Wolfgang Hochbruck. **Die Geschöpfe des Epimetheus: Veteranen, Erinnerung und die Reproduktion des amerikanischen Bürgerkriegs**. Mosaic, 39. Trier: WVT, 2011. Pb. 560pp, 7 ill. € 58.00. ISBN 978-3-86821-254-9.

In July 1866 the *Atlantic Monthly* published "The Case of George Dedlow," a story about a Civil War veteran who had lost all his limbs in the war. Writing from the perspective of the "larval creature," its author, Silas Weir Mitchell, preferred to remain anonymous. Though his tale depicted a medical impossibility, the story was inspired by an intimate knowledge of the physical and mental suffering of war veterans who had experienced amputation: the author who would later become America's most famous neurologist had been an army surgeon during the sectional conflict. Apart from giving a voice to the amputated and traumatized ex-soldiers in America's future-oriented postwar society, "The Case of George Dedlow" articulated key concerns of a nation in the process of redefining itself economically, politically, and mentally: is there a right of representation for 'lesser men?' What can be learned from a 'useless torso?' And how can he be 're-membered?'

At the time of its publication "The Case of George Dedlow" was received as an authentic first-person account rather than a piece of fiction. Yet although it was discussed widely then, it is not mentioned in Hochbruck's *Die Geschöpfe des Epimetheus*, a book that is centrally concerned with the (self-)representation of Civil War veterans as agents in a process that turned the sectional conflict into what has been called the American Iliad. In keeping with this mythical understanding of history, the book excludes a 'lesser man' like Dedlow from the outset: Hochbruck is interested in the dominant concept of the veteran that casts him as a paragon of heroic manliness rather than as a critical witness. This rhetorical figure did not inspire philosophical questions but connected postwar America to a past wholeness. A 'creature' (*Geschöpf*) of the backward-looking Greek titan Epimetheus, America's prototypical ex-soldier played a defining part in a cultural process that thrived on romantic stereotypes and figures from the Jacksonian and antebellum period(s) and helped the population in both the North and the South ignore the complexities of the sectional conflict. In light of this concept, Mitchell's narrative of the limbless Dedlow was a powerful intervention in what Hochbruck has termed the "memory gap" of the early postwar years: driven by the responsibility of the witness, the man who dictates his story against all odds reminded American readers that there was no returning to what one had been before.

Die Geschöpfe des Epimetheus is a treasure trove for any academic Civil War buff. A unique effort to analyze how Americans have remembered the war from the mid-war years until the early 1950s, it examines a complex cultural archive that includes journal articles, personal memoirs, short stories, 'serious' novels, and popular songs, but also photographs, paintings, speeches, and pamphlets. Hochbruck investigates the particular attraction of souvenirs, monuments, and battlefield parks, and shows how archives, foundations, lobbying groups, and re-enactors have played their part in a standardization process that turned historical complexities into myth. While tracing a chronological development and unraveling the multilayered historical, cultural, and economic mechanisms that turned surviving soldiers into the rhetorical figure of the veteran, it explains how institutions, individual decisions by producers of culture, and methods of distribution have shaped a dominant narrative of Amer-

ica's first modern war. By calling attention to the complex reception and production processes that transgressed the North-South divide, the book interrupts the narrative of Civil War America as that of two neatly distinguished sectional cultures. Hochbruck argues convincingly that the privileging of the former Confederacy in postwar versions of antebellum plantation romances, late-nineteenth-century literature, and twentieth-century representations such as Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* assuaged the political and cultural needs of audiences in both the former Union and in the so-called 'rebel' states: while it enabled the latter to establish the myth of the 'Lost Cause' it reconnected the former with the sentimental discourse of the antebellum South and accelerated sectional reconciliation. What Hochbruck terms the "memory gap" is of central importance for this public standardization process: after a period of relative silence, insecurity, and nostalgia, Americans established an increasingly self-assured culture of public commemoration that thrived on the cultural repertoire of the antebellum period or, in later decades, of the Spanish-American War. Cast as 'brothers in blue and grey,' veterans became part and parcel of this process that, according to Hochbruck, was based largely on denial and economic profit. At the same time, the dominant idea of what the war was about and like also left its imprint on the veterans' memories themselves, turning their published reminiscences into an ideal template for cultural productions to come.

Hochbruck is the best guide to Civil War memorial culture that one can get: he seems to know every secret of his territory, and has a story to tell about its cultural artifacts both high and low. He participates in the debate about the meaning and mechanisms of war-related memory with the passion and vigor of the academic truth-seeker. He offers amazing anecdotes, his footnotes suggest that there is much left to be seen, and he is at his best in close readings of works such as Winslow Homer's "The Veteran in a New Field," Samuel Clemens' "The Private History of a Campaign that Failed," Ulysses S. Grant's *Memoir*, or the Shaw Memorial. The book is also admirably adept at carving out inconsistencies and tensions within individual works or in their relation to the larger culture, for instance in its discussion of a memoir by a Tennessee veteran, Sam Watkins.

Hochbruck's continuous focus on the veteran invests his book with a clear focus, and fills a gap in the still relatively scarce scholarship about Civil War commemoration. There are, however, a few oversights in his fine work. In the field of American Civil War studies, two generations of female scholars (Mary E. Massey, 1966; Elizabeth Young, 1999, for instance) have explored how U.S. women writers contributed to American conceptions of the sectional conflict, Alice Fahs has gathered an amazing range of popular texts to explain what the war meant for Americans during and in the aftermath of hostilities (2001), and Kirk Savage has investigated the role of Civil War monuments in perpetuating ideologies of racial superiority. David Blight has elsewhere called attention to a public culture that projected the vision of a white, reconciled nation by marginalizing the emancipationist aspects of the Civil War (2001), and Edward Blum has reminded readers of the religious dimension of this process (2005). *Die Geschöpfe des Epimetheus* underlines Blight's findings in *Race and Reunion* but abstains from a scholarly debate with this influential work, and overlooks Blum's *Reforging the White Republic* altogether.

