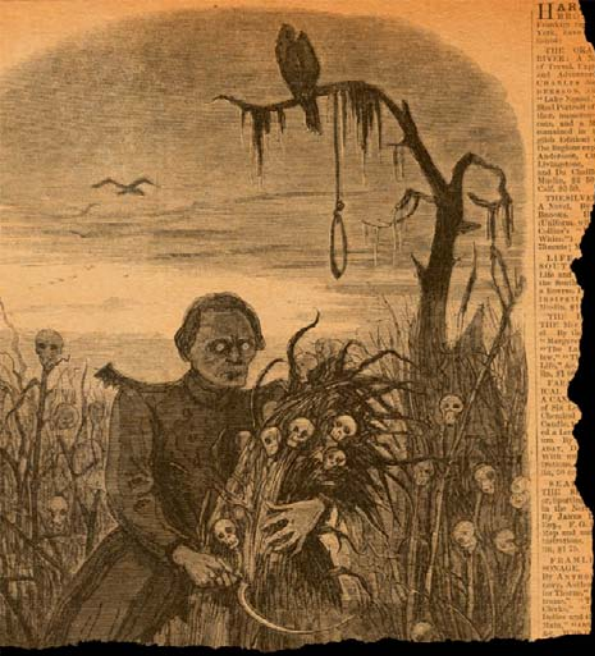

WEIRDING THE WAR

STORIES FROM THE CIVIL WAR'S RAGGED EDGES

EDITED BY STEPHEN BERRY

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Stories from the Civil War's Ragged Edges

EDITED BY STEPHEN BERRY

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FOREWORD

Meatloaf was likely the start of it all. Conversations at a series of lunches in Athens, Georgia, with Stephen Berry, Sam Thomas, and myself wandered into topics that intrigued us about the study of the American Civil War. The word "weird" surfaced quite often. We remarked upon this circumstance and achieved consensus, and alliteration, about a symposium entitled "Weirding the War."

The papers presented here in this volume emerged from the symposium held at the T. R. R. Cobb House in Athens. As Steve has pointed out in his introduction, "weird" is wonderful. These topics, presumably at the edges of the war, are often "edgy" indeed – at the leading edge of where our studies seem to be heading. Our contributors are exciting scholars whose insight offered here explains a lot about the American experience.

My own offering to "Weirding the War," the symposium, was a piece of "history as performance art," regarding the plight of the Museum of the Confederacy. At a "welcome to Athens" dinner party hosted by Peggy and Denny Galis, I showed up with a shopping bag containing family-sized boxes of Cheerios, Shredded Wheat, and Honey Bunches of Oats; a half-pint of half-and-half; and two sticks of butter. I used these items to demonstrate the problems associated with the location of what is the premier collection of Confederate artifacts anywhere. The Museum of the Confederacy is to the Confederate States of America what Hollywood is to film, what Wall Street is to money, or what Wimbledon is to tennis.

The Museum of the Confederacy is located where it is because the White House of the Confederacy is there, and together these buildings compose three-fourths of an acre of real estate. But surrounding this parcel is the Medical College of Virginia, the teaching hospital complex that was a couple of blocks away when Jefferson Davis lived in the White House. Now the Medical College of Virginia Commonwealth University and its hospitals are sprawling and threatening to swallow the museum.

To get some sense of this situation, imagine a half-pint container, the kind with milk or cream that is common in school lunchrooms and supermarkets. This is the White House of the Confederacy. Imagine also two sticks of butter, or margarine if you wish, arranged in an "L" and placed near the milk/cream container. These items represent the museum. Then conjure family-sized cereal boxes – Cheerios, Shredded Wheat, Honey Bunches of Oats, whatever – arranged on three sides around the milk/cream and butter. (You *may* try this at home. I did at the Galis home.) Please notice that the cereal boxes dominate the display and make the milk and butter containers appear quite small.

Hospitals, in the contemporary sense of specialized places for treatment, care, and repair of ill or injured people, arose in the United States in large measure as a result of the American Civil War. In Richmond, Virginia, as elsewhere, disease is a growth industry. Hospitals in the present and recent past come with chainlink fences, huge construction cranes, and hardhat areas alongside emergency rooms. For the Museum of the Confederacy, the Medical College of Virginia is a problem. Construction debris and detours compound the intimidation of would-be visitors attempting to find the museum and then find some place to park their cars.

Imagine a tour bus driver/guide trying to decide what to do with his or her vehicle and forty septuagenarians in an alien place with two ambulances bearing down, sirens screaming. Caretakers of the increasingly distant past have serious challenges.

Having done my "weird" demonstration, I enjoyed the papers presented at the T. R. R. Cobb House by extremely bright scholars. I confirmed my belief that much of the most exciting research about the war concerns these edges, the strange stories about people and events that are just weird.

Since the symposium, in the course of trying to understand a war more recent than the American Civil War, I have read Sebastian Junger's *War* about the conflict in Afghanistan still taking place. Junger, perhaps best known as the author of *The Perfect Storm,* which became a feature film as well as a bestselling book, embedded himself in an infantry platoon stationed in a remote valley in eastern Afghanistan. As I read Junger's account of the horrors of life and death in a very harsh place, I

took notice whenever the word "weird" appeared. Would it be possible to "weird" Junger's *War*?

Following, then, are some instances of the term "weird" in *War*. I cannot guarantee that I found all of the times that this talented journalist used this word, but surely this is an intriguing sample of those I caught.

Returning from a patrol in the cold, "with snow-covered mountains all around us it's hard not to think we're just on some weird camping trip." Junger then describes many species of filth not uncommon to camping trips – except in degree and duration.[1]

Junger watches a videotape he made while riding in a Humvee. Someone detonated an explosive device beneath the vehicle. The explosion took place under the engine block of the vehicle, not the passenger space ten feet away. Thus Junger survived. When he looks at the tape he reflects, "My pulse gets so weird."[2]

Junger ponders why the war continues: "[W]hy would you want to wake up in the morning and shoot at us?" And why could not "the actual guys behind the guns . . . somehow sit down together and work this out." "The sheer weirdness of this war – of any war – can never entirely be contained and breaks through at odd moments."[3]

When no contact with the Taliban occurred for several weeks he observed "the men are getting a little weird." The absence of firefights "produces a cruel mix of boredom and anxiety . . . all the dread and none of the adrenaline."[4]

Describing a platoon of men penned behind concertina wire without women or combat required "weird" three times in one page.[5]

Perhaps war has a universality about itself. Maybe the link between the Civil War and other wars, including the one in Afghanistan, is "weird." Or maybe the universal metaphor is "meatloaf."

Emory M. Thomas

Notes

1. Sebastian Junger, *War* (New York: Twelve, 2010), 157.
2. *Ibid*., 147.
3. *Ibid*., 170.
4. *Ibid*., 208.
5. *Ibid*., 224.

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Introduction

STEPHEN BERRY

In a particularly poignant moment in Ken Burns's fabulously popular PBS series *The Civil War,* narrator David McCullough describes the results of the first day at Shiloh. April 6, 1862, had dawned on a peach orchard in full bloom. It was a Sunday in America with soft pink petals floating on the breeze. By nightfall, however, a storm had gathered over the orchard; between thunderclaps, one could hear the groans of the uncollected wounded, and by lightning strikes, one could see the hogs feeding on the ungathered dead.

This, ironically, is the war Americans love to love. Such gore is legitimated, made meaningful, because the violence served a higher purpose; the war condensed us as a nation, redeemed our sins, and rededicated us to freedom. Lincoln called the war, "this fiery trial through which we pass." Historian Shelby Foote called it the "cross-roads of our being." No one doubts that, taken as a country, we passed the trial and took the right turn at the crossroads. Any other way of thinking is painful to contemplate.

But *precisely* because so many died, we *should* contemplate the meaning of the war. We should consider – not merely the possibility that we took a wrong turn at the crossroads or did not pass the trial but even that the "crossroads" and the "trial" did not exist; they are mere tropes. The soft pink petals of Burns's peach orchard shroud the dying and the dead – and our eyes – just when we ought to pay attention; the sublime awfulness of the scene is so intoxicating we don't notice it has been purged of a grosser truth. For why *are* the dying uncollected and the dead ungathered? At least partly because hundreds of soldiers have chosen to loot the field amid the groans of their own wounded comrades. By guttering lamplight and in the midst of a downpour, they are rifling the bodies and the captured tents, drinking what they can, and staggering off to Corinth to stash the rest. It is not the actions of war's hard hand that are difficult to redeem – Burns knew that – it is the actions of humanity's hard heart. Glancing over a battlefield after a Union victory, an adjutant with the Thirty-Eighth Illinois noted that "it was a sad sight and yet [not an] unpleasant one to see those infernal rebels lying on the field – Kicking like a flock of dead partridges."[1]

In an article subtitled "Why We Love the Civil War," Drew Gilpin Faust noted that even after social historians finally "found" the war in the 1990s, they (in their own way) loved it as much as the military historians ever had. Yes, in the new Civil War history, "homefront rivaled battlefront as the decisive factor in war's outcome; common soldiers, rather than generals became the critical military factors in triumph or defeat; women undermined the stability of slavery and the level of civilian morale and contributed to Southern defeat or, conversely, struggled both at home and in military disguise to ensure victory. Perhaps most notably, slaves freed themselves." But if the actors were different, the stage was the same. Still the war was presented "as moment of truth, as occasion for decisive action, as laboratory for agency – even for heroism." The great social revision had succeeded in creating a "war both old and new Civil War historians could love."[2]

The authors of the following essays are not suggesting that we now need a war we cannot love. To be sure, a book dedicated to cowards, bummers, drunks, prostitutes, scavengers, and profiteers (in short, to selfishness and its victims) might make a nice antidote to the dominant themes of sacrifice. But the real solution is a war we must feel ambivalent

about (as we ought anything that killed so many of us, and so many on so wrong a side of a great moral question). In a terrific 1999 essay titled, "Worrying about the Civil War," Ed Ayers hammered home this point in issuing a clarion call, not for a new military history of the war, but for a new revision entirely: "If Americans resist the temptation to count every cost of the Civil War as a 'sacrifice,' we might be more grateful for our simple good fortune and perhaps less self-satisfied with the people we have become. If we acknowledge that we inherit all the past and not merely those parts we like to call our 'heritage,' we would better respect the past's complexity, weight, and importance. If we recognize that the Civil War did not represent the apotheosis of American ideals, we might look for that culmination in the future rather than in the past."[3]

So how do we inherit, or better, how do we *own,* the whole past? We remember that our historical subjects had, if anything, less knowledge, less vision, and as much confusion about their paradoxical world than we have about our own. We remember that there is no "real war" to put in the books; there is only what Whitman himself called the "many-threaded drama," the vast mosaic of lived lives and human choices that shared only the same "fervid atmosphere." We resist, as Ayers suggests, "the very notion of the war as a single story, with a beginning, middle, and end, with turning points and near misses. . . . [We] set aside the Olympian perspective and voice of our dominant books and films to provide a different sense of the war's depth and scale. . . . [And we] give up older reassurances to provide new kinds of clarity."[4]

The essays in this volume are written in this "new revisionist" tradition. What caused the war? Who gets credit for victory or defeat? Who freed the slaves? How did the war condense us as a people? These are tired questions; their assumptions box us in. The essays collected here ask new questions of new social types. For if we are to see this war anew, it must be seen from the eyes of those we haven't heard from yet. And while we have heard a great deal from generals, politicians, and homesick soldiers and their wives, we have heard much less from soldiers who looted bodies and joyfully blew things up; from men who guiltlessly made money making war; from madams who trafficked in the war's wake; and from African American troops who decided desertion was the better part of valor.

In 1881, Mark Twain was invited by *Century* magazine to contribute

a remembrance of his doings during the Civil War. The editor knew Twain hadn't had a distinguished military career, but the author had gained a reputation, and the magazine needed articles on the Missouri theater. Twain, being Twain, began his piece:

> You have heard from a great many people who did something in the war, is it not fair and right that you listen a little moment to one who started out to do something in it but didn't? Thousands entered the war, got just a taste of it, and then stepped out again permanently. These, by their very numbers, are respectable and therefore entitled to a sort of voice, not a loud one, but a modest one, not a boastful one but an apologetic one. They ought not be allowed much space among better people, people who did something. I grant that, but they ought at least be allowed to state why they didn't do anything and also to explain the process by which they didn't do anything.

Twain's point, though he would not have called it such, was historiographical. The *Century* series, which became the staggeringly successful anthology *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War,* was ignoring a whole sector of the population – the "do-nothings" – who helped comprise the war's history.

Like Twain, we do not claim that the social types represented here deserve the loudest voice, only that, by their very numbers, they deserve *some* voice – and that we need more such voices. What about Lincoln's brother-in-law, who made a fortune in crooked war contracts? What about the Union men who sold African Americans into slavery, even after Emancipation? We need to hear more from people like these.

But even as we allow these new social types to tell their versions of the war, and even as we aggregate those versions, we must be comfortable leaving things ironic, fragmented, episodic, and conditional. As Thomas Mann observed, "out of the crooked timber of humanity no straight thing was ever made." This volume is dedicated to leaving things crooked. Undoubtedly, one critic or another will say of one essay or another: "Well, that's not *that* weird." But the point isn't a *Ripley's Believe It or Not!* version of the war. The puzzling and the revolting can be entertaining without being illuminating. Properly narrated and analyzed, however, the isolated incident, even the bizarre one, can be more explanatory, even revelatory, than the typical one. Certainly this was

true of groundbreaking historical works such as Robert Darnton's *Great Cat Massacre* or Natalie Davis's *Return of Martin Guerre*. Borrowing from their playbook but broadening their scope, we might propose the term "weirding" as the historians' equivalent of "freakonomics" (the use of economic theory to investigate atypical subjects in the hope of yielding fresh insights into typical social dynamics). We might also remember that to antebellum Americans, "weird" meant prophetic – as in the "Wyrd" sisters of Lincoln's beloved *Macbeth* or the "weird John Brown" of Melville's "The Prophet."

