

may well be his finest interpretation to date. Students of country music have long acknowledged the complex forces that underlie the melodies. Malone reveals the diversities of “residence, religion, occupation, ethnicity, and even politics” that characterize those who listen to country music (p. viii). Malone argues that the musicians and their fans, far from being a monolithic group, may represent the wonderful diversity that serves as one of America’s greatest strengths better than their counterparts in any other art form.

He skillfully analyzes the connection between the music and Protestant evangelicalism and the concept of “rambling men,” as well as the centrality of politics and dancing to the world of country music. While he is careful to demonstrate that the genre is far from homogenous, he reminds us that some consistent themes endure. Perhaps foremost among them is the schism between the appeals of home life and Christian propriety versus the ecstasies of hedonism, a theme that continues to be a central component of the music’s appeal.

Malone’s research is as meticulous as his narrative is passionate. Readers are treated to first-person recollections of many important figures from the past fifty years of musical development. Malone does not merely report; his interpretation reveals a lifelong immersion in the music’s message, which began on a cotton tenant farm in Depression-era Texas. The result is a celebration of country music as culture, as dear to neo-Confederates as it is to the teenage fans of Alabama and Billy Ray Cyrus.

A comprehensive bibliographical essay along with a general index and a song-title index increase the usefulness of this volume. Malone also includes photographs of famous country music performers. For their fans and for students of the southern plain folk this book demands a careful reading. For those who do not harbor an affection for country music, it is certain to stimulate a new appreciation of a misunderstood art form.

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Somebody’s Darling: Essays on the Civil War. By Kent Gramm. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002. Pp. xv, 190. Notes, index. \$29.95.)

In his first paragraph, Kent Gramm states that this book “is for any reader who thinks about life,” (p. xi) yet the 175 pages that follow seem to focus upon death. To be sure, death is a part of life, and the soldiers and civilians who endured the Civil War came to know much about both in the years 1861–1865. Gramm’s selection

of topics, poetry, and songs allows the reader to form a literary relationship with these people, whom he calls "Somebody's Darlings." As he argues, "the more we experience what the War was *like*, the more uncomfortable we should become, if we are not depraved" (p. xiv). This was an unusual book to read, because it asks whether we really can come to understand the emotions, passions, and deeds of people who lived in the Civil War era.

In any event, Gramm has assembled an array of interesting topics. In "The Gettysburg Nobody Knows," we try to imagine Robert E. Lee, as well as others, as somebody's darling beyond what Americans saw in the movie *Gettysburg* (1993). In his chapter "American Iliad," Gramm attempts to make the case that we can only understand the Civil War in the context of "a larger world" (p. 48). He moves deftly to form literary images of the "Wilderness," both the battle and the concept. In "The Real War," he targets the famed words of Walt Whitman, showing how significant the romantic's characterization of war was and still is for historians, including the modern-day Civil War scholar James McPherson. "Nothing but Omnipotence" reminds us that there really is some truth to the old Soviet joke that while the future is certain, the past is always unpredictable. The latter half of the book is devoted to "A Soldier's Grave" and "A Soldier's Bones," which focus upon the combatant's imagination and how historians dispute the degree to which we can understand him. In "Face to Face," Gramm discusses what the generation of Civil War citizens has become for us.

This volume emphasizes the relationship between the drama of the Civil War and its results, which conjure up distinct historical features that we continue to reconceptualize and try to understand in our modern day. There is much to ponder from reading this volume, and Civil War enthusiasts would benefit greatly from taking a step away from traditional approaches to the conflict to gain the different perspective of the war offered by Gramm's selections.

Gramm's unique narrative is sure to please those looking for something beyond drums and trumpets. It is to be hoped that his poetic prose in giving a voice to the unwritten aspects of the war will attract the large reading audience *Somebody's Darling* so richly deserves.

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Building an American Identity: Pattern Book Homes & Communities, 1870–1900. By Linda E. Smeins. (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 1999. Pp. 335. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Clothbound, \$52.00; paperbound, \$24.95.)

In her book *Building an American Identity* Linda E. Smeins sets out to explore the evolution of pattern book designs for American homes in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, to examine the