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The Aftermath of Sorrow: White Women's Search for Their Lost Cause, 1861 1917

Karen Aviva Rubin
THE AFTERMATH OF SORROW: WHITE WOMEN’S SEARCH FOR THEIR
LOST CAUSE, 1861 – 1917

By

KAREN AVIVA RUBIN

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The members of the Committee approve the dissertation of Karen A. Rubin defended on June 11, 2007.

Elna C. Green  
Professor Directing Dissertation

Bruce Bickley  
Outside Committee Member

Suzanne Sinke  
Committee Member

Jonathan Grant  
Committee Member

Valerie Jean Conner  
Committee Member

The Office of Graduate Studies has verified and approved the above named committee members.
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ABSTRACT

Scholars have not explored in depth the subject of women’s grief as a result of their losses in the Civil War. The loss experienced by southern white women of their husbands and sons was compounded by their sense that they had also lost a culture based upon white male protection of white female virtue. If their soldiers were dead and their cause was dead, then they had reason also to mourn their loss of a privileged social status that held them sacred by virtue of their gender and race. These women were at once responsible for administering the rituals of grief and mourning as well as transmitting cultural values to children in the home. Beset by anger and bitterness at the loss of their families, their homes, their incomes, and, significantly, the white male protection they had been assured they required—yet circumscribed by the societal boundaries of women’s proper activity—white women after the Civil War sought to rebuild their lives and their social fabric. Women participated in memorialization groups and organizations such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy. But perhaps more significantly, the trauma of the war’s aftermath of these women expressed itself in new cultural rituals and in fanning the embers of race hatred in the home and in the culture at large. This dissertation seeks to move beyond describing women’s memorialization activities and analyzing violent male culture of the New South to focus instead on the activities of women to reestablish their privileged status in the aftermath of war and the end of slavery.

The performed culture of grief and mourning had a specific meaning for women in the post-Civil War South. White southern women had to translate the defeat of their husbands and their institutions into “cultural victory.” The theme of death and rebirth is the connecting matter between the Old South and New. Women in the New South had to reconstruct their habits, customs, and behaviors in the face of a world that had suddenly rejected their cultural foundations utterly. Because of this rejection and the trauma of war, women engaged in a campaign of vindication for their social position and their Lost Cause that was both highly visible and, at the same time, intensely private.

The campaign was waged in the activism of memorial clubs, but also in the solitude of homes across the South where women kept written records of their grief. Women who did not have the relative affluence to head voluntary associations could keep a journal or scrapbook. Those who did not have journals or scrapbooks wrote letters expressing sentiments similar to those found in the most diligently kept and ornamented keepsake diaries. Most southern white
women were participants in the culture of racial hierarchy that exalted all whites, and relied on white men’s protection of white women.

The entire nation had suffered an unparalleled shock, but grief from war had a specific effect in the South that it did not have in the North. The patterns of violence and fear in the post Civil War South were a result of their unique experience of military, economic, and cultural defeat. Women used writing as a catharsis and as a place to keep their pain undiminished over generations. Many women wrote in their diaries that they specifically intended to convey to the coming generations their feelings of bitterness unhealed by time. They were afraid that if women failed in the task of training children about the rightness of the Lost Cause, that southern culture, and white supremacy, might disappear.

A few affluent club women made careers from cultivating the Lost Cause ideology. Katie Behan, wife of New Orleans mayor and head of the local White Citizens’ League, and Rebecca Latimer Felton, columnist and wife of a Democratic Untied States Senator from Georgia, embraced the racial views of their husbands, but they also worked zealously in behalf of white supremacy themselves. Kate Behan was the president of the Confederated Southern Memorial Association and was a brilliant fundraiser for the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Felton was an outspoken suffrage supporter and was appointed as the first woman United States Senator upon her husband’s death, although she served for only one day.1 These women were certainly exceptional, but they exerted cultural hegemony. They directly influenced groups of club women and those who heard them spoke or who read their public writing. They also indirectly supported women across the economic spectrum who were engaging in the very political activity of training children in homes across the South to support the Lost Cause and racial hierarchy. For Southern white women, this cultural power was tied up in the origins of the “Lost Cause Myth” that stemmed from the shock and loss of white social and economic dominance during and after the Civil War. Southern women actively engaged in supporting a system of racial violence and hate by keeping alive the trauma of war in the violent and vindictive post-war period by teaching these values to children.

1 David Parker, “Rebecca Felton and the Country Home” (unpublished article, Kennesaw State University). See also Lee Ann Whites, “Rebecca Latimer Felton and the Problem of ‘Protection,’” in *Visible Women: New Essays on American Activism*, eds. Nancy A. Hewitt and Suzanne Lebsock (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 41-61, for the paradox of Felton’s very public, political life juxtaposed with her exhortations to southern women to fulfill the traditional southern gender expectations of wife and mother.
INTRODUCTION

The total number of war dead for the Civil War outstripped the American war dead in World War II by 150 percent. Although antebellum Americans were intimately familiar with death, Americans could not prepare for the volume and proximity of gut-wrenching carnage that visited communities nearby the battlefields. Photography brought the horrors of war to people who lived far from it, and even when news was hard to come by, accounts of battle deaths reached every corner of America. Families were rent apart when brothers took up arms for opposing armies, and the defeated South suffered a destruction of faith in their hallowed political principles in addition to destruction of the landscape and bodies that sustained the South.

It was the sheer volume of these dead bodies, however, that violated Victorian American notions of the rituals of mourning and death. Soldiers and families on both sides worried about the indignities that would be visited upon men’s bodies in case their corpses should fall into enemy hands. Pre-war rituals for the dead might be approximated near hospitals with attendance space set aside for cemeteries, but the chaos and disorder that resulted from corpses and limbs as yet unburied created a sight devoid of solemnity and ritual. Without an ability to rely upon traditional cultural rituals of mourning, Americans had to make meaning out of violent death by leaning heavily upon the religion of nationalism that helped grieving Americans re-conceptualize bodily sacrifice not in terms of earthly pain and suffering, but in terms of cosmic conflict that symbolized sacrifice in a war between good and evil.

There was a sharp disconnect, however, between the romantic rhetoric that many desperately clung to in their times of grief, and the task in front of them of confronting the result of a modern war that had found its way to the very doorsteps of southern homes. In the Civil War South, women frequently found their homes turned into makeshift hospitals, surgery rooms, and morgues. Those who had not been driven from their homes by war saw their property littered with war casualties.

In nineteenth-century America, women possessed the primary responsibility for the rituals of grief and mourning. In addition to managing their own feelings of loss and bereavement, women frequently had to manage the physical manifestations of death and war: identifying the dead, recovering bodies, cleaning and dressing them, arranging mourning clothes for the living, and making arrangements for a funeral and the body’s burial. During the war,

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2 The total number of Civil War casualties is generally placed at 600,000 while WWII claimed 400,000 American lives. Excluding Vietnam, the Civil War sustained a larger number of dead than the sum of all American wars.
women increasingly were surrounded by the chores associated with death and dismemberment as the violence was brought into their parlors in a very literal sense.

Three out of every five southern white men of military age served the Confederate Army. According to E. Merton Coulter, “[The South] was forced to skip almost a generation of young men, dead of disease, killed in battle, or wounded into economic incompetency . . . The wounded came back generally with the loss of an arm or leg. In some communities, at least a third of the veterans lacked a limb. Mississippi spent, in 1866, a fifth of her revenues on artificial arms and legs.”

Southern white women relied upon men’s productivity. Dead or battle-scarred men could not fulfill their promise to protect and provide for women.

Many of the men who did return from combat had been profoundly changed—they were traumatized, crippled, and otherwise devastated by their experiences, making postwar adjustment especially difficult for wives and families. Southern white women during and after the Civil War were encumbered by the strain of attempting to reclaim their privilege in a postwar milieu of defeat. They lost husbands, homes, and incomes. They were dispossessed of their slave labor, their daily routines, and their household items. When they buried their husbands and sons, they also buried their hope for economic stability, social stability, and the protections they believed they were promised by virtue of their race and sex.

Elite southern white women had largely supported the war efforts of their husbands and sons based upon cultural ideas of white male chivalry that protected – and justified – their feminine virtues. These ideals were subsequently lost with the defeat of the Confederacy and the deaths of the thousands of white men upon whom the virtue of white women had been pinned. Their defeat also threatened southern ideals of an agrarian lifestyle based on hierarchy. All Americans were forced to confront the birth of modern warfare during the Civil War, which foretold the modern scourge of meaninglessness and equality in the obscurity of mass death. In the South, however, white women faced the awesome task of confronting not only the physical death of their beloved protectors, but also the metaphorical death of an exalted feminine supremacy. This combined physical and cultural death on a massive scale produced women who were disillusioned and ready to support white supremacy in order to recover their promised social protection. White women expressed their grief ritually in journals and diaries and created a culture of “aggressive mourning” through publishing nostalgic war memoirs and engaging in memorial work that contributed to a culture of violent white supremacy.

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Southern women suffered a complex trauma. Their homes, the locus of women’s power, were frequently destroyed or physically transformed into hospitals or supply depots for war, symbols of death and destruction. Exploring the historical after-effect of wars on the thoughts and behavior not only on combatants, but also on women, is important because women often have been intensely involved in the war on the home-front. Women in the nineteenth century also were instrumental in shaping memory by writing, by raising monuments, and by keeping a vigilant watch on the history children learned about the South. But because these women were so profoundly affected by the war itself, because southern women crafted a culture of grief and were unable to accept the loss of white supremacy, the work they did to “glorify” the South materially supported Klan-type violence that swept the South after Reconstruction, and prepared children to support white supremacist causes, an influence scholars have yet to analyze.

The trauma of the war caused this kind of “bad mourning” by which I mean an inability to accept radically changed circumstances and a compulsion to romanticize life before the trauma of war, and the soldiers who died that awful conflict. Southern women’s writing reveals that the processes of moving beyond grief – denial, shock, anger – were not temporary states of mind. Through writing, women remained in protracted states of denial, shock, and anger, and through a culture of grief that women’s groups created to envelope the South, this state of “bad mourning” was transferred to the children and grandchildren of the Civil War. Historians have defined the personal trauma of war, variously referred to as battle neuroses, shell shock, and post-traumatic stress, as a “chronic and persisting fear generated by particular contexts of war.”

Southern women experienced this extreme emotional stress as they tried to provide for their children and themselves, while the blockade literally starved the South. In cities like Charleston that were under siege for the war’s duration, daily stress from troop movements and shelling added layers of worry to women already concerned about getting home-made supplies to their men at the front. Women feared not only hunger, but also they feared death, and they feared a future dominated by defeat.

The pervasive, deep-seated apprehension about a new hierarchy they feared the victors would impose terrified southern men and women alike. Women were equally vested in a southern victory, but by and large were rendered impotent to help the South win. What southern women could do, however, was lend their emotional support to the cause and help assuage the sting of defeat by enacting social rituals that indicated that the southern cause and southern men

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did not lose. Southern women filled letters and diaries and scrapbooks with poetry and reminiscences that reveal their genuine worry about what would become of their “place” in a defeated South. This written expression did not help women work through their fears and uncertainties; instead, this ritualistic repetition of their anger and disbelief that the cause was dead reinforced their discontent. Together with the cultural rituals of memorial-making and story-telling, these women were instrumental in fueling a culture of race blame and sectional hatred that lasted generations and fed violence. Southern women were successful in the fight to reestablish white supremacy in their country.

The impetus to bolster racial tensions came from white women’s trauma from the aftermath of war. Southern white women were angry not only about the fatal blows to white supremacy, but also they were angry about the death of their expectations for high status which had depended on slavery. Many southern white women’s aspirations for a life of leisure died with emancipation. Women who never enjoyed the ideal of female gentility and leisure aspired to gentility. Like women who truly were elite, women who could only idealize the plantation and slave-owning gentry had their future plans irrevocably altered alongside the gentry when the institution of slavery became a casualty of war. Non-elite white women often relied upon white supremacy as the only sort of social supremacy that southern culture permitted them. In writings by elite and non-elite women, the tenor of their language and rhetoric about race and the activities glorifying the Lost Cause became increasingly aggressive as economic and social pressures heightened.

This southern fixation on race was not limited, of course, to women, nor did it emerge only after the war was over. The relationship between blacks and whites in the Old South was made more complex by the fear-mongering of white southerners for the purpose of controlling black labor. Southern white women had themselves been conditioned by this intentional propaganda to fear men, especially black men, but also men with “black” sympathies – northern men who were prepared to sacrifice their lives to overthrow the system of race control in the South on which southern white women’s leisure depended. This kind of fear was intensified when Yankee troops invaded the homes of white women in the South, heaping upon them all manner of indignity and challenging their faith that their claim to “southern womanhood” would protect them upon their pedestal.

But women embraced this fear for their “virtue” that the propagandists had created and this, mixed with grief and anger about the Lost Cause, prompted Southern white women to
engage in bad mourning – itself a practice of fear-mongering – by recounting and enshrining their wartime experiences (even generations later) and conflating Yankees and blacks into one omnipotent enemy. Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas burst forth,

I must confess to you my journal that I do most heartily dispise Yankees, Negroes and everything connected with them. The theme has been sung in my hearing until it is a perfect abomination -- I positively instinctively shut my ears when I hear the hated subject mentioned and right gladly would I be willing never to place my eyes upon another as long as I live. Everything is entirely reversed. I feel no interest in them whatever and hope I never will.5

Women easily substituted a black beast for a Yankee beast in their formulaic mourning rituals that were expressed privately in writing. As an example of how women felt angry about their vulnerability at home, Cornelia Peake McDonald in Winchester, Virginia, “felt as if [she] should choke with anger and mortification” upon the arrival of the Union army, and when troops came in her home she “felt impelled to resent [the soldiers’] intrusion with the greatest scorn.”6 This resentment and anger about the lost war and the South’s future prospects dominated Peake’s diary.

White southern women, whether dwelling on the past or denouncing the present, rarely seemed to reconcile their feelings or move beyond bad mourning. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton remarked after a visit to McDonald’s hometown, “The men are all in the army, and the women are the devil.”7 He may have made this remark because he had heard the comments of several of Winchester’s Confederate women, like Kate Sperry who wrote on March 28, 1862, “Old Seward and Staunton – Sec of State and Sec of War – came this evening to visit us and the battlefield; the ‘old rips’ – to think our soil should ever be desecrated by the tread of such black-hearted villians!”8

This repetition of the injustice of postwar realities fed a cycle of discontent and blame, and white women targeted Yankees and blacks with equal venom as the harbingers of evil. According to women’s diaries during the war, the presence of representatives of the “black” North in their homes signaled a violation like the death of the Confederate ideal of racial hierarchy. After the war, this fear remained and intensified as the southern states faced the

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7 http://feeds.feedburner.com/blogspot/WlqT
complexities of political, social, and economic reconstruction. The lingering racial animosity is an example of the “terrors humans have made for themselves” in history that, in the case of the South, was layered upon the trauma of the war and its aftermath.\textsuperscript{9} Southern women chose this topic to write about, in some cases, to the virtual exclusion of all others. Some women were impelled by postwar “injustice” to act publicly by joining memorial societies – virtual public mourning clubs. Women with less access to club work continued to use their diaries and scrapbooks as a repository for these feelings of outrage, and they dedicated a great deal of time to revisiting the past.

Even whites without an immediate vested economic interest in race hate still saw the social value of the popular postwar Lost Cause propaganda. For the vast majority of southern whites who did not own slaves, their support of the war for slavery was based on recognition of the position slaves served in the social hierarchy of the South. When slaves claimed personhood, the cultural foundations of the South shook. Non-slaveholding white southerners were just as bereft of the loss of racial hierarchy as slave owners were of the physical loss of their slaves. In the southern social hierarchy, slavery bolstered the claim that white southern culture protected white women’s virtue from the feared depredations of black men. Southern men and women alike were motivated toward race hate because of their deep-seated fear that the end of the Confederacy meant the end of that protection. And women – planters’ wives or tenants’ wives – wrote in similar terms about racial challenges to their position.

Southerners valued ritual, and the post Civil War rituals – the rituals of commemoration and retribution –were intensely laden with meaning and symbolism. Southern violence is primarily associated with the physical violence of men, and in \textit{Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920} (1990), historian Ted Ownby examined the male culture of violence in an overtly religious South in the uncertain times after the Civil War. Karen Cox demonstrated that southern women embraced ritual and expressed grief through the United Daughters of the Confederacy’s efforts at erecting memorials to Confederate soldiers in her book \textit{Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture} (2003). Cox argues that white southern women were the standard bearers of the Lost Cause myth that was based upon white supremacy and mourning for the “slavery days.” As the UDC was transformed into “one of the most socially and politically effective

\textsuperscript{9} Leed, “Fateful Memories,” 94.
organizations in the region,” it promoted stasis; it was a “movement about vindication, as well as memorialization.”

The process of remembering the loss of the Civil War was both necessary and painful for those who took up the task. As one psychoanalyst notes, “Memory, and the reconstruction of histories, are so important . . . because they are our ordinary way of talking about our primal, irritating relationship to loss. People may die and be remembered; but they only disappear when they are completely forgotten, when no one ever uses their name.”

Southerners were afraid that if their cause “disappeared” because it was not kept alive through memory, then the white southern claim to social and economic privilege – and white women’s claim to protection against attacks on their “virtue” – would similarly disappear. A granite monument defied the decomposition of the earthly body and made it less likely that the nation would allow the Lost Cause to fade completely. “Dixie’s Daughters” preserved a sturdy “Confederate culture” that changed Confederate “defeat into a . . . cultural victory” for all southerners willing to believe.

Snatching a cultural victory from the jaws of military defeat was necessary emotional recompense for the trauma of war. The “culture of death” that pervaded the South after the war was what southerners, and southern women in particular, faced when the guns fell silent. Southern women responded to the Confederate loss with a revised view of history: women’s private writings and public memory crafting eschew loss and defeat and claim a victory for white southern men that they were denied in battle.

In an effort to reestablish an antebellum social system, whites used cultural coercion – that is, they re-established white supremacy in lieu of slavery – to control blacks’ independence. In this culture of hostility – when customary efforts at social control proved insufficient to compel blacks’ obedience – southerners created a culture of violence towards blacks. Women contributed to the race hostility through the repetition of the catechism of victimization of the prostrate South. These ruminations at once confirmed for the white South that the fight was not fair, and given different circumstances, they certainly would have won, and helped the white South feel less out of control by denying that the racial order had changed. By keeping the hero poems and war stories alive, women ensured that a generation of white southerners who had never known war would nurse the same emotional wounds, and would also attempt to “vindicate” the Confederate past that Confederate mothers were teaching.

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11 Adam Phillips, Darwin’s Worms (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 125.
12 Cox, Dixie’s Daughters, 1.
Women’s participation in the violence that swept the South was frequently less visible than the public violence of night riding and lynching. Public violence, however, is not possible without the support of the larger white community, including women. White southern women had a reputation for their sharp tongues and devoted opinions. When the ideas of white supremacy were cultivated carefully within southern homes by southern women, their actions were an essential component of the ideological underpinnings of racial superiority. One ex-slave remembered that his Mistress was “meaner than Old Marster, she was,” and although the master had four sisters who were slave owners themselves, “they wasn’t bad to them like our Old Marster and Missus . . . but they never dispute none with their brother about how mean he treat his slaves.”

According to Robert Falls, these women were complicit in his Master’s ill treatment of blacks. Directly or indirectly, white women supported racial violence. Falls pointed out that the overseer committed violence against field hands, but that “The Marster and Missus did hit at de house.”

There are records of some instances of women lashing out at blacks. Young Susan Bradford remembered the first time she hit a recently freed slave. “I ought to be ashamed of myself and yet I am afraid I am not. For the first time in all my life, I have laid hands in violence upon a negro.” As a group of young negroes approached the house, they were singing “Hang Jeff Davis from a sour Apple Tree” to the tune of John Brown’s Body, and she took a mule whip and rushed the crowd of adolescents, sending them screaming and scattering. She said, “I would have followed up the victory,” but it was dark and she didn’t know how big the crowd might be. She recalled, “It amused the family to think for nineteen years I had lived on the plantation and never before had I struck a negro.” There was apparently no censure meted out for her response; indeed the family was amused that striking a black person in anger was a novel experience for her.

Southern women were instrumental in cultivating and participating in a hostile racial environment in an effort to reclaim some status in a world where “bottom rail was now on top.” Some women were so angry at losing protection for their virtue and their southern culture of white supremacy that they attempted to dominate southern culture with both monuments and a public and private culture of violence. The generation of men and women who were not raised

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14 Ibid.
in the slave-holding South mourned more grievously than even their parents had for the mythical lifestyle that white supremacy supposedly provided to the dominant class.

Examining the generation of southerners who learned about the Civil War only through stories, but responded to the aftermath of war through extreme violence, Joel Williamson in *A Rage for Order: Black/White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* argues that, “The ultimate in studied violence against black people, death by lynching, had to wait for a new generation of young adults to grow to adulthood. Like the ‘new Negro,’ perhaps the ‘new whites’ had not enjoyed the ‘civilizing’ effects of slavery.”

But this new generation inherited the loss of their mothers and fathers. This new generation read the “southern histories” published by Ladies’ Memorial Associations, listened to the stories of the indignities foisted upon their kin by Sherman’s army, and took up the task of keeping these fires of loss alive. They added to the Lost Cause myth their own insecurities in the postwar world, away from Yankee attacks on the “southern way of life” and focused most of the venom of their attacks on the more vulnerable “victors” of the war, southern blacks, the more visible threat to southern manhood, womanhood, and home.

Gaines Foster, in *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865–1913*, argues that the activities of postwar Confederate organizations helped southerners come to terms with defeat. He suggests that southerners as a group “were far too realistic to let bitter memories get in the way of rebuilding their society.”

He suggests that “the rituals and rhetoric” groups such as the United Confederate Veterans “eased the region’s passage through a particularly difficult period of social change.” But it was the rhetoric and actions of the UCV, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and other groups whose raison d’être was glorifying a devastating conflict that created a platform for the continuation of the belief that racial hierarchy would rise again. Foster argues that postwar southerners had entirely jettisoned the idea of slavery and of a separate slave nation. The dramatic spike in racial violence was decades removed from the capitulation of the Confederacy, but the acts of violence were committed by a generation raised with history books written by the memorialization societies, in which the war and white supremacy were glorified. White supremacy was an essential component in reestablishing Democratic political control over the South, and white

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18 Ibid., 6.
supremacy was also an essential component of southern history texts which exhorted all “true” southerners to reassert their “rightful” place in southern society at the top by putting the “bottom rail” back on the bottom.

Women’s memorializing activities kept the Lost Cause and the trauma of defeat alive in the sense that “repetition builds memory . . . what is not repeated is quickly forgotten.” According to an historian of remembering the trauma of war, “there is much evidence that memory is not a reproduction of experience in mental images but a product of construction through repetition of images, words, communication.”

In other words, traumatic “memory” of the war and the consequent fear this produced was constructed and handed down to those who had not actually experienced it, in part by the enthusiastic efforts of women’s memorialization activities and history keeping. Eric Leed argues that “[m]any psychic victims of military events suffer from continuity, not discontinuity . . . their problem is an inability to establish the discontinuity creative of a ‘past,’ the place where Westerners put their finished matters so that they may be taken out and used when needed as cautions, examples, models.”

Many southerners continued to dwell upon the past and attempted to recast it into a less painful defeat by perpetuating the myth of the “Lost Cause.” The paradigm of southern honor required an explanation of defeat that blamed a group other than Confederate men. Since vulnerability to enemies was so anathema to the southern honor code, men and women alike were interested in casting Confederates as virile and as winners. The boasts of southern men and women contended that Confederates would shoot ten “Yanks” for every “Reb,” and that these virile protectors would naturally protect white women from violation. It is not surprising then that instead of blaming the exploitative hierarchy that the South rested upon when “Rebs” died horrifically in war and when white women did feel their homes violated, that white southerners – men and women alike – blamed blacks and the “black” North for their troubles.

Charles Joyner writes in an article entitled, “Forget, Hell!” that the South created, in Robert Penn Warren’s phrase, “The Great Alibi,” with which “the South explained, condoned, and transmitted defeat into victory, defects into virtues, and ignorance into divine revelation.” By crafting this southern story, the defeated could turn the world aright again. But “the Great Alibi,” Joyner pointed out, “required mythmakers.”

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19 Leed, “Fateful Memories,” 89.
20 Ibid., 87.
The southern male culture of violence in the New South, so expertly described in Ten
Ownby’s *Subduing Satan*, extended to, and was promoted by, women’s postwar culture.
Postwar violence toward Union troops and blacks was a result of the anger and blame that
characterized the Lost Cause rhetoric, championed ever louder by white women across the
South. Historians have focused on white male violence toward blacks in the South, but this
study will investigate the extent to which women joined in violence – by condoning violence or
by actively encouraging it – to re-institute the social protection that had been denied them after
the war. Kathleen Blee, in *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, explores
female participation in the Ku Klux Klan that was publicly tied to heinous crimes of race hate.
Blee points out “although women did not participate openly in the actions of the first
[antebellum] KKK, the idea of ‘white womanhood’ was a crucial rallying point for postbellum
Klan violence.”

Women’s violence before the 1920s, a period of women’s public activism, has received
no notice from scholars. Historians have noted, however, that women did suit up in the twentieth
century to march in parades supporting the old regime of white male supremacy as they were
gaining access to the political and social opportunities of the 1920s. The reactionary strains in
white women’s culture had strong antecedents in the postwar South. In both the immediate
postwar period and in the later period of the second Klan, women were engaged in work toward
conservative, white supremacist, ends. The seeming “progressive” clubs of memorial societies
and organizations such as the UDC were not politically or socially progressive. Like anti-
suffrage women who organized along the progressive model for explicitly conservative ends, the
aftermath of defeat for southern women created a cadre of influential women who helped
establish a culture of violence in white supremacy throughout the South. In searching for
meaning in defeat, women found a way in which to help resurrect the pre-war culture of race
control and superiority for white men and women.

David W. Blight writes in *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, “The
living were compelled to find meaning in the dead and, as in most wars, the dead would have a
hold on the living.” Since so many men were killed or incapacitated, southern women had to
reconstruct a life in the South without the help or protection of their men, and for most white
women, this implied a life without political access, without opportunity for economic

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advancement, without the company of a spouse. Southern society never accommodated single women well, and the onus was high for women to have intermediaries to help them negotiate the world.\textsuperscript{24} White southern women could “reclaim” their culture, their protection (or in the words of Karen Cox, “vindicate” their cause) by engaging in memorialization activities, by ensuring southern children learned a “southern” view of history, or by lashing out at those they believed were responsible for their fortune’s decline. After Reconstruction, it was no longer practicable to attack Yankees as the source of their misery, but the recently freed blacks were an ever-present source of fear and a captive target of the violence spawned from this fear. Ella Thomas wrote after the surrender

> We have been out in the country now nearly two months and I have not enjoyed the calm contented frame of mind I had hoped to. It is very much to be hoped we are at the worst of this transition state of the Negroes. If not God have mercy upon us. Sis Anne said the other day that she thought things would go on so until Christmas and then there would be some of this – with a very significant gesture across the throat – \textsuperscript{25}

Women detailed their feelings of being out of control, and their writing indicates that their traumatic stress was self-sustaining, and lasted far longer than a few months in 1865. Feeling so out of control, women sought to regain some reassurance that they were indeed safe in their own homes, and to do this, they had to help redeem the South from the specter of defeat.

Women understood that they could win the culture war by dominating physical space with monuments to individual men and to the Confederate cause, and by dominating the historical view of the war and the southern cause. Like the proponents of Massive Resistance in the mid-twentieth century, defenders of the Lost Cause understood that children must be deliberately taught the “true history” of the South or “true southern history” might be forever lost as might be white privilege. Mildred Lewis Rutherford, for example, as the historian-general for the United Daughters of the Confederacy, participated in both memorialization efforts and in the revision of southern history. Rutherford’s history was emotionally defensive about military defeat, the institution of slavery (and the role of blacks in the South after Emancipation), and the role of white women in the southern social order. This defensiveness and, in some cases, outright hostility toward the North and toward blacks had significance for the serious racial violence sweeping the South as it promoted the idea that white supremacy was not shameful, but in fact must be defended. Rutherford drove UDC members to write prolifically about their war


\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Secret Eye}, July 23, 1865, 275.
memories and encouraged standardization of the details into an “acceptable” version of the war (including avoiding terms like “Civil War” that would indicate the southern nation was not independent). Rutherford also supervised and directed the “southern histories” that white school children learned from in their formative years.  

Women influenced other women and men through public writing in newspaper articles such as the ones written by Rebecca Latimer Felton. Felton followed her much older husband into politics after tending wounded Confederate men in the war, and she sought to apply her progressive ideas to New South politics. As a southern representative of the Board of Lady Managers for the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893, she arranged an exhibit of “real colored folks” like two “sober and well behaved” former slaves she recruited, Aunt Jinny and Uncle Jack, as an antidote to the display depicting Harriet Beecher Stowe. She aimed “to show the ignorant contented darkey – as distinguished from Mrs. Stowe’s monstrosities – to illustrate the slave days of the republic.”

Felton was a prolific writer for several Georgia newspapers, and authored a long-running column for women in the Atlanta Journal’s semi-weekly rural edition called The Country Home. In it, she mixed recipes and household tips with political editorials including angry racial rhetoric toward blacks. Her influence on southern women spanned into the twentieth century and her extreme position on racial violence seems to have been in keeping with the views of her readers. Her articles in The Country Home have been saved only in her personal scrapbooks filled with clippings from this series as well as articles about her husband’s and her own political career. She marked in the cover of her Mark Twain brand scrapbooks that they were made to preserve her work for her children’s benefit. She scrawled, “From Mother.”

Her opinions on subjects from Cuba to Woman Suffrage were examples of sophisticated and passionate political analysis. She embraced the southern white supremacist progressivism that championed woman’s political participation for the purpose of racial purity in an effort to

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27 Rebecca L. Felton to W. H. Felton, March 15, 1893, Felton Papers, Hargrett Manuscripts, University of Georgia Library, microfilm.

28 Hoke Smith added Felton to the rural paper in an effort to solidify his rural political support in 1899 and to engage farmers’ wives and daughters through Felton’s “advice column.” See David B. Parker’s unpublished essay, “Rebecca Latimer Felton and the Country Home.” Copy in possession of author. Felton’s views were widely read if the Journal’s slogan, “The Journal Covers Dixie like the Dew” was to be believed.

29 One example of this inscription is on microfilm Reel 20 of the Felton Scrapbooks, UGA.
reaffirm elite white social control.\textsuperscript{30} Her strident response to the absence of the social control of slavery is evident in her wish to train the next generation of southern women and children about the benefits of racial purity. She penned a “Message to the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century” in which she wrote, “It is a shame that we take more pains in breeding cattle than in mating human beings – men go 1,000 miles to get the best grafts for orchards, but they allow the nearest scrubs to be grafted on the family tree.”\textsuperscript{31}

But some of her strongest language was reserved for the topic of black advancement in American life. In a scrapbook dedicated to her son she included an article she wrote on “The Negro Question” that was reprinted in the \textit{New York Journal} as well as an article she wrote entitled, “Social Equality Never” which railed against Theodore Roosevelt’s dinner guest, Booker Washington. She believed that race pride and separation was healthy and if blacks strove upwardly, social chaos would result. She wrote, “It is plainly evident that the negro now has less to hope for in a political sense, and more to expect from an industrial point of view. The amalgamators have been an injury to the real progress of the race, and their best friends are evidently those who encourage the negroes to take proper pride in their own race and color as distinct and separate from the whites.”\textsuperscript{32} She also suggested that efforts to help blacks advance had failed. “Education is not a success and unfit the negro for anything – white women are still not safe – suffrage has not elevated blacks – education makes the average negro ‘obnoxious.’” She ended her analysis with the statement, “This is a white man’s country and white men aim to keep it so!” In her book, \textit{Country Life In Georgia in the Days of My Youth}, Published in 1919, she recounts supplying her husband with “nigger jokes” for his political speeches.\textsuperscript{33}

Her writing was widely accepted and praised locally and by politicians at home and in Washington. A United States Senator praised her in a handwritten note in 1888 for “the kind interest you have taken in vindicating truth.” Felton was outwardly conscious of her role in creating a “true” historical memory not only for her family, but for the nation in the post-Reconstruction environment of southern redemption and race violence. She proclaimed that “race prejudice has neither latitude nor longitude in these United States,” and she warned of dire consequences for the nation as a result of the “mistake” of Negro suffrage. She explained that she was involved in “a movement to quietly withdraw the fatal gift for the well being of both

\textsuperscript{30} In a column on July 12, 1919 she wrote that the 19\textsuperscript{th} Amendment would be a way for conservative white women to oppose the “iniquitous [15\textsuperscript{th}] Amendment.” Felton Papers.
\textsuperscript{31} Felton Scrapbooks, Reel 20, UGA.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Rebecca Latimer Felton, \textit{Country Life in Georgia in the Days of My Youth} (Atlanta: Index Printing Company, 1919), 127.
races.” If this “gift” was not “withdrawn” in the South, “colonization, exportation, or extermination will be the consequence within the next fifty years.” In fact, she suggested that blacks be exported to the North so the Negro plague could be equally shared, and that if Negro equality was forced upon the South, southern states would ensure that “blood [would] flow like water.”

Blood was indeed flowing like water in parts of the South at the dawn of the twentieth century and white women played central roles in the macabre theater of lynch violence. While relatively few white women likely participated directly in the mob killing of black men, lynchings were community events meant to underscore the southern racial and gender hierarchy through violence. Rebecca Felton was outspoken in her support of vigilant violence for the purpose of social control. In 1885 when the Quitman Colored College in Georgia burned, Felton wrote that the fire department found “usually quiet citizens armed, organized, and waiting” to settle the “social equality business.” She especially condoned the “protection” of white women through the killing of black men by lynch mobs. She wrote that, “as long as rape violence prevails in Georgia, then lynching is going to continue. There is nothing more certain so long as there is enough red blood and manhood in the Caucasian race to stand for the protection of their women. Smoke that, brethren. It is true.”

Similarly, Felton made a “sensational” speech before the Agricultural Society at Tybee Island, Georgia on August 11, 1897, where she observed that the traditional race hierarchy that protected white women had broken down, and this reinforced the feelings of insecurity and anger that southern women had not shaken since the war’s end. She claimed that white girls had been left unprotected by white men and that black men would destroy the virtue of the South and of southern white women. Dramatically she suggested

When there is not enough religion in the pulpit to organize a crusade against sin; nor justice in the court house to promptly punish crime; nor manhood enough in the nation to put a sheltering arm about innocence and virtue – if it needs lynching to protect woman’s dearest possession from the ravening human beasts – then I say lynch, a thousand times a week if necessary.

34 Felton Scrapbooks, UGA.
35 Ibid.
36 Rebecca L. Felton to the Atlanta Constitution, December 19, 1898, clipping in Scrapbook 24, 76-77, Felton Papers.
In 1893, Felton also made a speech to the United Daughters of the Confederacy about domestic loss and its social consequences.\textsuperscript{37} If white men could not protect white women, it follows that a women’s group like the UDC would seek to salve the defeated men and reclaim and restore ideas of southern chivalry that also restored white women to their virtuous pedestals. By taking the initiative to mold cultural consciousness in the South, southern women were engaging in an effort to cover the shame of defeat with reassuring words that the past was not an error (secession was simply “a different and directly opposite view as to the nature of the government of the United States”), nor would a modern, commercial South betray the romanticized southern way of life.\textsuperscript{38} If the South’s past was an error, then the pedestal of white womanhood might also have been a false elevation.

As the persons primarily responsible for transmitting cultural values from one generation to the next, white women protected the old racial and gender hierarchy and gave the next generation the “evidence” to support their violent cause. The Old South myth embraced by women, enshrined in marble in public places, and stored in scrapbooks and diaries at home kept the embers of race hate alive well into the twentieth century under the auspices of memorialization activity, textbook vigilance, and transmitting “traditional” values in the home.

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One of the most significant and long-running debates among southern historians has been the so-called “continuity question.” W. J. Cash’s revolutionary book, \textit{Mind of the South}, argued in 1941 that the “New” South was only public relations glitter and that the “southern mind” was wholly unchanged since the first Cavalier to the present day. Cash argued that the New Men of the New South were closely aligned with the Old South planters and that the traditional southern culture that relied upon racial exclusion and privilege was everywhere evident – in economic, political, and social life. Cash’s book, with its assertions that very little about the southern mind had changed with the advent of war, enjoyed a “twenty-five year run as the undisputed first title on almost everybody’s list of books on the South.”\textsuperscript{39}

But a decade later, C. Vann Woodward suggested in \textit{Origins of the New South} that the South had remade itself after the war as the boosters promised and that the South was indeed

capable of radical change. Although not responding directly to Cash, Woodward saw capacity for change alongside actual markers of economic change such as increased industrial output, railroad expansion, and populist demands for market conditions that no longer disproportionately benefited the elite. Woodward sought to revolutionize the discipline of southern history as practiced by those similarly wedded to the idea that the South had always been unbroken in every sense. Woodward believed that only in an environment of southern solidarity and consensus about its past could Cash’s book about a singular southern mind from the beginning to present receive such wide acclaim.40

Both Cash and Woodward were committed to exposing the problems of race and poverty held over from the nineteenth century, but it was Woodward’s “discontinuity” thesis that became the prevailing standard for southern historians in the 1970s. After the Brown v. Board decision in 1954, Woodward’s The Strange Career of Jim Crow sought to demonstrate that the twentieth century “reconstruction” in race relations was born out of a pattern of racial practices that was highly fluid and changing. Cash and Woodward both had it right. A “southern mind” had its tap root in the Old South, that is to say, a distinctive southern culture existed that was wholly committed to racial and gender hierarchy and this southern culture was steadfastly defended, and the southern tradition was highly fluid and changing. The current discussion must now move away from arguing whether the South was continuous or discontinuous and toward an analysis of which rituals of southern culture remained, how much they changed, and what function they served in a world rapidly changing. Additionally, an investigation of the motives of groups who advocated or fought against change will contribute to historians’ understanding of southern culture and women’s culture.

Women’s roles in the South after the war changed as rapidly as did the economy and politics, but southern women were still constrained by the constructs of southern womanhood. Anne Firor Scott argues in The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics that New Women of the New South found public expression in progressive reform, and that the Civil War was a watershed for women’s activism in the South. Wars have traditionally been labeled “turning points” or “watersheds” in many areas including technology, communications, diplomacy, and the increased political participation of marginalized groups like women and blacks.41 Wars

certainly affect women and other groups who have experienced limits on their political and social lives, and in many instances, women have been positively changed when wars shake the foundations of the traditional patriarchal order. But wars are often followed by periods of backlash or conservatism in which women have been willingly or unwillingly returned to a restrictive sphere that seems a capitulation of the “advances” the war brought.

Women are sometimes complicit in this process of conservatism, and southern women certainly had reason to believe that by submitting to male dominance, they would be rewarded with a reestablishment of their privileged and protected position as white women. George C. Rable’s observation that southern white women were complicit in the subjugation of other (black) women in the pursuit of their own interests was an important starting point for this line of thinking. Rable acknowledges that women often were not progressively inclined to bolster the position of other women when it might compromise their own status. Rable writes, “Woman have often collaborated with men in maintaining their own subordinate position, and nowhere in the nineteenth century United States was that truer than in the eleven states that would make up the Confederate States of America.” Especially in an atmosphere of war when their primary claim to status was imminently worthless – their ability to own other people – these women sought comfort in the patriarchy that valued them for their delicacy, whiteness, and submissiveness to men. According to Rable, “female slaveholders identified with a reactionary social system that claimed to exalt and protect women.”

But for this complicity, Rable misses the complexity: as with all human responses, a spectrum of behavior cannot be reduced to the simplistic notion that southern white women responded in concert. Not all white southern women – even those of the same social strata – were rabid defenders of a “conservatism often based more on habit and inertia than on conviction” after the trauma of a war fought – literally – in their parlors. Thaviola Glymph, a Civil War historian, points out that “wars have a tendency to disorder socially constructed boundaries of all sorts and are particularly disruptive of the social constructions of gender

the numerous titles on women’s nursing, spying, and soldiering in the Civil War, see Drew G. Faust, Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese’s Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South, (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1988) was an early contribution to this historiography of women’s complicity.


Ibid., 31.

Ibid., 222.
precisely because they require, always, the mobilization of women.” In making the antithesis of the “watershed” thesis, however, Rable pushes the argument too far. That southern white women supported slavery has been amply documented and most women with a stake in southern institutions that assured their privilege and relative freedom from work initially (at least theoretically) were willing to support them.

Rable mistakes support for the Confederacy – he says that women became “ardent Southern nationalists” – for support of the war. In her book, Scarlett Doesn’t Live Here Anymore, Laura Edwards offers persuasive evidence that support of slavery and the South was a different idea from unwavering support of the war, its attendant deaths, and the consequences of defeat. To take the words of a melodramatic declaration from Susan Bradford of Leon County, Florida – “Oh, I wish we were all dead!” – at face value certainly bolsters Rable’s claim that these “brokenhearted and disillusioned women all grieved for their former bonds of womanhood.” What they were grieving was not the loss of their bonds as such, but the loss of status and power that came with the Old South ideology.

Rable misses the opportunity to explore the themes of shame and guilt between men and women in this era by demeaning these distraught women as silly girls who “blamed southern men for giving up too soon” and who “begged them to continue the fight.” In an effort to debunk Anne Firor Scott’s positive view of southern women, Rable writes in the span of a page and a half that southern white slaveholding women were unquestioning, complacent, condescending, cruel, exploitative, demeaning, interfering, disrespectful, unnoticing, unsympathetic, unpredictable, fiendish, cruel, intolerant, testy, and brutal. Women in every time and place can exhibit these qualities. A more discerning line of inquiry is to ask whether these qualities, where present, were exacerbated by the conditions of war, or lingered after to be imbedded in cultural rituals or traditions in the postwar South.

Drew Faust’s pioneering study, Mothers of Invention, demonstrates that elite white women in the South were clever and adaptive. Edwards, again, in Scarlett Doesn’t Live Here Anymore, argues that the notion that the chorus of whining and wilting vines is little more than the “Magnolia Myth” revised. Drew Faust’s argument was that rather than “change without

48 Rable, Civil Wars, 222-223.
49 Ibid. 176-178.
change” at the end of the war, “women of the South’s master class faced the war’s legacy: a rising sense of personal desperation, and eroding confidence in those on whom they had relied for protection, and an emerging doubt about their own ability to endure prompted women to consider the most fundamental assumptions about their world.”

So desperate women who lacked confidence and were filled with self-doubt may have seemed like “wilting vines.” In some instances, however, this image of “traditional southern womanhood” masked a powerful influence on the postwar culture.

LeeAnn Whites suggests in The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender that the change wrought by the war presented itself to planter-class women not as a victory for their gender interests, but rather as a defeat of their men and their class. I would suggest that the conservatism espoused by affluent southern women before the war and the similarity of their remarks after the war need not mean that the conservatism was in response to the same set of circumstances. Rather, women’s worlds (and the world of all Americans) had been radically altered, and white southern women had to devise a clever response that protected their interests as wives, mothers, and southerners.

Southerners had no way to shift their paradigm smoothly when their assumptions about hierarchy and honor had been assailed and shown wanting. Southerners – men, women, children of all races and classes – did not instantly replace one set of behaviors with another simply because of the war’s outcome. Behaviors, attitudes and ideas that served white women well before the war continued to be employed after the war – it took some time before the region was forced to jettison hierarchical and race-based philosophies permanently. The process of women’s transition from the devastation of war to “New Women of the New South” was fraught with grief and loss. In the process of gathering the shards of their past and fashioning a new set of rituals and traditions that at once elevated white women above blacks while returning to the comforting protection of hearth and home, white southern women were both breaking with the past and attempting to refashion it in the present.

Using women’s writing as the principle source of this analysis is imbued with complexity. Anne Firor Scott, in her introduction to the microfilm collection Southern Women and Their Families in the 19th Century: Papers and Diaries, writes that “Private diaries and personal letters are valued for what light they throw on what French historians label the

mentalité of a particular time and place. The fact that such documents were usually created only for the writer, or for a friend or relative, gives them an immediacy not often found in other kinds of records.”52 Of course, it is the lives of writing women – overwhelmingly white and relatively affluent – that are thus illuminated. The experiences of the truly poverty stricken and disfranchised of any race are not saved for historians in letters, diaries, or scrapbooks. There is much that the literate, “scribbling women” of the South have to say on topics like race and politics that historians have assumed did not concern “ladies.” Because they wrote, their children and grandchildren could refer to their experiences again and again. Because they wrote, historians can refer to their experiences as well. As Margo Cully pointed out in her text on American women diarists, “Women diarists in particular wrote as family and community historians. They recorded in exquisite detail the births, deaths, illnesses, visits, travel, marriages, work, and unusual occurrences that made up the fabric of their lives.”53 When historians seek the significance of women in history, it is often women’s diaries that supply the substance for their inquiry.

Peter Gay calls the nineteenth century the “golden age of they diary,” a time when women were encouraged to elevate themselves by writing candidly, emotionally, but privately.54 Caroll Smith-Rosenberg points out that “an analysis of women’s private letters and diaries which were never intended to be published permits the historian to explore a very private world of emotional realities central both to women’s lives and to the middle class family in nineteenth century America.”55 Women’s writing, especially in journals and scrapbooks that were intended for private family use rather than publication, is particularly valid for its candor and spontaneity. Magnolia LeGuin, writing in the twentieth century, intended her account as a “mother’s record” as did women writing about their Civil War accounts fifty years before.56 Like the unguarded style of women’s journals in the nineteenth century, LeGuin admits to slapping her son severely and she records her bitterness at having to feed her father’s constant stream of visitors, observations she would have omitted if the diary was intended for publication.57

57 Ibid., 68.
Laurel Thatcher Ulrich pioneered the technique of revealing women’s social webs from the legal and political superstructures that “covered” them. Through careful reading of the quotidian records that women kept, she points out historians examining political records might not see women’s participation, but “women were everywhere.” Ulrich emphasizes that diaries can serve many purposes for the author, and women have been writing politically since at least the colonial period. Historians, though, must look also at material culture – she suggests sewing – as a way to understand the presence and significance of non-writing women’s lives. Here I have substituted the Victorian craft of keeping a memory book or scrapbook to examine the connection between those women writing politically, and those women who may or may not be themselves authors, but who agreed with the author’s sentiment enough to preserve it for posterity.

Letters, scrapbooks, and diaries have shortcomings, of course. Many Civil War memoirs and several of the journals used here are situational records, that is, they begin and end with the event they trace – in this instance, the Civil War and its immediate aftermath, and the historian must look for additional sources to make connections about the subject’s broader experiences. “Memory books” also are frequently intermittent records and their keepers are more concerned about the message of the article or poem than with accurate notation of the source from whence the “scraps” come. There was no standard format or guide; nineteenth century diaries and scrapbooks are made from salvaged account books or made in special books bought for the purpose. Scrapbooks, especially, have not weathered the ravages of time well as the glues used to paste items into a book and the paper on which articles and keepsakes are adhered have, because of acidity in the paper and glue, degraded the condition of the memorabilia. Nevertheless, the ritual of keeping a scrapbook imbues this source with additional meaning, and it is the ritual of crafting with paper a narrative history that southern women did so lovingly, proudly, and well.

I was originally interested in the female ritual of keeping scrapbooks for posterity and its rise in popularity in the twentieth century. Nineteenth century women’s scrapbooks and their cultural function was one place I thought I could examine the intersection of women’s political activity and historical memory. Also, I have been inspired by two twentieth century photographs. One gory lynching photograph from 1935 pictures several young women smiling

59 Ibid., 203-204.
serenely as if enjoying a social event, albeit with a macabre murder as background. A second photograph taken during the integration of the Little Rock, Arkansas, Central High School in 1957 shows a school girl screaming at a composed black student with such anger upon her face that the emotions of the whole white South appear to be summarized in her features. I wanted to know where these girls’ mothers were. I wanted to know what kinds of dinner conversations these families had that would encourage these young ladies into this kind of frenzied race hate.

Also in the course of my research, I ran into several southern women who appeared to ground their understanding of American culture and memory on the outcome of the Civil War. While researching Magnolia Wynn LeGuin’s life in rural Georgia, I traveled to meet her granddaughter, who spent the afternoon showing me around McDonough and Locust Grove, and then took me for fried green tomatoes. She was an editor for a local newspaper, and obviously highly educated. I was surprised, then when upon meeting, she asked where I was from, and when I told her I was born and raised in Oklahoma, she looked at me quizzically and asked, “What side of the war were y’all on?” I decided against explaining, in honor of Woody Allen, that my grandparents were being assaulted by Cossacks at the time of the American Civil War. I was stricken by this woman’s sophistication and worldliness juxtaposed with her need to understand my “place” in her historical memory, which was still grounded on the assumption that all Americans (or all whites?) were similarly historically oriented.

