"A VICTORIOUS STRUGGLE:" CONFEDERATE WOMEN WRITERS COMMEMORATE THE CIVIL WAR, 1860-1945

A Thesis

by

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This thesis meets the standards for scope and quality of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and is hereby approved.

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ABSTRACT

The American Civil War was the most life-altering event in history. The entire country was thrust into the chaos and mayhem of this tragic conflict, but no one felt the turmoil of war more than those whose families, homes, and communities were destroyed. Hundreds of thousands of men joined the Confederate States Army (CSA) in defense of their traditions, liberties, and economic system. Women, too, joined in the fight to preserve southern heritage, with many female writers taking great care to celebrate their sacrifices and devotion to the Confederate cause.

Following the war, southern women entered yet another time of great anxiety and unrest as Reconstruction tossed the defeated region into a state of confusion. As northern interest in southern society waned and abruptly ended in 1877, white southerners, who sought to reclaim their homeland, publicly acted to recover what was lost in the war and engaged in memorialization and commemorative practices. Some women joined the ranks of ladies' organizations, such as the Ladies' Memorial Associations of the South and the United Daughters of the Confederacy. These women raised monuments to mark the battlefields that peppered the southern landscape and funds to recover the bodies of the Confederacy's sons and bury them with dignity in proper military cemeteries. This study, however, showcases the female writers of the war. Their recordings, recollections, and reminisces allowed them to consciously enter the public reclamation movement of the postwar years.

This essay chronologically follows two distinct shifts that occurred in Civil War memory. The first chapter emphasizes the work of other historians on the topic and provides context for the reader. It explains why these wartime women recorded their experiences and examines the

events and trends that they felt compelled to include in their writings. The second chapter explores the documents of authors written between 1860-1865 which remain unpublished. Unlike the women of the next chapter, they did not publicize their writings and, thus, were unfiltered or unaltered by any third parties. The third chapter uncovers the first shift in memory, where the witnesses of war began to give their testimonials to the reading masses from 1865-1895. This is indicative of a much larger social and cultural transition as white southerners turned their gaze toward the reclamation of their homeland. The final chapter outlines a second major transfer of Civil War memory from 1895-1945. A generational exchange of memory occurred, as children born after 1865 were sculpted by their parents' and grandparents' wartime experiences. This was an affirmation of southern survival, and the transference of their cultural identity in the new era continued their dedication to the preservation of white southern beliefs, traditions, heritage, and history.

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Chapter 1

Confederate Women Writers of War: A Historiography

After the Civil War, the act of commemoration in the South was also an act of preservation. Four years of violence and destruction destroyed the political and socioeconomic structures of the slave-holding states, and tore from them their source of labor, wealth, and power. Whether to leave a legacy for their children, to vent their frustrations, or to convey their own rendition of the war, white southerners worked to memorialize this time in American history. The writings of elite white Confederate women give evidence to how one group of these commemorators attempted to preserve *their* war story, and with it, their antebellum history and heritage. The diarists and authors who rushed their written works to the presses sought to construct war memory, and to reclaim their homeland and communities. These women pushed beyond the boundaries of honoring those lost in military conflict and emphasized *women's* experience on the home front. Their writings transformed collective civilian memory in and of the region, and led to the creation of a unique social and cultural identity immersed in Confederate glory. Their beliefs were ensconced in the region's ideals of dutiful sacrifice, war heroism, and faith in the sentiments and the lore of Lost Cause mythology. The Lost Cause—the southern belief in a righteous war against the tyranny of a central government in which Confederate defeat was due to the numerical superiority of their Yankee opponents—hinged on notions of nostalgia for power structures of the Old South. This effort was meant to reconcile their defeat and reclaim power for white southerners. Confederate women writers joined in the postwar reclamation movement by releasing their memoirs and letters to the reading public. The

meaning of their memories, the purpose they served after 1865, gives evidence to a larger shift in the region's social and cultural structures in the postwar era.

Historians give ample attention to Ladies Memorial Associations (LMAS) and the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) which worked diligently after 1865 to preserve the dignity of their defeated nation and of the war dead. Much of the southern landscape was marked by battle and bloodshed, violence and death. The LMAS and the UDC sought to reclaim the region by paying homage to what was lost. They erected monuments on the fields where more than a half a million men perished. They recovered the corpses of thousands of Confederate soldiers and laid them to rest in memorial cemeteries that they helped to create after the war. They joined their veteran counterparts and the Sons of the Confederacy in the public, political fight for memory after the war. Their contribution to the commemoration of the South is well documented and deserved, but the sociocultural power at stake also enticed literary-minded women who did not belong to the LMAS and the UDC. These women, who chronicled the war as they experienced it, gained passage into the reclamation movement through their publications, through relinquishing their "private" narratives to publishers as well as readers at home and abroad. In the act of publicizing their innermost thoughts and emotions, a shift in Civil War memory occurred. In retelling their war experiences, they worked to *dis*-member their war past and reassemble it, or *re*-member a slightly skewed version of it for future generations. This

process of nostalgic distortion enabled them to implant their narratives in not only southerners' memory of the war but also in the nation's collective Civil War history.[1]

Civil conflict, political upheaval, and the disruption of economic power left many white southerners in a state of disorder following Appomattox. Radical Reconstruction, meant to reform the South by fundamentally changing the region's political and economic structures, threatened to transform the postbellum world. Four years of terror was over but provided, as Richard Gray argues, a war "past to be mythologized … ready to be used as a means of understanding and evaluating the present." Southerners and northerners alike pursued the opportunity to retell the Civil War. As early as the mid-twentieth-century, scholars such as W. Cash and C. Vann Woodward began to question the myth of a resurgence in antebellum cultural and societal structures. Arguing that the glorification of the Old South was but an invention of the New, both Cash and Woodward emphasize the region's fixation on the reclamation of power in an uncertain world without slavery. In other words, the myth of a romanticized Confederate tragedy, illustrated in countless fictional works printed after the war, was promoted by those who sought to recapture their antebellum world, a space where white elites held the social, political, and economic power. It allowed white southerners a chance to reclaim shreds of their past and include them in the present, postbellum world. Residual sentiments of racial, social, and economic hierarchies before the war influenced the South's memory of the conflict as they idealized a more genteel time before Republican aggression. Fitzhugh Brundage argues that this

[1] Tanfer Emin Tunc, "We're What We Are Because of the Past: History, Memory, Nostalgia, and Identity in Walter Sullivan's *The Long, Long Love*," *American Studies in Scandinavia* 46, no. 2 (2014): 21.

process of memory-making allowed those who wrote about and commemorated the war's history to claim power and status in challenging times.[2]

Michael Kammen pushes Woodward and Cash's assertion further by stating the country became "a land of the past, a culture with a discernable memory." Kammen labels "tradition" as the cultural formation of memory and claims that from 1870-1915 antebellum tradition transformed visions of a reconstructed South because many sought to restore and direct memory of the war's public past. To Kammen, white southerners gained new social power by policing the past, controlling how it was remembered and memorialized. Women were no exception. In fact, many white southern women assumed charge and directed the Confederate commemoration movement. Ladies' Memorial Associations and the United Daughters of the Confederacy are but two examples of elite white women's attempt to regulate southern Civil War memory. Indeed, Woodward posits that only when the UDC organized on the steps of "the capital of the New South, Atlanta" in 1895, did "the cult of the Lost Cause" assume its popularity.[3]

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[2] Richard Gray, *The Literature of Memory: Modern Writers of the American South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 38; W. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Knopf, 1941), 112; C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 155-157; Fitzhugh W. Brundage, *Where Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 115-139.

[3] Michael Kammen, *The Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 7.

Contemporary historians such as Karen Cox, Gaines Foster, and Caroline Janney also include the work of women's associations in their interpretation of Civil War memory. The "mourning activities" of women, Janney reasons, were a "political response to Reconstruction" and at the forefront of the commemoration movement. Middle class and elite white women across the South entered into the political realm with more authority than at any time previously. They worked to erect monuments, exhume and bury the Confederate dead, and organize veterans' reunions and memorial celebrations. Foster adds that memorial activities "helped the South assimilate the fact of defeat without repudiating the defeated." Women led and participated in such activities and played a critical role in constructing Confederate Civil War memorialization. As Cox concludes, "their efforts to memorialize men became an important source of their own social power." Indirectly, meaning without direct political participation through the vote, ex-Confederate women gained political and social power as a result of their contributions to commemoration practices after the war.

Complicating the traditional gendered narrative—elite white women commemorating men lost in battle and those who survived to tell their war tales—of this history, this study offers another lens through which to analyze and study the cultural phenomena of the Lost Cause. It focuses on a different form of memorialization written by the elite women of the Confederacy. Once read, their words shaped how southerners and northerners alike envisioned the antebellum South and the war in a postbellum world. Ladies Memorial Associations and other organizations that sprang into action after 1865 contributed to the memorialization of Confederate *men* and the sacrifices made in battle during the war. Foster poignantly explains, southerners "reveled in its heroes of the war" and Confederate soldiers' tales of survival were the dominant fixture of

southern organizational attention. Yet, in stark contrast, literary women of the South often focused on women's efforts and their understanding of defeat on the home front.[4]

Women writers indeed transformed the history of the Civil War as they sought to memorialize the experience of civilians on the home front. In "The Lost Cause and the Meaning of History," Grace Elizabeth Hale argues, "The Civil War draws more unprofessionals into the project of making history than any other event in the U.S. past … Amateurs—including members of Confederate organizations like the United Daughters of the Confederacy, filmmakers, and novelists—have arguably played a more important role than professional historians in crafting this history." Hale places writers on the same plane as women's organizations, arguing that these "amateur" revisionists of the Civil War crafted how future generations would remember and historicize the event. Like the women of LMAS and the UDC, elite women writers inserted themselves in the commemoration process. In doing so, they did not memorialize what was lost as those organizations had, but grasped onto what was preserved: their heritage, ideals, beliefs, and values. Jeffery Lee Meriwether uses the term "cultural capital" to explain this phenomenon of continuation and argues it "derives from those who steer the historical conversation." Accordingly, Confederate women writers shifted the historical narrative by including *their*

[4] Karen Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1962), 21; 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), 45, 182; Caroline Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 5.

experience and *their* war service. It fundamentally shaped who they were and how they understood both their past and present, and their accounts did much the same for the postwar world.[5]

More recently, scholars such as Sarah H. Gardner and Kimberly Harrison have skillfully engaged in the work of elite white Confederate women writers. While both agree that these women consciously sought to direct Civil War memory through their writing, their approach differs as Gardner stretches her study beyond 1865 to include Reconstruction. In doing so, she uncovers how the mythology of the Lost Cause transformed Confederate narratives of the war itself. Gardner goes on to explain that "southern white women," in particular, "did not entrust even their own menfolk with the telling of the war." Elite white women were pitted in a state of nostalgic longing as many ex-Confederate writers sought to understand the recent war and called to imaginings of a harmonious antebellum southern paradise, one of grandeur before northern aggression. To Gardner, the defeated South wanted to ensure the victors did not monopolize on the memory and history of the Civil War. Whilst surviving men of the Confederacy recovered from four years of horrific warfare, elite women led the charge in the battle for memory.[6]

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[5] Grace Elizabeth Hale, "The Lost Cause and the Meaning of History," *OAH Magazine of History* 27, no. 1 (2013): 13-17; Jeffery Lee Meriwether and Laura Mattoon D'Amore, *We Are What We Remember: The American Past Through Commemoration* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), xiii.

[6] Sarah H. Gardner, *Blood & Irony: Southern White Women's Narratives of the Civil War, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 4-6, 31, 243.

Unlike Gardner, Kimberly Harrison includes only diaries written during the war. As such, she examines the ways in which elite southern women interjected their newfound roles within communities after 1865 into their recollections of the war years. However, the author challenges traditional stereotypes of Confederate women, said to be "shrewishly patriotic," and contends that their rhetorical choices exuded prideful notions of "southernhood" and southern antebellum tradition. Carefully scrutinizing the rhetorical choices elite women writers made in their personal entries during the war, Harrison believes their nationalistic discourse only amplified as they now had cause to portray themselves in public as the protectors of the southern home front, of southern tradition and as outspoken patriots of the Confederacy. For instance, in the writings about northern occupation Harrison evidences women's illustrations of defiance and resistance to Union troops in their diaries. By taking over their homes—the domestic space in which *they* held some notion of power—Yankee soldiers violated their realm and, as the author asserts, prompted women to revise the rules of etiquette and openly express their disdain toward the soldiers. Harrison's study is a fascinating approach to examining elite Confederate women's diaries but her argument that once the war ended, these writers' role as nationalists ended as well, is not quite accurate. Women engaged in nationalistic rhetoric well beyond the war's end and played a significant role in the spread of Lost Cause sentiments through publications of recollections and reminisces well into the twentieth century.[7]

Postwar orations and rituals grounded in commemorating the war were also based in memorializing and reinstating antebellum social and cultural structures in the postbellum South.

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[7] Kimberly Harrison, *The Rhetoric of Rebel Women: Civil War Diaries and Confederate Persuasion* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013), 19, 39, 77.

W. Stuart Towns argues, "the defeated region's leadership had many tasks to perform, but chief among them was the need to help the mass of southern whites see and understand a meaning behind the defeat of war, to see a reason for the sacrifice and the struggle." It was important for a "consistent story" to be told on Memorial or Decoration Days, at monument unveilings and dedications, and at reenactments of Confederate victories. Towns urges that "ceremonial oratory," also "created, shaped, and sustained the memories of the Lost Cause" and that leading orators—white, elite ex-Confederate men—strove to reaffirm a racialized and patriarchal postbellum society. The defeated South had a new war to wage over the postwar Lost Cause culture. It revolved around reverencing and memorializing the glories of the antebellum years. White southerners bonded over their past heritage and traditions, their shared memories of what once was and what they hoped could be and, in their minds, should be again. For Towns, and many other historians that find organizational actions and rituals crucial in understanding the political and social atmosphere of the time, words spoken at commemorative events had a direct effect on how future generations interpreted Civil War history. Like the orators of Towns' work, the writers and diarists of this study were equally persuaded by and reverberated Lost Cause sentiments. Therefore, they too had a critical role in shaping how southerners before and after the turn of the twentieth century assimilated to the ideals of victory in defeat.[8]

In the atmosphere of heightened nostalgia for the postwar years, most white southerners worked to reinstate their place in postbellum society. Nghana Lewis gauges how fictional writings of several "modern" southern women related to the "myth of White Southern

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[8] W. Stuart Towns, *Enduring Legacy: Rhetoric and Ritual of the Lost Cause* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 5-7, 243.

