Review

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Brian Matthew Jordan and Jonathan W. White, eds. *Final Resting Places: Reflections on the Meaning of Civil War Graves*. UnCivil Wars Series. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2023. Paperback. Pp. 384.

Following the examples of J. Matthew Gallman and Gary W. Gallager's *Lens of War: Exploring Iconographic Photographs of the Civil War* (2015), Gallagher and Gallman's *Civil War Places: Seeing the Conflict through the Eyes of Its Leading Historians* (2019), and Gallagher and Stephen Cushman's *Civil War Writing: New Perspectives on Iconic Texts* (2019), Brian Matthew Jordan and Jonathan W. White's *Final Resting Places* brings together twenty-nine well-known historians who contribute short essays that meditate on Civil War graves. Even more than its models, the volume is lavishly illustrated with abundant use of color, and the retellings of familiar stories and excavations of curious incidents often aim to appeal to a general readership without making strong claims to fresh overarching interpretation. Together, however, the essays make some important points about the Civil War culture of burial and the grave as a starting point for the writing of historical literature.

The introduction of national military cemeteries and related customs of respect for the soldier dead have achieved wide recognition in the last thirty-five years as a central Civil War innovation through the work of George Mosse, William Blair, John Neff, Caroline Janney, Drew Gilpin Faust, Micki McElya, Ian Finseth, and other scholars. Anna Gibson Holloway's contribution to *Final Resting Places* dramatizes the culmination of those new conventions in an elaborate, even compulsive military culture of final honors by recounting the 2002 recovery of the *Monitor* turret from the sea where it sank off Cape Hatteras in December 1862, the careful removal of two human skeletons from the vessel, the application of advanced forensic techniques such as DNA testing and facial reconstruction to generate information about the remains, and the highly publicized interment of the anonymous bodies at Arlington Cemetery on the 2013 anniversary of the battle of Hampton Roads in the presence of the secretary of

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the navy and other dignitaries. Barbara Gannon similarly celebrates echoes of Memorial Day in an essay that links Grand Army of the Republic veterans' cemeteries to federal military cemeteries and their Confederate counterparts, foundations for a burial regime Gannon traces into the twenty-first century. Timothy Orr and Douglas Egerton identify wartime instances of solicitude for the remains of fallen comrades, Orr at a makeshift Gettysburg headstone from which the body was removed shortly after the battle and Egerton in the meticulously buried bodies of nineteen Union soldiers from some combination of the Massachusetts 54th and 55th, discovered at Folly Island, South Carolina, in 1987 and reinterred two years later at Beaufort National Cemetery. Barton Meyers's account of John Rodgers Meigs also illuminates the dominant narrative of Civil War burial, though Meyers is more interested in the exact circumstances of Meigs's death than the significance of Arlington National Cemetery founder Montgomery Meigs decision to bury his son at Oak Hill Cemetery in Georgetown in October 1864 and his conclusion by 1879 that Arlington National Cemetery was a suitable resting place for his wife, joined the next year by his son and in 1892 by the former quartermaster general.

The boldest essays in the collection challenge reverence for the Civil War as the origin of martial funerary memorialization. Michael Vorenberg recounts the July 1864 drowning of twenty members of the 21st United States Colored Infantry when a navy tugboat pilot carelessly swamped the pontoon boats ferrying the soldiers across the Stono River. Fireworks at an Independence Day celebration two nights later exposed bodies floating on the river, but no burial site is known; an attempt to discipline the pilot came to nought. Vorenberg stresses that contrary to the rhetoric of Gettysburg and Arlington, these deaths were not a "sacrifice" but an utterly needless waste, perhaps as typical of the Civil War as more heroic casualties. "The absence of a memorial, an *un*memorial, best represents the meaning, and the meaninglessness of what happened here," Vorenberg observes (75); the military should not pretend to care for men in death when it did not care for them in life. David Mindell's *Iron Coffin: War, Technology, and Experience aboard the USS Monitor* (rev. ed. 2012) suggests that a similar argument might apply to the bodies recovered near Cape Hatteras, which reinforces the stimulating editorial juxtaposition of Holloway's essay and Vorenberg's essay.

Several authors join Vorenberg in exploring racial rifts in the paradigm of honored burial. Melodie Andrews examines another set of Civil War bodies that did not find a grave, the thirty-eight Dakota warriors hanged at Mankato, Minnesota, in December 1862, who were

briefly buried but soon exhumed by local physicians for anatomical studies. Andrews shows that Mankato and the Dakota have long struggled over remembrance of the execution site. Mark Schantz effectively focuses on a ten-foot-high brick wall in Norfolk that separates Elmwood Cemetery, the white-only rural cemetery that became home to an especially shameless tale of the Lost Cause, from West Point Cemetery, the post-emancipation cemetery for African Americans that became a field for local Black memory of the war, including a unique standing-soldier monument. Vitor Izecksohn locates transnational proslavery white supremacism at a cemetery for emigrant Confederados in Santa Bárbara D'Oeste, Brazil. Michelle Krowl recounts her youthful effort to visit Elizabeth Keckly's grave at Harmony Cemetery in Washington, D. C., only to learn that the institution had sold out to a real-estate developer in 1960; part of the site was incorporated into a Metro station. The developer pledged to reinter the 37,000 bodies at National Harmony Memorial Park in Landover, Maryland, but did not move any tombstones or other monument. With the expansion of Keckly's fame in the last generation, her second grave was marked for the first time in 2010.