Not long before that illuminating exchange, I had been visiting friends in Montgomery, Alabama, and had stopped downtown on a quiet Saturday morning, infant in tow, to look at the Confederate monuments, and found under the live oaks surrounding the capitol building a statue of a gynecologist, J. Marion Sims, a medical pioneer who had a private practice in Montgomery, but who is controversial today for experimenting on slave women. A young woman approached me and suggested that if I was impressed with the Montgomery monuments, I should come to Shiloh where the UDC tended to the “gorgeous” Confederate monuments at the battlefield there, but of course, one would have to look past the “ugly other” ones, by which I understood her to mean the Union memorials. She thought a moment and then invited me to join the UDC to help in their “glorious work.” I again passed up the opportunity to explain how many ways I would not qualify for membership in that organization, and I understood that she invited me because I was white woman, physically located in the South.

What struck me most was that a war that ended 142 years ago was still present – still raging – for them. Tony Horowitz saw this raging fascination with the Confederacy and
investigated the links between the Confederate impulse and the modern racist one. I read *Confederates in the Attic* when I was visiting Richmond to research at the Virginia Historical Society where I found the most direct connections between the UDC’s scrapbooks between their memorial work and efforts to maintain racial hierarchy (but could hardly find a bed to sleep in at any price because it was NASCAR week). I wanted to know what drives women’s understanding of the function and use of history, and also how women have used history and memory to achieve specific goals.

Women’s History emphasizes that the “sisterhood” that historians trained in the 1960s saw is a mirage, and that women are independent actors who respond in many cases to factors other than their sex. Dr. Green’s book on women anti-suffragists in the South demonstrates that conservative women worked against their “sex interests” but on behalf of their economic interests when they opposed votes for women. I began to see that there was very little “sisterhood” among rural southern women, and no sisterhood across race lines in the South. In a thesis chapter I called “Not Sisters, Not Slaves,” Maggie LeGuin, an educated but isolated woman, responded to the black women employees on her farm from emotion and cultural cues of white supremacy rather than any common bond of womanhood. Maggie, born in 1869 and harried mother to nine children, demonstrated the chain of culture that passes through families, and in southern white families, was largely a lesson in “place,” that is, understanding race hierarchy.

Recently I had a waiter whose name tag indicated he was from Serbia. When in the course of dinner he quipped, “Everyone is my friend,” I thoughtlessly and half-jokingly asked, “Even the Croats?” This young man, in his early twenties, suddenly turned somber and stood at our table for the duration of our meal recounting the atrocities his family had suffered in the civil war in his homeland. He said that Serbs his age could possibly “forgive, but never forget” the animosity between neighbors. War trauma has significant and lasting consequences in all parts of the world.

When I began teaching “Race and Ethnicity,” I discovered the assertion of sociologist James Lowen that she who controls the textbook committee controls history itself, and the power of controlling history textbooks lay in transmitting those cultural cues of race hierarchy. In *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything your American History Textbook Got Wrong*, he points out that most high-school level textbooks are white-washed or still contain relics of the southern
efforts to press the “southern view” of race. Southern women activists who worked zealously to promote “southern history” in the aftermath of defeat are thus rewarded by these race lessons still imbedded in modern history texts.

Loewen demonstrates why history matters, but southern women perceived this concept of preserving cultural customs instinctively, and this is the battle southern women fought – the battle over who controls history and memory – after the southern effort on the battlefield failed. The contest over public space – physical space – and ideas are important because of the power within them. The women I met in scrapbooks and diaries were as invested in these power politics as were the women I met who invited me to join the UDC.

Power politics in the South after the war was about race, and by shifting a southern defeat into victory, women bolstered southern men’s battered “honor,” reserved the power of cultural voice and influence for themselves, and assured their children a healthy self-concept when they could teach them about their ancestors’ “heroism” and the right-thinking of the “cause” which contemporaries admitted was cognate with white supremacy.

What emerged from this desperate effort to protect “southern honor” and hierarchy is a lesson about the devastating and long-lasting effects of total war. The recognition of psychological and cultural warfare must force historians to re-periodize the war in the south and women’s efforts on behalf of “southern honor” – to use Henry Grady’s phrase – “The South found her jewel in the toad’s head of defeat.” Historian David Blight explained that

Historical memory . . . was the prize in a struggle between rival versions of the past, a question of will, of power, of persuasion. The historical event of any transforming or controversial event emerges from cultural and political competition, from the choice to confront the past and to debate and manipulate its meaning.

This strategy, this desperate effort, also contained an intense bitterness that southern women poured out in their papers and scrapbooks. It reminded me of the intensity of the post-traumatic stress and illness that my child experienced after years of psychological violation and abandonment suffered years before we met her. After years of therapy, she remained “stuck” in her trauma – unable or unwilling to move beyond it – and she would even admit that she had a

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vested interest in remaining angry and bitter. Something incentivized her to hug tightly her chains of misery rather than come to terms with a future over which she had no control. Her sense of powerlessness bred fear of change, and thus she stuck to the bitterness she knew and could understand.

The psychological effects of terror and a consequent sense of powerlessness transcend time and place. Southern women after the Civil War operated from fear, but harnessed it into the will to control how southern children understood southern loss and defeat. Their strategies were effective enough that women who had never known war were even more ardent in their insistence on remembering it in a specific, romantic way. In this way, individual memories became collective memories, and the collective southern white understanding of “southern honor” was stuck in the bitterness of fear and hate.
CHAPTER 1

THUNDERSTRUCK

“All our future is so uncertain. We cannot look beyond the present moment.”
– Emma LeConte, January 29, 1865, age 17.

Southern white women had a set of expectations about their lives. Elite women could reasonably expect to marry and bear children in a home of their own, and many women expected that their financial security would increase over the course of their marriage. Southern ideology also pressed upon women that they had the right to demand male protection, physically, economically, and emotionally. White women in the South did not anticipate that they would suffer profound cultural humiliation or that they would be treated by men or blacks in a common or disrespectful fashion. While the secession crisis and bombing of Fort Sumter was a heady time for many women who fully embraced southern nationalism, the realities of war brought emotional stress to women’s lives on an unprecedented scale. The physical devastation of the South foretold the economic fall of elite families who, on top of the ladder of affluence, had the longest and hardest fall. Waves of dead bodies impressed upon women that their expectations of security and protection must be radically readjusted. Women suffered an emotional trauma that had lasting significance. The excitement faded to exhaustion and emotional distress. The mounting body count brought women closer to “senseless” killing than Victorian death rituals allowed. Rather than adjusting their ideology and expectations accordingly, however, southern women retrenched and fought back to salvage their material lives and their southern pride. Women were struggling, even as the war ground on, to make sense of the “senseless” war that was turning their world upside down.

This chapter will suggest how white women rode a crest of war fervor that crashed horribly into despair. Women consciously recorded their war-time deprivations and despair as they understood on a personal level the import of this war. Following the cultural cues of the wartime nationalism, southern women blamed their distress on the Union army, but increasingly linked their misfortune to the complicity of blacks, who added to women’s disappointment by embracing their freedom. Women wrote in their journals as an emotional release, but they wrote also because they wanted their children to know the depths of their humiliation and want, and
they also wanted to provide a record of blame that would permit future generations an opportunity to avenge southern honor.

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On April 9, 1865, the City of Tallahassee, Florida, held a grand musical event that had been a long time in the planning. Prominent Tallahasseeans had assembled in the Hall of Representatives in Florida’s capitol to celebrate Florida’s decision to join the Confederacy singing “Dixie” along with the band, when a man walked in carrying a telegram aloft. After stumbling twice, he finally read aloud, “General Lee surrendered the army of Northern Virginia today at Appomattox.” Susan Bradford, the daughter of a wealthy Leon County planter, remembered the moments that followed:

That was all but it was the death knell of all our hopes and for a moment a silence as of the grave filled the hall; then followed such a scene as we pray we may never see repeated. Tears and cries and lamentation, the bitterness of heart-broken woe. Men, women, and children wept aloud as they realized the calamity which had befallen us. Few slept that night and the sun rose on a miserable, broken-hearted people—far too miserable even to talk it over with each other. It was as though our nearest and dearest lay dead within the house.63

The calamity of the capitulation of the Confederate forces that spring day symbolized, as Bradford feared, not simply the end of the military struggle, but also the death of antebellum white southern culture. Some women needed so desperately to believe that their privileged way of life could not die that they remained certain of a southern victory even in the spring of 1865, believing—or wanting to believe—that every rumor that Lee had repelled Grant’s forces was true. Women on both sides of the conflict were sad and angry at the staggering number of deaths caused by battle and disease, but these Confederate women who, after years of hoping their men would prevail in their struggle against a larger foe, saw with the final defeat that all of their sacrifices appeared to be in vain.

Women’s diary entries reflect the nation’s emotional roller-coaster: entries progress from haughty hubris to crushing despair. In the period after the war, when individuals and the region might be expected to reflect upon the destruction the war had wrought, the tenor of women’s writings and memorial activities was not reflective, but aggressive. Their grief over the defeat was bitter and full of anxiety for the future of the South. As Emma LeConte wrote from South Carolina after word of the Confederate surrender at Appomattox had reached there “Have we

suffered all – have our brave men fought so desperately and died so nobly for this? For four years there has been throughout this broad land little else than the anguish of anxiety – the misery of sorrow over dear ones sacrificed – for nothing!” Not only were their family members dead, but the prospects that lay ahead for the South seemed almost unbearable.

This war trauma did not happen suddenly at the announcement of surrender, it had been bearing down on southern women through material deprivation and psychological stress specifically designed to bring the Confederate home-front to its knees. Women’s journals in the second half of the war, as northern fortunes were on the rise and women increasingly experienced warlike conditions at home, begin to show cracks in the hubris that southern women were famous for. Although the tenor of women’s writing begins to show stress, southern women do not wilt like vines, their despair and indignation bolster them. Indignation was cold comfort, however, as southern women prepared for the impending battle with hunger and want.

Many southern women lost what charity they might have had toward their fellow Americans early in the war. Northern wives did not suffer from the shortages of food, medical supplies, and manufactured goods as a result of blockade as southern women did. But southern wives knew that defeat meant the end of southern white culture. Southern women’s sacrifices would be for naught when their home states were occupied by enemy troops. The specter of suffering during the war was nothing compared with the specter of a defeat after it.

Southern women suffered variously depending on their circumstances at the outset of the war, and on their location and options for moving out of harm’s way. Some women were utterly emotionally and financially devastated, others recovered their fortunes more easily, but appear from their writing to be no less emotionally affected. In fact, women who had greater resources – and thus stood to lose the most in defeat – seemed most unreconciled to the challenges to their status. While many poor southern women could not conceive of an education, Susan Bradford saw the loss of hers as a true casualty of war. She was to be sent to a prestigious school in Raleigh, but when Union troops attacked the coast of North Carolina in 1861, she dryly remarked “War interferes with everything, even education.”

Educations might be had later in life, but women from all classes feared the loss of their male family members to war, and thus the loss of the lives they had expected when they came of age.

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Married women with young children understood these losses perhaps more deeply than did their unmarried sisters. Susan Bradford was seventeen at the opening salvo of the war, and had trouble hiding her enthusiasm for the initial excitement of war preparations that varied the plantation routine in Leon County, Florida. Her sister, Mag, married in 1859, felt less jubilant at the prospect of soldiers marching off to Virginia. With a toddler and a baby on the way, Mag did not share her sister’s youthful exuberance. Susan pitied her sister when news came that Florida troops would be sent to the Army of Northern Virginia: “Poor sister Mag, she is not a bit patriotic and she is almost broken-hearted at this news. Her baby is more than a year old now, fifteen months old, and he is learning to talk and is so funny and sweet but even Eddie cannot bring a smile to his mother’s face, she is the very picture of woe.”

Seven months later, Mag’s baby girl was born while her husband was away. “Sister Mag has a daughter, born this morning. Poor little girl. She will, in all probability, never see her father’s face.” Much of the tragedy of women’s loss in war was not exclusive to southern women. Death and disease struck families without regard to class, geographic region, or occupation. The extra layer of tragedy for southern women, however, was that these sacrifices seemed, in the context of defeat and occupation, meaningless and for no good purpose. Susan Bradford caught a glimpse of the sadness caused by the death of a new father in battle. Captain Simmons was a Confederate soldier killed at the Battle of Natural Bridge near Bradford’s home. His wife had delivered their baby only two weeks earlier. On March 7, 1865, Bradford noted in her journal “Today Captain Simmons was buried in the Tallahassee cemetery. His poor wife came from her home and fainted at the grave. How horrible war is!”

Emma LeConte was indeed uncharitable while contemplating her father’s possible death in war, and these ruminations caused her a great deal of anxiety. Along with her prayers for the safety of her family’s substantial property and other family members, she worried most about her father, the family’s protector. “And Father – I cannot bear to think of him. Every day I tremble with the fear that I may hear he is a prisoner or killed. Killed – oh, no – God would not be so cruel as that – I could not think of that – my darling, precious father, if you were only safe at home again!”

Whether men stayed home from battle to save themselves or protect women, not all southern men were drummed off to war. Susan Bradford’s cousin, William Bradford, was a

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66 Ibid., 158.
67 Ibid., 178.
68 Ibid., 261.
69 LeConte, *When the World Ended*, 7.
physician who was persuaded not to volunteer, but to remain at home to render medical services
to his neighbors. Men who were serving in the army wanted some guarantee that when they
were away, unable to protect their wives and family, some trusted man, in this case their doctor,
would be available to provide some assurance of safety for them. His services were so in
demand that one man claimed “I should be obliged to desert, if Doctor Bill was not in call, when
my home folks got sick.’ So after much discussion he consented to resign [his army obligation
to protect the women in the neighborhood].” Bradford noted the significant relief rendered to his
mother and wife upon this decision. She wrote “I know his mother rejoices for this as she has
consumption and is never well. His young wife and baby need him, too, but then so many wives
and babies have to suffer.” But the Confederacy could not afford to have able bodied men
tending to women and children. Whether motivated by idealism or pragmatism, most white men
could not remain at home indefinitely.

Young mothers often were terrified at the prospect of being widowed young with
children. They also understood how hard it would be to re-marry if they had young children
when the war created a shortage of potential mates. In some cases, young southern mothers
responded to the climate of dangerous uncertainty by acting to protect their mates. In the spring
of 1862, Susan Bradford’s sister responded with despair to the uncertainty of her husband’s war
absence. “Sister Mag has made up her mind to go to the front where she can be at hand if
Brother Amos should be wounded. This dreadful waiting, waiting, has almost broken her heart.
In June she will take her children, Eddie and the baby girl, whom her father has never seen, and
go to Richmond.” Not surprisingly, Mag was called upon to minister to her husband’s wounds.
When he was wounded at 2nd Manassas, she rushed to his side, almost forgetting about her
toddler and infant son, leaving “her sister and the nurses caring for the babies; their mother had
not given them a thought.” In her anxiety for her husband, she placed him at the center of her
existence and devotedly ministered to his wounds.

Captain Whitehead suffered from fever until the Minnie ball could be extracted from his
ankle. “We told Mrs. [Mag] Whitehead she was a heroine, but she said no she was only a half-
crazed wife. Not all were as fortunate as she, the demand for black dresses, for crepe, for
mourning veils, stripped the Confederacy of these emblems of mourning, and, after that, you
could not tell, when you saw a bright dress, how much of bitter sorrow was hidden beneath it.”

70 Bradford, Through Some Eventful Years, 159.
71 Ibid., 180.
72 Ibid., 187.
Although Mag Whitehead was fortunate that her husband was alive, she had to face the prospect of a permanently disabled spouse. These wounds, while painful to her husband, were also lasting reminders of her husband’s near total sacrifice to a cause that was about to be lost.\(^{73}\)

Amos Whitehead’s wound was sustained early in the conflict and his family tasted the challenge of reintegrating a wounded man back into southern civilian life. After Captain Whitehead was released from his duty to return home, he reached home with a physical reminder of his service. Several months after his brush with death, Bradford noted in her journal that her brother-in-law was safely returned. “Brother Amos stood the trip very well and can handle his crutches better than at first. He can walk about in the house, but has to have help to go down the steps. There are so many poor crippled soldiers. Oh, if this terrible war was over!”\(^{74}\)

Many women lost not only husbands but all hope. In February 1863 Mary Vaughn, nearly mad with grief, wrote from her plantation home, ironically named SunnySide:

> I do not think I am so much more sinful than others that he [God] should clutch my heart strings with his iron hand and tear them one by one asunder. First he took my dear greyhaired Father who had always been so dear and indulgent to me, but Charlie was left to me, and well did he fill the place of Father and husband to me. Then little Willie [her infant son], still I did not murmur; but now, oh how, can I lift my voice in praise to Him who has taken from me the one hope of my life. I don’t think I have had one thought apart from Charlie since we were married. My every wish has been to try in some measure to return his devotion and untiring kindness. I cannot for the life of me realize my forlorn situation. He must come home yet. It cannot be true he has left me to suffer and endure alone. He always would shield me from everything like trouble and annoyance, how can I walk the dark future alone and unassisted by his strong arm of protection. I have but one wish and that is to die. You speak of my baby. Why, sister, will God not smite me there too? Will he not darken my young life to the uttermost. I will crush back the love, welling up in the depths of my heart for the little one, so when God lays his chilling hand upon her limbs, it will not craze me. I have not read my bible since Charlie died. My tears and feelings seem frozen. I know, I feel but one thing. I am alone, utterly desolate.\(^{75}\)

The near-suicidal widow renamed her baby girl “Charlie,” in a symbolic gesture of her feelings of denial and a desperate need to remember the time before the war.

Women who were betrothed at the outset or during the war were similarly crushed when their dreams were dashed at the news of their fiancé’s death. Susan Bradford reported that the shock of hearing that their proposed future of married security was suddenly gone robbed women of

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\(^{73}\) Ibid., 190.

\(^{74}\) Ibid., 191.

\(^{75}\) Quoted in Clinton, *Tara Revisited*, 113.
their youthful optimism. Dolly Lunt recounted the stress and humiliation a young bride might suffer in an occupied South. On December 22, 1864, Lunt wrote

Tuesday, the nineteenth of the month, I attended Floyd Glass’s wedding. She was married in the morning to Lieutenant Dougherty. She expected to be married the week after the Yankees came, but her groom was not able to get here. Some of the Yankees found out in some way that she was to have been married, and annoyed her considerably by telling her they had taken her sweetheart prisoner; that when he got off the train at the Circle they took him and, some said, shot him. The Yankees found Mrs. Glass’s china and glassware that she had buried in a box, broke it all up, and then sent her word that she would set no more fine tables. They also got Mrs. Perry’s silver.76

Some women suffered not just broken china, but also a broken heart. In October, 1861, Susan Bradford’s cousin Rich was killed. She wrote “Mr. William Routh was killed also, he was engaged to be married to Cousin Sallie and she fainted dead away when she heard the terrible news. Oh! War is worse even than I thought.”77 The trauma was still fresh months later to the diarist and to the woman tragically separated from her beloved and her dreams for the future. On December 20th, 1861 Bradford gave some details about how the sad news found the bride-to-be.

Mr. Routh and cousin Sallie were to be married in November . . . she was almost ready with her preparations when the news reached us. Her wedding dress was made and waiting and only a few little things remained to be done. She fainted dead away at the terrible tidings and the next day she locked herself in her room and folded and put away, every article which had been made, in a big Saratoga trunk, locked it and hung the key around her neck. She is so pale and sad, it gives me the heart-ache to look at her. And yet, this is a part of war.78

Southern women had to give up dreams of advantageous marriages, but southern men and women alike mourned something more than just the individuals killed in the conflict. Dead fathers and lovers and sons represented both personal and national tragedy. Northern women could grieve the deaths of their loved ones with the certain knowledge that their cause was just and victorious. Southern women had to create a similar understanding in order to live with the massive losses they faced.

Some mothers stoically offered up their sons for the Confederate army and counted their deaths a noble sacrifice. Indeed the number of poems extolling the heroism of the Sons of the South almost seem too desperate to emphasize that their lives were not given in vain. The reality

77 Bradford, Through Some Eventful Years, 160.
78 Ibid., 167-168.
of the loss of a child tempered some parents’ expressions of the nobility of sacrifice. Susan Bradford could only wonder how it must feel to lose a son to war. Days before the attack in early April 1862 on Shiloh, Bradford wondered about the effect of a child’s death on parents. “If I, who have only brothers and cousins in the army, dread this so [news of troop movements], what must it be to poor wives and mothers and fathers? Uncle Richard has never been the same since Cousin Rich was killed.” Will S. Hayes, a journalist for the *Louisville Democrat* during the war, wrote a song shortly after Shiloh in which he immortalized a ten-year-old boy through the lyrics of the “Drummer Boy of Shiloh.” John Clem, who was indeed a drummer boy at Shiloh and Chickamauga, but who did not perish at either battle, may well have been the inspiration for this memorialization. The song, whether based on fact or on perception alone, encompassed many feelings about the loss of young men in war. Fellow soldiers gather around the mortally wounded boy who prayed that God would deliver him to his mother, waiting for him in heaven. “Each soldier wept then like a child / Stout hearts were they and brave / They wrapped him in his country’s flag / And laid him in the grave.” This motherless boy was mourned by his fellow soldiers who were impressed with the boy’s faith in God. The song then asks “How many homes made desolate, / How many hearts have sighed,” for the loss of a son like those killed in merciless battle at Shiloh. After news of the carnage of the battle at Chickamauga in 1863 reached as far south as Tallahassee, Susan Bradford remarked that the war represented different things to men and women. She exclaimed “it is grand, it is heroic, but oh, those poor boys and their wives and mothers!” To shield herself from the grief that a living mother felt for her dead son, Bradford’s mother admitted, “I am afraid it is not patriotic, but I am glad I have no sons.”

Parents lamented the fate of their sons killed at the hands of the enemy both on the battlefield and at home. Alice Williamson in Gallatin, Tennessee, reported that sons killed off the battlefield took a heavy emotional toll on their parents. In the spring of 1864 she gave a chilling report of the killings of young men at the hands of their enemy.

I learn today that Gen. Payne had no charge against Mr. Dalton, so he told his (Dalton's) father. After killing him he rode back to the house and told Mr. D. that his son was in sight - he could bury him if he wished. Today a gentleman (Col. E____) was in Paynes office when he was trying a young man about sixteen years old and the only support of an

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80 [Website](http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/hh/10/hh10h.htm)
81 Ibid., 206.
82 Ibid., 203.
aged father who was with him. His crime was being a rebel. Payne sent the young man to jail telling the guard to bring him out a seven o'clock. The father actually fell upon his knees before the heartless tyrant but was heartlessly bidden to rise and go home, the young man has never been heard of since.83

One woman expressed her empathy for families whose sons had escaped the army life, but who were hiding from the law. Mary Ann Buie recorded in her diary in 1861, “Those that are at home have a trying time around here hunting deserters. I think I would rather be in the army than to have to hunt for those unfortunate men that are in the woods. They seem determined on their own ruin or they would not stay in the woods now. I am sorry for their relations.”84 Her comment might be understood as her empathy for the shame or dishonor a deserter might bring to the family’s standing in the community, but also one might read her true sorrow for the state of affairs that forced so many boys and men to become outlaws in their own country.

The filial bond could be as strong as the bond between parents and son. One woman was deeply affected by the report of her brother’s death. Polly F. Tunstall wrote to her cousin, Jane E. Alston, about her sadness and disbelief.

Home, Nov. 30th 1864
My Dear Cousin,
Can it be, or is it a horrible dream? Can it be that my [first?] my good, my precious Brother is no more? Something says it so unalterably true. Oh! What must I do in my sorrow! I am no longer myself; my very being seems to sink beneath the forms (?) of this unexpected shake. Why was my heart’s Ideal so soon taken from me? Who will fill the void in our hearts?85

The moment of grief struck a hard blow. The news changed her very conception of who she was and she doubted her emotional and physical strength to bear life without her brother. She tried to comfort herself with the thought that his death was a protection from the hardships on the way in a world increasingly filled with uncertainty and strife. She concluded “It may be well that in life’s bright-morn he should pass away from earth so dark and drear. He was too sensitive to bear the many ills which must inevitably meet us all before the end of time.”86

84 Mary Ann Buie to "my dear cousin," June 4, 1861 in Mary Ann S. Buie Letters, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.
85 Polly Tunstall to Jane Alston, November 30, 1864. Lucy Tunstall Alston Williams Papers, folder 22, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
86 Ibid.
Tunstall had to check her own response to the difficult news because of how heavily it weighed upon the rest of the family.

Cousin Jennie will you pray God to give me strength to bear unwaveringly this, my first great sorrow. I am trying to do so, but it is difficult to still my heart throbbing, yet I know it would almost kill my poor grief-stricken father to see me so distressed. I am young and all that he has with him, so it devolves on me to . . . 

As if she could not even contemplate what responsibilities devolve upon her as the family’s emotional barometer, she trailed off into a thought about her younger brother’s feelings of loss. She continued

And dear little Sanders! Is there not a thought for him, in the midst of our anguish, for him who was snatched almost from his father’s arms and left all alone in the unfeeling world. No good brother to protect you now and supply you every want. I feel that soon I will be left to bridge life’s rugged, thorny pathway all alone, with nothing to cheer me in my pilgrimage. What a sudden transition from happiness to misery mine has been.

Polly Tunstall poignantly summarized the assessment of the women of the wartime South. The sudden transition from a life of certainty and routine to a world literally turned upside down was frightening, sad, and unwelcome.

In fact, as Susan Bradford pointed out, there was scarcely a household that was untouched by the ravages of war.

In the Bradford neighborhood death had been a frequent visitor; tragedy had not passed us by; every household had lost one or more.

There is no flock however watched or tended

one dead lamb is there, But

is no fireside howso’er defended, There

has one vacant chair.

For the daughter of a wealthy planter who doubtless expected her adolescence to be characterized by frequent garden parties, the exchange of that reality for days filled with want and hunger was jarring, so far had she come from days of new silk dresses and imported

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87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 Bradford, Through Some Eventful Years, 161.
accessories in such a short period of time. Bradford fretted on April 7, 1864 “Today I have no shoes to put on. All my life I never wanted to go bare-footed, as most Southern children do. The very touch of my naked foot to the bare ground made me shiver.” Poor folks and field slaves went shoeless. Foot coverings denoted respectability. So strongly did Bradford feel about wearing shoes that she taxed her creativity to make some. She was justifiably proud when she produced a pair of slippers for herself made out of corn shucks.

In some locations southern women were quite removed from the material sting of wartime necessity. Susan Bradford in Florida experienced the pinch of want late in the war. Her early journal entries were filled with the romanticism of a young woman who was smitten with the shiny brass buttons on the smart-looking uniforms of officers. Not until the drilling men departed did she begin to understand the gravity of the times. The gaiety that was normally the province of young southern belles began to be tarnished when those beaus shipped out to Virginia. “After dinner there was target practice and boat-riding; this does not seem like war. The 1st Florida Regiment went to Pensacola today. Oh! this is like war.”

Bradford was compelled to give up more as the sacrifices of war struck closer to her home. When a pair of her mother’s glossy bay carriage horses were commandeered by the Union army from the Bradford family weeks before the surrender, Bradford noted in her journal, “This is a sad day for all of us, dear Mother feels it most of all. Since the other horses were impressed we have had Jordan to carry us to town twice a week for our music and French lessons, tomorrow is the day, I wonder if we can go? Father says we can have a pair of mules, that is, if a gentle pair can be found.” Perhaps French lessons in the midst of the most serious shortages of necessities were an attempt to maintain some semblance that the antebellum days were not ending, but their mortification at being seen in town with a pair of mismatched mules was only the beginning of the altered life ahead. It was not exactly a silk purse from a sow’s ear, but, like corn shuck slippers, creativity had to go a long way towards mollifying wartime depredation. Instead of necessity giving birth to invention, it served as the provocateur of bitterness.

Creativity was especially in demand for Christmases during the war. By November, children commenced the speculation about what treats St. Nick would bring. In Florida,

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90 Ibid., 238.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid., 151.
93 Ibid., 256.
94 Ibid., 258 - 259, “Sister Mart declared she would not ride behind such a team.” Bradford describes how awkward their new team looked and when they got to Tallahassee and a crowd gathered, “Sister Mart burst into tears.”
Bradford’s aunt Lizzie answered the youthful question from the youngsters Sam about what Santa Claus would bring with an explanation that Santa could not very well run the blockade. Bradford remembered that she continued “‘Don’t you remember, Sam, when Captain Wheeler’s boat was trying to enter the Suwannee and the Yankees captured him and all the nice clothes Grandpa had ordered and paid for, for you, were captured?’ ‘Yes,’ Sam remembered, and a silence fell upon the group, sitting around on the floor and, when conversation was resumed, it was rather a sad outlook for Christmas.’”

Bradford reported that Sam was desperately in need of clothing; “the clothes he wore were neatly patched in almost every conceivable place and like Joseph’s coat, showed many colors.” It was hard to tell who despaired most about a Spartan Christmas. Bradford observed that “Sadly the boys talked of Christmas trees they had either seen or heard of; almost with tears they deplored the blockade and finally little Henry sobbed out loud, ‘Oh, God, please ‘stroy de’ ‘Ankees.’ Some way must be found to help Santa Clause run the blockade.” Mothers, too, were clearly distressed at the loss of familiar family rituals and at their inability to provide their children with happy holiday memories.

In Georgia, Dolly Lunt was most keenly stricken by the contrast between war Christmases and peacetime ones. She apparently anticipated that her daughter, Sadai, would not accept the blockade explanation that Sam was offered. On Christmas Eve, 1864 she noted

No confectionery, cakes or pies can I have. We are all sad; no loud jovial laugh from our boys is heard. Christmas Eve, which has ever been gaily celebrated here, which has witnessed the popping of fire-crackers and the hanging up of stockings, is an occasion now of sadness and gloom. I have nothing even to put in Sadai’s stocking, which hangs so invitingly for Santa Claus. How disappointed she will be in the morning, though I have explained to her why he cannot come. Poor children! Why must the innocent suffer with the guilty?

The scene Christmas morning confirmed her suspicion that the lack of the accustomed materials for their traditional Christmas rituals would cause grief. Her diary entry reported that

Sadai jumped out of bed very early this morning to feel in her stocking. She could not believe but that there would be something in it. Finding nothing, she crept back into bed, pulled the cover over her face, and I soon heard her sobbing. The little negroes all came in: “Christmas gift, mist’ess! Christmas gift, mist’ess!” I pulled the cover over my face and was soon mingling my tears with Sadai’s.

95 Ibid., 252.
96 Ibid.
97 Dolly Lunt, The Diary of Dolly Lunt Burge, 175.
Now forced to provide with such limited resources, Dolly Lunt cried what must have been tears of sadness and frustration.

Christmas gifts were the least of worries for a greater number of women who were struggling to keep house and home together. Florida native Hugh Black reported to his wife while marching in Georgia in the summer of 1864 that “The country is entirely ruined from here to Dalton and the Women and children are suffering for something to eat.” Women’s diets suffered in like measure to the Confederate soldiers’ diets. Hunger is a constantly recurring theme in diaries of the war and immediate postwar period.

Dolly Lunt, living alone with her daughter and slaves, suffered from hunger when Atlanta was burned and her home was pillaged. She wrote in 1864, “My poor servants feel so badly at losing what they have worked for; meat, the hog meat that they love better than anything else, is all gone.” She was not only hungry, but without food, she lost all leverage for federal protection from bummers, marauding bands of deserters who were marching on southern homes. She despaired, “Nothing to eat! I could give my guard no supper so he left us.” She was so distraught that she attempted to evoke a sympathetic response from her enemies by appealing to their impulse to protect women generally, but the tactic had little useful effect. “I appealed to another, asking him if he had wife, mother, or sister, and how he should feel were they in my situation.” The guards she was left were foreign soldiers who spoke no English, and she did not feel particularly confident with their services.

Unprotected, what food was left after the troops took what they wanted was often wasted. Lunt recollected that on November 21, 1864

We had the table laid this morning, but no bread or butter or milk. What a prospect for delicacies! My house is a perfect fright. I had brought in Saturday night some thirty bushels of potatoes and ten or fifteen bushels of wheat poured down on the carpet in the ell. Then the few gallons of syrup saved was daubed all about. The backbone of a hog that I had killed on Friday, and which the Yankees did not take when they cleaned out my smoke-house, I found and hid under my bed, and this is all the meat I have.

98 Letter to Mary Ann Black from Hugh Black, dated July 20, 1864, in Letters of Captain Hugh Black to his Family in Florida During the War Between the States, 1862 – 1864, Elizabeth Coldwell Frano, ed. (Evansville, IN: E.C. Frano, 1998), 66.
100 Ibid., 161.
101 Ibid., 163–164.
Even if goods were available in the stores, Union troops attempted to compel Confederates to pledge loyalty through economic coercion that seriously affected women. The fictitious character, Bill Arp, asked rhetorically in his “State of the Country” “What harm can the women do by receiving their letters oath-free?” Union troops were well aware of the role women played in undermining Union success, and in the border states under Union control, southern women were targeted as a potential source of Confederate strength. Catherine Clinton points out that “The war took a terrible toll on young women’s lives, and federal occupation hemmed them in even more.” This hemming in was deliberate, of course. Representatives of the United States government withheld desperately needed goods from women whom they could not control. On January 7, 1864, Ellen House noted that “An order came out yesterday forbidding any one from buying any thing except those who take the oath as Loyal citizens, not even a dose of medicine or a spool of thread.” A local Confederate woman in Tennessee was denied permission to buy her baby a warm cloak. Non-combatants in these territories who were attempting to care for their families by practicing their profession had to take the oath before they were allowed to continue.

Perhaps one of the most striking distinctions between northern and southern women’s wartime experiences was the Confederates’ devastating lack of resources for both civilian and soldier populations. The lack of food and medical supplies as a result of the stranglehold the Union exerted on Confederate shipping was exacerbated by the pillaging increasingly affecting larger areas of the South’s home front. Compounding the stress of dwindling supplies, the blockade also increased southern women’s workload. Dolly Lunt complained at the end of 1864 that her burdens had been directly increased as a result of the Anaconda Plan. She noted on November 12, 1864: “Warped and put in dresses for the loom. Oh, this blockade gives us work to do for all hands!”

The hard labor indeed devolved onto southern women, who, in some cases, had been entirely sheltered from certain, unladylike tasks their whole lives. Dolly Lunt found herself...
hauling grain to the mill. On a cold November morning she noted “Mounted in the little wagon, I went, carrying wheat not only for myself, but for my neighbors. Never did I think I would have to go to mill! Such are the changes that come to us!” Emma LeConte was seventeen in 1865, and prescient beyond her years. She assessed how the war affected her entrance into womanhood.

How dreadfully sick I am of this war. Truly we girls, whose lot it is to grow up in these times, are unfortunate! It commenced when I was thirteen, and I am now seventeen and no prospect yet of its ending. No pleasure, no enjoyment – nothing but rigid economy and hard work – nothing but the stern realities of life. These which should come later are made familiar to us at an age when only gladness should surround us. We have only the saddest anticipations and the dread of hardships and cares, when bright dreams of the future ought to shine on us.

She was willing to trade work for freedom from submission to a political foe, however. “I do all my own sewing now besides helping Mother some. Now that everything is lost, perhaps we will all have to work for a living before long. I would far rather do that and bear much more than to submit to the Yankees.”

The anxiety they faced in provisioning their charges angered some women. By the summer of 1864, Union forces had reached Dolly Lunt’s Georgia home. On July 29, she reported

Sleepless nights. The report is that the Yankees have left Covington for Macon, headed by Stoneman, to release prisoners held there. They robbed every house on the road of its provisions, sometimes taking every piece of meat, blankets and wearing apparel, silver and arms of every description. They would take silk dresses and put them under their saddles, and many things for which they had no use. Is this the way to make us love them and their Union? Let the poor people answer whom they have deprived of every mouthful of meat and of their livestock to make any! Our mills, too, they have burned, destroying an immense amount of property.

Many southerners claimed the war was largely a result of the South’s want to protect their property rights from a tyrannical federal government hell-bent on taking the South’s assets, and the concept of total war, specifically designed to cause widespread demoralization, cemented the belief that southerners would be impoverished for the benefit of the North. In her question, “Is this the way to make us love them and their Union?” Lunt hinted at the widespread bitter, unrepentant feelings left in the aftermath of destruction across the South.

107 Ibid., November 26, 1864, 167.
108 LeConte, When the World Ended, 22.
109 Lunt, The Diary of Dolly Lunt Burge, 149.
Women facing troops in their yards filled their accounts with detailed descriptions of what material goods were stolen or destroyed. Beyond the catalog of what items were lost was a subtext of their loss of feeling secure and protected. Emma LeConte claimed that the anxiety attendant with the approach of the Yankee threat could cause a mother to miscarry her child. “Poor Aunt Sallie suffered dreadfully, and her babe was born dead – the result of the fright she experienced when the enemy passed though Milledgeville . . . misfortunes assail us on every side.”

In addition to suffering the stress that may have caused her infant’s death, Sallie suffered from want of food as a result of the Union’s policy of total war in Georgia. “What a budget of bad news this morning! Father said the Yanks made a clean sweep of everything, and we have lost all of our worldly possessions except the few negroes here. Perhaps Aunt Jane’s family and Sallie are almost starving! Oh, it is too dreadful to think of!”

Southern women who were living in the path of the invading armies were subject to the sights, sounds, and smells of war, and suffered because of it. Dolly Lunt, on the day of the Battle of Atlanta reported “We have heard the loud booming of cannon all day.” When she heard the Yankees were coming, she parsed out her belongings to slaves to be hidden. “And, verily, we had cause to fear that we might be homeless, for on every side we could see smoke arising from burning buildings and bridges . . . I shall sleep none tonight. The woods are full of refugees.”

Women’s poverty was a destabilizing influence on the South, and the psychological terror of poverty, homelessness, and want on women and children was as debilitating as the fear of enemy attack. Snipers’ fire, the slaughter of surrendered prisoners on both sides, guerrilla warfare, and bushwhackers added to the terror, especially in the South, the location of most of this spontaneous violence. Also, southern towns suffered reprisals for the guerrilla fighters’ deeds. Union troops burned several houses because contraband was found in one and then “threwed women and children out of dores and plaid hell Generally.”

Homelessness, destruction of valuables, hunger, and danger from outlaws who inhabited the nearby woods at night were the stuff of nightmares and constant anxiety. These fears extended to a greater number of southern civilians as enemy troops covered more of the South and as the deprivations because of the blockade plumbed the larders of more and more homes.

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110 LeConte, When the World Ended, 6.
111 Ibid., 7.
112 Lunt, The Diary of Dolly Lunt Burge, 147.
Women left to guard their home-forts were frequently the targets of marauding bands of men before Sherman conceived of his plans to raid as the bummers before him had done. Many southern women started out with very little for Yankees or southern bummers to take. Women struggled with managing a home and provisioning their family in the face of the crushing weight of supply shortages caused by the Union blockade. Although women managed to ward off starvation by creativity and hard work, it was nonetheless a tremendous burden and an unwelcome reality for many. Susan Bradford and her family were managing without men and without supplies. She wrote “Brother Amos left this morning [after a furlough of two weeks] and our hearts ache for both of them. The women of the South have much to bear. . . . the Yankees have succeeded in making us very uncomfortable, to say the least of it. . . . I think this blockade is devilish.”

Sherman’s plan to bring the South to its knees included breaking the will of southerners at home—many of them southern women. Despite the general’s love for the region and the people in it, he hated that the nation had gone to war against itself. He asserted that “War is cruelty, and you cannot refine it; and those who brought war into our country deserve all the curses and maledictions a people can pour out.” He then claimed that women had been poorly treated by Confederate soldiers in parts of the nation, and so the women’s complaints about Union troops in Georgia were not his first concern. He wrote to the citizens of the South in a letter to Atlanta’s mayor:

I myself have seen in Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Mississippi, hundreds and thousands of women and children fleeing from your armies and desperadoes, hungry and with bleeding feet. In Memphis, Vicksburg, and Mississippi, we fed thousands and thousands of the families of rebel soldiers left on our hands, and whom we could not see starve. Now that war comes to you, you feel very different. You deprecate its horrors, but did not feel them when you sent car-loads of soldiers and ammunition, and moulded shells and shot, to carry war into Kentucky and Tennessee, to desolate the homes of hundreds and thousands of good people who only asked to live in peace at their old homes, and under the Government of their inheritance. But these comparisons are idle.”

Of course the women in Sherman’s path felt differently. They were terrified. Dolly Lunt wrote in her diary “November 17, 1864. Have been uneasy all day. At night some of the neighbors, who had been to town, called. They said it was a large force moving slowly. What shall I do? Where go?” As the realization descended that she and her daughter might be in

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114 Bradford, Through Some Eventful Years, 177-178.
grave danger, Lunt wrote the next day “Slept very little last night. Went out doors several times and could see large fires like burning buildings. Am I not in the hands of a merciful God who had promised to take care of the widow and orphan?” Far from wringing her hands, Lunt ordered all of her food and valuables hidden by her slaves. She “[b]ade them hide the wagon and gear and then go on plowing. Went to packing up mine and Sadai’s clothes. I fear that we shall be homeless.” Homelessness was not only the absence of a place to sleep, dress, and prepare meals, but it was the absence of protection, and the absence of southern tradition and culture.

As Sherman’s troops approached Atlanta, Lunt became increasingly terrorized. On November 19, 1864 she fretted about her circumstances. “Slept in my clothes last night, as I heard that the Yankees went to neighbor Montgomery’s on Thursday night at one o’clock, searched his house, drank his wine, and took his money and valuables . . . . Oh God, the time of trial has come!” A neighbor seemed less concerned than she about the effect Sherman’s army would have on them and she scolded, “Blissful ignorance! Not knowing, not hearing, he has not suffered the suspense, the fear that I have for the past forty-eight hours.”

As the men approached, Lunt told her “frightened servants” to hide while she stood at the gate to ask for protection and a guard.

But like demons they rush in! My yards are full. To my smoke-house, my dairy, pantry, kitchen, and cellar, like famished wolves they come, breaking locks and whatever is in their way. The thousand pounds of meat in my smoke-house is gone in a twinkling, my flour, my meat, my lard, butter, eggs, pickles of various kinds—both in vinegar and brine—wine, jugs and jars are all gone. My eighteen fat turkeys, my hens, chickens, and fowls, my young pigs, are shot down in my yard and hunted as if they were rebels themselves. Utterly powerless, I ran out and appealed to the guard.

She received no protection and she was “utterly powerless.” It was if she was appealing to Sherman’s thunderstorm. The troops took her “dear old buggy horse,” her brood mare, her colt, her mule and a baby colt. “There they go!” she exclaimed “There go my mules, my sheep, and worse than all, my boys!” Her loss of her servants, her “boys,” above the loss of her livestock, represented her future. It was something to mourn indeed that her “poor, doomed negroes” were, in her recollection, “forced from home at the point of a bayonet.” She was lamenting the loss of her slaves and directing her anger toward the Yankees who had more than the South had, but was

116 Lunt, The Diary of Dolly Lunt Burge, Nov. 17-18, 1864, 158.
117 Ibid., November 19, 1864, 159-162.
118 Ibid., November 19, 1864, 159 – 162.
rapacious for more. She indicated her resentment by pointing out that she needed her slaves more than the Union did.

No! Indeed no! They are not friends to the slave. We have never made the poor, cowardly negro fight, and it is strange, passing strange, that the all-powerful Yankee nation with the whole world to back them, their ports open, their armies filled with soldiers from all nations, should at last take the poor negro to help them out against this little Confederacy, which was to have been brought back into the Union in sixty days’ time!\(^\text{119}\)

Dolly Lunt, in her anxiety, lapsed back into the comforting myths about the slave south. She repeated like a catechism the white southerners’ beliefs about the benign institution of slavery, indicating that a life of freedom with Union troops was tantamount to a life of trial.

My poor boys! My poor boys! What unknown trials are before you! How you have clung to your mistress and assisted her in every way you knew. Never have I corrected them; a word was sufficient. Never have they known want of any kind. Their parents are with me. How sadly they lament the loss of their boys. Their cabins are rifled of every valuable, the soldiers swearing that their Sunday clothes were the white people’s, and that they never had money to get such things as they had.\(^\text{120}\)

After rifling through the slaves’ belongings, the troops inspected and claimed her own. “Ovens, skillets, coffee-mills, of which we had three, coffee-pots—not one have I left. Sifters all gone!” Not only would she now have to do the work formerly reserved for her slaves, but she was facing the prospect of doing it all without sifters. Dolly Lunt then had a stroke of luck. A Union captain near her home was a friend of her brother from Illinois. She begged him, through tears, to protect her “from the vandals who were forcing themselves into [her] room,” and she implored him to tell her brother of her “destitution.” She despaired “I saw nothing before me but starvation.”\(^\text{121}\) She described the scar that Sherman’s troops left on her property and on her psyche. “They tore down my garden palings, made a road through my backyard and lot field, driving their stock and riding through, tearing down my fences and desolating my home—wantonly doing it when there was no necessity for it. Such a day, if I live to the age of Methuselah, may God spare me from ever seeing again!”\(^\text{122}\) Worse than having a destroyed house, however, was having no home at all, and southern women often expressed their fear that they would be separated from their homes, from the centers of their existence. Lunt explained

\(^{119}\) Ibid., 160.
\(^{120}\) Ibid., 160-161.
\(^{121}\) Ibid., 159 – 162.
\(^{122}\) Ibid.
“Dinnerless and supperless as we were, it was nothing in comparison with the fear of being driven out homeless to the dreary woods.”

She feared that she would be driven out of her home either by the soldiers or by fire. Lunt kept a night-long vigil over the fire destroying the city of Atlanta as Union fires destroyed cities all over the South. “I sat up all night, watching every moment for the flames to burst out from some of my buildings. The two guards came into my room and laid themselves by my fire for the night. I could not close my eyes, but kept walking to and fro, watching the fires in the distance and dreading the approaching day, which, I feared, as they had not all passed, would be but a continuation of horrors.” Catherine Clinton puts Lunt’s experience in context: “The majority of white women on plantations did not become homeless indigents, although there are accounts of some women from wealthy families reduced to seeking any kind of work at all by war’s end. . . Slave women might be thrown off estates, while white women could be driven from their homes by invading troops. But more commonly, wives, black and white, anchored themselves in their husbandless homes, trying to hold the household together in terrible times.”

This garrison mentality that never disappeared, this unfortunate distinction that one group of Americans had been victimized by their neighbors, indeed made for terrible times. And southern women were instrumental in keeping alive this feeling so that the gallant men of the South could rise to the occasion and protect them, restore them to their position of privilege, when the time was right.

Sherman was attacking the South’s means of making war, including its psychological resources. Sherman’s intent to demoralize the backbone of the Confederacy—its civilian population—frequently succeeded, but this demoralization had a lasting effect: those who felt attacked outside of the boundaries of traditional warfare—white southern women—were angered by their treatment and galvanized in their hatred of the enemy. Union troops represented predators to these women. Soldiers attacked their homes, their incomes and their person. Susan Bradford, although far removed from invading troops exclaimed “Sherman is a very Devil.” William Tecumseh Sherman understood the toll that war takes on all citizens of a nation. He advised,

\[\text{123 ibid.}\]
\[\text{124 Ibid.}\]
\[\text{125 Clinton, } \text{Tara Revisited}, 102.\]
\[\text{126 Bradford, Through Some Eventful Years, 256.}\]
however, “You might as well appeal against the thunder-storm as against these terrible hardships of war.”

Some women were so tenacious that they would have attempted to appeal to the thunder-storm. When Ellen House’s father chose not to suffer from either hunger or pride by taking the loyalty oath, she was enraged. She fumed

I have been mad as a hornet all day. Father went and took the oath, and what is the worst took Mr Humes with him as a friend to vouch for him. It is not going to do one bit of good, and I would have done any thing rather than to have him do it. I know it don’t change his feelings one bit, but it is so humiliating. It mortified me to death. What is the use of fussing though, it wont do any good.

She learned that a local Confederate officer had applied to take the oath, and she was distraught. She wrote “I was thunderstruck. Did not say a word more, but came home and sat down to sew, but I could not. I felt so worried. At last I put my work away in disgust . . . .” House soon realized that she had recoiled in horror too soon. A letter from the wrongly accused southern man clarified that he did not soil his name by pledging loyalty to the Union. Lt. Buchanan wrote to Ellen. “Oh! I felt when I read it that I had wronged him, in thinking for one moment he could prove false to every feeling of honor and take the oath to the vilest government that ever disgraced a civilized world.” House was sorry that she had preemptively linked this soldier to the object of her revulsion, and she continued to vilify the occupying forces in her town.

