

female re-writing of the American celebration of individuality, which can be traced back to Puritan and Transcendentalist tradition.

Maria Holmgren Troy's study thoroughly examines how the issues of race, gender, and nationality interact in the particular spatio-temporal context of the house chronotope. The critic convincingly demonstrates the relative stability of this chronotope in the American literary tradition. However, she also demonstrates how the values and ideology it carries are negotiated by female protagonist-narrators in the nineteenth century and to what extent they are contested by twentieth-century narrators. Last but not least, in discussing the dialogicity of the house chronotope Holmgren Troy's study itself becomes a site where different discourses, readings, and disciplines meet, making *In the First Person and in the House* a fascinating text in its own right.

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Russell Duncan and David J. Klooster (eds), *Phantoms of a Blood-Stained Period: the Complete Civil War Writings of Ambrose Bierce*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002. xiv + 352 pp.; ISBN: 1-55849-328-X; \$19.00, paper.

Ambrose Bierce (1842-1914?) was the only major American author to have seen significant military duty in the Civil War. Some lesser writers, such as John W. De Forest, also saw action, but their standing in American literature is far lower than Bierce's. What is more, Bierce not only wrote some of the most chilling short stories about the conflict – most of them collected in *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians* (1891), later expanded as *In the Midst of Life* – but also several bracing memoirs of his own

military service, collected late in life in the 'Bits of Autobiography' section of the first volume of his *Collected Works* (1909-12).

It is a testament to the regrettable dearth of scholarly interest in Bierce that the volume under review has appeared nearly a century after Bierce's death. To be sure, one William McCann long ago assembled a volume entitled *Ambrose Bierce's Civil War* (1956), which did nothing but print, without annotation, the Civil War memoirs and many (but not all) of Bierce's stories dealing with the war; but, although it has been frequently reprinted, this book's scholarly shortcomings are plainly evident. (A more recent volume, *Shadows of Blue and Gray: The Civil War Writings of Ambrose Bierce*, edited by Brian M. Thomsen [New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 2002], is similarly the compilation of an enthusiastic amateur and not worthy of scholarly notice.)

The novel approach that Russell Duncan (associate professor of history at the University of Copenhagen) and David J. Klooster (associate professor of English at Hope College) have taken is to present Bierce's Civil War writings in chronological order, not by date of writing or publication, but by the date of the events they relate. The five substantial chapters of the book are each devoted to a single year of the war (the final chapter rather nebulously covers the period '1865 and after'), with Bierce's stories, memoirs, poems, and excerpts from journalism and letters arranged so that they simultaneously chart the course of Bierce's own military service and also, albeit perforce fragmentarily, the course of the war as a whole.

It cannot be said that the editors have done any pioneering scholarship of their own. By their own admission they are heavily indebted to recent scholarship both on the Civil War and on Bierce, including Roy Morris's biography *Ambrose Bierce: Alone in Bad Company* (1995) – itself heavily reliant upon the previous work of Carey McWilliams and Paul Fatout – and my own compilation of Bierce's *A Sole Survivor: Bits of Autobiography* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998), from which the editors have derived the fragments of journalism they include. They are so generous in acknowledging the work of David E. Schultz and myself that it would seem churlish to note that, in their sprinkling of relevant definitions from *The Devil's Dictionary* throughout the volume, they ought to have used our edition of *The Unabridged Devil's Dictionary* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000) instead of Ernest Jerome Hopkins's *The Enlarged Devil's Dictionary* (1967). Hopkins not only failed to include all the definitions that Bierce initially published in newspapers and magazines beginning as early as 1875, but also printed nearly 200 spurious definitions (none, fortunately, included in *Phantoms of a Blood-Stained Period*).

I am also not confident that the editors have a genuine grasp of the course of Bierce's literary career. They do not appear to have consulted any of the masses of uncollected journalism that Bierce wrote for such papers as the *San Francisco News Letter* (1867-72), *Fun* (1872-75), *Figaro* (1872-75), the *Argonaut* (1877-80), the *Wasp* (1881-86), the *San Francisco Examiner* (1887-1906), and *Cosmopolitan* (1905-09), not to men-

tion stray writings in other newspapers and magazines. Accordingly, their use of the word 'complete' is a bit problematical. Having read all of Bierce's journalism, I can say that they have left out nothing of consequence; but there are any number of additional random paragraphs about the Civil War that could have been culled from this immense body of work.