But most important, we must remember that looking at the margins to understand the middle has method as well as madness. Distinct from the social histories that have filled the field since Maris Vinovskis hectored his fellow social historians for forgetting the war, the essays collected here explore the cultural meaning of the war for its varied participants, meanings that may or may not overlap with the "larger" questions that interest political and military historians. To chase *meaning* we must suspend our predilection for cause-and-effect thinking; such history has its place but it also has a nasty, wish-fulfilling way of imposing a fully ordered, logical, progressive, and knowable past on the actual past actors, who struggled with their whole hearts to make contested meaning out of the seeming disorder, illogic, and entropy of their half-known lives. The past is a foreign country *constantly being colonized by the present,* made to do the work of the present – and this is especially true for Civil War studies where the sheer mass of the literature can make the war seem so fond and familiar. "Weirding," then – whatever else we might call it – is a way of alienating the past from its present purposes, releasing the past from its present work, and returning to the past a measure of its original "foreignness." The contributors in this volume attempt to do just that.

These essays share a final commonality, also borrowed from cultural history: a fondness for narrative. (Hence the word "stories" in the subtitle.) Many of the essays have a single story at their center; others seek very deliberately to unfold their tales, not as an assaying of evidence, but as a rendering of experience. For if we are to do "weirding" right, we must "weird" not only the *what* but also the *how.* Multiplying our social types, becoming more attentive to *meaning,* will only take us so far. In the end, we are imprisoned most by our own genre, by the lockstep way we pile

up examples to build monuments to the illusion of the Truth. Narrative strategy is a tool, not a trick, and to the extent that academe seems purposely bad at it, it's an astonishing shame. Give us stories that happened to real people who represent only themselves, these essays seem to say. because the war was essentially fractal: take any slice of it, and you have the whole of it, if only we can help you see it that way.

All of the essays in this volume were originally presented in October 2009 at the inaugural "UnCivil Wars" Conference, an annual forum on the Civil War era sponsored by the Watson-Brown Foundation and the T. R. R. Cobb House. "Give us a single story, incident, or phenomena that leaves us with questions about the war we thought we knew," the call for papers urged, and that is precisely what these presenters did.

In part 1, "Death Becomes Us: The Civil War and the Appetite for Destruction," contributors look over the shoulders of past actors as they contemplate the destructiveness of the war in which they are engaged. Leading off the volume, as he did the conference, Michael DeGruccio in his essay "Letting the War Slip through Our Hands: Material Culture and the Weakness of Words in the Civil War Era" surveys the wide range of emotional (and to a lesser extent economic) needs that drove Americans to scavenge their battlefields and their dead. Some were looking for loved ones, but most were looters and curiosity-seekers, trinket and trophy takers, and the objects they took, treasured, traded, and sold were part of the process by which Americans made meaning (and memories) of the war. Things matter, DeGruccio concludes, as much or more than words, because, like talismans, they sit at the intersections and boundaries of our shared humanity. Inanimate they may be, but things live forever, and when once they have belonged to us, some part of us lives on in them too.

In "The Pleasures of Civil War Ruins," Megan Kate Nelson concludes that Americans often took a sublime satisfaction not only in wading through the flotsam of their war's destruction but also in witnessing (and causing) the destruction itself. Civil War soldiers were young men, after all, and along with snips and snails, boys have a perverse admiration for their own power to destroy. Nelson makes such perversity historically specific, however, by noting that the resulting landscape of destruction fit into an existing aesthetic category: the romance of ruins. The Victorians,

she points out, were obsessed with tumuli and broken columns; from Rome to Babylon, the remnants of civilizations reminded sojourning Americans of the hubris of civilization-building generally and acted as an antidote to the "Go *a-head* mania" of their age – "the reckless, growing & insatiable thirst to drive every thing at *Steam Speed*." In "ruin-ing" their own country, then, soldiers were giving America the same sort of awful dignity other civilizations possessed, and, as good Victorians, they had alternately to sob and marvel at their own awesome handiwork.

Completing this section on Civil War Americans' "appetite for destruction," Rodney J. Steward in his essay "Confederate Menace: Sequestration on the North Carolina Home Front" points out a more prosaic (and less ambivalent) reason some Americans loved the war – they were making money. To be sure, many a future "robber baron" got his start as a member of the North's "Shoddy Aristocracy." DuPont (gunpowder), Borden (condensed milk), Brooks Brothers (uniforms), and Procter & Gamble (soap) all made their own kind of killing in the conflict. Steward, however, points us toward the understudied opportunists of the Confederacy – the Receivers whom the Southern courts appointed to track down, seize, and auction off the property of "alien enemies." In the case of some Receivers, the resulting fraudulent auctions amounted to little more than transfers of title in which the Receiver and his allies made out like bandits.

Part 2, "Hell's Belles," takes us inside the world of the war's *female* opportunists. In "The Tale of Three Kates," LeeAnn Whites reminds us that it wasn't merely Missouri's war-addled boys who went a little wild. Girls too seized the opportunity to run away and join an underworld of bars and brothels, and they were just as likely as their guerrilla brothers to find political justifications for their actions. In an impressive feat of archival detective-work, Whites resurrects the three faces of Kate Clarke Quantrill, "child-bride" of the notorious bushwhacker, William Clarke Quantrill. Kate was a woman who brazenly made money the old-fashioned way – as a wife, prostitute, and madam. Never a victim, and slippery as an eel, Kate Quantrill was a self-actualized chameleon and con-girl – and she was in every social sense a greater "guerrilla" than her "husband."

The elite women and girls who populate the essays by Anya Jabour

and Steven E. Nash were not quite so "loose" as Kate Quantrill, but they certainly made the most of the war years' relaxed oversight of courtship. In "Days of lightly-won and lightly-held hearts," Jabour shows how amid the social hubbub, and in the absence of chaperones, girls could flirt (and more than flirt) with any man in uniform and explain it away as a patriotic "duty." However, as Nash shows in "Love Is a Battlefield," writing of the case of Lizzie Alsop, when the objects of their innocent affections came home in pine boxes, and when the surviving men wanted not their bodies once but their hearts forever as proof of their patriotism, the dance was over, and the debs went home with a different sort of premature awareness.

In "Dissecting the Torture of Mrs. Owens," the first essay of part 3, Barton A. Myers examines a very different case of "patriotism" being practiced on the female body. While torture was not the official policy of either government, it is increasingly clear that it occurred with greater frequency and in a greater variety of guises than we have generally allowed. The mid-nineteenth century had its own version of stress-positions and water tortures, and those with a taste for sadism found newly legitimated outlets for their urges. The Confederate high command never explicitly sanctioned torture, but as Myers shows, they created an environment in which torture became both a likely practice and one that would end only when it was exposed – not as immoral – but as ineffective.

Joan E. Cashin takes us even further "inside the Civil War body" in her examination of the war's steady nutritional assault on the South, "Hungry People in the Wartime South." In ways environmental historians are helping us to appreciate, the South may have been an agriculture power, but it was the North's food power that won the war. Cashin examines the consequences of this disparity for the South, where rat-eating was only the most extreme example of a severe dislocation to the American diet that had real long-term health consequences. What is refreshing about both of these essays is that they record the war's impacts and assaults on the *civilian* body.

Finally, in "The Historian as Death Investigator," I conclude the section on the Civil War body with a meditation on coroners' reports and what it means to us, the living, to bear witness to so much Civil War death. If we are to "weird" the war – if we are to manufacture moments

of revelatory, *unpleasant* intimacy with the past, moments of being hideously, heartbreakingly "inside war"—then we must break the fourth wall to have a frank conversation with ourselves and our readers about the bedrock of history's allure: our own mortality, held up to us, and then distanced from us, as we rubberneck at historical accidents. Beginning as an examination of the coroner's office during the Civil War era, the essay gradually morphs, turning its lens from the dead "them" to the dying "us" to suggest that we are all—coroners, historians, and readers—just death-watchers of different kinds.

Amy Murrell Taylor's essay "How a Cold Snap in Kentucky Led to Freedom for Thousands," which begins part 4, "The Tortuous Road to Freedom," might just as easily have been placed in the previous section, for it concerns other civilian bodies, this time black ones. In November 1864, Union soldiers turned black refugees out of a contraband camp in Kentucky because they wanted the indoor spaces for themselves. When the children of some United States Colored Troops soldiers froze to death as a result, the Union high command was forced by public opinion to provide for and ultimately free 70,000 black refugees. The bitterest irony, Murrell Taylor notes, is that the cold weather had the power to free African Americans because it also had the perceived power to kill them. Northerners took great comfort in this proof that their climate would prove ultimately unfriendly to any newly freed blacks.

In "Rituals of Horsemanship," Paul Christopher Anderson traces a more virulent thread of racism running through the postwar South's revived ring tournaments. The Klan, in some strict sense, may have had its origins in a Pulaski social club, but it owed its theatrical trappings, Anderson speculates, to its violent burlesque of these chivalric horse rituals that often drew crowds of thousands. In a marvelous reading of a culture's profanity, Anderson postulates that the knight rider and the night rider were but inversions of one another—the knight pranced and glittered in a Southern dreamland of Lost Causes and false fronts; the clansman stripped off the mask when he donned his hood to ride wraith-like across a Southern wasteland of blighted desires and restive gray ghosts.

Andrew L. Slap concludes this section on a more optimistic note, however, in "The Loyal Deserters." While Northern and Southern racism created barriers to true freedom, African Americans managed to forge

stable and sustaining communities anyway. Indeed, Slap presents evidence that the soldiers who deserted the Third United States Colored Heavy Artillery Regiment may not have been actuated by cowardice but by a simple calculation: the community that had their best interest at heart was not the Union army but their Memphis neighborhoods. In all three of the essays in part 4, something is not what it usually seems. The freeing of slaves is the work of weather and prejudice. The frivolous ring tournament is but a Klan's masquerade. And blacks free themselves from the army that freed them.

Leading off part 5, "Honor Is the Gift a Man Gives Himself," Kenneth W. Noe gives us a nuanced portrait of yet another deserter, Captain George Dobson of the Tenth Mississippi. In 1862, Dobson carried his brother-in-law's body from the Battle of Munfordville to the rear of the army and then all the way home to Mississippi, where he remained absent without leave. When he returned and was arrested, he defended and was even sustained in his priorities by his army's commander, the notorious martinet, Braxton Bragg. On another day, in other circumstances, Dobson might have been shot – but he wasn't, and his story reminds us of the deep contingencies of whim and charisma that governed all relations between men.

In "Soldier-Speak," Peter S. Carmichael attempts to penetrate the vernacular of the average Johnny Reb and Billy Yank. From their letters home, we know a great deal about how soldiers spoke to their families, but we have no comparable source that can help us get at how they spoke to each other. Conceding DeGruccio's contention that words almost failed these men, Carmichael finds a bedrock of real meaning in the unlikeliest of places – in soldiers' clichés. Stripped of their reflexive use and emotional misdirection, terms like "bold soldier boy" and "poor fellow" offer a key to the world of the rank-and-file, and, as Carmichael contends, we need to take them seriously.

Daniel E. Sutherland concludes this part on the oddities of the male mind by taking seriously the painter James McNeill Whistler's contention that *if* he would have fought in the Civil War he would have become a major-general. Striding confidently through a counterfactual minefield, Sutherland gives us the shockingly plausible history of the rise of "James Abbott Whistler" through the Confederate ranks, making

a convincing case that what didn't happen can seem just as likely as what did. This narrative strategy works especially well for the braggart Whistler, just as Whites's "three faces of Kate" structure is a perfect fit for the self-inventive Kate Quantrill. Both essays remind us that historians can learn a great deal from the emerging genre of creative nonfiction. When academics take narrative strategy seriously, when they push themselves to follow the dictum of any good architect—"form follows function"—they can both tell a better story *and* make a better argument.

The final part of this volume, "Picking Up the Pieces," gives us three different looks at the cultural work of healing and memory-making in the postwar period. In "Confederate Amputees and the Women Who Loved (or Tried to Love) Them," Brian Craig Miller reminds us of the war's heavy cost to the women who lost some but not all of their husbands. Broken men needed more than their egos and their honor patched up. In many cases, the vine literally had to support the oak, and women's public celebration of their men's sacrifice belied the daily grind of compensating for men's partial loss of mobility, functionality, and sometimes even sanity.

Despite their wives' best efforts, however, some men receded into worlds of alcoholism, drug addiction, and mental illness. In her essay, "Will They Ever Be Able to Forget," Diane Miller Sommerville begins to give us for the South what Eric Dean's *Shook over Hell* gave us for the North: a sense of the depth and breadth of post-traumatic stress among Civil War veterans. What is especially intriguing about her essay is how well it pairs with Lesley J. Gordon's. In "Ira Forbes's War," Gordon tells the story of a corporal in the Sixteenth Connecticut who survived Andersonville and returned home to marry, attend Yale, and pursue a career in journalism. Unable to shake his war experiences, however, Forbes became so obsessed with writing and remembering his regimental history that he alienated old comrades, some of whom finally committed him to an asylum. For the historian, the implications of the Sommerville and Gordon essays are disturbing on a number of levels. First, Forbes and his friends disagreed vehemently over basic aspects of their war service. What chance have we of getting the history right if members of the same regiment couldn't agree on what happened? More than this, however, what does it mean that memory-making and post-traumatic stress are

so intimately related? What if the elisions, errors, and exaggerations of memory are not only normal but necessary responses to wartime stress? What if *misremembering* is what a healthy mind does?

Weirding is full of such troubling questions. And as they pile up, essay after essay, one has an aggregating, growing conviction that war is always about *damage,* even at its most heroic, even when certain people and things deserve to be damaged. To be sure, the destruction of slavery was a good thing and a great thing. That we should have had to fight our bloodiest war to end it is neither good nor great. Indeed, it is just sad. And to remember that the end of slavery was only the beginning of a longer battle for the kind of freedom that really matters is sadder still.

Here then is not the grandness of the Civil War but its more than occasional littleness. Here are those who profited by the war and those who lost by it – and not lost all save honor, but lost that too. Here are the cowards, the coxcombs, and the belles, the deserters and the scavengers who hung back and survived, even thrived. Here are those who did not see a redemptive conflict or a manly test but a fool's errand and a fool's grave that better belonged to somebody else. Here are those who did worse than nothing, who were animated not even by misbegotten principles. Here are those who saw and lived the *reality* of the war but decided it would be better lived down, misremembered, repackaged for public consumption. Here, in short, is war.