Ideally, House preferred that she and her father remain avowed Confederates by all outward appearances. The ideology of Confederate righteousness was every bit as strong in southern women as in southern men. When it was time for House to contemplate taking the oath

Mother said I had better go and take the oath. I told her I could not for anything short of saving the life of a member of the family. Sister said of course I was better than any body else, and mother that I would give up my family to go among strangers, who she supposed I cared for more than I did for them. I just boiled over. I said I would not take the oath, I wished they would send me south and walked off.

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129 Ibid., 106.
130 Ibid., 108.
131 Ibid., 96-97. Today, eligibility to become a member of the UDC is dependent upon the prospective member’s descent from an individual who served on behalf of the Confederacy or who helped materially aid the cause. If the ancestor, however, took the oath prior to April 9, 1865, the ancestor is not a valid antecedent for membership “unless proof of further service nullifying the oath is provided.”
http://www.discoveret.org/udcknox/Eligibility/eligibility.html
When the local Union commander wished to compel more obedience from House than she was willing to demonstrate, he first threatened her with banishment, told her that Union troops were responsible for shooting her beloved dog, and then taunted her with the prospect of a prostrated South. Both House and the Union commander, Captain McAlister, were engaged in a game of posturing in which House had to deny feeling threatened by the efforts of the men in command to subdue her “very violent” speech and behavior, and the men then had to discern whether exercising their power over House would do more harm or good. House wrote in her journal:

Capt McAlister told me tonight that he had seen Gen Carter and had quite a long talk with him, during which he (Gen C) had requested him to caution me, as I would certainly be sent South if I were not more prudent. That I had been very active and &e, and the military here had from my actions and conversations been led to believe me a very violent rebel, one who would sell her soul and body for the benefit of the Confederates. I told him I certainly would lay down my life willingly did I know by so doing I would do the Confederacy the least good . . . Gen Carter is foolish if he thinks he is going to frighten me. I am not afraid of him or any other Yankee living or dead . . . One of his clerks named Price told Lusie he shot my dog, the trifling rascal. Oh! wont I have an opportunity some time to pay off a few of the debts I owe to the miserable wretches, and I wont do it with a good will.\textsuperscript{132}

The Union troops could attempt to harass and intimidate this woman, but it clearly provoked her in a direction they did not desire. They could demand her home and shoot her dog, and ultimately, they could order her out of the area, but with these attacks on southern women’s property and honor, they were encouraging the habit of southerners to hate them and disregard the Union victory. These extreme positions on both sides deepened the sectional gulf that led to the war and confirmed each side’s suspicions of the opposition.

House recounted the commander’s taunt about the outcome of the war and her own extreme response. “Capt McAlister says the North will subjugate the South – if she wont submit she will be exterminated. I told him I had rather see both my brothers dead than take the oath to any such government as his.”\textsuperscript{133} Ellen House said she was more willing to guard jealously the hierarchy that the Confederate cause represented. Most women during and immediately after the war could not afford such bravado, however, especially if it meant losing what few resources they clung to.

If women attempted to appeal to the thunderstorm, they might find that their disobedience was

\textsuperscript{132} House, \textit{A Very Violent Rebel}, 113.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 115.
repaid with banishment from their home and from their culture. Union commanders threatened to send southern women – many of whom were not in a position to refuse – south if they did not take the loyalty oath. Ellen House’s friend was issued such a threat. House reported

She says Maj Gratz sent her word with the order that she could avoid being sent off by coming up and taking the oath. We advised her to do it. She says she knows no one south. Every thing she has is here, and she don’t know how she could take her two little children and go among total strangers. I asked her tonight what she was going to do. She said put on two veils in the morning and go take the oath.134

This veiling symbolized her mourning the death of her former position in the South. She didn’t want to take the oath, she didn’t want the Union commander to threaten to banish her, and she likely wanted to turn back the clock. But southern women could not bring back the dead, nor could they turn back the clock.

Avoiding homelessness was a pressing and anxiety-provoking concern for southern women. Women could be banished or driven away as refugees, and their homes were frequently taken as Union headquarters, hospitals, or living space for officers. In Tennessee, one Union commander contemplated commandeering a local woman’s house. Ellen Renshaw House recounted “Captain Whitman . . . threatened to take her house for a hospital. When she asked him where she and her children were to go if he did, he said if he compelled her to give up her house, he could compel some rebel family to take her in.”135 This redistribution of property fueled the southern sense of violation, oppression, and chaos at the instigation of the North. When the news came that Union troops desired possession of her family’s home, House wrote “Mother told him she would not leave. He certainly could not turn women into the street. He had always been paid regularly, and she was good for the rent.”136 She was so enraged that the social order, which demanded for white southern women some measure of protection and respect, had been turned on its head that she predicted that the aberration would be put aright. Men should know better—even if they were enemy federal men. She wrote about their impending ousting, “I think this turning us out is perfectly outrageous, and for a set of men too. Our day will come some time, it must.”137

If southern families did not themselves flee, many knew individuals or families who fled. Dolly Lunt observed that southern travelers were an important source of information. She wrote

134 Ibid., 94.
135 Ibid., 92.
136 Ibid., 79.
137 Ibid., 87.
in her journal “Mr. Kennedy stopped all night with us. He has been refugeeing on his way home. Every one we meet gives us painful accounts of the desolation caused by the enemy. Each one has to tell his or her own experience, and fellow-suffering makes us all equal and makes us all feel interested in one another.”

Lunt insightfully described the method by which southerners attempted to come to terms with the suffering in the South. By focusing on their common feelings of suffering and oppression, white southerners had formed a southern consciousness, believing that their collective suffering could ultimately bring triumph—if not a military victory, than perhaps an ideological one.

Confederate women were angry and thus motivated to seek some compensation, some victory, when Union troops took their homes. They understood that property was constitutionally protected, and when they were forced to accommodate the enemy in their homes – or when the enemy destroyed their homes – they were further convinced that more than just their property rights were violated. The feeling of vulnerability was exactly the effect Union commanders and northern Republicans hoped to achieve, but this attack on the sanctity of the white woman’s home instantly associated Union troops with whites’ fears of violation of their social position. Lost Cause ideology easily equated the threat of violation of Union troops in the homes of southern white women with the threat of violation of savage blacks who wished to violate the sanctity of the white home. Sherman’s willingness to make southerners howl reminded women of the brutal means their enemies would employ to subdue them, take their belongings, kill their men, and destroy their culture. It was the Union’s intent to make the whole South a battlefield and to treat all southerners as enemy combatants. Yankee troops treated women harshly because they rightly suspected their disloyalty to the Union, and they rightly understood women’s power to strike back at their foes.

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Through “total war,” the Union could bring the war to a hasty conclusion, but by forcing hunger, dislocation, and humiliation on southern women, the Union could never compel respect from their foes that might engender loyalty to the national government, and by extension, to northern values. Efforts to win the hearts and minds of women, the arbiters of culture and values, by locking them up, ejecting them from their homes and stealing their valuables and resources failed. Eugenia Phillips was jailed in Washington for her disloyalty.

Thus confined,


139 Phillips was a member of the Rose Greenhow spy ring and after her release from arrest in Washington, she moved to New Orleans where she was arrested again and imprisoned on the Yellow Fever station of Ship Island in the Gulf of Mexico.
she was provided plenty of solitude to contemplate the nature of power in the nation. In the boredom of confinement she could not enliven her imprisonment in a “miserable loft.” The women imprisoned with her burned camphor oil while pretending it was a good will offering to the Confederacy. “Some efforts are made at gaiety, but signally fail—none of our small pastimes bring any relief. Even our sacrifices on the Stove Altar no longer burn; but I fear the fire of resentment within our hearts, leaves no place for any other.”

As Union troops occupied more of the South, women who were neither prominently connected, nor spies had to fear threats of retribution by Union troops. Dolly Lunt’s neighbor, Mrs. Perry, worried constantly that her husband would be hanged as a traitor when he was captured by the Yankees. After the troops had passed by Lunt’s home and her edifice was still standing, she sought to comfort her neighbor in her distress “After the excitement was a little over, I went up to Mrs. Laura’s to sympathize with her, for I had no doubt that her husband was hanged. She thought so, and we could see no way for his escape.” The Union troops had apparently delighted in telling the women that they had hanged Mr. Perry and his brother. Amazingly, however, Mr. Perry “narrowly escaped” through country that he knew better than did his captors. When he returned, he found a relieved wife, but “all of his negroes are gone, save one man that had a wife here at my plantation. They are very strong Secesh.”

His wife wanted to reject any offers of protection from the soldiers who taunted her about her husband’s execution, but she succumbed to the realities of the untamed southern frontier. According to Lunt “When the army first came along they offered a guard for the house, but Mrs. Laura told them she was guarded by a Higher Power, and did not thank them to do it. She says she could think of nothing else all day when the army was passing but of the devil and his hosts. She had, however, to call for a guard before the night or the soldiers would have taken everything she had.”

Denying the reality of war and defeat was one way that southern women protected themselves emotionally from the incomprehensible loss of all they knew. In their diaries, women steadfastly maintained that the South was invincible. Women wrote confident letters. Mary Ann Buie, writing from Cumberland County, North Carolina, in June, 1861, assumed that all conflict required some inconvenience, but in the end, the righteousness of the South’s cause would prevail. Buie wrote “My Dear Cousin, What distressing times we have. I do hope that we

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141 Lunt, The Diary of Dolly Lunt Burge, 162-163.
142 Ibid.
will hear better news before long for I know that our cause is just for we have the Bible on our side and the Yankees cannot subdue us I don’t believe.”

Buie was correct in a sense: killing southern men could not defeat the southern culture of white supremacy. By wars’ end, southerners were hardly subdued with regard to their conviction about the inferiority of blacks and their push for states’ rights. The North’s killing southern men, did, however, cause a terrible grief for southern women. Wives, mothers, and sisters felt the sting of subjugation as letters, telegrams, and notices in newspapers announced the death and wounds sustained by their fighting men. As the war ground on, and as the Union strategy of total war rent the South in two, women’s fear of their troops being “subdued” by force became increasingly real. Subjugation, as historians have noted, characterized the relationship of slaves to their masters and of women to men—not of honorable southern men to vile northern ones.

News of Confederate losses represented to southern women the loss of southern chivalry. Together, the loss of the war and its hardships caused intense emotional distress. As women’s letters and diaries during the war plainly stated, southern women needed to believe the boasts of their fighting men – that ten of the enemy would be killed for every one rebel man. Dolly Lunt exclaimed “It makes me laugh to hear when our contemptible enemies talk about annihilating us! The idea is simply ridiculous . . . we cannot be conquered! Never, never.”

But bravado and drilling could not prepare green troops for the terrifying sounds and smells of the artillery and screams of wounded comrades, and nothing could prepare the South for a humiliating defeat. Soldiers on both sides sometimes fled from fear, and sometimes were emboldened by it, but the fear of being conquered crept into the writings of southerners more often as the war raged on.

Women were angry about the federal presence in the South, and they understood that larger indignities loomed near. Ellen Renshaw House’s observations about what the loss of the war meant for the South were keen. She linked the consequences imposed upon men to the ultimate suffering of families. On Friday, January 1, 1864, she wrote

The Yankees have completely overrun Tennessee, and are tightening the cords on the rebels every day. Southern men are allowed to do nothing. The consequence is as the season advances the suffering of their family increases. Today is the coldest we have had this winter, and yet they sent off our prisoners, many of them without blankets or even shoes or coats. They seemed glad to go. They cannot well be worse off than in Jail here,

143 Mary Ann Buie to "my dear cousin," June 27, 1865 in Mary Ann S. Buie Letters, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. A Mississippi UDC chapter is named for Buie.
144 Dolly Lunt, The Diary of Dolly Lunt Burge, 163.
such a horrid place as it is. The poor fellows have taken up some of the flooring to burn. They get no wood half the time, and such weather as this it is perfectly outrageous.”

The Union troops in her hometown were outrageous, the treatment of the prisoners was outrageous, and the assault on the southern social order was outrageous, according to House.

George Rable explained why these tactics of violating the homes of southerners were so damaging. He wrote “By carting off items of no military value – including treasured heirlooms – the Yankees showed a certain method in this seemingly mad carnival of destruction. Not only did they strip families of food and other necessities, they seized or destroyed irreplaceable pictures, documents, and other mementos. They struck at the heart of the home, tearing at the sinews of memory that bound families together and to past generations. In ransacking houses, they in effect ravaged habit and tradition, destroyed the commonplace, and left lasting scars, on the land and the people.”

Lunt was succinct in her summation of Sherman’s effect on her when in November, 1864, she remarked “then, presently, more soldiers came by, and this ended the passing of Sherman’s army by my place, leaving me poorer by thirty thousand dollars than I was yesterday morning. And a much stronger Rebel!”

After the Union army had passed by her home, Dolly Lunt inventoried her losses, and was relieved to find that the family’s cemetery had been left unmolested. Although she pined for her dead husband, she wrote on November 22, 1864 “As I stood by my dead, I felt rejoiced that they were at rest. Never have I felt so perfectly reconciled to the death of my husband as I do today, while looking upon the ruin of his lifelong labor. How it would have grieved him to see such destruction! Yes, theirs is the lot to be envied. At rest, rest from care, rest from heartaches, from trouble . . .”

It was this unwillingness to admit defeat that drove some southerners to value death over life. Susan Bradford commented that near Tallahassee, Florida, “All the girls in the neighborhood know how to shoot and we have agreed, if we cannot escape, we will shoot ourselves rather than fall into the hands of the enemy as they are treating the women and old men dreadfully in Georgia.” And that conservative southern women would wish to upend the sex hierarchy to maintain the racial hierarchy was evident when Emma LeConte questioned Jefferson

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146 Rable, *Civil Wars*, 172-173.
148 Ibid., 164-165, November 22, 1864.
Davis’s strategy. “Why does not the President call out the women if there are [not] enough men? We would go and fight, too – we would better all die together.”

The catastrophe for the South was not only the physical penetration of the sacred homes of the South, but also the psychological violence this caused. War is, of course, a physical and emotional violation for all sections involved, and the North also had vacant chairs that profoundly saddened all segments of northern society during the war and after, but the symbolic “vacant chair” took on a different meaning for southerners. Historian John Neff points out that the North was as active as the South in mythmaking, but while the death of northern men symbolized heroism and bravery in the fight for freedom, contemplating the death of southern men in a lost cause triggered feelings of shame and defeat. Until the war was over, however, women continued to hope against hope that humiliation and shame would not be the lot of the South. Southern white women fervently hoped that the ideology that they embraced—that southern men would protect the South’s culture of racial and gender hierarchy – would triumph. Capturing the mix of hope and loss after a Confederate defeat, Bradford noted “This is a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer.”

The theme of humiliation through war is prominent in women’s wartime writing, especially as they describe the invasion of their homes and the treatment they received by northern men and blacks. Women were also humiliated that their soldiers were bested, even after their boast of military superiority in the face of a stronger foe. One way that southerners tried to understand the unbearable prospects for the future was to view Appomattox as a watershed moment in which Federals and Confederates began to rediscover their shared American heritage and move beyond a fratricidal aberration in the national experience. This interpretation of surrender assuaged the feelings of inadequacy for the defeated and reinforced the notion that the victorious were gallant and respectable towards their opponents. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, Union commander, who wrote about the war in the Passing of the Armies in 1915, observed about defeated southerners, “Before us in proud humiliation stood the embodiment of manhood: men whom neither toils and suffering, nor the fact of death, nor disaster, nor homelessness could bend from their resolve; standing before us now, thin, worn, and famished, but erect, and with eyes looking level into ours . . .”

150 LeConte, When the World Ended, 90.
151 John R. Neff, Honoring the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2005), 7.
152 Bradford, Through Some Eventful Years, 241.
153 Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, The Passing of the Armies: an account of the final campaign of the Army of the Potomac, Based upon Personal Reminiscences of the Fifth Army Corps, (Gettysburg, PA: Stan Clark Military
The resolve of southerners, however, was to win back their honor, and if southerners were humiliated, it was more motivation to reclaim some dignity in the face of their naked shame. Psychological warfare was not only a collateral product of invasion, it was an artfully applied war strategy aimed at subjecting southerners – men and women – so utterly that they would never again appeal to rebellion. Since southerners had predicated much of their justifications for white supremacy on the need for white men to protect white women’s sexuality, a Yankee violation of the “magic circle” of the white southern home was a particularly sharp barb.

One of the most potent maledictions that Sherman could have poured out on the South, the surest way to crush out “southern honor,” was to suggest that southern women had no virtue worth defending. Catherine Clinton recounts the story of Sherman’s forced removal of four hundred women from their rural Georgia homes and the ensuing march to the nearest rail depot ten miles away for deportation North. Clinton writes “Contemporary folklore has the despised Union general claiming that the women were all prostitutes and shipping them out to keep Rebel harlots away from his troops. But whether they were common camp followers or merely women burned out of their factories, they reflected the growing number of female poor.” While individuals were struggling with the poverty that roving bands of hungry bummers intensified, the Confederate Congress enumerated the outrages committed by Union troops. In December, 1863, they issued a bitter denunciation of their conduct.

Accompanied by every act of cruelty and pain, the conduct of the enemy has been destitute of that forbearance and magnanimity which civilization and Christianity have introduced to mitigate the asperities of war. Houses are pillaged and burned, churches are defaced, towns are ransacked, clothing of women and infants is stripped from their persons, jewelry and mementoes of the dead are stolen, mills and implements of agriculture are destroyed, private salt works are broken up, the introduction of medicine is forbidden, means of subsistence are wantonly wasted to produce beggary, prisoners are returned with contagious diseases, the last morsel of food has been taken from families… helpless women have been exposed to the most cruel outrages and to that dishonor which is infinitely worse than death.

It is difficult to discern which transgression the Confederates ranked at worst: violations of property or of the “southern code.” Significantly, the Confederate government identified that

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Books; Reprint edition 1994), 260. Joshua Chamberlain commanded the 20th Maine and was awarded the Medal of Honor. He served as governor of the State of Maine from 1867 to 1871 and as President of Bowdoin College from 1871 to 1883.


155 Ibid., 111.
aggression toward women – they strongly implied that women were at grave risk of being raped by Union soldiers – was beyond the bounds of civility. Women’s virtue was life itself. Southern women wrote less about sexual violation than being hungry and having to work, and thus demonstrated that they were far more concerned with finding appropriate food and shelter than with the unwelcome sexual advances of Union men. Whether southern women worried more about their own sexual purity or about feeding their children, the invasion was a result of the inability of Confederate troops to safeguard them.

Eugenia Phillips understood early what subjugation to Yankee soldiers meant for the South’s future and for southern white women. She was a member of the prominent Southern Jewish Levy family, older sister to Phoebe Levy Pember (matron at Chomborazo Confederate Hospital in Richmond), and mother to nine children. She was so headstrong that she spied for the Confederacy although her husband was a Union supporter. She was jailed in Washington, forced to move to Richmond, and jailed again on the infamous mosquito-infested Ship Island near New Orleans. In her diary, Phillips details how the small indignities of war left lasting psychic scars on the households of the South.

She knew that when women’s homes were trespassed by enemy troops, the foundations of southern culture and the idea of southern chivalry had been compromised. Union commanders understood this as well, and purposefully seized prominent women’s homes and, for a select few, bodily detained them for portions of the war as both a safety against spying and a representation of the power of the North to humble southerners on several fronts. Phillips was jailed for spying for the South, and, suffering degradations of person and space not common for elite southern women, she had to face her trials with fortitude. On Thursday, August 28, 1861, she wrote in her journal:

This day has ushered in a new era in the History of the Country, one which marks the arrest and imprisonment of women for political opinions! At eleven o’clock we were notified that my sister (a visitor) my two daughters and myself were by the orders of the government to be taken from our house, and conveyed as prisoners to another place of confinement. We immediately prepared with courageous hearts, inspired with the thought that we were suffering in a noble cause, and determined so to bear ourselves, as not to shame our southern countrywomen. My dear husband was my chief sorrow. For ourselves, conscious that we had done no wrong, we feared nothing.\textsuperscript{156}

Although she claimed to “fear nothing,” her words suggest that she was very afraid for the state of Union domination. Through the act of writing that she was unafraid, she may have been

\textsuperscript{156} Phillips Diary, 6.
trying to convince herself of that. She was imprisoned and far from home in a time of war; her husband might have well been in grave danger, and she suffered the humiliation of confinement with no articles of diversion or refinement at the hands of enemy guards.

Imprisoned away from her young child, and suffering from serious headaches, Eugenia Phillips quickly succumbed to despair. On Thursday, September 5, 1861, she noted “Great despondency and illness have marked the interval since I last wrote in my journal. Nothing to raise our spirits—everything to depress them . . . we have sunk down into a quiet gloom suspecting everybody and enjoying nothing.” Days ran together. The security of her domestic life was instantly gone, and she could not appeal to any man to help her. She wallowed in sorrow with her older daughters who were imprisoned with her and despaired “Night has again come upon a sorrowful group—our hearts have given way. The unkindness in refusing admittance to the children, fills us with grief.” Nevertheless, she resolved not to be conquered and noted that “We have made up our minds to accept any deprivation the Govt. may choose to inflict upon us.”

Her imprisonment symbolizes the struggle southern women were engaging in – like their soldiers – with their country’s foe. The depredations were large and small. Phillips was locked in a power struggle with captors who made her wait two days for a headache remedy “giving me full time ad-interim to die as often as I pleased.” She decided, however, to best the “detectives” who held her when she resolved that she was “. . . determined to live to plague mankind a little more and in the hope of seeing a few of these ‘detectives’ hung.” Southern women did not soon forget the war they fought on the home front, or in Phillips’ case, in the Union jail cell. The anxiety on non-combatants clearly stressed them emotionally, and in the case of Eugenia Phillips, her despair settled into a determination to seek retribution.

In the miserable moment, however, she was less courageous and more exasperated. She complained that

We have found the comforts promised very cold—they made a makeshift mosquito tent which “taxed all their mechanical ingenuity,” but they found that although they had blocked many mosquitoes out, there were many more still inside. But in barring ourselves against the foreign enemy, we had made no provision against the more insidious domestic foe—and we soon found to our sore disappointment that though men propose, bugs dispose. . . it was truly a touching sight to see “two maidens all forlorn”
employing their dainty fingers in the “crushing out” process . . . but through thick and thin we managed to worry out the night, crying and laughing by turns.” \(^{161}\)

The despair Phillips felt in the “crushing out process” of the domestic foe may have well represented what she wished to be able to visit upon the “foreign” one. But as a woman bound by propriety, and bound in jail, she knew that she and the South had to bide time before her humiliation and the violation of her honor could be avenged. She captured this conflict when she wrote in the summer of 1861 “Although my heart sickens and the future looks dark, some indefinable emotion, whispers courage and promises that a day of reckoning will soon come.” \(^{162}\)

That day of reckoning was far in the future, and years of grinding anxiety deepened the chronic fear of loss. Women who had voluntarily gathered together for mutual support or been involuntarily housed together could scarcely keep their minds off the present difficulties or future troubles. Eugenia Phillips pointed out that uncertainty caused a great deal of anxiety. She noted that one night “We were much too excited to sleep well last night. Alternate fear and hope have agitated our hearts into their lowest depths.” \(^{163}\) She tried to set a cheerful example, but, she wrote “The girls are disposed to be very blue and are amazed at my good spirits . . . our social atmosphere is so chilled, we are again filled with despair . . . we all sit in fearful silence.” \(^{164}\) Eugenia suffered from headaches that were likely a result of the stress of her confinement. Additionally, the “detectives” refused to allow her chambermaid to remain with the women. This forced self-reliance gave Phillips a bitter foretaste of what life might be like without “servants.” She presciently noted “It is not the necessity of waiting upon ourselves, so much as the petty tyranny that makes us feel and which is so ominous of what the future may have in store for us.” \(^{165}\) Phillips summarized the feelings of the women sharing her chamber, and her words are similar to those found in many diaries of southern women struggling through the war. “The gloom which now reigns over us is so intense, that none of us has spoken for hours —. The end must come soon.” \(^{166}\)

Most women understood that the end of the war would signal profound change in their daily lives and also in the south’s status in the nations. Southern women’s writings indicate that they were painfully aware of the chasm that had widened between sections as a result of the war. The South was economically and psychologically devastated for generations. War devastated

\(^{161}\) Ibid.
\(^{162}\) Ibid.
\(^{163}\) Ibid., 33.
\(^{164}\) Ibid., 26.
\(^{165}\) Ibid., 30.
\(^{166}\) Ibid.
men’s bodies and minds, and their ability to reclaim a position at the top of the southern social hierarchy, so necessary for white women’s own financial security.

Invasion and defeat also had ramifications for southerners on and off the battlefield. Historians in the 1990s began to consider how American veterans suffered from battle trauma. In 1997, Eric T. Dean examined in his book, *Shook Over Hell: Post-Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War*, the degrees to which men who fought in these two hotly debated conflicts suffered both psychologically and socially in postwar periods. Fighting men in the Civil War South experienced gruesome scenes of death, dismemberment, agony, and terror that had been unimaginable prior to the technologies and war fighting strategies used in the Civil War. According to Dean, not only did the battles terrorize men, soldiers also had to endure the unsanitary and disease-afflicted close quarters of camp life; the crushing distances they marched without adequate rest, rations, or footwear; and the brutal exposure to the elements necessitated by the cross-country maneuvering of a nineteenth-century infantry. Death from exertion or extremes of heat and cold were not uncommon, and some soldiers prayed for a fight to end their suffering from the unbearable camp conditions. Disease claimed twice the number of men than shot and shell, and Confederate men in particular were in constant want of food and pay.

While most southern women could not conceive of the “portrait of hell” that was a smoldering Civil War battlefield, letters sent from the front profoundly impressed them. The letters home tried to indicate the level of carnage modern war had brought to America. Women read the gruesome letters describing scenes of the frontlines like the one written by soldier John Dooley: “Brains, fractured skulls, broken arms and legs, and human form mangled in every conceivable and inconceivable manner . . . at every step they take they see piles of wounded and slain and their feet are slipping in the blood and brains of their comrades.” Women received ghastly letters:

Such pictures of horrors as Mr. P gives! Unnumbered dead federal soldiers cover the battle field, one hundred in one gully, uncovered and rotting in the sun, they were all strewn along the roadside. And dead horses everywhere by the hundred. Hospitals crowded to excess and loathsome beyond expressions in many instances. How fearful is war! I cannot put the details he gave me, they are too horrible!

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167 Dean, *Shook Over Hell*, 46.
168 Ibid., 56-57.
170 Clinton, *Tara Revisited*, 112.
In historical treatments of the war, the savagery is sometimes airbrushed away, according to Eric Dean. He writes, “The Civil War has sometimes been portrayed as almost gentlemanly, an unfortunate war between brothers in which Union and Confederate soldiers routinely chatted with each other and exchanged newspapers or tobacco for coffee. Such incidents surely did take place, but not on the battlefield.”\(^ {171}\) This was not the common experience of Confederate troops in war. Even if a soldier was not exposed to frequent fighting, bombardment by treacherous camp conditions and fear for the safety of one’s home was enough to wear down the staunchest rebel.

As soldiers could succumb to battle fatigue, so too could people behind the lines. Hugh Black inquired of his wife on May 24, 1863 “Are you tired of the war? I am.”\(^ {172}\) His assumption was that she might, indeed, be as tired of war as he was. As many women who were stoic in the face of the world crumbling around them, there were a number of women who were unable to respond to the stresses of war with equanimity. The reports from women in the South indicated that the predominant feature of the Confederate states for the better part of four years was terror or the anticipation of terror. For example, Cornelia Hancock from Pennsylvania, was in the South when she observed and was awed by Union firepower directed toward the heart of the South. She wrote home “I wish you could have heard Butler’s guns last night. It seemed as if thunderbolts from heaven were running riot in the land.”\(^ {173}\)

Many southern women saw themselves as partners to Confederate soldiers, and thus fellow sufferers for the hallowed Cause. Those southern women who were battle-hardened in make-shift army hospitals and who bravely faced the mangled men in their charge, like their fellow soldiers, could not help hoping that the brutality of war would be worthwhile in the end. Small numbers of Confederate women nursed the battered bodies of these men and salvaged them the best that Victorian medicine, and the Union blockade, would allow. Battlefield nurses felt as if they were contributing to their country’s effort, and the horrors of heroic techniques employed to salvage men’s bodies were viewed as sacrifices to their respective causes.\(^ {174}\)

\(^{171}\) Dean, *Shook Over Hell*, 58.

\(^{172}\) Letter to Mary Ann Black from Hugh Black, dated May 24, 1864, in *Letters of Captain Hugh Black to his Family in Florida During the War Between the States, 1862 - 1864*, Elizabeth Coldwell Frano, ed. (Evansville, IN: E.C. Frano, 1998), 50.


According to Catherine Clinton in *Tara Revisited*, southern white women were so invested in the cause for which their men fought and died, they also viewed themselves as partners and participants in the cause. Clinton observed “Whether they darned or sewed for loved ones or for the ‘sons of the Confederacy,’ they saw themselves as warriors as much as women.” Union women were the more numerous battlefield nurses, and Union men were no doubt equally traumatized by the war and were just as disabled from battle injuries, but a southern man’s wounds – to his body, his mind, and his honor – served as daily reminders to himself, his wife, and his community of the shame of defeat, and southern women felt this shame intensely.

Southern white women in the wartime South frequently wrote about their understanding of their position as rebel combatants in war. Even if southern society had not adopted the belief that white women were fit warriors, historian Alicia Long argues, Union soldiers and southern women themselves understood that the enemy combatants in the occupied South included mothers, wives, and daughters of those men who suited up to fight. Long points out that United States soldiers were ordered to treat southern women as fit objects of war who had surrendered their rights by their continued engagement in protest and by their unwillingness to be reconstructed.

These “domestic terrorists” probably seemed harmless enough in the milieu of the nineteenth century assumptions about women’s role. But had more men understood fully, as Sherman and Butler clearly did, the new nature of a war fought from house to house – and southern women’s willingness to protect the memory of this deep wound – then northern soldiers might have felt less “victorious.” Sherman acknowledged that women were the root of resistance, and he encountered this resistance as his men fought, if not hand-to-hand, then house-to-house. As Long suggests, southern women won their war of remembrance with words, not guns. After all, she concludes “The bite of the she-adder is as deadly as the bite of the he-adder.”

Many women felt that by striking at the center of Confederate culture, the home, the Union had started a culture war. The significant aspects of this new type of guerilla war were

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175 Clinton, *Tara Revisited*, 82.
176 Alecia P. Long, paper, “(Mis)remembering General Order 28: Benjamin Butler, the Woman Order and Historical Memory,” given at the Southern Association of Women Historians Seventh Conference on Women’s History, 2006, Baltimore, MD, panel title, “Constructing Citizenship during the Civil War.”
that Union troops “terrorized” and “violated” defenseless white women, that they armed blacks and empowered them over the white citizens of the South, and in these ways, they leveled a direct attack on white men’s honor. In Gallatin, Tennessee, Alice Williamson kept her diary not only to vent her rage and feelings of helplessness under the strict policing of a heavy-handed Union officer, but also as a lasting record of her trials to show her “rebel brothers,” presumably upon their victorious return. During the war, consequences could be serious for lashing out publicly against a Union officer. Most famous was the incident in New Orleans when the women of the Crescent City responded violently to Benjamin Butler’s effort to impugn their womanhood by treating their displays of Confederate patriotism as akin to harlotry, striking at the center of the white hierarchy in the South which protected white southern women’s sexuality at all cost.179 In Gallatin, however, the citizenry was kept in check through dramatic displays of Union might.

In that small Tennessee crossroads, Williamson despondently recorded in her diary on September 27, 1864, that “Tom Miller is to be hung Friday week for resenting an insult offered his mother by a yankee. He has been in the penitentiary a long time. His mother has gone to Washington to petition for a pardon.”180 Southern women were close to battle death and executions on a scale that northern women were not. Susan Bradford was at the Tallahassee train station when she witnessed two Confederate soldiers shot for desertion.181 Tragedy was commonplace in the wartime South. She remarked, after a series of family deaths from disease and war “Our ‘God’s Acre,’ [cemetery] is filling fast,” which was likely a common observation throughout the South.182

Alice Williamson recounted that the Union “policing” merely served to murder defenders of women and impose upon the South an up-ended social order where blacks were armed to pass among the defenseless and besieged southern women and children unimpeded. She was sixteen years old when she recorded in her diary “Gen. Payne stayed at Paduca 56 days and shot 67 men: he is under arrest Paduca is a union place. The noblehearted patriots who suffered here will never be cared for save by those at home whom their wrongs have made desolate. A company of negroes have just passed well armed they are going out to forage & steal I suppose.”183

Williamson significantly links the tyranny of the Union commander to the death

181 Ibid.
182 Ibid.
183 Alice Williamson Diary, 35-36.
of “noblehearted patriots” while continuing seamlessly to a depredation of the ability of blacks to possess weapons and steal provisions from the women left at home. Here she indicated that the representative of oppression, Payne, had not only wantonly killed noble men, defenders of white women, but had also participated in the destruction of southern culture by using black troops to literally and symbolically unseat them from their accustomed place of social privilege.

Killing southern men in the audience of women at home demoralized the support system of southern troops, but these acts also ingrained bitterness on the home front that had lasting ramifications decades after Appomattox. Women in all areas of the Union-controlled South experienced — and rebelled against — reconstruction-like conditions years before southern women elsewhere did. Deliberate attempts to terrorize the civilian population and control their behavior by the executions of captured soldiers were effective. Townspeople feared sadistic hunters on fast horses having “fine fun” with their victims on slow ones. Williamson committed this kind of outrage to paper because she hoped that her children might avenge it one day. She wished that her terror and her despair might come through the pages of her journal for posterity.

Another soldier was shot yesterday. The yankees went to jail and brought him while a citizen was standing near. He said the soldier was very poorly clad but his countenance was that of a gentleman. When the guard brought his horse to him (a broken down one from the camp) he asked what they were going to do with them. On being told to "Mount that horse and say no more . . ." he did so remarking that he supposed they were going to shoot him. They took him to the river to shoot him but finding some gentleman there - Mr. H. & M. they said they had gone in a hornet's nest to shoot and went somewhere else. When they carry them out to shoot them they given them a worn out horse and tell them if they can escape they may: they say they "have fine fun chasing the boy with fresh horses" I am sorry I did not commence my journal when old Payne first came; he was worse then than now.\footnote{Williamson Diary, http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/williamson/text.html, 11.}

She so resented the commander of the Union railroad guard occupying her hometown of Gallatin – an important road and waterway just above Nashville, Tennessee – in an effort to protect the rail lines and police the locals, she likened his actions to despotism. In February, 1864 she wrote “Our King (old Payne) has passed. I suppose he has killed every rebel within twenty miles of Gallatin and burned every town. Poor fellow! You had better be a praying old Sinner!”\footnote{Ibid., 1.} Payne would have to face his reward in the next life, but Williamson must have ruminated about scenarios in which southern men might avenge their humiliation in the here and now.
But southern men had left the home front virtually undefended from Union incursions and Williamson saw that the attacks from the battlefields spilled over onto the occupied home front. She recorded the terror of an abduction and murder of a former rebel soldier on March 12, 1864:

Yesterday he went up the country a few miles to a Mr. Dalton's whose son came home from the Southern Army the day before and had the same day taken the Amnesty Oath. Riding up to the door he enquired of Mr. Dalton if his son was at home but before he answered his son came to the door. Old Nick then told him to get his horse and go with him. After insulting the father he carried his son a half mile away and shot him six times. One of Payne's escort hearing the young man groan with pain placed a pistol to his temple and remarked, I will stop that, sir, he shot him again. But this is nothing new this is the fifth man that has been shot in this way, besides numbers that have been carried off by scouts and never return.¹⁸⁶

“Old Payne” and other Union troops across the occupied South were pursuing a policy of total war that brought the war home to women and dashed their hopes that they could remain in a support-only role in the war.

Eugenia Phillips suffered acutely while imprisoned in the capitol city. She recorded a nightmare in which she had been attacked by snakes and could not come to the aid of a friend. She escaped from the snake attack, but she upbraided herself for not aiding her friend. When she woke she thought that the snakes might represent the “detectives”—those Union soldiers who had raided her apartment and taken her prisoner. She asked her notebook rhetorically “But why torment oneself with dreams when the realities are themselves so full of horrors.”¹⁸⁷ She understood that the stronger her resistance to her foes, the more severe her punishment as a conquered enemy. She wrote “Indulging in a reflective mood, (a thing rather unusual with me) I begin to think that much of the severity we endure has been caused by the determined spirit with which we resisted the impertinent intrusions of these ‘detectives’ when they took possession of our house; for I am told we are left very much to the mercy (or the want of it) of these men.”¹⁸⁸

Women felt unprotected and “at the mercy” of rough men who did not have their best interests at heart. This invasion of southern values and society happened each time Union troops were stationed in seceded states, each time a southerner’s home was commandeered for a Union officer, each time a southern woman was forced to flee her home or was arrested and imprisoned by the enemy. Phillips was nervous that she might have been cast out of society altogether by

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 7.
¹⁸⁷ Phillips Diary, 23.
¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 16.
capricious captors. She lamented in her journal “In the depraved judgments of these Government officials such sinners as we are, deserve the dungeon and all its horrors.”

Traditionally, women were kept well away from the front, out of the prisons, and out of military hospitals, but as women were increasingly obligated to participate in the war, so were they obligated to witness the heartbreaking cruelty of war. The total war strategy sought to break the very heart of the enemy’s strength—the home—the locus of culture and family. Breaking the bodies of men and breaking the culture of the southern home both targeted “honor.” Williamson recorded how the use of humiliation was an integral part of this war against the southern culture of honor:

April 8th The young man that was shot Friday was from Sumner but no one can find out his name. Mrs. A and W was going from Col. G. and me! I think carrying him out to the pines. They say he wore a look of calm despair. The Yankees pretended that they were tired and sat down on the side of the road but made the soldier stand in the pike: he stood with arms folded across his noble heart (for well I know he was a noble Southron and eyes bent toward the ground as a pale as death while the yankees taunted him with such remarks as 'I will have his boots;' another would name something that he would.

In Williamson’s telling of the story, the young, doomed man represented the South; subjugated and humiliated while his personal effects were stolen. He stood nobly under this torture, but the nobility and calm were not of resignation. Williamson indicates that she believed the South—and this humiliated young man—would be vindicated. In her journal she warned the nervous Yankees when she believed southern troops were nearby “Don't be uneasy gentlemen your time will come soon.” The next day she remarked “surely the rebels are coming once again to this God-forsaken village.” But the southern army could not protect her or the God-forsaken village of Gallatin, Tennessee. The civilian population of the town was so terrorized by the retributive killings that it was notable when it was not frequent. Williamson noted laconically on March 22, 1864: “Cold and windy. Paynes behavior moderate. No murdering going on.”

In Knoxville, Tennessee, Union occupiers met their match with local resident, Ellen Renshaw House. House hated the Yankees so openly that she blamed them for the dust in the air and the stench in the streets. Her brother was a prisoner in a Union camp, and this only deepened her hatred of the soldiers who occupied her hometown, admitting to her journal that she could have seen every Yankee here murdered and not shuddered.

189 Ibid., 13.
191 Ibid, 8.
192 House, A Very Violent Rebel, 43.
House’s personality hardened as the war ground on. Her neighbor was set to be executed as a spy, and the women of the Union-occupied Tennessee town moved into action to make the accused comfortable, if they could not compel a commutation of his sentence. Two days before the man was set to hang, House commenced her rounds. “I started over to Mrs Kains to see if I could get any liquor . . . She did not have any so all hope is over in that direction. We have not a drop in the house. Oh! if we only had some that was drank like water here last week. Oh! I cannot, cannot believe that they will hang him. Something must stop it.”193 But nothing or no one was able to stop the wrath of Union commanders hoping to effect some revenge on the rebels while they wielded power in these small, war-ravaged towns.

On January 8, 1864, the date of Dodd’s execution, House was exceedingly frightened and angry. She remembered “Later, at eleven o’clock I heard a gun fire. At the sound my blood seemed to freeze in my veins. A short time after I heard another. Oh! my God it was terrible, an innocent man to die such a death. It will, it must be revenged a hundred fold. It will not bring him back to life, but the Yankees must suffer for it.”194 The sense of helplessness fueled House’s sense of anger and inspired her to wish a payback in like measure of violence upon the enemies of the South. Southern men could not protect southern women from peril, nor could the southern women, in this instance, protect this man from his death.

John R. Neff, in Honoring the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation, points out that Victorian mourning practices were designed to “tame” death by striving for a “good,” peaceful death. Gruesome war deaths and the inability of most mourners to identify, reclaim or say goodbye to their war dead “disrupted dramatically the folkways associated with death ritual and defied every previous custom” that Victorian Americans had carefully constructed.195 For example, pre-Civil War death rituals were ideally centered in the home, on a death bed, with friends and family at hand to say goodbye and witness a stoic and serene departure. The sheer volume of dead bodies during the war years, however, overwhelmed soldiers and civilians alike, and practices like the “soldier’s burial” with no coffin in a hastily dug grave marked with a wooden ammunition box lid violated a sense of order and control. In an era before dog-tags, there were only informal methods of identifying the battle dead, like relying on comrades or uniform clues for identification, which made the mourning process even

193 Ibid., January 6, 1864, 79.
194 Ibid.
195 John R. Neff, Honoring the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2005), 19.
less comforting.\textsuperscript{196} Sometimes there was no time even for rudimentary guesses about a soldier’s identify as bodies were frequently hastily buried to deny the enemy an accurate body count. Enemy dead were unlikely to receive even a modicum of respect in death, and scavenging on dead bodies was a frequent practice.\textsuperscript{197}

Soldiers jettisoned the trappings of Victorian death-rituals quickly, but, according to Neff, civilians tried hardest to maintain “standards of death ritual and custom, almost always unsuccessfully.”\textsuperscript{198} This was especially true in areas like Richmond and Winchester, Virginia, that received “recurrent waves of dead and wounded.”\textsuperscript{199} Although the innovations in embalming, casket design, and funereal goods were impressive, families hoping to get soldiers from a battlefield to a parlor without odor was a task accomplished successfully by few.\textsuperscript{200}

War or not, women cared deeply about how men met their fates. Southern culture urged them to believe that men were white women’s protectors, and women felt more insecure when men were brutally killed or carelessly buried. If men could not protect themselves, they might have mused, how could they protect their women – that central tenet of southern hierarchy?

Ellen House responded to the topsy-turvy affairs of life during and just after the war by admitting to her journal the intense feelings of loathing she had for her circumstances, and for northerners. She ruminated about Dodd’s hanging and was dissatisfied with the way the affair was handled by the Union troops. She fumed “They murder a man and then cry over him. It has made me feel so miserably. I try not to think of him and his cruel fate. It makes me not only unhappy, but I feel perfectly fiendish. I believe I would kill a Yankee and not a muscle quiver. Oh! the intensity with which I hate them.”\textsuperscript{201} She not only suffered from intense feelings of situational hate – that is, she hated Yankees in that moment because they were currently causing her and her neighbors distress – but her anger was so profound that she took pleasure from the knowledge that southerners’ hate for the Yankees would manifest itself long after the immediate conflict ceased. Since many men who might have attacked the Union were dead, women were primarily in charge of keeping bitterness alive. She continued “I know it is wicked, but I have become so bad in the last few months, bad as I was before I was good. Oh! so good to what I am now.

\textsuperscript{196} Neff, 22-28.
\textsuperscript{197} Neff, 31.
\textsuperscript{198} Neff, 39.
\textsuperscript{199} Neff, 41.
\textsuperscript{200} Neff, 46-47.
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid., 108.
When I see a yankee going along with one leg or one arm I feel really glad, and I wish it was the whole Yankee nation instead.”

Ellen House also worried about the method of burial for Confederate dead after a battle. She wished that the bodies of the men who were the protectors of southern white womanhood would be treated with the dignity that their social place demanded. She wrote “I hope [Grant] will send out to the Battlefield & have the men they pretended to bury covered over. I am told that there are any amount of arms and legs sticking out, and there was one whose face was uncovered. If that is the way they do their own men, how must they do ours who are unfortunate enough to fall into their hands.”

Soon after the war, Sarah Carter toured the battlefield at Seven Pines (Fair Oaks). She recounted that “Our driver brought us three skulls, and there were numbers of ribs and ends of bones lying about on the carpet of fallen pine-needles. It was a sickening sight. We wandered around and saw how the men were buried in the places where they fell.” The travelers were stricken into silence on the way home by what they observed. The thought of an ignoble burial at the hands of enemies heightened the worry that Confederate women felt about their fighting men. Lizzie Hardin suggested that even an anonymous death was preferable to the present state of affairs when she recollected “We saw the graves of thousands of Confederate soldiers lying as close together as they ever stood on the field of battle. There they lay, unknown, forgotten, neglected, but free.”

Although Confederate women had accepted the boasts that Confederate soldiers were tenacious foes, they also knew from what they saw and heard that even southern men were not invincible. Although some women confidently, or even cavalierly, parted with their husbands and sons in response to the Confederacy’s call for troops, many southern white women understood the sacrifices at hand. On March 3, 1861, Susan Bradford, of Tallahassee, Florida, wrote in her journal that when news of war spread to her family’s plantation, the married women in the house understood the danger ahead: “Father volunteered. Mother was bitterly opposed but though father yielded to her in many things he would not in this. I wish I was a boy; even if I am young, I could go with him if only I were not a girl. It will break my heart if he goes.”

When Susan’s sister learned that her husband had volunteered two weeks before and had only then told the family, she was distraught. “Sister Mag was wild with grief at first, but Mother tried to

202 Ibid.
203 Ibid., 79.
204 Quoted in Culpepper, All Things Altered, 191.
206 Bradford, Through Some Eventful Years, 206.
comfort her by insisting that there would be no fighting—just talk of war and reconciliation would follow . . . this is extremely exciting.”

The excitement soon changed into expressions of horror when the romanticism of dashing men waving bravely in flashy uniforms changed into the reality of the unrefined cruelties of war visited homes across the South. As volunteers from every Confederate state heeded the call to arms, women at home understood that loss awaited them. In the heat of a Florida August, women gathered at the train depot in Tallahassee to attempt a brave farewell. Susan Bradford recalled the bitter-sweet parting for her diary.

August 12, 1861—The Howell Guards left today on the mid-day train. A crowd had gathered around the depot to see them off. Mothers, wives, sisters, sweethearts and friends—all were there. Standing on the platform and looking around I marveled at what I saw. Women with bright, smiling faces, looking tenderly on the soldiers, who were ready to depart. Saying fond, loving words of advice and hope: pressing the beloved gray-clad figure in a parting embrace; kissing the dear lips, maybe for the last time, and yet those brave women smiled. As soon as the train pulled out and the soldier boys could not see, the scene changed. Sobs and tears, wild outbursts of grief on every side, and yet, this had been suppressed lest it grieve those brave hearts, who were going forth to battle for home and country.

These wild outbursts of grief symbolized the terror women felt at the prospect of an uncertain future in a society that required male protection, but could no longer provide it to women. With their husbands absent, wives were in a perilous position of relying upon “home folks” for comfort and security.

In the second half of the conflict, the news for the South was more sobering and women were less able to pretend that the outcome would be a glorious or victorious one as they had once believed. Hancock observed from Gettysburg on July 7, 1863 “There are no words in the English language to express the sufferings I witnessed today.” She saw that southern men had access to fewer medical interventions and supplies and she wrote back home “You can tell Aunt that there is every opportunity for ‘secesh’ sympathizers to do a good work among the butternuts; we have lots of them here suffering fearfully.” She juxtaposed the scene that she imagined existed before that fateful day with the horror that war brought there. She mused “It is

207 Ibid., 151.
208 Ibid., 158.
209 Cornelia Hancock, The South After Gettysburg, 10.
210 Ibid.
a beautiful, rolling country here; under favorable circumstances I should think healthy, but now
for five miles around, there is an awful smell of putrefication.”

The “beautiful, rolling country” was now blood-splattered not only in Pennsylvania, but
increasingly all over the South. While the bodies of soldiers putrefied on the open fields
unattended, the dream of a pastoral life of white supremacy that was the cornerstone of the
arguments for “states rights” and for the viability of slave society were similarly rotting and
manifestly impure. As the dream of a privileged future crumbled for southerners, including
southern women, their homes and families were crumbling under the real and present dangers of
hunger, worry, and artillery fire.

Some women who came of age in a war-torn country bore the emotional scars of the war
for the rest of their lives. One fourteen-year-old girl, Julia West Pyeatt, who witnessed the Battle
of Prairie Grove, Arkansas, from her family’s home, wrote on December 7, 1862 “You can never
know the horrors of a battle unless you have seen or been in one.” She remembered that her
home was taken over by the needy men.

All the houses were filled with wounded men. Our house was also filled with General
[James G.] Blunt’s men. The General himself sleeping in mother's baby crib with his feet
hanging over. During the night when dispatches came he would arise up, read it, write
answers, or give orders. Men stood and sat around all night with their guns in their hands
talking about the fight.... All available beds and bedding was used for the wounded
except one bed they left for mother and the children but very few of us slept any.

