

Readers' Room

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Sarah J. Purcell, *Spectacle of Grief: Public Funerals and Memory in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022, \$95.00 cloth, \$34.95 paper, \$26.99 ebook). Pp. 352. ISBN 978 1 4696 6832 1, 978 1 4696 6833 8, 978 1 4696 6834 5.

Sarah J. Purcell's *Spectacle of Grief* is an important contribution to the study of Civil War memory that furthers our understanding of American national identities and the limits of sectional reconciliation. Developing her previous research on Revolutionary War deaths, Purcell identifies the links between mourning rituals and the development of national identities in the Civil War era. Noting that public funerals remained “durable forms of political expression” despite technological advancements, Purcell examines the funerals of nine prominent individuals from across the North and South between 1852 and 1898 (211). Assessing a comprehensive body of archival research, Purcell finds that rival memories coexisted and competed, reshaping grief and mourning rituals into political and cultural battlegrounds.

Purcell's work is situated within a recent scholarly trend that challenges earlier arguments that a spirit of national reconciliation triumphed during Reconstruction. Historians have increasingly argued that both reconciliationist and emancipationist narratives emerged from the sectional conflicts of the nineteenth century. As Caroline E. Janney puts it, these competing narratives marked the “limits” of reconciliation. These “limits” have been the focus of recent work on the Lost Cause from, among others, Adam H. Donby and Karen L. Cox. Purcell develops this dialogue, answering Nina Silber's call for a broader framework that recognizes the importance and survival of both reconciliationist and emancipationist narratives. Highlighting the risk of an “either/or” approach to Civil War memory, Purcell demonstrates that several contradictory national identities emerged out of the nineteenth century. Purcell also draws on the history of emotions in her methodology, noting the importance of collective emotions and grief in developing a culture of memory and national identity. *Spectacle of Grief* extends Michael E. Woods's work on emotional and sectional identities in the antebellum era, contending that collective mourning shaped identities well into the twentieth century. This methodology likewise complements, and builds upon, famous work from scholars such as Drew Gilpin Faust by examining the competing meanings and interpretations of wartime deaths. By analyzing wider American emotional culture, and its links with national identity, Purcell's approach extends and develops discussion of these important themes.

Purcell's early chapters set the stage for the postwar battle over Civil War memory, with particular attention given to the “material culture of death” (32). Chapter 1 begins with an examination of Henry Clay's 1852 public funerals. National mourning for Clay set the stage for future public funerals, coming at a time of advancements in

material, print, and visual culture, as well as heightened sectional tensions. The passing of the Great Compromiser allowed Unionists and secessionists to imagine national unity, even as they used the opportunity to offer competing interpretations of what "unity" meant. Chapter 2 explains how public funerals for Colonel Elmer Ellsworth and General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson reinforced competing Union and Confederate national identities, whilst also showing the universal importance of collective mourning. Rituals themselves remained consistent on both sides, though their meanings were "diametrically opposed" (47).

Later chapters dealing with the postwar years encourage readers to consider how funerals allowed the Lost Cause to become a part of the American national identity. Chapter 3 explores the funerals of transatlantic philanthropist George Peabody and Confederate icon Robert E. Lee in 1870. Though offering opportunities for reconciliation that highlighted the possibility of Confederate redemption, both funerals simultaneously revitalized sectional tensions. For example, Virginia sought to portray Lee's death as a "national calamity," whilst also advocating for a secessionist ideal of reconciliation that ignored the ambivalent feelings of African Americans (131). Chapter 4 emphasizes the contradictions inherent in this developing US national identity. Charles Sumner and Joseph E. Johnston both advocated reconciliation, but their public funerals reveal that each man came to embody "reconciliation with a belligerent sectional twist" (140). As both sought to protect their individual legacies, Sumner and Johnston simultaneously acted as symbols for reconciliation and continuing tensions over race in a nation that could only imagine true reconstruction. By the turn of the century, contested versions of reconciliation characterized Civil War memory and national identity. Chapter 5 discusses the funerals of Frederick Douglass and Jefferson Davis's daughter, Winnie, to show how public grief had extended to include new characters, but nonetheless remained defined by contradictions. At these funerals, malicious Lost Cause ideals clashed with emancipationist memory and conceptions of American reconciliation.

