

Strauss, Jessalyn. Review of *Memory and Myth: The Civil War in Fiction and Film from Uncle Tom's Cabin to Cold Mountain*, edited by David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, and Roy Morris Jr. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 85.1 (2008).

This volume brings together twenty-five essays originally presented at several "Symposia on the 19th Century Press, Civil War and Free Expression," sponsored annually by the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga.

As the title implies, the book covers a wide variety of representations of the Civil War, addressing subjects across several different kinds of media (novels, film, television). The timeframe covered by the essays spans more than 150 years, from the pre-War foment over slavery to contemporary times. Rather than examining journalistic representations of the war, *Myth and Memory* focuses on what the editors refer to as "creative responses to the Civil War."

The book is divided into four chronological parts that examine the pre-war controversy over slavery and states' rights. Civil War literature produced during and immediately after the war, re-tellings of the war in twentieth-century literature, and recent television and film representations of the war. The organization of the twenty-five essays, covering a variety of disparate topics, is one of this book's largest challenges. Finding a way to categorize them was a formidable task, and the editors have addressed it by simply ordering the essays' subject matter chronologically.

The essays' focal points include personalities of the war (e.g., Nathan Bedford Forrest and John S. Mosby), authors who wrote about the Civil War (e.g., Upton Sinclair and Ambrose Bierce), and postwar representations of the conflict. As a result, the loose chronological organization sometimes seems disjointed as essays move from F. Scott Fitzgerald to representations of Mosby and Forrest to Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain*. An alternative organizational strategy that grouped the content more on subject matter than chronology might have helped the book flow more smoothly.

At the same time, the strengths of this volume rest in the diversity of broad and niche topics it covers, which might bring new insights to Civil War scholars and others interested in Civil War history. For example, Eve Dunbar's essay, "The Terror of Poe: Slavery, the Southern Gentleman, and the Status Quo," addresses the way in which Poe's upbringing in the pre-Civil War South may have influenced his writing. Essays also address the work of Sinclair, Fitzgerald, and other American writers not often known for their writings on the Civil War.

The book re-treads some very familiar territory in Civil War scholarship: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, John Brown, *Gone with the Wind*, and the author Ambrose Bierce. Yet most of the essays that address these familiar topics do so with new angles that are useful to communication scholars. For example, in essays by Bernell Tripp and Robert Blakeslee Gilpin, the authors examine the portrayal of John Brown in film, fiction, and historical biography. Both Gilpin's essay and a chapter entitled "The Search for Community and Justice" offer valuable insight into the Civil War writings of Robert Penn Warren, which influenced many Americans' perspectives of the Civil War.

At its core, this book strives to show how, in representations across media and time periods, creative representations of the Civil War have served to influence Americans' perceptions of the war. The essays focus their analysis on the texts themselves, without much attention to audience reception. This is slightly problematic, as the book's

introduction promises discussion of the effects of Civil War portrayals on the American public, although "the public" itself never makes an appearance. The book focuses heavily on the "myth" created around the War and not as much on the American public's actual "memory" of it, except in the case of authors who actually participated in the conflict. Rather, the book portrays a nation whose collective memory of the conflict has ostensibly come from representations in fiction and film.

This book is largely valuable for those with niche interests in the Civil War. It draws few concrete conclusions about media representations of the country's greatest internal conflict, but it does address a number of interesting topics that may have previously gone unexamined. The book may have benefited from a concluding chapter from the editors designed to tie together the content of the essays, which cover such a wide variety of topics that it is hard to find a common thread other than their focus on the Civil War.

The essays in this volume come from approximately twenty scholars, academics, and Civil War buffs. As may be expected with a topic of such regional significance, the essays' authors hail primarily from universities in the southeastern United States, but also from such places as San Diego, Calif.; St. Cloud, Minn.; and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The team of three editors features two communication faculty members from the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga and a founding editor of *America's Civil War* magazine. This team has combined forces to produce a valuable volume that addresses media representations of our nation's most notorious conflict.

See also at: <http://jmq.sagepub.com/content/85/1/190.full.pdf+html> (starts on pg. 216)