Womanhood and Plantation Mythology." More so than Gardner, Harrison, or Towns, Lewis contends that writers sought to steer war memory in an effort to claim a sense of social and cultural power, including traditional standards of racialized superiority over non-white populations. Lewis also asserts that women writers, in particular, worked to "profit in the economy of southern ideology" that erupted after the war's end. Their writings appealed to the region's readers by consciously drawing from southern mythology, showcasing the wartime plight of white civilians. They sought to profit—not so much monetarily but socially—off of the retelling of their experience on the home front, as the guardians of the South, its heritage, traditions, values, and social structures. Lewis goes on to claim that the plantation, both as a literal and after the war's end an imagined space of power, is intricately woven into the social and cultural fabric of the South. Elite white women's writings show their investment in continuing the racial and economic hierarchies of the past. Although focusing on only five female authors, Lewis's contribution to the study of white women's agency as memory makers after the war is beneficial to this study because she reaffirms that these women knowingly directed, and therefore sought to control nostalgia for a world now destroyed by four years of war.[9]

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[9] Nghana Tamu Lewis, *Entitled to the Pedestal: Place, Race, and Progress in White Southern Women's Writing, 1920-1945* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2007), vii, 5. For an additional source on Civil War romanticism, the Lost Cause, and women authors see Sharon Talley, *Southern Women Novelists and the Civil War: Trauma and Collective Memory in the American Literary Tradition since 1861* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2014). Talley's work is a valuable addition to the study of death and trauma as illustrated in fictional

Many whites also asserted their regional identity. As northern antagonism mounted and antebellum sentiments of paternalistic stewardship over slaves flourished, notions of race and racial hierarchy in the South intensified. This added substantial weight to the region's social and political way of thinking. Southern whiteness—intricately tied to racist and classist beliefs of the gentry, slaveholding class—allowed Confederates a way to exude their nationalistic fervor. Grace Elizabeth Hale again aids this study with her foundational work on postwar notions of southern whiteness. She claims that after the war's end in 1865, "some southerners created common whiteness to solve the problems of the post-Civil War era" and goes on to argue that "Americans of both regions shattered the old hierarchal structures of power, imagined as organic and divinely inspired, and used the fragments to erect more binary orderings, imagined as natural and physically grounded." Even though those "old" structures of power were seemingly broken by Confederate defeat, white superiority in every aspect of the postwar South continued to exist in a distorted form, under the guise of economic and political reformation. Many white southerners recreated the New South's social, political, and economic structures and reclaimed not only their racial authority but their regional authority as well. Belief in the land of Dixie

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accounts of the Civil War. She carefully traces the works of key southern women writers from 1861 to the present, analyzing each author while outlining the evolution of Civil War memory. Emphasizing the chapters that deal with writers during the war and the Reconstruction generation, this study is benefited by Talley's literary emphasis on the crucial role of women's writing in the commemoration and remembrance of the Civil War after the war's end.

remained in the minds of ex-Confederates, and sentiments of a heritage defined by war evolved.[10]

Southern whites sought to recuperate their agrarian economic system. Agriculture had been the mainstay of the southern economy before the war and would continue in the years following. But in order to regain economic, and thus, political power, southern whites would have to keep pace with the industrialized North. This would prove difficult as their access to investment capital and willingness to change antiquated farming techniques and modernize their means of production were largely outpaced by their northern counterparts. James McPherson's *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* offers a lengthy synthesis of the Republican Party's enthusiasm for modernization in the United States, which he argues intensified the divide between the northern and southern states. To be clear, McPherson places slavery as the cause of the war. However, in the last quarter of his study, McPherson contends that the radical Republicans push to reform the South was not only brought on by the issue of slavery but also by the fundamental differences between two competing economic systems. His work is helpful in understanding how modernization affected both pre-and postwar southerners whose lives were dependent upon the region's agricultural production. The author urges that Republican, in the end, achieved their main objective both economically and politically by forcing the Confederacy to adhere to modernization through war and Reconstruction. Even the new racial policies of radicals in Congress—enacted by the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments—attempted to push the lower states into accepting a reformed, modernized society. Yet, as the nation divested its time,

[10] Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), 5-7.

money, and energies away from reformation and toward progress in the post-Reconstruction years, southern whites reclaimed their legal dominance with the watershed *Plessy v. Ferguson* case in 1896.[11]

Postwar publications by Confederate women are, while important in understanding southern civilians' experiences on the home front, complicated because of possible editorial intervention. A famous example of this is of Mary Boykin Chesnut. Chesnut was the epitome of the romanticized southern belle: grandchild of a large plantation owner in Sumter County, South Carolina, daughter of a U.S. Senator, eventual wife of a state representative and Confederate general, and well-connected to notable people in the upper echelons of the Confederacy. She recorded her experiences in the South and continued to write in the postwar years, mostly from memory. In 1881, Chesnut gathered her wartime writings and began to piece together the final form of her manuscript. Her unfinished book *Diary of Dixie* was edited and released in 1905, almost twenty years after her death, and again in 1949. The first publication omitted almost half of her memories, and in the latter over one hundred thousand words were cut. Other publications thereafter also took liberties and altered Chesnut's work. But in 1981, C. Vann Woodward used her final 1884 version to meticulously compare it to early and late publications. In *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, Woodward takes note of Chesnut's edits during the postwar years. He argues, however, that regardless of this, she did not revise fiction but, instead, rewrote the events

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[11] James McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2001). For more on how modernization affected every-day life of farmers in the postwar era see David Blanke, *Sowing the American Dream: How Consumer Culture Took Root in the Rural Midwest* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000).

in her diary as she remembered them. Woodward goes on to explain that "Chesnut can be said to have shown an unusual sense of responsibility toward the history she records" and should be "remembered for the vivid picture she left of a society in the throes of its life-and-death struggle, its moment of high drama in world history." Although Woodward's interpretation of Chesnut's writing is sometimes called into question—for instance his assertion that Chesnut was an abolitionist or militant feminist—his publication offers, as Faust urges, "a complete version of the revised journal" because it, indeed, illustrates her understanding of southern society and proves Confederate women's postwar writings as a valuable source in the history of this era. Chesnut's 1884 diary shows how literary women also sought southern reclamation after the war and saw their stories as an avenue to which they could reinstate their place in the New South.[12]

By understanding why Confederate women writers entered the battle for Civil War memory, it is crucial to also acknowledge the experiences they found worth telling. Bell Irvin Wiley's foundational work, *Confederate Women,* highlights the writings of three prevalent women: Chesnut; Virginia "Alabama Belle" Tunstall Clay; and Varina Howell Davis, "First Lady of the Confederacy." Wiley's research serves as a template for historians who analyze the diaries and personal correspondences of Confederate women. Contending that southern women left numerous records of their experiences in abundant detail and represented a "distinct type of Confederate womanhood," Wiley identifies significant communal bonds forged by war that brought many together under one cause, and against one enemy. Those experiencing suffering

[12] Mary Boykin Miller Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, ed. Comer Vann Woodward (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), xxvii-xxix; Drew Gilpin Faust, "In Search of the Real Mary Chesnut," *Reviews in American History* 10, no. 1 (1982): 55.

and loss did so as a community. Wiley later examines poor white and slave women. In doing so, he offers a broad assessment that highlights the class and racial diversity of southern women.[13]

Multiple studies on Confederate women and southern identity by Drew Gilpin Faust also contribute greatly to this history. In *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South*, Faust uses women's writings to showcase a sense of commonality brought on by the shared hardships of war that created a unique national identity amongst most southerners. In addition, Faust's influential article, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narratives of War," shines further light onto the effects of war on elite Southern women as revealed through their personal writings. While men were at war, Confederate women writers claimed to be the preservers of the home front, protectors of southern social order, and the spiritual, ethical, and patriotic leaders of the region. Many white women willingly accepted and even embraced this role. As Faust insists, a southern "woman's role was not simply to make sacrifices herself but also to celebrate and sanctify the martyrdom of others." Elizabeth Moss's work compliments Faust's, contending that unlike the female reformers of the North, female novelists used their writings to assert the dominant, widely patriarchal, values of antebellum society. The author challenges traditional narratives of southern

[13] Bell Irvin Wiley, *Confederate Women* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1975), xii. For Wiley's contributions to Civil War military history see Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1943); Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank, The Common Soldier of the Union* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1952); Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Road to Appomattox* (New York: Atheneum, 1956); and Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Common Soldier of the Civil War* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1958).

women's strain against the yoke of their fathers and husbands by pointing out that many women did not write of their oppression but embraced their duties as mother, daughter, community member, and the high status of plantation mistress. In doing so, Moss emphasizes their defense of the "peculiar institution" to themselves and their readers.[14]

Faust's most notable contribution to the study of elite southern women's identity is her 1996 classic *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*, which discusses the ways in which these women became commemorators of war memory. Letters, journals, published songs, novels, and poetry flowed from the pens of white women living in the Confederate states. These women, Faust contends, "could invent new lives and could imagine new selves, new identities, and new meanings" through their writings within a disturbing and challenging reality of wartime loss and Reconstruction. Faust's women had much to lose. Yet, elite slaveholding women sometimes placed traditional gendered ideology above victory on the battlefield. Faust points out this interchange in several ways. She discusses how some upper-class women refused to become war nurses because it was demeaning to interact with common soldiers. Faust adds, "Resistance to nursing as indelicate—it did after all involve some level of intimacy with male bodies, often those of the 'degraded' classes—persisted." Furthermore, the author examines how elite women resisted the role of slave master in the

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[14] Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 6; Drew Gilpin Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narratives of War," *Journal of American History* 76, no. 4 (March 1990): 1216; Elizabeth Moss, *Domestic Novels in the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

absence of men. Within a system ensconced in paternalistic ethos, Faust argues that slaveholding women found it difficult to maintain the South's commitment to slavery, that "no gendered code of honor celebrated women's physical power or dominance." As the death toll continued to rise, elite white women were increasingly unwilling to support the Confederate cause to maintain their "peculiar institution." Faust contends that southern women were more willing to lose the war than to lose their loved ones. Thus, she challenges narratives of Confederate women's homogenous support of the war and points to the variations within their writings.[15]

The complexities of elite women's wartime identity presented by Faust become even more tangled by the hundreds of thousands of wartime deaths. Understanding the traumas of conflict and death is imperative to the present study. Faust's *The Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* discusses how the "work of dying" effected every person during the time. She argues that the "Good Death"—one where the dying is surrounded by loved ones and is able to convey their last words and wishes—was impossible on the battlefield. As the war's carnage mounted, elite women grew reluctant to continue to sacrifice their men and homes. Memorialization of the Confederate dead grew out of this tragedy and women, in particular, worked to commemorate their fallen in new ways by writing, erecting monuments, and creating museums in their honor. As they did so, Faust insists that Confederate women created a collective memory of the South's Civil War. Female authors played a significant part in the

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[15] Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 178, 92, 63-64, 239.

region's memorialization movement as they, too, sought to defend the old views of the "Good Death" as part of a lost and glorious South through their writings.[16]

In an effort to fully understand the ways in which Confederate women writers shaped Southern identity during the Civil War, it is important to grasp how the experiences of southern women differed on the home front. Elite women fared best. Stephanie McCurry's *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* argues that middle to lower class soldiers' sacrifice for a slave-based economy not only divided sentiments on the battlefield but also those at home. Soldiers' wives were now a group all their own, teetering between worlds of traditional domesticity and a new one as public and governmental servants who sacrificed a part of their family for an institution of slavery most southerners did not participate in. The meat of McCurry's argument centers around the low income "soldiers' wives" who became heads of household when their husbands left to fight in the slaveholders' war. Often missing from the bulk of women's Civil War narratives, these women make up a majority of the South's female population and often protested when the newly formed Confederate government was not quick enough to adhere to their demands. Like a great ocean wave, these women unleashed their fury in Richmond's bread riots in 1863, which forced the government to change its policies and divert supplies from the battlefield to the home front. McCurry's emphasis on the influence of lower class women during war is crucial in this study because it further sheds light on a complex and

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[16] Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), xviii, 249.

heterogeneous society in the South which, as the author argues, bled into social structures after the war.[17]

Elite women dominated narratives that memorialized and commemorated Confederate Civil War history, and Faust and McCurry both highlight the tensions within their ranks. McCurry emphasizes the ways in which Confederate women differed, even in their support or distaste for the southern cause. Faust contends that despite these subtle inconsistencies, elite white women dominated and even "invented" the Civil War narrative in the South. Like Faust,

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[17] Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 17, 135. To strangle the Confederacy at its' core and decimate moral by attacking their enemy's home, Union troops had seized control of ports on Virginia's coastline and cut off trade routes to the state's inland capitol. By 1863, Richmond was short on food and to make matters worse, President Jefferson Davis called for the nation to spend the entire day of March 27 fasting and in prayer for the cause. Days later, Southern working class women stormed the capitol demanding audience with Virginia's governor, John Letcher. When Letcher refused, word spread throughout the hungry city and hundreds of women made their way to the capital. The large mob then traveled to the market district, looting and destroying much in their path. They not only gained the attention of Letcher but also President Davis, who tried to appease the women but to no avail. For more scholarship on the subject see Alan Pell Crawford, "Richmond's Bread Riot," *American History* 37, no. 2 (June 2002): 20; Emory Thomas, "To Feed the Citizens: Welfare in Wartime Richmond, 1861-1865," *Virginia Cavalcade* 22, no. 2 (1972): 22-29; and Stephanie McCurry, 'Bread or Blood!,' *Civil War Times* 50, no. 3 (June 2011): 36-41.

McCurry continues to explain the effects of war and the new reality of a Lost Cause in southern society and illustrates how trauma and death shaped the region, as revealed by Confederate publications after 1865. Collectively, as these authors have shown, southerners did not encounter the war in the same fashion. Most did not suffer from Sherman's wrath and a large number of Confederate soldiers, although forever changed by the horrors of their experience, returned home.

The work of these scholars shows that Confederate women created and shaped Civil War memory in the South not only through organizing veterans' events, erecting statues, and curating museums, but also through the act of writing. Whether they wrote for future generations, for themselves, or for the South, these commemorators of the war left a lasting legacy that remains evident in much of the region. The study of Civil War memory creation—how people interpreted their past and in what manner that interpretation then shaped behavior in their present—allows historians a glimpse into understanding the ways in which history unfolded through the generations after the conflict's end. It offers insight into how certain portions of the southern population understood their Civil War experience and, in turn, how it transformed their ideals of post-war southern society and identity. Many historians engage in the history of Confederate women guiding Civil War memory after the war, emphasizing the work of memorial associations and the UDC. Yet, the work of Confederate women writers is also crucial to the study of Civil War memory. Through their works, they, in essence, transformed antebellum southern identity into one that supplanted Reconstruction. Their New South was shaped by the Old. The cultural and social histories of the conflict in the Confederate states were dismantled, or *dis*-membered. and then reformed, or *re*-membered, by women writers.

This study moves chronologically, covering first the untouched documents written by elite women, preserved by their families, and donated to archives for future study. Chapter two includes the personal correspondences of two women on the Texas frontier whose experiences were unlike diarists in states to the east. It also discusses several unpublished memoirs and collections of letters. The chapter explores these private works thematically, identifying commonalities in their writing. It describes how fear, death, and destruction wrought by war affected their daily lives and how these women found solace in their communal kinship in the war effort, sewing uniforms and sending care packages to soldiers. Occupation by Union troops also dominated their war accounts, and illustrations of hostile military presence in their communities peppered their written accounts. The war changed the region's landscape and prompted women to write of their homes and communities before the war. In this way, Confederate diarists included sentiments of remembrance for their antebellum past, nostalgia which promoted a strong sense of nationalistic fervor for the rebel cause.

The next chapter examines recollections and reminisces of the conflict that were published between 1865 and the turn of the twentieth century. These authors revealed their war memories during the reclamation movement, an era in which southern whites sought to reconcile their defeat. The warstory of the "southern belle" was of special interest in the postwar years. Many thought their recollections on the home front intriguing, and offer glimpses into the private thoughts and inklings of these "damsels" trying to survive under the weight of war and hardship. This often led to a romanticized view of them and their war stories. Furthermore, it was an acceptable means of communication for Confederate women, who by this time were seen as the "true" keepers, the civilian survivors of the war. They also discuss how they viewed death and destruction brought on by warfare, Union occupation, their wartime duties, the southern

landscape (both physically and symbolically) which was changed forever by battle, and their belief in a righteous Confederate cause. There are subtle, yet relevant, changes in these authors' rhetoric that differ from the writings discussed in the previous chapter as Lost Cause sentiments were rife throughout the region by this time and elite women's publications showcased the resurgence of Confederate pride and longings for antebellum power structures. Where death and destruction were the most prominent features of early war diaries and correspondences, this group of writers focused more on sentiments of southern will and resolve. Memories of great tragedy were often turned on end, followed by passages that point to how women responded to death and destruction with accounts of their bravery and fortitude. It is here that the shift in meaning occurs, where the diaries of the war years became narratives of postwar recollections. Details of civilian life on the home front, given by those who witnessed this great event first-hand, transformed into their testimonials, their recorded memory of the war.

Moving into the twentieth century, this study ends by highlighting the final shift in wartime memory. By this time, Reconstruction of the southern states had ended as the nation looked to create an illustrious empire within its borders and abroad. The region, traditionally shaped by its agrarian economic system, moved to modernize antiquated modes of agricultural production. In effect, there was a sentiment of nostalgia in the writings of this period, a longing for traditions and power structures of the antebellum era. Thus, Confederate women introduced their war narratives with histories of their family, informing the reader of their southern heritage, an effort to ensure the integrity and authenticity of their tale that also speaks to their yearning to reclaim the prewar past. They also wrote of a genteel land before the war, and hoped to pass on their memories to the next generation of white southerners. Once the children of the postwar era began to publicize their mother's writings, the final transference or shift in war memory

occurred. Confederate women writers affirmed their place and their experiences into the annals of southern Civil War history.