In rejecting strict boundaries between reunion and reconciliation, Purcell's work offers a myriad of possibilities for further research. By necessity, *Spectacle of Grief* covers a broad chronology and geography to effectively highlight the long-term trends that shaped Civil War memory. Closer analysis of state, regional, and individual memories therefore offers fertile ground on which to develop Purcell's approach and continue to explore the fusion of competing strands of memory into a broader national identity. The border states would certainly benefit from this focus, where the difficult task of constructing a unifying memory and identity was further complicated by widespread guerrilla warfare and competing loyalties during the Civil War. Equally, scholars of the history of emotions will find opportunities to continue engagement with the public expression of emotion and its connections with political discourse.

Purcell reiterates the importance of this research with a poignant conclusion that discusses the recent public funeral of Georgia Congressman and civil rights activist John Lewis. Purcell argues that these rites demonstrate the continued ability of mourning rituals to ask "what the nation should stand for" (221). Lewis's funeral, in addition to subsequent funerals for other political figures such as Bob Dole, emphasize the necessity of Purcell's research for understanding the past and present of the United States. In highlighting American memory's contradictions, *Spectacle of Grief* significantly advances scholarship of Reconstruction and death in the nineteenth-century

United States, establishing a fresh and important methodology for the study of Civil War memory.

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Edward Sugden (ed.), *Crossings in Nineteenth-Century American Literature: Junctures of Time, Space, Self, and Politics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022, \$110.00). Pp. 272. ISBN 978 1 4744 7628 7.

The essays in Edward Sugden's edited collection *Crossings in Nineteenth-Century American Literature: Junctures of Time, Space, Self, and Politics* are interested in the historical specificity of selves in crisis and the way those crises erupted in moments of crossing, exchange, and juncture in the nineteenth-century United States. Rather than reaching back into the nineteenth century to locate the roots of what Sugden calls biopolitical liberal modernity – underpinned by the notion of a coherent, embodied self – the volume offers careful expositions of the range of ways in which nineteenth-century selves are unintelligible within today's taxonomies of identity and works to define new terms by which we might come to know them. The people, places, and ideas in this study are united by their shared excesses, their disjointedness, their refusals of binary oppositions. This is not, in other words, a history of the inevitable consolidation of liberal individualism, but rather a speculative exploration of alternative possibilities, ruptures, and conflicts that surfaced during the period that many look to as a point of origin for the anchoring concepts of our present political landscape.

The book is organized thematically and divided into four parts. Part I, "Elsewheres," offers examples of historical figures attempting to place their ideas of the self within shifting material contexts. For Cody Marrs, this means exploring the ways in which Frederick Douglass's canonical writings exceed their rootedness in US American print culture and its terrestrial reach, whereas for Gordon Fraser, a growing awareness of the universe beyond Earth is foundational to the operations of national and local politics and the print discourse that upholds it. Rachel Heffner-Burns, meanwhile, reads Walt Whitman as a poet whose attempts to exceed the materiality of print result not in a rejection of the physical world but rather in a richer sense of human embodiment. These essays, though they differ substantially in method and argument, and in moments productively contradict one another's core premises, demonstrate that the question of the material body's embeddedness in its contexts – textual, terrestrial, political – was a live and deeply unsettled issue for nineteenth-century writers.

Part II, "Excess Identities," focusses on the ways certain nineteenth-century expressions of gender, race, and nationality exceed our contemporary notions of identity's political contours. Leigh Johnson points out that Latinx soldier Loreta Janeta Velazquez's gender fluidity is part of the same set of impulses that leads her to join the Confederate army, frustrating our contemporary desire to align queer identities with liberatory political formations. Likewise, Spencer Tricker looks to the example of David Fagen – a black American who defected to the Philippine army during the Philippine–American war – as cause to "resist the methodological urge ... to celebrate Fagen's defection as a luminous instance of Afro-Asian solidarity contra US imperial