

## BOOK REVIEWS

Dan T. Carter. *When the War Was Over: The Failure of Self-Reconstruction in the South, 1865-1867*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1985.

In the months following the end of the Civil War while the South was in chaos and southerners faced a bleak future, many problems had to be faced and dealt with. This future included problems about race relations, the Southern economy, and new governments for the Ex-Confederate states. What Dan T. Carter has done in *When the War Was Over: The Failure of Self-Reconstruction in the South, 1865-1867* is to give us an in-depth study of how the white leadership reacted to these many problems of "a world turned upside down." In so doing Carter sheds new light on the leadership of the 1865-1867 period and concludes that the leadership deserves better at the hands of historians than they have received.

Even during the hey-day of the Dunning school of historical scholarship, 1900-1940, when most white Americans sympathized with the defeated white South, the leadership of the era of Presidential Reconstruction, 1865-1867, did not fare well at the hands of historians. The policies of the white leadership, Carter maintains, played into the hands of the Radical Republicans, led to the loss of influence by President Johnson, and to the Republican party's winning more than a two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress in the 1866 elections. The days of Presidential Reconstruction were then numbered.

What were some of the policies of these white leaders? They failed to accept the full implication of emancipation and went on to enact drastic black codes which were designed to get the blacks off the street and working again as well as to regulate their conduct in general. They were not given full civil rights, including the right to vote, which the Republican party insisted upon because of their desire to remain in power and also because of humanitarian reasons. These actions, Carter states, created fear in the North instead of soothing the fears of the victorious Union. Not being able to solve the racial problem, the white Federal leadership was not able to make much of a start at solving economic problems. They did, however, establish new governments for the defeated South. Nevertheless, the post-war leaders of the Ex-Confederate states, as a group, failed in the test of their leadership.

These leaders did accept many of Johnson's demands for readmission into the Union. They repudiated the Confederate debt, renounced secession, approved the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery, and took loyalty oaths to the United States government. But they would not give the black man the right to vote, a position which many Northern states such as Wisconsin and Connecticut also followed. Nor would they approve the Fourteenth Amendment, which would force the enfranchisement of black adult males or cause the south to suffer a loss in representation. The

amendment would also deny thousands of southerners the right to hold public office and the right to vote. In effect, approval of the Fourteenth Amendment, most white southerners believed, would make the ex-slave the dominant political force in many Southern states because of their numbers. The ex-master and whites in general could be dominated politically by the ex-slave. Had the Southern governments approved the Fourteenth Amendment, it is possible they would not have been put through Congressional or Radical Reconstruction as was the case with Tennessee. Evidently this is what Carter is saying when he faults the leadership of these states. It seems that he is saying they should have gone the extra mile. However, the limit of voluntary acquiescence had been reached in the white South. The south would voluntarily give no more.

Nevertheless, Carter concludes: "It will not do to dismiss the southern leaders of Presidential Reconstruction as racists and incompetents. In important ways, they represented the most constructive and creative response white southerners were able to make to their defeat and to the revolution of emancipation." *When the War Was Over: The Failure of Self-Reconstruction, 1865-1867* is an important addition to our understanding of Presidential Reconstruction. It is a solid piece of research and recommended reading for all interested in this period of United States history.

Lonnie E. Maness, Ph.D.

---

Robert E. May. *John A. Quitman: Old South Crusader*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1985.

Very little has been written on the southern secessionist leaders. Although historians have long been fascinated by the Civil War, there are only a handful of book-length studies of the men who vigorously pushed secession and made possible the Civil War which transformed the nation. Such neglect is particularly striking in the case of John Anthony Quitman. He has only one published biography, which was written before the War for Southern independence, and it was neither comprehensive nor critical. Robert E. May has remedied this situation with *John A. Quitman: Old South Crusader*, which explains Quitman's radicalism and describes his contribution to southern secessionism, among other things.

John Quitman was born in New York state to German immigrant parents, the son of a Lutheran minister. Though trained for the ministry, he eventually studied law in Ohio under Platt Brush. In July, 1821, John passed his bar examination and was admitted to the practice of law in Ohio. However, he had no intention of remaining in Ohio. Very shortly he went to Natchez, Mississippi, where he easily passed the bar examination before the Supreme Court and began a lucrative practice of law, married well, and adjusted without difficulty to the plantation society he found in Mississippi, even acquiring several plantations and many slaves. Quitman entered poli-

tics, served in the Mississippi legislature, was chancellor of the State of Mississippi, governor of state on two occasions, fought in the Mexican War and rose to the rank of major general, organized a filibustering expedition to acquire Cuba, and served several terms in the United States House of Representatives. Quitman was hardly an obscure, behind-the-scene manipulator. He was no opportunist who sought office above principle.

