

1 WOLFGANG HOCHBRUCK, *Die Geschöpfe des Epimetheus: Veteranen, Erinnerung und die Reproduktion des amerikanischen Bürgerkriegs* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2011), 560 pp.

5 This deeply informed and richly layered study starts out from essentially one key question: How has it been possible that an overall positive image of idealized southern “rebels” holds such a prominent place in America’s cultural history, given that the secession almost destroyed the nation’s democratic union? As Wolfgang Hochbrück unfolds his answer, he traces the ways in which a wide range of cultural expressions have constructed, reconstructed and, in fact, pre-constructed the American Civil War between 1845 and the 1960s. Reaching back before the beginning of the actual military conflict, and forward to its centennial, his book offers illuminating discussions of popular songs, poems, plays and magazine fiction; veterans’ letters, diaries, and photographs; battle souvenirs, military service records, and uniforms; exhibitions, memorials, and battlefield parks; and a number of canonical and lesser known short stories, novels, and films. According to Hochbrück, the dynamics that have been at play in the construction of a romantic image of southern “rebels” are linked to the peculiar character of Civil War veterans’ memory, to the shaping power of a modern cultural industry, and to the practice of structuring the memory of an event by reaching back to a time before the event took place, resulting in what he calls an “epimetheic” process.

10 The argument is essentially three-fold: 1) the Civil War was the first military conflict whose participants, due to their discursive position, actively constructed their own memorialization on a massive scale, 2) the veterans’ memories stand not so much in tension with as they become part of a pervasive industrial production of the Civil War and its subjects, characterized by a remarkable alliance between the cultural industries of North and South, and 3) the prominence of “positive” images of the “rebels,” including a range of racist, undemocratic positions, has been shaped by the (public memory of the) pre-war period, channeling individual and collective expectations for decades to come. *Die Geschöpfe des Epimetheus* (Epimetheus’ Creatures: Veterans, Memory, and the Reproduction of the American Civil War)

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shows how processes of memory and industrial reproduction have reduced recollections of the war to a progressively smaller number of events and ideological interpretations and how veteran experiences have been incorporated and streamlined in the process; the veterans are turned into quasi-mythical figures that embody the trans-sectional nostalgia for the “Old South” and the ideal of national reconciliation at the price of (remembering) more differentiated and critical positions towards slavery, secession, and war. The study is as committed to theory as it is to material culture and historical detail and offers a series of finely crafted explorations of American literature, history, and popular culture.

The introduction (chapter 1) develops a complex scheme of organizing all texts that constitute a particular memory culture according to their dynamic position in a hegemonic system (from mainstream via dissenting to oppositional voices). Hochbrück argues that the dominant mode of remembering the war, which privileges the memory of the pre-war South and grants secessionists a prominent position as figures of identification, could only emerge in the course of various adjustments to such a system. His survey of different waves of memory research pays special attention to distinctions between individual, collective and public memory, cultural and social memory, and group-memoirs, and to the works of Maurice Halbwachs, Paul Ricoeur, and Jan and Alaida Assmann. The argument is occasionally a bit difficult to follow, but the range of references, together with a massive body of footnotes, are impressive and provide a rich ground for anybody interested in the intersections between literature, popular culture, history, memory, aesthetics and politics. Hochbrück then develops his key concept of “public cultural history,” defined as the history of public texts in the public sphere (“eine Geschichte öffentlicher Texte im öffentlichen Raum” 35). The concept highlights how public memory has been in conflict with but ultimately came to subsume other forms of memory, including historiographical discourses, and how inextricably this process is linked to the entertainment industry’s influence on the construction of particular “memoirs” and their audiences.

The book’s main chapters demonstrate how the Civil War has been reproduced in discursive systems that privilege hegemonic practices without completely silencing marginal

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or dissenting voices. Chapter 2 begins by examining pre-constructions of the Civil War in mid-nineteenth century plantation novels, slave narratives, songs, minstrel shows, and core texts such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, emphasizing the early trans-sectional attraction of stereotypically southern figures and the powerful impact of (northern) publishing houses. It then examines medial constructions of the war during the military conflict itself. Hochbruck excels at turning his impressive knowledge of Civil War documents, uniforms, souvenirs, and battlefields into a compelling analysis of how pre-formed notions ("Vor-Bilder") of the war already shaped the construction of its memory while it was taking place—ranging from soldiers' individual recollections of battles to poses in photographic portraits and early monuments. He shows how diverse memories were streamlined and reduced to types, pointing out that "dissenting" positions were often expressed in literature written by and for women: while stories about southern women as suffering civilians were initially quite prominent in northern "Ladies Magazines" but survived only in the realm of private texts, experiences of southern women that contradicted the emergent rhetoric of reconciliation more forcefully were underrepresented in the media from very early on due to political and economic mechanisms of exclusion.