Chapter 2
Witnesses of War: 1860-1865

Thirteen days before the presidential election of 1860, Sarah Wadley wrote from Vicksburg, Mississippi, "There is great excitement here concerning the coming election … I shudder to contemplate a civil war." Living in Amite City, Louisiana and privileged to travel during the summer of that tumultuous year, Wadley, like so many other elites in the South, believed that her family's way of life was threatened if Abraham Lincoln were elected. Southerners would go to war if abolitionists were successful. She bitterly noted, "the Union is but a name, there is no concord, no real heart [in the] Union any longer." At fifteen, this young southern belle realized the looming danger ahead and less than two months after she recorded this impending crisis, South Carolina seceded from the Union and set into motion four years of violence, mayhem, and chaos that resulted in the deaths of close to three quarters of a million American men. Sarah Wadley's experiences were shared by many southern women. With little hope of changing public notions toward the emerging conflict, their diaries, letters, and other writings served as an avenue in which they could privately cope with the turmoil that surrounded them.[18]

With Lincoln's election, southern angst and anger boiled in the region and only intensified when war began in April 1861. As Drew Gilpin Faust and others demonstrates, there

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[18] Sarah Lois Wadley, October 26, 1860, Private Journal of Sarah L. Wadley; From my Father, Louisiana 1859, 1258, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill Digital Collections, accessed January 3, 2017, http://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/wadley/wadley.html; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 5.

was a mounting sense of crisis amongst southern women as they became increasingly preoccupied with public affairs such as politics and military movements. Their engrossment in such subjects remained a fixture of emphasis in diaries throughout the war. “Better far for us would be civil war,” Sarah Wadley fumed, “than this dreadful incubus which hangs over us now this continual wrangling and bitter malediction with which we are persecuted.” To her, this “incubus,” this demon, a seducer which lays upon its prey, was the North. In anger, she aligned this mythological creature, said to bring destruction and death to those it encounters, to her countrymen who she saw as countrymen no more. To give substance to the myth and thus the importance of Wadley’s seething comparison, a mid-century painting of this monstrous creature featured a winged, devilish brute with a torch in one hand and a dagger in the other. On the bed below him, lying in a pose of agony, a half-clad Anglo woman tries to turn away from her destruction but to no avail. At the foot of the bed, an animalistic black beast (symbolizing the result of Lincoln’s election and southerners’ fear of slave insurrection caused by northern interference) with fangs that creep from behind the woman to touch her bare thigh (signifying the imminent threat that male slaves posed to the purity of white women and the South). A telling and grisly depiction, it sheds light on southerners’ feelings toward their enemy and the terror felt after the election of Lincoln. Wadley and others saw the antebellum South, and its political and socioeconomic institutions that gave white elites inherent power, as fatally threatened by unjust northern aggression. Wadley did not share this fiery rhetoric but kept it private in the pages of

her diary. It is safe to assume, however, that such conversation was common on the streets, in the pews, and around the dinner tables throughout the region.[19]

This chapter traces the lives of seven Confederate women who recorded their unedited and unpublished wartime experiences. It is categorized by three distinct topics to which the authors aimed their attention. The first highlights diarists' emphasis on the chaos of war, the cruelties of the conflict and Union occupation, which further spurned southern hatred for the North. Second, female writers responded to the turmoil that surrounded them. Some turned to their faith, whereas others chose to invest themselves in the war effort. Women stressed their fears in an ill-equipped Confederate army, seen to be no match against the much larger, industrialized northern states, which prompted them to write of their own involvement in the war effort to aid their men, whether it be through prayer or through wartime activities. Lastly, they emphasized their admiration of southern resolve and the resilience of their communities. The authors' experiences differed depending on where they resided; either west of the Appalachians on the western front or in the east, where devastation to property and the loss of their massive slave labor force were more widespread.

What started as a journal to chronicle her travels in the fall of 1859, Sarah Wadley's war diary extended into the summer months of 1865 as she felt compelled to record the chaos that ensued. In the first three months of writing, she described the journey she took with her aunt and uncle across fifteen states and Canada. The excursion took her from the deep South, beginning in

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[19] Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 10; Wadley, October 26 1860; Charles Walker, *The Encyclopedia of Secret Knowledge* (New York: Vintage/Ebury, 1995), 37. The painting, titled "Incubus," is featured in Walker's book as part of his study on occult history.

Louisiana then to Mississippi and, on her way home through the Carolinas, Georgia, and Alabama. She traveled through abolitionist strongholds like Illinois, Massachusetts, and New York. She visited family in the northeast, and was joined by her fraternal grandmother for the duration of her travels. The matriarch of the family, after living her entire life in New York City, decided to move south to be with family in Louisiana. Almost a year after her trek through the eastern half of United States, civil war was in the offing. On October 26, 1860 Wadley wrote, "Abolitionists have sowed the seeds of dissension and insurrection among us, those seeds are fast ripening and a blood harvest seems impending; they have burnt our homesteads, killed our citizens, and incited our servants to poision us, think they that we will submit to continual disturbances, oft repeated wrongs, much longer, no!…We can no longer claim them as brothers." Tyranny and treachery felt by southerners of planter and middle-classes were echoed by this young teen. As one New Orleans newspaper proclaimed on election day, "The news of the success of a party hostile in its attitude, not only to the South, but to every principle of honest constitutional construction, has been attended with the certain assurance of its impotence for evil." The election was the catalyst upon which most southerners drew the line, and six states, including Wadley's Louisiana, quickly followed South Carolina's lead to secede from the Union.[20]

Like Wadley, Tennessee native Alice Williamson was a teen when the fighting broke out and she bore witness to the onslaught of this conflict. She, too, lived on the western front. Born in a small town along the banks of the Cumberland River in Gallatin, Williamson recorded

[20] Wadley, October 26, 1860; "The Result," *The Daily Picayune*, November 8, 1860, sec. News/Opinion, New Orleans, Louisiana, America's Historical Newspapers, p. 1.

conditions of occupation under Union General Eleazer A. Paine. Gallatin was the seat of Sumner County, from which some three thousand men joined Confederate service during the war, almost the whole of the white male population there. For the Union, Gallatin was a crucial central railway hub that would connect Yankee troops to railways throughout the region. Paine was given specific orders to hold the town's rail and maintain order over the civilian population. The general was known for his ruthless behavior toward civilians in occupied territories, and Williamson's depictions of events from February to September of 1864 illustrate his rule. Initially concerned that she had neglected the opportunity to record *her* experience with Union troops, she penned, "What a negligent creature I am I should have been keeping a journal all this time to show to my rebel brothers." She wanted to ensure that her brothers away at war knew that she, too, was in a struggle with "heartless Yankees" like Paine. "I suppose he has killed every rebel in twenty miles and burned every town," she wrote. Williamson then described the execution of a soldier who returned from his service in the army. He had taken the "Amnesty Oath," which protected returning rebel soldiers from punishment if they pledged their allegiance to the United States and swore not to return to the Confederacy. Williamson wrote that only days after his arrival to Gallatin, "Our king" and his men took him from his home to a field a half-mile away, shot him six times, and, to ensure his death, a fatal seventh time in the head. March 11 she recorded, "I learned 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." Mr. Dalton's son was one of five killed just days after Paine was named commander of the District of West Kentucky. Writing of her wartime

experience, Wadley shows how the cruelties of war often overcame the lives of Confederate women.[21]

In the days that followed, Williamson recorded the killing of almost a dozen others that took place in and around Gallatin. She described how "Yankee" soldiers walked prisoners miles into the countryside. They would stop and sit to rest but demand the guilty remain standing. She was told how the soldiers taunted the victim before the execution, "I will have his boots." One sixteen year old suspected of being a would be rebel was arrested and killed in this manner, "never heard of since." On another occasion, she wrote of Paine's soldiers "chasing the fox with fresh horses." The prisoner was saddled on an old, worn out horse and told that he was free to

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[21] Edwin Ferguson, *Sumner County, Tennessee in the Civil War* (Tompkinsville; Monroe County Press, 1972), 36; Alice Williamson, March 11, 1864, Diary of Alice Williamson, in the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University, accessed November 12, 2016, http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/scriptorium/williamson/text.html. Paine's actions eventually gained the attention of an official Congressional inquiry into his activities in Paducah, Kentucky. He was found guilty for his misdeeds and rumored killing of sixty-seven people, both soldier and civilian, within just over fifty days there. He was also charged with unlawful confiscation of civilians' furniture and living materials which he used to adorn his dwelling in Gallatin. For more on General Paine and Paducah's war past see Halbert Eleazer Paine, *Wisconsin Yankee in Confederate Bayou Country: The Civil War Reminiscences of a Union General*, ed. Samuel C. Hyde Jr. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009); and Jacob F. Lee, "Unionism, Emancipation, and the Origins of Kentucky Confederate Identity," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, 41, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 102-104.

leave. After a short head start, Union men hunted him down and made sport of his execution. On two occasions, the author recorded that northern women joined the trailing posse to watch the chase and brutal killings. On days there was no bloodshed, she wrote, "Well, well, was ever such a time seen before since E.A. Payne has been here, they have neither burned any houses or killed anybody in three whol days." She continued a week later, "Remarkably quiet: no murdering for several days." For Williamson, violence and chaos from the war reached beyond the fields of battle but came into her homeland, into her community.[22]

Union troops occupied only small portions of the South, but the impact of their presence could be overwhelming. Williamson added in June 1865, "The country is overrun with Yanks: they are camped in the woods in front of us and have already paid us several visits killed sheep, goats and chickens Our new yankees are very neighborly. They come over to see us every few minutes in the day. Some came today and demanded their dinner at two o'clock but did not get it. They went off cursing us for being d__n rebels." Like Williamson, Frances Woolfolk Wallace also experienced general Paine's wrath. When the general's troops entered Paducah, Kentucky, Wallace and her family fled to Louisville. Her husband, Phillip Wallace joined, the Confederate Army only days into the war, rising to the rank of major in 1864. She, too, witnessed and recorded the desolation left by Paine's men. "Oh the desolation—beautiful plantations laid

[22] Williamson, April 15 – April 28, 1864. On inquiry into General Paine as leader of the District in West Kentucky see Allen Anthony, "Kentucky Bend: The Lock That Had to be Released," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 77, no. 2 (April 1979): 108-111, and Patricia C. Click, "Shifting Loyalties: The Union Occupation of Eastern North Carolina," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 109, no. 3/4, (Summer/Autumn 2011): 490-492.

waste—where we are staying they were worth one million of dollars & now she is using pewter spoons for which she paid 50 cents," she complained on April 20, 1864. "The Federals took silver, furniture, everything but house and left her without even a mouthful of food for her children … oh! what a scene of desolation and destruction … nothing left but the brick chimneys and the ruins." Wallace recorded the desecration of three Paducah plantations within four miles of the city limits. Each family estate was systematically burned, and the slaves "left to their own amusements" once freed. Only days after she wrote of the destruction of neighboring plantations, she recorded that General Ulysses S. Grant banished her family from Kentucky and ordered them to settle in Canada. Wallace and her infant son escaped in the night, and settled in Memphis, Tennessee for only a time before landing further south in Tuskegee, Alabama. The home she had known was but a distant memory, a lost relic of a past life, and was burned just days after her getaway.[23]

Accounts of anger and mayhem that were written within the pages of Sarah Wadley's diary, and of the cruelties of war showcased by Alice Williamson and Frances Wallace, show the chaos brought by Northern occupation. Anger and angst turned to rage as these women witnessed their lives being torn from them. Women like Wadley, Williamson, and Wallace found refuge in their writings, in the private pages of their daily memories. Their country was a dismantled, destructed mess, and so were their lives. As the war progressed, these women writers clearly felt the tensions and unabated disasters of this conflict.

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[23] Frances Woolfolk Wallace, April 10, 1864, Diary of Frances Woolfolk Wallace: March 19 – August 25, 1864, 3063, in the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, accessed January 11, 2017, http://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/wallace/wallace.html.

Women took on a public role by assisting in the wartime effort. Following the initial shock and horror—the realization that one's family is under great threat—the war became a permanent fixture of southern women's day to day accounts. Women responded to their desperate situations in various ways. Some, like Mary Jeffreys Bethell, whose husband and sons joined the fighting, turned to their faith to overcome the burdens of war. Others, like Caroline Sedberry, whose husband left their farm in Texas to join the Confederate service, dedicated their day to day activities to the duties of home, taking on the role of both master and mistress. In addition to sacrificing their families for the cause, Sarah Wadley, Frances Wallace, and Anita Withers also aided the war effort. They hoped to help their fighting men, which they felt were ill-equipped to go into battle with Union soldiers. Tales of their civic involvement in the war effort indicates a trend as Confederate women began to take more public roles in southern wartime society.

From Rockingham County, North Carolina, mother of nine and the wife of a captain, Mary Jeffreys Bethell wrote just days after her husband and two eldest sons left for military service. Devastation came not only as "another bloody battle" threatened her small community in eastern North Carolina but also when she came to experience the pains of the Union blockade. "War is a terrible calamity," she urged, "Our country is gloomy…I am encouraged to ask God for grace, that he may bless my children in battle." In addition to fearing for her sons' safety, now Bethell faced the uncertainty of sustenance. "If the War continues much longer it will be a gloomy state of things, I'm afraid we will suffer this winter. We cannot get any coffee without giving a very high price, salt is very scarce and high price…it is a very cold winter, we will suffer." Continuing Christmas day, Bethell predicted the hardships that lay ahead. She, her family, and her community were besieged. She penned,

> How different this Christmas from last, now our Country is filled with armies to defend our country from the Northern army, many bloody battles have been fought, hundreds have been killed on both sides, and a great many have died in the camp from disease and want of attention while sick. It is sad to contemplate…My neighbors are all in distress. The South will be over-run by the enemy…An awful time is before us. Oh! Lord have mercy upon us.