This state of affairs remained with the family weeks after the war moved on. She wrote “We
were left with hundreds of wounded and dead. For days, people hunted the battle ground for
some of their missing people. On Monday, we saw four houses burn to the ground that was set
on fire by the Federal troops . . . We lived in the house with the wounded for six weeks.”

One of

the Wests’ young neighbors, Caldonia Ann Borden Brandenburg, was only nine when she
witnessed the battle’s aftermath. During the battle, she remembered, she hid with her family in
the cellar. On that same December day, her family emerged to survey the damage.

After dark, it got quiet and we came out of the cellar. There was a dead man across the
cellar door, wounded and dying men all around. I can still hear them calling "help - help -
help." The men worked through the night helping the wounded. Yankees and Rebels all

211 Ibid.
212 http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/TwHP/wwwlps/lessons/70prairie/70facts2.htm
213 ibid., December 8, 1862.
got the same care. Four died that night. One soldier's leg was just hanging by the skin and the doctor cut it off and threw it outside. It sure was scary and pitiful. Some of us got sick.\footnote{ibid.}

Perhaps if her family’s home had kept wounded men, it would have been spared. Instead, their home became a casualty of war.

Pa sneaked back up the hill and found that our beautiful two-story house that was painted light yellow with green trim, the home that we all loved so much, had been burned to the ground after the Yankees plundered the inside.... We never got a thing out of our home, not even a change of clothes. They killed and ate our cattle, hogs, sheep and chickens and used what we had stored in our cellar.... They took everything they could use, then set the house on fire. We had 60 bushels of wheat stored upstairs and it slowly burned for three weeks in the rubble.

As a result of their recent poverty, the children attempted to find scraps in the trash of the battlefield. Brandenburg recalled

As soon as it was safe for us kids to go on the battle fields, we went and picked up clothes, canteens, blankets and anything we found to use. We had to put everything in boiling water to kill the "grey backs" [body lice]. We made bedding out of the cloth we salvaged after cleaning it. The Yankees took our good horses and a beautiful big bay mare, a fine pacer, our work horses and saddle horses and left us only an old oxen and an old blind mare, but she was still a good plow horse and we bred her to a good stallion and got a fine colt.

A year and a half later, the war continued to affect southern children, and, in Brandenburg’s case, fertilized the seeds of hatred for Yankees that characterized many white Southerners long after the war.

Well, in March of 1864 one day the Yankees ran onto two of the Southern boys and the only thing the boys could do was to run as they weren't armed. We were watching and we saw the boys fall. We went closer to see who they were and they were dead. We knew them, they were our neighbors and it was a half a mile to their house, so an old man and a woman helped four of us kids move the bodies. Brother Will and I each took a hand, Tom and Reynold each took a foot and the old man carried the head and the woman put a board under the hips and shoulders and we carried them one by one to their folks. That was some time too. A lot I can't tell...it shakes me up so.... All we thought of during the war was to save ourselves. We didn't have time to pray and when we had time we were too tired, but God took care of us.... Well, we lived over it but I don't have any love for a Yankee.\footnote{ibid.}
Another woman witnessed the Battle of Prairie Grove and also remembered her role in assessing the carnage. Nancy Morton Staples wrote “...the day after the battle we did all we could to relieve the wounded and dying. Such pitiful wails and cries that came from those poor men. We made them tea from herbs and did all we could for their comfort...” Southern women also did their best to bury the dead, even in the face of obstacles. Nancy Morton Staples recalled another shocking affair was my helping to bury Mr. Borden, a brother of A[rchibald] Borden, who was brutally killed in the Pittman lane. He had lain there all night when Eliza and Mary Borden, Martha Butler and myself got there. Two old men who had previously dug the grave helped us carry him to it and being afraid of scouts they left us to fill the grave. All the implements we had were an old hoe and pieces of boards. We blistered our hands and were worn out when we got home, as we had to walk.

Near the village of Bentonville, North Carolina, the Harper family farmed about 100 of their 825 acres of land and contributed one of their sons to the Confederate cause. In the spring of 1865, the fighting hit even closer to home. That March, the Battle of Bentonville occupied a field about a mile from their home, and the Union’s Fourteenth Army Corps commandeered their home as a field hospital. The home’s owner, his wife, and their six children living at home sought refuge in the rooms upstairs while surgeons filled the lower chambers with their “rude benches” and poor, suffering patients. One Union commander remembered that the tireless doctors were “cutting off arms and legs and throwing them out of the windows where they lay scattered on the grass. The legs of the infantrymen could be distinguished from those of the cavalry by the size of their calves, as the march of 1,000 miles had increased the size of one and diminished the size of the other.” As horrifying as the screams, the limbs and the stench of the hapless men must have been, the Harpers refused to leave their home.

Union troops finally cleared out their army’s dead and wounded, but left the Harper family in charge of forty-five Confederate men. One of the Harper’s sons recalled that his parents were “nurses, surgeons, commissaries, chaplains and undertakers. My mother fed them, washed their wounds, pointed them to the Saviour, closed their eyes when all was over, and helped to bury their uncoffined bodies as tenderly as she could.” This young man stayed to help his family with the task of burying the nineteen men who died in their home.

216 Ibid.
217 http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/TwHP/wwwlps/lessons/70prairie/70facts3.htm
219 Ibid.
Even if women didn’t “touch” death, they were constantly afraid it would visit their homes. On August 11, 1864, ten-year-old Atlanta resident, Carrie Berry, wrote, “We had to go in the cellar often out of the shells. How I wish the federals would quit shelling us so that we could get out and get some fresh air.”

“Aug. 15. Mon. We had no shells this morning when we got up and we thought that we would not have any to day (but, my, when will they stop) but soon after breakfast Zuie and I were standing on the platform between the house and the dining room. It made a very large hole in the garden and threw the dirt all over the yard. I never was so frightened in my life. Zuie was as pale as a corpse and I expect I was too. It did not take us long to fly to the cellar. We stayed out till night though we had them all day but they did not come so near us again.”

“Sun. Oct. 2. This has ben a very pretty day. I went around to Mrs. Lesters. Ella and I took a walk to see how the soldiers had torn down the fine houses. It is a shame to see the fine houses torn down.”

Women who were not experiencing the sounds of cannons, or hunger from having their provisions appropriated by Yankees or refugees had reason for anxiety, too. News from Union papers was distrusted; news from southern newspapers came unreliably as a result of military movements or lack of supplies. After Gettysburg, a telegram carried the sad news to the Bradford plantation in Tallahassee. Susan Bradford wrote on July 3rd, 1863, “Another telegram brings more news from Gettysburg—such awful news—death and destruction and perhaps defeat. God help our poor country. Holding my breath I listen and tears come, though I try to be calm. So many of our brave men, who went forward can never come back. Oh, this horrible, horrible WAR!”

Psychological stress increased with the hypervigilance of constant waiting for information, sorting through rumors and trying to guess success or failure at the hands of a capricious foe. Women waited near bulletin boards to learn news from the front or to exchange second-hand information. Susan Bradford wrote “Fighting is almost continuous now and there is not standing room around the bulletin board, to do more than get a hurried glance at the list of ‘Killed, Wounded and Missing.’ Oh, those horrible words, I seem to see them in letters of fire when I wake in the night.”

After communication had been restored in places where it was temporarily stopped, women eagerly sought good news, but were increasingly profoundly disappointed and distraught.

220 Carrie Berry, http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/berry/
221 Ibid.
222 Ibid.
223 Bradford, Through Some Eventful Years, 240.
Susan Bradford recalled her despair on August 11, 1864, “Communication is established once more and Oh, the horrible, horrible news that has come to us! . . . It is heart-rending to think of death and destruction, bodily destruction, for those young boys, who were so thoroughly alive, who were looking forward to a speedy return home and the home folks who were waiting for them. Oh, it is dreadful!”

As common soldiers had varying levels of letter-writing skills and access to writing paper and ink, perhaps the majority of southern women had to rely upon information about their loved ones from second-hand news. Bradford pointed out that “. . . there were many who could not even write the few words home which would have given such comfort to the anxious heart of wife or mother or sister, waiting—always waiting.” Frequently, letters between women at home and their family members at the front were intercepted or harried by Union troops. Hugh Black, however, got word back to his wife about the actual conditions of the southern troops at the Battle of Atlanta. He described the scene in July of 1864 by warning her against believing Confederate propaganda.

You will no doubt heare a glowing account of the victory in front of Atlanta but is all stuff for the victory was over the left shoulder. It is reported here that we captured three thousand prisinors [sic] but I think that is all stuff too for I have seen but five prisinors. Our Brigade (Finley’s Brigade) that once contained from five to six thousand men has now not exceeding three hundred and fifty or four hundred men. This will tell you which way our Victory was . . . the Confederate army is demoralized and will never fight again as they have heretofore.

This kind of report must have been profoundly disconcerting to women who a few years before had been assured of a swift Confederate victory and a maintenance of their white privilege.

Perhaps because the news from the Confederate government was so at odds with the accounts of the soldiers themselves, women and civilians at home steeled themselves for a Yankee invasion of their cities and towns. After the summer raid on Atlanta in 1864, Dolly Sumner Lunt remarked on the receipt the Yankee troops left on northern Georgia. When she traveled to nearby Covington that fall to shop she remarked “How dreary looks the town! Where formerly all was bustle and business, now naked chimneys and bare walls, for the depot and surroundings were all burned by last summer’s raiders.” Although the area had been ravaged a

224 Ibid., 241.
225 Ibid., 170.
226 Letter to Mary Ann Black from Hugh Black, dated July 26, 1864, in Letters of Captain Hugh Black to his Family in Florida During the War Between the States, 1862 – 1864, Elizabeth Coldwell Frano, ed. (Evansville, IN: E.C. Frano, 1998), 67-68.
few months before, reports still circulated about additional incursions. Lunt continued “On our way home we met Brother Evans accompanied by John Hinton, who inquired if we had heard the Yankees were coming. He said that a large force was at Stockbridge, that the Home Guard was called out, and that it was reported that the Yankees were on their way to Savannah. We rode home chatting about it and finally settled in our minds that it could not be so. Probably a foraging party.” A foraging party was manageable; a large force of northern troops was far more menacing. Not knowing what to expect could inspire more fear than the thing itself.

The uncertainty of the war could be as oppressive as the certain news of the death of a loved one or neighbor. The very question of survival was at stake, and there seemed to be no indication that the southern cause—of the southern people—would long endure. Dolly Lunt reflected “A new year is ushered in, but peace comes not with it. Scarcely a family but has given some of its members to the bloody war that is decimating our nation. Oh, that its ravages may soon be stopped! Will another year find us among carnage and bloodshed? Shall we be a nation or shall we be annihilated?”

Southern women actually felt as if the world was ending—at least the world they had always known and the world upon which they depended. This sense of loss that the defeat in war signaled affected the behavior and attitudes of southerners generations later. Even after the Confederate victory at Fredericksburg in 1862, Susan Bradford felt glum. She wrote “We have news of a great battle in Virginia, Fredericksburg, a terrible battle in which our side won the victory and the enemy suffered severe losses. How I wish the war would end; it throws a cloud over everything.” Emma LeConte observed in the last months of the war that “Things are looking very gloomy . . . we seem sunk in apathy. Nothing could surprise me now, unless some wonderful help should break in upon our trouble and give us the independence we have been longing and fighting for all these years. Even my books fail to keep my attention.” Southern women may have wanted the deprivation and death associated with war to end, but they were not interested in accepting defeat passively.

Union troops sought to annihilate both the physical and cultural underpinnings of southern life. They did this by striking at women’s homes—the cultural center of southern ideology. By imposing material loss, emotional stress and humiliation, the North hoped to hear

227 Lunt, The Diary of Dolly Lunt Burge, 158.
228 Ibid., 142.
229 Bradford, Through Some Eventful Years, 190.
the South “howl.” And southern women did “howl.” The intense grief that women felt as a result of the overwhelming numbers of Confederate dead, many of whom women had begged to defend them, inspired southern white women to record their trauma. Women began to draw the lines of a war that they could fight – a culture war – fought with guerilla tactics in the same parlors that Yankee troops sought to annihilate. Southern women would protect Confederate culture, even if southern soldiers could not.

Southern women wanted their grief recorded because they found relief in the writing process, and because they wanted a record of events so their children could fully understand their suffering. Women’s writings increasingly tied the Yankee invasion to their fear of the ramifications of Emancipation. As women’s material losses mounted, so did their feelings of humiliation and despair. Journals and diaries record that women struck back when stricken in their homes. The battlefront had moved home, and they were equal to the new challenges of a war of ideas.

Southern women reacted not only to the horrors of war and deprivation, but they also were keenly affected by the postwar landscape of broken men and burnt out homes. Women had to reconstruct their physical lives and their emotional lives that relied upon white male protection and provision. Taken together, the material losses and the emotional ones imbued southern women and men with a determination to salvage their material and racial privilege. As southern women had primary responsibility for mourning, so too were they obligated to explain the consequences of the war to southern children who were also trying to make sense of a defeated Southern culture.

Nineteenth-century women all over America had more difficult challenges to make a comfortable living without a spouse, but women in the Civil War were facing high odds of tragedy for their husbands, brothers, and sons. Susan Bradford identified the common thread of tragic loss. She mused in her diary, on July 2, 1863 “There must be aching hearts at the North as well as here. I feel for all who suffer and it seems to me the bond of brotherhood, which once united the two sections, ought to make us kinder in our judgments; more merciful in our actions. But war is a monster and destroys charity.”

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The Union’s physical control of southern territories enraged women. The strategies the North applied to subdue civilian populations made women even more bitter. Southern women’s writing indicates that they searched for an object of blame, and located Yankees and blacks – interchangeably – as satisfactory targets. While southern men were increasingly unable to defend the South, especially in the border states occupied by Union forces early in the conflict, women moved into the breach to harass the enemy with non-compliance to federal authority. Increasingly, northern observers identify southern women as “violent” and “vile” when they disregarded Benjamin Butler’s efforts to control them in New Orleans, and when they urged their husbands and brothers to eschew oaths of allegiance. Women who did not directly strike out at Union forces established cultural resistance through sustaining a culture of hate and blame that was moored in the nation’s mourning for lost men and for lost ideology.

The aggressive conservatism that marked the pre-war South was deepened and made more violent by the anger, shame and humiliation of the South’s defeat. George Rable notes that although the war had been grueling for Confederate women “the end of the war marked the beginning of a new emotional crisis. Peace brought its own troubles, and defeat – so unthinkable, so overwhelming, so crushing – cast a pall over daily life.” The generation of sectional conflict did not, as many historians suggest, end with Appomattox. Although Rable concludes that the defeat was so humbling that “the spirit of most rebel women had been broken,” he underestimates the fortitude of southern resistance and defiance when he suggests that Sherman’s troops were able to crush the Confederate women’s support for their cause.

Rable writes

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233 Alecia P. Long, paper, “(Mis)remembering General Order 28: Benjamin Butler, the Woman Order and Historical Memory,” given at the Southern Association of Women Historians Seventh Conference on Women’s History, 2006, Baltimore, MD, panel title, “Constructing Citizenship during the Civil War.”
235 Rable, *Civil Wars*, 175.
By the time Sherman’s men reached Savannah, they had left behind them not only a track of devastation but homes and families filled with despair, sorrow, and most of all bewilderment, mixed with dread for the future. The collapse of hopes and dreams – for individuals, families, and the Southern nation—seemed all but complete. Wives and mothers might try to pick up the pieces of their lives, but for many there were few pieces left.236

It was anger over, not submission to, this complete devastation of white southerners’ uncertain future that women expressed in the postwar period.

Rable argues that as a result of the physical devastation in their backyards, women let go of their commitment to southern nationalism. Southern women had endured the war, “But the intense feeling and strong commitment of the war years had either vanished or appeared as quaint survivals of a recent, but now suddenly distant past.”237 British sociologist Eric Leed, however, argues that armed conflicts scar the consciousness of those who experience them, and these disfigured memories can be handed down to succeeding generations. He writes “The traumatic neuroses generated by industrial war . . . show us how our wars mark our minds, how an unforgettable past becomes determinative even though the past has no existence outside human imagination and memory.”238 Southern women were members of a group of conquered Americans – a status heretofore reserved for Indians and slaves – and after the war, southern white men and women together sought to reclaim their privileges – economic, political, and racial.

The war had deeply shaken Americans, and southerners had an added layer of psychological scars – remnants of defeat – that they had to confront. Rebecca Harding Davis, one of the nation’s first social historians, observed that the war had lasting and deep psychological effects on the South.

There was one curious fact which I do not remember ever to have seen noticed in histories of the war, and that was its effect upon the nation as individuals. Men and women thought and did noble and mean things that would have been impossible to them before or after. A man cannot drink old Bourbon long and remain in his normal condition. We did not drink Bourbon, but blood. No matter how gentle or womanly we might be, we read, we talked, we thought perforce of nothing but slaughter. So many hundreds dead here, so many thousands there, were our last thoughts at night and the first in the morning. The effect was very like that produced upon a household in which there has been a long illness. There was great religious exaltation and much peevish ill temper.

236 Ibid., 175.
237 Ibid., 221.
Under the long, nervous strain the softest women became fierce partisans, deaf to arguments or pleas for mercy.239

The “peevish ill temper” of many southerners was intensified after Appomattox when they had to take stock of their evaporated fortunes.

Southern white women had to make their lives without men for support or frequently with men who were angry themselves. Rebecca Davis pointed out

Another singular feature of the war, which I think nobody has described, was the hopeless confusion which followed its close. When Johnny came marching home again he was a very disorganized member of society, and hard to deal with. You cannot take a man away from his work in life, whether that be selling sugar, practicing law, or making shoes, and set him to march and fight for five years, without turning his ideas and himself topsy-turvy. . . . The older men fell back into the grooves more readily than the lads, who had been fighting, when, in ordinary times, they would have been plodding through Cicero or algebra. Some of them harked back to college to gather up the knowledge they had missed; some of them took up awkwardly the tools of their trades, and some of them took to drink and made an end of it. The social complications of the readjustment were endless and droll.240

Men and women alike had undergone a prolonged period of sacrifice with the result an upending of their very conception of the order of things. Southerners all seemingly sacrificed for nothing; but worse, they were slated to be punished for sacrificing for what they believed to be sacred values. The process of transitioning from war to peace would be equally long and hard, even if the region was willing to reconcile. Much of the South, however, lacked incentive to feel loyal to the Union or loyal to a new social order. On May 1, 1865, Dolly Lunt hosted soldiers making their way back from the war. “Two soldiers called dined with me. Said they were from Texas or at least Inglehart was the other from Arkansas named Goodrich. They were very bitter.”241 Those men who served out their terms may have also resented their compatriots who were deserting at the rate of one hundred soldiers per day. In addition to the resentment they must have felt for the Confederate loss of the war, these men returned to communities that may have been laid waste or which had been occupied by their mortal enemies, Union soldiers. They may have felt a sense of inadequacy that their homes and families suffered in their absence.

White southern culture rested on the premise that men would honorably protect their women and

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240 Davis, Bits of Gossip, 136.
property against attack. In this effort, they failed. Those who returned home were certainly missed and welcomed, but a happy homecoming could not change this basic fact.

The most pressing complication of readjustment was reestablishing an economic foundation in a bankrupt and devastated South. A region which had consciously eschewed a free market now was forced to negotiate it under direct Union supervision. Women who had husbands during Reconstruction watched them chafe under this supervision. Rachel Susan Cheves received a letter in August 1868 from her husband who was attempting to re-establish his fortune near Savannah, Georgia. His letter said “My Dear Wife, I continue to receive no letters from you, it is due undoubtelly to the unprincipled Yankees who fill every chink like bugs in a plank house . . . The crop still promises favorably, we have nothing to fear but storms, revolutions and robbery.” He had been wealthy before the war, and his pardon required President Andrew Johnson’s signature. When he received it, he took possession of the land immediately, pending his pardon. Nevertheless, he asked permission from Otis Oliver Howard, commissioner of the Freedmen’s Bureau, to eject the freedmen from the overseer’s house and the surrounding ten acres. The “revolutions and robbery” that Cheves feared were clearly to be perpetrated jointly by northerners and freed blacks. He wrote with a hint of apprehension to his wife

At the present moment, though everything is quiet, there is no knowing how the nigs might take their sudden change in their hopes for there is a lying prophet, a Yankee missionary out there who has been telling them that we were only pretending when told them that we would get the land from them, What if they would stick to him he would guarantee them possession & would stay with them always and forever more, he has a guard of thirty [six?] nigs with muskets who do nothing but guard him.

Cheves described this heightened state of alarm in later correspondence with his wife. He explained that it would be dangerous for her to travel to Charleston because he had read a letter that claimed the city was about to be shelled by sea, that the US military “was about to destroy it soon, to level the buildings to the ground, to give the inhabitants over for indiscriminate slaughter & if the soldiers would not do it to instigate the niggers to general massacre but there are a few people here that I think would have a word to say in that matter.”

Even after the war was officially over, southerners felt moved to protect their women and save

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242 Letter from John Richardson Cheves to Rachel Susan Bee Cheves, in Cheves Family Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. Cheves was an heiress to two plantations and many slaves.

243 Undated Letter from John Richardson Cheves to Rachel Susan Bee Cheves, in Cheves Family Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.
them from harm at the hands of northern whites and their recently freed compatriots. Men also signaled their wives that bitter language and fear-mongering about enemies in wartime was still the accepted paradigm in the postwar South. The rhetoric of fear was exacerbated when southern whites were anxious about their ability to re-establish economic, political and social control in their own backyards, and many southerners continued to feel attacked by invading “carpetbaggers” after Appomattox.

Southerners were mortified by the kind of northern condescension so evident in schoolteacher Cornelia Hancock’s letters. Cornelia Hancock, a New Jersey Quaker, was traveling south to teach freedmen, and she observed this omnipresent poverty of the region and its effects on the once proud white southerners. “It was laughable to see the poor secessh getting along; they are so poorly clothed; talk so thick, and most of their houses and bridges are burned. The most forlorn country I ever have seen.”

While her view of white southern society was uncharitable, her description of the terrain was little exaggerated. As they traveled by train she noted “Burned pine woods most of the way. It seems to me all the while as if the train was filled with Johnny prisoners as they still wear the uniform of Rebels. They have the subject of reconstruction before their mind; deal in the most vituperative language against the Yanks.” The returning men obviously blamed the Union soldiers for their misery, but then they shifted their anger to northerners who assisted blacks, and then finally to the Freedmen themselves. “We were marked on the whole way and the people said every kind of disagreeable thing in our hearing but would not condescend to speak to the ‘Yankee nigger teachers’ as they call us . . . I suppose the sparseness of their clothes makes them look so very bad. But they really look starved in their faces. They say they will hire the niggers this year and prove to the Yankees that no large cotton crop can be raised and then next year the Yankees will be glad to let them make the niggers work. I cannot say that I was actually afraid of them but we seemed to be alone in sentiment.”

Hancock, in an official report to the Friends’ Association for Aid and Elevation of the Freedmen, Philadelphia, made similar findings.

The rebels are extremely insulting wherever they have any opportunity to speak in the hearing of the “Yankee nigger teachers” as they insist upon calling us . . . left no opportunity unused to say the most violent things possible. They seem to take delight in torturing the feelings of the negro in every way they can so as to escape the penalty of the

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245 Hancock, *The South After Gettysburg*, 193.
law . . . There is one thing certain, the Rebels are violent rebels yet and no compromises with them will have a beneficial result.\textsuperscript{246}

Hancock surmised that the southern farmer had become so economically disadvantaged at the Emancipation that their anger stemmed from race hate, but was fueled by economic woes. Hancock seemed keenly interested in the social forces that had made these Americans so different from the Americans she knew in the North. She formulated a proposal for the South based on her recent observations.

I walked along with an old secesh man. He said he owned several plantations but he never intended to plant any cotton again. He was going to raise a little corn and a few hogs and that was all; for he said niggers won’t work and all the Spirit was out of him anyway. They seem to have been extremely dependent on the negro. I think the best plan would be to put all the secesh in the poor house and let the negroes have the land and just keep them until they die. I talk to all I can get a chance when I am in a safe place. I like to hear them speak of their ruin.\textsuperscript{247}

Her mother wrote back to Hancock “I don’t think thee ought to love to hear the people there talk of their ruin, for to me they are objects of pity and are or should be warnings to all to do justice to all men.”\textsuperscript{248} Being the objects of northern pity – or any kind of pity at all – further enraged and humiliated southerners.

Northerners, in attempting to understand their sacrifice in the war, often demeaned their foe, which struck at the basic complaints southerners leveled against the North. Adding to the layers of humiliation that southerners wrote about were high profile northerners like Boston abolitionist Elizur Wright who taunted southerners by jointly attacking their intelligence and their fears of racial instability when he suggested in 1865 “that since it would take too long and therefore be too costly to educate the Southern whites to the point of being loyal citizens, the cheapest course would be to give the Negroes the suffrage and let them run things, for that way troops would have to be maintained for a shorter period than if an eye had to be kept indefinitely upon the white Southerners.”\textsuperscript{249} This continued barrage from the north cemented for southerners looking for a target of blame for their circumstances the idea that Yankees and blacks had conspired together to effect their ruin. This was the shame that southern women wished to erase.

\textsuperscript{246} Ibid., 194.  
\textsuperscript{247} Ibid., 198.  
\textsuperscript{248} Ibid., 200.  
\textsuperscript{249} Ibid., 26.
Because the southern ideology of states’ rights had been promoted as divinely sanctioned, southerners as a group did not interpret their defeat as a referendum on their principles or culture. In order to understand how their superior culture and way of life could have lost when God was on their side, southerners, including southern women, needed an object of blame for their distress. Because the southern culture of honor described by Bertram Wyatt-Brown remained intact after the war, every action by the United States government or supporters of the same was taken as a direct challenge to this southern code, at the heart of which lay racial and gender hierarchy. Historian Anne Sarah Rubin suggests that southern white women stepped into the breech caused by the un-manning of southern men by performing a type of “political ventriloquism.” Rubin argues that “men recognized that, for the most part, gender insulated women from Yankee reprisals, freeing them to say and act as most white Southerners felt.”

Mary Ann Buie’s letter to her cousin demonstrated the struggle southern whites had in working out their object of blame.

How are getting along these times under Yankee rule and how are the free people of color [sic] doing up with you unless they are doing better than they are around here you do not have a very quiet time of it with them but I do not blame negroes as much as I do the Yankees for if they had been let alone they would behave as well as usual but now they are moving about uncared for by their former owners or the Yankees and doing mischief and suffering and dying and I don’t think the Yankees care how many of them die all they want is to injure the South for they envy the people here and want to crush us in every way they possibly can. I think that all the innocent blood they shed will be required of that government I feel sure that no nation as wicked as they are will be permitted to go unpunished I expect you will think that it is rather severe to feel so but I can’t help it and that is my opinion and I have told the Yankees the same more than once.

Buie repeated the myth that had it not been for federal intervention, the South would be a peace-loving place, with everyone grateful to know his or her place. The Union’s plan for the nation seems to her punishing and capricious, and it is as if she felt some release in expressing her anger by cursing the Yankees personally. The tenor of her letter might strike the reader as emotionally immature, but the false bravado covered up terribly painful wounds and deep-seated anger. She continued her letter by stating that she wanted her blanket back and she also desired to leave because she apparently felt out of control with the present state of affairs.

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251 Mary Ann Buie to "my dear cousin," June 27, 1865 in Mary Ann S. Buie Letters, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.
We have not heard of any more of our things yet and I don’t expect we ever will if I could get my quilt they might keep the rest of my things but I do not know how I can spare my quilt or get along this winter without it bed clothes are so scarce and I am so chilly that I require so much to keep me from suffering in the winter. I wish some of my relations would go to South America or some where else and let me go with them for I don’t want to stay here among the free negroes and Yankees.\textsuperscript{252}

The quilt was a real material need as well as an emotional need for Buie. Covering up her body with a quilt to avoid suffering from cold and covering up her fear of the loss of her status by a proposed flight from the South seemed to be solutions to the great problems of Buie’s postwar plight.

Even if most southern whites recovered their personal property, negotiated the poverty and hardship, and remained politically unfazed by the efforts of Republicans to reconstruct the South, the grief for dead men and the dead Confederacy was so profound that it reverberated through the South for generations. The trauma that Appomattox symbolized for the South cut southerners from their moorings and, instead of inspiring them to become suddenly introspective, they were unrepentant southerners – including southern women – and they held onto their anger and grief. Sometimes this grief was a physical expression of defeat and exhaustion as when Judith McGuire said “My heart became dull and heavy, and every nerve and muscle of my frame seems heavy too. I cannot now shake it off.”\textsuperscript{253} In other instances it manifested itself in a more esoteric questioning of where southerners now fit in the world.

Some southern women felt so powerless to influence the events happening around them that they feared that history would drown them. Emma LeConte had maintained her indignation throughout the war and showed no signs of a sudden change of heart at its close. After the defeat she realized that the levee of Confederate men who held back the specter of “Negro rule,” “Yankee domination,” and utter economic ruin had broken. She anticipated that when this realization came to every white southerner “then the waves will roll over us.”\textsuperscript{254} Contemplating the future, she despair. “I feel as if the end has come, and utterly heartsick.” Southerners were hardened against accepting a “Yankee” racial view and accepting any form of equality for blacks. Instead, the southern view after the war is embodied in LeConte’s searching questions “Is all this blood spilled in vain – will it not cry from the ground on the day we yield to these

\textsuperscript{252} Mary Ann Buie to “My Dear Cousin,” Letter dated June 27, 1865, in Mary Ann S. Buie Letters, 1842-1871, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.
\textsuperscript{253} Judith W. McGuire, \textit{Diary of a Southern Refugee During the War: By a Lady of Virginia}, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).
\textsuperscript{254} LeConte, \textit{When the World Ended}, 90.
Yankees! How can it be? How can they talk about it?” Rable notes that “Drifting along from day to day without anchor in a stormy sea of change, women often seemed aimless and disoriented, even in the familiar surroundings of hearth and home.”

However, the familiar surroundings of hearth and home were as likely to evoke feelings of despair as they were to evoke feelings of comfort. Feeling violated and betrayed, southern women could not be certain in their property rights or in a future income. Many southern women in the postwar period had to make do without the material comforts that were important social markers in southern society. But most significantly, southern white women had lost their position of privilege that included a promise of protection and honor based on their sex and race. White women’s status in the South was intimately linked to their husband’s or father’s wealth and social position, and for those fortunate women who welcomed home able-bodied husbands or fathers, their plight to re-establish some semblance of their former status was almost as difficult as women who now might not hope to marry well. Historian Gaines Foster pointed out that “The majority of Confederate leaders searched for months before securing new means of making a living, and less distinguished Confederates as well encountered difficulties adjusting.”

In the chaotic aftermath of war, women had to begin to come to terms with their new lives. Gaines Foster argues that, although it was difficult, southerners were up to the challenge. Though swift, the acceptance of irreversible defeat brought much pain. Deeply shocked by what they perceived as a calamity of unknown but awesome proportions, white southerners appeared demoralized and disoriented. Wives and sisters commented frequently on the discouraged appearance of returning soldiers. Women lamented how ‘utterly hopeless’ the former Confederates appeared, regretted how ‘exceedingly quiet’ they seemed, and wondered if ‘all dear men in gray’ felt ‘as crushed and disconsolate’ as those they knew.

But the appearance of demoralization and disorientation did not simply melt away in the aftermath of defeat. Women observed that men returning from war were badly affected by their experiences away from home. For example, a month after the war ended, George Mercer of

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255 Ibid.  
256 George C. Rable, *Civil Wars*, 223.  
Savannah had still ‘not recovered from the stunning effect of mingled surprise and grief caused by the sudden prostration of our cause.”

Gaines Foster notes that:

The soldiers considered the civilians as ‘spiritless’ as themselves. One veteran observed that during the first months after Appomattox all seemed ‘steeped in a fatal lethargy, unwilling or unable to resist or forward anything.’ Even the women, formerly a mainstay of Confederate morale, gave into despair. ‘The demoralization is complete. We are whipped. There is no doubt about it,’ wrote a Georgia girl as she awaited the arrival of Yankees in her town. A North Carolina woman admitted sleeping ‘endlessly’ after hearing of Lee’s surrender, and another in Virginia complained that she did not ‘feel much like doing anything.’ Several diarists could not summon the energy or courage to record the traumatic events in their journals and abandoned them for weeks or months.

Pens may have been laid aside out of despair or because it was necessary to engage all hands in the task of feeding and clothing the family. In addition to the economic problems caused by war, white southerners frequently reported economic coercion, and advantage-taking in a region destabilized by war engendered economic and psychological hardships. For example, “An [treasury] agent in Texas forced a woman to sell for $75 a bale her 400 bales worth $200 each, under threat that he would seize it as Confederate cotton if she did not comply.”

Confederate women might not be surprised to learn they had been taken advantage of in the market, but Confederate men must have felt especially impotent to encounter additional layers of economic defeat on top of their political and military setbacks. There was little wealth for southerners to call upon in this period of emergency. Hodding Carter notes that “The uncompensated freeing of the Negroes had wiped out investments in human beings variously estimated at from two billion to four billion dollars,” further distinguishing the defeated region from the North whose industry thrived upon the stimulus of war.

Poverty and hunger had marked the south’s working majority since the earliest days of white settlement, and whatever gains had been made in the two previous centuries had been reversed in a few tumultuous years. For many southerners, their section had been made a proverbial frog pond. Carter emphasizes how long-lasting the economic reverses of war had

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259 George Mercer Diary, #503, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
262 Ibid., 33. Also, the South was on the mudsill of national economics. According to Carter, “Louisiana had been second in the nation in per capita wealth in 1860. By 1880 she would be in thirty-seventh place. South Carolina dropped in the same twenty years from third to forty-fifth in per capita wealth. Mississippi from fifth to forty-sixth, Georgia from eighth to fortieth, Texas from ninth to thirty-sixth, Alabama from sixteenth to forty-fourth, Arkansas from nineteenth to forty-third, and Virginia from twentieth to thirty-fifth,” 33.
been. It would require twenty five years for the southern economy to resemble its pre-war production for livestock and cotton, and the immediate effect of the physical devastation of the War was that upwards of a million southerners – white and black – lacked basic necessities.263

Tallying up the costs of loss does not show the effect of defeat on the honor of southerners. Hodding Carter writes “There was another injury which could not be assessed in vanished homes and towns destroyed, in lost wealth, or in the crosses that marked the resting places of the dead. The prideful, martial soul of the South had been dealt an appalling blow. Her people, who before the war had boasted and even believed that one Southerner could lick ten Yankees, had learned that they could themselves be licked.”264 Charles Joyner points out that

The [Civil War] taught many lessons, but for the defeated rebels, none was more humiliating than learning that you can strive and sacrifice and do your best and still lose. In the months after Appomattox, hatred crackled and seared among former Confederates. They had lost control of their destiny; and the experience left them frustrated and outraged. For at least fifteen years after Appomattox, a kind of post-traumatic stress settled upon the late Confederacy.265

But northerners, like reporter Whitelaw Reid, traveling through the South after Appomattox, optimistically believed that the decision rendered by war would be eventually, if not cheerfully, accepted by southerners, if for no other reason than they wanted to resume their lives. He wrote that the southerners he observed

made no hypocritical professions of new-born unionism. They had honestly believed in the right of secession. The hatred of Yankees, which had originally aided the conspirators in starting the movement, had grown and strengthened with the war. Neither the constitutional theory nor the personal hate of their lives could be changed in a day, but both were alike impotent; and having been forced to abandon the war, they longed for the blessings which any peace on any terms might be expected to bring in its train.266

Southerners, however, did not see that they had to relinquish the “personal hate of their lives” in order to hasten the rebuilding of the economy and the rebuilding of their places in the social hierarchy of the South. In fact, there were very few expressions of the “blessings which any peace on any terms” might bring in the private writings of southerners. And if southern men had

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263 Ibid., 35.
264 Ibid., 43.
265 Joyner, 20.
to release their outward expressions of Confederate culture in order to reclaim their property and
to vote, women had no such compunctions.

Occasionally a woman was forced to ask for a pardon in order to access confiscated
property. Anna Maria Hennan Jennings had to get a pardon because she was the widow of a man
who was worth more than $20,000. Jennings had to feed her five daughters, but hated a
government who forced her to humiliate herself for food. She might be forced to ask for a
pardon so she could care for her family, but these strategies of force embittered grieving women
even more. Furthermore, according to Carter, this class of southerner “had not been in the
habit of asking pardon from man or government.” The outward symbols of reconstructing the
rebel South – Emancipation, pardons, oaths – should not be viewed as proof that “personal hate”
had been flushed from the South.

Although Gaines Foster argues that the postwar conditions were sufficient to bring a
humble spirit to southerners, and that southerners had no choice but to accept defeat, personal
writings of many southerners show that in fact there was little interest in forward progress in
terms of economic or racial reforms. Even Foster acknowledges that “Southerners mostly
wanted to be defiant: Women refused to walk under the American flag or crossed the street to
avoid an encounter with a northern man.” A British observer found southern women
especially hostile to northerners and Freedmen, because these unreconstructed women “have
nothing to do but stay home and nurse their wrath.”

It is this defiance, not New South boosterism, that was the lynchpin of the South’s
response to defeat. It is overlooking as insignificant women’s contribution to this culture of
defiance that allows Foster to conclude that “No matter how much southerners wanted to remain
‘good old rebels’ who ‘did not care a dam,’ military power had failed, and neither defeat nor the
Yankees would go away. Southerners had somehow to come to terms with that fact. Naturally,
people reacted to the loss of war and the demands of the North in different ways . . . Most
acknowledged defeat, realized the inevitability of a new order, and resolved to make their way in
it.” Indeed, “Inevitability of a new order” is not the characteristic that defines women’s
postwar writings. If reunion meant that the South would be in any way tainted by the poison of
anything remotely northern (including free black labor), southern white women wanted none of
it. Many women angrily denounced the Union troops as the source of much of their difficulty

269 Robert Ferguson, *America During and After the War* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1866), 208.
and humiliation. Always with a flair for the dramatic, young Emma LeConte did not appear to embrace the inevitability of a new order when she wrote “Let us suffer still more, give up yet more – anything that will give us freedom and not force us to live with such people – to be ruled by such horrible and contemptible creatures – to submit to them when we hate them so bitterly.”

Clearly, the Civil War marked the minds of southern women no less than the minds of southern men. The postwar environment offered continual reminders of what white southern women had lost in the Confederate defeat. In 1901, Caroline Elizabeth Merrick offered an observation about what women faced at the Confederacy’s collapse.

The women in every community seemed to far outnumber the men; and the empty sleeve and the crutch made men who had unflinchingly faced death in battle impotent to face their future. Sadder still was it to follow to the grave the army of men, of fifty years and over when the war began, whose hearts broke with the loss of half a century’s accumulations and ambitions, and with the failure of the cause for which they had risked everything. Communities were accustomed to lean upon these tried advisers; it was almost like the slaughter of another army - so many such sank beneath the shocks of reconstruction.

It is impossible that the experience of southerners could be so instantly and profoundly changed simply because the stimulus of war had ceased. In other words, as the war had scarred the physical landscape of the south, it had scarred the emotional landscape of the south. White southern women, like white southern men, had been bound in common war experience, and felt besieged together, and this common memory served as the basis for crafting a history that was regionally distinct. Historian Nina Silber argues in Romance of Reunion that Americans crafted an inclusive historical memory together at the century’s end. This was not, however, the history or the memory white southern women were teaching their children, and it is not the memory that women’s memorial work promoted.

Southern hierarchical culture was not defeated in war, and through manipulation of the memories of the war southern women handed down this foundation of white supremacy from one generation to the next. Leed writes

271 LeConte, When the World Ended, 90.
the neuroses of war transcend the context of their generation, continuing through some kind of inertia to frame the perceptions, judgments and behaviour of those who suffer from the past. Through the lens of war neuroses we may see how events become ideas that determine and define subsequent actions. [War neuroses] generate a causality – the faith and fear that what happened before is happening still and will happen again.  

Southern women were afflicted by the fear that the vulnerability they experienced in the war years would be repeated with the South under federal control. They feared that white southern men would continue to be impotent against the “outrages” of the Yankee and the Freedman. They feared that their race privileges were under assault as a result of the defeat, and they had a strong interest in perpetuating the “truths” of white supremacy and in effecting a victory for the South, even if it was in the minds of white southerners alone.

Historians have suggested that women applied the strength they gained during the war to their postwar lives, but in the case of white women who were fixated on “righting the wrongs” of the war, this strength was emotionally driven, strongly conservative, and racially reactionary. The Lost Cause ideology was constructed upon a foundation of grief that women nurtured and handed down to their children through story telling and through their letters, memoirs, diaries, scrapbooks, and memorial work. This southern cultural resistance to federal authority, cultivated by white women in an attempt to reestablish the distinctive “southern culture” through white supremacy was embraced by southern children, and remained strong for generations.

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Reconstruction began for parts of the South even while Lincoln was alive. Before southerners knew the Confederacy was dead, they saw how the Union planned to reconstruct the rebel states. These events confirmed for southern women that they had reason to be sorrowful and had reason to fear for their positions in society. Two days before his assassination, President Lincoln announced a plan for reconciliation with and reconstruction of the South. He acknowledged that it would be “fraught with great difficulty,” and that “we simply must begin with and mold from disorganized and discordant elements.” But few northerners realized how profoundly unable most white southerners were to accept the federal authority that they had sacrificed so much to throw off. Few southerners were able to acknowledge or accept any responsibility for the terrible results of the war, although Cornelia Phillips Spencer in an atypical

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274 Leed, “Fateful Memories,” 85.
analysis of the war’s meaning wrote “We are paying the forfeit of our delusions and mistakes.”276 Although “by the conquering standards in other wars, Sherman’s troops acted with restraint,” southerners attempting to protect their households could not see historical perspective; they only saw the present threat. Perhaps because women felt so violated by the Union invasion of their homes, Rable claims “such lessons in comparative history were lost on the Southern female population.”277 In hindsight, it may seem as if southern women simply could not grasp comparative history, but the salient detail is that it mattered more how horrible southerners perceived their crisis to be – not how horrible modern historians perceive it to be.

Serious threats came from the North in many forms. Not only could women’s homes and possessions be attacked, but also their unambiguous place above blacks was now threatened. Weeks before the surrender at Appomattox, Congress established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, which, at its peak only employed nine hundred agents across the entire South, but had a disproportionately strong effect on southerners’ fears that blacks would receive benefits that would give them an advantage at the expense of whites. In addition to providing emergency relief to freedmen and other starving southerners, General Otis Oliver Howard was charged with the task of “humbl[ing] the pride of South Carolinians, especially the women.” But in the face of efforts to demoralize the South with total war and the Freedmen’s Bureau, these tactics served merely to retrench southerners – and southern women – further into their belief that they were being tyrannized.278

Following the proud tradition of blaming the federal government for the woes of the region, Southern whites blamed Union troops and Yankees for the hardships they faced. This was increasingly possible when Union troops arrived in large numbers in various southern places. While Union troops were prevalent in the South, it was expedient to lay the hardships of the postwar South at their feet. And in a real sense, it was Union troops that enforced those provisions of the defeat that southerners hated most: emancipation, political equality for freedmen, and freedom of choice of the nature and pace of work for freedmen. Union soldiers and blacks had not only lodged in white women’s consciousness as beasts and perpetrators of crimes, but because they were a close and “other” representation of the “foreign values” that had destroyed their lives, southerners quite instinctively blamed Yankees and freedmen for their humiliation.

276 Quoted in Rable, Civil Wars, 222.
277 Rable, Civil Wars, 178.
278 Ibid.
Southern women were full participants in a culture of blame that characterized the Reconstruction period. The trauma of war and defeat for the South fueled the atmosphere of hostility that had predated the armed conflict in America, and southern women, as the purveyors of culture, joined in the finger pointing and furthered the divisiveness. Elizabeth Hardin claimed she would cheer the devil himself if the contest were between Satan and the Union.\textsuperscript{279} Although Sherman was singled out for vilification, Lincoln was a popular target for the anger southern women felt at their misfortune and powerlessness. Susan Bradford claimed that “poor Booth” was so distraught that his classmate had been hung as a spy when Lincoln gave his word he would not be, that he shot Lincoln in retaliation. She explained “To this day he is looked upon as a martyr and yet the truth remains that he died because he did not keep his sacred word.” She then claimed Lincoln’s death was Seward’s fault for pursuing the execution of Booth’s friend.\textsuperscript{280}

Combining the impulses of hate and blame, southern women showed themselves to be as vested in southern hierarchical culture as any of their husbands or fathers were. As Susan Bradford claimed a small victory against the perfidious Yankees when she cheered Lincoln’s murder, so too, did Emma LeConte let loose with a barrage of verbal ammunition aimed directly at the president. When news of his death reached her, she exclaimed, “Hurrah! Old Abe Lincoln has been assassinated! It may be abstractly wrong to be so jubilant, but I just can’t help it. After all the heaviness and gloom of yesterday this blow to our enemies comes like a gleam of light. We have suffered till we feel savage.”\textsuperscript{281} She worried momentarily about the backlash on the South for this crime. In the end, she concluded, Lincoln’s death was his comeuppance. “There seems no reason to exult, for this will make no change in our position – will only infuriate them against us. Never mind, our hated enemy has met the just reward of his life. The whole story may be a Yankee lie.”\textsuperscript{282}

LeConte was not alone in her exultant feeling about Booth’s deed. As soon as the news was confirmed, she shared with her family and friends a feeling of satisfaction that the Great Emancipator was killed. She described

As soon as I reached the head of the stairs, they all cried, ‘What do you think of the news?’ ‘Isn’t it splendid,’ etc. We were all in a great tremor of excitement. At home it was the same. If it is only true! The first feeling I had when the news was announced

\textsuperscript{279} G. Glen Clift, \textit{Private War of Lizzie Hardin: A Kentucky Confederate Girl’s Diary of the Civil War in Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia} (Frankfort: Kentucky Historical Society), 261.\textsuperscript{280} Bradford, \textit{Through Some Eventful Years}, 216.\textsuperscript{281} LeConte, \textit{When the World Ended}, 91.\textsuperscript{282} Ibid.
was simply gratified revenge. The man we hated has met his proper fate. I thought with exaltation of the howl it had by that time sent through the North, and how it would cast a damper on their rejoicings over the fall of our noble Lee. The next thought was how it would infuriate them against us – and that was pleasant, too.  

Tempering the pain and grief the South felt at Lee’s surrender with Lincoln’s assassination – asserting that “the man we hated has met his proper fate” – is an example of how deeply the pain of defeat affected the mind of the South, how disconnected the southern experience had become from the American experience. As Emma LeConte demonstrates, southern women did not shy from engaging in this culture of grief that had devolved into advocating a brutal end to the enemies of southern life. LeConte wanted no part of the “American experience” such that it was. She concluded that the only tragedy of Lincoln’s assassination was that “Andy Johnson will succeed him – the rail-splitter will be succeeded by the drunken ass. Such are the successors of Washington and Jefferson; such are to rule the South. ‘Sic semper tyrannis’ – it has run in my head all day . . . What exciting, what eventful times we are living in!”

At Appomattox, the “excitement” that some women expressed turned to icy-veined terror. At first, a few women chose to disregard the news of surrender. Myrta Lockett Avary remembered that the wars’ end brought “hunger and nakedness and death and pestilence and fire and sword everywhere, and we, fugitives from shot and shell, knew it well, but somehow, we laughed and sang and played on the piano – and never believed in actual defeat and subjugation.” Her husband dealt with the surrender by refusing to acknowledge it. He left Lee’s army and went to join Johnston’s.

Southerners could not deny the reality of a military defeat forever, especially in the face of concrete symbols of defeat. Avary remembered “Exactly at eight o’clock the Confederate flag that fluttered above the Capitol came down the Stars and Stripes were run up. We knew what that meant! . . . We covered our faces and cried aloud. All through the house was the sound of sobbing. It was the house of mourning, the house of death. This was a singular psychological shock that remained with Avary for the rest of her life. Looking back on her life she recounted that “The saddest moment of my life was when I saw that Southern Cross dragged down and the

283 LeConte, *When the World Ended*, 93.
284 Ibid.
285 *Myta Lockhart Avary, A Virginia Girl in the Civil War, 1861 – 1865, Being a Record of the Actual Experiences of the Wife of a Confederate Officer* (New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1903), 357.
286 Avary, 362.
Stars and Stripes run up above the Capitol. I am glad the Stars and Stripes are waiving there now. But I am true to my old flag too, and as I tell this [about 40 years later] my heart turns sick with supreme anguish of the moment when I saw it torn down from the height when valor had kept it waving so long and at such cost.”

