why.

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The Long Shadow of the Civil War: Southern Dissent and Its Legacies. By Victoria E. Bynum. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. Pp. 240. Cloth, \$35.00.)

Victoria Bynum's previous books—*Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (1992) and *The Free State of Jones: Mississippi's Longest Civil War* (2001)—challenge misconceptions that white southerners were unanimous in their commitment to the color line or their devotion to the Confederacy. In her new book, she revisits some of the same places and actors and extends her historical vision, asking how men and women who defied the region's orthodoxies during the Civil War era continued to shape its history for decades to come.

Bynum draws on evidence from three white-majority, nonplantation areas: the Quaker Belt of the North Carolina piedmont, the Piney Woods of southeastern Mississippi, and the Big Thicket region of East Texas. In all three, many residents opposed immediate secession in 1860–61, and within two years some had taken up arms against the Confederacy. Deserters and draft dodgers banded together, often along kinship lines, to evade and in some cases do pitched battle with Confederate forces. The best known of these bands—thanks in part to Bynum's prior work—is the company led by Newt Knight in Jones County, Mississippi, but she finds similar groups at work in North Carolina and Texas. In each locale, women were crucial to the anti-Confederate resistance. Female relatives provided food and information that allowed men to hide out, and confronted and even threatened government officials themselves. Bynum's local detail complements Stephanie McCurry's sweeping treatment of some of the same topics in *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in*