His career sheds light on many facets of the Old South's politics, economy, and mores, such as political culture, martial propensities, family customs, social mobility, master-slave relations, and the assimilation of transplanted Yankees into the South's culture. Quitman's career was a very complicated one. This should warn one, May insists, "against reducing secessionist motivation of facile formula or stereotype." For example, much recent scholarship maintains that "the Old South's radicals were misfits or societal outsiders." This characterization does not fit Quitman. He became an insider among Mississippi's elite prior to his emergence as a radical politician and May maintains, "his strong physique and martial air should buy presumptions that all radicals suffered from traumas of psychological inadequacies." May further points out that the citizens of the Old South thought of themselves as both Americans and southerners "with no sense of hypocrisy or reason to feel hypocritical." Quitman's life bears this out.

Although Quitman was regarded as the "high priest of the secession cult in Mississippi," an analysis of his life bears out the fact that he thought of himself as an American first and foremost during most of his public career. This can be seen in the Texas Revolution, the war with Mexico, and in his filibustering efforts. He advocated secession for only a few, separated years during a public career that spanned more than thirty years. However, he did finally agree that secession was the best course of action for the South to follow if its rights were to be protected. Accordingly, Quitman worked out an extreme southern position on Kansas because he was despondent over slavery's long-range future in the Union. Even then, Quitman approached secession with a Calhounian sense of deep despair rather than with an exuberant southern nationalism. His southern radicalism, May maintains, was derived from a "southwestern slave expansionist mentality and being a slaveowner under siege rather than from the conviction that southerners had lost all cultural commonality with the North." If Quitman pursued a halting course, May states, "we must ponder anew how agonized was the overall southern road to secession." Quitman died in 1858 and thus did not live to see his advocacy succeed. Had he lived, he would have been sorely disappointed because the Confederacy failed and was not able to protect the institution of slavery.

*John A. Quitman: Old South Crusader* by Robert E. May is an important addition to an understanding of the Old South and to the events that helped mold the secession cast of mind during the 1850's. It is a well-written, solid piece of research and recommended reading for all interested in the aspect of American History.

Lonnie E. Maness, Ph.D.

taining and relaxing book, recommendable to all manner of readers. Read it on a plane or by the pond while waiting for the fish to bite.

Svend S. Nielson

---

Elizabeth Maddox Roberts. *The Time of Man*. Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press.

One of my earliest, and certainly most vivid, literary experiences was when my mother read me *The Wizard of Oz*. As a youngster growing up in an upper middle-class neighborhood of a large mid-western city, I was fascinated and intrigued by farms and animals and farm workers and dirt roads and all those other rural things that were alien to my own life. I was also awed by the antics of a little girl who had neither father nor mother (itself an unspeakable horror to my young mind) and the excitement she must have felt on her journey to the magical and mystical land that lay somewhere over the rainbow.

Farms and animals and farm workers and dirt roads are also a vital part of *The Time of Man*. Indeed there is even a Dorothy-like young woman (Ellen Chesser Kent) who spends her life searching for the city at the end of the yellow brick road. Here, however all comparison must stop. *The Time of Man* is one of the fine American novels; it belongs alongside the work of such writers as Ralph Ellison, William Faulkner, Margaret Walker, and Eudora Welty, all of whom deal with the ways that the human spirit struggles against the confining restraints of community and family when confronting the mysteries of life.

Ellen is the only living child of a poor tenant-farming family of eastern Kentucky, and the novel takes her from adolescence to middle-age, with the focus always on her sense of wonder and uncertainty at the vicissitudes of life. Whether she is marveling at the very notion that stars have names, or discussing the origin of rocks, or celebrating her very being in the face of an indifferent universe ("I'm Ellen Chesser and I'm a-liven"), or weeping over betrayal by her first love, she is always in harmony with and profoundly aware of her world and its possibilities and limitations.

In many ways Ellen's story is the story of all people of all times, and Ellen herself articulates the issue:

Oh, why am I here and what is it all for anyway? What is it a-beaten down on my breath? I'm a-fallen through the world and there's no end to the top and no end to the bottom. Mammy a-getten up and a-cooken and a-goen to bed and Pappy works all day, and we have to eat and we have to wear and we have to have fire, and there's no end to anything.

But I do not want to give the wrong impression. *The Time of Man* is no sentimental soap opera. It is a moving novel, but it is so largely because

the main character is able to respond honestly to her myriad life experiences in such a way that she does grow and develop emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually.

Finally, "they asked no questions of the way but took their own turnings," is the last line of Elizabeth Maddox Roberts' novel about the life and times of Ellen Chesser Kent and her family, and, though seemingly inconsequential, the line is a paradigm of Ellen's life. She never "asked...questions of the way," but always took her own turnings.

Phillip J. Miller