It is not entirely clear why Bierce began writing of the Civil War in the 1880s, nearly two decades after the end of the conflict. To be sure, even someone who enjoyed the fighting as much as Bierce evidently did – however much it may have colored his views on the folly, hypocrisy, and general cussedness of the human race – would have required a certain gestation period to digest the mingled horror and ecstasy of war and transmute it into literature; but in Bierce's case, certain more mundane factors may have been involved. The editors state that Bierce 'suddenly' began writing of the war in the 1880s, and go on to suggest that the series of war memoirs by generals appearing in the *Century Magazine* in 1884-87 had some influence in turning Bierce's attention to his soldier days. But I also believe that being freed of the onus of being the virtual editor of the *Wasp* and the very free hand that William Randolph Hearst gave him as a columnist for the *Examiner* finally gave Bierce the leisure to contemplate his war experiences and distill them in both fiction and memoirs. (I may add here my recent discovery – not included in my bibliography of Bierce [*Ambrose Bierce: An Annotated Bibliography of Primary Sources* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999)] – that Bierce's finest Civil War memoir, 'What I Saw of Shiloh,' first appeared, surprisingly, in the *London Sketch Book* for April and May 1874. It was then reprinted, with revisions, in the *Wasp* [23 and 30 December 1881] and then in 'Bits of Autobiography.')

The editors also state that 'By the time Bierce turned to writing war stories, he had already written a large number of ghost stories and Poe-like investigations of the mysterious, marvelous, and miraculous workings of the human psyche.' Well, not exactly. It is a remarkable fact that the great majority of the contents of both *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians* and Bierce's landmark collection of supernatural tales, *Can Such Things Be?* (1893), first appeared in the *Examiner* in the six-year period 1887-92. It was a period of remarkable fecundity for Bierce, and war stories and supernatural tales appeared pretty much in a heterogeneous mix. Moreover, the four brief tales in which Bierce distinctively combines supernaturalism with a Civil War backdrop all appeared quite late in his career, in *Cosmopolitan*: 'A Man with Two Lives' (October 1905), 'Three and Three Are One' (October 1908), 'A Baffled Ambuscade' (November 1906), and 'Two Military Executions' (October 1906). ('A Man with Two Lives' is not included in *Phantoms*, presumably because it takes place in 1866; but it could have fit as well into the '1865 and after' chapter as any of the other items therein.)

The editors have ingeniously placed Bierce's war stories in juxtaposition with the memoirs, making plain the intimate connection between the two. In some cases it must have been difficult to place the stories in the proper context of the war, since several of them are by design very spare in their citation of external events. Duncan and

Klooster situate Bierce's most famous story, 'An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge,' in the 1862 sequence, presumably because of its mention of 'the fall of Corinth' (May 29, 1862). They could have gained additional evidence from the original appearance of the story (*San Francisco Examiner*, July 13, 1890), whose opening sentence reads: 'One morning in the summer of 1862 a man stood upon a railroad bridge ...' Bierce later revised this to read merely: 'A man stood upon a railroad bridge ...' This kind of revision – which makes the tale less of an historical artifact and more a timeless exploration of the psyche – is typical of Bierce's revisory techniques for his Civil War stories. The editors have bypassed the opportunity to annotate the stories extensively; indeed, the annotation throughout the volume is fairly light. This is doubly unfortunate, since the only other annotated edition of Bierce's fiction – Tom Quirk's edition of *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians and Other Stories* (New York: Penguin, 2000) – is similarly skimpy.

This volume cannot be said to represent any significant advance in Bierce scholarship. But it is evident that the editors' purpose was not to appeal merely to the tiny number of Bierce scholars – who can, almost literally, be counted on the fingers of one hand – or even to Civil War scholars, but to that body of individuals whose demise has been much exaggerated: the literate general reader. For the reader who requires something a bit more substantial than a novelization of the latest blockbuster action film but who finds little nourishment in the often impenetrable, jargon-laden prose of academic literary critics, *Phantoms of a Blood-Stained Period* is tailor-made. It provides just enough scholarly guidance (in the form of an extensive introduction, scattered notes, and a useful glossary of military terms) for the reader interested in pursuing Bierce's march through the blood-stained battlefields of America's most searing conflict and the grim, brooding, despairing, yet exhilarating literature he produced in the decades following it. Perhaps a comprehensive and sympathetic account of what the Civil War meant to Bierce has yet to be written; but whenever it is written, this book will provide invaluable raw materials.

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