

stant and forceful emphasis on the truth that slavery was deeply flawed and intrinsically contradictory, the reader may at times be under the impression that the then widely-accepted institution was an anomaly of sorts. If cultural history is an effort at imagining what it would be like to believe in precepts and values that we may not share today and to act upon them, then such weaving of modern and earlier conceptual means of constituting reality is a bit risky, as it would be to analyze the caste system in the culture of India in terms of its contradictions with one's own different notion of equality. One could note along the same lines that his argument that the loyalty of many bondsmen to their masters represented a "tragic involvement of many slaves in their own oppression" (p. 385) downplays both the lack of choices caused by the totalitarian nature of the slave system and the ensuing cultural efforts to make existential sense of participation in it (vide the phenomenon of "captive minds" in communist and Nazi systems). Perhaps the book would have benefited from a little more appreciation for the rich theory of cultural anthropology (incidentally, Bronislaw Malinowski, one of its founders, has his first name cited incorrectly as Bernard, p. xxiii).

One may disagree with this or that minor detail of the author's interpretation, but the overall product is without doubt impressive for its careful and balanced discussion of the dynamics of slave culture, the logical architecture of the book (Morgan even eschews a separate—and by now sacred requirement in colonial studies—chapter on the Revolutionary era), the vast scholarship absorbed by the author, the originality of so much new source material, and the elegant explanation of the complexities of the subject. It will remain an authoritative study for a long time to come.

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Pickett's Charge in History and Memory. By Carol Reardon. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997. Pp. x, 285. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95.)

Pickett's charge is one of only a handful of historic episodes that almost every American knows something about. Or, as Carol Reardon reminds us, we think we know something about that glorious—and horrible—charge on Gettysburg's final day. This provocative book works at various levels, adding important contributions to what we know while also calling into question the true meaning of that knowledge.

At its most fundamental level *Pickett's Charge in History and Memory* is a conventional chronological narrative, summarizing the

evolving popular conception of Pickett's charge. Reardon begins with a very brief sketch of the *dramatis personae* as they stood poised for the attack that early afternoon. Major General George E. Pickett commanded three brigades of Virginians from the Confederate First Corps. To their left on Seminary Ridge were men of the Third Corps from North Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama. Awaiting them behind fortifications on Cemetery Ridge were the Union's II Corps. The eight chapters that follow consider different perspectives on the events that followed, starting with the murky, fragmentary accounts by the participants themselves. Many points of confusion and controversy emerged from these early descriptions, to be joined by other layers of distortion introduced by subsequent waves of journalists, historians, novelists, and artists. But the conflict at the core of the story centers on the identification of the charge with Pickett and his Virginians. How much credit did the Third Corps deserve, and what explains their lack of public recognition? And what of the gallant Union soldiers who turned back the assault? How has their achievement been remembered? At a different level, this detailed account of the shifting understanding of Pickett's charge merges with a broader discussion of the evolving place of the Civil War in the national consciousness. As the nation underwent the slow process of reconciliation and commemoration, Pickett's men became a culturally useful symbol for a postwar America intent on acknowledging the Lost Cause without reopening old wounds.

At the most theoretical levels Reardon uses this one episode as the focus for an extended discussion of "two powerful forces [that] frame the way we recall past events: the objectivity of history—the search for 'truth'—and the subjectivity of memory, which shapes perceptions of that 'truth'" (p. 1). By insisting on a dichotomy between history and memory, Reardon sometimes seems to be discounting the role of the historian as arbiter among competing accounts. On other occasions she appears more willing to take a side, indicating for instance that the non-Virginians are victims of memory's distortions. Moreover, Reardon seems to draw no clear distinction between an assemblage of "facts" and something else that we might call "history," which includes (inherently subjective) judgments about the significance of certain events. The initial eyewitness accounts by soldiers and reporters routinely garbled many details while omitting others, but is it fair to dismiss these versions as mere subjective memory rather than considering that these participants may have been quite reliable in recording those aspects of their history—emotions, sensations, results—that they deemed most historically significant?

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