Desperation and despair was a common theme in this author's entries. The likelihood of her sons returning unscathed and her home remaining intact declined as the war progressed. She witnessed her life, one that ensured her security and safety, diminish with each passing day and as war continued, so did her distress.[24]

Bethell's two sons, William and George, and husband, joined the cause shortly after the firing on Fort Sumter. William (Willie) had been a volunteer in the North Carolinia militia before the war came to Rockingham County but the youngest of the eldest sons, George, had planned to attend college at the first of March. Instead, he joined the Confederate army. George's action, Bethell explained, "makes tears flow from my eyes to think of it … I feel very solemn today thinking about the war, I hope God will give me grace to bear all the trials that are coming upon me, it is my fervent prayer that God will convert all of my children, and take them to Heaven when they die. Oh Lord have mercy upon us all." In later entries, the author eludes to Willie's being saved through baptism as the protection needed for battle but makes no reference to George having "professed his faith in Christ." Her worry only increased after George reenlisted to serve another year in the conflict. She was consumed by her son's movements, recording

[24] Mary Jeffreys Bethell, April 29 1861 – May 10, 1862, Mary Jeffreys Bethell Diary: January 1, 1861 – Dec. 1865, 1737, in the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, accessed December 21, 2016, http://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/bethell/bethell.html.

every bit of information from the frontlines. After hearing of a battle in which George may have fought, she earnestly prayed for God's protection for him and guidance of faith for herself. On the tear-stained page of March 10, 1862 she cried, "Our happy and peaceful Country laid in desolation and ruins … it makes my heart sad to think of the time when my son will march to the battle field and be exposed to the balls and fire of the Enemy, but I have prayed to God to cover his head in the day of battle, and that his life may be spared if it is his will." Bethell was sacrificing her family for the cause, for the common-good of her country, but was conflicted in giving a part of herself to be "exposed to the … fire of the Enemy." The misery of knowing a loved one was in danger was yet another burden left on the shoulders of Confederate women.[25]

From her home near Meridian, Texas, Caroline Sedberry exchanged letters with her husband, William, from the beginning of the war until his death in January 1863. In May 1862 Mrs. Sedberry urged, "Oh it is awful to think of being deprived of everything that is near and

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[25] Bethell, February 29,1861. Bethell's sons were stationed for a while in 1861 in the same regiment in Suffolk, Virginia. They survived the first and second battles at Manassas. There were a few casualties amongst Bethell's church community, two sons from one family died in the second battle in 1862. Upon hearing of these deaths, Bethell was distraught for several weeks and recorded a prayer almost daily for her sons' safety. She wrote the most consistent entries from March 1861 to June 1862, with every entry there was several devotional lines praising God for his comfort. Whether it be a mother's instinct or some other form of spiritual superstition, Bethell's worry for George's safety did not go unwarranted. He would later be captured at Gettysburg in July 1863 and remained a prisoner of war at Johnson's Island on Lake Erie in Ohio until Lee's surrender.

dear to us on earth and then have our homes taken from us and our little farms that look so beautiful laid waste. The thought is almost intolerable but I sincerely hope and pray that you will all be spared to get home safe and that you will be able to keep them [the Yankees] out of our country." Mrs. Sedberry longed for her husband's return but understood the sacrifice needed for "our country"—*their* country—and their antebellum way of life to remain protected. Her son Summer enlisted at the time of his father and her other son Merritt wished to follow suit. Sedberry relayed his sentiments to her husband, "I had rather Merritt would stay at home and go to school but he wants to go so bad…I asked him the other night if he had ever thought of the seriousneys of battle and what he was going to fight for. He readily spoke and said yes'm for liberty and my country." Merritt enlisted in the Confederate army but not long after, he became ill and returned home in the winter of 1862. Sedberry's letter to her husband gives further evidence of her resignation of family sacrifice to the war. "I think is will be sometime before he is able to do duty," she explained, "but he seems so anxious to serve his country that I can't insist much on his staying at home and if he can do any good I am perfectly willing for him to go. Anything to lighten your burden and end the war and I think the more that are in the service the lighter it will be on those that are in and the quicker we will have peace." Tragically, peace would not come to her "Mountain Home" along Meridian Creek as William perished after a short illness on New Year's 1863. Sedberry did not consciously work to create war memory. Yet, her letters gave insight into the ways in which civilians living in the western regions of the South experienced the war.[26]

[26] Caroline Sedberry to William Sedberry, May 15, 1862, box 7, folder 1.17, item 86, Dan E. Kilgore Collection – Sedberry Papers, Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi Bell

Trends appear as female writers recorded hardships of their lives. Some, like Bethell, prayed to God and thrust their faith in his deliverance of those who perished in battle. Others, like Sarah Wadley, were angered and focused instead on the state of the Confederacy, how many soldiers often died needlessly due to the government's lack of preparedness for such a drawn-out conflict. In late March 1863, Wadley's father was in Vicksburg, Mississippi trying desperately to escape "Yankee" occupation. Some thirty days later, Union troops began their siege of Vicksburg. She wrote,

> The poor soldiers in Vicksburg are suffering very much for want of food, their bread is little better than pounded corn and their meat they will not eat, it is beef and nothing but gristle. Oh! how my heart bleeds for them, and it might all have been averted if proper steps had been taken a month ago. I feel so utterly powerless to

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Library, Corpus Christi, TX (hereafter cited as Sedberry Papers); ibid., December 29, 1861, folder 1.9, item 39; ibid., June 17, 1862, folder 1.19, item 70. In many of the letters to her husband, Caroline Sedberry informed him of the day to day occurrences on the farm. A most fascinating aspect of Mrs. Sedberry's correspondences with her husband is how unsure, and even fearful, she was of conducting business traditionally prescribed to William Sedberry. At times, she asked her husband if she did something correctly, even the seemingly menial task of sowing crops in a certain field worried her. Sedberry often conveyed her wish that her husband would come home not only to be free from the dangers of war but also to relieve her of these unwomanly duties. For more on frontier women of Texas during the Civil War and the life of Caroline Sedberry see Dorothy Ewing, "Caroline Sedberry, Politician's Wife: An Ordinary Woman in Extraordinary Times," in *Women in Civil War Texas: Diversity and Dissidence in the Trans-Mississipi*, eds. Deborah M. Liles and Angela Boswell (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2016).

> do anything for them, but if I can do nothing else, I can bear without murmuring the great trial, of my Father's absence.

The "proper steps" to which Wadley was referring blamed her new nation's inability to protect their own men, much less citizens on the home front, from the might of the Union army. Fear and confusion, the ultimate shared experience on the southern home front, affected the daily lives of the region's citizens. Even though not all the South experienced Union occupation, the narrative of those who did significantly influenced the overall depiction of the home front during the war. Faust argues that Confederate women found commonality amongst one another because they were tied by the reality "that their husbands or sons were three times more likely to die as were their Northern counterparts." Yet, it was what came after in their writings that intrigues this study—women's response to chaos, destruction, and an ill-equipped Confederate States Army. For Wadley and others on the western front, the needs of their people and their soldiers and consumed much of their daily lives, thus their daily writings.[27]

Frances Wallace is another example of how women wrote of their efforts to support the ill-equipped men of the Confederacy. From sewing shirts and pantaloons, to sending care-packages and other hearted necessities, to holding devotionals with family members and raising money for the sick and wounded, southern women went to work for the war effort. In summer 1864, Wallace recorded the desolation she had seen as she and her infant son moved from Kentucky to Tennessee, and later as she took part in a revival missionary that took her from Louisiana to Alabama, then to Georgia and back. Along the journey, she busily worked sewing and "cutting out shirts and some clothing" for her husband, Phil, and the sick and wounded at

[27] Drew Gilpin Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and Narratives of War," *Journal of American History* 6, no. 4 (March 1990): 1201; Wadley, March 30, 1863.

Camp Watts, placed near the Tennessee/Alabama state line. Days upon her return to Nashville, she relayed that she and her husband were asked to sing at a benefit for those at the Camp at the Baptist College where they sang and raised over three-hundred dollars for their men. She wrote of one benefactor, in particular, who became a widow after the Battle of Gettysburg and wanted to "give what the Yanks hadn't taken" to the cause. Some women gave not only their time and energies to the war effort, but also saw it their duty to give their men to the cause and take on the responsibilities of the home front. They stepped outside of the traditional gendered boundaries of the home and were thrust into the public affairs of men.[28]

Some historians question whether women remained in favor of the war, recording instances of women's refusal to engage in efforts that would put them in contact with common soldiers such as nursing and hospital volunteerism. Overwhelmingly, one could argue, many women seemed more inclined to participate in activities that allowed them to be amongst other women of their station in wartime efforts. For Anita Dywer Withers, time spent to "nit socks for soldiers" was a fine alternative to nursing the sick and wounded on the battlefield. Withers, a Richmond native who moved to San Antonio with her husband in the 1840s to settle and farm the vast, fertile soil of this newly acquired frontier wilderness, often visited her home state of Virginia to escape harsh conditions of Texas. Her war journal began six months before Lincoln's election but there was little to no mention of it or the war until almost a year later when she reported the death of a soldier from the community. Her husband, a veteran of the Mexican-American War, was her "Captain" and joined the ranks of thousands of other Texans in March 1861. Like so many other Confederate women, Withers' contribution often involved sewing for

[28] Wallace, June 10, 1864.

the soldiers, work which allowed her to stay within the confines of her community. She felt most comfortable being amongst others of a like mind who, too, felt the need to be a part of this communal undertaking. Once her husband left for war, she had found refuge with her family in Virginia and spent her time at her mother's friend and neighbor's house. "Mrs. Nelson" gave Withers the yarn needed to sew and she would go "in the mornings," spending "at least three hours" there and every time she was sure to "bring [her] knitting for the soldiers." It is safe to assume that a large portion of women from Southern white communities joined in the endeavors of publicly supporting the Confederate cause in this fashion. Such memory of their war efforts forged communal bonds amongst southern women on the home front.[29]

Letters exchanged between loved ones shed further light on just how common Southern women's engagement in the war effort became. Just miles from Chickamauga in Dalton, Georgia, Louise (Lou) England described to her sister, Ann England Le Grand, in Texas, "You talk of hard times in Texas. Sister you don't know nothing unless you was to live awhile with Yankees." Words written between sisters of a family at the forefront of this great dispute indicate an abrupt change in their daily lives. She then continued, "There is a great amount of work going on here, none such as making keepsakes and boxes and all. Such as that myself, Mollie and Fima, are all in town making coats and pants for the soldiers. There is many to be made." Mary (Mollie) and Fatima (Fima) informed Ann of their war activities but Lou, the youngest of six, designated the most time in her portion of the letter to explain the families' civil engagements in

[29] Anita Dwyer Withers, August 26, 1861, "Diary of Anita Dwyer Withers, 1860-1865," 1746-Z, in the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, accessed December 11, 2016, http://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/withers/withers.html.

supporting the cause. She spoke of her brothers, Otis and Jo, who were soldiers in the Confederate army and wrote of her mother's difficulties with knowing two of her children were in constant danger even as she held on to the vision of victory for the South. "Ma believes and hopes that the boys will be spared and come home again sometime … everyone has to sacrifice." Lou pointed to the things which shaped her every day existence in war-torn, rural Georgia, revealing her effort to inform her older sister of the hardships they endured during the conflict.[30]

In late spring 1864, from Resaca, Gorden County, Georgia, Lou England wrote to her sister Ann, "I tell you they never left us as much as you could carry on your back. Only our household things. They never left anything outside the house but one old hen and rooster and one calf they did not happen to find." Lou made sure to emphasize her family's plight. Only being left two chickens and "one calf they did not happen to find," Lou continued her tale. "We had mighty good horses and plenty stock of one kind and another but we lost it all. We all work hard and got a start again ... Everyone in the county has had to live very hard." She added, "The country is so tornup that nobody could live here that was not used to it but after a while times will be better." Here, one can start to see a rising tone of resilience in women's writings, one of resolve and hope. England showed a glimmer of optimism, of a certain determination that "times will be better." A new duty, one that showcased how women felt the need to restore order to the

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[30] Louise England to Ann England Le Grand, November 25, 1861, June 19, 1864, Ann England Le Grand Papers, 1864-1924, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin (hereafter cited as Le Grand Papers). In a letter written later to Ann England Le Grande in the summer of 1866, Lou reveals that both England sons survived the war, were married, and resided in Resaca, Gorden County, Georgia.

South. Her faith and conviction that the southern people would overcome this hardship and survive the defeat of their nation would be an important aspect of diaries released in the postwar era.[31]

The women of the wartime South felt compelled by their chaotic reality to support their ill-equipped men by any and every means possible. Whether it be through prayer and private daily devotionals in support of their fighting men or through active participation in the war effort, they did not remain idle. In an effort to overcome the confusion caused by the onslaught of death, violence, and occupation, women sought to regain a sense of order and were forced into greater public involvement for their survival. Here, a shift occurred, where Confederate women's duty was no longer confined to the private sphere, as their men were away at war, but expanded outside the bounds of their homes because the world they relied on for security was collapsing around them. Similarly, women of the postwar years would use their wartime experiences as an entrance into the public realm of sociopolitical and cultural reclamation under the new pressures of Reconstruction.

Lastly, southern women writers also focused on their communities, how their neighbors and friends dealt with the afflictions of war on the home front. For instance, after word of a deadly battle, some, as noted previously, devoted their time to prayer and sought refuge in their faith. Others took time to record their hope for their people, how although these trials might be cumbersome and at times even hopeless, southerners would withstand the test of this conflict because of their conviction in the cause. They believed that they were justified in their war

[31] Lou England to Ann England Le Grand, June 19, 1864, box 2E356, folder 1, Le Grand Papers.

against northern tyranny, against a government whose main purpose was perceived to have been rooted in a fight for political and economic power and dominance. The rhetoric of resilience became more apparent as the war dragged on. Four years of civil conflict tore the South apart, but with it came an undercurrent of increased emphasis on southern survival.

Wendy Kurant, Lee Ann Whites, and other historians have explored the new sociocultural roles southern women played during the war. It became tradition that they were believed to be “the uber-loyal keepers of the ‘true’ Confederate spirit” because they were seen “as the representatives of the home [front].” As Whites asserts, “The connection just became more pronounced in the South, where social upheaval ‘reinforced [women's] role as the guardians of the home and of Southern traditions.” This was the case for women on both the western and eastern fronts. In the west, southern women like Alice Williamson wrote of her communities’ resolve under General Paine’s rule. She recorded after hearing of Paine’s arrest in Peducah, Kentucky on September 22 1864, “The noblehearted patriots who suffered here will never be cared for [except] by those at home whom their wrongs have made desolate.” Those who perished in Gallatin, Tennessee were forgotten by Union government but not by the local population, which held on to the memory of the “noblehearted patriots.” Williamson would not let the deaths of her Confederates go unnoticed, or unwritten. It was important to her to record her experiences. Either as a cathartic way to cope with the Paine’s brutality or to record the events that occurred in Peducah, she felt it compelled to write, to remember.[32]

[32] Wendy Kurant, “The Making of Buck Preston: Mary Boykin Chesnut, Women, and the Confederate Memorial Movement,” *Southern Quarterly*, 46, no 4 (Summer 2009): 47; LeeAnn

Fanny Wallace wrote of her faith and of her sacrifices for the cause. She escaped her former trials under Union occupation by moving to Tuskegee, Alabama. Her husband, Captain Phil Wallace, was on the front lines and she was left alone with their infant son, Georgie. Tuskegee was a place seemingly untouched by war. In 1864, Wallace attended July 4th "exercises" and wrote of how "the streets were thronged with pedestrians and carriages…As I looked around I thought how little this looked like war." She added, "The Confederate flag was waved with a very appropriate speech … and drums were beat … Altogether is was a beautiful sight. The ladies were beautifully dressed, some elegantly … I think the Southern ladies dress more in taste than any people I ever know." Wallace was in awe of how "unscathed" Tuskegee was, how locals seemed unmoved by the bloody conflict that *she* narrowly escaped when she fled Kentucky. She was relieved that not all of the South had been laid in desolation, that semblances of proper decorum survived and continued regardless of the turmoil surrounding them. The next day, she praised the generosity of the community, which raised over one thousand dollars for the sick and wounded at Camp Watts. This was followed up by several lines that described how Phil was requested to sing "Brave Boys" to conclude the wonderful night, a testament to their devotion to the men of the Confederacy and to the cause.[33]

On the eastern front, women, too, remained dedicated to their cause and country. Unlike Wallace in Tuskegee, Mary Bethell lived in eastern North Carolina. With two soldier sons off fighting in the war, one of whom would be captured at Gettysburg and imprisoned in Ohio for

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Whites, *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender: Augusta, Georgia, 1860-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 168; Williamson, September 22 1864.

[33] Wallace, July 5, 1864.

the duration of the war, she also found solace and resilience in prayer. Upon hearing rumors that twelve thousand Confederates perished in battle while fighting in Williamsburg, Virginia. In 1862 she wrote, "Dear Willie, he was in the battle, his company suffered, was cut up. Oh my Heavenly Father, help to bear this great trial." Days later she continued, "There has been another bloody battle near Richmond, between our army and the Enemy, 'tis said that the Lord enabled us to overcome the enemy this time … I have faith in God to believe that [Willie] is safe. I feel like the Lord will help him, and save him … from the cruel hands of our enemy." To her, both the South and her son had the "Lord" on their side, fought for a righteous and just cause, and had a righteous and just God that sanctified their victories in battle. Their steadfast belief in God carried their cause and allowed them to continue, to survive the perils of this war.[34]

Unpublished writings by England, Williamson, Wallace, and Bethell gives evidence to southern women's resolve, their dedication to the cause and in supporting their fighting men. As turmoil intensified and the war progressed, these women preserved their wartime experiences through their writings. The last theme of this chapter is crucial to the study as it is the platform, the launching-pad, from which postwar reclamation movements are based. The witnesses of the war were now survivors. Their new cause was now to reconcile their defeat, remain steadfast and dedicated to their antebellum selves, their ideologies, and traditions. When war was over and the South defeated, women shifted their civic war duties into postwar reclamation efforts, a concept discussed in the following chapter.

In analyzing the activities Confederate women engaged in and what they chose to include in their private writings and correspondences, it is clear that these women wrote for purpose.