Like many southerners, Avary was distressed that the Confederacy had nothing to show for southern sacrifices. She wondered “Was it to this end we had fought and starved and gone naked and cold? To this end that the wives and children of many a dear and gallant friends were husbandless and fatherless? To this end that our homes were in ruins, our State devastated?” As much as the loss struck at southern institutions and hearts, Avary indicates the “enobling” effect these sacrifices would come to represent for white southerners – living and dead. She wrote about “those terrible, beloved days. They are the very fiber of us.”

A result of the northern strategy to compel obedience through force was that southern women became even more violent in their language about Yankee strategies to subdue them. Flowery hyperbole in Victorian America veiled ugly emotions, but the bitterness that southern women felt could not be erased from their thoughts or deeds. Eugenia Phillips celebrated her twenty-fifth wedding anniversary in her guarded prison-apartment and mused on that day in 1861:

Did the wildest imaginings ever vision forth present realities? All of us under arrest, shut out from the world, torn from the blessings of home, forbidden to see our nearest relatives, or even our servants, and deprived of the common necessaries of life. The greatest criminals are allowed the sympathetic visits of their friends, but we are deprived even of this, and wonder that such things are—But great as are these wrongs, they may but preclude still greater atrocities, for we have only to go back a few months to understand how easy are the descending steps, when Revolution and Civil War show the way to Anarchy and Riot.

She observed the precipitous decline in her material prospects and in her personal happiness, and expressed resentment that the world had been upended. Criminals were allowed free reign to pursue their own happiness, but white women—who were supposed to be protected and privileged—were not; they were deprived of the “common necessaries of life.” This, she surmised, was the beginning of the end of civilization as she understood it. This was the beginning of “Anarchy and Riot.”

287 Avary, 363.
288 Avary, 364, 384.
The Union’s war of attrition demoralized both the armed troops and the non-combatants at home. The repeated bad news that reached anxious Confederate women in the South, and became increasingly bad and more frequent in the closing days of the war, was compounded by anxieties of what awaited the South after defeat. The desperate and bold ballad called “Song of the Southern Women” underscored how galvanized some women had become in the face of attack. It related southern women’s plight to Joan of Arc’s:

ABRAHAM LINCOLN! we call thee to hark
To the song we are singing, we Joans of Arc;
While our brothers are bleeding we fear not to bleed,
We'll face the Red Horror should there be need
By our brothers we'll stand on the terrible field,
By our brothers we'll stand, and we'll ask for no shield;
By our brothers we'll stand as a torch in the dark,
To shine on thy treachery, we Joans of Arc.
Behold our free plumes of the wild eagle dark,
Behold them, and take our white brows for thy mark;
We fear not thy cannon, we heed not thy drum,
The deeper thy thunder the stronger we come.

Although not personally devastated by the South’s destruction, Cornelia Hancock, a New Jersey Quaker, reported from Gettysburg the aftermath defeat had on southern society.

As we drew near our destination we began to realize that war has other horrors than the sufferings of the wounded and the desolation of the bereft. A sickening, overpowering, awful stench announced the presence of the unburied dead, on which the July sun was mercilessly shining, and at every step the air grew heavier and fouler, until it seemed to possess a palpable horrible density that could be seen and felt and cut with a knife. Not the presence of dead bodies themselves, swollen and disfigured as they were, and lying in heaps on every side, was as awful to the spectator as that deadly, nauseating atmosphere which robbed the battlefield of its glory, the survivors of their victory, and the wounded of what little chance of life was left to them.  

She observed that while soldiers lay dying “Every kind of distress comes upon the friends of soldiers.” Friends of soldiers included the women who cared for and relied upon their men to win the war.

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That the end was coming was a fact that was becoming increasingly obvious to soldier and civilian alike. Historian Gary Gallagher suggests that Confederate soldiers, at least,

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290 Cornelia Hancock, *The South After Gettysburg*, 7.
291 Ibid., 22.
“pragmatically accepted a stark reality while lamenting their failure to establish a slave holding republic.”292 But this lamentation of the future was mixed with an often undisguised hatred for the new order and this fatalism should not be confused with pragmatic acceptance. For example, one Confederate officer told Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain that the postwar attitude of northerners to their fellow countrymen at the South was irrelevant to their own harbored hate. He spewed “You may forgive us but we won’t be forgiven. There is rancor in our hearts . . . which you little dream of. We hate you, sir.”293 This matter-of-fact pronouncement summed up all of the sadness and despair many southerners were experiencing in the immediate postwar South. Although succinct, this officer rolled together the emotional force of a boiling bitterness on matters political, social, cultural, economic and military—the sting of having the supposedly superior southern way of life bested—coupled with the pronouncement that forgiveness was a misplaced gift that would not be received because its existence reinforced the notion that the South was wrong.

The result of feeling helpless during war was a commitment to vindication at the earliest possible opportunity. Grace Elmore hated northerners and wished them nothing but ill will for their fight against the South. She wrote “I feel so hard, so pitiless. Gladly would I witness the death of each of those wretches . . . God grant that they may suffer in their homes, their firesides, their wives and their children as they have made us suffer.”294 Some southern women went beyond wishing harm upon their enemies to wishing to harm their enemies should they encounter them. Janie Smith wrote “If I ever see a Yankee woman I intend to whip her and take the very clothes off her back . . . Where our Armies invade the North I want them to carry the torch in one hand & the sword in the other. I want dissolution carried to the heart of their country. The widows and orphans left naked and starving just as ours were left.”295 The pain of the precarious southern cause was augmented and deepened by hunger and devastation.

For those whose focus was less on whether or not the “southern cause” was right or just, the immediate pain of the death of loved ones was enough to sustain their hatred for the war they felt was brought on by northern zealots. One North Carolina man grew venomous when he remembered that bummers “entered the graveyard, dug up my dead children, opened their coffins, and left their bodies exposed to birds and beast, less vile than they. Tell me to forgive

292 Gary W. Gallagher, “‘There is Rancor in Our Hearts Which You Little Dream of,’” Appomattox: Commemorative Issue, 2005, 70.
293 Ibid.
295 Rable, Civil Wars, 180.
them? Never! If anybody . . . hates the wretches who followed Sherman’s army more than I do, it is because his capacity for hating is greater than mine.”

Southern women had as great a capacity for hate as anyone else, and they did not simply pine away in their journals. Although they often remarked that they felt powerless, some southern women made attempts to contribute to the cause for which they were suffering. As Union troops made an appearance in Florida, Susan Bradford wrote excitedly about the first incursion of Union troops into the areas around her family’s plantation. On March 5, 1865, news reached the Bradford’s plantation of colored troops landing near St. Marks, an inlet on the northern Gulf Coast, a few days’ march from Tallahassee. She wrote “Such excitement I never saw; . . . The cadets from the seminary west of the Suwannee, offered their services [to defend Tallahassee] and there was even some talk of a company of women, to organize and help hold the enemy at bay.” Although a company of armed women seems a remarkable hyperbole, Bradford claimed the next day after the Battle of Natural Bridge at the opposite end of her county that “I am so hot with anger, I would like to take part in the fighting myself.” Mary Chestnut explained why the southern postwar response to northerners and the freedmen they supported was so violent. “One can never exaggerate the horrors of war on one’s own soil. You underestimate the agony, strive as you will to speak, the agony of heart-mind-body. ‘A few more men killed.’ A few more women weeping their eyes out, and nothing whatever decided by it more than we knew before the battle.”

Eighteen-year-old Kate Sperry remarked about the stress of living in her homeland occupied by the Yankee enemy “I take it out in cussing . . . Have become reckless—stonehearted and everything, hard and pitiless.”

It was a hard and pitiless people who abided the lynch law that blanketed the former Confederacy at the century’s close. J. Randall Stanley connected the postwar circumstances to the southern tradition of racial violence. In his 1950s account of Jackson County, Florida, he wrote that living in the postwar South took a grit that originated from desperate circumstances to survive the assaults on southern life. Stanley claimed “. . . it took a strong character, or a spirit of desperation to carry on.” Racial violence, he suggested, was a result of southerners’

297 Bradford, Through Some Eventful Years, 260.
299 http://feeds.feedburner.com/blogspot/WlqT
300 J. Randall Stanley, History of Jackson County, Florida (Jackson County, FL: Jackson County Historical Society, 1950), 197.
postwar grief. This feeling of desperation, the need for the impetus of outrage, then, served the purpose of buoying a defeated people.

Southern women who lived through the war’s end contemplated what function sorrow served in the South. Cornelia Phillips Spencer may have been thinking both of her deceased husband and of the struggling South when she mused “Grief often takes a selfish turn & locks the heart up in contemplation of its own anguish.”301 Marion Knox Goode Briscoe, a member of a First Family of Virginia that was also a family of large slaveholdings, reflected in her memoirs that “The custom of burning the widow in India when her husband died was far kinder than that of setting her aside as though she had joined some nunnery. Never again was a Virginia widow to take off the long veil or forget for a minute that her husband, being gone, she must court sadness as long as she survived.”302 She likened the absence of Southern men, and the consequent abandonment of women at home, coupled with the emancipation of the slaves, to the condition of mourning. She wrote “Ours was indeed a stricken household . . . The men were all off to war, and there were the women and children absolutely unprotected in the midst of a new and unknown terror.”303 This mourning was constantly remembered by a brigade of women who were angry and unreconciled to a changed southern society.

Individual mourners did not feel isolated in the South’s culture of mourning and Briscoe noted that the normal routines of her life – as the normal routines of all southerners – had been disrupted. She had been chosen Queen of the May festival, but she was expected also to be in mourning because of her cousin’s recent death. She remembered

In those days under the circumstances it would have been shocking for me to have taken part in our little entertainment. To show respect for the dead, the living must be crucified. Children had no argument with which to assuage their troubles. They could not tell themselves that it is best. It was no comfort to know that someday they would understand. They only knew that their beautiful world had fallen to pieces, and there was nothing to cling to. I lay on the floor all the rest of the day sobbing, but no one noticed me.304

“Those circumstances” to which Briscoe referred continued to breed distress for southern women. After the war was over, slaves were no longer slaves, men continued to be absent or

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301 Cornelia P. Spencer to Mrs. Swain, Wed. May 6, 1869, box 3, folder 1874-1880, Personal Collection #7, North Carolina Office of Archives & History, Raleigh.
303 Ibid., 146.
304 Ibid.,192.
unable to reconstruct the life they expected. The circumstances that caused grief for southern whites during the war continued to consume their energies afterward. Cornelia Phillips Spencer engaged in a lively correspondence with Eliza, a friend who lived in the North. On March 10, 1866 she wrote from her home in Chapel Hill “from the other side of a great gulf – a gulf at one time impassible, but which has been bridged over” but was not yet filled. Spencer claimed that she was a “moderate, compared with many of my friends . . . but I yield to no one in love for the South, devotion to her cause, & anguish over her humiliation.” She claimed that she did not approve of the war, but when she saw

the ruins of my earthly happiness, & came back to North Carolina at the close of 1861, & found every man, woman and child enlisted for the war, I joined the army too, & never left my colors till Lee’s flag went down on his last field.305

Most Confederate women “joined the army,” at least emotionally, and as many Confederate soldiers refused to accept defeat, so did southern women engage in fantasies that the South, and “every man, woman and child enlisted for the war” had not been humiliated in defeat. For Spencer, the humiliation lay in the insistence that southerners were fundamentally incorrect to go to war for southern institutions and values. She continued her letter

You seem to wonder why if we left the Union with regret, we did not welcome its restoration. Ah Miss Eliza, it was not the Union we left – it is not now: and we had been fighting it for four years, -- learning to hate it, & those who were forcing it on us, -- learning to hate with deadly burning hatred those who wantonly spoiled us, destroyed us, and above all misrepresented us.306

Spencer points to the power of culture on the willingness of the South to accept defeat. Indeed, there is little evidence in words or behavior that southerners accepted defeat. According to Gaines Foster “Most accepted the defeat of their cause but continued to resist unacceptable northern demands.”307 But southern women were not in a mood to accept either defeat or Yankee influence. Southern men failed to win the war, and in the face of the postwar “invasion” and assault on southern racial values, southerners – men and women – were determined to “save the South” in the “second Civil War” of Reconstruction. Foster did clarify that for southerners,

305 Cornelia P. Spencer to “Eliza,” dated March 10, 1866, typescript correspondence 1862, 1865-June 1866, folder 2, in the Cornelia Phillips Spencer Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
306 Ibid.
307 Foster, Ghosts of the Confederacy, 19.
“Acceptance of defeat rarely included love for the North, enthusiasm for reunion, or tolerance of black social or political equality. Nor did it entail any abdication of local control or abandonment of local customs.” Southerners did not accept defeat in any meaningful way. Without tolerance of black social or political equality, “defeat” was a concept that southerners were willing to leave only on paper.

Women were certain even at the end of the war that they had been right in their cause, and that the loss of the war need not necessarily require a readjustment of their feelings about the southern cause, lost or not. Sarah Hine reflected the belief that the South had no reason to flagellate itself because “We never yielded in the struggle until we were bound hand & foot & the heel of the despot was on our throats.” In addition to jettisoning any idea of repentance, she also reinforces the comfortable catechism that southern men were not beaten in a fair fight, a recurrent theme in women’s Lost Cause memorial-making. Cornelia Spencer understood that hatred was un-Christian, but she felt a compulsion to spit on the star-spangled banner when she “contemplate[d] certain parties in the Yankee nation.” And yet she thought herself “a better Christian in this matter than a good many of my neighbors.”

Southerners had intense instruction in hatred for blacks and Yankees who, together, represented the threat to the southern social order. Racial violence was the most dramatic expression of the combination of hate and grief. The atmosphere of racial violence that dominated the Reconstruction period was an outward expression of the denial and the anger associated with the (threatened, though never complete) loss of white supremacist culture. Grace Brown Elmore noted in 1865 that “a gulf of blood and fire and rapine the length of those four years stands between” North and South, and now there was “nothing in common but hatred between us and the Yankees.” She candidly noted that “the hearts of our people are boiling with rage and hatred.”

According to the New York Times, the passage of time did not serve to soften the hearts of the southerners, but instead provided them with an opportunity to dwell on their hardship and challenged racial status, and emboldened them to speak out about this unsatisfactory situation. Southern women, according to this observation, fanned the flames of hate for the Union. The

308 Ibid., 19.
309 Quoted in Gary W. Gallagher, “‘There is Rancor in Our Hearts Which You Little Dream of,’” Appomattox: Commemorative Issue, 2005, 70.
report stated that “By the end of 1865, Floridians had recovered from the initial shock of defeat, and the dread of Northern rapine, slaughter, and proscription had subsided. This change was evidenced by an increase in the number of reckless utterances and comments relative to the South’s position in the nation. The spirit of bitterness was growing, fanned by newspaper editors, some of whom had not seen combat, and by southern women (regarded by some as far superior to men in intelligence) who occupied a dominant place in the South.”\textsuperscript{312} It is impossible to measure the claim about southern women’s relative intelligence, but based on their writings, it appears that southern women did take a position on racial hierarchy, and their feelings were every bit as full of racial animosity as those expressed by the men of the white supremacist Democratic Party of the Reconstruction and Redemption period.

When Republicans won elections in the South with the help of the recently enfranchised freedmen, the feelings of defeat resurfaced and deepened racial animosity. When Republicans were successful in the congressional elections of 1866, the returns made southerners “bitter and defiant.” And, according to Carter, it was a reprisal of the sense of defeat not yet shaken off; and “The political impotence of the white conservative Democrats seems a major cause of their frustration, a disappointment that bordered on despair.”\textsuperscript{313} The only way out of this cycle of defeat was to reassert the white male prerogative of protecting white women from threats – defined increasingly in the South as blacks and anyone who didn’t believe that whites should profit from their subordination.

Reconstruction in the South provided blacks with their first opportunity for governmental authority and civic participation. These expressions of autonomy only served to enrage white southerners further and remind them of their loss in war. For women, it was as if their enemies were dancing on the graves of their protectors, and this heightened their sense of vulnerability to “outrage” at the hands of black men. While white men attempted to reestablish white hegemony through Black Codes, apprenticeship arrangements for “vagrant” blacks, and through intimidation and violence such as the Ku Klux Klan specialized in, women also were hard at work “reconstructing” their former racial privilege. They did this by honoring Confederate soldiers and leaders as if they were unconquered heroes and they simultaneously engaged in the white supremacist racial rhetoric that is typically associated with political demagogues. Ellen House praised Nathan Bedford Forrest, later first Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, for the


\textsuperscript{313} Carter, \textit{The Angry Scar}, 41, 60.
murders of colored troops near Fort Pillow, Tennessee. She wrote that Forrest “put most of the garrison out of harm’s way, killed every officer there. Good for him. I think he did exactly right.”314 After the war, House continued her unremitting hatred of Yankees and also resented being “slaves to the vilest race that ever disgraced humanity.”315

It was in this atmosphere that a new generation of white southerners was taught to hate. The stories of this “blood fire and rapine” were chanted by firesides, carefully copied into keepsake journals and scrapbooks, and published as reminiscences of the War.316 Women engaged in memorial work ensured that this message of hate was engraved in stone, and taught in white southern schoolrooms. Public Historian David Glassberg points out that public history can be intensely emotional. He writes that “Psychologists have explored the consequences about when bonds between people and places are broken – grieving for homes . . . some places have meaning primarily through the memory of their destruction. They become ‘storied places.’”317 The stories that women wove in the South were indeed imbued with often deep emotion, and by curating history in stories and physical spaces, women exerted power over political and popular culture.

This southern story, crafted to reinforce white supremacy, endured for generations as it was designed to embalm regional histories, and family recollections, and place women on pedestals, protected from the uncertainty the power shift after defeat represented for elite whites. Even though the Protestant Christianity that dominated the South taught its followers not to hate, southern women alone were not prepared to lead by example and “turn the other cheek” for the embittered white south. Cornelia Phillips Spencer, in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, mused

I really do believe we ought to choke down, trample out, scatter to the winds all our natural, & (casually speaking) justifiable resentments, & bitterness, & force ourselves to feel, look, speak kindly & forgivingly of these people. It will cost a mortal pang to do it, but it ought to be done, I believe, by Christians. And done now. If we wait till time has

314 House, A Very Violent Rebel, 194.
315 Ibid., The Knoxville Chapter of the UDC dedicated their club, #2624, to this “Confederate heroine.” The group’s webpage declares, “Miss House is a wonderful example of the courageous women who supported the Confederacy in their day-to-day lives. The organizing members of this chapter felt it most appropriate that she be honored by having a new chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy [2000], Tennessee Division, chartered in the city where she lived and wrote her diary, named in her honor and memory.” http://www.discoveret.org/udcknox/Our_Namesake/our_namesake.html, 2006.
316 Grace Brown Elmore rewrote her diary in the 1880s when her daughter was active in the South Carolina UDC, chairing the organization’s book committee, and encouraging the publication in 1903 of the first volume of a two-part series of women’s contributions to the Confederate effort.
dulled our memories somewhat & worn off the keenness of the edge, we may begin to say I forgive – when it is only that we are forgetting.\textsuperscript{318}

“These people” may well have deserved southern resentment, she suggests, but the fear that the South would forget the pain of the war provoked a different fear: that in the forgetting, the South would be trampled upon again and again by the northern aggressors because southern posterity might have lost their feelings of outrage. But northerners observed no shortage of outrage as southerners demonstrated that they would “never forget” the shame of defeat by speaking and acting violently toward federals and blacks alike.

The Freedmen’s Bureau officers stationed in some of the most unreconstructed parts of the South reported that forcing promises of good behavior on the angry southerners was a losing proposition. Captain J. H. Mathews in Amite County, Magnolia, Mississippi, reported on January 12, 1866

I beg leave to make the sweeping statement, that in some four or five townships or beats in the counties of Amite and Pike nine-tenths (9/10) of the entire white male population have actually perjured themselves. All, or nearly all, have subscribed to the amnesty oath, and have sworn to refrain from the very acts they are performing; and I have no idea that more than one in ten in the Zion Hill vicinity can lay his hand upon his heart and swear he has acted an upright and honest part toward the freedmen since taking the oath, while at the same time it should be remembered that this same Zion Hill country is continually reporting negro insurrections being on foot - a perfect “hot-bed” for originating insurrection canards. No wonder that such an inmate in their minds as the recollection of their own nefarious actions should be the instigator of a subterfuge to screen themselves in violating law by implicating others who are defenceless.\textsuperscript{319}

This federal officer understood in 1866 the concept of “projecting” anger about their defeat onto “defenceless” others – justifying attacks on freedmen with the argument that freedmen are fomenting insurrection. Captain Mathews worried about the “terribly vindictive passions controlling the minds of these people” and suggested federal troops be stationed in Mississippi until cooler heads prevailed. He even suggested that if radical measures were not exerted on behalf of freedmen, they might soon face genocide. Mathews testified

Should they remain where they are, under existing circumstances, their condition will not only be rendered worse than slaves, but the safety for their lives and their hopes for the future for this unfortunate race will depart forever.

\textsuperscript{318} Cornelia Phillips Spencer Papers, typescript, folder 2, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Similarly, based on a visit to one South Carolina plantation by Agent F. N. Montell, Freedmen’s Bureau representative Major Kinsman reported that he found freedmen submissive and the planters in denial about the end of the war.

[T]he planters [were] very much dissatisfied, throughout charging the U. S. Government with having destroyed the country and that, to use their expression, "everything had gone to the Devil." On my visit to a plantation named "Mount Hope" J. C. Warley, owner, in speaking to the people I used these words. "Now the war is over you must all go to work faithfully &c.," when I was interrupted by Mr. Warley who remarked in a loud voice “The war is not over.” I stopped and asked for an explanation, he said “every man had a right to an opinion and his was that this thing would never die out and he had taken the oath by compulsion and not by choice.”

If the southerners refused to believe the war was over, the Union must send another army to show them the end of the war. An additional battalion of men, Brown believed, would be the least force necessary to meet the ongoing war. He implored

The authorities must remember we are still among our enemies (I say enemies without qualifications) and they communicate no intelligence to us except from necessity – and the Negroes are afraid to tell half they know and do see. I make this general statement of facts without giving details – that you may at once call the attention of the authorities to the wretched conditions of the Freedmen and Women – the silent though powerful opposition to the Military authorities . . .

Freedmen’s Bureau agents in all corners of the South felt that they must be experiencing the most dire violence and calls went up from virtually every district stressing the immediacy of their need and the impending doom should help not be forthcoming. Brown ominously concluded “The attentions of the authorities should be called more to this section than any part of the South – and that at once.”

The Freedmen’s Bureau faced a culture of white supremacy that additional Yankees would have been just as inept at countermanding. White supremacy had been embraced in the slave south and had rewarded its adherents with wealth and status. Even those poor whites who were never likely to be wealthy understood that white supremacy was the path to what status they did enjoy and what power they could exert.

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320 United States Government, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of South Carolina, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1870, National Archives Microfilm Publication M869 Roll 34, “Reports of Conditions and Operations.”
321 Ibid.
322 Ibid., October 23, 1865.
Women watched over this culture of white supremacy. Women could practice it without running afoul of the Freedmen’s Bureau officers. Politicians discussed punishments for men who practiced white supremacy “in the field” – by exploiting or attacking blacks – but there was no such approbation for ladies’ reminiscences, scrapbooks, memorial parades, or textbook committee work. Each of these activities, however, celebrated white supremacy and fostered an atmosphere of denial of the end of black inferiority. These private acts of racial violence were diligently and systematically taught to southern white children and within a generation, these children, nursed on their parents’ hate, avenged their honor through unprecedented race terror when Judge Lynch’s Law ruled the South and the Freedmen’s Bureau was but a distant memory.

Some women did lash out with their accumulated frustration and strike or attack blacks – usually as a result of a labor disagreement or an alleged theft of property. Infrequently, Freedmen’s Bureau records reveal women who used shovels, sticks or weapons against former slaves. Some former slave-owning women missed the days when lashing blacks held promise of getting them to work. When Susan Darden’s free black woman help left when her husband lashed her and the provost marshal lent only a sympathetic ear, Darden made an increasingly common complaint in her diary “Freed women are doing so bad, cannot get them to go to the pen with Lucinda to milk. I wish I could get a hold of them with a good cowhide.”

Although southern white women were likely more frequently thinking about committing physical violence upon “uppity” blacks, some women approved of the race violence that their husbands and other white southern men were perpetrating across the “Redeemed” South. Darden commented favorably to her diary when her husband attended a burial of the Republican Constitution at the Democrat’s “Redemption” of the state from the “Black Republicans” in Mississippi in 1868 even though this repudiation of a Republican state Constitution delayed Mississippi’s participation in federal elections. In 1876 Darden recorded her husband and son’s participation in a prospective race riot in Fayette, Mississippi. Her kinsmen met with the “Brandywine Club” and their cannon. And although the anticipated clash did not occur, Darden confirmed her men’s willingness to meet the challenge they perceived when “The darkies had said they were going to make the white men raise their hats to them & send a committee to wait on their wives.” Three months later, Darden indicated that her husband and son “went to Fayette to hear Lynch (colored) speak; they cheered him so he had to stop . . . he left on the cars, freedmen followed him to the cars; the Clubs were ordered to follow on to see if Lynch got off

323 Culpepper, All Things Altered, 250.
324 Ibid., 253-254.
the cars, he did not.” While Darden was told that her son and nephew needed guns for hunting, Darden’s nephew was mortally wounded while accompanying her son’s “Club,” which had been “ordered out.” When the news spread that the young man was wounded in a racial conflict, Susan reported “The Clubs from all round were there. They got 7 of the Negroes; the others got away, some may have been shot (wounded).”

Northerners observed that southern attitudes became increasingly hostile to the Freedman’s Bureau and others with a northern association. In the hearing held by the Joint Committee on Reconstruction in Washington M. Hobbs, a chaplain of a colored regiment, testified that “the spirit of the people of Florida had become very bitter, many citizens uttered treasonous sentiments on the streets, and Unionists would be compelled to leave the state if the military were withdrawn.”

Union observers saw the kinds of hostility espoused in women’s journals acted out by men and women after the war. Julius Quentin was astonished that the “elite” in his district were so revered even though their behavior towards blacks evidenced a profound hatred toward them. He mused at the irony of how respected slave beaters were in the upper ranks of southern society and could even hold positions of moral authority. He suggested that when influential members of white society, for example a minister, treated freedmen as animals, then southern society was in real trouble. The violent desire for racial superiority was fueled by support for this hate at home. Quentin asked “What can . . . [be expected] when the wife of the minister whips her servants, accompanying the same with oaths, and stimulates her husband to worse actions?”

Charles Hamilton, Freedman’s Bureau agent in west Florida, was worried that “The defiance and opposition of whites in Jackson County Florida served as bad examples to freedmen; chief among the defiant whites were the women who nourished feelings of disloyalty and who had a great influence on the men.”

The Freedmen’s Bureau agents’ accounts of the defiance of the region’s women was corroborated by a New York Times article in which an observer in Tallahassee on July 12, 1865, reported “that most of the people in the region were disloyal and yield unwilling assent to the decrees of the government. . . the planters in the vicinity are generally irreconciled to the new

325 Ibid., 255.
order of things and think it will be impossible to succeed by free labor.”

Driving this atmosphere of defiance and anger, according to Lieutenant Quentin, were the local “women of the better class,” who were as “vile, both in action and in language [as the ex-Confederate men], and the child at home is being instilled with hatred toward the North” by its mother. Quentin bemoaned “the influence of the women on both the youth and the men was regarded as great and a ‘misfortune to the country.’”

The “misfortune” in the South, according to the majority of white southerners, was the wrongheaded charity that the Freedmen’s Bureau was doling out to former slaves, and the feeling blacks were demonstrating that freedom from slavery meant freedom from oppression. The transition to free labor in the South was at the crux of what was fueling white southerners’ resentment and fear. Southern women who relied upon unfree labor – especially in the absence of men – were especially ill equipped to negotiate the postwar world of work. Dolly Lunt apparently did not anticipate that the end of the war would mean an immediate end to slavery. A month after Appomattox she seemed surprised to learn that she would be compelled to relinquish her property in slaves immediately. She wrote on May 17th, 1865 “I hear to day that our negroes are all freed by the US government. This is more than I anticipated yet I trust it will be a gradual thing & not done all at once but the Disposer of All knows best & will do it right.”

Interestingly, she engaged one of her slaves in a conversation on the topic of emancipation. “May 14, 1865, I had a long conversation with my man Elbert today about freedom & told him I was perfectly willing but wanted direction. He says the Yankees told Maj. Lees servants they were all free but they had better remain where they were until it was settled as it would be in a months time.” Here it appears that she attempted to use her femininity and lack of familiarity with the protocols of labor management as an excuse to keep her slaves close to home and working for a few more weeks. In the previous entry she indicated that the United States government had decreed that her slaves are free to go, but in her conversation with her laborers, she was clearly not so candid and suggested that even slaves of that famous Confederate, General Lee, were loyal to their master’s place until told they may go at some future point.

330 Report of Julius Quentin, April 30, 1866, Madison; in Freedman’s Bureau Papers, Report of Julius Quentin, April 24, 1866, Madison; in Freedman’s Bureau Papers.
331 Lunt, The Diary of Dolly Lunt Burge, May 14, 1865, 112.
The Thirteenth Amendment was proposed in January, 1865 and southern states ratified it so they could be easily “reconstructed” under President Johnson’s terms. Not all southerners accepted the loss of the war as an imperative to relinquish their property in slaves. Some women whose slaves were the only thing between their respectability and hard labor were especially unable to act decisively to make postwar provisions for their now free slaves. Dolly Lunt, who had shown so much condescending concern for “her boys,” consulted several prominent men about the strategy she might employ to keep her “servants” working for her as long as possible. A few weeks after the war’s end, she recorded her concern about the status of her slaves.

May 25 1865
Dr. Cheney came in the evening to see me & we had a long talk about carrying out the advice of Dr. Comings in regard to our servants. We hear so many conflicting rumors we know not what to do but are willing to carry out the orders when we know them.\textsuperscript{333}

Although she seemed reconciled to following directions about freeing her slaves, whatever they may be, four days later, she seemed far more emotional and distraught about what her days might hold without unpaid labor. In addition to the aftermath of war, the parameters of Lunt’s world forever shifted, and the shock of the change caused a pervasive anxiety. She wrote

May 29 1865
Dr. Williams from the “Circle” came this morning to trade me a horse. He tells me the people below are freeing their servants & allowing those to stay with them that will go on with their work & obey as usual. What I shall do with mine is a question that troubles day & night it is my last thought at night & first in the morning. I told them several days ago they were free to do as they liked. But it is my duty to make some provision for them. I thank God they are freed & yet what can I do without them? They are old and young & not profitable to hire. What provisions shall I make for them?\textsuperscript{334}

Discerning the role of blacks in the South was a source of tremendous distress for whites. When southerners no longer could orchestrate black labor, they attempted to control freedmen in other ways. Georgia Conrad, a young woman at the end of the war, assumed that if women’s claim to social deference had been violated during the war, then white southern men should rise in indignation to shake off this humiliation after the war. While walking in Savannah, she complained that “a huge Negro soldier compelled me to take the gutter, to escape coming in contact with him. I rushed into my house in a tempest of indignation, I found my father seated, reading, in the dining-room. ‘Papa! Papa!’ I called out, ‘A Negro man would not make way for

\textsuperscript{333} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{334} Ibid.
me on the sidewalk.’ ‘My child,’ answered he, ‘you must expect that and many things besides.’ I left the room feeling that the world had indeed been turned upside down, when a Negro – one of the people I had been so fond of – could be rude to me and my father not resent it.”

She claimed that before Emancipation, slaves had been “politeness personified,” but she worried that blacks would misunderstand and assume that freedom meant equality. She asked “When will the Negro of to-day understand that freedom does not necessarily mean rudeness, and that ‘white man’ or ‘white woman’ applied to their old masters and mistresses, and ‘colored gentleman’ and ‘colored lady’ to the members of their own race, does not show any great amount of education, only ignorance of the meaning of two very simple English words.” Like other southern women suggested, it would be only a matter of time until the results of the war had been clarified by their southern white men. She continued “We will hope that a Daniel will rise in judgment, who will, in these new days, teach the Negroes as they were taught in the old time ‘to mind their manners.’”

As Hodding Carter pointed out, this unwillingness to understand the status of freedmen in the way their enemies understood it was a deliberate attempt to soften the trauma of defeat; this unwillingness to accept defeat was shouldered not only by ex-Confederate men or former soldiers, but by the whole white society, including women. He wrote “No matter how literate the free Negroes might have been, the white southern majority was emotionally unready to incorporate in the restoration of normal political life a race it considered in multitude to be not only unready for suffrage, which it was, but innately inferior.”

If a social revolution could occur in one direction, it must have seemed quite possible to reverse the revolution and return southern society to the status quo. Revolutions are infrequently bloodless, and a reestablishment of the social and racial hierarchy in the South required the participation of not just the Ku Kluxers and vigilantes, but required the participation of the society at large. White southern women willingly contributed to a culture of racial hostility. Together with southern white men, they hoped to reverse defeat, to fight the war on a different front. The culture war in the South played out on the streets and in households throughout the region. This war took place by the hearthside and in nurseries, in schools and in church – in all the places white southern women commanded, where their ideology could influence generations about the results of the war.

336 Ibid.
Southern women were attempting to manage a bitter hatred that caused southerners – men and women – to view Reconstruction as an opportunity to reconstruct their former cultural hegemony, and sex and race hierarchy rather than reconstruct the South in the image of its oppressor. In this battle for the historical memory of the South’s role in this momentous war, white southern women were well equipped. In cemeteries and public squares, women literally carved the South’s white culture of superiority and animosity to their foes – Yankees and blacks – into history.
“Although my heart sickens and the future looks dark, some indefinable emotion, whispers courage and promises that a day of reckoning will soon come.”

– Eugenia Phillips

Southern women nursed their hatred and used it as a weapon in their arsenal in the culture war in the post-Civil War South. The strength white women gained through their war trauma was a steely commitment to crafting a southern history that future generations could embrace and feel proud of. In this way, they were engaging in a “public history” making that was, in many ways, intensely private and localized. Centered in their “homeschools” across the South, this Lost Cause was adopted by groups of women with similar concerns about crafting a “true” history that suggested that the South had not really lost, men had not really been unable to protect women, and blacks were not truly citizens. Women did this because they had a stake in racial hierarchy and because they wanted to run the world aright again.

These women were attempting to right the world through a lens of trauma and grief that they had not motivation to jettison. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, in her book, *On Death and Dying*, identified “Five Stages of Grief” which include denial, anger, bargaining, and depression. This rubric has been widely acknowledged for understanding loss, and has also served as the framework from which more sophisticated analyses of loss have been developed. Instead of viewing the grief stages as an inevitable path on which the person facing loss must travel, Kubler-Ross’s model is more profitably used as a guide to emotional behaviors which have no pre-determined or linear motion. This chapter demonstrates that women’s writings were ground in a “bad mourning” that kept southern women attached to and revisiting rituals of death. They began organized efforts to mourn the Confederacy collectively and through these efforts bolstered a cultural hegemony of race privilege that was adopted by most southern whites.

I suggest that the kinds of repetitive and assertive behaviors that characterized women’s memorial club work and the vindictive language that filled women’s personal writing were a result, originally of war-trauma, and eventually of social habit that indicates southern women did not resolve their grief about the social realities of reunion. While I am not attempting to impose

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modern psychological diagnosis on historical actors, today’s psychiatry can illuminate the motivations of a deeply troubled people.

The ability to reconcile to loss depends on many factors, internal and external. Southern women were frequently plunged into emotional depths of despair that were only deepened by the loss of the Confederate cause. The postwar environment in the South created external stressors that helped keep white southerners mired in the “Lost Cause,” seeking its eminent resurrection, and, when that seemed increasingly less possible at the dawning of the twentieth century, prominently placing the Confederacy’s “heritage” in marble monuments in virtually every nook and cranny of the South – as if in a desperate attempt to win at least one war. Southern women’s private expressions of grief in their journals, diaries and scrapbooks, as well as in their reminiscences intended for an audience – either their family, community, or for a commercial audience – show that the grief process in the South was encouraged and kept alive by Lost Cause rhetoric and women were instrumental in this “civic mourning” of the Cause, of their status based on white supremacy, and of the Confederate dead – their husbands and sons. Their path of mourning was not linear, nor was there a great deal of motivation to work past the past.

The American Civil War had provided precious few lessons to southerners except that in the future, they should not lose. Southern women were watching the events of the century unfold before them, but not as passive spectators. These women shaped the postwar South by chronicling their process of grief, by keeping alive sectional hatreds through memorial activities, and by teaching this grief to children through an insistence on teaching a “true southern history,” that further enshrined the Lost Cause myth.

Although historians of emotion, like Peter Stearns, have examined the shift in the function of emotions for the middle class after the 1880s, a period of Victorian intensity, most historians have overlooked the emotional implications of invasion and defeat – on nations and on individuals.\footnote{Peter Stearns, \textit{American Cool: Constructing a Twentieth Century Emotional Style}, (New York: New York University Press, 1994) and Peter Stearns and Jan Lewis, eds., \textit{An Emotional History of the United States} (New York: New York University Press, 1998).} Also, an emotional history of the South must acknowledge the functions that southern women found for guilt, grief, and anger long after the nation as a whole lost interest in the repercussions of defeat. Historians of the Civil War and Reconstruction viewed the war as primarily about the glory of combat and the nobility of manly suffering, and have focused on battles, weapons, and troop movements. The Civil War period is fascinating because the physical and emotional devastation so many Americans endured shows Americans defeated –
and thus is contrary to the prototypical American story of success and achievement. Southerners were the first group of Americans to experience defeat in war and a military occupation that consciously struck at the libertarian feelings of southern planters and yeomen. In the postwar South, then, southerners were careful to emphasize achievement and triumph over adversity in the creation of the “Magnolia Myth,” where everyone in the South was living a life of success and satisfaction. This story carefully subsumed the raw emotions – anger, hatred, extremism, intractability – that the war symbolized. Gaines Foster noted that

Rather than looking at the war as a tragic failure and trying to understand it, or even condemn it, Americans, North and South, chose to view it as a glorious time to be celebrated . . . they celebrated the war’s triumphant nationalism and martial glory. Southerners participated in the celebration, even though they had lost the war. Surprisingly, they never questioned whether defeat implied something was wrong with their cause or their society. Their cause had been just and their failure the result of overwhelming numbers, they concluded.341

Southerners were not blind, nor were they obtuse. This was the denial that stemmed from grief.

European and World Historians have already identified the “shell shock” of the First World War and the dehumanization of modern war on civilian populations. The near-constant Civil Wars in Africa and the Middle East have provided scholars with evidence of the generational devastation of those conflicts. In Mothers in the Fatherland, for example, Claudia Koons suggests that women’s power through conservatism must be taken seriously, and that women often saw their self-interest in tacitly or openly sanctioning suffering. Scholars of international gender studies have produced a number of works on the effect of war on women, including comparative studies of violence and reconstruction after war.342 Civil War historians have been slow to use an interdisciplinary approach to examining the implications of this conflict, perhaps because of the myopic belief in American exceptionalism, or in the long-held assumption that the American Civil War was an exclusively male conflict.

Few historians have incorporated the contributions of the psychiatric community, which has long acknowledged the mental stress that life in the trenches or on the march could visit upon fighting men. Soldiers’ letters and diaries demonstrate that no amount of bravado could steel

341 Gaines Foster, Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865 – 1913 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 196.
them for the shock of the battlefield, the overwhelming gruesomeness of modern warfare. Men were not “tougher back then” because they lived closer to the land, slaughtered hogs, and lost family members to scarlet fever. In fact, Victorian men brimmed with emotion that they poured out in letters back home to their mothers, wives, and sisters. Eric T. Dean, Jr. examined the emotional battle wounds on soldiers during and after the Civil War and compared their experiences in readjusting to postwar life. He argues that the postwar trauma for Civil War soldiers was as painful and permanent as the readjustment problems many Vietnam veterans faced when dealing with the delayed psychiatric response, post-traumatic stress. Although only identified in the twentieth century as a set of psychopathological symptoms, post-traumatic stress, including anxiety and prolonged grief and rage, seem to dominate the writings of postwar southerners, soldiers and women alike.

One need not be a uniformed soldier to be traumatized by the Civil War – especially in the South where the “total war” concept had proved especially devastating – to experience the symptoms that today signal post-traumatic stress. According to Jeffrey McClurken, 31.58% of patients admitted to the Western Lunatic Asylum in Staunton, Virginia, between 1861 and 1868 whose listed reason for admittance was “the War,” were women. McClurken points out that

The medical records of these 18 women [of 57 patients] indicate that their ‘Mind[s were] unsettled by the war,’ although in a variety of ways. For women like Polly Shank, it was the conscription of her husband, plus the ‘insolence & depredations of [Union] soldiers’ near her home, that pushed her into a severe depression. For other women, anxiety or grief over the absence or death of loved ones seems causative. For still others, mental problems came from a particularly traumatic encounter with Northern troops.

Many southern women had traumatic encounters with Northern troops, although not all of them had access to mental health services. They frequently turned to expressing their anger and frustration through journal and memoir writing, and later, working to restore the Confederate Cause in an effort to deny the trauma of defeat.

Additionally, the South’s culture of grief, fueled by the hated occupation, combined with the fact that southern households and daily routines were disrupted in a permanent way, exacerbated the traumatic after-effects of the war. No matter how chivalrous or militaristic the


southern way of life, the unparalleled shock of defeat was replayed again and again in rituals of reenactment and memorial-making. According to the diagnostic manual (DSM-IV) for mental illness,

The essential feature of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder is the development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor involving direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate (Criterion A1). The person's response to the event must involve intense fear, helplessness, or horror (or in children, the response must involve disorganized or agitated behavior) (Criterion A2).345

Combat troops suffered trauma not only from their bloody engagements, but also from the extreme hardships of camp life, marching, brutal weather, and short supplies. Furloughs might offer temporary respite for a soldier, and some men who deserted the fighting life escaped the constant demands of drills and waiting. Those at home suffered similarly continuous levels of stress, with infrequent respite from the worries of war. Southern women wrote extensively about anxiety that they might encounter Yankee troops, and many southern women wrote that they understood that their personal fortunes would be devastated; uncertainty about the extent of the devastation they would have to bear only exacerbated their suffering. Southern women, in the path of war, were not only helpless to combat or control it, but they were in much closer proximity to the long-lasting physical devastation of their home, property, and way of life.

The diagnostic manual explains "The disorder may be especially severe or long lasting when the stressor is of human design. The likelihood of developing this disorder may increase as the intensity of and physical proximity to the stressor increase."346 Stated in simple lay terms, PTSD is a collection of psychological, behavioral, and physical responses to traumatic events in the life of an individual. The trauma itself may have been a single event or a series of events over an extended period of time. In the twentieth century, PTSD is commonly diagnosed in countries that experience long term war and social upheaval. Women can suffer from stress trauma after witnessing death, but they may also be triggered by the fear of personal attack or physical harm.

346 DSM-IV, 309.81
Modern psychiatry had linked other psychiatric afflictions to PTSD sufferers: panic disorder, phobia, and major depressive disorders.

Southern women were candidates for lasting consequences of the overwhelming events of invasion and civil war. According to Harvard psychiatrist and trauma expert Judith Lewis Herman, MD,

Psychological trauma is an affliction of the powerless. At the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force. When the force is that of nature, we speak of disasters. When the force is that of other human beings, we speak of atrocities. Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning. . . . Traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life. Unlike common misfortunes, traumatic events generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death. They confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror, and evoke the responses of catastrophe.347

As a group, southern women were closer than northern women to the effects of war. Although southern women were less frequent battlefield nurses or soldiers in disguise, it was more often a southern woman’s home or church that was the location of the battlefield hospital. Southern women were widowed at a higher rate proportionally than were their Union sisters. Southern women suffered intensely from the blockade, and were more frequently hungry because of the shortages of war. Because of the close proximity of the extreme stressors of war, defeat, and occupation, southern women’s efforts to cope with the stress are frequently angry, obsessive, and full of denial. Southern women’s reminiscences of their war time and Reconstruction experiences are filled with heroic poetry in which soldiers never die, with recollections of better (pre-war) days in which “darkies” knew their place, and with paraphernalia relating to the heroizing of Confederate soldiers through monuments designed to show that the “spirit” of the South was never conquered.

One of the essential criteria of diagnosing posttraumatic stress is lasting effect on an individual’s ability to negotiate life after the traumatic event. Southerners continued to return to the emotional behavior of denial and anger without reaching the final stages of acceptance of grief; that is to say, the grief “process” of the South got stuck. Gaines Foster noted that “Late nineteenth century southerners gained little wisdom and developed no special perspective from

There were no rewards – there was no external motivation – for most southerners to adopt a new racial paradigm, or a new way of conceptualizing labor or politics. But the potential for reclaiming white supremacy in the South was real and seemed attainable through both racial violence and by dominating historical memory.

The passion with which women participated in the re-enactment of the Civil War’s design on glory – through memorialization, scrapbook-keeping, poem-writing, and story-telling – lends credence to the claim that not only did individual southerners reel from the death of loved ones, but that the white South writ large indulged in prolonged postwar stress that drove the myth making and monument building that dominated postwar southern white culture.

“Recurrent and intrusive recollections of the event” is a hallmark of Post-traumatic stress. \(^{349}\) (Criterion B1). Not only could men re-enact their war service through Confederate veteran activities, but southern women played a prominent public role in re-creating their loss – the chivalrous, white-male hierarchy in the South. Memorial-making alone, however, could not reverse the gains for blacks that the end of the Civil War symbolized. White southerners sought to address their feelings of helplessness about the fact of defeat through memorial and re-enactment activities and sought to address their feelings of helplessness about the fact of black freedom through increased racial domination. Southern white women played prominent roles in the effort to dominate historical memory, and throughout the period of Reconstruction, the historical evidence suggests that they also were part of the effort toward racial domination. In many journals and scrapbooks, the Victorian immortality poetry, representing domination of historical memory, is pasted carefully onto the same page as “nigger” jokes and notices of Klan rallies, representing southern whites’ effort to dominate blacks in the power vacuum of Emancipation.

Women were complicit in Redemption and white supremacist movements that have thus far been characterized as male-only pursuits. Southern women zealously told a revisionist history, and this was an aggressive political and cultural act. In the postwar period, groups and individuals were complicit in the suppression of stories which did not glorify white Confederate men. In this, they were complicit in maintaining the race and gender hierarchy from which they derived some modicum of power and privilege.

Eric Foner points out that “as a wholesale rejection of the present, nostalgia can serve as a powerful means of protest,” and southern white women used this power of protest – this

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\(^{348}\) Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 196.

\(^{349}\) DSM-IV, 309.81, Criterion B1.
practice of public nostalgia – to insulate themselves and their household from what they regarded as the insidious influences of progress – foisted upon them in defeat. This pattern of behavior – looking to a golden (if mythical) past when the dominant group’s racial, cultural, and economic hegemony is threatened – is the stock-in-trade of modern reactionary movements, and the antecedents of modern cultural conservatism can be found in women’s spheres in the nineteenth century.  

After the Civil War, women continued the contest for culture in an atmosphere of economic malaise and increasing racial violence. Women authors and diarists recast the past – the inadequate and unsatisfactory past of Confederate defeat – into a more useful one. The new generation of southern women who knew about defeat through foggy childhood memories or at their mother’s knee needed a useable past. According to Sarah E. Gardner in *Blood and Irony: Southern White Woman’s Narratives of the Civil War, 1861 – 1937*, women in the period following Reconstruction continued to reconstruct a white southern history with a shared “belief that southern majesty and grandeur rested with the Confederacy.” Within this shared understanding was an increasingly aggressive white supremacy that manifested itself simultaneously with the hegemonic monument work and ceremonies of Confederate celebration and a sharp increase in the number of race killings throughout the South. 

Reconciliation was impossible when the war was still on, and Confederate women worked diligently to assure that the final verdict of the war was not yet rendered. Women engaged in what historians call “Confederate culture,” and “memorialization,” in order to win the war that the Confederates in uniform lost. This was important for their race status as well as for the race status of their progeny. With a tenacious hold on a culture of race deference – Confederate culture – women hoped to replace some of the structure and privilege that Reconstruction had taken away. As Gaines Foster noted “Confederate culture was enacted publicly both to assuage the sting of defeat, but also to replace the message of racial intimidation that slavery used to convey. Lawrence Goodwin calls it ‘patterns of deference.’ These patterns of deference ‘helped foster the cultural patterns that made political revolt or racial reform so difficult.’” Preventing political revolt and racial reform was a key objective of men and women engaged in this great struggle. Echoing the dramatic professions of women who wrote

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that the prospect of defeat signaled the end of the world, in 1867, one Ocala resident wrote to the US Attorney General to inquire about how southerners might be re-enfranchised because the prospect of Negro rule was “too appalling to contemplate.”

Conservative, ex-Confederate men and women envisioned a counter-revolution that would right their upside-down world. Voting men found an expression for their revolutionary plans in party politics. “The Southern Democrats – anti-Negro, anti-Republican, and anti-Reconstruction – perceived that counter revolution had a definite chance of success, and they aimed their main blow at the keystone of Republican strength – the Negro.”