The book's background as a German post-Ph.D. research project ("Habilitationsschrift") accounts for both its strengths and weaknesses. It begins with a long, theoretically complex methodological section in which he tests the validity of di-

verse models of memory production, maps out the dynamics of recalling and forgetting in Paul Ricoeur's landmark work, discusses Maurice Halbwachs' model of 'social memory' together with Jan Assman's concept of memory as a public, cultural act, and suggests the pragmatic concept of "public cultural history," (33-34) which aims to describe the history of "public texts in the public realm" (35, my translation). Following Ansgar Nünning, Hochbruck upholds the difference between fiction and historiography, insists on the role of public demand in memory production, and modifies the concept of the 'culture industry' by extricating its elitist implications. This theoretical specificity is admirable and helpful as it shows the practical usefulness and limits of crucial philosophical and cultural concepts in the context of Civil War memory construction.

Unfortunately, the majority of the book's potential readership will not be able to access *Die Geschöpfe des Epimetheus*: written in German and in a long-winded style, the book is not removed far enough from its academic origins and is sometimes hard to follow. An index, along with illustrations that support Hochbruck's very convincing interpretations of visual culture, would have contributed to its structural clarity. Furthermore, the book cannot conceal the academic scholar's uneasiness vis-à-vis a cultural apparatus that feeds on sentimentality and established images to sell a flawed version of history. Thus, although *Die Geschöpfe des Epimetheus* rightly circumvents the category of experience as a bulwark of authenticity, it nevertheless insists on differentiating between 'real' veterans and someone like Walt Whitman, whom it casts as a man whose immediate experience of the war was more limited than his writings suggest. There is a somewhat indignant ring to the book when it accuses particular works of altering historical experience (like John Esten Cooke's *Surry of Eagle's Nest*), identifies seemingly "realistic" narrative strategies as appropriations of an established, war-related imagery (as with Stephen Crane), and exposes deliberate historical inaccuracies (such as those in D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*).

While *Die Geschöpfe des Epimetheus* widens the reader's understanding of the complexities of cultural processes, the sheer number of cultural productions it mentions tends to be overwhelming. What is more, the standardization process it traces so assiduously is hardly as surprising as the book seems to suggest: it is not very astonishing that producers of culture tend to become more liberal in their interpretation of the past and that the surviving veterans were reduced to the role of authenticating accessories. In analyzing the role of the war veteran as both active agent and authenticating figure, the book focuses on the defining power of particular representations and measures others against them; those others are then cast as "dissident" rather than as a defining aspect of the cultural negotiations that surrounded the figure of the veteran. Still others are not even considered "dissident" but merely seen as evidence for the diversity of early wartime memory. By focusing on dominant cultural trends instead of highlighting oppositional voices, *Die Geschöpfe des Epimetheus* seeks to intervene in a scholarly tradition that, according to Hochbruck, exaggerates the impact of popular but less influential cultural texts. Such a warning is justified in the larger context of cultural studies, yet it comes at too early a point in scholarly history of the Civil War: so far a relatively small number of scholars have recognized Civil War culture and memory as valid objects of analysis, and an overly critical stance toward certain strands in this debate risks underestimating the cultural work of texts that do not accord with established narrative patterns. Thus

when *Die Geschöpfe des Epimetheus* interprets Alcott's "The Brothers / My Contraband" as a symbolic silencing of the African-American veteran it overlooks the ideological complexity of a text that is in fact one of the most ambiguous and contradictory narratives about American race relations after Emancipation. At certain points one wishes that *Die Geschöpfe des Epimetheus* had granted more attention to gender as a central category of historical and cultural analysis. After all, the Civil War evoked a crisis of gender that preoccupied American society for decades to come. If George Dedlow's precarious dependency dramatized white men's postwar anxieties, the popular success of Sarah Emma Edmonds' account of her activities as a cross-dressed nurse, spy (white and black), and soldier challenged the normative position of white masculinity. To focus on women's commemorative activities merely as contributions to a male-centered cult of the veteran underrates the gender tensions that marked the century after the Civil War. Last but not least, Hochbruck's decision to discuss the systematic marginalization of African-Americans in the public cultural history of the war in an excursus titled "coda" does not do justice to this important aspect of veteran culture. Together with Hochbruck's suggestion that African-Americans themselves involuntarily contributed to their own cultural exclusion, the topic is provocative enough to be treated in a separate follow-up publication.

Having read veteran stories like Mitchell's "The Case of George Dedlow," Twain's satirical analogy "The Siamese Twins," Alcott's "The Brothers," or Edmonds' *Adventures of a Nurse and Spy in the Union Army*, *Die Geschöpfe des Epimetheus* left me a bit unsatisfied, since these works point toward a public cultural history far more complex than Hochbruck's work reveals. And yet his book is essential reading not only for those with an academic interest in the Civil War but especially for the many scholars of late-nineteenth-century American culture who systematically ignore the impact of the sectional conflict on this era. How deep and multifaceted this influence was may be deduced from the fact that in 1900 "The Case of George Dedlow" came out in a new edition. Speaking to his readers from a place in the far West of the country, the "stump" reminded Americans of an inner void that was a direct result of the war and was still with them: "I have so little surety of being myself that I doubt my own honesty in drawing my pension."

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