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[34] Bethell, June 11 – 20, 1862.

Through their writings, elite Confederate women mourned their lost culture, identity, security, homes, belongings—in essence, their sense of traditional Southernhood. In loss, southern women writers sought to memorialize and commemorate *their* experiences, to preserve their memories. They could convey and redeem their loss through writing. They forged bonds by their experiences, through shared occurrences of occupation, shared commonality with their neighbors in the war effort, and in the bonds of white southernhood. They contributed to the ways in which ex-Confederates later commemorated and memorialized their collective war experience. These depictions of the conflict became more than just memory of what they witnessed but created an archive of testimonials that were later released to the public through publication. Witnesses of war now had a new task at hand: reclamation.

Chapter 3

Reclamation: 1865-1895

For many years after the war, white southerners sought to reclaim the remnants of their lives. Physically, the region was devastated. Cities, from the Confederate capital in Richmond to those in the Deep South like Atlanta, Georgia and Columbia, South Carolina, had been hit hard by Union forces. The defeated nation was now abased by their enemies, forced to accept their military presence which deepened ex-Confederate feelings of resentment toward the result of their war. Once the shock of defeat became a normalcy, southern women began the difficult work of reclamation and restoration. Some joined ladies' associations and civic organizations to cope, to implement order in their lives. Others, like Virginian native Fannie Beers, became a part of the written reclamation movement, which was an effort by southern men and women alike in the postwar years to make public *their* rendition of the war. In the preface of her 1888 diary, Beers wrote, "For several years my friends among Confederate soldiers have been urging me to 'write up' and publish what I know of the war. By personal solicitation and by letter this subject has been brought before me and placed in the light of a duty which I owe to posterity." Over a decade after Reconstruction of the South, Beers and her friends were still preoccupied in the public release of what they believed to be "the truth," and felt it their civic duty, a need to establish a story, *the* story of the war. She continued, "Taking this view of it, I willingly comply, glad that I am permitted to stand among the many 'witnesses' who shall establish 'the truth,' proud to write myself as one who faithfully served the defenders of the Cause which had and has my heart's devotion." To Beers, and the other authors of this chapter, they were the 'witnesses' of the war, the survivors of the southern home front, and the only ones who could tell their

accounts of this great event. Now that the fighting was over, the Confederate women writers were tasked with an important role; to provide 'the truth,' a testimony of the South's wartime story.[35]

Reconstruction was meant to modernize and transform the political, economic, and social systems of the former Confederate states. Within five years of President Lincoln's assassination in spring 1865, three Constitutional Amendments abolished slavery, guaranteed personhood and protection of inalienable rights to those freed from bondage, and gave African American men the right to vote. The road to reunion, however, was not easily trodden. Although Lincoln's 1863 Emancipation Proclamation made all slaves that remained in the rebel states free, by the war's end some three million were still in chains. Eric Foner notes that President Andrew Johnson's preoccupation with restoring racial and economic order in the South eclipsed any notions of black enfranchisement. "In the weeks following Lincoln's assassination, leading Radicals met frequently with the new President to press the issue of black suffrage. Yet Johnson shared neither the Radicals' expansive conception of federal power nor their commitment to political equality," writes Foner. Peace was thwarted, however, in the "postsurrender era" by an intricate system of local and state bylaws, or Black Codes, that ruled southern society and allowed whites to negotiate their way around military occupation. "The force that remained in the South was

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[35] Fannie A. Beers, *Memories: A Record of Personal Experience and Adventure During Four Years of War* (1888), in the Perseus Digital Library, accessed December 13, 2016, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3atext%a2001.05.0242; Jane Turner Censer, *The Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood, 1865-1895* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 6.

enough to do something but not enough to do everything," writes Gregory Downs. These state and local codes defined the roles and rights of freedmen in the New South. Foner posits, "The entire complex of labor regulations and criminal laws was enforced by an all-white police and judicial system" which made intervention in the southern states all the more difficult. In 1867, southern lands were divided into five military districts occupied by United States troops that policed the region to protect over four million newly freed men, women, and children, as well as thousands of former Unionists and those who advocated a quick reconciliation with Washington. As former rebel states slowly regained statehood, they swore loyalty to the United States and promised to adhere to the laws of the American government.[36]

Radical Republicans, like Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner, felt they had a "moral" duty to create a "utopian…nation whose citizens enjoyed equality of civil and political rights secured by a powerful and beneficent national state." Stevens believed that in order to achieve Reconstruction, "the whole fabric of southern society *must* be changed." Radicals passed the Civil Rights Bill, the Fourteenth Amendment, and the Reconstruction Act of 1867, an assertion of Congress's national power to protect the country's new citizens. But, as Downs shows, these laws were not able to fully protect blacks in the South, as attacks and violence against freedmen increased. Foner argues that southerners "launched a campaign of violence" so extreme that it challenged the very survival of Radical Reconstruction. By the time Ulysses S. Grant took office in 1869, white southerners had regained much of what was lost during the war. Grant, however,

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[36] Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), 83, 84-85, 95; Gregory P. Downs, *After Appomattox: Military Occupation and the Ends of War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 42, 111, 26.

was neither a southerner nor a southern sympathizer. He believed that clandestine attacks on Unionists and African Americans by groups like the Ku Klux Klan were so prevalent that he created the Justice Department to implement federal laws in the South, using military force if necessary. He also asked Congress to pass the Ku Klux Klan Act in 1871 which outlawed racial terrorists' organizations and made racial violence a federal offense. The Klan's power diminished but sentiments of white superiority did not. In 1875, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act which expanded the civil liberties of African Americans to public lodging, transportation, and judicial services, but the disputed presidential election of 1876 (which resulted in a tie within the electoral college) between Republican, Rutherford B. Hayes, and Democrat, Samuel Tilden, stalled further federal efforts to insure racial justice. As a compromise, Hayes became president, but Democrats insisted on the demilitarization of southern states. The Compromise of 1877 ended Reconstruction of the South and with it any real hope of racial reform in the region. The road toward reclamation was now paved for southern whites, and Confederate loss could be rectified. The literary women of the region joined in the race for a new cause, and made public the experiences of *their* war.[37]

Unlike Confederate writers of the last chapter, women of the reclamation era deliberately publicized their writings about the Civil War. Their diaries now shifted from coping

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[37] Foner, *A Short History*, 105-107, 184. For more on the anatomy of Radical Reconstruction see David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2001), and Bruce Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant: Historical Memory in the American South* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007).

mechanisms, a way to deal with the chaotic times of civil conflict, to testimonials of their trials, providing readers the "true" southern war story as only *they* could relay what had taken place during the war. As had their unpublished wartime predecessors, women of the reclamation era also wrote of the cruelties of war and life under occupation. Their efforts to tend for and supply the ill-equipped Confederate troops and tales of southern resolve also dominated the writings of postwar women. More often, however, stories of brave southern women who remained steadfast and provided comfort for their communities and families joined their accounts. This variation, these moments of crafted and adjusted emphasis in their wartime importance, reveal that southern women during the reclamation movement not only wanted to reclaim the stature and posterity of their people, and to recover the social and racial order of the antebellum South, but they also hoped to implant their role during the war into the annals of history.

The authors discussed in this chapter sought to create a vision of a new southern womanhood, one in which their public presence was accepted, even needed if whites in the South were to achieve postwar reclamation. Publications provided a means for women to express themselves outside the parameters of home during the reclamation years during and after Reconstruction because it was an act immersed in rebel patriotism, to recover racial dominance of whites in the region. Through this, women could engage in the larger social movement of racial reclamation. Radical Reconstruction challenged whites' authority over freedmen, and as the mothers of southern whitehood, Confederate women were needed if southerners were to regain their power. As Victoria Ott and others suggest, this aided women's quest to solidify their southern traditions amidst a period of great change. As such, the opportunity for Confederate women to preserve their "class and race privilege" expanded in the postwar years. They were, as Betsy Glade explains, "nostalgic for an idyllic past" and willing to "remain steeped in a

particular memory of their past," one before the war, before their antebellum world was annihilated. These diarists molded their war-writings in a quest to recoup their lives, to "remain steeped in" their created former existence. They wished to preserve their story, to shape how it was told and how their community and country were remembered during a time in which white southerners were fighting of their survival.[38]

In 1867, Judith McGuire—a well-to-do Virginian socialite—published the memories kept in her diary to which she had written almost daily during the war of the unfolding events in Richmond. Her book, titled *Diary of a Southern Refugee During the War*, was said to be "an integral part of the literary" postwar years and named "at once a best seller throughout the postbellum South" by critics more than a decade later. From her experiences in Alexandria and then as a war refugee in Richmond, McGuire's diary has been edited/reprinted four times since first published. Like Beers, McGuire represented how southern women became ambassadors of war memory, the loyal keepers of the antebellum past for whites. She concluded in her preface that "almost every woman of the South … will have her tale when this cruel war is over." Twenty days after she launched into the work of recording the war, the Virginia convention ratified the Ordinance of Secession which prompted the invasion of Union troops the very next day. She, like several other Confederate women, wrote of the occupation of northern Virginia. "Alexandria is doing her duty nobly; so is Fairfax; and so, I hope, is the whole South." McGuire

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[38] Victoria Ott, *Confederate Daughters: Coming of Age During the Civil War* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 5-6; Betsy Glade, "The Rhetoric of Rebel Women: Civil War Diaries and Confederate Persuasion," *Virginia Magazine of History & Biography* 122, no. 3 (June 2014): 282.

had high hopes for the southern revolution and maintained a steady belief in the cause throughout her wartime journal. "We are weak in resources," she added, "but strong in stout hearts, zeal for the cause, and enthusiastic devotion to our beloved South; and while men are making a free-will offering of their life's blood on the altar of their country, women must not be idle."[39]

Fellow Virginian Sallie Brock Putnam was also thrown into the hardships of Civil War in the capital. With the memory of this great event still fresh in her mind, thirty-four-year-old Brock began to recount and record her war recollections in the summer of 1865, after she and her family moved to New York City to escape the despair in the South. Just two years later, she published her memories anonymously as *Richmond During the War, Four Years of Personal Observation by a Richmond Lady*. Brock introduced the diary by describing the first instance she saw the "Stars and Bars" flying above Richmond in April 1861 to which she exclaimed, "The excitement was beyond description … the satisfaction unparalleled." Throughout her accounts, she remained devout to the Confederate cause. Unlike those discussed in the previous chapter, whose work was not published during the war years, Brock had the opportunity to open her story, to introduce her experience the way *she* intended. It is here that she introduced the reader

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[39] Willie T. Weathers, "Judith W. McGuire: 'A Lady of Virginia,'" *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 82, no. 1 (January 1974): 100; Judith W. McGuire, *Diary of a Southern Refugee, During the War, by a Lady of Virginia* (New York: E. J. Hale, 1867), 120-122. For the most recent publication of McGuire's diary see Judith Brockenbrough McGuire, *Diary of a Southern Refugee during the War,* ed. James I. Robertson Jr. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013).

to her tribulations during the Seven Days Battles that took place from June 25 – July 1, 1862, just outside Richmond.[40]

Brock provided a vivid and emotional rendition of scenes in the capital that covered a week of bloodshed, a short time in which over twenty thousand Confederates fell casualty. General Robert E. Lee was victorious in preventing Union occupation but at great cost. Brock told her readers of their (white southerners') sacrifice. "Every family received the bodies of the wounded or dead of their friends, and every house was a house of mourning or a private hospital." Fighting and death overran Richmond, its people and community. She continued that after the last cannon sounded, "The clouds were lifted, and the skies brightened upon political prospects, but death held a carnival in our city." Here, Brock took time to note workers could not dig graves fast enough to deal with the influx of bodies, so "the smell of pungent decomposition" was prevalent for a time. The Union's first attempt to occupy the capital, and banish the southern

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[40] Sallie A. Brock, *Richmond During the War: Four Years of Personal Observation by a Richmond Lady,* Mary and Jeff Bell Library, Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi, text-fiche, Z1236 LAC 16625, p. xi. Sarah "Sallie" Ann Brock was born in 1831 in Madison, Virginia. As the daughter of an inn keeper and teacher, Brock tutored young students who attended the University of Virginia during the prewar years who were housed at her father's hotel. Fashioned to a certain type of life, it was during this time that she perfected her literary and writing skills. In 1882, she married an Episcopal minister and heir to a Boston publishing house, after which her writing diminished greatly. Brock died in late March 1911, five years after her husband Richard Fletcher Putnam. They were both buried in the prestigious Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond.

"way of life" which revolved around the power structures slavery provided, remained in the hearts and minds of the citizens there. Brock shaped the memory of this bloody week in Richmond as a foundation upon which the belief in southern resilience and resolve could stand. She took this great tragedy, and turned focus toward the days when southerners had once been triumphant, "the skies brightened." Brock's retelling of the Seven Days Battles offered a steady reminder that they had fought hard and mightily for a "righteous cause." Although Richmond and much of the South would be under the weight of the war, they could survive as they had the summer of 1862. Her depiction of the battles' aftermath was cloaked in the vision of a "victorious struggle," and remained an emblem of great solace, of resolution and hope, for many white southerners after the war's end.[41]

Brock, again, told of the Union's attempt and eventual success in occupying Richmond. By early April 1865, Confederate defenses at Petersburg crumbled. With Richmond cut off from the rest of the South, General Lee ordered the evacuation of both Petersburg and Richmond in a desperate effort to save the Army of Northern Virginia. Brock described the moment President Jefferson Davis received the telegram from Lee that informed him of his army's demise. They were sitting in the prestigious St. Paul's Church. Davis, a regular worshiper of the congregation, "occupied his pew" and waited patiently for the monthly "celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper." Then, amidst the upper echelons of Virginian society, a messenger was seen making his way "to place in the hands of the President a sealed package." She continued, "The

[41] Brock, *Richmond During the War*, 114-116. On the Seven Days Battles of 1862 see Jay Wertz, "Seven Days that Saved Richmond in 1862," *Civil War Times* 46, no. 4 (June 2007): 12-16.

direful tidings spread with the swiftness of electricity. From lip to lip, from men, women, children and servants, the news was bandied … Friend looked into the face of friend to meet only an expression of incredulity; but later in the day, as the truth, stark and appalling, confronted us, the answering look was that of stony, calm despair." Here, yet again, she reiterated southern resilience even in the moment of realized defeat, having maintained a "stony, calm despair."[42]

As her book had done after the Seven Days Battles, Brock emphasized the theme of resilience as word of Lee's surrender reached the capital. Several paragraphs told of civilian reaction, of how desperation and night fell upon the South. Brock explained, "No human tongue, no pen, however gifted, can give adequate description of the events of that awful night." The author then took the time to interrupt the chaos in her tale, to provide a small light of hope to her readers:

> While these fearful scenes were being enacted on the streets, in-doors there was scarcely less excitement and confusion … Ladies were busily engaged in collecting and secreting all the valuables possessed by them, together with cherished correspondence, yet they found time and presence of mind to prepare a few comforts for friends forced to depart with the army or the government. Few tears were shed; there was no time for weakness or sentiment. The grief was too deep, the agony too terrible to find.