Notes

1. Quoted in David W. Rolfs, "'No Nearer Heaven Now but Rather Farther Off': The Religious Conflicts and Compromises of Northern Soldiers," in Aaron Sheehan-Dean, ed., *The View from the Ground: Experiences of Civil War Soldiers* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 132. (In the interest of authenticity, all quotations in this volume retain the capitalization, spelling, and syntax found in the original texts.)

2. Drew Gilpin Faust, "'We Should Grow Too Fond of It': Why We Love the Civil War," *Civil War History* (December 2004): 368–84.

3. Edward L. Ayers, "Worrying about the Civil War," in Karen Halttunen and Lewis Perry, eds., *Moral Problems in American Life: New Perspectives on Cultural History* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999).

4. Ayers, "Worrying about the Civil War," 145–66.

PART ONE

Death Becomes Us

The Civil War and the Appetite for Destruction

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Letting the War Slip through Our Hands

Material Culture and the Weakness of Words in the Civil War Era

MICHAEL DEGRUCCIO

Major Sullivan Ballou's final letter to home, penned to his wife Sarah a week before Bull Run, has become something of a Civil War chestnut. Though he had written earlier that morning, when darkness overcame camp Sullivan felt "impelled to write a few lines." He unconvincingly assured Sarah that something "whispered" to him that he would survive the anticipated battle. But forebodings soon crowded out hope. He apparently had heard other whispers. If he should fall on the field, Sullivan begged and consoled her, "do not my dear Sarah, never forget how much I love you, and when my last breath escapes me on the battle field, it will whisper your name." At the letter's sentimental climax, Sullivan promised that if he should die he would return as a spirit to fan the cool breeze across her "throbbing temples." "Do not morn me dead" he continued, "for we shall meet again."

In his extraordinarily popular documentary *The Civil War,* Ken Burns hooked the hearts of millions with Ballou's words, dedicating an en-

tire segment to the soldier's moving swan song. The use of this letter exemplifies what Burns calls "emotional archeology" where, somehow, the deeper we dig into the Civil War the more we find psychic remains that evoke our own buried emotions.[1] What fated this letter to be sifted out and cherished over millions of others is Major Ballou's death at Bull Run a week after he wrote it. What might have been merely one of many overwrought letters from a New England soldier filled with pre-battle jitters instead became (from our end at least) a prophetic manuscript in tune with the cosmos and the real costs of the war. Ballou's pledge to spill his blood to pay down the debt owed to the heroic generation of 1776, his premonition of his own death, and the haunting theme of unfinished love make this and similar sources from the war irresistible. Though rarely as rich, a similar nectar of pathos, romantic love, and prophecy runs throughout the war's surviving manuscripts.

For anyone who studies the Civil War era, words – for good reason – have a magical pull. The crisis over slavery produced more than a few antebellum Ciceros. Spellbinding rhetoric from folks like Stephen Douglas, John Calhoun, Daniel Webster, George Fitzhugh, Henry Clay, Frederick Douglass, and William Lloyd Garrison edged the nation toward war, while the rising standard of rhetorical gifts helped pave the way for an upstart Republican who could craft plain-folk language with the sting and beauty of Dante. And when words soon gave way to black powder, Lincoln regularly disarmed his critics, shifted the war's course, and lent meaning to massive death with exquisite proclamations, speeches, and eulogies. Meanwhile, Americans devoured the papers with a ferocious appetite. Editors ramped up the fustian, as plain-folk Americans – farmers, slaves, women, men, and children – filled hundreds of millions of sheets of paper with words. The Civil War was the apotheosis of American letter and journal writing.[2]

With this embarrassment of archival riches, it is tempting to think that by burrowing further into the heaps of letters, newspapers, and speeches historians will inch their way closer to some grand narrative that captures the "real war." Or that by casting our nets wide enough we can drag back a composite picture of how "common" soldiers felt about the war – from slavery to the experience of battle.[3] There is something self-defeating in all of this, however. The act of war, after all, means that

words have fallen short; that is, words have both incited and failed those who have chosen war over debate. Any "call to arms" is paradoxical in that it depends on rhetoric to convince folks of the futility of more talk. War, the most brutal kind of persuasion, wins arguments – not by debate – but by disfiguring limbs and littering fields with stilled bodies.[4] Like Ballou, soldiers who feared they would soon be silenced through death hurried to write letters, sometimes several before a looming battle, begging their loved ones to respond in kind. Anyone who has read war letters and diaries knows how the mail tormented soldiers who could never quite get enough: their lovers wrote too formally, too vaguely about home life or the health of children, too infrequently, too briefly. Perhaps just as bad as getting no letter was reading a missive that ended too abruptly, or knowing that letters had been lost in delivery.

The flood of Civil War writing did something notable to language, leaving it watered down, abundant yet elusive. No matter how great the outpouring of letters, or how rich to our taste the stilted prose that abounded during the war, words rarely sated Americans' desires. Everywhere, if we look for it, we find Americans – civilians, nurses, politicians, and especially soldiers – writing profusely yet despairingly of the impotence of language. In his strangely brief address at Gettysburg (which followed a two-hour oration) Lincoln said that posterity would "little note, nor long remember what we say here."[5] Because he was flat wrong about what future generations would remember, it is hard to take Lincoln's claim at face value. Perhaps, though, our quest to understand the war primarily through the lilt of words prevents us from hearing what amounts to a disclaimer about language. Words alone, Lincoln intimated, could not hallow or consecrate a place that had already been transformed by battle and the presence of soldiers' mute corpses. After clashes like Gettysburg ordinary Americans said as much. Words failed to express what inhered in the material world. The war had to be seen, felt, tasted, smelled during battle.[6] The sense of futility is repeated everywhere in letters, memoirs, and news reports: "No pen can describe"; "the most gifted writer could not give the slightest shadow"; "no tongue can convey." Soon into the war, expressing how one lacked words became its own cliché.

In his *Complete Hand-Book of the Monuments and Indications and Guide to*

the Positions on the Gettysburg Battle-Field, J. Howard Wert – two decades after the battle – continued to wrestle with his desire to communicate what he experienced during and after the conflict. Throughout the guidebook (part narrative, part tour of the battle's monuments) Wert insisted again and again on the war's ineffability. Attempting to summarize the regimental movements at the Peach Orchard, for example, Wert admitted that it was "almost impossible" to present the action of that "death dealing afternoon" within the limits of an ordinary book.[7] Though he claimed his pen was powerless, Wert depicted Gettysburg as a phantasmagoric hell that confounded the senses with putrid smells, "strange, unearthly noises," and the open air filled with "shattered fragments of human bodies."[8] When his narrative reached the "whirlpool" of the battle known as the Wheatfield, Wert warned his readers that the "repulsive sights of every portion of the battleground were intensified to a degree which no words can hope to adequately portray." Like so many of his comrades, Wert blended horror and hyperbole, evoking images of crimson streams, sod that when pressed by heels "oozed forth blood," and so many dying and dead bodies that the surviving had to walk on top of bodies.[9]

Complete Hand-Book of the Monuments provided a virtual tour of the nearly one hundred stone monuments that veterans' and women's clubs and organizations had erected since the summer of 1863. Throughout, Wert toggles wildly between sensitive descriptions of stonework of obelisks in the 1880s to graphic, if exaggerated, recollections of battles of the past. For Wert, granite served as a kind of portal between the present and the violent past. Alternating sections, for example, bring his readers to a masterfully crafted monument set on an idyllic knoll, twenty years removed from the war, and then suddenly into the teeth of combat. Wert seemed to think that the power of the monuments to evoke the past was something most visitors sensed. That is, many folks found life in the chiseled stone. After drawing attention to one monument graced with a granite knapsack and rolled blanket, Wert wrote that what "especially attracts" the attention of visitors, particularly veterans, was the stoneworkers' use of "appropriate and suggestive military accoutrements." "Mute and motionless," as Wert described them, these common objects of the war "yet seem to speak" of "things of life." Though faces

of commanders, poetic descriptions, and tributes had been chiseled into various monuments, it was these humdrum, perfectly still shapes of cannonballs, knapsacks, artillery boxes, kepi hats, swords, and canteens that somehow spoke to the living.[10] For Wert, at least, the basic military accoutrements, scattered amid the dying and dead, spoke to his own living soul when in 1863 he toured the fields during and after the battle.

Halfway through the guidebook, Wert adds a peculiar twist. After journeying with his readers to a high ridge and reflecting upon a monument erected there, Wert gets swept away by a nightmarish memory of the death struggles that took place below. The reader learns that a knoll a short distance off reminds Wert how swollen bodies of dead Confederates had partly dammed a nearby stream creating great ponds. While his readers know that Wert did not play a typical military role in battle, they do not understand, until Wert comes clean about it, how the author came to know this death scene so intimately. "The writer," he confesses, "wandered over these fields immediately after the fierce strife had ceased," witnessing "death in its ghastliest and most abhorrent forms, everywhere. Festering corpses at every step," including scads of partly buried cadavers, many more left to rot or to be gnawed on by swine. Much of the vast area below, Wert tells his readers, was a "vast hideous charnel house," with the dead sometimes amounting to a "few mutilated fragments and pieces of flesh." In trying to describe the indescribable, Wert demurs, as did millions of soldiers, that "words have lost their power and language is weak." The best attempts at describing battle experience, he goes on, fail to capture "the full intensity of both splendor and horror." "It must be seen and experienced to be understood." But if no wordsmith has ever truthfully depicted battle, Wert wondered, "how must be the failure to describe the field of conflict when the passionate strife has ceased"—once the pomp and drama have petered out, leaving only the "horrible remains in its ghastliest and most terrible forms." In short, through his meditation on various monuments, and visiting parts of the field, Wert had seemingly been transported to death scenes he still could not describe.[11]

Complete Hand-Book of the Monuments leads the reader to believe that these dim, indescribable scenes came to Wert as he actually climbed to this marker on the crest, gazed at the ravines below, and remembered

the carnage. But here, roughly halfway through the book, Wert reveals more. It wasn't an actual landscape, or even the monuments (with their chiseled army rifles or knapsacks that "seemed to speak") that brought the hellish memories rushing back. It wasn't his diary, war letters, or reminiscing with comrades that collapsed the distance between the past and present. Instead, Wert reveals that the grim visions were called forth by dozens of relics that he had gathered long ago from the bloody ground. "As these lines are penned," he makes plain, "from the walls around, cartridge box and cap-box, bayonet and sword, canteen and canister, with a hundred other relics gleaned twenty-three years ago from the fields and woods we are now traversing, look mutely down upon the writer and vividly recall the sorrowful appearance of the bloated and blackened dead that lay close beside."[12]

In the summer of 1863 the Union army hired Wert, a twenty-two-year-old Gettysburg local, as a special government scout, hoping his intimate knowledge of the area would aid the Union in thwarting Confederates' penetration into the North. It isn't clear how Wert fulfilled these duties, but immediately after the battle, if not during, he began what he called his "daily rounds"—wandering over the battlefields and by the field hospitals.[13] Sometime during his rounds, Wert began touching, handling, and pocketing items from the fields. Wert's father and grandfather had accumulated various artifacts and documents pertaining to the American Revolution and the Wert family in general. Perhaps young Wert imagined his activities as a forward-looking continuation of the kind of cultural preservation and commemoration that antebellum Americans increasingly engaged in, especially with relics and objects pertaining to the Revolutionary struggle.[14] But soon Wert's interests consumed him.

Why Wert picked through the carnage and gathered items from the hellish scenes, he did not tell us. What pushed him to inspect the remains of what he frequently described as "ghastly" we can only guess. "Immediately after" the engagement at Culp's Hill, for example, Wert found tiny shattered pieces of a daguerreotype mingled with the "mangled shreds of a soldier." He suspected he found a shredded image of a wife or some loved one, probably held in the breast pocket of a soldier until a shell ripped into his body. Sympathizing over the aching heart of a wife

or mother Wert picked through the scrambled breast of the dead man, pocketing "a couple of those fragments."[15] Although rare, we know that troops or burial teams occasionally found a killed soldier in the field, holding before his lifeless eyes a picture of his lover or children, clasped in stiff hands.[16] But over the following days and weeks Wert gathered so many daguerreotypes and photographs that he had enough images of small children alone to fill a small mahogany box.[17]

During the battle soldiers from a Pennsylvania regiment were burned alive in a barn. Not long after the embers cooled, Wert scavenged through the rubble, taking away fragments of a U.S. belt buckle and parts of a musket.[18] At Culp's Hill he bagged hundreds of flattened bullets. Similar to other contemporary descriptions of the aftermath of battle, Wert drew attention to the "thick littered debris" scattered with the blood and festering corpses: "broken muskets and soiled bayonets, shattered caissons and blood defiled clothing, trodden cartridge boxes and splintered swords, rifled knapsacks and battered canteens." [19] Wert never admitted to "rifling" through knapsacks and pants pockets, or to contributing to the confusing litter. But he did testify to the "thousands" of civilians at his side – from all corners of the Union – who swarmed the fields to locate, often to dig up, the body of a son or husband. These grieving souls desperately scoured the hospitals and battlefields hoping to identify their dead – occasionally depending on the fragments of a blouse, a wedding ring, cartes-de-visite, a customized sword – the same kinds of objects, in other words, that Wert (alongside thousands of relic seekers, scavengers, impoverished farmers, speculators, and curious citizens) hunted daily.[20]

We know a great deal about what happened during the Civil War from the scads of historical narratives that follow the gunsmoke of battles. Thanks to more recent scholarship, we also know a good deal about how Americans, years and often decades later, came to remember those battles and assign meaning to the war through the reburial of bodies, the rise of veterans' associations, and the memorializing of war with granite, national reunions, maudlin poetry, and parades.[21] The recent boom in memory studies has been fruitful in tying the legacy of the war to the last four decades of the nineteenth century (especially through material culture); but by and large the literature depicts war memory as something that emerged only with the rise of formal organizations that contested

the war's meaning. In doing so, it fails to trace war memory back to its earliest, inchoate beginnings, back to memory's most delicate and seminal point of creation when, just after bone-jarring experiences, soldiers and civilians began piecing together the meaning of something that for them was a holocaust of the senses. No doubt, some of the most critical formation of war memory happened right after battle when soldiers imposed a narrative on their experiences in letters to loved ones. But these letters brimmed with confessions that words could never suffice, and civilians read in these confessions that their sons and husbands now stood on the other side of an emotional and experiential gulf. No wonder, then, that because so much talk about the war admitted to merely buzzing about but never capturing what had to be experienced through the senses, Americans, like Wert, came to believe that they could somehow capture the war's essence by holding small objects, gathered just after battle, in the palms of their hands.

