age earns its explanatory stripes. Wading into the debate over whether women largely supported or undermined the Confederacy, and whether the war reinforced or weakened the southern feminine ideal, Jabour argues that during the war young female Confederates fashioned a new ideal, the "rebel lady," which incorporated some decidedly unladylike traits in support of the Confederate cause. Rebel ladies vociferously advocated Confederate independence (perhaps seeing a "parallel … [to] their own attempts at resistance," 249), prolonged singleness (with the excuse that all the men were off fighting), and harbored ferocity (only towards the hated yankee). The war years allowed the long-simmering "youth culture of resistance" to boil over into "outright rebellion" against the feminine ideal in a way that widened the arena of possibilities for southern women in the postwar era (280).

The power of Jabour's portrait of young women in the South is not at all lessened by the fact that she is aware of the limitations of their resistance. She acknowledges that young southern women "developed a piecemeal critique of male dominance" but did not develop a coherent theory of equal rights (13). Even during the war, with her subjects in "outright rebellion" against the southern feminine ideal, Jabour acknowledges that most young women gave vent to their unladylike hatred of the yankees only in their diaries (260). In fact, most of the acts of resistance that Jabour catalogues were enacted with a pen and in private. Important as these may be, the book's true contributions lie elsewhere. Despite assertions of a "youth culture of resistance" and "outright rebellion" it is finally Jabour's evocative account of the cultural complexities and paradoxes with which young southern women struggled in their becoming that makes *Scarlett's Sisters* such an important piece of scholarship.

Emory University ROBERT ELDER

Journal of American Studies, **44** (2010), 1. doi:10.1017/S0021875810000150

David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing and Roy Morris Jr. (eds.), *Words at War: The Civil War and American Journalism* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008, $29.95). Pp. xiv+412. ISBN 978 1 55753 494 1.

This book is a real disappointment, barely even a curate's egg. The product of a regular symposium on the 19th Century Press, the Civil War, and Free Expression held at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga since 1993, it contains thirty essays on the role of journalists and journalism in the coming, course and aftermath of the American Civil War.

The essays cover a wide range of topics; the majority of them are southern in focus. Illustrative examples include the Unionist journalism of editor Andrew Jackson Donelson, the changing stance of North Carolina newspapers during the secession crisis, the work of the Confederate Press Association, the memorializing of rebel general Nathan Bedford Forrest, and the close relationship between the southern press and Klan-style violence during Reconstruction. So far, so good. These are all important and potentially interesting subjects. Unhappily the majority of these pieces should never have seen the light of day. Over two-thirds of them are written by scholars working in communications and journalism studies. Their efforts are, in the main, exceedingly lame. They lack adequate contextualization, are seldom

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875810000150 Published online by Cambridge University Press

grounded in manuscript research, and fail either to engage convincingly with the latest scholarship on the Civil War or to ask hard questions about the relationship between journalism and historical change.

The worst of them are little more than pastiches of extensive quotations which would shame many an undergraduate historian. One seven-page account of the anti-slavery journalist James Redpath contains twelve such quotes which constitute the primary building blocks of a woefully mundane account of Redpath's antebellum activities. Most of the other contributions to this volume are similarly light on analysis and intellectual ambition, with many of the contributors seemingly content to reinvent the wheel rather than push back the boundaries of our knowledge of the American press during the Civil War era. There are a handful of honourable exceptions but even some of these, notably Menahem Blondheim's study of the Lincoln administration's attempts to manage war information, have already been published elsewhere in slightly different form.

At times the quality of the editing matches the quality of the scholarship. Roy Morris, for example, has southern journalists striving "mightily" twice on the same page (5), while material from the *New York Tribune* and the *Richmond Enquirer* is unwittingly fused on page 91 so that Horace Greeley's anti-slavery *Tribune* abruptly and ridiculously becomes a mouthpiece for anti-abolitionist sentiment. In fairness to the editors, they were probably daunted by the size of the task before them. They note judiciously that for every paper chosen for inclusion in this, the second of a three-book series, three 'were set aside for future consideration' (x). The mind fairly boggles at the thought of the bloated monstrosity that might have been unleashed upon libraries across the world without the cuts made by Morris and his hard-pressed colleagues.