Brock turned this tale of sorrow and woe into one of survival. She showcased the work of women, amidst a time of tribulation, as the beacon of resolve and calm resolution. Richmond, although defeated and abandoned, saw the dawn of a new day, a new era, as should the entire South. She pointed to the women of Richmond as heroines who held the

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[42] Brock, *Richmond During the War*, 339-343. For more on the fall of Richmond see Hampton Newsome, *Richmond Must Fall: The Petersburg-Richmond Campaign, October 1864* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2013).

city and the South together. Union troops hung from the "Capitol" the "Stars and Stripes," which she described as "the ensign of our subjugation." She ended this tale of the war as she had begun it, with a descriptive view of a flag flying in the southern breeze. Yet with it, she added a nod to her sisters of war who witnessed *and survived* the horrible trials of civil conflict.[43]

A year after the publication of her diary, Brock gathered what she considered the most significant poetry of the Civil War and published an anthology, *The Southern Amaranth: A Carefully Selected Collection of Poems Growing Out of and in Reference to the Late War*. Brock wrote with poignant, careful reflection in the Preface in 1868, "The design of this work was conceived in an individual desire to offer a testimonial of gratitude to the memories of the *brave men* who perished in the late ineffectual effort for SOUTHERN INDEPENDENCE." Brock continued, "As well as in a wish to render to my Southern sisters some assistance in gathering up the remains of the CONFEDERATE DEAD, from the numberless battle-fields over which they were scattered, and placing them where the rude ploughshare may not upturn their bleaching bones, and where sorrowing friends may at least drop a *tear*, and lay a *flower* upon the grass-covered hillocks that mark their resting-places." The six hundred and fifty pages that followed give evidence to just one of the many ways Confederate women sought to memorialize and commemorate their righteous cause. Brock explained, "In the language of one whose noble soul is bowed with grief over the martyred slain:--'All we can now do is to sing at the graves of our Dead; but … our songs can never express all our feelings—can never celebrate all their fame." In writing her memories for publication, Brock wanted to honor her sacrifice, the sacrifice of her

[43] Brock, *Richmond During the War*, 343-346.

community, and wished to "lay a *flower* upon the grass-covered hillocks" of the South, of Virginia. Just as Sarah Wadley and Alice Williamson had written about occupation and devastation during the war, Brock wrote during *and after* the war to tell of her experience, to document her enduring journey as they endured. This suggests a continuance in the subject matter in women's southern writing, but also highlights the ways in which Confederate women solidified *their* war experiences in the annals of history as they continued to write after the war's end. They hoped to direct how the war was remembered and how the South, and southerners, were perceived and honored.[44]

Kate Cumming also celebrated the continuing dedication to Confederate lives lost in her *Hospital Life in the Army of Tennessee.* Born in Edinburg, Scotland, Cumming came to North America with her parents in the 1840s to escape tensions between her home country and Great Britain. The family of six landed first in Montreal, Canada before settling in Mobile, Alabama, where her father had a shipping business. She spent her formative years as a white southern merchant's daughter, until war erupted and her family was forever changed. Her mother and sisters fled the country to England in the late months of 1861. Kate Cumming remained with her elderly father in Mobile, and became personally invested in the war after her brother David, Jr., enlisted in the Confederate Army. With forty other Confederate women in Alabama, including acclaimed Civil War novelist Augusta Jane Evans, Cumming left the comforts of her home and became a civilian Confederate nurse on the western front. In the opening pages of her work, published in 1866, she consciously told the reader why she chose to release her personal writings

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[44] Sallie A. Brock, *The Southern Amaranth: A Carefully Selected Collection of Poems Growing out of and in Reference to the Late War* (New York: G. S. Wilcox, 1869), v-vi.

to the public. She hoped that "the southerner may learn a lesson from the superhuman endurance of the glorious dead and mutilated living who so nobly did their duty in their country's hour of peril." Cumming went on to explain, "And the northerner, I trust, when he has brought in review before him the wrongs of every kind inflicted on us, will cry, Enough! they have suffered enough; let their wounds now be healed instead of opening them afresh." Only three pages into her the introduction of her diary, Cumming confirmed her effort to shape Civil War memory.[45]

Cumming continued in her push to convince northern readers that the South had paid its due. "O, if the authors of this cruel and unnatural war could but see what I saw there, they would try and put a stop to it!" Cumming pointed, again, to northerners, "To think, that it is man who is working all this woe upon his fellowman. What can be in the minds of our enemies, who are now arrayed against us, who have never harmed them in any way, but simply claim our own, and nothing more! May God forgive them, for surely they know not what they do." She blamed the Union for what she considered a merciless quest to punish the southern people. Brock saw the images of death and occupation in Richmond, as did Cumming in Corinth following the bloody battle of Shiloh. Both women were thrust into the aftermath of battle, one by choice and the other by circumstance. "I daily witnessed the same sad scenes -- men dying all around me. I do not

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[45] Kate Cumming, *A Journal of Hospital Life in the Confederate Army of Tennessee, from the Battle of Shiloh to the End of the War: With Sketches of Life and Character, and Brief Notices of Current Events During that Period*, Mary and Jeff Bell Library, Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi, microfiche, p. 3, Z1236 L45 15864. Cumming's work was often compared to the war nurse tale of Florence Nightingale after the Crimean War. The author often referenced and was greatly inspired by Nightingale in writing her own war-tale.

know who they are, nor have I time to learn." In the telling of these unnamed soldiers' deaths, she focused on the human cost of the war. She affirmed the need to remember, to remind her readers of what she witnessed along the halls of death in the after the battle. Tales like this soon encouraged many women of the South to aid in the recovery of those who were buried in an undignified manner. Ladies' societies and the United Daughters of the Confederacy helped raise funds to reclaim the southern war dead and lay the remnants of their bodies to rest in community cemeteries and Confederate memorial parks.[46]

Women like Beers, McGuire, and Cumming had been witnesses to the cruelties of war, of how death and destruction ripped the families and communities of the south apart. After 1865, their books and poems testified to the human and material debt paid to their victorious northern. Much like the women of the previous chapter, they pointed to the chaos of those horrific years as

[46] Cumming, *Hospital Life*, 14-15, 20-21. Cumming's war stories were particularly shocking to most of her readers as she did not hold back in describing horrific and sad tales of soldiers dying alone. This would have struck a chord with so many who lost their loved ones to the war but were not present at their time of death. Southerners had traditionally believed that in a "good death." The notion of the "good death," the one in passing would be surrounded by those who loved him, so that they may go with peace and dignity. But there was nothing dignified about being left on the battlefield, or poorly covered with little dirt upon burial to smother the smell of decomposition. For a history of death and the concept of the "good death" in the American South and its origins see Peter Moore, "The Usable Death and the Politics of Dying in the Late-Colonial South Carolina Lowcountry," *Death in the American South*, ed. Craig Friend and Lorri Glover (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

proof of their dedication and steadfast loyalty to the South. In the trials of Radical Reconstruction, in which black men were gaining limited political rights that had not yet extended to *all* whites, these authors gave their readers a vision of women as steadfast beacons of strength and resilience that illustrates how the female writers of the reclamation era asserted their presence, their importance amongst the turmoil. The addition of these tales illustrates how Confederate authors implanted themselves, the women of the South, in the telling of their war stories. It shows that they were agents of memory and actively took part in the broader reclamation movement of the postwar years during Reconstruction.[47]

Their emphasis on tales of southern women's involvement in the war effort, how families and communities worked together to supply their fighting men shows the ways in which they felt compelled to assert their role in supplying the CSA. As Alexis Brown explains, "The Civil War, though devastating in its barrage of terror and destruction, forced women to expand their sphere and take on activities they had never dreamed of doing. Plantation mistresses, especially, were required to manage slaves, make decisions regarding crops and planting, and carry out the tedious chores of clothing and food production alone." This was evident in the work

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[47] Women's suffrage was used in the West by states like Colorado, Washington, Oregon, and California so whites in that region could maintain power in areas with large Asian populations. Under the frameworks of Reconstruction and western expansion, territorial and state officials also used women voters to push free labor and, toward the end of the century, Populist ideals. For more on western territories and women's suffrage see Rebecca Mead, *How the Vote Was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States, 1868-1914* (New York: New York University Press, 2004).

of Fannie Beers and Parthenia Hague, who both published their wartime memories in 1888. Both wrote of how the people of the South contributed by the cause. In this way, the authors showcased the usefulness and the capabilities of southern women, a testament to their strength and dedication during the war. If the southern people were to successfully overcome the perils of this new battle, the one for reclamation within the postwar world, women again must be a force in this new era.[48]

Like McGuire and Brock, Fannie Beers had been in Richmond, Virginia during the later years of the war. She, too, was a refugee from her home in New Orleans, Louisiana. Born in Connecticut, she and her southern husband A.P. Beers moved to the Deep South in the late 1850s. Once war began, Beers' husband joined the Confederate cause and quickly rose to rank of sergeant of an artillery regiment and was sent to Pensacola, Florida. Alone with an infant son, Beers moved to the Confederate capital in hopes to work in one of the hospitals there. She was hired by a group of "Southern Ladies" who had opened a hospital just outside the city. Only months later she was sent to Mobile, Alabama to aid soldiers in the aftermath of the Battle of Shiloh. There, she was named matron in charge of the Second Alabama Hospital. In spring 1862, her husband's regiment was sent to the front lines in Tennessee and she applied to a position in Gainesville, Alabama to be closer to him. Moving with her husband's regiment she aided the sick and wounded along the way. She dutifully acted as the symbolic southern woman who

[48] Alexis Girardin Brown, "The Women Left Behind: Transformation of the Southern Belle: 1840-1880," *Historian* 62, no. 4 (Summer 2000): 759.

valiantly charged to the front lines in support of her man and the Cause. From Louisiana to Alabama, Georgia to Virginia, Beers actively participated in the war.[49]

Beers recalled how the plantation-mistresses of Mobile had organized their slaves to support the war effort. Many plantations across the South mobilized in such fashion, and provided ill-equipped Confederate armies with much needed provisions. Beers revealed that "Butter, eggs, chickens, etc., were classed as luxuries, to be collected and sent by any opportunity offering to the nearest point of shipment to hospital or camp. Fruits were gathered and made into preserves or wine 'for the sick soldiers.' Looms were set up on every plantation. The whirr of the spinning-wheel was heard from morning until night." She remembered seeing "dusky forms," slaves who "hovered over large iron cauldrons, continually thrusting down into the boiling dye the product of the looms, to be transformed into Confederate gray or *butternut jeans*." This was the author's only reference to the plight of slaves in her war story. The "dusky forms" that she witnessed were forced to make uniforms for a cause that fought to keep them in bondage. Sadly, Beers did not make that realization when she published her work almost a quarter of a century later. This is a telling feature toward understanding postbellum racialized thinking amongst southern whites. Beers' description of how plantation mistresses worked together to support the war illustrated how they hoped to preserve the system upon which they depended. It was the work, however, of both the men on the battlefield *and* the women at home that mobilized for the South, a point the author was sure to emphasize in this new era of turmoil in which women must participate. She pushed this rhetoric a bit further by adding, "When a sufficient number of these articles had been completed by the united efforts of ladies for miles

[49] Beers, *Memories*, 11-26.

around, a meeting was held at one of the churches, where all helped to pack boxes to be sent to 'the front.' I attended one of these meetings, the memory of which is ever fresh." These women had performed a duty for their country, and would also need to do so after the war ended. "Looking forward," those who had participated during the war effort, as Victoria Ott asserts, "hoped that a brighter future lay ahead" for them. Women like Beers believed that the roles they played to aid in the war should have provided them a new place in the New South where they were needed again if southerners—their beliefs, traditions, and values—were to survive Reconstruction.[50]

Published in 1888, the diary of Parthenia Antoinette Hague is yet another example of an ex-Confederate woman who published her writings as part of the white southern reclamation movement after Reconstruction. Like Beers, Hague was on the western front and felt the constraints of occupation. Born in Georgia in 1838, her family moved to Alabama in the late 1840s and were prominent landowners. As the war began, the Hague plantation became immersed in the work of supplying not only themselves and their community but also Confederate soldiers at war. She wrote, "The great push of the cotton mills, they proved totally inadequate, after the war began, to our vast need for clothing of every kind. Every household now became a miniature factory in itself, with its cotton, cards, spinning-wheels, warping-frames, looms, and so on. Wherever one went, the hum of the spinningwheel and the clang of the batten of the loom was borne on the ear." Like the authors discussed, Hague told of how her

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[50] Beers, *Memories*, 52-53. For more on Alabama's plantation war efforts and the role of women see Jonathan M. Wiener, "Female Planters and Planters' Wives in Civil War and Reconstruction Alabama, 1850-1870," *Alabama Review* 30, no. 2 (April 1977): 135-149.

community went to work in an effort to supply Confederate soldiers. They felt it their duty to provide every comfort for their men because the government had not made the necessary arrangements for such an effort. "Every household," the sphere of southern women, became a factory, every family a part of the war.[51]

Chapters three through eleven of Hague's depictions were dedicated to the ingenuity of her community, how southerners produced shoes, clothes, sugar, syrup, salt, and other necessities while at war. She informed the reader, "Here and in all the surrounding neighborhood, as far as I could see, the same vigorous efforts were put forth to feed and clothe the soldiers of our Confederacy, as well as the home ones, that I had witnessed in southern Alabama. There was the same self-sacrifice, without a thought of murmuring for the luxuries enjoyed before the war." Hague continued, "All aid and succor as regarded provisions and clothes for our army was at an end from beyond the Mississippi. We were caged up like a besieged city. There was neither egress nor ingress for men or means. Our soldiers from the west had to share what little provisions were grown in our circumscribed limit. They also shared what clothing could be manufactured in the more and more straitened condition of the South." Here, Hague's rhetoric is telling in that she went to great pains to explain how under the tight grips of Yankee overseers, the community of women in the area invented other processes needed to supply not only their own households but also to give aid to the soldiers. She emphasized this notion of women's work being the saviors of both fronts, on the battlefield and at home during the war. Hague added,

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[51] Parthenia Antoinette Hague, *A Blockaded Family: Life in Southern Alabama During the War* (1888) in the Perseus Digital Library, accessed November 30, 2016, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3atext%3a2001.05.0020, p. 2-4, 39-40.

"Corn and what little wheat could then be grown, with rice and sorghum syrup, formed the base of our supplies. Of course fruits and vegetables were grown, but being perishable were worthless for our soldiers or prisoners, so limited were our means of transportation." She reiterated how her household often put the cause above their own hardship and misfortune, and did what they could in this era of conflict and survival.[52]

These reminisces are telling. They showcased the devotion to which elite southern women organized their efforts in support of the war. Instances of one's own suffering, like the tale given by Hague, is an important aspect to the memory of the southern home front. Beers highlights the efforts of plantation mistresses to systemize the slave labor system that supplied the war effort. These women, whose wealth and power hinged on slavery, stepped outside their role as mistress and into the public sphere of the southern masters. They, along with so many others who supported the cause, were the keepers of the home front, seen as the preservers of the South. To exemplify this, both authors pointed to the perseverance of southern women, their devotion and resilience in a time that required them to step outside the bounds of their traditional duties at home and publicly enter the war effort. They showed how women were able to enter the political and economic spheres of society, and to join their men if needed against public challenges (in this case Reconstruction), sentiments which would come to be a foundational argument of the women's suffrage movement of the next century.

Lastly, the writers of the reclamation era focused on the unrelenting dedication of southern women to the cause. Many historians suggest that towards the end of the conflict, southern women were no longer unified in such devotion. Indeed, difficulty and hardship in the

[52] Hague, *A Blockaded Family*, 130-132.

region that saw occupation and fighting was a horrific reality of their wartime experience. By choosing instead to emphasize southern women's loyalty and support for their Confederate men and the Confederate cause, postwar publications give evidence to how women of the postbellum South sought to implant themselves into the postwar memory of the war.