A week after Gettysburg, Sarah Broadhead wrote in her journal, after turning away many strangers seeking out beds in her home (already overflowing with wounded soldiers), that she could not fathom how her little town could hold the throngs who for "various motives, visit the battlefield."[22] Broadhead rightly perceived that "various motives" drew Americans to the charnel house. No doubt, many were thieves and speculators. One veteran recalled how at the base of Little Round Top maggot-filled corpses lay everywhere, "nearly all of them" with their "pockets turned inside out showing that human ghouls had here robbed the dead."[23] Another early witness at Gettysburg noted how the rotting dead lay with pockets turned out or slit open for quicker access. He believed that burial teams had spent more time ferreting for rings and money than interring the dead.[24] Less than a week after the battle's end a New York paper reported that "all over the field are numerous men from the country, engaged in gathering whatever is of value. A few are merely in search for relics, but most of them are bearing away any and everything that they consider of pecuniary value." In one orchard the reporter discovered men cutting off the harness from a bloated horse; others gathered blankets or muskets.[25] This went down, of course, while locals read published pleas in town papers from the U.S. Sanitary Commission

begging for donations of food, blankets, and sheets. Locals also read warnings from the acting provost marshal who threatened to arrest and punish "Citizens visiting the battle-field" who walked off with government property.[26] Perhaps aiming to prick consciences, this same local paper printed the full letter from a soldier who just before expiring at Fredericksburg wrote his wife to tell her, among other things, that his portfolio, watch, jackknife, canteen, and one hundred dollars had all been filched by Alabama soldiers, probably as he writhed in death agony. The dying husband only hoped that his regimental doctor could find and sell the soldier's horse, saddle, and blankets – and hopefully send the money to his wife. But the report left readers to wonder not only if his blankets and saddle had been carried off but also if the widow ever laid eyes on this original letter. The report only stated that this "touching" missive was "found" on the soldier's person.[27]

Who found it? A reporter, the soldier's father, a comrade, a ghoul, a relic hunter? This confusion was born of the fact that all kinds of folks converged after battles, contesting these small objects that had pecuniary, emotional, familial, regimental, spiritual, and patriotic values. These elusive, if conflicting, values and the quest for meaning drew people into these death scenes. They did not come out of caprice, or on a whim. If they did, they left the field thinking like one soldier who wrote in his journal: "May God spare me from ever witnessing another such a scene . . . I will never again go over a battle-field from mere curiosity, before the dead are buried."[28] Soon after Gettysburg many civilians dealt with the stench by walking about with open bottles of peppermint and pennyroyal. Most accounts depict similarly gruesome scenes: bloated corpses ready to burst "asunder" from the building pressure of "foul gases and vapors," men on burial duty dropping to their knees to vomit "profusely," "corruption" flowing from the corners of discolored mouths.[29] And for those who wandered the fields before flesh began rotting, their descriptions attest to a different kind of hell: eerie nights filled with moaning, wounded soldiers gibbering insanely; terrorizing cries for loved ones and pleas for water or for someone to end the suffering; fresh blood on rocks and leaves; the bodily remains of soldiers recently "brained" by a rock or the end of a rifle, or disemboweled by a shell.[30] Yet people came in droves. As a Dartmouth graduate and Union officer,

Frank Haskell, reported only two days after he survived the battle, he "could not repress the desire or omit the opportunity to see again where the battle had been." Though Haskell had fought and watched comrades die there three days earlier, he found himself pacing toward the place where the gunners laid into Pickett's Division: "a strange fascination," he wrote, "led me thither."[31]

Strange fascination led many, many more. Only two sunrises after the battle ceased almost everything of value especially "small arms and the accoutrements" had been carried away, leaving the scattered debris of empty knapsacks, "bruised" canteens, and shreds of clothing. Haskell noted how one could use the debris to know "where the fight had been hottest." Venting some of his frustration about civilians trespassing hallowed ground, Haskell confessed irritation with the "numbers of civilians and boys, and some girls even, curiously loitering about the field, and their faces show not sadness or horror, but only staring wonder or smirking curiosity." They told Haskell that they were there for mementos, but Haskell guessed by the gathered firearms and untorn blankets that they had profit on the brain. "Of course," Haskell continued, "there was not the slightest objection to their taking anything they could find now; but their manner of doing it was the objectionable thing."[32]

A young boy, Albertus McCreary, walked the fields where he found a dying soldier who, in exchange for water, gave young McCreary a hammered coin that the soldier had collected after the battle of Fredericksburg. Wandering inside of an abandoned home the boy encountered the still body of a young Rebel soldier who lay with a tempting medal pinned to his breast. The boy hesitated and finally resisted, figuring that this potential relic would lead to the body's identification. With his chums McCreary combed the fields for deposits of bullets, and he pried open the cap-ends of explosive shells to sell the lead to unnamed adults for thirteen cents a pound. Perhaps they sold the relics to a man that one witness recalled "came along from New York a few days after the battle and told the children he would buy any relics they could pick up."[33] As the boys scoured the fields, an exploding shell killed McCreary's own schoolmate, a fate that papers reported about other men and children who gathered firearms and explosive relics.[34]

The children's curiosity overlapped with mounting demand from the

home front. "Visitors soon began to come to see the battlefield," he recalled, "and all wanted relics."

> We were always on the lookout for bullets and pieces of shell, in fact anything that could be easily handled to sell to them. We found that a piece of tree with a bullet embedded in it was a great prize and a good seller. Every boy went out with a hatchet to chop pieces from the trees in which bullets had lodged . . . . Lamps were made of round shells. The caps were taken out, a tube for a wick was placed in them, and the shell was fastened to a square block of wood, thus making a very useful and convenient relic.[35]

Soon after getting word of the conflict in a town some hundred miles from Gettysburg, Reverend Franklin Schantz joined several other men on an eleven-hour wagon ride to administer to the wounded. Besides making the rounds to makeshift hospitals, Schantz and his party wandered the fields of destruction, gathering relics as they went. He discovered a pair of pantaloons and, after digging in the pockets, a little silver coin and a soldier's medal. On the return home Schantz's party passed "many men" racing toward the battlefield, braving "great dangers," like fording swollen streams, in order to get there as soon as possible. Posted soldiers halted Schantz's party and others, inspecting departing wagons "to learn whether any of the relics carried from the battle field were such as ought to be taken" back from the civilians. This suggests that while firearms were forbidden, all wagons returned with objects gleaned from the battlefield. One member of the pastor's party hid a rifle in the wagon, while a farmer held solid shot wrapped in a bandana. Schantz trucked with him a Bible with its cover ripped off, a broken lock of a musket, and a "bayonet that was greatly bent by hard use." He also carried with him an envelope pierced by a bullet, which he eventually – perhaps after his conscience pricked him – mailed to the unknown woman who was the addressee.[36]

In Chambersburg, following the news of Lee's retreat, so many people rushed to the town of Gettysburg that Jacob Hoke could not find a conveyance. Instead he and others walked for several hours. Immediately after securing a place to sleep his party "sauntered out to see whatever" they could before sunset. Hoke had already witnessed similarly macabre scenes at South Mountain, but his uninitiated companions were "shocked

and horrified." In the early hours of the next morning, they headed for Culp's Hill where they found a leg severed from the body by a shell. Nearby somebody found part of a pocket Bible that had been ripped in two by a missile. They compared the jagged tears of the leg flesh with the pages in the Bible, agreeing that the same shell tore through them. They discovered a rebel song inscribed in the final pages. The party then divided the blood-stained pages among themselves. Hoke got so many pages that he later gave some to a friend who sold them at a New York Sanitary Commission Fair where citizens regularly paid top dollar for relics and mementoes from the war still raging. By midday Hoke's team began its several-hour-long walk home, "bringing with us, as did almost everyone else who visited the field, some relic."[37]

The hours and days following Gettysburg mirrored what happened throughout the war. Comrades, battlefield vultures, wives, fathers, and relic hunters flocked to the immediate aftermath, sifting through human debris in hopes of obtaining small, precious talismans; mementos; relics; and items containing magical, emotional, and monetary values. In less than two weeks after Bull Run, a Virginia paper reported that "of relics of the battle, already but few remain. The field has been searched and gleaned by daily crowds of visitors seeking mementoes." After an "extensive ramble" the correspondent found little more than a few bullets and some bomb fragments, adding that civilians had begun cutting canes from surrounding trees, a relic "considerably in demand." Two months later a South Carolina correspondent reported his visit to the "the famous field of Manassas Plains," noting that the "Free Negro House" where "the old woman lost her life" had been stripped of its laths and weatherboarding due to the "ridiculous custom of gathering relics." A cedar stake that had been erected to mark the place where General Barnard E. Bee fell had been whittled "pretty vigorously" down to just a few inches; the rocks surrounding the whittled stump were chipped and scattered by individuals looking to bring home a piece of the war in their pockets.[38] At the end of the war a Boston paper railed that "curiosity hunters are as destructive as locusts. Woe to the tree under which, the stump on which, or the house in which any memorable event of the late war has occurred. Every thing within hailing distance will be, if it has not already been, gobbled up by these relentless hunters of relics."[39]

Soldiers hacked into pieces tables upon which treaties had been signed and carried them off; after Lee's surrender in Appomattox officers fleeced the parlor's furniture and decorations; soldiers and civilians found or searched in bloodied uniforms for letters from strangers, reading them, sometimes sending them home as mementos; a mourning father carried the bullet that killed his son in his pocket; prisoners of war carved knickknacks from bone or gutta-percha and sold them to eager civilians; and soldiers carved rings and jewelry from the bones of a dead enemy and sent them back home to lovers.[40] So much did the quest for these material objects consume the minds of soldiers that Braxton Bragg, in his official report of Shiloh, where he laid out the various reasons that prevented his troops from clear victory, blamed the hunt for spoils, especially in the enemy's abandoned camps, as a factor that "served to delay and greatly to demoralize" the men.[41] For Civil War Americans, matter intensely mattered. The relics and mementos that from the late nineteenth century to the present have fed antiquarian hunger for "old stuff," or the romanticizing of the Civil War, or provided time-travel devices for reenactors – were not gathered for the sake of museum curators or antique collectors but instead for intense immediate psychological and spiritual needs of those who sought them. In the end, even money-crazed vultures depended on the desire of workaday Americans to display these objects on their mantels and tables or to wear breastpins on their lapels, carved by emaciated prisoners of war.[42]

Given that Northern and Southern armies and both home fronts manifested intense desire for war artifacts, it is odd that Civil War historians have mostly steered clear of the boom in material culture studies of the last three or four decades. Perhaps it has been a self-conscious attempt to distance "serious" scholarship from the quaint (if mildly embarrassing) zeal of modern-day bullet collectors and hobbyists. When objects *have* been taken seriously it is often in the service of understanding, for example, how the rifled musket or other changes in firepower or war technologies altered the way armies fought.[43] But a history of war's "things" can do more. Borrowing from anthropologists and folklorists, scholars of material culture insist that objects made, modified, traded, or desired directly or indirectly reflect fundamental belief patterns of individuals and the larger society – so fundamental that these beliefs are rarely

spoken or written.[44] Artifacts allow us to glimpse into our historical subjects' most basic "way of knowing"—what one scholar has called their "sensory thinking." "We have been so preoccupied with words," this scholar warned fellow historians, "that we have neglected things."[45] Some material culture enthusiasts have abandoned reason, suggesting that the written word obfuscates more than it reveals, and that by approaching artifacts through our senses—touching, seeing them—we can commune with people of the past through our and their sensory thinking. It is as if rubbing my hands along the barrel of a gun speaks to me the same way it would have for John Dillinger.[46] These exaggerations aside, there remains much to learn from scholars of anthropology, folklore, semiotics, and material culture. But first Civil War scholars have to reckon with the limits of spoken and written language. We have to confess that the war's enviable cache of archival riches can ironically lead to a narrowing of our imagination and a general reluctance to explore the war through materiality and the senses.[47] As one agricultural historian put it, historians "seem to believe almost anything as long as it is not three-dimensional."[48] To a perplexing degree, Civil War historians have turned a blind eye to the third dimension.

Major Sullivan Ballou's beautiful words tempt us to forget that his letter was, in fact, three dimensional. And if we are to tell an unvarnished story of Ballou's demise, we can't avoid these other dimensions. In fact, Ballou's famous letter has never been traced down. It was not found among the many letters safeguarded by Sarah Ballou. Historians have located various copies of the original, but none in Ballou's hand. It is possible, though I think highly unlikely, that Ballou never wrote this letter at all but that it was merely an attempt to fill the void of death with words. Perhaps relatives, an eager journalist, or even Sarah herself penned what they believed Sullivan would have written if he only knew it was his last missive. I believe, though, that Sarah took this letter with her to her grave. If she did, it was because the letter's smell, its creases, edges, and texture (which changed over time with the oil of her own hands), mattered as much as the words themselves. Nineteenth-century Americans cherished the power of language; but they also clung to things, especially those connected to death and violence. About nine months after Ballou's

death the governor of Rhode Island and a large team scoured the Bull Run battlefield for officers' graves, hoping to bring the heroes' bodies back home. To their shock and horror they learned from locals (mostly African Americans) that Rebel soldiers had dug up Ballou, decapitated the corpse, and tossed it in a fire to burn off the flesh. As one black woman testified this burning was unusual as soldiers often avoided the stench of charred flesh by boiling the meat from corpses. With the coveted material now at hand they sawed off various bones, carving them into rings or jewelry, or crafting shinbones into drumsticks. She recalled one soldier swearing that on his wedding day he would press his lips to his prized relic – a Yankee's skull – and from it drink brandy. As if settling for second place in this macabre scramble for things, the governor's party gathered and brought back Ballou's blanket, some clothes found in a nearby river, and a lock of hair that one black woman somehow salvaged for the sake of the dead soldier's family.[49] Fixating on words like those in Ballou's letter can keep us from seeing what was everywhere obvious. Silent things – relics, bones, ordinary canteens, tufts of hair, spent bullets, and the massive material detritus of the war – spoke to Civil War–era Americans. What Americans said and wrote during the Civil War is the best thing we've got for writing their history. But until we reckon with the symbolic and spiritual power of things our narratives will paper over the confusion, skimp on the dimensions of pain and doubt, and flatten the intense rage and sorrow.