Women also sought to undertake counter-revolutionary activity. This time they would not allow another defeat because they were in a position to control the very memory of the war’s end. They, too, were “Enraged by the economic and social upheaval which continued as an aftermath of war and defeat,” they too “saw a fundamental threat to their futures in the ascendancy of the Negro.”

Anna Green observed the South’s physical ruin and what she saw as the ruin of the South’s traditionally hierarchical culture. She was certain that if racial hierarchy went unrestored, another war – a race war – would be forthcoming. She wrote:

> Our country is in a deplorable condition. Many fear a war of the races, and indeed it seems impossible for the white man to submit to negro rule . . . It is certainly a distressing state of affairs when negroes hold conventions in our state and have every right of suffrage and civil power. Men look ominously at one another and wonder what the times will bring forth. And poverty and ruin stalk the land. Military despotism our only authority.

Southern women hoped to avert additional poverty and ruin to the land and to their own lives. Combining their bitterness from defeat with a strong sense of violation and injustice, white southern women fought to right the wrongs they perceived were not protected by southern men. Instead of blaming their protectors, however, or the cause for which they fought, they sought to vindicate the confederate soldiers and cause while reestablishing racial hierarchy in the South.

If ex-Confederate men rectified their political impotence by attacking blacks physically and economically, ex-Confederate women channeled their despair into crafting lessons of Confederate culture for their children such that they might vindicate the Confederacy rather than forget it. Eugenia Phillips remarked to her diary that she might not be in a position to right the

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353 Peek, 69, John Taylor, Sr. to Attorney General, September 28, 1867; in Attorney General’s papers.
355 Ibid., 81.
wrongs of her suffering while the war raged on, but she would influence her progeny to feel her suffering and make retribution at a more opportune time. “Think you the indignities heaped upon us will make us love our tyrants more or hate them less?” she asked her journal rhetorically. “To my six noble boys there will be bequeathed a lesson in their Mothers sufferings, which will teach them a jealous watchfulness of power and a timely response to despotism, in whatever shape it may assume.” She acknowledged that she was in no position to act while incarcerated during the war, but she seethed nevertheless when she sighed “But this is rather too lofty a strain for an empty stomach, so I must tone myself down to my humble condition.” Her “humble condition” was upsetting to her children when they saw her, but it was her “humble condition” that no doubt reinforced her feelings of being violated and unprotected, and likely cemented her hatred for the Union, for reconciliation, and for a cessation of hostilities at war’s end. Her motherly indignation was evident when she wrote “Had a little visit from little ‘Pug’ our baby . . . he little understands why Mother, sisters and aunt, have been torn from their happy home for such rough surroundings.”357 “Little Pug” may also have remembered his mother’s unfortunate position, and if he did not, her words, immortalized in her journal, would remind him of it.

Many southerners had no way to unlearn race hate. Hard work did not make women more sympathetic to blacks, it made them less. Southern women retrenched further into bitterness when faced with economic instability. Free market skills were forced upon agrarian men and women sliding down several social rungs on the cultural ladder of hierarchy that they so tenaciously clung to mortified men, and devastated women.

Women wrote about their feelings of anger and humiliation over perceived loss of racial supremacy and power after the war, and the postwar journals and scrapbooks contain elements of race hate mixed with the Victorian lamentations and heroization of Confederate soldiers and the Confederate cause. In both instances, the object was the same: exerting cultural hegemony and bolstering white power through a hostile environment meant to subdue blacks from claiming equality. Hate literature could be the forthright sort, with overt threats of violence toward blacks, or it could take the form of heroizing the Lost Cause. But in any case, it served the purpose of the proponents of white supremacy, even if these sentiments were cloaked in Victorian

357 Phillips Diary, 25.
gingerbread neatly penned in a scrapbook. As Hodding Carter remarked “The hymners of hate were motley.” Historians have observed that “despite the psychologically crushing effects” of the war, the Confederate woman’s legendary defiance still occasionally burst forth – in both Rebel songs and harsh invective. Although many writing women were too shocked with the war’s outcome to continue writing, they were motivated to renewed their attacks on progress and reconciliation in the period of Reconstruction.

The way in which women so successfully recast the past was through writing and memorial work. Organized women’s memorial groups gained a significant following and a great deal of political clout at the close of the century, and the ideas that were the stock-in-trade of the Ladies Memorial Associations, and later, the Daughters of the Confederacy, came directly from the pens and scrapbooks of women who suffered the war’s loss and aftermath. Had not southern men had the enthusiastic support of southern women to create a protective ideological bubble around the Confederate Cause, and thus to help sustain the environment of racial antipathy and violence, the efforts at reconciliation that some historians believe were cemented after the Spanish American War might have been more meaningful.

One of the reasons that women engaged so zealously in memorial activities is because they necessarily were predicated on the violated concepts of a good and honorable death. Memorialists tried to make sense of a senseless slaughter by ennobling the dead in their work. Confederate women felt a keen sense of obligation to their work and the dead men in whose behalf they labored. And they were also driven by an acute fear that if Confederate values were not preserved, and, in fact, not celebrated, they would be lost. John Neff argues that the ideology of the Lost Cause was the “social and cultural explanation” for 260,000 dead men and no success.

Rable suggests that most southern women were too busy surviving to indulge in writing poetry or pasting it neatly into scrapbooks. He writes “A few dedicated women worked hard and long to enshrine the Lost Cause, but poverty, social insecurity, and other domestic problems became the dominant themes during this age of shrinking opportunity.” But it was poverty, social insecurity, and “other domestic problems” (by which Rable probably means race conflict)

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359 Rable, Civil Wars, 172, 173.
360 John R. Neff, Honoring the Confederate Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2005), 6.
361 Rable, Civil Wars, 221.
that drove women’s work on creating Confederate memories. If they could win the culture war – if they could write history such that southern children could be proud of the Confederate cause – then their sacrifices would have meaning. Death, destruction, and defeat would not have been in vain after all. While the strategy of crafting a positive Confederate history was only organized a generation after the war was over, it was born from an understanding that white women’s social privilege was based on race supremacy and conservation of the traditional race and sex roles of the ante-bellum South.

Rable’s conclusion that “the essential conservatism of southern women – for sure, a conservatism often based more on habit and inertia than conviction – survived and indeed flourished”362 after the war indicates that southern women were conservative because they were too stupid or too distracted to figure out anything else to be. Karen Cox points out, however, that some southern women who could spend time writing and organizing instead of planting, cobbled together careers out of “rehabilitating [the image of] Confederate men,” and, I suggest, stirring up bitter feelings of righteous indignation about the war’s outcome.363 Cox believes that the public activism of Confederate women was embraced because of the same atmosphere that jettisoned Reconstruction. I suggest that white supremacy and states rights ideology were so powerful in the postwar period because women buoyed them with their own indignation and desire to reestablish racial hierarchy that may not have been publicly evident. Discounting women’s powerful private conservatism misses the social and political power and influence that women wielded long before they could vote. Southern women aggressively pursued their former claims to the privileges of white womanhood, and they asserted their ante-bellum status through fanning the flames of discord. They did this by constructing a Confederate memory of noble sacrifice and racial superiority.

Southern women employed their resentment when recounting their hardships – and their version of the outcome of the war – for their children and grandchildren. Common is the dedication to Mary Norcott Bryan’s war reminiscence. She wrote:

Dedicated to my daughters who are my companions. To my sons who are my counsellors, and to my grand-children who are my delight.364

362 Ibid., 221 - 222.
Some women were themselves clever wordsmiths, but others contented themselves with collecting the published sentiments that most closely matched their own. The types of pieces in postwar journals and scrapbooks fall into the broad categories of Confederate hero worship and vindictive rhetoric. Often these poems and articles are pasted cheek by jowl, on the same page, as if to represent that these seemingly contrary expressions of regret for days past – when the Confederacy promised a comfortable hierarchy, and when blacks knew their place – draw on the same feelings of grief and despair.

Lizzie Munford Ellis’s journal, kept between 1861 and 1871, demonstrates the continuity of hostility into the postwar years. She pasted articles in her journal which were entirely about the war or which expressed her feelings about the postwar environment. Many poems in what she called her “Confederate Scrap Book And Family Journal” were Victorian Confederate death poetry – pieces like “There is no Death,” “Our Dead,” “Stonewall Jackson’s Grave,” “Lines to a Skeleton,” “Blessed are they that Mourn,” “The Teachings of Death,” “Nothing is Lost,” “The Unknown Dead,” “The Southern Cross,” “The Soldier who Dies To-day,” and “Over the River.” But her entries also included invective like the newspaper clippings with “political nursery rhymes” that parodied the efforts of the government to restore order and suppress violence in the South. One poem indicated that the brutality of war was not sufficient enough force to cause the South to submit.

There was a little man and he had a little gun,
   His bullets they were made of lead, lead, lead;
He went to New Orleans, and he shot at all the rebs,
   But he didn’t kill them all quite dead, dead, dead.365

Political invective was not, of course, exclusive to the South, but it is significant that satire with such depth of feeling should be so common in women’s keepsakes and parallel so closely their expressions of trauma during and after the war. While southern women were not routinely engaging in speech-making or political demonstrations, they were, nevertheless, engaging in the political arena of ideas after the war.

Poems and rhymes frequently denigrated or made fun of the conduct of northerners, reflecting the hyper-sensitivity of southerners about their own levels of education and refinement. This poem suggests that the North was agitated about the conduct of southerners,

365 Lizzie Ellis Munford Scrapook, 1861-1871, in Munford-Ellis Family Papers, Duke University, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Durham, NC, unnumbered pages.
but was impotent to intervene, or was too focused on enriching itself at the South’s expense that it could not effectively maintain control.

Hey diddle-diddle – the Democrats fiddle –
The Radicals all in a swoon,
The poor Rebs laugh to see such sport,
Beast Butler has swallowed a “spoon.” **366

Many selections are openly defiant, like this excerpt from a John Lewis O’Sullivan poem.

Are we to bend to slavish yoke?
Close the ranks, close up the ranks!
We’ll bend when bends our southern oak.
Close the ranks, close up the ranks!
On with the line of serried steel!
We all can die, we none can keel,
To crouch beneath the Northern heel.
Close the ranks, close up the ranks!

Women also helped to combine and preserve the hostility toward the United States government and, in this case, the taxes levied to operate it, and the racial animosity that was flowing out of scrapbooks and newspapers and onto the streets in many southern locations. One song, titled, “All for the Nigger” conflates feeling yoked by taxes and feeling yoked by obligations to free blacks.

We are taxed on our clothing, our meat and our bread,
On our carpets and curtains, our table and bed,
On our tea and coffee, our fuel and lights,
And we are taxed so severely we can’t sleep o’night

CHORUS – And it’s all for the Nigger! Great God!
can this be
The Home of the Brave and the Land of the Free? **367

The implication is that taxes have enslaved white southerners for the benefit of black “masters.” A note to the editor published below this song indicates that the sentiments originated with the “working men of Pennsylvanina” making the point that even the northern working class could not support an abomination such as redistributing white wealth to blacks.

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**366 “Beast Butler” refers to commander of New Orleans, Benjamin Butler, who, during his controversial stay in New Orleans, was accused of stealing silver spoons and treating elite Confederate women as harlots.

**367 Lizzie Ellis Munford Scrapook, 1861-1871, in Munford-Ellis Family Papers, Duke University, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Durham, NC, unnumbered pages.
Other poems in Ellis’s journal were entitled “The Fount of Bitterness,” and “Manacled,” whose last verse emphasizes the steadfast resentment that the “shame” of a loss to an inferior race engendered.

Manacled! manacled! Word of woe
But words of greater shame;
I’ve that within me which these wrongs
Can never, never tame;
And standing proud in conscious worth,
I represent my land,
And that Lost Cause for which she bled,
Lofty, heroic, grand.

Southerners believed the Lost Cause was “lofty, heroic, grand” but it was also hate-filled and interested in the subjugation of all blacks in America. The “Lost Cause” ideology was formulated during Reconstruction in the crucible of defeat and profound social change, and southerners attempted to control the political, economic and social landscape. One acerbic poem clipped and kept by Lizzie Munford sums up the southern view of “The Situation.” This poem claims that Reconstruction, and rights extended to blacks, was the very work of the devil. The “rads” in Congress sold their souls for the purpose of further humiliating the South. In order to effect this insult, the “rads” were using blacks as their own sort of “slave.” “The Situation” reads in part

The Prince of Darkness was their type
Of honor and salvation
And Afric’s son’s skin to him
Suited the situation

Since providing freedmen with civil rights was untenable, the Radicals had to employ the use of force.

They first proclaimed blest “Civil Rights,”
With dear infatuation
And pinned them fast with bayonets
To hold the situation

And righteous “Reconstruction Acts,”
With generous exaltation
While Satan shouted brave “Amens!”
’Twas his own situation
It was the Christian duty, the poem exhorts, for southerners to “Redeem the situation!”

And white men yet may freemen be;  
In noble vindication,  
May Southland raise her drooping head  
To face the situation

The theme of “noble vindication” and northern oppression were seamlessly interwoven with the idea that northerners and blacks are in league with Beelzebub and must be cast back down into their infernal home.

Lucy Parke Bagby’s scrapbook also wove the ideas of Confederate sacrifice with the ungrateful Negro who would repay the South’s sacrifice with race war. Bagby was married during the war to the editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger*, who had to supplement his postwar income as assistant secretary of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Her scrapbook, inscribed on the cover with the date 1867, was filled with clippings from the *Messenger*, including Timrod’s poems and poems she wrote about her fifteen month old’s death in 1867 from pneumonia entitled “A Mother’s Grief and Hope,” “Hymn for an Infant’s Funeral,” and “To a Dying Infant.” She also published a poem to her brother killed in the war, “In Memoriam of Randolph Fairfax – Killed at Fredericksburg, Dec. 12, 1862.” Like many other southern women, she collected poetry heroizing the Confederate dead. On page three of Bagby’s scrapbook she included the “Prize Poem to the Confederate Dead [Unanimously awarded by the COMMITTEE OF THE HOLLYWOOD MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION, to whom were referred all poems on this subject].” It is unclear whether Bagby was the author of this poem, or if she simply clipped it to keep in her scrapbook as it reflected her own views. It reads

When once again we stand erect and free  
And we may write a truthful epitaph –  
A nation uttering its grief in stone  
Shall pile aloft a stately monument.  
Not that their fame has need of a sculptured urn,  
For they have lived such lives and wrought such deeds  
As venal history cannot lie away.  
Till then shall scattered roses deck their graves  
And woman’s tear shall be their epitaph.\(^\text{368}\)

\(^{368}\) Lucy Parke Chamberlayne Bagby Scrapbook, in the Chamberlayne Family Papers, 1821-1938, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA. It is possible that Bagby authored this poem herself. Bagby was later chairwoman of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities in 1894.
Although the poem suggests that true heroes do not need to be commemorated with things, the nation needed to “utter its grief in stone” and women were committed to writing a “truthful epitaph,” that would explain to southern children that their ancestors were not traitors.

Bagby’s scrapbook indicates that the impulse to keep a “correct” accounting of the southern position in the war included embracing the racial values of the Old South. On page right, Bagby pasted “A Fish Story: A Parable without a Moral: Written expressly for the Southern Opinion by the author of the Prize Poem on the Confederate Dead.” This poem summarizes the cant of the Happy Slave and the harmful effects of freedom for blacks. It suggests the “civilizing” influences of enslavement and miscegenation. Blacks were, according to the poet, stupid, smelly, and “addicted to entrails and grease.” The author proposes that the racial chaos will not be the fault of the white South who valiantly fought in behalf of slaves.

Down by the marge of the York’s broad stream,
An old darkey lived, of the ancient regime.
His laugh was loud, though his lot was low,
He loved his old master and hated his hoe . . .

He was thought by some a remarkable hale old nigger.

Though all the philanthropists clearly can see
The degrading effects of slavery,
I can’t help thinking that this old creature
Was a great advance on his African nature,
And straighter of shin and thinner of lip
Than his grandsire that came in the Yankee ship.
Albeit bent with the weary toil
of sixty years on ‘slave trodden’ soil,
Untaught and thriftless and feeble of mind,
His life was gentle, his heart was kind;
He lived in a house, he loved his wife,
He was higher far in his hope and his life,
And a nobler man with his hoe in his hand,
Than an African prince in his native land.

For perhaps the most odious thing upon earth
As an African prince in the land of his birth,
With his negative calf and his convex shin,
Triangular teeth and pungent skin,
So bloated of body, so meager of limb,
Of passions so fierce and of reasons so dim.
So cruel in war, and so torpid in peace,
So strongly addicted to entrails and grease,
So partial to eating by morning light
The wife that had shared his repose overnight,
In the blackest of black superstitions downtrod,
In his horrible rites to his beastly god . . .

Happy old Edward played the “old-fashioned, plantation, nigger fiddle.”

And now if that fiddle is heard no more,
Nor the corn shucking laugh, nor the dance of yore,
When the rhythmical beat
Of hilarious feet
Struck the happy ‘hoe-down’ on the cabin floor;
But deserting those cabins in discontent,
And thinking it free to be indolent,
They leave the fields of the rice and the maize,
And huddle in cities to die of disease*
*The official report of General Howard (Chief of the Freedman’s Bureau), shows the numbers of negroes has decreased 1,308,000 since their freedom.

If the Christian hymn forgotten should be,
And idols be raised by the great Peedee;
Or if, misled by villainous men
To enact the mad scenes of Jamaica again,
They fall, as they must, in the deadly assault,
We only can say that it wasn’t our fault.
For the South did certainly try her best
To rescue them from the Philanthropist
In a strife that shall redden the page of history . . .

Ned was drowned in the pursuit of a fish, and the story ends:

And the fisherman thought it could never be known,
After all their thinking and figuring,
Whether the nigger a fishing had gone,
Or the fish had gone out a niggering.369

Bagby kept a published explanation of the “Parable of the Fish” in her scrapbook. The commentary explained

In the poem on our first page, entitled, “A Fish Story – a Parable without a Moral,” there is more meaning than a careless reading would discover. Although written in a light vein, with frequent digressions and a somewhat whimsical termination, the allegory is clearly enough made out. The beautiful flashing fish represents Liberty. It is gained by the negro without effort of his own, and while he is asleep. They both perish together.

369 Ibid.
When we see that to secure the negro his freedom, Military Governors or Brownlow’s Rule in the South, and that thereby civil liberty is dead; and when we see by the official report of General Howard that the number of negroes has decreased 1,308,000 since their liberation, we find the parable of the poem complete. The freedman is withering away under the influence of the precious boon to secure which liberty in ten States was destroyed, and is destined at last to die of his freedom as freedom has already died of the nigger.\textsuperscript{370}

Whether Bagby wrote these poems or whether she simply clipped them from her husband’s paper, she was clearly interested enough in the sentiment to keep them for posterity. She was listening and responding to the racial tenor of the former Confederate capitol, Richmond, also the site of some of the most expensive and impressive Confederate memorials.

One clipping in Bagby’s book indicates that southerners did not understand the surrender to represent a permanent defeat. On page fourteen Bagby placed an article entitled, “Bide Your Time.”

\begin{quote}
So said J. Q. Adams at Columbia, S.C. So say we with all possible earnestness.

But –

Sit down here, my man, in this barrel of boiling pitch, while I pour a hod full of live coals into your lap and fasten a heavy, white hot iron collar around your neck. The situation may be unpleasant, but don’t be impatient, for I will send a negro around every half hour or so to spit in your face, and will come myself regularly to abuse you like a dog and tell all manner of lies upon you. Take it easy, hide [sic] your time, and at the end of four or five years if I’m entirely satisfied that you have no unkind feeling toward the negro and love me – really love me – as I think I ought to be loved, why then I may perhaps forgive you, let you up and permit you to work for my benefit just as you did before the war, and just as if nothing had ever happened. – Native Virginian.\textsuperscript{371}
\end{quote}

But southern women could not pretend that nothing happened, so they commanded the historical record and made for the men a victory which they could not make for themselves. This victory is part of a larger culture of racial hostility that historians have demonstrated in the street theater and gendered activities of men. There is clearly also a female component in women’s efforts to monopolize public space with monuments and cultural space with the “right view” of history. Southern men reminded blacks of their place through physical violence and intimidation, and Freedmen’s Bureau records indicate that white women lashed out at black laborers in frustration as well. But more common were the efforts of white women to dominate blacks through control of physical space by erecting monuments to a “Lost Cause” that celebrated racial hierarchy and

\textsuperscript{370} ibid.

\textsuperscript{371} Ibid., this article was pasted three times.
through controlling memory of the “glorious” period before the “tyranny” of emancipation in scrapbooks, diaries, memoirs, and southern history textbooks.

Nineteenth century American women were barred from direct participation in public political life, but increasingly women engaged in public life and found avenues of personal fulfillment through club activities, reform work, and “social housekeeping.” Southern women, however, were less often working for the public good, and more often working to provide for their families and children. The ways in which southern women with the luxury of leisure contributed to the public domain were often wrapped in flags of the Confederacy. Never far from these women’s minds was the feeling that the South had been robbed of its vitality and virility as a region, and that it was incumbent upon them to help “rebuild” the South’s honor through re-casting the Confederate legacy.

One path towards this unique brand of southern “social housekeeping” was through women’s Confederate clubs whose chief aims were to dominate the historical record through “correct teaching” of southern history, and to dominate the physical landscape – and thus public consciousness of southern history – through erecting elaborate monuments to the Confederate dead in virtually every southern town – no matter how small – in every former Confederate state. Another path – although less studied – is the home memory-making that southern women diligently created through story-telling, “proper” history teaching, and through the vehicles of diaries and scrapbooks that were handed down from generation to generation. These private expressions are no less imbued with political importance than the most public and most overtly political monument of the Confederate panoply engraved in relief in Stone Mountain, Georgia.

There was a sudden reduction in the practice of southern women’s diary-keeping immediately after the surrender if the archival holdings are an accurate measure of this activity. Many women’s diaries end with little or no explanation about their abrupt end, but this, in itself, may very well be a marker of the level of stress women across the south were under when the war ended. Margaret Stanley Beckwith, Edmund Ruffin’s granddaughter, remarked in 1913 on the omissions in her postwar journal. She thought it was odd that she’d not recorded the exciting history unfolding in front of her, but, she noted, “the conditions were strange and upsetting. One felt too much to put it into black and white.”

372 Elizabeth Varon, We Mean to be Counted: White women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), Varon discusses women as “conservators of the region’s values,” 103-105.
373 Edmund Ruffin Beckwith Papers, Margaret Stanley Beckwith Journal, unnumbered pages, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
Though some women may have been too overwhelmed with their new work responsibilities and with the tasks of reconstructing their own households, Reconstruction era scrapbooks reveal the connection – not always publicly stated – between racist ideology and Confederate hero-worship. Southern women kept scrapbooks for some of the same reasons they wrote war memoirs. Scrapbooks were ways of holding onto a time that seemed imbued with the chivalry that southern whites feared was so lacking in the postwar South. They also served as assurances to themselves and their families that they would “never forget” the atrocities and humiliations of invasion. Their children could be taught the catechism of sectional division and could be reminded about what was different and unique about the South – the genteel manners and customs that the North lacked. They could serve as references for women who were instrumental in supervising the history taught in southern schools to the next generation of white children. For women’s memorial organizations, they were business records of their accomplishments in restoring some modicum of dignity to the South through the rituals of memory domination.

Elmina Thibaut, from a family who owned two large plantations in Louisiana, was, after the Civil War, a member of the UDC. As a club member, she valued the message of Confederate memorialization enough to pay dues to that organization. Some prominent UDC women, like Katie Behan, who had ties to white supremacist activities, remained notably silent in their private writings on the topic of race conflict. Thibaut had no such compunction about attempting to separate the memorial group’s values from white supremacist values. Thibaut’s scrapbooks contain stories and poems that were layered with messages of white supremacy. They illustrate the kinds of items that appealed to many white southern women who identified enough with the poem or story to compel them to clip or copy them, and paste it on a scrapbook page – ostensibly as a personal reminder or to show others with similar values. An example from Thibaut’s scrapbook, dated April 15, 1886, is the allegory of the “Turkle [sic] and The Crane.” The story is about a turtle who symbolizes free blacks and a crane that represents white southerners. The turtle runs the fish in the lake to the periphery and the crane eats them. The turtle complains about having to work so hard and get so muddy, but the crane replies that the turtle is dark anyway, so the mud does not matter, and anyway, they are each doing what they were suited for:

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374 Her family owned Elmfield in Palo Alto, LA, (in Donalsdonville, LA), and Belle Terre in Assumption Parish, LA. Elmina Thibaut Papers, number 817, Manuscripts Department, Tulane University.
A far down Souf do [missing] again,
Broad fields of cotton and sweeps of cane,
De plow and hoe [missing] de hands dat toil,
In hands hued dark as the loamy soil,
And breasts brown as de turtkle’s shell,
All holding hearts that work brave and well,
And brawn dat bears before de cold and sun
From New Years’ Day till de year is done.

My sermon’s done: let all wise folks larn
About whom lessons like dis concern:
We darkey’s made for to dig and hoe,
Or gather craps dat the groun’ mus grow,
White folks to boss an’ to trade an’ sell.
So bofe can flourish in life’s brief spell;
Together bearin’ each one his share,
Dey’ll prosper sho’ly if bofe tote square.375

It is, of course, not atypical that white southern men and women alike held racist ideas or beliefs, and that they should be reflected in their personal papers. It is significant, however, that women enshrined these ideas for the avowed purpose of teaching them to their children so that the racist hierarchy would not fade away.

Mary

Pocahontas Alley, a Baton Rouge native, left a record of the lasting effects of defeat. She was eighteen at the war’s commencement. Her expectations for a married life of privilege were profoundly affected by defeat and emancipation. She compiled a scrapbook through the war, but many of her keepsakes date from the postwar period. Her scrapbook contained an interesting juxtaposition of southern expectations for white women and southern white women’s feelings about the postwar period. For example, her scrapbook seemed typical enough, with recipes for apple jelly and home remedies for the croup and an antidote for poison. She kept clippings about gardening in Louisiana and about propagating camellias. The advice that Alley wished to save in her book included directions to put charcoal on a burn to ease the sting, to use peach leaves for a nail to the foot of horse or man, and to use an overnight poultice of bread soaked in vinegar to remove a corn. She kept instructions about how to stain wood to resemble mahogany, and a warning against entering a sick room while perspiring, which causes pores to absorb illness.

375Elmina Thibaut, collection number 817, Manuscripts Department, Tulane University. This poem is marked, “RA Wilkerson in Southern Bivouac for April.” The Southern Bivouac: A Monthly Literary and Historical Magazine was published in Louisville between 1882 and 1887 by the Kentucky branch of the Southern Historical Society, established as a “conscious effort to prevent the victors from writing history,” Neff, 160.
She included other items typical in white southern women’s scrapbooks: an image of “The Creole Belle,” dated 1855; a flowery, Victorian “Eloquent Extract” about Lee’s surrender; a copy of General Lee’s Farewell Address; common heroic poetry like the popular, “There is no death!”

Alley’s scrapbooks, though, were also filled with the aggressive racism that characterized the South during Reconstruction.

She was clearly cognizant of and interested in the great political questions of the day and she included newspaper items on armed black Union troops and Emancipation, as well as Schuyler Colfax’s anti-Catholicism and Horatio Seymour’s Democratic bid for the presidency. All items were profoundly partisan, many with gloat titles such as “Scalawags Come to Grief.” Alley’s scrapbook was littered with “Sambo” jokes and “Nigger” jokes and anti-suffrage jokes which called suffrage supporters “Amazons” and demanded that they should “practice what they preach” and give up their positions to men. Without any indications that Alley perceived irony, these entries are followed by an article of advice entitled, “Speak no Ill.”

Like Thibaut’s scrapbook, Alley clipped and kept many examples of parodies of freedmen, written in dialect. One piece copied from the Portsmouth (Ohio) Times in the New Orleans Daily Crescent in 1866 was entitled “The Wail of Sambo on the Death of the Amendment.”

Oh, had you heard de solum news  
De amendment it am beaten  
Oh death it gib de nig de blues  
To see the Rads retretin,  
Dey said dey lubbed us berry much  
Dat dey could all embrace us  
Now I don’t see how any such  
Can hab de heart to face us.

I feel today most monstrous sad  
As solemn as a sermon  
To think the Copperheads had gone  
And well nigh lected their an.  
They ought instead hab hung him up  
Dat is de way to sarb him  
Why when de Rebs was in Camp Chase  
He wouldn’t help to starve ’em!

An’ Old Ben Wade himself could not
Do anything to save us
I don’t belieb de ‘publicans
Am betted dan Jeff Davis
Look how de whites today step ‘roun’
Dey feel a great deal biggah
I ‘spect dey think dat dey am now
As good as enny niggah

I was so shuah dat I wud vote,
And git de county offis,
I didn’t tink our own deah frens
So soon wud scorn and scoff us
I thought dat all de nigs to-day
Wud shout de loud ‘hossana
I guess I’ll pack my things and go,
Right off to Alabama

For dah de niggahs rule de day
And do all ob de voting
De whites aint got no show down dah
At least nun dats worf a notin
Den niggah in de lubly Souf
Stay in de swamps and byo
Don’t cum enuf dis heathen State
De cussed ole Ohio

The fear about a changing racial hierarchy in the postwar South dominated the dialect poems in these scrapbooks. It is unlikely that blacks were reading these Democratic newspapers, so these poems were written by whites and published for them. Cartoons and “jokes” dealt with frightening subjects – black domination of southern whites and an upside-down racial system in which blacks assumed they were equal or superior to whites. Here, the reader might laugh because the prospect of a black man assuming he would be able to vote in Ohio or “rule de day” in the South was so preposterous that it warranted a laugh – or so southerners fervently hoped. Even the official UDC record was peppered with doggerel that was meant to humiliate blacks and to reaffirm white supremacy. Individual UDC chapters kept elaborate scrapbooks (sometimes in an effort to win a state-wide contest) with clippings of music and poetry as well as articles on southern politics and commemoration events. The record keepers of the leading ladies’ group for promoting the Lost Cause clipped and carefully saved the melodramatic poems that portrayed the ongoing culture wars in the South as a contest between good and evil, and which celebrated the eventual triumph of right over might. But they also kept, interleaved,
morality tales, told in dialect, which demonstrated the rougher impulse of race hate. One such clipping was originally printed in *Scribner’s Monthly*, probably reprinted in a southern newspaper, authored by Irwin Russell. Entitled, “Precepts at Parting,” the story was ostensibly the advice of a father to his son making his debut as a free black laborer in the postwar South. With irony, the author placed the subject as a laborer on the ship *Robert E. Lee*. His father advised him to keep a low profile & not be like the “vulgar niggers” who crow like cocks while the smart, quiet “chickens” pick up all the corn. The father counseled the young man:

Now listen and mind what I tell you, and don’t you forget what I say; 
Take advice of an experienced person, and you’ll get up the ladder and stay:  
Who knows? You might get to be President, or Judge, perhaps, of the Peace – 
The man who keeps pulling the grape vine shakes down a few bunches at least.

He counsels his son saying that there are unscrupulous blacks about who would take advantage of him, and could thwart his aspirations to “get up the ladder and stay.”

You’ll easy get along with the white folks – de cappen and steward and clerks –
Dey won’t say a word to a nigger, as long as they notice he works;  
And work is de onlies ingime [?] was any ‘casian to tote
To keep us gwine on troo de de currents dat pesters de spirichul boat.

At the same time the speaker wanted his son to be an exemplary employee, deferential to all whites he sees, he wished him to distinguish himself from “common” laborers. Part of climbing that ladder involved eschewing the lowest sort of dock worker. And the advice concluded with a reiteration of the necessity to ingratiate himself with his “masters,” which include “all the white folks.”

I wants you, my son, to be ‘ticlar, and ‘sociate only wid dey 
Dat’s ‘tittled to go in de cabin – don’t neber had nuffin to say 
To dem low minded roustabout niggers what han’les the cotton below – 
Dem common brack rascals ain’t fittin’ for no cabin-waiter to know.

But neber get airy – be ‘spectful to all de white people you see, And neber go back on the raisin’ you’s had from your mammy an’ me.377

In 1893 the Richmond UDC published the *Confederate Scrap-book: Copied from a Scrap-book kept by a Young Girl During and Immediately After the War, With Additions from War Copies of the “Southern Literary Messenger” and “Illustrated News” Loaned by Friends*

377 UDC Scrapbooks, VHS, Mss1:P8718b22, 9.
This volume is an example of the formula followed by local groups as well as by individual scrapbook keepers. To bolster the UDC’s claim that the Civil War was not a Civil War at all, but a War Between States, there were copies of both the Confederate and United States Constitutions and the Ordinances of Secession. There followed a selection of memorial poetry that glorified the southern struggle and southern soldier. Far from any indications that groups like the UDC were helpful in working through grief or helpful in an effort to come to sectional reconciliation, poems like “The Southron’s Chant of Defiance” represent the South’s intensification of sectional hate carried on in women’s groups. “The Chant” goes,

You can never win us back
   Never! Never!
Though we may perish on the track of our endeavor,
   And Blood pollutes each hearth-stone
Forever!\footnote{Ibid., 194.}

Included are also old standards such as “I’m a Good Old Rebel,” which expressed the feelings of many southerners that they were willing to fight the war all over again.

Oh, I’m a good old Rebel, now that’s just what I am,
For this “Fair Land of Freedom” I do not give a damn!
I’m glad I fit against it, I only wish we’d won,
And I don’t want no pardon for anything I done.

I hates the Constitution, the Great Republic, too,
I hates the Freedman’s Buro in uniforms of blue,
I hates the nasty eagle with all his brag and fuss,
The lying, thieving Yankees, I hates ‘em wuss and wuss!

I hates the Yankee nation and everything they do,
I hates the Declaration of Independence, too,
I hates the “Glorious Union,” tis dripping with our blood,
I hates their striped banner, I fit it all I could.

I followed old Marse Robert for four years, near about,
Got wounded in three places, and starved at P’nt Lookout;
I cotched the “roomatism” a’camping in the snow,
But I killed a chance o’Yankees, and I’d like to kill some mo’.
Three hundred thousand Yankees is stiff in Southern dust!

\footnote{Confederate Scrap-book: Copied from a Scrap-book kept by a Young Girl During and Immediately After the War, With Additions from War Copies of the “Southern Literary Messenger” and “Illustrated News” Loaned by Friends and Other Selections as Accredited, (Richmond, VA: J. L. Hill Printing Company, 1893).}
We got three hundred thousand before they conquered us. They died of Southern fever and Southern steel and shot, I wish they was three million instead of what we got.

I can’t take up my musket and fight ‘em now no more, But I ain’t a’gonna love ‘em, now that is sarten sure; And I don’t want no pardon for what I was and am, I won’t be reconstructed, and I do not care a damn!

I won’t be reconstructed! I’m better now than them, And for a carpetbagger, I do not give a damn. So I’m off for the frontier, soon as I can go, I’ll prepare me a weapon and start for Mexico.\(^{380}\)

“The Cotton States’ Farewell to Yankee Doodle” is equally pointed and defiant, while calling northerners racial hypocrites.

Yankee Doodle strove with pains
And Puritanic vigor
To loose the only friendly chains
That ever bound a nigger.

But Doodle knows as well as I
That when his zeal had freed ‘em
He’d seen a million niggers die
Before he’d help to feed ‘em

So Yankee Doodle, Now goodbye
Keep the gains you’ve gotten
Proud independence is the cry,
Of sugar, rice, and cotton.\(^{381}\)

These poems and doggerel are represented in women’s scrapbooks across the South. Individual UDC members absorbed the lessons of the organized group and embraced their roles as social stewards in the cultural contest and they were keenly aware of the questions of the day. While southern social codes prohibited them from participating fully in the public politics of the day, choosing the materials they clipped for their keepsake books was making an important political statement: southern white women were interested in maintaining racial hierarchy.

Individual women in their diaries, scrapbooks, and journals commonly juxtaposed Victorian memorialization poetry and “nigger jokes,” or lists of Confederate dead and notices of Klan rallies, or UDC fundraisers and articles that encouraged lynching. Mary Alley’s scrapbook

\(^{380}\) Ibid., 239.
\(^{381}\) Ibid., 248.
included an article written by columnist and Georgia state senator, Charles Henry Smith, under the pen name Bill Arp. Smith, as a politician, could express racial views directly through this fictional character who was meant to represent the plain white yeomanry of the South. He savagely attacked Reconstruction policies with a cover of humorous “cracker” dialect. This character was enormously popular with a southern readership, and through humor, audiences could feel secure and superior. Alley kept one entry clipped out of the Feliciana (LA) Democrat entitled, “On the State of the Country Bill Arp,” originally published in Bill Arp, so called, A Side Show of the Southern Side of the War (1867). This genre of caustic satire was exceedingly popular in the South. Bill Arp articles were the most widely read in the South, and his later articles from the 1890s openly supported the practice of lynching as a form of social control. The author’s satire barely covered a seething resentment, anger, and fear that reflected how many white southerners viewed the New South, and especially demands for radical changes in elements of social control.

This desire to return to the “gentility” of the past together with an inability to do so deepened the feelings many southerners had of anger and hopelessness. There is no evidence that southern women saw the irony of the Victorian rhetoric embraced by memorialization groups as a way to ennoble their monument-building set cheek-by-jowl with appellations to lynch black men. The impulse to build monuments to a day of unquestioned white supremacy and the impulse to regain this position through violence were both impulses of extreme conservatism, and southern women included both in their memorabilia.

Alley’s scrapbook contained several examples of this “genteel racism.” Bill Arp’s caustic satire was affixed to a page that also held an article entitled “Meekness.” Alley’s scrapbook contained an article called “A Model Maiden” which reminded the reader that a proper lady “Never descends to vulgar slang,” but Alley took obvious glee in a story about a man who was able to use profanity within the limits of gentility and southern decorum. The clipping relates “A certain western judge, who is noted for a severe temper, and exceeding piety, when he gets angry always changes the conversation to saw mills, so that he can use the word “dam” as often as he pleases, without exposing himself to the charge of profanity.” On a page with a handwritten note in which Alley reminded herself to “Keep sunshine in the heart,” was pasted a

382 Bill Arp, so called, A Side Show of the Southern Side of the War (New York, 1867), 139-146.
story that made fun of the misfortunes of freedmen, which helped assuage southern fears about racial change.

One typical clipping is a story about a black man named Ephe who asked his master’s son which apostle he liked best. The little boy said he did not know and Ephe responded that he liked Sampson best. The little boy retorted that Samson wasn’t an apostle and Ephe indignantly replied “Look here, white boy, how old am you?” “Twelve” “Well, I’se forty; now, who ought to know best, I ax you dat?” Like the dialect poem of the black man who was disillusioned in Ohio, many of the southern homilies and morality stories in the postwar period that appear in women’s keepsake books demonstrated that racial hierarchy was fixed and unchanging, no matter how black men might assume that their age or location in the north might change their social status. Alley clipped a more direct reminder that blacks were incapable of managing themselves in an article entitled “A Lone Nigger: Story in Dialect” which indicated the man’s illiteracy and inability to understand that “free” and “black” were incompatible in the South. The freedman says “I’se got no massa. Massas runned away, yah! yah! I’se free nigger now!”

One indication that southerners had difficulty moving away from a state of emotional despair about the effort of the government and of African Americans to replace racial domination with racial civility was the language that white women used in reminiscences of the war years and Reconstruction. The depth of their hatred for a world of political, economic and social equality for blacks was virtually unchanged, and in some cases, had grown even more bitter with time. In many postwar reminiscences, the “happy and carefree” days before the war lost their haze and seemed almost real again. The authors’ memories were so vibrant – and so pleasant – that the reader almost wishes that such an idyllic life could be possible once again.

In many instances, the memoirs were written as ex-Confederate women aged and reflected on the expectations for their lives, and what had actually become of them. In the 1930s, when the girls who were teens during the Civil War were great-grandmothers, remembering an idyllic life free of care would have, indeed, been a happy way to pass time. The memoirs of Florence Dymond demonstrated this melancholy feeling of what-might-have-been. She suggested that the degradation of free blacks would “enslave” good white people like her family and ultimately lead to social, political, and economic collapse. In the forward of her memoir she wrote, “Ante bellum days had a glamour of their own and much has been written about them,

but the years succeeding the War Between the States, the Seventies, Eighties, and Nineties –
those years intermediate between the slavery of the person and the present day slavery of the
soul in business war and depression – have their own personality, never again to be duplicated . . .

Dymond spent many pages remembering her “happy and carefree childhood” on Louisiana’s
“Lower Coast,” twelve hours by boat from New Orleans, where she lived with her family in the
plantation’s “big house,” overlooking an empire with two overseers’ houses, buildings for the
cooper and blacksmith, a cookhouse, bakery and mule house (large enough for 100 mules), horse
stables, two barns, and forty-five “double” slave cabins for ninety five-families, a slave church,
and a dozen houses for Italian laborers (“father being the first man in Louisiana to employ
Italians agriculturally”). Next to this main plantation, Bellair, the Dymond family also owned
another plantation, Fairview, where the infrastructure was again replicated. The family bought
and sold two other plantations, and later bought and kept a third. She remembered that “Living
in the two plantations we had some seven hundred men, women and children and, during
grinding, this number often rose to over a thousand with the transient labor.” With the 300
mules for field work, oxen for pulling and riding horses, driving horses and a dairy herd, “the
whole forming a small town, complete in every respect.”

Dymond detailed the style of living she had been accustomed to in the “big house” and noted
that “There were, of course, servants galore . . . three laundresses . . . in addition we nearly
always had a small child who had been given to us by his parents to ‘raise’ . . .” Their lifestyle
was hardly diminished during the school months when they lived in the “town house” in New
Orleans. The family required two turkeys, six to eight chickens, two cakes and a two-gallon
freezer of ice cream for a typical meal.

But her most vivid memories are from the plantation days. The family’s girls were given
a two-room cabin for a play-house, outfitted with a wood stove and fully operational kitchen.
The girls took food from the main kitchen for their play “whether Aunt Mary had planned other
uses for them or not.” Dymond also cataloged her recollections of slaves on the plantation. One
was constantly in debt and dunning her father, one was a murderer who had avoided detection

385 Florence Dymond Memoirs, collection number 453, typescript, Manuscripts Department, Tulane University.
386 Ibid.
387 Ibid.
until after his death, and the third was a extremely large man who could not find shoes to fit and wrestled alligators and ate their meat with dumplings. Her nicknames for blacks indicated her opinion of them. “Georgie Sundown” was an errand boy who always managed to return home late. “Big Tooth Ham Britches” was a buck-toothed boy whose trousers came from ham wrappers. One smelly boy was called “Mink” and a girl whose paternity was uncertain, Dymond called “Who She.” This effort of whites to name blacks represents an effort to shape their identity. The familial role of handing down names was thus aggressively interrupted by those who imposed pejorative nicknames on blacks which daily reinforced negative stereotypes to the person named and to everyone around them.

Southern women’s memoirs frequently revealed that women continued to expect to control blacks after the war, and were angry when their efforts at the kind of control they possessed with their slaves evaporated. Dymond remembered interceding on behalf of a favorite slave on the plantation church before Emancipation. At a funeral the blacks would preach the deceased either to heaven or hell. One woman, who had never joined the plantation church, was going to be preached to hell until Florence demanded that she be preached to heaven. When the minister protested, Florence insisted and then threatened to break up the church if they did not do as she commanded. “Nick,” she said “I’m telling you right now Loretta’s going to be preached to Heaven, and if you don’t preach her to Heaven, I’m going to break up the Belair church, and I’m not joking, either.”

Dymond approved of blacks when they conformed to her stereotypical opinion of the proper subservience and self-effacement. When one black woman, Theresa, was a slave, Dymond lauded her “rhythm” and “story telling ability.” Dymond wrote “Theresa had the negro’s usual agile feet was a marvelous little dancer and could double shuffle and jig with great vim, and our friends often had us bring her in the living room to dance for them.” “Therese knew all the negro folklore and could tell about Brer Rabbit and the briar patch and many other stories of the Uncle Remus variety.” But Dymond’s opinion of Theresa changed dramatically when Dymond could no longer compel her behavior. Freedom had a deleterious effect on blacks, according to Dymond. She no longer praised them, but wrote “The plantation negro was utterly unmoral, in my opinion.” She was referring to her inability to control Theresa’s “promiscuity,” which, in

388 Ibid.
this instance, could mean her sexual promiscuity, or simply her movement outside of the Dymond’s home.  

Theresa eventually became too ill to work as a result of tuberculosis, but she may also have succumbed to other illnesses. Dymond wrote “Finally, her promiscuity was such as she grew older that she became ill and when we insisted on her going to the hospital for examination and treatment, she refused and left our employ.” Dymond paid old Theresa’s rent and grocery bill for two months and then found a place in the country for Theresa to recover when her twelve-year-old daughter came seeking help for her mother who was too sick to work. Dymond wrote “It may be odd to state that the plantation negro was unmoral, but on a plantation in those days it was an accepted fact.” 

This “unmorality” continued to be an “accepted fact” in part because southern whites relied upon these assumptions to maintain racial control. Dymond continued to relate cases that reinforced her beliefs, but by the act of relating them in her memoirs, helped to reinforce these beliefs for others who wish to believe blacks are inherently “unmoral.” Dymond told the story of a friend visiting her one winter from Chicago who, upon discovering that the “house girl, Alice, a ‘high yaller,’” was expecting a child, inquired about the child’s father. “Who’s the father, Alice?” he asked. “It’s ha’d to tell, Mr. Lally,” she responded. Alice’s evasive response was taken as a mark of her “unmorality” and stupidity, and was adopted as a family joke in response to any unsolvable problem. Dymond assumed it was “hard to tell” because of black promiscuity, but Alice may have had a hard time telling that the father of her child was white in racially charged Louisiana.

It was hard to tell what the future held for race relations in the South, and this uncertainty compelled many white women to reflect on the Old South and their elevated position in that world. As blacks pressed for rights in the South, southern whites retrenched. Southern white women, longing for a return to the “carefree” days of their past, were no doubt alarmed by the prospect that the South – and their fortunes – might never rise again. Dymond wrote that the modern stresses of traffic, pollution, Nazis and Fascists caused her to remember the old song, “Backward, turn backward, Oh Time in thy flight, Make me a child again, just for to night.”
This kind of “hopeful remembering” contributed to the painful postwar transition in the South. Women actively remembered “happy days” that were not happy for a majority of southerners, they tried to remember victory instead of defeat through poems of immortality, and they tried to prescribe an unchanged racial hierarchy by denying blacks were capable of equality as evidenced in dialect written for a white audience.

Dymond’s recollections, and other women’s memoirs whether published or not, are not striking because they were filled with stereotypical language and supremacist assumptions, but they are important because they demonstrate that southern women were at the forefront of the activity of cultivating a happy memory of slavery and painting a gloomy portrait of postwar life. The layers of rhetorical “lace” covering some of these hierarchical sentiments is part of the political theater that placed white women’s “purity” at the center of whites’ justification of race violence. Southern women could appear only to be peripheral to race violence or the views of northerners claiming that southern women were dangerous would serve to undermine their necessary function as symbols of southern cultural superiority.

Southern women’s efforts to romanticize the Lost Cause amplified at the coming of the twentieth century as memory keepers and writing women became increasingly concerned that Civil War participant and those with first hand memories of white privilege in the Old South were dying. One of the prominent themes in women’s journals and diaries is an effort to remove any vestige of shame from defeat. Grandmothers wanted their grandchildren to look upon their scrapbooks and memories before Emancipation without shame and thus they worked to instill values in the children of the New South that were essentially conservative and appreciative of racial hierarchy.

The activism of memorial ceremonies and statues and the prolific writing on the topic of the war for generations after its end represents how intensely southern women felt compelled to erase any remnant of this shame from defeat. Southern men were the only group of Americans to suffer military defeat and, according to LeeAnn Whites “in losing the war to the North lost the right to construct their sense of manhood exactly as they pleased.”393 The idea that black men had gained the manhood that white men lost seemed an ultimate betrayal – not only for the men themselves, but also for the women they “represented.” Victoria Bynum argues that southern women were even more loyal to their husbands and male family members than they were to “the Cause” and thus felt this loss of manhood in a very personal way. Drew Faust argues in *Mothers...*

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393 Whites, *Civil War as a Crisis in Gender*, 8.
of Invention that Confederate women felt unprotected and betrayed as a result of this lost Cause and lost manhood. And although LeeAnn Whites observes that Confederate women’s response to the collapse of their prospects for a comfortable life was varied and complex, a general pattern of loyalty to white men and the principles of white supremacy, and a corresponding hatred of Yankees runs through the postwar writings of Confederate women.

Southern white women felt the whole depth of humiliation that the loss of the war represented, and women felt additionally aggrieved that their access to status in the South depended, in large measure, upon their husband’s status. A challenge to white supremacy directly challenged white women’s hyper-exalted position in southern society.