None of this is to say that nineteenth-century journalism is not a fit subject for academic scholarship. As the better essays in this collection make clear, the press contributed hugely to the sectional crisis of the 1850s, to the bolstering of popular morale in the ensuing Civil War, and to the violence of Reconstruction and the subsequent reunification of the divided republic. There are many important questions that need answering – about the extent to which the largely partisan press was a tool for power-hungry elites on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line; about the ways differing ideologies were disseminated by newspapers; about how, and how effectively, governments tried to manage information during the Civil War itself; and about the ways in which ordinary people received news and editorial comment during what many scholars have seen as a transitional era in the history of the American press (surprisingly not one of the contributors to this volume displays an interest in reader-response theory). The history of Civil War-era journalism should also deepen our understanding of "linkage" – of how politicians and voters related to one another in the mid-nineteenth century – and strengthen our awareness of how grassroots reform movements altered society and institutions.

Unfortunately this lacklustre collection sheds only a few shafts of light on any of these issues. Far from being a shining example of what scholars can achieve when they collaborate across disciplinary boundaries, it merely highlights the dangers of dabbling in areas beyond one's own professional craft. As noted above, a third volume of essays generated by the University of Tennessee symposia is pending. On

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875810000150 Published online by Cambridge University Press

this evidence historians of the Middle Period should look forward to its appearance more in hope than in expectation.

University of Sussex ROBERT COOK

Journal of American Studies, **44** (2010), 1. doi:10.1017/S0021875810000162

Peter Balaam, *Misery's Mathematics: Mourning, Compensation, and Reality in Antebellum American Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2009, $95.00). Pp. 186. ISBN 978 0 415 96807 2.

Antebellum Americans were obsessed with mourning. Popular literature and public rituals of the period placed more attention upon the mourner than on the deceased. Urban church graveyards gave way to rural cemeteries, such as Boston's manicured Mount Auburn Cemetery. Their landscaped settings appealed to the grieving sentimentalist's concern with appearances, including orderliness, communal grieving, high morals, and civic pride. Peter Balaam deftly shows that not everyone, however, bought into the superficial shows of mourning. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Susan Warner and Herman Melville resisted genteel displays of bereavement. Juxtaposing biographical details with analysis of their work, Balaam examines the somewhat unconventional attempts these authors made to rectify the "disequilibrium of loss" (7).

Ralph Waldo Emerson's nearly inconsolable grief over the loss of his five-year-old son, Waldo, is well known. Balaam examines the role played by Charles Lyell's popular and influential work *Principles of Geology* on Emerson's efforts to come to terms with loss and pain. Emerson found solace in Lyell's idea of the earth as a place of endless, dynamic change balanced by destruction and creation. From this "emblem of compensation" (27) Emerson developed a "geological theodicy" (27) that viewed loss as part of a natural, beneficial order, rather than as an inevitable part of life. These ideas find their expression in the elegiac "Threnody" and the essay "Experience."

The chapter on Susan Warner's moralizing novel *The Wide, Wide World* substantially deepens and revises past critical work by Jane Tompkins and others. Balaam interprets protagonist Ellen Montgomery's struggles as a reflection of Warner's involvement with neo-Edwardian New School Calvinism and a response to the exaggerated expressions of sympathy commonly found in novels of the day. Ellen does not so much demonstrate "feminist resistance beneath the novel's surface piety" as learn that the compensation for mastering "the art of losing" (154) is godly virtue.

The book's final chapter is a fine renegotiation of Herman Melville's engagement with grief and mourning. Melville's exposure to loss came early, with his father's fiscal ruin and sudden death. Balaam examines Melville's interests in the picturesque to show how *The Piazza Tales* may be read, in part, as a parody of Catherine Marie Sedgwick's popular picturesque fiction, particularly the moral perfection gained by her female heroines through the suffering of others. Melville undermines conventions of the literary picturesque with images of grieving women who cause his narrators to shift from objectifying others to objectifying themselves, resulting in "mournful reckonings of self-estrangement in intersubjectivity" (16).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875810000150 Published online by Cambridge University Press