Notes

I would like to thank fellow "weirdlings" for the fantastic input I received on the *Weirding the War* blog and, later, at the conference in Athens. My earliest thinking for this essay was shaped by Scott Nelson, Seth Bruggeman, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, and David Waldstreicher.

1. Ken Burns's nine-part documentary, *The Civil War*, drew in some forty million viewers when it debuted on public television in September 1990. For a description of the ways in which Burns's use of this letter unleashed a storm of emotion and curiosity, see Robin Young, *For Love and Liberty: The Untold Civil War Story of Major Sullivan Ballou and His Famous Love Letter* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2006), xxviii–xxxiii.

2. For the degree to which the many papers informed the secession crisis and the war's execution, see David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, and Debra

Reddin van Tuyll, eds., *The Civil War and the Press* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2000); Edward Ayers, "What Caused the Civil War?" in Edward Ayers, *What Caused the Civil War? Reflections of the South and Southern History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005), esp. 137–42. There is no work to my knowledge that satisfyingly assesses the magnitude and cultural impact of letter writing during the war.

3. See James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988); Chanda Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over* (New York: Knopf, 2007); James I. Robertson Jr., *Soldiers Blue and Gray* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998).

4. For more on the ways in which disfiguring bodies is central to war and legitimating new regimes, see Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

5. Abraham Lincoln, Don Edward Fehrenbacher, and Alfred Whital Stern Collection of Lincolniana (Library of Congress), *Speeches and Writings, 1859–1865* (New York: Library of America, 1989), 536; also note how in his Second Inaugural Address Lincoln resisted talking at length as he had done in his first address. With the profusion of declarations and war talk he felt compelled to speak to the point. See ibid., 215–24 and 686–87.

6. One only need read a small sample of war letters or memoirs to see how much this confession of insufficient language became a cliché – though soldiers, I believe, wrote this more out of sincerity than convention. Typical is one soldier's letter to his parents after Bull Run: "I hope to God I will never see another such a time. . . . I have not power to describe the scene. It beggars all description." After Gettysburg a young girl wrote about what she witnessed during the days surrounding the battle. Dashing off a letter "so long my hand trembles," she wrote, "I scarcely know how to begin, so many things have happened and in so short a time that I have gotten things confused. It seems more like a dream than reality." Incapable of even conveying the concussive thump of single fired cannon she asserted with confidence that "no one who has never heard it can form any idea how terrible it is." See *Reflections on the Battle of Gettysburg*, ed. Ralph S. Shay (Lebanon, Pa.: Lebanon County Historical Society, 1963), vol. 13, no. 6, 278–84.

7. J. Howard Wert, *A Complete Hand-Book of the Monuments and Indications and Guide to the Positions on the Gettysburg Battle-Field* (Harrisburg, Pa.: R. M. Sturgeon, 1886), 131, 108–10.

8. Ibid., e.g., 82 and 84.

9. Ibid., 99.

10. Ibid., 46–48. Because the monuments stood for something living, Wert betrayed his frustration that certain monuments had not been erected on the precise place where a regiment charged, or an officer died. See ibid., 100.

11. Ibid., 109–10.

12. Ibid.

13. G. Craig Caba, ed., *Lost Children of the Battlefield: A Collection of Photographs Found at Gettysburg* (Enola, Pa.: G. Craig Caba Antiques and Publishers, 2004), 71.

14. Seth C. Bruggeman, *Here, George Washington Was Born: Memory, Material Culture, and the Public History of a National Monument* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 27–28; Bruggeman argues that the Revolutionary generation built very few monuments to itself and tended to look forward; Caba, *Lost Children*, 10–11.

15. Wert, *Complete Hand-Book of the Monuments*, 199.

16. For example, see Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 2008), 11–13.

17. Caba, *Lost Children*, 8–9. Neither Wert nor those who have written about his collection have answered how it is that Wert found all of these precious relics. While it is believable that Wert found some of the images by or around the bodies of the dead, it is much more likely that Wert (as did many of his contemporaries) rifled through the pockets of the dead.

18. Wert, *Complete Hand-Book of the Monuments*, 134.

19. Wert, *Historical Souvenir of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg, July 1–4, 1913* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Harrisburg Telegraph, 1913), 26, 41. Wert was more than a battlefield scavenger; he spent significant time around the field hospitals, particularly the "White church" close to his home where he watched men from the Iron Brigade suffer on cots. He "learned to love" these suffering soldiers. Perhaps he brought them comfort. Certainly he found more than one relic in such a place where men with jewelry, pictures, and precious possessions died daily. Within a few days of Lee's retreat Wert helped a New York woman named Annie Roberts search for her husband and brother who had been reported dead or severely wounded. They traveled from hospital to hospital, looked over dug up bodies. See Wert, *Complete Hand-Book of the Monuments*, 93, 109, 161–63.

20. Wert, *Complete Hand-Book of the Monuments*, 204–5. Some witnesses viewed relic hunting through the lens of politics. A Union officer who was charged with organizing the burial teams and recovering government property – that is, what was left of it – recorded in his diary that the "Swarms" of civilians who swept and plundered the area could be traced back to the "Copperhead fraternity of Gettysburg & the country about." David D. Sparks, ed., *Inside Lincoln's Army: The Diary of Marsena Rudolph Patrick, Provost Marshal General, Army of the Potomac* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1964), 268.

21. The literature for war memory has flourished over the last decade. For the best treatment of the accomplishments and shortcomings of this literature see Matt Grow, "The Shadow of the Civil War: A Historiography of Civil War Memory," *American Nineteenth Century History* 4, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 77–103.

22. Sarah Broadhead, July 12, 1863 entry, in Jim Slade and John Alexander, eds., *Firestorm at Gettysburg: Civilian Voices* (Atglen, Pa.: Schiffer Aviation/Military History, 1998), 161.

23. *Autobiography of Capt. Richard W. Musgrove (*self-published by Mary D. Musgrove, 1921), 94. Later, this same captain transferred to Fort Ridgely where he began hunting for and collecting relics – bones, skulls, pipes – from the remains of a massacre of Indians in 1862. When "pretty ladies" visited the fort he made a point to show off his collection as a way to impress them.

24. Mr. Benner quoted in Slade and Alexander, *Civilian Voices*, 147.

25. *New York Herald*, July 9, 1863.

26. *Adams Sentinel*, July 7 and July 14, 1863, in columns titled: "Help the Wounded Soldiers"; "Flags Captured at Gettysburg"; "The Death of General Barksdale"; "Special Notice."

27. From one local paper alone we glimpse the confusion surrounding these small things. Above a report of how blood-spattered flags had been captured from the field and sent to the War Department, the paper recounted to its readers how a dying Rebel officer safely placed his "large" gold watch and trinkets in the hands of a subordinate to be returned to Mississippi; see "Dearest Anna," *Adams Sentinel*, July 21, 1863. In the same issue a report, "Touching Incident of the Battle-Field," informs readers that a soldier "picked up" among the "relics of the dreadful fight" a small paper with two locks of hair attached and "Our Darlings" written below. Though the locks had probably once been carried, pressed to the heart of a father, the newspaper contemplated how "strangers now possess the tender relic."

28. Edmund Brown, *The Twenty-Seventh Indiana Volunteer Infantry in the War of the Rebellion, 1861 to 1865* (Gaithersburg, Md.: Butternut Press, 1899), 394–95.

29. See, for example, Jacob Hoke, *The Great Invasion of 1863 or, General Lee in Pennsylvania* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1959), 477–505; Francis Colburn Adams, A *Troopers Adventures in the War for the Union, a Thrilling History of the Campaigns, Battles, Exploits, Marches, Victories and Defeats of the Army of the Potomac, Being a Complete and Graphic Narrative of the Peninsular Campaign under McClellan, by a Cavalryman* (New York: Hurst & Co., n.d.), 538; the burial worker and Rebel prisoner are quoted in Slade and Alexander, *Civilian Voices*, 147.

30. J. Hoke, *Reminiscences of the War; or Incidents which Transpired in or about Chambersburg during the War of the Rebellion* (Chambersburg, Pa.: M. A. Foltz, 1884), 484–85.

31. Frank A. Haskell, *The Battle of Gettysburg*, ed. Bruce Catton (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), 147–48, 154.

32. Ibid., 147–48.

33. Nathaniel Lightner quoted in Slade and Alexander, *Civilian Voices*, 166.

34. The *Adams Sentinel* also reported the death of a boy shot by his brother as they played with a gun they "picked off" the battlefield; also the *Sentinel* in-

formed readers that Samuel Warner, a gentleman, was killed in a similar way, the bullet shooting through his heart. See "We Have Learned only of the Following" and "Incidents of the Battle Field" in *Adams Sentinel*, July 7, 1863; Jacob Hoke heard but could not vouch for the claim that folks collected bullets by the bucketful and sold them to dealers. See Hoke, *Reminiscences of War*, 173.

35. Albertus McCreary, "Gettysburg: A Boy's Experience of the Battle," *McClure's Magazine* 33 (May–October 1909): 250–53.

36. Shay, *Reflections on the Battle of Gettysburg*, 286–301. When Schantz returned to Gettysburg later that fall he met another minister from the region that the soldier (who left behind his pants) apparently called home. Perhaps out of duty and some guilt, Schantz gave the soldier's medal to the minister to return to the soldier, and if dead, his family.

37. Hoke, *Reminiscences*, 172–73.

38. "The Campaign of the Potomac Camp of Bonham's Brigade, S. C. V. Our Own Correspondent," *Charleston Mercury*, October 24, 1861.

39. *Boston Transcript* report reprinted as "The Gatherers of Curiosities" in *The Christian Recorder*, May 27, 1865.

40. Confederate soldier John Casler wrote about war prison that "those who had no friends to send them money were always making rings, breastpins, fans, watch-chains, etc., out of gutta-percha, and put silver and gold sets in them. It was like a manufactory every day; and we could sell them to the guards and they would sell them again down in the city for double what they gave for them. There was a continual trade going on all the time." Casler also tells a story about a prisoner fabricating stories about so-called relics, like a watch that Stonewall Jackson supposedly wore, and selling the items to gullible guards. See John O. Casler, *Four Years in the Stonewall Brigade* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 279–80, 284; John Coski, "Lord of the Rings: The Museum of the Confederacy's Prisoner of War Art Collection," *North South Trader's Civil War* 31, no. 6 (2006): n.p.; Phillip Shaw Paludan, *The People's Contest: The Union and Civil War, 1861–1865* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988), 321. For soldiers making rings out of bones from the Battle of Seven Pines see the end of this essay; and Diary of Samuel H. Walkup, Collection No. 01401, University of North Carolina Library (typed transcription), 48–49.

41. Bragg's report no. 166 in United States, War Department and others, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series 1, Volume 10 (part 1), chap. 22, 463–70. John Casler wrote in his memoir that at Cedar Creek too, the triumphs of the Confederate army were nullified by the plundering that ensued after capturing enemy camps. Of course, this had much to do with obtaining food and alcohol for weary minds and famished bellies. But plundering camp also involved simultaneous searches through haversacks, stealing items, watches, and any accoutrements left behind. See Casler, *Four Years in the Stonewall Brigade*, 242–43.

42. Scanning the *Confederate Veteran Magazine* one finds that by the late nineteenth century and first third of the twentieth, war relics had become a way for Southerners to preserve the Lost Cause. Logs taken from Chickamauga, pens made from Stonewall's house, canes made from Jefferson Davis's home, bullet-penetrated Bibles with prophetic messages where the bullet stopped, hooves from General Forrest's horse, the bullet that wounded Forrest, wreaths made from Rebel generals' hair, a Confederate flag made from a Southern bride's dress, personal effects and things "picked up" from the fields, pieces of a Rebel flag cut up and hidden in soldiers' clothes to prevent its capture – the list goes on and on. The point is, though, that while these relics had much to do with postwar memory, they were primarily gathered in the earliest inchoate moments of memory formation.

43. It was a Civil War historian who leveled one of the most dismissive critiques of material culture studies. William Hesseltine suggested that material objects can do little more than illustrate what has already been proven by rigorous examination of words. Objects have only "illustrative value"– that is, material culture helps busloads of children visualize some fragment of the past, but it does not speak to the historian the way that letters and written records do. See William B. Hesseltine, "The Challenge of the Artifact," in Thomas Schlereth, ed., *Material Culture Studies in America* (Nashville, Tenn.: American Association for State and Local History, 1982), 93–100. For material culture and the Civil War see Earl J. Hess, *The Rifle Musket in Civil War Combat* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008); Earl J. Hess, *In the Trenches at Petersburg: Field Fortifications and Confederate Dead* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

44. For a thorough discussion of the rise and guiding assumptions of material culture studies, see Thomas J. Schlereth, ed., *Material Culture: A Research Guide* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1985), 1–34. For material objects articulating the unspoken and unwritten, see Jules David Prown, "The Truth of Material Culture: History of Fiction," in Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery, eds., *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 1–19.

45. John A. Kouwenhoven, "American Studies: Words or Things?" in Schlereth, *Material Culture Studies in America*, 80–83, 90.

46. For some provocative (if questionable) essays about approaching history through the senses, see Prown, "Truth of Material Culture," 1–19.