Judith McGuire and Fannie Beers both chose to tell of women's resolve after the war. They proclaimed the strong feelings they had, and continued to have, toward a cause that was lost but not in vain as their fight had been a righteous one, a belief that reverberated in the postwar years. Civilians praised not only the soldiers lost in battle but also the wives who took on the roles needed to survive on the home front, whose sacrifice inevitably effected their day to day lives after the war's end. In her travels from Richmond to Mobile, Beers remembered trying to console herself by identifying with the thousands of women whose men were in battle. She recounted, "Let none give undue praise to the women to whom during the war Almighty God vouchsafed the inestimable privilege of remaining near the front, even though they may have endured untold hardship, hours of agony while listening to the noise of battle, fully realizing the extreme danger of beloved fathers, husbands, or sons." To her, the experiences of the home front were almost as dire as those on the battlefield. Confederate women waited anxiously for any word of the fate of their loved ones. Beers continued, "Never until my visit to Alabama had I fully realized the horrors of suspense,—the lives of utter selfabnegation heroically lived by women in country homes all over the South during the dreary years of the war. Every day—every hour—was fraught with anxiety and dread. Rumor was always busy, but they could not hear *definitely*: they could not *know* how their loved ones were faring." In this, Beers recalled how Confederate women had embodied the Cause just as earnestly as their male counterparts. She highlighted her recollections of the women in Alabama in an effort to shape the memory of

the war to extend beyond the trenches of the battlefields and the sons lost. She wanted to praise those on the home front for they, too, had been part of the war. And in the postwar South, such wartime experience played an important role in reclaiming their female southern identity.[53]

Time and time again, the author remained consistent in her retelling of the conflict. She first dedicated time to the tell the reader of southern men's sacrifices and depicted scenes of battle which haunted her memory. She followed these vivid stories of death and destruction with tales of southern women who also faced the trials of battle and occupation. Beers' publication signifies the campaign by southern whites to restore the status and standing of themselves and their families. It shows how she and other "noble women" of the Confederacy, who sacrificed their husbands and sons to the war and who remained steadfast in their duties and efforts for the comfort of their soldiers, would also contribute to the postwar efforts to reassert their authority in the New South. In the last part of her publication, Beers followed the pattern of retelling. After recording her sentiments toward the men who fought, she praised Confederate women for their continued bravery in the years after defeat. She titled it her "address to the wives and children of Confederate veterans." From this point forward she wrote in the present, some twenty years later. Having revealed her experience of war, Beers sought to explain why she felt compelled to reveal such a violent rendition of events to the public. "Memory annihilates the distance between the long-ago and the present," she explained. "I seem to see them marching, with brave, bright faces and eager feet, to meet the foe. I hear the distant boom of cannon, growing fainter as they press the retreating enemy. And then, alas! many come back to me mutilated, bleeding, dying." She, again, nurtured the rhetoric of inclusion, of sentiments toward southern women who participated

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[53] Beers, *Memories,* 53.

in the war. "In many a country home women endured, day after day … heroically, patiently, toiled and prayed on. Startled by flying rumors, tortured by suspense, weary with unwonted labor, they never dreamed of leaving the post of duty or of neglecting the interests confided to their care … Memory brings back to me a scene which sadly illustrates the exalted courage and faith of these noble women." The focus of southern resolve emanated throughout the hundred pages that followed. Beers, like so many others who made their writings public, reconciled their defeat by clinging to the memories of their antebellum war pasts and sought to extend the importance of southern women, their traditions and symbolic part in the postbellum South.[54]

Like Beers, Judith McGuire felt compelled to publish her war recollections. As she penned in her preface in 1867, "The following pages are, as intimated above, presented to the public more in compliance with the wishes of others than of the writer. She has no experience in matters of this sort, and claims nothing except what may be due to sincerity and truth. Her earnest prayer is, that what is erroneous may be forgiven her, and the whole result be agreeable and useful to her readers." Here again, an elite, "loyal" woman of Richmond asked to tell 'the truth,' of what occurred during those fateful years at war. Friends with capital elites, the author used her diary to reminisce about the day she called upon the wife of General Lee after Appomattox and news of Lincoln's assassination reached Richmond. She recalled:

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[54] Beers, *Memories*, 306-308. Many writings were released to the public that expressed admiration of southern women's dedication to the Confederate cause and of their ability to overcome the hardships they experienced under the constraints of Union occupation of the southern states. For an example see Anonymous, *Our Women in the War: The Lives They Lived; the Deaths They Died* (Charleston: News and Courier Book Presses, 1885).

> When I called in to see his high-minded and patriotic wife, a day or two after the evacuation, she was busily engaged in her invalid's chair, and very cheerful and hopeful. 'The end is not yet,' she said, as if to cheer those around her; 'Richmond is not the Confederacy.' To this we all most willingly assented, and felt very much gratified and buoyed by her brightness. I have not had the heart to visit her since the surrender, but hear that she still is sanguine, saying that 'General Lee is not the Confederacy," and that there is 'life in the old land yet.' He is not the Confederacy; but our hearts sink within us when we remember that he and his noble army are now idle, and that we can no longer look upon them as the bulwark of our land. He has returned from defeat and disaster with the universal and profound admiration of the world, having done all that skill and valour could accomplish.

McGuire portrayed the "patriotic wife" as a resilient woman, dedicated to the cause even when her husband "and his noble army" had given up, forced to give in to the might of the Union. She showed how Mrs. Lee had gained hope once word came to the capital that the leader of the North was dead. She remembered her in jubilation, "there is 'life in the old land yet.'" Such sentiment showcases the remembered devotion of southern women, a trait that continued throughout the postwar years.[55]

Time and time again, the desire by postwar women writers to implant themselves into their readers' memory of the Civil War is evident in their postbellum writings. They emphasized women's resilient dedication to the Confederate cause. They highlighted how women survived the war, and persevered with or without their fighting men. They, too, had been patriots against northern tyranny, against a mightier foe. Their writings were a testament to the strength and courage of Confederate women, or so they hoped their readers would conclude. These tales of loyalty would have only furthered the vision of the southern belle, who stood unraveled in this great struggle. The region could look to these emblems of fortitude in the new era just as they

[55] McGuire, *Diary of a Southern Refugee*, 356.

had during the war, as they were true and noble. They were the symbols of those who harnessed their pride in the southern people, their resilience, and their reclamation.

Publications released between the war's end in 1865 until the end of the century were representative of a much larger movement in the southern states. Many white southerners, preoccupied with the restoration of their political and economic status, worked to reclaim what they could, to recover from their defeat. Their recollections and diaries of the reclamation era worked hand in hand with those who engaged in civic networks. These women sought to recuperate their status and station in society, and advance their roles as necessary citizens of the South. They shaped the postwar narrative to include the tireless efforts of dedicated Confederate women despite suffering hardships both during the war and under Union occupation. By advancing the rhetoric of resilience, the authors illustrated the presumed dedication of southern women to the Confederate cause, and to supporting their men away at war. These writers thrust themselves into the reclamation movement by publicizing their wartime memories. It was the memories that they left behind, however, that shifted women's place in the postbellum world. They, who had traditionally been the "keepers" of the home, were now the "keepers" of the South, of the southern war story, and the postwar Confederate community. They were the mothers of the reclamation era, and remained so in the next century. Thus, memory and history were interwoven, as white women of the South who witnessed the war shared their understanding of it and found resolution in its aftermath.

Chapter Four

Affirmation, 1895-1945

In 1902, a woman of the war wrote from Florence, South Carolina, “Those dreadful scenes are now over, and peace reigns in all our land, but many of our Southern women who saw their bravest and best taken from them during those cruel years share a bond that has the power to squash any future conflicts … the children of this Southland will recognize our sacrifice.” The “children of the Southland,” of the New South, were responsible for using what they learned from the perilous years of their parents and grandparents. Within this atmosphere, the remnants of rebellion and traditional power structures remained in large part due to white southerners’ credence in the continuance of their cause. Female Confederate diarists and writers consciously released their southern narrative and pressed their war past onto the next generation of Americans. This transference of memory laid the foundation for a caste of new white southerners, steeped in the traditions and teachings of the Old South. With the close of any lasting social reform in the region, Confederate women writers, and in some cases their descendants, used their writings of the Civil War to affirm, or to further solidify, progress made during the years of reclamation. Their publications illustrated the ways in which these recollections served as a vital function in the historical memory of antebellum tradition and demonstrated how their war stories shaped southern identity in the new era.[56]

At the turn of the 20th century, most southern whites had further entrenched their beliefs in their own sociopolitical and racial dominance over African Americans. After troops left

[56] Ott, *Confederate Daughters*, 164.

Louisiana and South Carolina in 1877, all former Confederate states could institute their own laws, as could local municipalities. De jure segregation was "the cornerstone of southern life" and was used, as Robert Cook explains, as an oppressive social system that unanimously united whites under a common understanding of racial domination over blacks. Furthermore, as David Blight posits, many southerners deemed the northern attempt to restructure their homeland invalid, thought by many of the time to be a ghastly "mistaken era" fraught with "scandal and humiliation." He goes on to note that after Reconstruction, northern whites were less interested in Radical politics and black suffrage. Northerners and southerners had reconciled and even commemorated the war together, like in the Great Gettysburg Reunion in 1913 where over fifty thousand white veterans met in reunification. Reconciliation often overran concern about slavery, exacerbating the plight of African Americans in the postwar South. Such convictions toward race amongst whites in the New South was solidified when the Supreme Court upheld states' segregation laws in 1896 in the monumental case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, ruling "separate but equal" to be constitutional and protected by federal law. It was an affirmation for southern whites, for those whose quest for social, economic, and political postwar reclamation had triumphed. They could now move toward a new era, one that resembled the society of prior generations before the war and in which Confederates declared reclamation a success. In this way, they, as Caroline Janney urges, nullified the military defeat of their men, their fathers, sons, brothers, and husbands, and claimed a sociocultural victory for postwar whites. The lore of reclamation had been institutionalized by various cultural forms, including, as this work has shown, publications by Confederate women during the postwar years. In an era of great change,

their version of the war past was a mainstay of their identity and, more pointedly, it determined how they saw themselves and their role in the next century.[57]

By this time, Confederate women were viewed as the preservers of white southern heritage. Even some male commentators of the war acknowledged the work of Confederate women. Veterans dedicated their publications to the steadfast and resilient women of the South. In books like *Confederate Women of Arkansas in the Civil War, 1861-65: Memorial Reminiscences*, the United Confederate Veterans professed their dedication to "the Confederate Women … of the South, as a memorial of their glorious work on behalf of the Confederate States of America." Alexander Hunter, Confederate soldier from Virginia and author of numerous books after the war, also dedicated his *The Women of the Debatable Land* to Confederate women. The author began his work much like the Arkansas veterans; "I esteem it a proud privilege to voice through this book the sentiments of my comrades in paying tribute to the women of the South during the Civil War. We admired those women for their devotion to the cause … and *To the United Daughters of the Confederacy* … who have labored to preserve the truth of history, and who have made the South 'The Land of Song and Story.' Such sentiments permeated the region and continued to do so well into the next century. To the men of this great

[57] Janney, *Burying the Dead*, 3; Robert Cook, "(Un)Furl That Banner: The Response of White Southerners to the Civil War Centennial of 1961-1965," *Journal of Southern History* 68, no. 4 (November 2002): 88; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 43, 91, 315-318. For more on the effects of *Plessy v. Ferguson* see William James Hull Hoffer, *Plessy v. Ferguson: Race and Inequality in Jim Crow America* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2012).

time in southern history, Confederate women had gained the right to be the public keepers and commemorators of their southern war heritage.[58]

Once white southerners reaffirmed their place at the top of social, political, and economic power structures, many women spoke publicly of their continued devotion to passing on the traditions of the Old South to the New. Sarah Dabney Eggleston urged in 1917, "I am devout to teaching the young that our cause, never a 'lost' one, was a just and glorious one. Let no one teach otherwise!" The duties of war did not cease after the turn of the century for elite white women of the South. Thus, the war of southern memory was still active with Confederate women still at work to commemorate the fallen, to protect their home front, and to preserve their heritage. In an interview with the *New York Times*, Eggleston, like many women, continued her patriotic duties in the next century knitting socks for American soldiers during the First World War. The caption beneath her picture described her "in her eightieth year, between heel and toe of her six-hundredth sock knitted since the World War began." Even as she went to work in the civic efforts for a new war at hand, she remained steadfast, devoted to the Old South to "our cause … a just and glorious one." This further illustrates how Confederate women sought to continue in their preservation activities well into the next century. Georgian Katharine Du Pre Lumpkin published her autobiography *The Making of a Southerner* which substantiated the legacy left by women like Eggleston. "For many years Confederate reunions had been sounding

[58] United Confederate Veterans, Arkansas Division, *Confederate Women of Arkansas in the Civil War, 1861-'65: Memorial Reminiscences* (Little Rock: H.G. Pugh Print Co., 1907), v; Alexander Hunter, *The Women of the Debatable Land* (Washington: Cobden Publishing Co., 1912), vi.

the slogan, 'Educate the children!' … They had said: 'Confederate soldiers, you have made history! See that it is written! Put into our schools history books true to the South!' They would urge: 'The South and the cause of the Confederacy have nothing to fear from the truth, but we do not want our children educated out of a book which tries to throw disgrace on their fathers!'" To white southerners, the narrative of the war must be told by the people who lived it, who fought for Confederate principles, and who remained fervent Rebels. Lumpkin explained that the feeling was to "let some changes if they must," meaning Reconstruction, but "it was inconceivable, however, that any change could be allowed that altered the very present fact of the relation of superior white to inferior Negro. This we came to understand remained for us as it had been for our fathers, the very cornerstone of the South."[59]

This chapter brings to close the discussion of white southern women's "victorious struggle" to recover from the war. Confederate authors had long found commonality amongst others in their experiences of the war, of death and destruction caused by Union occupation, of

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[59] Sarah Dabney Eggleston, *Women of the South in War Times*, compiled by Matthew Page Andrews (Baltimore: Norman Remington, 1924), 321-328; Katharine Du Pre Lumpkin, *The Making of a Southerner* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 126-128. Lumpkin came from a upper-class family in Macon, Georgia. Her grandfather Adoniram Judson Lumpkin owned over a thousand acres in and around Macon. Her father William was the only child and sole heir of the plantation and by the time he inherited the property, it came with some one hundred slaves. After the war, the Lumpkins fared well and could send their daughter Katharine to college at Brenau College in Gainesville. She went on to receive her M.A. at Columbia University and achieved a doctorate in 1928 in economics from the University of Wisconsin.

their efforts to support their fighting men, and their emphasis on women's resilience in times of great hardship during the war. Those themes remained constant in the publications from 1895 to 1945. This chapter, however, focuses instead on the final transference, or shift, in postwar Civil War memory which may be found in the Prefaces and Acknowledgments made by the authors almost half a century after the conflict ended. This chapter is divided according to whether the accounts were published by the author, first-hand, or by a relative, often a son or daughter. Once the children of the South began to publish their mothers' wartime accounts, the final shift in memory occurred. The rupture of war and the fight for reclamation thereafter gave many white southerners a great sense of nostalgia for their antebellum pasts. The mothers of the South had a duty to preserve southern traditions by teaching their heritage to their children and shaping the collective memory of the war for the next generation. Eric Sanger argues, "the reproduction of collective memory" occurs "within the boundaries of social groups whose present needs define the social frames that govern the social remembering of the past." Communities that initiate memory creation do so as "a means to re-affirm their place in history and thus to reconstruct the story on which their collective identity has been built." Confederate women writers fulfilled their role in maintaining white southern identity after the war, a legacy left for generations. Their influence, however, spanned almost a century, as a new age of southerners, "the children of the Southland," continued the traditions and beliefs of their ancestors. As a result, a continuum of southern whitehood sustained their defeat during and after the war as they now were able to claim victory in how the Civil War was *re*-membered.[60]

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[60] Eric Sanger, "From 'Memory Wars' to Shared Identities: Conceptualizing the Transnationalisation of Collective Memory," *The Tocqueville Review* 36, no. 2 (2015): 66, 77-

Mary Gay of Decatur, Georgia released her wartime accounts every year from 1897 to 1901, each featuring a short introduction that informed the reader of her reason to make her war memories public. By the fourth edition, she explained, "I have long felt it was the duty of the South to bequeath to posterity the traditions of that period; for if we do it not ourselves they will be swallowed up in oblivion, I have essayed the task of an individual effort, and hope that others may follow my example." She, like many ex-Confederates, feared their story, their history would be forgotten or worse, mis-told or misinterpreted. In her book, Gay released twenty-four chronological short stories of her experiences in the war. She described the burning of Atlanta in summer 1864 and of the last time she saw her brother, as he would perish only months into his service in the Confederate army. Gay worried that their sacrifice—her brother's, her family's, and her own—would be overshadowed, lost in the annals of time. Gay continued, "No woman who has seen what I have seen, and felt what I have felt, would be apt to write with less asperity." She clearly illustrated how she saw it her public duty to continue *re*-membering the war, memorializing her and other southerners' experiences and relaying 'the truth' to the world.[61]

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78. For more on memory theory and war see Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004; and for more on the collective memory after the Civil War see Daniel Sutherland, "Memories of a Rooted Sorrow," *Civil War History* 62, no. 1 (March 2016): 8-35.

