



This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War

By Drew Gilpin Faust

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This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War By Drew Gilpin Faust

An illuminating study of the American struggle to comprehend the meaning and practicalities of death in the face of the unprecedented carnage of the Civil War.

During the war, approximately 620,000 soldiers lost their lives. An equivalent proportion of today's population would be six million. *This Republic of Suffering* explores the impact of this enormous death toll from every angle: material, political, intellectual, and spiritual. The eminent historian Drew Gilpin Faust delineates the ways death changed not only individual lives but the life of the nation and its understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. She describes how survivors mourned and how a deeply religious culture struggled to reconcile the slaughter with its belief in a benevolent God, pondered who should die and under what circumstances, and reconceived its understanding of life after death.

Faust details the logistical challenges involved when thousands were left dead, many with their identities unknown, on the fields of places like Bull Run, Shiloh, Antietam, and Gettysburg. She chronicles the efforts to identify, reclaim, preserve, and bury battlefield dead, the resulting rise of undertaking as a profession, the first widespread use of embalming, the gradual emergence of military graves registration procedures, the development of a federal system of national cemeteries for Union dead, and the creation of private cemeteries in the South that contributed to the cult of the Lost Cause. She shows, too, how the war victimized civilians through violence that extended beyond battlefields—from disease, displacement, hardships, shortages, emotional wounds, and conflicts connected to the disintegration of slavery.

Throughout, the voices of soldiers and their families, of statesmen, generals, preachers, poets, surgeons, and nurses, of northerners and southerners, slaveholders and freedpeople, of the most exalted and the most humble are brought together to give us a vivid understanding of the Civil War's most fundamental and widely shared reality.

Were he alive today, *This Republic of Suffering* would compel Walt Whitman to abandon his certainty that the “real war will never get in the books.”

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Download and Read Free Online *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* By Drew Gilpin Faust

Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Battle is the dramatic centerpiece of Civil War history; this penetrating study looks instead at the somber aftermath. Historian Faust (*Mothers of Invention*) notes that the Civil War introduced America to death on an unprecedented scale and of an unnatural kind—grisly, random and often ending in an unmarked grave far from home. She surveys the many ways the Civil War generation coped with the trauma: the concept of the Good Death—conscious, composed and at peace with God; the rise of the embalming industry; the sad attempts of the bereaved to get confirmation of a soldier's death, sometimes years after war's end; the swelling national movement to recover soldiers' remains and give them decent burials; the intellectual quest to find meaning—or its absence—in the war's carnage. In the process, she contends, the nation invented the modern culture of reverence for military death and used the fallen to elaborate its new concern for individual rights. Faust exhumes a wealth of material—condolence letters, funeral sermons, ads for mourning dresses, poems and stories from Civil War–era writers—to flesh out her lucid account. The result is an insightful, often moving portrait of a people torn by grief. Photos. (Jan. 10)

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Those who fret over the state of American universities will embrace this history by Drew Gilpin Faust. Academics appreciate how Faust explains so many social and cultural changes by recentering the story of the war on its massive toll in lives: the estimated 2 percent who died, or 620,000, would be equivalent to 6 million today. She also breaks new ground by reexamining the relationship of the war to modern institutions like the welfare state. Yet Faust constructs *This Republic of Suffering* in a way that will appeal to every reader—from the Civil War buff to the casual nonfiction reader. Some critics were a little queasy about the book's level of detail, both in describing death and the lives of its victims. But as more than one reviewer pointed out, for a nation at war, such writing and such reading are a duty.

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Review

Praise for Drew Gilpin Faust's *This Republic of Suffering*

“Extraordinary . . . profoundly moving.” —Geoffrey C. Ward, *The New York Times Book Review*

“It's a shattering history of the war, focusing exclusively on death and dying—how Americans prepared for death, imagined it, risked it, endured it and worked to understand it.” —Jon Wiener, *LA Times Book Review*

“Faust is particularly qualified to identify and explain the complex social and political implications of the changing nature of death as America's internecine conflict attained its full dimensions.” —Ian Garrick Mason, *San Francisco Chronicle*

“Faust excels in explaining the era's violent rhetoric and what went on in people's heads.” —David Waldstreicher, *The Boston Globe*

“*This Republic of Suffering* is one of those groundbreaking histories in which a crucial piece of the past, previously overlooked or misunderstood, suddenly clicks into focus.” —Malcolm Jones, *Newsweek*