47. Fortunately there are notable exceptions. See, for example, Mark L. Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 195–270; Scott Nelson, "'A Hive of Activity': Men's Fashioning and Self-Fashioning in Confederate Prison camps," paper presented at the Popular Culture Association Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana, April 17, 2003; John Coski, "Prisoner of War Collections Reveal Creativity in Captivity," *The Museum of the Confederacy Magazine* (Spring 2006): n.p. Also, fine examples of how to

use material culture to get at the psychology, memory, and politics during and after the war can be found in John Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag: America's Most Embattled Emblem* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006).

48. John T. Schlebecker, "The Use of Objects in Historical Research," in Schlereth, ed., *Material Culture Studies in America*, 106–113.

49. See: *Report of Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War. In Three Parts* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1863), part 3, 449–85.

The Pleasures of Civil War Ruins

MEGAN KATE NELSON

The young man tosses his head back, swinging a curtain of long hair over his shoulder. His left hand, which holds a cigarette, trembles slightly. "It's gonna be a great, a great smash," he says. "I'm really excited for it. I will release other frustrations in my life by showing that monitor who's the alpha male." The man stubs out his cigarette, picks up a sledgehammer, and swings it like a baseball bat, pulverizing the screen of a desktop computer that sits on the ground. He heaves the sledgehammer over his head and brings it down again and again; the glass and plastic fly. Off to the side, a woman laughs and says in a low voice, "yeaaahhhhh." After about fifteen hits, the computer is no longer recognizable as such; it is a pile of rubble in a Baltimore backyard. The man breathes hard and sucks blood from a cut on his finger. As he heads inside the house to rinse it off, he smiles serenely.[1]

This is one of eighteen scenes in a documentary film called "I Will Smash You," released in September 2009. In each scene, the smasher

talks about an object of his or her hatred or loathing, destroys it, and then discusses the resultant emotions. Two things become clear. First, the objects destroyed on camera – army discharge papers, a papier-mâché head of a girl's mean teacher, office furniture, a cursed Ford Taurus – embody a host of negative meanings for their destroyers. Second, the conversion of these objects into ruins is a pleasurable experience for both the smashers and those who watch them smashing. That people would have to make a film – or start a business like Sarah's Smash Shack in San Diego, which offers a VIP room for groups of people up to twenty – in order to destroy things (or to watch other people do it) indicates both a desire to demolish and a lack of opportunity to do so in modern American life. This is, of course, a lucky thing – the United States today is not a war-torn locality in which violence is routine, or a landscape littered with ruins. During the American Civil War, however, soldiers in both the Confederate and Union armies did their fair share of smashing in battle, along roadways, and in the houses of Southern civilians.[2] For them, acts of demolition were feats of power through which they asserted their control over the enemy and over the vagaries of war itself. For some soldiers, destructive violence and the ruins they created could be distressing, awe-inspiring, or immensely pleasurable, depending on the individual's moral and aesthetic sensibilities. An investigation of the enjoyable aspects of creating and watching ruination reveals that for many Civil War Americans, wartime violence was physically, emotionally, and aesthetically gratifying.

Bringing Down the House: Enjoying Acts of Destruction

Not all Americans – especially soldiers – found pleasure in devastating the Southern landscape. Charles Carleton Coffin, a journalist traveling with the Army of the Potomac, noted that after receiving orders to live upon the land, some soldiers "were tender-hearted, and took only what was needed to eat, while others ransacked houses, ripped open feather-beds, smashed looking-glasses and crockery, and tumbled tables and chairs about unceremoniously."[3] Those with moral objections to burning and pillaging, like Rhode Island soldier William Arnold, opted out of raids. While on the way to meet Confederates for the first time at Manassas,

Virginia, "many of the soldiers broke into stores and Private houses," Arnold wrote. "But I did not think this was hardly right so I stayed at our grounds and enjoyed myself lying upon the grown [ground] and talking with the boys."[4] Connecticut soldier John Emery Morris acknowledged that "some of the boys don't think much of such doings," but confessed that he quite enjoyed the "'*rage*' up the Peninsular" that he took part in for a week in June 1863. "I rather like the *fun* of such an expedition."[5] As Coffin himself went on to note, "There was pleasurable excitement in riding through the enemy's country, making dashes into villages, charging upon the enemy, riding through dense forests, and finding good living at every farmhouse. There were plenty of volunteers for any enterprise."[6] Maine cavalryman John Parris Sheahan reported to his father that his attitude had improved after participating in one of General George Stoneman's raids: "I think I like soldiering better than I ever have before," he declared.[7]

The invigoration that some soldiers felt during destructive acts may well have been physiological. The nerve fibers that control functions like heartbeat, breathing, blood pressure, and sexual excitement are interwoven with "nerve fibers serving pleasure seeking."[8] But soldiers found these smashing raids to be "*fun*" for other reasons, both intellectual and emotional. Breaking down doors and entering the "inner sanctums" of stores and Southern homes gave soldiers an opportunity to gain access to areas that, in normal circumstances, would be off limits to them. The pleasure that some soldiers took in destroying household goods in the homes of the South's wealthy planters – expensive furniture, ornate mirrors, and, most gleefully, pianos – suggests that in doing so, they were experiencing schadenfreude, a pleasurable feeling when witnessing another's fall from grace.[9] As they watched burning houses crumble, some soldiers enjoyed the thought that they had brought about the collapse of the Southern elites who (to their minds) had started the war.[10] Many soldiers who razed homes and other buildings felt badly about it but then justified it, arguing that Southerners had brought such ruination upon themselves. As Union General William T. Sherman famously pointed out in 1864, Atlanta's residents, despite being far away from the theaters of combat between massive armies, had devoted "your houses and streets and roads to the dread uses of war," and thus "deserve all the curses and maledictions a people

can pour out."[11] Such beliefs indicate that these men felt satisfaction in the defeat of the South but also saw their violence as a kind of retaliation for the crime of secession. Perhaps the most intense emotion related to acts of devastation during the Civil War was this desire for revenge; this particular passion not only propelled some soldiers to destroy but also provoked many Southerners to shout with rage for retribution.

One of the ways that Northern soldiers indulged their vengeful cravings was to target the homes of high-ranking Confederates. Union regiments marching through Jackson, Mississippi, on the campaign for Vicksburg in 1863 destroyed the plantation of Jefferson Davis, as one soldier wrote, "most effectually by fire. His house, with all the furniture &c. were burnt."[12] Southerners were scandalized when Union soldiers set fire to Virginia's White House – reportedly where George Washington had first met, courted, and then married Martha Custis – because it belonged to the family of General Robert E. Lee. Virginian Lizzie Alsop wrote about the burning that "I should think Col. Lee would hate them all his life for this last act of barbarism."[13] Union soldiers shelled and burned the homes of Confederate politician James Lyons and Governor John Letcher in Virginia in 1864; they also targeted symbols of the Confederacy's military prowess, burning the campus of the Virginia Military Institute and the family estates of Confederate General Wade Hampton outside Columbia. Oscar Lawrence Jackson, a Union officer from Ohio, participated in Sherman's marches through Georgia and South Carolina and noted in his diary that "there were no residences of noted rebels left unburned."[14]

Such acts of reprisal – wreaked upon the homes of Confederate leaders and, more commonly, upon any Confederate home that happened to be in the vicinity – enraged many Southerners and led them to hope fervently that the "Yankee horde" "will some day have retribution" for the crimes committed against Southern households during the war.[15] In February 1865, as Grace Brown Elmore watched Union troops march through her garden on their way out of Columbia, her "whole soul rose against that army as it passed, that band of highway robbers, the insulters of women and children. My whole nature is changed." She found herself feeling "so hard, so pitiless. Gladly would I witness the death of each of those wretches."[16] Virginian Louisa Minor, after reading a letter from her brother reporting the damage that "the 'Feds'" had done in Missouri

in 1862, was sure that Union soldiers would pay for their attacks against Southern domesticity, if not in life then in death: "As there is a just God in Heaven what a long reckoning their's will be at that day when all men will be called upon to give an account of their actions!"[17] Such anticipations of vengeful punishment – most of which imagined horrible, painful deaths for "Yankee vandals" – may seem to have been cold comfort as Southerners watched houses burn down around them. However, neuropsychologists have recently discovered that the mere *desire* for revenge is in fact, as pleasurable as the actual achievement of it. These emotions light up the brain – the activity, like bolts of lightning, captured in a PET scan – in the same areas and with the same intensity as recreational drug use and falling in love.[18] Imagining the future misfortune of the enemy and vowing that "one day, the South would rise again" gave Southerners great comfort and pleasure throughout the Civil War and for years after its end.

One can see all of these elements of vengeful pleasure in Southern responses to the burning of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, in 1864. Many Confederates had been calling for retaliation since 1862, after Union General John Pope announced a policy of "hard war" in Virginia and after more than a year of fighting between massive armies had turned Virginia's lush, rolling hills into a "barren wasteland." Southerners continually expressed outrage at what they saw as the Union army's flagrant disavowal of the laws of "civilized warfare." In July 1864, Confederate General Jubal Early sent John McCausland and two brigades of cavalry into Maryland and Pennsylvania with the overt purpose of avenging the destruction of Virginia, especially the homes of civilians. Although McCausland made a show of "fairness" by offering Chambersburg's residents the chance to buy their way out of destruction for $500,000, Confederate cavalrymen almost immediately set fire to the courthouse, town hall, and bank buildings first, and then tossed turpentine balls into houses along the main roadways. The editors of the *Richmond Enquirer* expressed no pity for the "terrified women" and "suffering children" of Chambersburg, as they, like Early, believed the act to be justified by the Union's three years of atrocities on Southern soil: "We rejoice to know that the burning of towns and villages is regarded as 'heinous deeds of barbarism.' If repeated wherever our armies may march, it will bring home to

the enemy the 'atrocity' of their own troops, and experience will teach them that civilized warfare is the best policy for them."[19] Although some Southerners objected to these actions, believing that they made Confederates just as vile as Yankees, many were ecstatic after the burning of Chambersburg: finally, the Confederate army had avenged at least in part the ruination of the South. That this was problematic for Southern claims to innocence – that they had engaged in ruination to punish ruination – seemed not to matter one whit; revenge was clearly sweeter than moral superiority in this case.

The ruins of the war gave both Northerners and Southerners comfort and pleasure of another kind as well. Just one week after Chambersburg's destruction, the *New York Herald* reported that the town "is still a scene of interest. The number of sight seers who daily arrive and depart is wonderfully large."[20] The ruins of war were tourist attractions for both civilians and soldiers from the very beginning of the conflict. Not only were they a somewhat novel sight in the American landscape, they were magnificent to survey. The proliferation of verbal descriptions and visual images – illustrations, engravings, and photographs – depicting wartime ruins reveals that the violent destruction of warfare was both emotionally satisfying and aesthetically appealing.

Ain't It Grand? The Pleasures of Viewing the Ruins of War

In May 1862, Union photographer James Gibson took a picture of five soldiers sitting on the brow of a hill, looking out over a valley filled with the tents, horses, denuded land, and drifting smoke of their encampment at Cumberland Landing, Virginia. Gibson's subject was not the view itself, but the soldiers' act of viewing. During marches and in camp, soldiers on both sides often sought out prospects: high ground from which to survey the landscape. Hills were abundant, especially in Virginia and North Carolina, and the landscapes that the war produced – earthworks, forts, signal towers – created additional prospect points in many locations. Soldiers often clambered up these structures to take in the view, for there was much that was new and exciting to see.

Soldiers relished the sights of army camps full of thousands of men, especially at night when, as Massachusetts officer Richard Cary wrote,

"there was a nice young moon and the camp fires with tents etc. made quite a picturesque scene."[21] Soldiers also became quite fond of looking at cities, both Northern and Southern. In January 1863, Rhode Island soldier Henry J. Anthony climbed up a hill "opposite our camp & took prospective views of cities Washington & Alexandria," and four months later in Norfolk he "got up at one A.M. & sat by fire went up street viewed city" before leaving for Suffolk.[22] Other soldiers climbed hills and trees in order to revel in views of the South's unique natural landscapes. Massachusetts officer Greely Curtis wrote to his mother from James Island in June 1862, regretting his inability to draw what he was seeing: "If I c'd only sketch I w'd try to make something out of the present prospect. A perfectly flat-banked river, with every house surrounded by trees, no hill within a hundred miles, but everything gives the idea of repose."[23] Most Northern soldiers who campaigned in the eastern theater, however, were most impressed with the rugged mountain scenery of Virginia's Shenandoah Valley and the dramatic city and landscape of Harpers Ferry. William Dwight, a Bostonian and officer in the Union army, made his first visit to this "most picturesque and notorious region" in July 1864. The landscape, he wrote, has "natural beauties even war cannot disturb."[24]

By 1860 most Americans were familiar with the sublime and the picturesque, aesthetic categories usually applied to natural and built landscapes that were key elements in the Romantic discourse that emerged in the early nineteenth century. The sublime communicated a vastness and grandeur that left the viewer awestruck and slightly afraid (such as jagged mountain ranges). Picturesque scenes were characterized by pleasing contrasts and surprises, irregular deviations in texture, light, or color that spark curiosity (like winding pathways that reveal a vista).[25] These categories were well established within both the literary high culture of essays on aesthetics and the more middling culture of travel narratives that appeared widely in newspapers and magazines, as well as the American and European tourist guides that proliferated in the 1830s.[26] It is no surprise, then, that Civil War soldiers used these terms in their letters and diaries to describe the Southern landscape and their war experiences. When soldiers watched battles occur from afar, they often used the term "sublime" or its close aesthetic synonym "grand" to describe the

action and its effect on their emotions. Connecticut soldier Milton Woodford was so eager to see his first battle that he climbed up into the rigging of his vessel, anchored off of Hilton Head in November 1861, and "wached the scene which was the most *terribly grand* scene I ever saw."[27]

Many soldiers and journalists were particularly captivated by the bursting of shells in the air, which they described as "balls of fire," "beautiful fireworks," and "brilliant meteors."[28] South Carolinian James Barr wrote to his wife, simply, "The shells looked beautiful."[29] The number of men in action; the kinds of weapons engaged; and the explosions of shells in the air, in trees, and in men was a novel sight to many (especially green) soldiers. They tried to convey the intensity of these martial experiences to family members and friends at home. Thomas McCoy sent Annie Baltzley a letter from Camp Fremont, Missouri, portraying his first fight:

> [F]or nearly an hour here was such a roaring of cannon – cracking of musketry – flying of smoke & dust – & thundering of wheels & horses hoofs, as no pen or tongue could describe notwithstanding the bloodshed & suffering it caused I could not help liking it. There was something so grand & imposing in the scene of carnage – long lines of uniformed troops – canon booming at regular intervals – & horses galloping forward as if eager for the fray –: it was grand.[30]

McCoy's description here is breathless; the use of the gerund verb form (-ing), the ampersand, and the short, action-packed phrases all serve to make his description more immediate, so that Annie can feel like she is there, with him, on the battleground as the fight rages around her. In the pauses that the dashes create, the shells explode. McCoy's profession of speechlessness – "no pen or tongue could describe" – is an important element of the sublime discourse; awe-inspiring scenes literally rendered the writer or viewer dumb (or suggested that they should; McCoy, after all, continues with his description after this point). The alleged inability of soldiers to capture what they have seen in writing leads to the repetitive nature of these descriptions; "grand" is a rather vague term, but soldiers used it all the time and seemed to assume that their readers would fill in the blanks.