Cornelia Phillips Spencer pointed out that not only were women humiliated by the wars’ inglorious end, but southern women were humiliated that southern men were suffering a kind of ritualistic emasculation through forced pardon petitions, which further upended southern social hierarchy. In correspondence to Governor Zebulon Vance in the fall of 1865, Spencer wrote

Dear Sir,

The whole system of bringing the gentlemen of the South to their knees as petitioners at the Bar of the federal Govt. is to me, the expressed essence of meanness – which only the universal Yankee nation could have been guilty of. However, I am not in spirits to say what I think of the North, for there is among our own people such an amount of servility – such a want of manliness and decent self-assertion. The men are all so thoroughly cowed and prostrated that it won’t do to throw stones northwards. I begin to despair of the great American people. North and South it looks very like a vulgar and mean one.394

The good soldier, Vance assured the Lady Spencer that Southern men would be provoked to manliness and as a result of Yankee rule. “My dear Madam,” wrote Governor Vance

[North Carolina], I think you will agree with me, has given some evidence in the recent elections of her restiveness under the load of humiliations lately heaped upon her by the new guides of her policy. She will yet assert her manliness. Believe it.395

If women could not see manliness or competence in the challenge of confronting the new racial order, they could summon up womanly strength and courage that they had practiced during the war. Caroline Elizabeth Merrick was forty years old at the outbreak of the war and she noted that southern women may have been “petted,” but they were steely when the situation demanded

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394 Cornelia Spencer to Zebulon Vance Nov. 11, 1865, Cornelia Phillips Spencer Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
395 Vance to Spencer November 15, 1865, Cornelia Phillips Spencer Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
it – and the insults from “lazy darkeys” and taunting Union men deepend women’s hatred and resolve. She wrote in her memoirs at the age of seventy-six that

It is folly to talk about the woman who stood in the breach in those chaotic days, being the traditional Southern woman of the books, who sat and rocked herself with a slave fanning her on both sides. She was doubtless fanned when she wished to be; but the antebellum woman of culture and position in the South was a woman of affairs; and in the care of a large family - which most of them had - and of large interests, she was trained to meet responsibilities. So in those days of awful uncertainties, when men's hearts failed them, it was the woman who brought her greater adaptability and elasticity to control circumstances, and to lay the foundations of a new order. She sewed, she sold flowers, milk and vegetables, and she taught school; sometimes even a negro school. She made pies and corn-bread, and palmetto hats for the Federals in garrison; she raised pigs, poultry and pigeons; and she cooked them when the darkey - who was "never to wuk no mo' " - left her any to bless herself with; she washed, often the mustered-out soldier of the house filling her tubs, rubbing beside her and hanging out her clothes; and he did her swearing for her when the Yankee soldier taunted over the fence: "Wall, it doo doo my eyes good to see yer have to put yer lily-white hands in the wash-tub!"396

Southern women did not see themselves as wilting vines either during or after the war. Already competent and zealous, Cornelia Spencer saw humiliation as a stimulant to southern pride. Spencer was an author with a regional readership and she used her platform to shape the historical analysis of the postwar period. Southern women, Spencer suggested, would use their grief to honor their dead heroes and to write the “true story” of the South’s role in history. In her regular article for the North Carolina Presbyterian, she wrote

The ladies, as usual were especially active and indefatigable. Where, indeed, in all the sunny South, were they not? And why should they not have been? They were working for their fathers, husbands, sons, brothers and lovers, and for principles which these beloved ones had instructed them to cherish. Would it not have been culpable in the last degree for the women of the country to have remained even indifferent to a cause (good or bad) for which the men were laying down their lives? Why should they not take joyfully all privations and all hardships, for the sake of these, and soothe the agony of bereavement with the belief that they who needed their cares no longer, lying rolled in their bloody blankets in the bosom of Virginia, or on the fatal hills of Pennsylvania, had died in a good cause and were resting in honored graves. Who shall question the course of the women of the South in this war, or dare to undervalue their lofty heroism and fortitude, unsurpassed in story or in song?397

396 Caroline Elizabeth Merrick, Old Times in Dixieland, a Southern Matron’s Memories (New York: Grafton Press, 1901), 76.
397 Clipping from the NC Presbyterian dated February 7, 1866 in the Cornelia Phillips Spencer Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
She dared history to indict southern women’s fortitude. This fortitude, however dressed in Victorian hyperbole of “lofty heroism,” was aggressively asserting that white supremacy was a heroic principle worth dying for. Support for the Confederacy and its principles could continue unchallenged in women’s memorialization of white supremacy. Spencer saw women’s memorial work as an extension of the war for a “good cause” and saw women’s role tending the memories of the Cause as essential as tending to the wounded men who fought for the Cause. She continued

Your labors of love, your charity, faith and patience, all through the dark and bloody day, lighting up the gloom of war with the tender graces of woman’s devotion and self-denial, and now, even in darker hours, your energy and cheerful submission in toil and poverty – and humiliation . . .

This theme of humiliation in defeat is common in women’s postwar writing because humility was not one of the “principles which these beloved ones [white southern men] had instructed them [white southern women] to cherish.” Spencer reached out publicly to women and informed them that their public grief was understandable and reminded them that they should still properly be enraged by what they experienced during war. Regarding the occupation of the South by Union soldiers – this “violation” of southern white womanhood by the “black” Yankees, Spencer instructed her readers

Southerners cannot write calmly of such scenes yet. Their houses were turned into seraglios, every portable article of value, plate, china, glassware, provisions and books were carried off, and the remainder destroyed; hundreds of carriages and vehicles of all kinds were burned in piles; where houses were isolated they were burned; women were grossly insulted and robbed of clothing and jewelry; nor were darker and nameless tragedies wanting in lonely situations. No; they hardly dare trust themselves to think of these things. ‘That way lies madness.’ But the true story of ‘THE GREAT MARCH’ will yet be written.”

She indicated that to dwell inwardly on this desecration of southern honor would bring madness, but that to control the story – to dominate the historical memory – was a productive use of humiliation and grief.

Spencer wrote about an incident at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where her father had been a noted scholar. Spencer dedicated her life to the school and ran to the campus to ring the school’s bell to announce the “redemption” of the school from “carpetbag rule” when the Republican appointed administration was pressed out by a Democratic University

398 Correspondence with Zebulon Vance, Cornelia Phillips Spencer Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
President. In an article Spencer wrote for *The Presbyterian*, republished in *The Sentinel*, called “The Decline of the University,” she claims the “Cause of the Decline” was a misunderstanding of the depth of hatred southerners still had for northerners, and the marriage of the daughter of North Carolina’s governor Swain to a Federal officer who commanded the occupying brigade at Chapel Hill underscored the importance of recognizing southerners’ lingering bitterness. She wrote

> Without any disposition to call up past grievances, or violate the proprieties of social life, I may be allowed to say . . . that there is no doubt that the marriage of Gov. Swain’s daughter to the Federal officer . . . was the principal agent in alienating public affection and confidence from our University for a time. Ordinarily a gentleman may give his daughter in marriage to whom he pleases without any effect beyond his own family circle; but it is one of the penalties of holding an exalted and responsible station, that in critical times even private acts become public property, and are weighed, and have their consequences.

This effort on behalf of one prominent southern family to accept the finality of surrender symbolically through condoning the marriage of their southern daughter to a Yankee officer was eschewed by the local community. Southerners, Cornelia Spencer pointed out, were not ready to accept defeat; the South was stuck in public mourning. Spencer explained

> To Southern people smarting under the humiliation and agony of defeat and surrender, unable to look with complaisance upon their conquerors, uncertain of the future and shrouded in gloom, it seemed an outrage that the Head of an Institution, to whom their sons were to be entrusted should show so little apprehension of the Southern situation, so little sympathy with Southern feeling.

The “southern situation,” was, of course, the inability of many southerners to accept the end of white supremacy. Spencer, acting as an arbiter of southern social mores, explained that southerners in high social positions dictated “southern feeling” and it was this social transgression – an intermarriage that symbolically offered up southern womanhood to the Yankee occupation and all that stood for – that reinforced the notion that southerners must continue – publicly – to rue and lament the new social paradigm.

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399 The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill named an award – the Cornelia Spencer “Bell” Award – after this historic event. Recently there was a controversy about giving this award to notable women on campus because of Spencer’s historic racism.

400 Cornelia Phillips Spencer Papers, scrapbook, unnumbered pages, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

401 Ibid.
For Gov. Swain thought the war was over. He had never entertained extreme views in regard to Southern rights in the inauguration of the war... And he did not calculate on the continuance of the exasperated state of feeling left by the war in those who had lost sons, husbands, brothers, houses and fortunes, and who had been subjected to insult and degradation. The people who felt most bitterly at the close of the war were not the majority in numbers at the South, but they were the majority so to speak in social rank and influence, refinement, intelligence and wealth. They were, in short, the class that supports Colleges and Institutions of learning.

No doubt Spencer’s readers were appropriately horrified to read the details of the nuptial celebration: A large cake was sent to the wedding party by freedmen “as a bridal present to their deliverer and liberator.”

It is difficult to accept a new racial system in a culture that is stuck in a cycle of glorifying the old one, no matter how absurd the manifestation of this hold on the past. By writing this “morality tale,” Spencer was re-playing for her audience the familiar theme of nostalgia for the ante-bellum life. Criterion B1 of Post Traumatic Stress identifies “recurrent and intrusive recollections of the [traumatic] event,” a criterion met by the pervasiveness of hero-tales set beside “lazy darkey” stories, penned by women.

Story-telling and reminiscing was one way that the war and its end were kept alive in the white South. The tales of battles and forging solidarity through trial that must have been told again and again on the march or beside the campfire had an analog hearthside in southern homes. Southern men returned home to their wives and families to hear the stories of deprivation and terror that southern women often faced during the war years, and women kept the indignation burning, to tell the stories again and again – and often publish them after the war – to reinforce continually a common sense of outrage that bound white southerners together when the unifying force of the Confederacy was no more. The “common distress” of southern women made them feel “well acquainted,” according to Emmeline Lightfoot.

Southern women were also “well acquainted” with the southern cultural tale of vanquishing a stronger foe with little more than a belief that the vanquished would one day be avenged with the help of God. By enumerating “outrages” heaped upon the “defenseless” South, southerners attempted to justify white supremacy and racial violence. Cornelia Phillips Spencer meticulously collected detailed accounts of the violations and humiliations southerners witnessed.

402 Article clipped from The Sentinel, June 30, 1869 in the Cornelia Phillips Spencer Papers, scrapbook, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

403 DSM-IV, 309.81

404 Emmeline Allmand (Crump) Lightfoot Memoir, typescript, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA, 8.
and experienced during Sherman’s Campaign. This rumination served to deepen southern whites’ feelings of trauma and victimization and helped feed the feelings many southerners expressed of a need to “vindicate” the memory of southern white men in the aftermath of war. In other words, at the same time an expression of grief, these war stories served to deepen the wound of the war for southern men and women alike. As these emotional wounds festered over the course of a generation, their meaning shifted: for the generation of southerners who had no first hand memory of war, and ostensibly no stake in its outcome, these ruminations became the basis on which racial violence was justified. In a letter from a correspondent to Cornelia Phillips Spencer, there was a recognition that reconciliation to the new social paradigm after the war would be difficult.

I am doing what I can to aid the work of “reconstruction,” by eschewing politics and laboriously attending to my private affair, and I try to feel “harmonized,” but when I think of the sacrifice of such men as these, of such cruelties as I have recorded, of the wanton desolation of my beloved South, and still see the spirit of hate and revenge burning in the hearts of the victors – then the work of harmony is stopped – not yet – If it is ever completed it must be – “sometime hence in the distant future I fear.” Notwithstanding all this its completion might not be long deferred if the Northern people . . . would reach for the brotherly hand of help and reconciliation to a helpless people.\(^\text{405}\)

As keepers of southern culture, southern women used their story-making in the pursuit of maintaining control over southern white thought and racial mores. Through memorial groups such as the UDC, elite southern women took up the “domestic housekeeping” of the Reconstruction South, waging war upon those who would suggest the South – and the ideology of white supremacy – had been defeated. Women fought with words, not guns, and in an historical moment when the future racial hierarchy was in a state of change, women like Cornelia Spencer, Mildred Lewis Rutherford, and Rebecca Latimer Felton unleashed a barrage of prose that served to strengthen the pre-war racial hierarchy and ensure that southerners who had not known war would be adequately imbued with the “revolutionary” ideas of the Confederacy. Their words also were a product of and reinforced the new generation’s predilection for violent racial hierarchy. When Spencer, Rutherford, and Felton began their public campaigns, the Klan was riding openly through the streets of Raleigh, Richmond, and Atlanta.

Spencer was, like other UDC members, an articulate and passionate woman, who concerned

\(^{405}\) R. L. Beall to Cornelia P. Spencer, August 29, 1866, in the David L. Swain Papers #706, folder 55, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
herself with the preservation of “southern culture.” Similar to the monument building that the club women of the UDC undertook, conservative female authors lent their gifts to influence youths, promoting the “good old days,” polishing the image of a virile South, denouncing the new order. Southerners were interested in especially pointed southern sectionalist accounts of Northern injustice, and gave Cornelia Spencer’s First Steps in North Carolina History, a lukewarm response because she indicated that slavery led to the rendering of the Union. The review in the Statesville Landmark entitled, “Mrs. Spencer’s History: Why it’s not popular with Certain People and Papers” asked

Why is not the “First Steps in North Carolina History,” written by that highly gifted woman, Cornelia Spencer, popular with the newspapers and the State educational authorities? Does she not score Holden and Kirk with righteous scorn? Is not the carpetbagger sufficiently pilloried? Has she a single good word for the murderer of Mrs. Surratt? Could Governor Graham himself give the ku klux philosophic apology? We fear her offence is the inculcating of that now universally admitted truth that slavery is per se wrong and that the South in its defence undertook to wreck the Union.

Southern audiences demanded more than simply a justification for the Klan’s “good work,” they also insisted on a complete justification for the institution of slavery. But those readers who followed Spencer’s work knew she regularly glorified enslavement and praised those former slaves who, like her father’s “Aunt Dilsey . . . declined to use her liberty, but remained true to “old master” till his death in 1867. She raised no question of “freedom” or “equality” or “civil rights,” went as she said “straight on ‘tending to her business, acting with self-respect and dignity, and insuring to herself the affectionate regard of all who knew her . . . like others of her race she dwelt fondly on ‘old times’ as being better than the present.”

At Spencer’s death, her obituaries indicated her contribution to the Southern Cause. One clipping, “Recollections of Mrs. Spencer: Estimate of her Life and Character: From the News & Observer,” indicated “She combined the charm and graces of womanhood and motherhood with the strength, sanity and virility of a man. She was neither feminine nor masculine, but both womanly and manly. [She was] ‘almost virile.’” Zebulon Vance, twice governor of North Carolina, and close friend of Cornelia Spencer, said she was “the smartest woman in the State, yes, and the smartest man, too.”

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407 Clipping, “For the White and Blue” signed “CPS” in the Cornelia Phillips Spencer Papers, scrapbook, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
smart women could win a war of words. They could dictate the terms of the war for southern children. The UDC pressed its members in a concerted way to craft a southern history that glorified white supremacy and Confederate men, and this southern history was gaining a national currency. Sarah Gardner traces the exponential increase of women’s Civil War writings published in the early twentieth century and suggests that southern women were winning the “silent battle of public opinion – victory was within their grasp.”

This time, however, the victory would not be snatched from them. To ensure that future generations would hold a “correct” southern view of history, UDC historian Mildred Lewis Rutherford encouraged southern women “to become insistent that the truths of our history should be written, and that those truths should be correctly taught in our schools and colleges.” Let northern boys learn Hamiltonianism, but Southern boys must know the Jeffersonian Constitution. Rutherford’s bold assertion that there were two Constitutions – even in 1914 – suggests the depth of the conviction that the Civil War settled nothing for the South. She told an audience of activist UDC members that they must be firm in teaching the “proper southern” history, even if children didn’t want it. “I know perfectly well what the young people of today will say: ‘We are tired of hearing these old issues, don’t resurrect them.’ We have listened to this too long from the young people, and we have allowed them thereby to grow up in ignorance of the truth regarding our history. We must not listen to them any longer.” No matter how active women were in this push to canonize “historical truth” in schools and colleges, women canonized this conservative, revisionist ideology in their homes by cataloging the southern “historical truth” in their scrapbooks, journals, and diaries.

In her journal, Eliza Andrews explicitly states the motivation to teach this history to southern children:

We look back with loving memory upon our past, as we look upon the grave of the beloved dead whom we mourn but would not recall. We glorify the men and the memories of those days and would have the coming generation draw inspiration from them. We teach the children of the South to honor and revere the civilization of their fathers . . .

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410 Ibid., 164.
412 Ibid., 3.
413 Ibid., 34.
This “civilization of their fathers,” predicated upon black slavery, had not perished because slavery was evil, but because its time had simply passed, according to Andrews. But the part of the “civilization of their fathers” that had not perished, predicated on white supremacy, could be salvaged by teaching a revisionist history. Women in the post-Reconstruction period and into the twentieth century embraced their mothers’ grief for a conservative past and in so doing prolonged and deepened southern race hate. Even women with no real claim to planter status – women who struggled in a South of economic uncertainty and racial strife – could understand their current struggles through an historical lens of a once-proud race that could redeem their history as well as their politics.

White southerners embraced the idea of redemption through remembering the war more usefully, and this trend fueled an outpouring of emotion about the war. This catharsis took the form of literature, marble monuments, ceremonies, parades and the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan. Southern women were public and private historians. They used their desires to reconstruct the Confederate protection they wished to recall and they used their status as cultural directors to direct the discourse of winning and losing. They also used their positions as mothers – literally or figuratively – to control the history, the memory of loss and grief to desperately uphold gender conventions they appeared to be breaking while engaged in very public roles. Rebecca Felton suggested that women should be actively involved in constructing historical memory when she wrote “We need more history and less fairytales.”

But history about the Civil War was, in some women’s writing, indistinguishable from “fairytales” as some women sought to “exorcize their demons” by writing. “Fairytales” about antebellum life filled with glittering parties were devoured by a weary postwar generation that desperately wished to believe in the Magnolia Myth. Other women were more interested in crafting “useful histories” that would help future generations of southern children make sense of the southern position. For example, Nancy Bostick De Sassure wrote Old Plantation Days, published in 1909, so that her granddaughter, who knew only the New South, might learn of the fallen Confederacy. Whether women contributed more history or more “fairytales,” historian Sarah Gardener points out that women “very confidently entered the public debate on the war – no matter the size of the audience, women were entering the public world.”

415 Gardner, Blood and Irony, 175.
416 Ibid., 112 – 113, 129.
Female writers born after the war’s end relied upon their mother’s memories of the war to inform their own writing. Born in the 1870s, southern author Ellen Glasgow recalled “The adventures of my mother, as a young wife during the war, were as vivid to me as my own memories.” Women writers and activists were imbued with memories from women who struggled with a terrible trauma, and who, in many cases, coped with their losses by aggressively, passionately, and articulately denying them. The United Daughters of the Confederacy provided a generation of women who had no direct war experience, but who felt called to uphold a “true” history of the Confederacy, with an outlet for more aggressive “histories” of the Civil War. Often UDC activists were daughters of women who had endured the Confederacy’s defeat. Grace Brown Elmore had lived through the war, and was herself an active UDC member. In 1877, on behalf of “the women of South Carolina,” she sent an elaborate silver service to the state’s governor, John Brown Gordon, an ex-Confederate officer who was acknowledged as a key player in South Carolina’s Redemption and Home Rule.418 Elmore’s autobiographical writing and typescripts of her diary demonstrate a formulaic view of her war experience: “White southerners were benevolent to slaves, who were content with their lot until stirred into troubling ideas by Union soldiers. Elmore described herself and those around her as moral, righteous people whose way of life was sanctioned by God, and thus above reproach; Yankees were evil challengers who brought only destruction.”419 As her diary’s editor, Marli Weiner, noted “By the time she prepared the typescripts, Grace felt the war had robbed her of the life she could have expected for herself even as it offered her a chance to demonstrate courage and distinctiveness. It was an opportunity she both enjoyed and regretted.”420

Elmore’s daughter, Sally, was politically active in the World’s Fair Centennial Club, state and national Patrons of Husbandry, and the UDC. Sally Elmore chaired the book committee for the South Carolina state UDC. Sally was a force in producing the first of two volumes of history of women’s activities during the Civil War, published in 1903, and it contained contributions from her mother, Grace. Clearly young women were taking up the call of southern honor and defending it the UDC indicated they should. As mothers continued to tell their version of the war’s history through memoirs, scrapbooks, and diaries, their daughters were working to raise money to make these memories visible and permanent in cemeteries and town squares. The

417 Ibid., 147.
419 Ibid., 183.
420 Ibid.
impulse of memorialization and aggressive race hate were not separate, although professional sectionalists frequently muted their support for white supremacy in the face of criticisms that the war was an unholy one fought for slavery. The careers of some of the most prominent advocates of the Lost Cause ideology indicate that the stance on activities of UDC members, and the UDC directly, looked a great deal like race war.
CHAPTER 4

PROFESSIONAL SECTIONALISM

“Political reconstruction might be unavoidable now, but social reconstruction we hold in our hands & might prevent.”

– Mary Greenhow Lee

This chapter suggests that the United Daughters of the Confederacy was an important cultural institution that was dominated by women who were vested in white supremacy in the South. They used their formidable organizational and fundraising skills to carve out a political niche for themselves which reinforced their cultural influence. Claiming women’s rightful place on the pedestal, women in the UDC climbed down off of that pedestal to lobby legislatures, raise huge sums of money for monuments, and challenge men’s memorial groups for hegemony in the field of Civil War commemoration. As women’s groups claimed no race hate, and then worked diligently to instill those values in their homes, they also claimed no desire to enter public life, while doing so in the name of protecting the South’s image from the travesty of “bad history.”

Describing the power of the work of twentieth century historians of memory, Jacqueline Dowd Hall writes that the power to control what people remember is “the politics of history . . . both the use of history as a technique of power and the search for a past that provides a sense of agency and a lever for [social] critique.”

Southern women embraced the politics of history with gentility, but also with zeal.

Women could claim to be “eschewing politics” when they were campaigning against Reconstruction policies by their memorial work, but several southern women were “the smartest men” in their respective states because they were able to establish their authority in the domain of memory-keeping while collecting praise for their Victorian hero-worship. Historian John Neff claims that “Since southern women had no political life to protect, they assumed the task of honoring Confederate veterans, not by default, but by strategy, and they took up their duties, quite literally, with a vengeance.”

Many of these women’s methods and efficacy seem “manly” because of their success. The United Daughters of the Confederacy had to establish their dominance in the field of memorialization of the Confederate dead, and in the debate about

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421 Sheila R. Phipps, Genteel Rebel: The Life of Mary Greenhow Lee (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 209. Mary Greenhow Lee was sister-in-law to famous Confederate spy, Rose O’Neal Greenhow.
423 John R. Neff, Honoring the Confederate Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2005), 146.
re-interment, national UDC officers, Katie Behan from New Orleans and Janet Randolph of Richmond, used decidedly “unfeminine” methods, according to a rival group of the United Confederate Veterans, to claim soldiers from an undignified re-internment at Arlington. Using overtly political language of States’ Rights in a highly symbolic bid for hegemony over the very bodies of Confederate soldiers, Behan and Randolph went to battle.\textsuperscript{424}

Mrs. Norman Randolph was thirteen-year-old Janet Weaver on the eve of the Civil War. Her home in Warrington, Virginia, was a field hospital, and young Janet served the Confederacy by tending to the wounded in and around Warrington. At the age of 32, she married Norman Randolph, a member of the Executive Committee of the R.E. Lee Camp of United Confederate Veterans and moved with him to Richmond. In an early effort at historic preservation, she traveled to Washington to commission a taxidermist for Thomas J. Jackson’s warhorse, Sorrel. The widowed Mrs. Randolph threw herself into Confederate relief work for indigent widows and she then founded the Richmond Chapter of the UDC in 1896 and remained its president until her death thirty-one years later. Randolph was active in “public history” long before it was a recognized field by helping convert the White House of the Confederacy into a museum and in the erection of statues of Confederate heroes on Monument Avenue. She was chair of the Jefferson Davis Monument Association and a member of the committees for the other four monuments. She was president of the Memorial Association that maintained Confederate graves in Hollywood Cemetery. She is best known for her image as the grieving Confederate widow with outstretched arms, pictured in a black bonnet and veil on a fundraising poster for the Richmond Community Fund in 1925. Janet Randolph was “Mother Richmond” and this grieving figure plaintively asked “How much do you care?”\textsuperscript{425} Janet Randolph had made a career for herself in public history-making and upon her death was so widely recognized that she became the second woman, after Winnie Davis, the “Daughter of the Confederacy,” to be buried with full military honors provided by the Richmond Infantry Light Blues.

Randolph was not just an honorary soldier, however. She donned her saber on behalf of “correct” southern memories of the Confederate cause, and in this effort, she made history even for herself. The Richmond Monuments are an imposing tribute, not only to the ideals they sought to glorify, but to the power of Confederate women. As many southern women’s scrapbooks show, the “polished” side of Victorian hero-making frequently had an unlovely and

\textsuperscript{424} Confederate Memorial Association Records, 1896-1947, Scrapbook, Box 11, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.

\textsuperscript{425} Virginia Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, Randolph’s portrait resides at the Richmond UDC chapter.
highly political side that southern white women historians could use or subsume, depending on their motives. Career club women (and professional sectionalists), as Janet Randolph had made herself, were proficient political operatives, and thus produced a great number of monuments to Confederate heroes, which are also monuments to white supremacy. They were also willing barb-throwers in the war of words as when a representative from the Grand Army of the Republic suggested that the United Daughters of the Confederacy was an unpatriotic group, Randolph said of the charge, “In fact, I almost think it was delightful, because it just shows what they are, and exactly what they have always been. Talk about forgiving and forgetting. They’ll never forgive or forget.”

Janet Randolph had helped to polish the image of a virile South through her work in erecting a Jefferson Davis shrine – perhaps the ultimate Confederate memorial in the Confederacy’s “City of the Dead” on Richmond’s lovely Monument Avenue. Randolph then applied all of her influence as the “Mother of the Confederate Capitol” to the Confederate political principle of states’ rights when, in 1901, she lobbied to have the relocated dead in Arlington cemetery distributed to their home states rather than relocated within the national cemetery.

Samuel E. Lewis of the Sons of the Confederate Veterans vehemently disagreed with the women’s memorial management and he kept correspondence about Behan and Randolph in the cleverly named Confederate Dead Scrapbook. These letters between Lewis and other Sons of Confederate Veterans indicate that these southern women were exerting a great deal of influence to disrupt the War Department’s plan to re-arrange the graves of Confederate soldiers in Arlington. The Veteran’s group hoped that the War Department would use funds to arrange in some order and care for the graves of fellow Confederate veterans in a separate Confederate section, away from other graves. As it was, this group was troubled that Confederate graves were scattered throughout Arlington in a haphazard way and that they were among the graves of “negro contrabands, Quarter Master employees, citizen refugees, state prisoners &c., and there was no way to distinguish from them the graves of a Confederate soldier.” But Behan and Randolph had lately devised a strategy to petition the Secretary of War to hold off on these plans

426 Confederate Memorial Association Records, 1896-1947, Scrapbook, Box 11, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA, article clipped from the Richmond Times-Dispatch, January 6, 1922.
427 Grand Camp Confederate Veterans, Department of Virginia, R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, Richmond, Records, 1883-1936, Box 40, Scrapbook 1, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.
428 Ibid.
429 Letter to General Gordon in the Grand Camp Confederate Veterans, Department of Virginia, R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, Richmond, Records, 1883–1936, Box 40, Scrapbook 3, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.
and consider releasing the remains to these soldiers of their home states. In a frantic letter to Elihu Root, Samuel Lewis explained “It has recently come to our knowledge that protests have been made to the Secretary of War by an organization very recently formed purporting to be interested in the erection of monuments in cemeteries to the memory of the Confederate dead; that the existing law should be set aside; and that all the remains of the dead of each State should be placed in one separate box and shipped to that state for reburial there.” Lewis continues to protest this interference, by claiming that the women memorial makers have no right to these relics.

We are of the opinion that no one whatever has any right to these remains other than relatives . . . and we would view with great sorrow the carrying out of the plan proposed by the organization above referred to; would deem it a desecration, a great wrong to our revered dead comrades . . . We are not aware that any of the members of that organization are related to these dead.\footnote{Letter to Elihu Root, January 18, 1901, Grand Camp Confederate Veterans, Department of Virginia, R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, Richmond, Records, 1883–1936, Box 40, Scrapbook 2, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.}

As “Daughters of the Confederacy,” however, Behan and Randolph were aggressively claiming remains, as their newly-created occupation as memorialists demanded memorials, and the most sentimental and moving kind were erected over the bodies of the war dead.

But the dead men’s “brothers,” as it were, felt their authority usurped and, as military men, were perhaps unaccustomed to being challenged by southern women. In a letter dated January 18, 1901, to General John B. Gordon, Commander in Chief, UCV from Samuel E. Lewis, he wrote

Thus far we have been able to ascertain very little information regarding the organization purporting to be the “Confederated Southern Memorial Association”, who constitute it, its object and powers, means and responsibility. It is asserted that it is quite recently incorporated in the state of Arkansas. Until the date of Mrs. Randolph’s letter to the Depot Quarter Master of this City, Sept. 28, 1900, we had no knowledge of the existence of such an association. It would seem that their plans are antagonistic to the general understanding at the Re-union in Charleston, S.C. in 1899, that while the Southern ladies resented interference with Confederate dead in the South, they would be glad for the United States Government to give them care in the North. We doubt the ability of any such organization to suitably remove and care for the nearly 30,000 Confederate Dead now lying in the Northern States; and we feel that they have made a most unfortunate commencement in interfering with the efforts of the Confederate Veterans in this District, which have been so generously seconded by the Congress and the Departments, and which threaten to cause failure of fruition.\footnote{Grand Camp Confederate Veterans, Department of Virginia, R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, Richmond, Records, 1883–1936, Box 40, Scrapbook 1, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.}
Behan and Randolph had made waves with their lobbying efforts, and Lewis felt that this difference of opinion between the men’s and women’s patriotic groups was embarrassing – to the War Secretary – but also probably to Confederate Veterans who Behan and Randolph were characterizing as “conciliatory” by accepting federal dollars to inter Confederate dead in a “Yankee cemetery.” Lewis indicated the degree to which the women were unnerving policy makers in his letter to the UCV commander in chief, General Gordon.

The project of the Confed. section of Arlington was proceeding apace, but “Just at this Juncture unfortunately the interference of Mrs. Behan and Mrs. Randolph began, and caused the Secretary [of War] to defer action. From that time, these ladies have been very active and persistent and the Secretary, instead of executing the law of appropriations as passed, feeling embarrassed at the conflicting views, has held action in abeyance . . . [until the appropriations run out the following year], and we are now endeavoring to relieve him from that embarrassment by bringing to our support the aid of the most broad minded, enlightened and patriotic of our comrades [Stephen D. Lee].

Lewis also wanted to relieve the embarrassment that these southern women were causing by interfering with their overtly political efforts. Katie Behan had been lobbying the Governor of Virginia on the UDC’s position to have the bodies returned to individual states, and a letter addressed to Frank Hume of the Virginia House of Delegates from the UCV indicates that the men’s group was hard upon Behan’s heels. The UCV asked Honorable Hume to weigh in with the Governor and try to nullify her powers of persuasion and to “try and sway [the Governor] to the Arlington plot – and he’s asked also to see Mrs. Randolph & talk some sense into her.”

Mrs. Randolph had apparently had all the sense she cared for, and Frank Hume recounted that Mrs. Randolph was implacable.

I had the honor of a long talk with Mrs. Norman Randolph and must say that we old Confederates will stand no show in this matter if left to Mrs. Randolph “who talks about the dead not having been reconstructed, that she would rather they be in a broom-sage field than buried at Arlington.” I was absolutely unable to make the slightest impression on this strong minded lady though . . .

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432 Ibid.
433 January 22, 1901 letter to Honorable Hume, Virginia House of Delegates in the Grand Camp Confederate Veterans, Department of Virginia, R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, Richmond, Records, 1883–1936, Scrapbook, Box 40, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.
434 January 24, 1901, letter from Frank Hume in the Grand Camp Confederate Veterans, Department of Virginia, R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, Richmond, Records, 1883–1936, Scrapbook, Box 40, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.
Randolph and Behan had some support for their idea of bringing states’ rights to the common soldiers. On April 6, 1901, Behan’s home paper, the New Orleans’ Picayune, commented that

Since the inauguration of Mrs. Behan new life and strength has been given to the Memorial Association. It is now known throughout the length and breadth of the land by the splendid stand that its president as president also of the Confederation [sic] of Southern Memorial Association has taken on the question of the removal of the Confederate dead to their native states from the National cemeteries at Washington.\(^{435}\)

Randolph was enraged when a Pennsylvania chapter of the Grand Army of Republic passed a resolution describing the UDC’s work to beautify Confederate graves in the North as “needlessly stirring up the dying embers of sectional strife. No Union soldier would think of asking permission to erect national monuments in cemeteries set apart for the Confederate dead. The war of the Rebellion is over . . . thinking people cannot forget that the Confederate soldiers fought to destroy the republic . . .”\(^{436}\) The Richmond UDC took deep offense to these remarks. Perhaps the ladies’ membership was equally affronted by the comments about stirring sectional strife, finality of the war, and the charge that Confederates were enemies of the Republic.

Randolph suggested that the Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond would be the most appropriate location for the remains that the War Department would move, but the UCV thought this idea – that women could orchestrate such a complex operation – was preposterous. Furthermore, the UCV in Washington published a letter deriding the cemetery’s suitability. Lewis’s friend had recently seen the cemetery that Randolph suggested was more fitting for Confederate “heroes.”

Now then as to ‘Hollywood.’ I went there on Sunday and investigated. I found that there was neither marble, slate or wood headboards or foot-boards, nor wooden stakes with metal tags attached. No mounds arise over any grave in which a common soldier was buried.

In one corner, near the street fence, there was a section with two hundred and fifty marble strips (narrow pieces) with numbers cut in them to mark the graves; and in all the other portions devoted to the C.[ommon] S.[oldier] of the C.S.A. there were at intervals (and

\(^{435}\) “Woman’s World.” Article clipped from *New Orleans Picayune*, in the Grand Camp Confederate Veterans, Department of Virginia, R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, Richmond, Records, 1883–1936, Scrapbook, Box 40, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA, 12

\(^{436}\) Grand Camp Confederate Veterans, Department of Virginia, R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, Richmond, Records, 1883–1936, Scrapbook, Box 40, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA, 192.
without plan, it seemed to me) square slabs of granite with numbers cut on their tops (sunk in).\textsuperscript{437}

Randolph called this letter describing the cemetery at Hollywood “very false” and wondered if the ‘friend’ was afraid to give his name?” She continued on belligerently “But enough. The women of the south want our dead; we have a right to our dead; and why a camp of Confederate Veterans should object to our having our dead is incomprehensible.”\textsuperscript{438}

The SCV thought that the women were misleading the public about the scope of the project. He also indicated that they were not knowledgeable about the finer points of moving human remains as their plans did not keep one soldier’s bones separate from another. The UCV kept a copy of Samuel Lewis’s May 21\textsuperscript{st}, 1901, letter addressed to General Lee in Columbus Missouri which pointed out that the ladies were mistaken in their zeal.

I would repeat in the way of emphasis that there are no known Confederate dead here outside of the Cemeteries named; because the two ladies most active in the agitation of this matter, persist in making the impression that the dead are to be moved from outside into National cemeteries, thus creating an erroneous idea and baseless sentiment . . . It should not be forgotten that the plan of Mrs. Behan and Mrs. Randolph was to put all these 264 remains in one box and have them delivered to Hollywood, near Richmond, Va.; or that those from each state be placed in one box and shipped to some place in that State. (p. 252) Such plan would have destroyed all identity; and for that reason alone, to say nothing of other reasons, should not have prevailed. I sincerely trust that some way may be found to remove the objections of the ladies, and bring them into reconciliation with us.\textsuperscript{439}

But the men’s methods of persuasion only sought to galvanize their foes. SCV member and Washington attorney, H. A. Herbert, pointed out that the cost of the removal of the dead to the various states “would be an added burden placed upon the shoulders of the blessed women who are already overtaxed to take care of the cemeteries now in their charge.” He pointed out that fundraising letters from the memorialization groups said that they were under funded already.\textsuperscript{440}

\textsuperscript{437} Letter was dated October 3, 1900 and reprinted in the \textit{Richmond Dispatch} February 6, 1901 in the Grand Camp Confederate Veterans, Department of Virginia, R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, Richmond, Records, 1883–1936, Scrapbook, Box 40, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.

\textsuperscript{438} Article clipped from the \textit{Richmond Dispatch}: Feb. 7, 1901 in the Grand Camp Confederate Veterans, Department of Virginia, R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, Richmond, Records, 1883–1936, Scrapbook, Box 40, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.

\textsuperscript{439} Grand Camp Confederate Veterans, Department of Virginia, R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, Richmond, Records, 1883–1936, Scrapbook, Box 40, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA, 251-252.

\textsuperscript{440} Letter dated February 6, 1901 in the Grand Camp Confederate Veterans, Department of Virginia, R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, Richmond, Records, 1883–1936, Scrapbook, Box 40, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.
He asked “Can there be any good reason why the burdens of these ladies should be added to by the effort to remove these bodies South?” 441

The ladies thought they had several good reasons, not the least of which was that they were the self-appointed matrons of southern memory. The logistics seemed less important to Randolph than did the symbolism. That summer, the Ladies’ Memorial Association held a meeting in Memphis to demand that their position be accommodated. In the August edition of the Confederate Veteran, the report recounted the removal committee’s resolution. The report of the committee’s resolution stated that they hoped that whenever “any State in the South or any organized memorial association from any Southern State shall ask for the dead of that state, we ask that such request be granted.” 442

The Sons of the Confederate Veterans followed this power struggle in their scrapbook, but especially kept the letters that disparaged these she-adders and questioned their ability successfully to carry out proper memorial work. One letter from General Stephen Lee, President of the Missouri Historical Society, in Columbus, Missouri, dated Feb. 8, 1901, summarized the Memorial group as “An organization of ladies, full of zeal . . . interfered with good, but I think unwise intent. They can’t properly care for the graves of the South, certainly they could not in addition care for 30,000 dead buried at the North.” He suggests that they “do not fully understand their surroundings” and that they were stirring up “bad blood.” 443 The Arlington project was completed, as the SCV planned, October 1, 1901.

Southern women who had taken up “The Cause” professionally, were, however, rarely defeated on their chosen field of battle. Katie Behan represents the steely postwar woman who was extremely influential and successful in dominating the historical landscape and directing the memory of the postwar South. She was born an only child to a family of wealth and luxury, who became one of the most prominent and outspoken members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. She was educated in the Ursuline Convent in New Orleans, and shortly after the war ended, on June 7, 1866, Katie married the youngest General in Lee’s artillery, William J.

441 Grand Camp Confederate Veterans, Department of Virginia, R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, Richmond, Records, 1883–1936, Scrapbook, Box 40, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.
442 Clipping from the Confederate Veteran, 369-370; in the Grand Camp Confederate Veterans, Department of Virginia, R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, Richmond, Records, 1883–1936, Scrapbook, Box 40, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA, 276. The article explained, “The president, Mrs. W.J. Behan, had been called with Mrs. N.V. Randolph of Virginia, the chairman for the removal of the Confederate dead, to meet the Resolution Committee of the U.C.V. Mrs. Letetia Frazier, of the Ladies Confederate Memorial Association of Memphis welcomed the delegates in her sweet, womanly fashion.”
443 Grand Camp Confederate Veterans, Department of Virginia, R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, Richmond, Records, 1883–1936, Scrapbook, Box 40, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.
Behan, who became one of the most prominent planters in Louisiana from the family’s holdings in Alhambra, White Castle. Less than two months after the Behans were married, a white supremacist mob descended upon a convention of supporters of black male suffrage, instigating a bloody race riot represented by a joint force of New Orleans police and former Confederate Veterans. It was “wholesale slaughter,” according to one observer. Soon after this race riot, William Behan himself led a similar attack on the Reconstruction government and used his connections as a supporter of redemption to build his – and his wife’s – public image as “true Confederates.”

General Behan rose to his Confederate military position from a non-commissioned officer post, and after the war was elected mayor of New Orleans. Katie also used the Lost Cause as political capital to become one of the most prominent leaders of the state and national United Daughters of the Confederacy. Katie Behan raised her two surviving daughters (of five infants born) in the family’s elegant townhouse on Jackson Street in the Crescent City. By 1874, Katie Behan was home with a two-year-old and an infant when percolating racial tensions in Reconstruction New Orleans exploded.

In September of that year, William Behan had become the leader of the Crescent White League, a Klan-style white supremacist group dedicated to a "white man's government" and the suppression of "the insolent and barbarous African," charged with upwards of 3,500 armed men towards the Customs House near Canal Street. In the ensuing melee, what the White League called the “Battle of Liberty Place,” black onlookers taunted the men and threw bricks; the mob fired back at the gathered crowd. In all, thirty-eight persons were killed and seventy-nine wounded. The vigilante group held their position for three days until an alarmed President Grant sent reinforcements. In this “Battle,” the bi-racial Reconstruction government in New Orleans was deposed for three days in an eerie predecessor to the political “redemption” of the South from “carpetbag rule.” William Behan was then made head of the Louisiana National Guard and served in that post until he was elected mayor of the city for a two year term in 1882.

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445 Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library, Administrations of the Mayors of New Orleans, and Behan Family Papers, collection number 78, Manuscripts Department, Tulane University.

446 http://civilwar.bluegrass.net/AftermathAndReconstruction/raceriots.html.

As the mayor’s wife, Kate Behan certainly had a great deal of name recognition in the state of Louisiana and she had good reason to support the re-establishment of white supremacy in the South. Her efforts to idealize white supremacy through memorialization work heroized her husband and his colleagues, ex-Confederate soldiers. As historian Catherine W. Bishir points out about women dedicated to the proposition of “adjustment of public memory . . . At the same time their politically active husbands and other Democratic friends were raising the specter of Reconstruction to discredit Republican foes, the women were recasting the saga [of their memorial work and the meaning of the aftermath of southern defeat] in similar terms.” Kate Behan’s position in the UDC was made possible by her husband’s solid reputation as a guardian of the ancient regime, and she, in turn, worked tirelessly to maintain the Lost Cause, in part, because she understood that women’s privilege rested on the privilege of white men. Her papers are filled with records of her own professional accomplishments – opportunities for public work and recognition to which only a few women working in the UDC had access. But her papers are also filled with a strange silence. For someone so intimately tied to race politics that relied upon the intimidation through terror of free blacks that her husband had effected so well, she says so little about race conflict that a casual reader could easily assume there was none.

Her papers, however, demonstrate her untiring efforts at dominating southern history and the southern landscape with physical markers of white supremacy. Monuments were a symbol of the South’s renewed strength and served as a warning to the opponents of white supremacy. The expense and size of the marble relics were testaments to the willingness of ex-Confederates and their supporters to go to some length to return the South to its pre-war feel. The United Daughters of the Confederacy raised enormous sums of money to build shrines and monuments to those who fought to maintain race hierarchy during a time when whites and blacks alike were starving throughout the devastated south. Instead of turning to charitable work as many club women did in the North, the UDC busied themselves with marking territory in an effort to preserve the past.

The effort to enshrine the ideals of the Confederacy in marble and stone was in full swing in 1900, the same year bloody killings in New Orleans symbolized a “Carnival of Fury” that was sweeping the South a generation after the “peace” of Appomattox. In fact, Catherine Bishar has traced the change in women’s story-telling rhetoric from the 1860s to the 1890s and found women employing language that was imbued with drama and emphasized the “tyranny of

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Reconstruction.” Women’s words had moved from sad to militant.\textsuperscript{449} In 1900, Behan was elected president of the “Confederated Memorial Associations,” responsible for leading an “army” of women, highly trained and imbued with zeal, and all dedicated to the Confederate cause.\textsuperscript{450} While Governor Behan fought for white supremacy at the customs house and in the state house, Katie Behan exerted her considerable influence not only for New Orleans Catholic school children, but for white children across the South.

In 1908 – forty-three years after Appomattox – when Behan could not persuade the Louisiana state legislature to contribute to her fundraising effort for an elaborate and expensive Jefferson Davis monument in New Orleans, she persuaded them to change the names of two parishes to commemorate Confederate heroes. Thus “Pine” and “Rice” parishes became “Davis” and “Beauregard.”\textsuperscript{451} Behan was also clever in discovering ways to keep the memory of the war alive for a generation of children who knew nothing of the trauma their parents felt coming of age during the bloody war. She lobbied the Catholic Board of Education to grant pupils out for a “half holiday” on February 22, the official date adopted by the second and permanent Confederate Congress for formation of the Confederacy.\textsuperscript{452} She also drove a campaign to lobby the Louisiana state legislature to make June 3, Jefferson Davis’ birthday, a legal holiday in Louisiana, and had portraits of Davis distributed to all the state’s public schools.\textsuperscript{453}

Behan was a trustee of the Confederate Memorial Association, which conducted the massive campaigns of monument building that Behan helped orchestrate, not only in New Orleans, but in all former Confederate states. The city of Richmond had already spent $750,000 for Confederate monuments when the Confederate Memorial Association began construction on the Battle Abbey and Confederate Soldiers’ Home in 1912.\textsuperscript{454} Cities that had hoped to host this Confederate shrine, but did not win the bid to host the Battle Abbey, donated the money that they had raised for the project. Behan’s home city gave $3,000, and the Commonwealth of Virginia gave $4,000 to build sidewalks. The City of Richmond contributed $50,000 and private donors contributed generously to the building and the grounds which cost about $140,000 to build. Twenty thousand dollars was donated to decorate the building with elaborate art to make a sort of “museum” dedicated to glorifying the Confederate Cause. The formal opening of the

\textsuperscript{449} Bishir, “Women, Politics, and Confederate Memorial Associations,” 486-487.
\textsuperscript{450} Hair, \textit{Carnival of Fury}.
\textsuperscript{451} June 28, 1908 Times-Democrat, in Behan Family Papers, collection number 78, Manuscripts Department, Tulane University.
\textsuperscript{452} Behan Family Papers, collection number 78, Manuscripts Department, Tulane University.
\textsuperscript{453} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{454} Confederate Memorial Association Records, 1896-1947, Scrapbook, Box 11, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.
complex, located between Kensington, Boulevard, Shepard and Stuart streets was performed on May 3, 1921. According to articles recounting the opening festivities “throngs of women and veterans in gray uniform” attended the laying of the cornerstone.” And an address delivered by Col. Robert White, chairman of the Executive Committee of the Confederate Memorial Association at the laying of the Cornerstone, declared that “with the earnest hope and sincerest prayer that, in years to come, it will be a very “Mecca” for our children’s children.”

Women had tirelessly worked for this day that a “Mecca” would stand as a place where southern children could pilgrimage in search of their “history.” Colonel White said it would be “dedicated to the perpetual memory of the Southern Confederacy . . . that will forever stand as a monument to the heroism, the fidelity, the fortitude, the virtue of the men who fought for the South.”

An address given by H. Snowden Marshall recounted the understanding the memory corps had about their effect on the interpretation of history that children who had not experienced the war or Reconstruction might have. In his speech entitled “Building as a Lesson,” he pointed out “We are consecrating this building today as a memorial to the generation which bore these trials and as a lesson to the descendants of the men and women of our Southern country who lived in those dark and terrible times. We are asking all of their posterity to understand and believe the same thing that we know about them. We look back with happiness and pride on many things that have been done by our ancestors.”

Clearly the memorial societies had the collective goal of working as amateur historians, monitoring popular historical interpretation. The Memorial Association scrapbook kept speeches and articles that were conscious of the profound responsibility that they had taken on. In an article entitled “Causes of the Civil War,” in the Memorial Association’s scrapbook, General Wade Hampton said

We of the South have been derelict in not presenting to the world our version of the causes which led to the Civil War.” We still are derelict in this respect, and the repetition of falsehood, unchallenged by weary listeners, sometimes produces an accepted fact. It is said that we learn from history that no one ever learns anything from history. We surely

455 The opening was delayed because one of the primary artists left to fight for the French in WWI.
456 Confederate Memorial Association Records, 1896- 1947, Scrapbook, Box 11, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.
457 Ibid.
458 Article clipped from the Richmond Times-Dispatch, May 3, 1921 in the Confederate Memorial Association Records, 1896- 1947, Scrapbook, Box 11, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.
can learn nothing from false history. If our people fought for the preservation of slavery, we ought to tear down this building and wreck the statues that beautify this historic city. If they were rebels or traitors to any government that was entitled to their allegiance, we ought to teach the next generation to despise their memory.