Chapter 3 examines (re-)constructions of the Civil War in its immediate aftermath, marked by a general reluctance to remember the war's particulars. It not only shows how the unionists' notion of forgiveness became intertwined with forgetting, while confederates, too, temporarily turned away from the war; it also demonstrates how even during this "memory gap" (154) pre-formed structures shaped the myth of the "Lost Cause" and the romance of white reunion in ways that further marginalized the experiences of women and, especially, African Americans. The chapter sheds fresh light on texts by John Esten Cooke and John William De Forest, and the mnemonic constructions of Lee and Lincoln, emphasizing which institutions and economic interests had a hand in turning multilayered historical developments into a national story of white male heroism and honor in which secessionist sentiments retained a prominent position. Chapter 4 demonstrates how in the mid-1870s, Americans re-remembered the war with increased passion (and increasing liberty in terms of the war's "actual" dynam-

ics). It traces a shift from individual memoirs to collective memory, focusing on the rhetoric of reconciliation, veterans' memoirs, collections of war documents in public archives, and the institutionalization of cemeteries, monuments and battlefields. The subchapter on "visitable pasts" is particularly strong, offering insightful readings of battlefield parks in transnational comparison, in terms of intensified religious discourses about the war, and in relation to the parallel development of national parks and their different but equally paradoxical (ecological) attempts to preserve the past. Chapter 5, on literary modernism, provides detailed analyses of stories, novels, and memoirs by Abrose Bierce, Mark Twain, Ulysses S. Grant and, especially, Stephen Crane, whose instances of subversion, critique, irony and caricature, and various (a-)historical references to the Civil War and their epimetheic structures have been largely overlooked. The chapter traces these texts' closeness to pre-formed patterns, revealing how for all their multilayered implications, they, too, participated in the streamlining of Civil War memory. Chapter 6 proceeds to the next decades with their southern belle diaries, novels by Thomas Dixon, and films by D. W. Griffith and others, highlighting how types of memory that had been informed by pre-war perspectives in genres such as the reunion romance are now themselves repeated: "Geschichte [war ein] sich selbst verstärkend inszenierter Massenkonsens" (393).

Chapter 7 interrupts the book's chronological setup to fully turn to the role of African Americans, or rather—in line with the critical focus of this study—to the mechanisms that have excluded black veteran experiences from America's public cultural history. It talks about the precarious position of black soldiers before emancipation and the racism in the context of U.S. Colored Troops, about *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Louisa May Alcott's *Hospital Sketches*, and about the role of a black press that published fiction and letters about and by black soldiers—which, however, did not suffice to establish the autonomous black veteran as formative figure in the nation's collective memory. In the postbellum period, as Hochbruck stresses, the fictionalization of African Americans shifted from the occasional heroic (or ironic) black soldier to the reductive and racist image of the "loyal darky." Soon, active black war participants were almost completely written out of the "national narrative" (if they

had ever managed to enter it); Frances E. W. Harper's *Iola Leroy* and Paul Laurence Dunbar's *The Fanatics* are shown to have played conflicting roles in this process. Similar mechanisms characterized the exclusion of actual African American veteran groups from public spaces and the mis- or non-representation of black veterans in early film, which is demonstrated here via discussions of the film version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (a "dissident" text with a black leading actor) and, especially, *Birth of a Nation*. The "narrative of (African American) exclusion" ends in the late 1930s, not so much because by then the last black veterans had died, but because the figure of the black veteran had become all but invisible (or reduced to the "loyal darkie"); as Hochbruck stresses, it has not been possible to create a lasting subversive counter memoir.

This extra chapter is also crucial because it indirectly calls attention to the related yet different position of a second group of Civil War participants—that of women veterans—and the need to explore their exclusion from public memory. Hochbruck himself is aware of this tension and explains that for one, very few women were actively involved in the war and even fewer of them might be considered "veterans" in the narrow sense of the term, while, conversely, so many texts about the Civil War were written by women that a separate chapter would have been impossible. Clearly, such structural quandaries are undeniable, and it is also true that the study refers to the situation of women and women's texts throughout. The situation still remains somewhat unsatisfying, particularly in the context of a comprehensively researched volume. On the one hand, the comment that female veterans could "only" be found in the positions of nurses, vivandières, and cross-dressers (42) sits at an odd angle in a book that is otherwise so learned and includes a wealth of examples in terms of so many aspects of the war; it seems that a shift in emphasis (or categories) would have allowed for extremely illuminating discussions of how these unconventional "veterans" have been remembered. It might have been particularly fascinating to hear more about the hundreds of women—northern, southern, black, white, ranging from Cuban to Canadian born—who served as

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spies, since some of their memoirs did have a prominent presence in public cultural memory. On a different level, if so many women have written about the war, a more prominent presence of their works throughout this study would also have been desirable. And yet it is always easy to fault a book for the roads it did not take, so that ultimately the reasoning Hochbruck provides for not focusing more on (women's) memories of female war participants as part of his own core argument accentuates how fruitful such attention would be in future projects to come; *Die Geschöpfe des Epimetheus* provides a solid foundation for such research.

Chapter 8 then traces developments between the 1930s and '60s, foregrounding an increasing skepticism and ambivalence in literary texts, a relative decline of Civil War films and simultaneous Disneyfication of the war's memory, and the problematic position of the very last living veterans. Hochbruck once more offers a range of fine analyses—of texts by Hemingway, Wolfe, Glasgow, Faulkner, and Mitchell, of Buster Keaton's silent comedy *The General* and the film version of *Gone With the Wind* (with its symbolic undoing of white men as veterans), and of the first reenactments. Finally, the book's conclusion revisits the study's theoretical foundations and aspirations and usefully pulls together its most important findings: cultural reproductions of the Civil War revolved around veterans, even though, paradoxically, veteran recollections were systematically pushed out of the system; they have been pre-constructed by older, sentimental notions of romance, adventure and honor shared by the South and North; and the "lost cause" rhetoric, with its consistent silencing of racial issues, is largely grounded in processes of a capitalist cultural industry. Overall, the study makes significant contributions to Civil War scholarship, veteran and memory studies, and gains further weight through its relevance to studying post-9/11 American culture. Additionally, with its solid theoretical foundation, rich documentary base, and numerous in-depth textual analyses, *Die Geschöpfe des Epimetheus* will certainly enable a rich array of further studies.

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