“Faust is a first-rate scholar who yanks aside the usual veil of history to look narrowly at life's intimate level for new perspectives from the past. She focuses on ordinary lives under extreme duress, which makes for

compelling reading.” —Don Oldenburg, *USA Today*

“The beauty and originality of Faust’s book is that it shows how thoroughly the work of mourning became the business of capitalism, merchandised throughout a society.” —Adam Gopnik, *The New Yorker*

“Fascinating, innovative . . . Faust returns to the task of stripping from war any lingering romanticism, nobility or social purpose.” —Eric Foner, *The Nation*

“Eloquent and imaginative, Ms. Faust’s book takes a grim topic—how America coped with the massive death toll from the Civil War—and makes it fresh and exciting. . . . [A] widely and justly praised scholarly history.” —Adam Begley, *New York Observer*

“*This Republic of Suffering* is a harrowing but fascinating read.” —Marjorie Kehe, *The Christian Science Monitor*

“If you read only one book on the Civil War this year, make it this one.” —Kevin M. Levin, *American History*

“Having always kept the war in her own scholarly sights, Faust offers a compelling reassertion of its basic importance in society and politics alike.” —Richard Wrightman Fox, *Slate*

“[An] astonishing new book.” —Adam Kirsch, *The New York Sun*

“A moving work of social history, detailing how the Civil War changed perceptions and behaviors about death. . . . An illuminating study.” —*Kirkus*

“Penetrating . . . Faust exhumes a wealth of material . . . to flesh out her lucid account. The result is an insightful, often moving portrait of a people torn by grief.” —*Publishers Weekly*

“No other generation of Americans has encountered death on the scale of the Civil War generation. *This Republic of Suffering* is the first study of how people in both North and South coped with this uniquely devastating experience. How did they mourn the dead, honor their sacrifice, commemorate their memory, and help their families? Drew Gilpin Faust’s powerful and moving answers to these questions provide an important new dimension to our understanding of the Civil War.”

—James M. McPherson, author of *This Mighty Scourge: Perspectives on the Civil War*

“During the Civil War, death reached into the world of the living in ways unknown to Americans before or since. Drew Gilpin Faust follows the carnage in all its aspects, on and off the battlefield. Timely, poignant, and profound, *This Republic of Suffering* does the real work of history, taking us beyond the statistics until we see the faces of the fallen and understand what it was to live amid such loss and pain.”

—Tony Horowitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War*

“Drew Gilpin Faust has used her analytical and descriptive gifts to explore how men and women of the Civil War generation came to terms with the conflict’s staggering human toll. Everyone who reads this book will come away with a far better understanding of why the war profoundly affected those who lived through it.”

—Gary W. Gallagher, author of *The Confederate War*

“Drew Faust’s brilliant new book, *This Republic of Suffering*, builds profoundly from the opening discussion of the Christian ideal of the good death to the last harrowing chapters on the exhumation, partial identification, reburial and counting of the Union dead. In the end one can only conclude, as the author does, that the meaning of the Civil War lies in death itself: in its scale, relentlessness, and enduring cultural effects. This is a powerful and moving book about our nation’s defining historical encounter with the universal human experience of death.”

—Stephanie McCurry, author of *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the political culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country*

“Whitman was wrong; the real war did get into the books. This is a wise, informed, troubling book. *This Republic of Suffering* demolishes sentimentalism for the Civil War in a masterpiece of research, realism, and originality.”

—David W. Blight, author of *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Alvarez:

The book *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* make you feel enjoy for your spare time. You should use to make your capable a lot more increase. Book can to be your best friend when you getting strain or having big problem together with your subject. If you can make looking at a book *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* being your habit, you can get a lot more advantages, like add your personal capable, increase your knowledge about many or all subjects. You are able to know everything if you like available and read a guide *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. Kinds of book are several. It means that, science reserve or encyclopedia or other individuals. So , how do you think about this book?

Milford Garrett:

Book is to be different for each grade. Book for children till adult are different content. As you may know that book is very important normally. The book *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* was making you to know about other understanding and of course you can take more information. It is quite advantages for you. The e-book *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* is not only giving you far more new information but also to be your friend when you really feel bored. You can spend your personal spend time to read your guide. Try to make relationship with the book *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. You never truly feel lose out for everything when you read some books.

Crystal Dewitt:

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Samuel Freeman:

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