The destruction that these battles and their thundering explosions created were also a kind of blank – they invited viewers to consider the

empty spaces they suddenly revealed and to reassemble the rubble in their minds. This kind of imaginative engagement is also productive of pleasure, as the aesthetic philosopher Joseph Addison premised in 1712. Even the most terrible of scenes "clear and brighten the Imagination," and this interplay between object and idea creates the "pleasures of the Imagination or Fancy."[31] William Chambers, in his *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772), categorized ruins as "terrible," along with gloomy woods, dark caves, grotesque trees, and sites overgrown with weeds, "near which are placed pillars of stone, with pathetic descriptions of tragical events, and many horrid acts of cruelty."[32] This categorization suggests that ruins have been understood as sublime – transitory and unstable, associated with death and disorder, and productive of fear. But Richard Payne Knight and Uvedale Price, British philosophers and popularizers of the picturesque at the beginning of the nineteenth century, declared that ruins were akin to winding paths that were pleasing to the eye and imagination and that they provided ample opportunities for viewers to indulge their curiosity and love of surprise.[33]

Antebellum American painters and illustrators embraced both visions of the ruin, producing canvases and woodcuts that depicted real and imagined shards of wall, broken columns, and empty windows.[34] Thomas Cole's painting *Desolation,* for example, portrays the sublime ruin created by war. As the final image in his polyptych *The Course of Empire* (1836), this painting presents destruction as the result of empirical desire, which many antebellum Americans saw as inevitable; nature has subsumed the works of man, which crumble into dust. John Gadsby Chapman's *Ruins of Jamestown* (1834), however, depicts a different kind of ruin in the landscape, one with historical resonance for most Americans. Like the single column that commands the center of Cole's painting, the Jamestown church ruin in Chapman's canvas towers above a rubble-strewn foreground, covered with vegetation. This ruin is more picturesque than Cole's destroyed city; it suggests not so much a cataclysmic destructive event but a gradual process of decay over time. Ruins were considered ideal objects for the study of drawing and painting because they provided opportunities for depicting light and shadow and multiple textures. In *The Art of Drawing Landscapes* (1820), three plates (meant for the student to imitate) include ruined buildings, and fragmented columns

encase the title of the manual in the frontispiece.[35] By 1861, ruins were accepted elements of the conventional landscape scene. Newspaper illustrators, photographers, civilians, and soldiers themselves not only depicted them as aesthetic objects but also enjoyed contemplating the ideas that their rubble embodied.

George Barnard, who traveled with Sherman's troops in Georgia and South Carolina in 1864 and 1865, took more photographs of the South's ruins than any other structures in the wartime landscape. After entering South Carolina's capital city, Barnard took a photograph he titled merely *Ruins in Columbia, S.C. No. 2*.[36] This image conveys an appreciation of the aesthetic form of the ruin itself. The columns are scarred by fire but still stand, and the viewer can see the fragments of walls and empty windows through them; the ruined columns act as both subject and frame. The aesthetic philosopher John Baillie categorized columns as sublime elements of architecture in *An Essay on the Sublime* in 1747. More recently, Robert Ginsberg has explained the visual appeal of columns standing alone: "Unexpectedly, the ruin introduces us to the structural interest of the single form. The ruin removes the building from consideration and replaces it with an assortment of walls, windows, towers, and pillars."[37] Barnard's deliberately vague caption for this photograph and the viewer's inability to situate these ruins in any context more specific than "Columbia, S.C." allow her to focus on the fragments, the interplay of light and shadow, the parallel lines of the columns and scorched tree limbs. Barnard's photograph is enjoyable as a photograph, a work of art whose subject both represents and provokes aesthetic pleasure in ruins. This visual appreciation of destruction was so widespread that even some Southerners acknowledged the awe-inspiring spectacle of ruination. Mary Whilden, attempting to flee from Columbia as it burned to the ground, stopped to watch the burning of a wealthy businessman's mansion:

> One of the grandest scenes of this mammoth conflagration was the burning of Mr. Clarkson's house. The building was surrounded by an arched colonnade, consisting of thirty-nine columns, extending from the roof to the ground; these were of massive brickwork and stood while the dwelling within burned. The fire, as seen through the arches, was grand beyond

> description, it was verily an illuminated picture, such as is seldom seen in real life.[38]

Whilden does not invest this image with any meaning except its sublimity; the striking novelty of seeing a house burn within standing columns was wondrous to her. She even compares the sight to an "illuminated picture"; for her, the destruction is purely aesthetic, the ruin is captivating because it is "seldom seen in real life."

Whilden's comment reveals that novelty was often an important element of pleasure taking in Civil War ruins. For her, Clarkson's house was a completely new sight; she is horrified but also amazed by the "grand" scene that is "beyond description." Such a response exemplifies what Joseph Addison described as a facet of "primary pleasures" (those objects we see with our own eyes). When one sees something uncommon, even if it is "terrible or offensive," it provokes pleasure; David Hartley went on to expand this idea in 1749, arguing that novel sights seem to "exceed all bounds of credibility, at the same time we are certified by irrefragable evidences of the truth of the facts."[39] This tone of disbelief is common in descriptions of Civil War ruins, especially when the soldier or civilian is viewing a pile of rubble for the first time. The fragments of stone, wood, brick, and glass are the evidence of their reality, and yet observers cannot believe that they exist. The conversion of incredulity to consciousness of the ruin's reality is in itself pleasurable; it is a kind of epiphany of the war's violence, which, for many soldiers and civilians, was both sad and scintillating.

Soldiers wanted to see Southern ruins. As Illinois soldier W. H. Redman wrote excitedly to his sisters on his way to the eastern theater in 1862, "I haven't yet seen any of the ruins of the Rebelion but have hopes to soon."[40] The novelty of ruins struck many soldiers forcibly when they first viewed them, and they tended to write lengthy and detailed descriptions of them in their diaries and letters. As the war dragged on and ruins proliferated, however, many soldiers neglected to even mention them. But the ruins that never ceased to captivate observers were those with the most meaning for the conduct of the war itself: the ruins of the South's major cities.

As the Confederate capital, Richmond, Virginia, was a major target

of Union military campaigns throughout the war. When it finally fell in April 1865, Confederate soldiers set fire to the warehouses near the James River in order to distract Union regiments and aid in their escape. To Northerners, the city was stunning in its annihilation. Currier and Ives' print *The Fall of Richmond, Va.* contains common features of the sublime ruin image: massive plumes of fire; giant, swirling clouds of smoke that dominate the background of the image; a contrast in the middle ground between the burning parts of the city and the areas left intact; a slightly elevated prospect and an angle of vision that allows the viewer to see multiple sides of buildings in their moment of destruction. As *The Fall of Richmond, Va.* conveys, the city was a splendid ruin – a spectacle of annihilation, loaded with meaning.

Richmond's ruins also communicated what John Baillie called "the powerful force of connection" in sublime sights.[41] Northern viewers most likely read in Richmond's burnt district the end of the war; the destruction of the Confederacy's capital city was a metonym for the ruination of the Confederacy itself. Northerners felt a similar sense of ecstatic pleasure – that emotion that often accompanies victory – when they contemplated the ruins of Columbia, South Carolina. Albert Gallatin Browne, a U.S. Treasury agent in the Department of the South during the war, expressed as much when he saw the ruins of Columbia in late May 1865, more than three months after the burning of the city's business district and a good number of its houses in February. He stood on the south bank of the Congaree River and looked up at the city, which "presents a fine appearance, *finer to me,* from the effects of Sherman's bombardment and torch – we could see hundreds of chimneys against the sky – walls without roofs – O it was a glorious sight – I luxuriate – I delight. I enjoy the sight of all this havock and ruin."[42] Clearly, Browne's elation was rooted in the symbolism of the ruined city – its "walls without roofs" represented a beheaded Confederacy, the death of the Cause in its very cradle.

A week before Browne viewed the city from across the river and luxuriated in its "havock and ruin," Emma LeConte, a teenager living in Columbia during the war, went for a nighttime walk among the ruins with her friends. Although LeConte was enraged and distraught the night of the fire (and like Grace Elmore, fervently wished that the Yankees

would burn in the conflagration of their own making), time and moonlight changed her views. On a warm spring evening, she wrote, the burnt district "was very beautiful and melancholy." The members of her party became very quiet as they picked their way across the rubble. "As far as the eye could reach only spectre-like chimneys and the shattered walls, all flooded over by the rich moonlight which gave them a mysterious but mellow softness." As LeConte and her friends wandered onto Blanding Street, the scene became even more beautiful because, in LeConte's estimation, "the handsome residences made most picturesque ruins. Clarkson's house with its white columns gleaming in the moonlight looked like an old Greek ruin."[43] The scene of "havock and ruin" that would so please the Northerner Browne was, to the Southerner LeConte, a site of picturesque rambling. The ruins of the city were "mysterious" and "mellow," and LeConte was able to enjoy the interplay of the moonlight with the rubble, associating them not with rage but with melancholy, a kind of exquisite sadness. She was transported, imagining the Clarkson house to be an "old Greek ruin." Such a substitution was a satisfactory discursive turn for Southerners: it turned the Southern landscape of destruction into an aesthetic of the ages.

Emma LeConte's changing, contradictory emotions and Albert Browne's ecstatic happiness while contemplating Columbia's burnt district in May 1865 suggest the tremendous symbolic flexibility of ruins during the Civil War. Over the course of the war they inspired a range of pleasurable feelings, some visceral and some intellectual: awe, fear, vengeance, triumph, melancholy. The soldiers and civilians who created and looked upon the destruction of the Southern landscape did so informed by a range of emotions and an aesthetic tradition of ruins in American visual culture. They also understood these fragments as products of violence, the roles that men play in bringing about their own ends suddenly and often incomprehensibly. What had stood in front of them just a moment before was no longer there, leaving only pieces to mark its place. As such, the ruins of war exposed the processes of time, revealing the connections between the past, present, and future, and the ways that violent conflict could compress or conflate these moments.[44] That shards of wall and lone chimneys provoked such a diverse array of responses among

soldiers and civilians reveals that warfare is a process of transformation, altering emotions and turning cities and plantations into scenes of grand and terrible beauty.

Notes

1. Black Arrow Studio and Michael Kimball Films, "I Will Smash You," Trailer2, released online March 12, 2009, www.youtube.com (accessed March 15, 2011).

2. Although it is my contention that soldiers on both sides engaged in ruination of Southern property and enjoyed it, my evidence is heavily tipped to the Union side. The reasons for this are twofold: first, Union soldiers did do the majority of the deliberate smashing. Second, the Southern soldiers who engaged in this kind of destructive activity tended to be partisan fighters, who left comparatively few records (letters or diaries) for historians to mine for evidence of emotional engagement in acts of war.

3. Charles C. Coffin, *Four Years of Fighting: A Volume of Personal Observation with the Army and Navy* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1866), 399, Rare Books Collection, Virginia Historical Society.

4. William R. Arnold, July 17, 1861, Box 15, Miscellaneous Manuscripts 9001-A, Rhode Island Historical Society.

5. John E. Morris to his Uncle John from Diascund Bridge and Williamsburg, Va., June 14 and 17, 1863, John Emery Morris Civil War Letters, Folder 4, John E. Morris Papers, Connecticut Historical Society.

6. Coffin, *Four Years of Fighting*, 221–22.

7. John Sheahan to his father from near Rappahannock Station, May 9, 1863, John Parris Sheahan Civil War Letters (1862–1865), Folder 5, John Parris Sheahan Papers, Maine Historical Society.

8. Dorina Miron, "Enjoyment of Violence," in *Communication and Emotion: Essays in Honor of Dolf Zillmann*, ed. Jennings Bryant, David Roskos-Ewoldsen, and Joanne Cantor (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003), 456.

9. On the pleasurable destruction of pianos, see "Sickles' Drunken Brigade" [letter from a resident of Fredericksburg, April 5, 1862], *Richmond Enquirer,* April 10, 1862, 1, Confederate Collection, Boston Athenaeum; William Sabin to [] Gladding, from St. Simons Island, June 14, 1863, William A. Sabin Civil War letters, in Benjamin Gladding Letters (1862–1865), Box 3, Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection 9001-G, Rhode Island Historical Society; Edward Tobey Barker to his mother, Sally Fuller Barker from the Gunboat "Huron," and from Port Royal, February 10, 1862, Edward Tobey Barker Letters (1862–1864), Box 4, Barker-Edes-Noyes Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

10. Stephen Yoshimura, "Goals and Emotional Outcomes of Revenge Activities in Interpersonal Relationships," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 24,

no. 1 (2007): 87–98; Ming Hsu et al., "The Right and the Good: Distributive Justice and Neural Encoding of Equity and Efficiency," *Science* 320, no. 5879 (May 23, 2008): 1092–95; Hidehiko Takahashi et al., "When Your Gain Is My Pain and Your Pain Is My Gain: Neural Correlates of Envy and Schadenfreude," *Science* 323, no. 5916 (February 13, 2009): 937–39.