Relocations and modifications of graves are promising cues for studies of final resting places. Stephen Engle recounts the installation of a statue at the Hingham grave of John A. Andrew but doesn't explain the decision to move the Massachusetts governor's body after two years at the prominent Mount Auburn Cemetery. Michael Gray sees a gesture of sectional reconciliation in the 1911 dedication of a monument to forty-nine Confederate prisoners and seventeen Union guards who died in a train wreck while on the way to the new Elmira Prison. DeAnne Blanton describes an especially provocative example, the burial of Albert Cashier in Saunemin, Illinois, in 1915 with a headstone that listed only his name, his regimental and company affiliation, and his birth and death dates. A second headstone unveiled in 1977 recorded that Cashier was born in Ireland as Jennie Hodgers. The friends and comrades apparently responsible for the first headstone knew by the time of Cashier's death that he was biologically a woman, but they respected his choice of gender identity. The later deadnaming headstone invites further comment on the relationship between a headstone and other forms of remembrance, such as Blanton's trailblazing scholarship.

Several essays do not truly concentrate on final resting places but merely use them as starting or closing points for the story of a life. Michael Burlingame ably illustrates a facet of Lincoln in describing his relationship with servant William H. Johnson, but the essay passes

quickly over the uncertain location of Johnson's burial site, for which Lincoln bought the coffin. Joshua Chamberlain's grave plays little part in Ronald White's profile. The adjacent graves of Gabriel and Nannie Wharton in a family cemetery in Radford, Virginia, are straightforward conclusions to William C. Davis's story of their romance and marriage. Christopher Phillips finds a little more symbolic significance in the Marshall, Missouri, graves with which he begins and ends his melodramatic tale of William Barclay Napton and Melinda Williams Napton, but he acknowledges that the adjacent gravestones "breathe to us today only the faintest whispers of this war-torn narrative of loss" (278). Walter Stahr's account of the grave of Edwin Stanton's son is historiographically notable mainly for Stahr's skepticism about Gideon Welle's diary record that on the carriage ride to the funeral Lincoln disclosed to Welles and William Henry Seward his intent to issue an emancipation proclamation.

Other essays focus directly enough on graves but find little original inspiration in oft-studied sites. The most successful piece on a principal figure of the war is John Coski's essay about the grave of Jefferson Davis's son Joseph, which suggests that the site was crucial to Varina Davis's decision to bury her husband in Richmond and hence to the development of grand landscapes of Confederate memory at Hollywood Cemetery and on Monument Avenue. Allen Guelzo updates a return to the Lee Chapel at Washington & Lee with only a brief summary of recent controversies over the future of the chapel and the name of the school. Richard Greener's biographer Katherine Reynolds Chaddock recounts the making of Grant's Tomb from the perspective of the Black lawyer who served as initial secretary of the project but was forced out in the reorganization that led to completion of the monument. Jennifer Murray's piece about George Meade's horse and Terry Alford's piece about John Wilkes Booth face the unenviable tasks of following Drew Gilpin Faust's "Equine Relics of the Civil War" (2000) and C. Wyatt Evans's *The Legend of John Wilkes Booth: Myth, Memory, and a Mummy* (2004), two classic works of Civil War historical literature.

Literary sensibility is an indispensable feature of a volume centered on the grave, the quintessential site of contemplation. David Blight's foreword sets the bar at a high level by showing how Robert Penn Warren found poetic metaphors and Walt Whitman mystic transcendence in Civil War graves. George Saunders has more recently put Civil War graves at center of his brilliant *Lincoln in the Bardo* (2017), though the novelist adopts techniques unavailable to the academic historian. Jordan and White report that the editors "encouraged the

authors to embrace the tool of autobiography if they felt it appropriate" (2). The results are mixed, but the best examples show the benefits of systematic self-revelation. Glenn LaFantasie recalls his gradual recognition of the depth of Confederate officer William Oates's grief and guilt over the death of his brother, whom he left behind at Gettysburg, and the way LaFantasie's wife helped him put that emotional crisis at the center of an Oates biography, a writing delay vindicated by the discovery that Oates eventually learned the site of his brother's grave and achieved some consolation. The story about the development of historical understanding within the context of a marriage gains poignancy when LaFantasie reports that the process foreshadowed his struggle to cope with his wife's death. Edward Ayers turns family bonds in a different direction in the discovery of Confederate ancestors after a long career in social history, only to find that a cousin would not permit a photograph of a family cemetery to appear in Ayers's essay for fear of current upheavals over Confederate memory. Caroline Janney identifies the Confederate cemetery at the University of Virginia as a decisive site in her life from her first encounter with it as an undergraduate through her doctoral research on Confederate burials to her return to Charlottesville as director of a center for Civil War history at a point when the university confronted the legacy of proslavery secession illustrated by the wartime hospital cemetery. Hilary Green likewise describes her work on the burial sites of enslaved laborers at the University of Alabama as important to her growth as a scholar-activist. Dana Shoaf's account of his efforts to find a remote grave in rural Maryland associated with an early wartime shooting is less personally and ideologically fraught but serves as a metaphor for the obsessions characteristic of research. Shoaf writes that he could tell the story of Samuel Calvin Lamar only after he had found the slate headstone of the drunken teenager killed by a Union officer in one of the countless personal encounters that were as much a part of the war as the organized battles.

Final Resting Places provides multiple ruminations on a theme distinctive to the Civil War. Although Jordan and White rightly note that they could have expanded their volume considerably, a comparable book on any other American war is unimaginable. This collection is a worthy successor to its templates and will serve as a useful model for future sets of essays on songs of the war, volunteer regiments of the war, paintings of the war, and public monuments of the war.