[61] Mary A. H. Gay, *Life in Dixie During the War, 1861-1862-1863-1864-1865* (Atlanta: Foote & Davis, 1901), 3. The burning of Atlanta began as Confederate troops set their munitions on fire to prevent the enemy from getting them. After two months of fighting, Union troops

Mrs. Burton Harrison of Alexandria, Virginia also described her memories of the civil conflict. Harrison released *Recollections Grave and Gay* in 1911 and provided a testimonial to the trials of her war experiences. Harrison lost her family home in Alexandria during the war to which she focused much of her writings. "Centres of pleasant gatherings" were turned into "homes of tragedies," she recalled. Harrison told of how a great many "hospitable homes" in this once genteel southern town had been "overshadowed by the sacrifice of their best beloved in the war." These "homes made desolate" became altars of her community's Confederate dead as many families proudly "hung memorials and tattered banners" in their honor. The homes were emblems of preservation, of remembrance, and of memorialization in the postwar years. She wanted to garner the sympathies of the reader, to illustrate, as had authors of the reclamation era, the price the South paid for its war against the North. The flags and "tattered banners" were emblems of proud resolution, of remembrance of their loved ones' bravery and a showing of their continued support to affirm the cause.[62]

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seized the city. The siege of Atlanta boosted northern morale and aided in Lincoln's re-election against Democrat George McClellan in 1864.

[62] Mrs. Burton Harrison, *Recollections Grave and Gay* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 160. Born in 1843 in Lexington, Kentucky, Harrison's father moved the family east in the early 1850s. By the time the war came to Virginia, her older brother joined the Alexandria regiment in the CSA. At eighteen, Harrison witnessed the First and Second battles of Bull Run. After the war, she and her mother traveled to Europe for two years which gave her the opportunity to study different languages, art, and music. They returned to Virginia in 1867 and Constance quickly became reacquainted with Burton Norvell Harrison, who had been the private

Mrs. St. Julien Ravenel dedicated her written reclamation efforts to the antebellum past of her home town. Educated at a private school in Charleston, South Carolina, Harriot Horry Ravenel was a novelist and budding historian in the years before the war. *Charleston: The Place and the People*, released in 1912, offers an in-depth history of the elite class in one of the oldest cities of America. She wrote dutifully of their colonial beginnings, the hardships of English rule, and tales of their Revolutionary War past. The planters and farmers of her state, "who knew familiarly every forest path, every river, every creek," had aided in the fight for independence and rallied in the common American cause. They "made swords and pikes from scythes and tires; shot-guns were in every house; the women spun and wove indefatigably." Ravenel consciously and carefully described the years prior to the Civil War to show that southerners had been contributors to the country, patriotic until pushed to rebel against the government.[63]

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secretary of President Jefferson Davis during the war. She was an accomplished writer and novelist, and published more than fifty works ranging from satire to comedy to fictional works based on her recollections of the time spent in Virginia.

[63] Mrs. St. Julien Ravenel, *Charleston: The Place and the People* (New York: MacMillian Company, 1912), 305. Harriot Horry Rutledge Ravenel was born in Charleston, South Carolina in August 1832. Her father Edward was a naval captain and her mother was the daughter of a South Carolinian Congressmen and granddaughter of Eliza Pickney, renowned indigo producer in the state. At age nineteen, she married physician and agricultural chemist St. Julien Ravenel. She bore nine children, two during the war years. St. Julien Ravenel worked for the Confederacy to produce medicines capable of helping wounded soldiers on the battlefield. She and her family were forced to flee 5 East Battery St. in Charleston to Virginia, whilst

In the last twenty-one pages of her five-hundred-page narrative, Ravenel assessed Charleston after the war. "In order to finish the story of Charleston, some mention of the war in which her old life ended must be made, briefly as possible." She continued for several pages, writing of South Carolina's move toward secession prior to the presidential election in 1860. She asserted that John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry had angered and outraged her state and "the feeling of being evinced by the North filled the South with horror and indignation … For the first time the Southern people thoroughly understood how they were regarded." The brevity of her discussion of South Carolina's charge to secession, illustrated in only a few lines, denied any fault in her home state's role in this great conflict. She wanted to make sure that South Carolina would be remembered for its greatness and dependability, a history to be regarded and cherished, not its damning part in starting the Civil War.[64]

Writers like Gay, Harrison, and Ravenel maintained that they needed to release their wartime memories for "posterity," for the good of future generations. These women saw it their civic duty to not only release their memories to nullify their defeat or reclaim what was lost but to transfer their accounts to southerners of the new era. It would now be the duty of Confederate children to continue and preserve southern white identity. Women like Gay, Harrison, and

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Sherman's troops made their way from Savannah up to Columbia and east into her hometown. In 1879, she released a romantic Southern novel, *The Days that are Not*, under a pseudonym and then went on to publish three more books that celebrated her community and the prominent people who lived there. She died in July 1912 in Charleston, survived by her children and grandchildren.

[64] Ravenel, *Charleston*, 486-487.

Ravenel exemplified the ways in which Confederate women remained agents of war memory, preserving the southern past for the next generation. Steeped in the stories of their war heritage, children of South took on the cause, to affirm their ancestors' reclamation after the war.

Numerous publications illustrate this final shift of war memory from one generation to the next. The diary of Sarah Morgan Dawson is one of the most widely read war diaries to date. Dawson first attempted to publish her memories shortly after the war in 1868. However, it was rejected, deemed unworthy of publication and returned to the author "with cold regrets that the temptation to rearrange it" was too great. Her son, Warrington, took it upon himself to insure publication of his mother's work, and in so doing was sure to include this memory of the afternoon she received word of her failure. He recalled that his mother, "wounded and profoundly discouraged," wanted to throw the linen envelope that contained her diaries into the fire. Her papers—the hard evidence of her experiences on the western front, of what she believed was the demise of the South and the undoing of her world—would disappear, just as the life she knew before the war had disappeared. Warrington urged his mother to deed him the coveted records of her war recollections and gained his mother's permission to "make such use of them as [he] might think fitting" after her death. Sarah Morgan Dawson died in Paris, France in 1909 at the age of sixty-seven. Four years later, the first edition of *The Civil War Diaries of Sarah Morgan* was released. Warrington Dawson's insistence upon revealing his family's active participation in the war is telling of how many postbellum southerners maintained their reclamation practices of this civil conflict well into the twentieth century. Only this time, it was

the 'children of the Southland' who took on the task as agents of war memory. The generational transference of memory shaped the way southerners and northerners alike remembered the war.[65]

For many women of the South, places that once held fond memories of a genteel, happy life before "Yankee aggression" and postwar occupation were scarred by the war. The southern landscape had become a symbol during the postwar years, a token of survival and of southern reclamation. During Reconstruction, Mrs. Cornelia McDonald assembled the pages she had written in Winchester, Virginia, along with recollections she penned after the war. In 1937 McDonald's diary was published and annotated by her youngest son Hunter McDonald. The author dedicated her war memories to the "Southland" and described how she once played in the "poor little mountain brook" near Manassas as a child. "And now," she explained some years later, "the homely name of that place has become classic, as much as any in ancient story, for as goodly men, and as glorious heroes dyed its waters that day with their blood, as any that ever fell on the hard-fought battle fields of the world." McDonald imprinted upon her readers the notion that the southern people paid a heavy price for the sins of slavery. She felt it her duty, her civic right, to publicly reconcile this debt and insisted that they had atoned for their transgressions. In the next passage, the author recalled the catastrophe of dead and injured soldiers being carted through the city, and rued the destruction of her childhood, of her heritage, and of memories that once were. It is easily understood why many elite Confederate women, including countless numbers of women in LMAS and the UDC, zealously sought to reclaim the southern landscape. These women wanted to recover their losses, and reinvent a life that resembled versions of an

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[65] Sarah Morgan Dawson, *A Confederate Girl's Diary* (New York: Houghton & Mifflin, 1913), xxviii-xxix.

antebellum past. Hunter McDonald, a generation removed from the terrible conflict, continued the wartime recollections of his mother and, thus, affirmed the transfer or shift in Civil War memory.[66]

Many diarists recorded the loss of property during Union occupation, specifically during William Sherman's final, forceful march through South Carolina in 1865 as he laid waste to countless plantations and farms. From Lexington, Virginia, poet and author Margaret Junkin Preston described the day Union soldiers stormed into her community on the way to Richmond, ransacking almost every house in their path. She recorded, "I am in despair! Forty thousand troops are marching upon Richmond through here; eight thousand more left in Stanton … Richmond must fall—how can it withstand such numbers!" In the lines that followed, Preston revealed the ultimate fear she felt as she watched her life stolen from her. She continued, "How awful is war! … every sheep has been slaughtered, every cow, and the horses carried off. We are ruined, nearly; if this house is burned, then all is gone but the bare land." Preston then described the comfort she found through writing, "I continue to scratch down a line now and then, to occupy myself. I do it too, that my father and friends in the North may know—if ever I can send them these notes—something of what I am passing through." It seems safe to assume that she wrote so that her ancestors would know the hardship she endured. Bequeathed of her mother's diary, Elizabeth Randolph Preston Allan published this collection of memories in 1903, explaining that it was in honor of the "loyal demand" among her mother's readers that she chose

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[66] Mrs. Cornelia McDonald, *A Diary with Reminiscences of the War and Refugee Life* (Nashville: Hunter McDonald, 1934), 28-30.

to reveal these journals. Allan not only released her mother's work to faithful readers, but reinforced traditions of publication that espoused sympathy and celebrated Southern resolve.[67]

Twenty-three-year-old Pauline DeCaradeuc, like Preston, wrote of her experience of Sherman's March and the scores of "Yankees" who tromped into her family home in Aiken, South Carolina. By the time the war ended, Pauline lost two potential suitors and over a dozen friends and neighborhood acquaintances to the conflict. Their family home and vineyard was looted and destroyed as Sherman's troops made their way through Charleston, Aiken, and into Columbia. In late 1865, Pauline met and married Jacob Guerard Heyward, a Confederate officer and prisoner of war since 1863. They had nine children, five of whom survived childhood. Pauline's diary was transcribed in 1928 by her daughter Elise and printed for the family. The transcription was dedicated to the South Carolina Historical Association in 1937, which later made it available for online public readership. When Elise Heyward transcribed her mother's memories, she became an agent of war memory. Nine years later, she transferred this war story from the privacy of her family collection to the public collection of the state's Historical Association. These actions affirmed the continuance of her mother's war history, and of her war legacy, as it allowed historians like Mary Robertson to edit and publish her mother's war

[67] Elizabeth Randolph Preston Allan, *The Life and Letters of Margaret Junkin Preston* (Boston, Houghton & Mifflin, 1903), 192-193.

memories some fifty-five years after she donated them in *A Confederate Lady Comes of Age: The Journal of Pauline DeCaradeuc Heyward, 1863-1888*.[68]

The journals and wartime diaries mentioned in this chapter only scratch the surface of those published and available for research. More research is needed to fully understand why the children of Confederate women writers chose to release their mothers' wartime documents. The intention here, however, is to show a transference, a shift from the war generation to the postwar generation who publicized these writings. The children of the South also worked to preserve their ancestors' antebellum traditions and heritage and, thus, helped to shape and even create southern Civil War history. They, too, were agents of memory and had an important role in *re*-membering the region's wartime past, as had their Confederate mothers.

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[68] Pauline DeCaradeuc Heyward, *A Confederate Lady Comes of Age: The Journal of Pauline DeCaradeuc Heyward, 1863-1888*, ed. Mary D. Robertson (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992).

CONCLUSION

When I began the long road of researching and writing about Confederate women writers—their role in postwar southern society and the cultural purpose their writings served in the twentieth century—a tragic event had just occurred in our country. Nine parishioners, including a state Senator, at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Charleston, South Carolina, one of the oldest congregations of its kind in the nation, were gunned down while in a Wednesday night prayer meeting. A twenty-one-year-old white supremacist attended the hour-long meeting before opening fire on the group. He waited until their heads were hung in closing prayer, eyes closed and completely vulnerable, before shooting and killing his victims in the hopes of setting fire to a race war. Almost two years have passed since then in which time the assailant was charged, convicted, and sentenced to death per federal law. The gunman did not fulfill his desires to create such chaos in our nation but did open an exchange of ideas, of intellectual discussion surrounding the meaning of such a racially charged, heinous act in the twenty-first century. It would be incorrect for me to say that this case has held no bearing on my study of southern memory. The terrorist, seen posing with the Confederate battle flag on several social media postings just months before these murders, was motivated by his deeply-rooted beliefs, learned beliefs of hatred. Sometime in the twenty years of his life, these sentiments regarding race and societal order had been taught to him. As I dove deeper into the lives of Confederate women through their writings and began to see a trend emerge of their intent to pass on the traditions of the antebellum South, I could not help but make a connection between what I was writing and the hate crimes committed at the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston. The women in my study sought to preserve the southern way of life, to ensure that their southern selfhood was not lost with the war. To safeguard themselves, their families and

communities, from oblivion, Confederate women released their wartime recollections to the world after the war. This set into motion a continuum, a sustainment of sentiment amongst whites in the region. Four years of Civil War, however bloody and devastating, could not topple the fundamental ideologies toward social order upon which elites in the southern states had built their wealth, their livelihoods, and identities.

As their men left for war in 1861, Confederate women were plunged into uncharted waters. They were now *the* preservers of the home front and were left behind to ensure their survival. They were the protectors of the next generation, their communities, and the Confederacy. This war demanded that southern women step out of the private roles as wives and mothers of the home but into a public one as the guardians of the Southland. Their experiences during the conflict have been the focus of many foundational studies by historians such as Bell Irvin Wiley and Drew Gilpin Faust. Other professionals like Kimberly Harrison and Betsy Glade insist that after the war, the writings of Confederate women were rooted in southerners' desire to recover and reclaim what was lost. This study has sought to resolve the question: How? How did Confederate women writers reclaim and, thus, commemorate their antebellum lives? I have argued that they were agents of memory. Once they released their letters, diaries, recollections, and reminisces after the war, they expanded their role as the preservers on the home front during the war to the postwar years and even into the next century.

Once the war was over, devastation faced many white southerners. Much like after the great tragedies of our time, for example the 9/11 attacks in 2001 and the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013, people are shaken, defeated, terrified, and shocked. Then, to find comfort in commonality, in shared suffering and heartache, they come together and try to recover and reclaim the remnants of their lives. Following the Civil War, Confederate women writers

publicized their memories in a collective movement of reclamation. They joined other women of ladies' organizations and associations who focused on the honor and bravery of the military men who fought and died for the southern cause. The women of my study, however, shifted their focus to their roles on the home front and honored the resilience of the southern ladies who endured the cruelties of war and occupation, organized to supply the ill-equipped Confederate armies, and maintained order while chaos and mayhem surrounded them. In this way, southern women created a rhetorical phenomenon that not only reclaimed what was lost in the war but also furthered their position in postwar society as keepers of white southern identity. In their "victorious struggle" to recover and to reclaim their lives, Confederate women writers created and shaped southern memory for themselves. The physical, material, and psychological landscape of the region was devastated but it was to be the work of southern women that would rebuild the social and cultural scape for whites in the postwar South. Between the end of the war 1865 and 1895, southern women writers fulfilled their civic duty of recovery by publishing their war recollections. Thus, they implanted their narrative of the war into its history, as those who read their accounts most often did not question their validity, for they had witnessed the chaos of war first-hand and their testimonies were evidence of their experiences. Their war stories became the history of the war on the southern home front.

In 1896, when states and local municipalities were given the support of the Supreme Court to maintain segregation laws, the reclamation movement was over. White southerners had reclaimed the region, they had reconciled their defeat and were once again dominant within the societal order of the South. Some Confederate women writers continued their civic duty of publicizing their war memories. The purpose of these publications, however, changed as the authors sought to pass on their accounts to the next generation. They wanted the children of the

South to know their war heritage, which they considered a cornerstone of white southern identity. Once their children took on the task of continuance and published their mothers' war writings, Confederate women writers were affirmed of their "victorious struggle" to recover from the war. They were successful, passing the torch of their heritage to their children and grandchildren. These beliefs continued for many generations and their sentiments of racial division and supremacy have persisted, as seen in the Charleston shooting, etched into the history of the South.

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