He claimed that slavery was a dying institution and many southerners opposed it. He said northerners were to blame for the continuation of slavery because northern states made it impossible for southerners to find land “where negroes were free” and that “there were placed powerful obstacles in the way of that large party in the South who were trying to get rid of slavery.” His apologia continued with the traditional defenses of the war: freeing slaves would be impracticable and abolitionists provoked the South into war because they singularly hated white southerners. 459 Southern women implicitly accepted this ideology and made monuments to it in town squares and in schoolhouses across the South.

Crafting a “career” from memorial work allowed southern women to translate this ideology into action and continue the battles of the modern culture war. At the 1905 annual United Daughters of the Confederacy convention in San Francisco, Kate Noland Garnett, claimed that “We have met together to pledge anew our undying fidelity to the memory of the Confederate soldier, to teach our children, to remote generations, the true history of the South . . .” 460 A sense of urgency pervaded the new century about teaching a “true” history to prevent youngsters who had never known war from accepting the cultural norms that the northern press would ask them to accept. These southern women saw themselves on a cultural crusade – by 1905, their army was 40,000 strong – and their mission was sanctioned by God. In 1907, Cornelia Branch Stone apocalyptically claimed that “God has brought us into existence for specific purposes.” 461 Members of the UDC were called to “stand shoulder to shoulder as a bulwark of truth against the assaults of every calumny.” 462

The UDC was instrumental in recasting defeat into “a divine trial that confirmed their chosen status.” 463 In addition to re-framing the language of defeat (what present day politicians would characterize as engaging in “spin”), the national historian-general for the UDC, Mildred Lewis

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459 Confederate Memorial Association Records, 1896-1947, Scrapbook, Box 11, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA. Wade Hampton was the Governor of South Carolina in 1876 and 1878 and was credited with “redeeming” the state from Reconstruction.
460 Gardner, Blood and Irony, 117.
461 Ibid., 118.
462 Confederate Veteran 3 (October 1895): 302, “A Nashville Daughter.”
463 Gardner, Blood and Irony, 120.
Rutherford, instructed the organization’s members to refrain from using the word, “rebel.”\textsuperscript{464} The UDC’s textbook committee worked to remove and ban books that argued that the Civil War was linked to a conflict over slavery, and this formidable organization asserted its cultural power by encouraging its members at all levels – local, state, and national – to pick up their pens and write.\textsuperscript{465}

The revisionist history was kept up into the 20\textsuperscript{th} century by the United Daughters of the Confederacy and Rutherford. By the 1920s, a generation of women who had not had any first-hand recollections of the Civil War were continuing the work of the UDC and could only read accounts of the “good old days” like the one by Susan Bradford Eppes, written in 1920s which recounted the slightly sad, but still honorable days following the war. Confederate men, she wrote

\begin{quote}
\ldots were crushed and conquered, these noble heroes, who, for four years had fought as never men had fought before. They were coming home to poverty and want, all was lost save honor.
\end{quote}

Southern soldiers were blameless for the unfortunate outcome of the war and, according to Eppes, those women who could make a warm welcome for their husbands did. But many of the southern homes that represented the South’s prosperity were leveled, and Eppes asked

\begin{quote}
but how about those who were coming back to a chimney standing where once a home had been? If there was no roof-tree, there was a woman’s warm heart, a woman’s willing hand and nature was kind in these April days. They should feel and know we held them blameless for what had happened, our dear, dear boys.
\end{quote}

Eppes still remembered sixty years later how defeated southerners felt when they were forced to cease the hot war.

\begin{quote}
the gray uniform hung in tatters and many a manly head sank low on a woman’s breast, while he wept the bitter tears of humiliation and defeat. God help us! We cannot believe we deserved to drink of this bitter cup.
\end{quote}

Women continued telling the stories of Negro domination and carpetbag rule, without distinguishing between them. Southerners like Eppes were still certain they’d been tricked.

\begin{quote}
If we could have had the kind of peace that General Grant had in mind at Appomattox; if we could have been entirely under the control of the United States Regulars, all might yet
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[464] Ibid., 125.
\item[465] Ibid., 127 - 128.
\end{footnotes}
have been well, but we were turned over to the negro troops and, a little later, to the Freedman’s Bureau. Then a horde of Carpetbaggers overran the country, inciting the hitherto harmless negroes to evil deeds of every kind, arresting white men on trivial pretexts, carrying them before a Military Court and after a trial, which was only a travesty of justice, pronouncing any sentence which seemed good to them. Several citizens were banished to the Dry Tortugas; some were incarcerated in local jails and those who were shrewd enough to see through the motives of these “masters of the situation” paid some money and went scot free.466

The “carpetbaggers overrunning the country” line was embraced by prominent historians who staked their career on the white supremacist interpretation of the postwar period. Southern white women, however, played a significant role in bolstering this claim by writing their own historical interpretation of Reconstruction. In almost every instance of writing or memorial work, southern women’s subject was the past. They sought to glorify it, and in so doing, raise up the southern soldier that represented the compact they wished to be party to: Southern white men controlled the south by controlling blacks, and southern white women ruled beside them. Glorifying the Civil War and the southern men who fought was only one facet of the larger assertion that these brave men could never truly lose because white supremacy was essential truth ordained by God that would one day be made right. In the meantime, southern women had to repeat this catechism to southern children so that when the moment for a re-establishment of the ancient regime was right, the descendents of these brave southern soldiers would be able to accept their rightful place at the head of southern society once more.

In 1879, Phoebe Yates Pember published A Southern Woman’s Story in which she asserted that “the women of the South had been openly and violently rebellious . . . They were the first to rebel.” She also claimed that “no appeal was ever made to the women of the South . . . that did not meet with a ready response.467 This bold assertion may have been exactly what occurred, or it might be the author’s great wish about southern women’s effectiveness in the sectional struggle. In either instance, it demonstrates that in the years preceding the twentieth century, an unabashed claim that southern women were the first rebels of the Confederacy and were effective participants in the southern struggle was met neither with approbation nor alarm. In the 1870s and 1880s, girls born during or after the Civil War were coming of age and were taught that as women were enemy combatants in the war of the 60s, they would be effective participants in the culture war of the 1880s and 1890s.

466 Bradford, Through Some Eventful Years, 268.
The UDC was on the front lines in this culture war, and other southern women were crafting a useful history of “majesty and grandeur” that glossed over the very race hate that drove the Confederacy of the 60s as well as the memorialization movements a generation later. Mildred Lewis Rutherford, as UDC historian, was instrumental in imbuing southern history texts with the “southern version” of history. Rebecca Latimer Felton knew that daughters of the war generation suffered a crippling loss of status as a result of the impoverishment of the war, and she urged them to redeem the travesty of racial equality as “the mothers of coming generations of whites.”

White women across social divides absorbed this ideology and taught it to their children.

Mary Biddle Norcott Bryan kept personal scrapbooks for her children and grandchildren, but also wrote her reminiscences for a wider audience. “A Grandmother’s Recollection of Dixie” was Bryan’s ostensible “token of love” to her “daughters who are my companions. To my sons who are my counsellors, and to my grand-children who are my delight . . .” Bryan was connected to both the UDC through her own membership and to the KKK through her husband’s and sons’ work. She was married to Judge Henry Ravenscroft Bryan and made a two-month bridal tour of the southern states. He was prevented from serving the Confederacy because of an injury, but he was an ardent supporter of secession and the war. Henry Bryan was an attorney in private practice and he defended a large number of leading citizens in Lenoir and Craven counties on trial for alleged Ku Klux Klan offenses in 1868, and was one of the defense lawyers cited for contempt by the Reconstruction Supreme Court of North Carolina. He was later appointed a Superior Court jurist. According to the Lexington, North Carolina newspaper, The Dispatch, in an article entitled, “Down with Lawlessness,” Judge Bryan was a “North Carolinian of the old school.”

Judge Bryan continued to be active in the Democratic Party and received a personal appeal from Furnifold McLendon Simmons, a United States senator from North Carolina who solidified redemption of North Carolina through white supremacy, and called on the Bryans in 1918. In a letter he asked Judge Bryan to mobilize the forces of white supremacy to combat “new conditions.”

468 Rebecca Latimer Felton, “The Industrial School for Girls,” 73, February 18, 1891, galley proof, Felton Papers, UGA.
469 Mary Biddle Norcott Bryan, A Grandmother’s Recollection of Dixie (Owen G. Dunn, printer, New Bern, NC, 1912).
470 The Dispatch, Lexington, NC, March 8, 1905.
471 These “new conditions” might refer to the woman suffrage campaign, as Simmons was a leading opponent of woman suffrage.
I do not doubt either the patriotism or the democracy of our people, but we are confronted by new conditions . . . I wish to suggest that you and other prominent and active Democrats in your community confer and devise ways and means of arousing interest and stimulating the individual to greater effort to bring about party success . . . it is in this spirit of confidence that I write you this personal letter. If the efforts of our part friends at home result in getting the absentee vote, and in getting out the home vote, I have no fear of the result, either for the party or myself.

For her part, Judge Bryan’s wife, Mary, was unabashedly “old school” as well. Her scrapbook contains lists of “Negroes – women” alongside lists of Confederate generals and comments addressed to her children and grandchildren like “I wish I could sufficiently impress upon you the delights of plantation times during slavery. We had a great many Negroes and they were all handled kindly.” In her published reminiscences she wrote to her children, “I grieve that you will never know the tender ties that existed between mistress and servant.” In an example of extreme fanciful thinking, Bryan continued “To the credit of the colored people be it said that during the Civil War, when on plantation after plantation the mansions were occupied only by wives and daughters, not a disloyal act or word ever occurred.” She wanted to relate to her family and to her readers the parts of the Old South that she valued. She missed the huge pots of boiling lard and “and fat smiling mammies with red bandannas on their heads singing sweet old negro melodies, and chopping up sausage meat.” She missed the “careless happy living, without a thought for the future,” that was a direct result of those smiling mammies with red bandanas on their heads. Bryan remembered seeing those mammies’ babies:

How cunning I thought the little darkey babies, what a privilege to sit in old Aunt Rachel's cabin, and rock the cradles - first one and then another; the mothers brought them to be taken care of while they were in the fields. [She also remembered] the cool pleasant lane, in which the little darkies and dogs played, were much more enjoyable than the present-day sports of the negro. Sometimes on the streets now I meet a darkey to whom I have given a name. This very afternoon I had a very gracious bow from "Edward Stanley." I learned to sew by making the babies I had named clothes, and I am not ashamed even now of my sewing.

Mary Bryan left a lasting impression on the slaves on her family’s plantation when she named them, but rued that Negroes had taken up unbecoming sports since slavery’s demise.

472 Mary Bryan scrapbook, Manuscript Collection #1988, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
473 Ibid., 4.
474 Ibid., 11.
475 Ibid., 11-12.
Bryan makes several observations about the negative effects of Emancipation on blacks. Although Bryan took pleasure in terrifying her slave cook, she suggests that living as a slave was preferable to living in the poor house.

Our cook, Rachel, whose equal in preparing savory dishes I have never seen, was fond of imbibing too freely of "mountain rye" at times, and such fun I had in placing a big black doll in the path of the kitchen to hear her clap her hands and cry, "De debil is gwine to git me sho!" Later when the poor old woman was an inmate of the Poor House, I sent her a weekly allowance of coffee and sugar. 476

She was also dismayed at the behavior of blacks when congregated and unsupervised by whites. The following passage is formulaic and worded to provoke indignation in the reader. Bryan carefully juxtaposed the peaceful paternal relationship under slavery with the violation and virtual chaos when the "benevolent institution" was revoked.

When Amy, my black mammy died, I was sent for, and mingled my tears along with the dusky mourners about her coffin. In great contrast indeed, to this one day just after my return home after the close of the war and during that awful reconstruction period, I was walking along quietly on Broad street, when a fat buxom mulatto wench came up to me, and shaking her fist in my face ordered me off the side-walk. I quickly looked up and seeing no white person visible, and the streets full of negroes, as a church had just emptied itself into the streets, I stepped aside into the gutter and went home. I will not tell what I thought on that occasion. 477

“In the dear old Dixie Days,” the Bryans were a prominent North Carolina family who traced back to John R. Bryan, a United States Congressman (1798 – 1801). And although her eight of eleven surviving children went on to prominent careers and successful lives – one son was a physician, one was Justice of the Supreme Court of Maryland, one was twice a member of the General Assembly of Missouri – the Bryans suffered greatly as a result of the war and emancipation. They fled their plantation home of over 4,000 acres, and had trouble finding an upcountry family who would take them in. Their infant son died during their odyssey, and upon their return, they found their plantation was razed to the ground, their orchards destroyed, and their slaves no longer in their charge. But Mary Bryan made a direct connection between the end of the war and the usefulness of race hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan. She remembered

476 Ibid., 13.
477 Ibid., 13.
The after effects were as trying as the war itself, the disgusting Reconstruction period was a disgrace to all concerned. We submitted to the inevitable, the freeing of our slaves, the ruthless destruction of our dearly loved plantations, the pillage of our homes, and then all we asked was to be let alone and rebuild as our judgment told us was for the best. Reconstruction times as you may well know, was trying to men's souls, "getting back into the Union" was a favorite expression, and in some ways these times were worse even than the war.478

With unselfconsciousness she remarks

The Ku Klux organization was a power for good in our land. Their allegiance was to the Caucasian race, and "Mothers and daughters were their patron saints."479

Mary Bryan was related to Confederate General James Johnston Pettigrew, and her scrapbook includes a biographical story of her prominent relative. No doubt influenced by the atmosphere of the Living Lost Cause that the Bryan family attempted to recreate, one of Henry and Mary’s daughters, Mary Shepherd Bryan, was intimately involved with the UDC, and wrote a song in 1904 for a UDC fundraiser which demonstrates the importance of this oral history for the maintenance of the Lost Cause myth.

Our hearts all turn towards the ‘sixties’
And loved ones who are gone,
We will keep the glorious record left us,
Stainless and clear,
The children too will hear the story,
Of the men who knew no fear.

The lines cannot literally mean that Confederate soldiers “had no fear,” nor does the author mean that she literally believes that their “cause is lost forever.”

Al’tho our cause is lost forever,
And the men in gray
Who bought beneath its brilliant colors
Most, have passed away
Yet the Banner[’]s wreathed in glory,
In our hearts t’will stand
An emblem of the Southern story,
T’ill we join the soldier band.

478 Ibid., 34-35.
479 Ibid., 35.
Mary Bryan’s son, Shepherd Bryan, was an attorney in Atlanta in 1893 and was elected president of the Young Men’s Democratic League of Fulton County, Georgia, and, according to a clipping in his mother’s scrapbook “Frater Bryan is a member of many secret orders.”

There is little evidence that UDC women took any action to reduce sectional strife, and many instances where women condone or support the vicious actions of white men against blacks. Southern women raised the men who were night riding and supporting the emergence of a New Klan whose program for hate was even more broad than its predecessor. As the North attempted to put the war behind them and join their fellow Americans toward a national identity and in a common fight for the empire abroad, southerners were participants in a war against blacks on an unprecedented scale. The men in the lynch mobs had no first-hand experience about the war, but they had been raised on the stories of women who were still nursing the wounds that war left.
“There was the glamorous, distant past of our heritage. Besides this, there was the living, pulsing present. Hence, it was by no means our business merely to preserve memories. We must keep inviolate a way of life.”


Southerners have always understood the power of a story and southern women have been dedicated storytellers. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall points out, “We are what we remember, and as memories are reconfigured, identities are redefined.” Whether these stories were “fairy tales” or “true history” is clearly important for historians, but it was the salient fact in the postwar South that women understood their version of history to be true. Women could attend dedication ceremonies, pay dues to a memorial association, or bring flowers to a Confederate cemetery on Memorial Day, but teaching children about the South’s position in the nation required no membership card. Mothers and teachers across the South quietly carried on the cultural inculcation of “southern values” to white women informally, but were informed by the rubric established by women’s organizations like the UDC.

Gloria Steinem stated that “The family is the basic cell of government . . . it is where we are trained to see the sex and race divisions and become callous to injustice even if it is done to ourselves, to accept as biological a full system of authoritarian government.” And in this system, “children are the key to upholding or challenging the social order.” Southern women understood that, in Ownby’s words “in the public arena, conservative movements have historically harnessed the power of the family to serve as the conservatory of conservative – and reactionary – nostalgia.”

Raising her children in the years before the Civil War, Fanny Kemble, unhappy in her marriage to a large slave owner, worried about the effects of slavery on the children who would be masters. She knew that children were deeply impressed by the examples their mothers and fathers set as daily practitioners of white supremacy, and she feared

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her own children might become despots like their father. As a foreigner, Kemble saw that racial
animosity was taught – handed down from parent to child.483

Her daughter, Frances Butler Leigh stayed in the South when her mother left it, and wrote
a repudiation of her mother’s attack on the evils of slavery called Ten Years on a Georgia
Plantation Since the War.484 Kemble correctly perceived that her husband’s influence on her
daughter ran deep. Pierce Butler forbade Kemble’s interaction with the girls, and the youngest
daughter, especially, adopted her fathers’ southern principles. Frances Butler Leigh wrote about
the war’s aftermath,

They have blasted our fields – they have slaughtered our youth,
And dishonored the names of the maids of the South;
But the rivers shall dry, and the mountains be riven,
Ere vengeance be quenched or our wrongs be forgiven.

Kemble and her daughter fought bitterly about the meaning of slavery and the war, so different
were their conceptions of race relations in the South.

In a
chapter entitled, “A Child Inherits a Lost Cause,” in her 1943 book, Making of a Southerner,
writer Katherine Du Pre Lumpkin’s traces her coming of age in the generation of southerners
who learned about southern culture, “learned both behavior and belief at a time when those
around us were peculiarly disturbed,” as she put it.485 Her family was comprised of some of the
most prestigious planters and professionals in the South, and when her family’s circumstances
were reduced after the war, her family still maintained its status in a region where one’s “place”
or pedigree mattered. She learned about the Civil War in which her father served in the waning
campaigns as a fifteen year old private from her father’s stories “which could still fill him with
cold fury, and, beneath that, a smoldering memory of impotence and disgrace.”486 She was
systematically fed the “Big Lie” of the happy slave and Tragic Black Reconstruction even
though her father appeared distressed recounting the stories.

‘Lest we forget,’ he would say to us . . . We were told how our world . . . was ruled by . . .
. . rank outsiders who had come in, so it was said, to feast like harpies upon a prostrate
country, to agitate and use for personal aggrandizement the hapless black man, to dare to
rule in place of the South’s own foremost leaders. And to be ruled by Negroes! Ruled by
black men!

486 Ibid., 73.
The Lumpkin patriarch compensated for his feelings of impotence by joining the Ku Klux Klan and by encouraging the participation of his wife and daughters in memorial pageantry and speech-making. For the Lumpkins, “the Lost Cause became . . . an emblem of intimacy and family love,” and activity that bound them to one another in common cause against a common foe.487

Lumpkin remembers that her childhood was filled with family debate competitions in which they would have to opine about “States Rights” and “Negro Equality.” With her parents’ open approval, she and her friends also formed a children’s Ku Klux Klan with costumes made from old sheets sewn my the children’s mothers, they met secretly to plan “punitive expeditions against mythical recalcitrant Negroes.”488 She understood that her parents were grooming her to be an historian of the Lost Cause, as would be armies of southern children, and she also clearly understood the Lost Cause to be about white supremacy. She recalled, “No lesson of our history was taught us earlier, and none with greater urgency than their either-or terms in which this was couched: ‘Either white supremacy or black domination.’”489

Historians now recognize the inheritance of culture and racial ideology from parents to children. Ted Ownby traces the residue of the racism and exclusion of the 1950s and 1960s efforts at “massive resistance” to the modern reactionary conservative movements of the 1990s.490 Similarly, there is evidence that the efforts of white southern women to reclaim their status through race conservatism were cultivated in the home and gifted as “heritage” to white southern children. It is impossible to measure how much of a child’s racial education is influenced by fathers or by mothers, but white southern women wrote often in journals and diaries about their desire to influence their children’s views on history and on race. In the 1870s and 1880s, white girls born during or just after the Civil War were coming of age and grew up with mothers or other female role models who overwhelmingly accepted the conservative racial ideology that the memorial clubs and memory keepers had upheld in the ideology of the Lost Cause. In the diary of one southern woman born just after the Civil War, Magnolia Wynn LeGuin, this transmission of white culture demonstrates how mothers did participate in

487 Hall, ‘You Must Remember This,’ 456.
489 Ibid., 127-128.
cultivating their children’s white supremacy. Historian Joel Williamson points out that when Rebecca Felton made her call to “lynch a thousand a week” in 1897 “To many southern minds . . . Felton’s words] seemed the gospel truth.” Today, her words seem shocking because our minds are “educated away from this peculiar mode of licensed lawlessness.” But children born in the aftermath of war were trained up to lay their difficulties at the feet of Yankees and blacks, and they were expected to hate.

One poignant example of this training occurred in 1866 when Ella Thomas was on the road to Augusta and she saw a man by the road whom she took for a Yankee. He asked for food and she refused. He then asked for a ride to Augusta, and she again refused, saying about his denial about being a Yankee “let me give you a little advice. If you wish much kindness shown to you don't travel through this portion of the country wearing blue pants. They are not apt to promote charitable feelings towards you.” As she drove on, she realized that her lunch basket on the seat had plenty she could have shared with the man, and the poor man was stunned by the food her children threw on the ground. Thomas remembered how the bitterness of the war had trained her to hate. “It reads like a little thing but it is a part of the religion I have taught our children to dislike the Yankees and were we not drilled in the doctrine ‘that to give aid & comfort to the enemy was treason.’ I am afraid during our four years pupilage some of us learned that doctrine better than that other command, ‘If thy enemy hunger give him bread. If he thirst give him drink.’

Children, especially, drank in the doctrine of hate, and having mastered it, passed it along to their own children in the guise of “heritage” or “true history.” G. Hope Summerell Chamberlain was a correspondent with Spencer and was related to her through the Phillips’ family. She was a lay historian who wrote Old Times in Chapel Hill in 1927. As a student, she had clearly absorbed her parents’ racial values which she delightfully recounted in letters to her mother and father from the Augusta Female Seminary in Staunton, Virginia, near Charlottesville. In the spring of 1882, Chamberlain was twelve years old. She attended a class field trip and wrote about the girls’ behavior:

Some body struck up “John Brown’s Body” at the top of their lungs, and everyone joined in the chorus. [In evere?] leaving off a word at the end each time which makes it very funny. Several of the northern girls struck in to the same tune, “We’ll hang Jeff Davis on a sour apple tree.” Awful taste I think we tried to drown them, but couldn’t, and Hallie Cooper gave a mighty whoop, “we’ll hang all the Yankees on a sour apple tree,” and forty two girls chimed in and just took the roof off the car with the “Glory, Glory, Halleluja,” chorus. Miss Wright came up; and pretended to shake Hallie, who retaliated, and we laughed and laughed at Miss Wright, and she laughed too, and Prof. Murray [fist?] doubled up and howled like it was so funny it hurt him. Somebody yelled, “three cheers for the Democrats,” and we shouted wildly then somebody said “Hurrah for Cleveland” and every body laughed again. Then we struck up Yankee Doodle, and just then the Conductor came in and thought he happened in on a traveling Lunatic Asylum. Well, it was continued to Stanton, and some of the girls said, “You Yankees had better not abuse Jeff Davis down here, or you’ll get set on, and you deserve it.” I was very glad of it, but considered it a crowning joke of the holidays. Jennie H. considers herself deeply offended, and they too have made Hallie mad and so forth. Yankees are so “ornery.” Miss W. has tried to make peace, she thinks it as utterly ridiculous as we do. She is sensible, if she is from N. Y. state. Did you ever?

Chamberlain believed it was her responsibility to help defend the “honor” of Jeff Davis by “drowning” the “ornery” Yankee girls. Her schoolmates were willing to “set on” their adversaries if they continued to malign the South. In the same letter she indicated that in their haste to make the train, the school girls ran “little niggers” off the sidewalk and “into the mud-gutter.” The southern feeling of disdain for both “Yankees” and “niggers” had arrived intact to children born after the war’s end.

Not all southern women were as explicitly political in their feelings about white supremacy. Examining Magnolia Wynn LeGuin’s diary reveals how one woman taught her children about race. Magnolia Wynn Le Guin was a self-described “home-concealed woman,” in the hamlet of Locust Grove, Georgia, in what is now southeastern suburban Atlanta. Born in 1869, she came of age during the racially charged 1880s and kept a diary for twelve years of her married life, detailing her daily rounds as mother to nine children. She did not have the leisure to participate in club work – she never traveled more than five miles from her home – but her private reflection shows how postwar racial hostility was manifest in generations touched only by the war’s aftermath in the form of memories – often preserved by their mothers.

Le Guin was more educated than other agrarian wives, and so her diary is remarkable in several ways. It is punctuated with the frustration white women still felt with the radical racial changes sweeping the South in the first decades of the twentieth century, and it demonstrates

494 Letter to “Papa,” from Hope Chamberlain, dated April 8, 1882 in the Hope Summerell Chamberlain Papers, Duke University, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Durham, NC.
how women taught racial values to their children. There is no evidence of written memories that Magnolia’s mother kept for her, although Magnolia cared for her elderly mother until her death in the home where she was born. Magnolia’s diary is not consumed with remembering the Confederacy, but it is consumed with a struggle for economic and racial dominance, and her frustration with black independence could have been written by any one of the Confederate women mentioned here.

The Le Guin family worked intimately with blacks both inside their house and out, but Magnolia’s temper toward blacks in her community became increasingly strained as economic and social tensions increased. She detailed several unpleasant confrontations with her black washerwomen in the months following the Atlanta washerwoman strike of 1906, and she frequently “reproved” her help and even slapped a young black girl she employed as a domestic. As women in the immediate postwar period asserted their superiority over blacks in their writing, so did Magnolia a generation later. Also reminiscent of women’s response to feeling out of control of blacks after the war, as Magnolia became less able to control her black laborers, her language and behavior toward them became more hostile, and she stopped praying for moderation in her behavior toward blacks.

One diary entry offered an example of how a simple description of an outing could carry clues about power and social conventions. Magnolia was rarely out of her own home, but on this one occasion, she ventured to the churchyard, and was embarrassed to be seen in the company of blacks. She wrote

We (Mattie L., Fred, Travys, Ralph) (Dola, Monk, and Aunt Mary) went up to New Hope Cemetery and planted some shrubbery . . . we had darkies to help us dig and plant and carry shrubbery and children. We met Mr. Sullivan the mail carrier -- and I was real shamed for him to see us with so many negroes.495

Although she could not escape being noticed in and embarrassed by her mixed company, she could later segregate the blacks from whites on paper – permanently – by relegating each group to their own set of parenthesis.

Magnolia’s diary pages show that she differentiated herself from blacks in several ways. All blacks as well as Magnolia’s occasional white help were identified by race. For example, “Aunt Mary (col) helped me plant some shrubbery in the garden this P.M.”496 The label after a person’s name, (col)

495 LeGuin, February 3, 1903, 73.
496 Ibid., Feb. 3, 1903. Some additional examples include: “Jane Miller col. A darkey who had lived a number of years with Papa before I married and since till this year (and who was sort of a “black mammy” for all my children except last one) came to see us this week. Askew, Fred and Travys always though lots of ‘Aunt Jane.’” Aug. 2,
in this example, was a powerful separator. It confirmed that, even on paper, blacks and whites were separate. In one passage, Magnolia made black children “nameless,” effectively stripping them of their identity. When she was tired and exasperated and when she did not get the help she believed she was due, she withheld her acknowledgement of these children by omitting their names.

We saw some little Edna Davis negroes on the bridge and that’s why I crept on so far – thinking, without a doubt, I could get one of them to bring Baby back for me. I asked a little negro to help me bring him back and she impudently refused.\footnote{Ibid., 45, August 7, 1902.}

The young girl refused to carry Magnolia’s baby, and Magnolia refused to recognize her. She was a “little Edna Davis negro” -- she was not even her own person. She was a common weed -- being only one of “some” little Edna Davis negroes. Magnolia seemed to suggest that Edna Davis has too many “little negroes.”

Whatever she thought of Edna or her children, however, it did not prevent her from accepting Edna’s help when she needed it. When Magnolia had to go to Jackson to have some teeth pulled that September, Magnolia’s sister “nursed” Ralph, the baby, while “Edna stayed here to help take care of him.”\footnote{Ibid., 50, September 30, 1902. Her sister may have breastfed the baby in her absence. Later Magnolia records an instance of breastfeeding her sister’s son, but the term “nursing” was also used when men cared for infants.} Magnolia’s husband, Ghu, also hired Edna presumably to work in the mill or in the cotton fields, and she helped Magnolia with Thanksgiving that year.\footnote{Ibid., “November 27, 1902 (Thanksgiving Day) Yesterday I had Edna (a negro woman who lived with Papa this year and one whom Ghu has hired for the coming year to cook dinner for me).” Since Magnolia’s father (“Papa”) was in his eighties and owned the home in which the whole family lived, and if she had “lived with” Papa for a year, it seems unusual that Magnolia rarely mentions her. Her one other mention is the prior September: I think Edna Davis, colored, witnessed the baptism of [Charles Ralph] also 48.} The LeGuin family relied upon black help not because they felt blacks’ performance to be superior to white help or because of a sense of benevolence, but because blacks often did work that whites did not or would not. In a passage on August 31, 1903, she expressed frustration with her hired nurse:

Dola Tarpley, Ralph’s nurse, left yesterday morning. She wasn’t good to mind me and was a little sassy yesterday AM. I slapped her a few times for her wrongdoing and she threatened to go home. I told her to go right away; that I would not object. She was troublesome on some lines, and couldn’t be trusted far. While on other times she did very well. She had been here nearly a year.\footnote{Ibid., 103, August 31, 1903.}
Several aspects of this entry are revealing. This is the first time in which Magnolia records the use of physical reprimand to a non-family member. Also, Magnolia obviously felt her authority threatened with Dola’s willful disobedience and “sassy” response. Although Magnolia stated that she “would not object” to her departure, other diary entries belie this statement. She was indeed very unhappy with the lack of available help. The line that Dola “couldn’t be trusted far” is interesting in light of the charges of theft leveled against two other black women domestics in the home – including the charge that Dola’s mother stole a coat and a pistol.

As a relatively “educated and cultured woman,” Magnolia struggled with the changing race roles in the South. Peeling back the layers of racial hierarchy and oppression after reconstruction in the South rendered the relationship between blacks and whites, employee and employer, new, confusing and complicated. She wrote

I feel very unpleasant tonight. Have felt so all day because I had to reprove a grown negro boy about drinking out of a dipper. It excited me to deal with an impudent negro and I feel as if I had been sick all day. Oh, how excited I become over any impudence from darkies. I treat them all with kindness just as long as they are respectful to me. I never feel right when I get excited and say thro’ excitement as much as I have today. Trust the Foster negro will behave from now on, and that I will not have to reprove but I will reprove if he manifests any impudence toward me. The good ones are where? Scarc to be sure. God forgive me for all I said today that I ought to have left unsaid and give me courage and preserve me calmly to say to the impudent ones what I ought to say.  

It is impossible to tell if she felt “very unpleasant” because what she said was rude to the “Foster negro” or if she was upset because the episode completely upended her understanding of the social order and her world was spinning. She poured out a jumble of emotions that intertwined race, class, gender, and even age with God thrown in to sort the whole mess out.

In this incident, Magnolia boiled over with indignation, but did not lash out with her hand. Dola, however, worked very closely with her employer, both in physically close quarters and in doing tasks that Magnolia did regularly and about which Magnolia had strong opinions. Several explanations of this behavior suggest themselves. Magnolia could have been acting out her long-held belief that as a white woman, she was superior to blacks and by slapping Dola she was helping her learn her “place.” Perhaps she did not feel threatened by a young female who at best could have slapped her back, or perhaps she was having a bout of postpartum despair that caused her to act out in such a way.

Magnolia generally praised those sharecroppers -- black and white -- who shared her property, but when one sharecropper’s wife refused to work in Magnolia’s home, her tone changed entirely.

501 Ibid., 255, December 12, 1906.
A negro named Mandy came up for her breakfast and after milk was so impudent that she wouldn’t sweep dining room and stove room after she got it. I wanted her to iron - she gave me to understand she wouldn’t iron this AM.

Oh, how unsettled, and nettled it made me! How badly I need help the Lord knows, and I asked The Lord to calm my spirit and help me under such provocation to keep calm - preserve me gentle in my commands when darkies are insolent. Oh, how agitated I have become over the impudence of the negroes this morning. Oh, what physical and mental suffering it has caused. Lord help me to be right in Thy sight when the negroes are provoking me. I feel so bad, so hurt and tears spring into my eyes.

I wanted so bad to fix up something for Thanksgiving...Here are a big pile of roughdried clothes for me to iron. Here it is 9:30 o’clock. Here I sit writing, weak, and tears in my eyes. No one to help - lots to do - and I so unable. Lord be with me today. Would that I could see Suse Tarpley today. She has her faults but is kinder to me than any negro on our premises.502

This passage demonstrates Magnolia’s frustration with her circumstances. She felt entirely entitled to Mandy’s labor and when it was denied, she was truly perplexed and hurt. She felt victimized and appealed to God for help, but ultimately, it was Suse Tarpley, her black washerwoman, who could help her get the clothes done. She was stuck in a self-centered spot that was at the same time completely reliant upon and antagonistic toward her black neighbors.

What Mandy did to be considered “impudent” went unrecorded. Magnolia needed help and her only potential source of help flatly refused her. Her frustration was symptomatic of an unfamiliar feeling of lack of power in this relationship. It was probably the exact result that Mandy’s “impudence” was meant to elicit. Her acts of passive resistance or her outright refusal to work outraged Magnolia who, in the above instance, was about seven months pregnant for the fifth time.

In addition to her belief that she held social authority over these women, Magnolia was further insulted by a black woman’s rebuff because she asked these women to help her perform her work, not do it for her. Her health was exceedingly poor from a birth injury sustained after her first baby died, and her constant pregnancies and lactation depleted her strength. Her silent pleas for help sounded almost desperate.

My health is not [good enough], (nor hasn’t been in 8 years) to do all the housework (ironing, sewing, sweeping, cooking) and see after the children without aid. We’ve needed someone but not feeling able financially to hire is one reason we haven’t hired sooner or tried to. Another reason was because we were not in our own home. [She considered the house she lived in to be her parent’s house while they were alive.] I feel that we hardly able to pay her wages, yet I am willing to deny myself of things I can do without, if she will only faithfully do her work. It

502 Ibid., 183, Nov. 29, 1905, the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.
seems if I possibly can get help I must, as household work and care of children has been a burden to my overtaxed body.\textsuperscript{503}

As needy as she was for a spare pair of hands, she resented the unsatisfactory work she often had to accept.

I need help so bad. I need a good negro all the time (if there are any good ones) our washerwoman and her children give me trouble - some clothes missing and some not clean and she owes for things I let her have just to please her (a nice little bonnet that I wanted to keep) and to be good and accommodating to her I let her have it for her to make me four brooms (I furnished the straw) and she to scour 2 water buckets. I asked her twice to scour the buckets last week and no buckets scoured yet.\textsuperscript{504}

Her washerwoman was most frequently Suse Tarpley, whom she once referred to as “kinder to me than any negro on the premises.” Her perception of the \textit{quid pro quo} associated within the terms of “neighborly cooperation” were not understood universally by both Magnolia and her black domestic help as evidenced by such an act of resistance.

Another example of Magnolia’s mixed experiences with her black neighbors took place on a roadside on a trip to McDonough.

On our way to town one of our buggie wheels started to creak and we stopped at an honest darky’s by name of Sandy Gordon, to get him to grease it for us, which he very kindly did and I felt very grateful for his kindness. He was unusually obliging for a darky. I appreciate kind words and acts even from darkies.

This entry highlights the complexity of black-white relationship at this time. Magnolia was clearly grateful for Gordon’s kindness, yet it did not occur to her that her pejorative use of the term “darky” diminished her positive thoughts about his kindness.

Another woman who lived close by LeGuin’s Mill worked for the family long-term as well. Susan Tarpley also remained in favor with Magnolia as long as she was obedient and helpful with household tasks. During Magnolia’s mother’s last illness in 1903, she stayed to provide her with round the clock care. Magnolia reported, “Susan Tarpley has been lots of help to us in waiting on Mama. She thus far has pleased Mama well.”\textsuperscript{505} Susan Tarpley was in the LeGuin home so much that some of the personal relationships became quite close. She and Magnolia’s father became friendly when Susan nursed him through his last painful days.

\textsuperscript{503} Ibid., 27, January 15, 1902.
\textsuperscript{504} Ibid., 178, November 9, 1905.
\textsuperscript{505} Ibid., 84, April 16, 1903.
Papa had been living such a careful life the last years of his life - kind to all - black and white and keeping his conscious clean - watching and praying - keeping his heart void of offense in sight of God and man . . . . He gave Susan Tarpley an almost new coat to wear for a cloak.\(^{506}\)

On his deathbed, Dr. Wynn told Susan goodbye and was holding her hand when he lost consciousness. Susan had witnessed a very intimate moment with Magnolia’s beloved father and Magnolia was understandably grief-stricken. After all, Magnolia did raise her family in his house so she could care for him and his wife in their old age. Perhaps not coincidentally, six weeks later, Magnolia charged Susan Tarpley with stealing a coat and gun:

I had a nervous or wakeful spell and decided I’d rather get up and make a fire and write than to lie in bed 2 hours awake. I too, keep thinking Susan Tarpley Col stealing a coat and pistol when she was here last. I decided to get rid of unpleasant thoughts I would write.\(^{507}\)

One wonders if the coat was the same one that Dr. Wynn had given Susan, and Magnolia, in her distress, resented this gift, or if an opportunistic servant was exploiting the family’s grief. Susan Tarpley, who had been the most frequently relied upon for help in the LeGuin household, was not mentioned again in Magnolia’s diary.

As racial tensions in Georgia increased, so did Magnolia’s desire to distance herself from blacks. Notwithstanding Magnolia’s fondness for particular individuals, racial tensions are increasingly recorded in Magnolia’s writing. By 1909 Magnolia recorded “We do our own washing and a large pile of clothes we do have but Ghu and children help and it is easier with their help than to hire impudent lazy negroes and have badly washed clothing and I thank the Lord for the strength and the help of home folks to wash with.”\(^{508}\)

Le Guin’s children witnessed several of her outbursts and accusations towards her black domestic help, and the children also easily adopted the racial assumptions of their mother. Magnolia described in her diary a “boogey man” game her children played called “Black Man” in which they chanted “What are you going to do when the black man comes?” But perhaps more striking is her acceptance of the racial behavior of her oldest son who traveled from home for the first time in the summer of 1908. Magnolia’s “dear little boy,” fourteen-year-old Askew, took his first trip out of Henry County to the adjoining county and the town of Barnesville to visit a relative. Magnolia wrote “He expects to be gone about a week. How anxious we will all be for a postcard from him,” wrote Magnolia. That Friday, June 26, the postcard came. “We had one card from Askew saying the first thing he did

\(^{506}\) Ibid., 269, February 1, 1907.
\(^{507}\) Ibid., 276, March 17, 1907.
\(^{508}\) Ibid., 310.
after arriving in Barnesville was to knock a little negro down; the little negro asked him if he was a white boy.” Magnolia seemed almost pleased with his assertion of her son’s “coming of age” when his position was challenged, and it causes to remember a ditty she learned as a child. She wrote

So Ghu and I laughed heartily at the first card. I guess the negro said it with impudence, or at least Askew thought so, ‘tho Askew is tolerably dark and there are white negroes in cities. Askew can’t bear “sass” from negroes -- neither can I and my father would not, and did not, bear it. He would do as Askew did first -- “Knock a negro down.” I answered Askew’s card and told him his card reminded me of some lines I read when a child in “Lorenza Don.” These were they:

Where you come from?

Chucker-
lucker town?

Who do you belong to?

Knock a negro down.

I quoted these lines on card to Askew. 510

Clearly this “southern lady” was pleased with her son’s ability to respond as she would have or as her father would have to a challenge from a black boy or man, and she also believed it her responsibility to educate her son to the racial etiquette of the day. 511 It is these very private stories hidden in women’s memory books – journals, diaries, and scrapbooks – that reveal women’s complicity in promoting white supremacy, a central tenet of the southern Lost Cause, and how effective southern white women were in fighting the hidden war of words in an effort to regain white cultural dominance of the South.

509 ibid., 299.
510 Ibid., 300.
511 Laura Edward’s Gendered Strife and Confusion: the Political Culture of Reconstruction illuminates the problem of race and gender tensions in the post-Civil War South. Edwards suggests that the primary cause of race violence and tension was southern gender constructs and the consequent sexual conflict. See “‘Rich Men’ and ‘Cheerful Wives’: Gender Roles in Elite White Households,” 107 - 144.
CONCLUSION

Examining histories written by women – kept in women’s journals and scrapbooks – is more useful for finding women’s role in war and its aftermath than looking to histories written by generals, politicians, and newspapermen. When kept from positions as generals, politicians, and newspapermen, women have used social and cultural means to access influence and power and to protect their economic and social interests. In the case of white southern women, the Civil War was a profound event, changing the way many of these women viewed race and power. Rather than adjust their expectations, however, the devastation the war brought left many southerners bitter and fixated on rebuilding the hierarchy that Union troops tried to destroy. Women’s work in memorial societies and in the home to romanticize the hierarchy served as the scaffolding for re-making the Old South and calling it New. Certainly this idea was more complex than “change without change,” but privileged women rarely saw tremendous advantage in change to the extant hierarchy on which they perched.

It is easier to comprehend conservative women who oppose social and cultural change, and actively work to thwart others’ efforts to raise the bottom sill up when their antecedents are clear. Southern women in the period of social and economic chaos involuntarily forfeited their paradigm of wealth and power, and left a legacy of feeling entitled to privilege and a willingness to work zealously for its return. In the aftermath of sorrow southern women chose to look to the romanticized the past. They chose the life they had been indoctrinated to expect: that white women were privileged by virtue of their sex and race. White men could re-make their privilege through violence and in physical displays of power, and women participated resistance to black progress by crafting a culture of hate in their homes and by endorsing hate through “whitewashing” Confederate memorial work. The efficacy of women’s memory-making can be measured in the race hostility that characterized the behavior of the children and grandchildren of these women for one hundred years after the war was “over” as evidenced by the efforts of southern whites toward “massive resistance” in the 1950s and 1960s.

In his article on the significance of Public History to memory-making, David Glassberg points out that

We can be neither timid nor passive in our advocacy of the notion that an understanding of the past is vital to our ability to reason wisely, that history is an inclusive public process of what will be remembered and what will be forgotten, that in making these choices, we limit or expand future options, that the exposure to diverse points of view
encourages mutual understanding, and that in this process we learn to recognize the
difference between good and evil and between what is beautiful and what is ugly.  

David Glassberg observed that “Historians like to think that we go where the interesting
questions lie. We rarely appreciate that the questions we are most likely to find interesting are
the questions already resonating in the culture that surrounds us.” In the aftermath of the
invasion in Iraq, the political landscape is awash with questions about what the world has sown
in continuing to apply the philosophy of total war to non-combatants. Americans understand that
reconstructing nations after war includes more pressing concerns than re-building infrastructure.
Martin Luther King pointed out during America’s involvement in Vietnam, “We have destroyed
their two most cherished institutions: the family and the village. We have destroyed their land
and their crops. We have corrupted their women and children and killed their men.”

Corrupting the “basic cell of government,” the family, through war has consequences that last for
generations. Sociologists have long understood the ramifications of war and reconstruction for
women in war-torn regions. And historians are looking afresh at what war means for non-
combatants. A good place to start is in the process of re-envisioning the battlefront and
analyzing again the dates that mark “forfeit” in a conflict pitting neighboring groups against one
another.

Southern women were responding to the emotional challenge that defeat of their culture
and thus their racial and economic hierarchy meant. Their response was powerful. The UDC
and public women like Felton responded in an organized, professional manner that exerted
cultural influence from above. Many more southern women, however, engaged in equally
effective memory-making privately, in their homes. They taught their children how to see their
social and political environment, and gave them cues about how they might appropriately
respond to continued pressures on the southern system of power and control. In the martial
south, which women fully supported, a male culture of violence flourished. Southern white
women were particeps criminis, not because of their silence, but because of their deeds that
nurtured a culture of race hate.

In the modern political climate when overt racism is less publicly tolerated, Confederate
memorial groups have made attempts to deflect attention from the connection southern women

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512 David Glassberg. “Public History and the Study of Memory.” *The Public Historian*, Vol. 18, No. 2. (Spring,
1996), 7-23.

513 Martin Luther King, Jr., “Beyond Vietnam,” Address Delivered to the Clergy and Laymen concerned about
Vietnam at Riverside Church, New York City, April 4, 1967.
and men openly and unabashedly made between Confederate hero worship and white supremacy. It is revisionist history in the pejorative sense to suggest that “heritage” groups were not founded upon “hate.” Modern UDC chapters and others who seek to romanticize the Confederate effort by insisting on calling the Civil War “The War Between the States,” for example, are following in the tradition of the first generation of memorialists who fought a still-burning culture war of words and symbols and thereby attempted to “spin” a victory out of defeat.

The Confederate Flag debates that periodically erupt are examples of how viscerally the war continues to touch the cultural consciousness of Americans. In a Raleigh, North Carolina Memorial Day procession on May 10, 1896 members of the Ladies Memorial Association were enraged that the Stars and Stripes were carried by one of the marching units from the Agricultural and Mechanical college, and the president, Mrs. Garland Jones, asked the instructor of the unit, a Naval officer, to carry the Confederate colors instead; he declined. When a photo of both flags appeared in the *News and Observer*, Jones accused the newspaper of “flaunting” the National flag and making “burlesque” of the somber occasion. She threatened to discontinue Memorial Day celebrations rather than risk “such wanton violations of the sacred day.”

Over a hundred years later, the conversation continues about the memory of the Confederate position in the Civil War, with a similar level of distress about what message these symbols have for posterity. United States Senator, Carol Mosley Braun, said on the Senate floor in 1993 regarding Senator Jesse Helms’ effort to renew the United Daughters of the Confederacy’s patent on their organization’s symbol – the Confederate Flag: “that in spite of the fact that we have made strides forward, the fact of the matter is that there are those who would keep us slipping back into the darkness of division, into the snake pit of racial hatred, or racial antagonism and of support for symbols - symbols of the struggle to keep African-Americans, Americans of American descent, in bondage.” Mosley Braun understood how important the physical symbols of memory continue to be in re-enforcing or reforming the hierarchy of race in America.

The women of the UDC continue to wage war over the cultural landscape in America as in the 2002 lawsuit in which the Tennessee United Daughters of the Confederacy sued Vanderbilt University to block the removal of the name “Confederate Memorial Hall” from a building. The UDC funded the construction of this University building as a dormitory in 1932

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with its own funds, and when the University found the term “Confederate” offensive, it sought to sandblast off the offending moniker. Critics charged that “erasing” history was hardly a solid strategy for promoting diversity, and, ultimately, the UDC won their suit on appeal. The subject of keeping or jettisoning the name of this building continues to engender a great deal of emotional debate, as it reflects the power inherent in language, physical space, and memory.

Confederate memory remains an exciting topic for both academic historians and “home historians.” New York Times Bestseller, *The Widow of the South*, romanticizes the horror of a Confederate rout at Franklin, Tennessee during which the Carnton Plantation and its mistress were called into service for the wounded and dying men. Carrie McGavock was pulled from her laudanum habit rooted in grief and despair for the death of her children by mourning the battle dead in her yard. She literally “found a cause” when her property became the largest private military cemetery in the United States. Oscar Wilde called her “Widow McGavock, the high priestess of the temple of dead boys,” for her habit of perpetual mourning and zealous keeping of a “Book of the Dead.” Her character seems to have to objective other than to pour her personal suffering into a representative of all women bereft of a loved one to war. The significance of the best-selling popularity of women’s grief in war, however, points to the power of massive killings and civil strife on a nation’s psyche.

Modern total war is designed specifically to break a nation’s psyche. The aftermath of hate, coupled with the technology to visit utter destruction on a people for their principles can have a galvanizing effect thereby breeding, not understanding of the flaws of the defeated ideology, but a hatred for the invading party who demands fealty. This strategy of dominance has consequences beyond physical reconstruction of a nation’s ruins. Scholars are acknowledging both the role of trauma on entire cultures as well as the power of women to transmit culture efficiently and emotionally through generations.

[^516]: http://www.tsc.state.tn.us/OPINIONS/TCA/PDF/052/UDCOPN.pdf
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Karen Rubin graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Oklahoma and began her graduate studies concurrently with motherhood, which reinforced her interest in women’s history. While studying at Florida State University, Karen collected a houseful of children.