11. William Tecumseh Sherman [to the Atlanta City Council] from Atlanta, September 12, 1864, in *The Civil War and Reconstruction: A Documentary Collection*, ed. William E. Gienapp (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 254.

12. Robert Knox Sneden Diary (Volume 4), 456, Virginia Historical Society.

13. Elizabeth (Lizzie) (Alsop) Wynne Diary, July 3, 1862, Wynne Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

14. Oscar Lawrence Jackson, February 1865, in Oscar Lawrence Jackson, *The Colonel's Diary: Journals Kept before and during the Civil War by the Late Colonel Oscar L. Jackson . . . Sometime Commander of the 63rd regiment O.V.I.*, ed. David P. Jackson (privately published, 1922), 184.

15. "The Destruction of the Valley," originally published in the *Staunton Vindicator*, reprinted in the *Richmond Enquirer* 37, no. 126 (October 24, 1864): 2, Confederate Collection, Boston Athenaeum.

16. Grace Brown Elmore, November 20, 1864 and February 21, 1865, Grace Brown Elmore Reminiscences, 23, 62, South Caroliniana Library.

17. Louisa Minor, January 17–March 16, 1862, Diary of Louisa H. A. Minor (1855–1866), University of Virginia Libraries.

18. Dominique J.-F. de Quervian et al., "The Neural Basis of Altruistic Punishment," *Science* 305, no. 5688 (August 27, 2004): 1254–58; Brian Knutson, "Sweet Revenge?" *Science* 305, no. 5688 (August 27, 2004): 1246–47; Joel Yager, "A Positive Neural Payoff for Revenge?" *Journal Watch Psychiatry* (September 23, 2004), http://psychiatry.jwatch.org/cgi/content/full/2004/923/1 (accessed March 15, 2011); Michael Schirber, "Brain Scans Reveal That Revenge Is Sweet," *Scientific American* (August 30, 2004), http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=brain-scans-reveal-that-r (accessed March 15, 2011). In their impassioned desires to see the retributive "fall" of Union soldiers on judgment day, Southern civilians may also have felt a sense of renewed patriotism and fealty to the Confederate cause. The historian Jacqueline Glass Campbell has argued that the ruination of the South resulted not in louder calls for Southern soldiers to come home but to more vociferous claims to Confederate support among women in Georgia and South Carolina. This renewed conviction – and a sense of personal strength it suggests – was likely a pleasurable feeling as well. Jacqueline Glass Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North from the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 6, 59, 71, 74.

19. Editorial, *Richmond Enquirer* 37, no. 61 (August 6, 1864): 2, Confederate Collection, Boston Athenaeum.

20. "The Rebel Raid," New York *Herald,* August 6, 1864. Thanks to Mike DeGruccio for sending this article my way.

21. Richard Cary to his wife from Martinsburg, July 13, 1861, Richard Cary Letters, Massachusetts Historical Society; L. Prescott Hubbard Jr. to Annie Baltzley from Camp Union, Bladensburgh, Maryland, September 11, 1861, Letters to Anne E. Baltzley (1861–1862), Folder 3, Baltzley-Potter-Etz Family Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute of Advanced Study.

22. Henry J. Anthony, January 24, 1863 and April 17, 1863, Henry J. Anthony Civil War Diary (1863), Miscellaneous Manuscripts 9001-A, Box 10, Rhode Island Historical Society.

23. Greely S. Curtis to his mother from James Island, June 15, 1862, Greely S. Curtis Civil War letters (1861–1863) [originals at Massachusetts Historical Society], Transcripts, Carton 1, Folder 39, Curtis Family Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute.

24. William Dwight to his mother from bivouac beyond Harper's Ferry, July 30, 1864, Dwight Family Papers, Box "1864: January to July," Massachusetts Historical Society.

25. Joseph Addison, Letter No. 412, *The Spectator* (June 23, 1712), in Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *Selected Essays from "The Tatler," "The Spectator," and "The Guardian,"* ed. Daniel McDonald (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973); Christopher Woodward, *In Ruins: A Journey through History, Art, and Literature* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 121; John Baillie, *An Essay on the Sublime* (1747), in Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla, eds., *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 88–90; Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1759), 2.1, in Ashfield and de Bolla, *The Sublime*, 132; Addison, Letter No. 414, *The Spectator* (June 25, 1712), in Addison and Steele, *Selected Essays*; William Chambers, *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772), in Ashfield and de Bolla, *The Sublime*, 270; Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1794), in Ashfield and de Bolla, *The Sublime*, 274.

26. John Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 3; Patricia Mooney-Melvin, "Harnessing the Romance of the Past: Preservation, Tourism, and History," *Public Historian* 13, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 35; Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770–1840: "From an Antique Land"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1–2; Beth Leuck, *American Writers and the Picturesque Tour: The Search for National Identity, 1790–1860* (New York: Garland, 1997).

27. Milton Woodford to his wife Lina from Hilton Head, November 9, 1861, Milton Woodford Civil War Letters, Folder "1861–1863," Churchill-Woodford Family Papers, Connecticut Historical Society. The battle Woodford was watching was the Battle of Port Royal.

28. Milton Woodford to his wife Lina from Bermuda Hundred, June [1], 1864, Milton Woodford Civil War Letters, Folder "1864–1928," Churchill-Woodford Family Papers, Connecticut Historical Society; Thomas Ward Osborn to his brother A. C. Osborn from Falmouth, Va., May 8, 1863, Item 1307, Folder 1, MOLLUS Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University; "From Petersburg," *Richmond Enquirer* 37, no. 117 (October 15, 1864): 1, Confederate Collection, Boston Athenaeum.

29. James Barr to his wife Rebecca from Pocotaligo, April 12, 1863, in James Michael Barr, *Let Us Meet in Heaven: The Civil War Letters of James Michael Barr, 5th South Carolina Cavalry*, ed. Thomas D. Mays (Abilene, Tex.: McWhiney Foundation Press, 2001), 64, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, South Carolina.

30. Thomas McCoy to Anne Baltzley, from Cape Girardeau, Camp Fremont, Missouri, November 2, 1861, Letters to Anne E. Baltzley (1861–1862), Folder 3, Baltzley-Porter-Etz Family Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute of Advanced Study.

31. Addison, "Pleasures of the Imagination," *The Spectator* no. 411 (June 21, 1712), in Addison and Steele, *Selected Essays*, 460–61, 463.

32. Chambers, *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772), in Ashfield and de Bolla, *The Sublime*, 268.

33. Richard Payne Knight, *Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* part 2, chap. 2, sec. 29 (1805), in Walter John Hipple Jr., *The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957), 262–63; Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1794), in Ashfield and de Bolla, *The Sublime*, 272; Woodward, *In Ruins*, 119, 123.

34. Michel Makarius, *Ruins* (Paris: Flammarion, 2004).

35. An Amateur, *The Art of Drawing Landscapes; Being Plain and Easy Directions for the Acquirement of This Useful and Elegant Accomplishment* (engravings by J. Hill) (Baltimore: Fielding Lucas Jr., 1820), [frontispiece, plates 1, 2, and 5], 31, 32, 35. Graphics Collection, American Antiquarian Society.

36. It is difficult to ascertain viewer responses to this photograph, but Barnard's inclusion of it in his *Photographic Views of Sherman's Campaign*, which he offered for sale to the general public, suggests that he believed that images of Columbia's ruins would please prospective purchasers.

37. John Baillie, *An Essay on the Sublime* (1747), in Ashfield and de Bolla, *The Sublime*, 98; Robert Ginsberg, *The Aesthetics of Ruins* (New York: Rodolpi, 2004), 33.

38. Mary S. Whilden, *Recollections of the War, 1861–1865* (Columbia, S.C.: State Co., 1911), 13, Rare Books Collection, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, South Carolina.

39. Addison, *The Spectator* no. 412 (June 23, 1712), in Addison and Steele, *Selected Essays*, 464; David Hartley, from *Observations on Man* (1749), in Ashfield and de Bolla, *The Sublime*, 104.

40. W. H. Redman to Jane and Emma Redman, from Western Virginia, July 6, 1862, William Henry Redman Papers, University of Virginia Libraries.

41. John Baillie, *An Essay on the Sublime* (1747), in Ashfield and de Bolla, *The Sublime*, 98.

42. Albert G. Browne to his family from Columbia, S.C., May 29, 1865, Albert Gallatin Browne Civil War letters (1862–1865), Box 1, Folder 22, Browne Family Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study.

43. Emma LeConte, May 17, 1865, in Emma LeConte, *When the World Ended: The Diary of Emma LeConte,* ed. Earl Schenck Miers (1957; Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 99–100.

44. Rose Macaulay, *Pleasure of Ruins* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1953), ii.

Confederate Menace

Sequestration on the North Carolina Home Front

RODNEY J. STEWARD

By 1865, in North Carolina's western Piedmont district, a man named David Schenck had confiscated and sold at auction the property of hundreds of people living around him. He kept the choicest properties for himself or sold them at rock-bottom prices to others who were, like him, ardently committed to the Confederate cause. In spite of the economic disaster unfolding all around, he acted with impunity – believing all the while that his work would withstand Divine scrutiny and that, indeed, he was advancing the cause of Southern independence just as he was advancing his own interests. The extraordinary story of Schenck's activities as a Receiver under the Confederate Act of Sequestration reveals the largely untold story of how the Confederate government unleashed a menacing presence among Tar Heels struggling through the dark days of war on the home front.

As the secession crisis loomed, Schenck, who resided in Lincoln County, North Carolina, was a staunch advocate of disunion. He found

opportunity to advance himself socially, politically, and financially by supporting the cause for Southern independence. After Lincoln's call for troops he secured a position as a captain in the state's Commissary Corps, where he served for only a few months before resigning his commission to represent Lincoln County at the Secession Convention then in session in Raleigh. As the convention's business drew to a close in 1862, Schenck went to the town of Goldsboro to meet with Asa Biggs, judge of the Confederate District Court of North Carolina. There Judge Biggs awarded Schenck the position of Receiver under the Confederate Act of Sequestration. Schenck faithfully recorded his activities as a sequestration Receiver in his diary. His writings, along with additional evidence, reveal a remarkable pattern of corruption among leading Tar Heel secessionists serving the Confederacy as secondary bureaucrats from the safety of the home front. Schenck and other officers of the District Court enriched themselves with the confiscated property of people accused of being disloyal but who were perhaps anything but. Armed with sweeping powers, the District Court and its officers acted with impunity, confiscating and selling property at will. Although the Act of Sequestration is not widely known, its application on the North Carolina home front, and possibly in other Confederate states, reveals widespread disregard for civil liberties and personal property rights as well as an institutionalized system of corruption heretofore unexplored by historians.

On August 6, 1861, the United States Congress approved the First Confiscation Act, which laid the legal groundwork for Union forces to confiscate Southerners' private property being used to aid the rebellion. Although not directly mentioned in the act itself, it was understood, and later confirmed by executive order, that "property" included slaves. The broad scope of the act and its purposefully ambiguous wording rendered it sufficiently vague so as not to rouse anti-abolitionist sentiment among Northerners. In the South, however, the message of the First Confiscation Act rang loud and clear. "The war is to be waged on the heads of women and children," clamored the *Charleston Mercury*. "Let them emancipate, let them confiscate. And while they emancipate our slaves . . . let us console the instrument of their destruction."[1]

Passage of the federal confiscation law touched a raw nerve with

Confederates. Protection of personal property rights, and particularly the right to slave property, underpinned the Confederate government's entire political philosophy. The threat of large-scale federal confiscation of Southerners' property scared some Confederates. It should come as no surprise therefore that within a month of the federal confiscation law's passage, the Confederate government in Richmond responded with its own version of government-sanctioned confiscation.

The Confederate Congress passed the Act of Sequestration on August 30, 1861. Its preamble read, "Whereas the government and people of the United States have departed from the usages of civilized warfare in confiscating and destroying the property of the people of the Confederate States of all kinds, whether used for military purposes or not; and whereas, our only protection against such wrongs is to be found in such measures of retaliation as will ultimately indemnify our own citizens for their losses, and restrain the wanton excesses of our enemies."[2] Such inflammatory language is noticeably absent from the Northern confiscation law, suggesting the value Confederates attached to private property as well as their disdain for Northern attempts to violate its sanctity.

The Confederate Congress designed the Act of Sequestration to strike at Northern financial interests within the Confederate states. It mandated that Confederate officers would locate "all and every lands, tenements, hereditaments, goods and chattels, rights and credits within these Confederate states and every right and interest therein held, owned, possessed or enjoyed by or for any alien enemy." Such property would be "sequestered by the Confederate States of America." The confiscated property of "alien enemies" would be sold and the proceeds paid into a fund administered by the Confederate Treasury Department. A board of three sequestration officials would hear indemnity claims made by "loyal Confederates." The board would pass on its recommendation to the Confederate Congress, and after a special hearing, Congress would approve or reject the claims. Those claims approved by Congress were to be sent to the Treasury, which then would issue an indemnity to the claimant. The circuitous route established for indemnity claims ultimately gave Congress the final word on which "loyal Confederates" would be compensated for their losses.

The wording of the indemnity clause, however, is dubious at best for

it stated that confiscated property "shall be held for full indemnity of any true and loyal citizen or resident of these Confederate States, or other person aiding said Confederate States in the prosecution of the present war between the said Confederate States and the United States of America."[3] Nowhere did the act define or offer any criteria for identifying "true and loyal citizens."

The authors of the Sequestration Act understood that the primary difficulty with enforcing the law would be locating Northern-owned property. Business, tax, and legal records would be useful in shedding light on the whereabouts of some of it, but the Confederate government would rely heavily on information provided by ordinary citizens. As historian Brian Dirck noted, "the Sequestration Act accordingly required every Southerner to turn informant for the government."[4] Indeed, should Southerners prove reluctant to provide the government the information it sought, sequestration officials were given extraordinary punitive powers to search out and seize confiscable property.[5]

Enforcement of the law fell to two newly created arms of the Confederate Department of Justice, Receivers, and federal grand juries. Receivers, appointed by Confederate District Court judges, tracked down, seized, and auctioned property belonging to alien enemies. Federal grand juries aided the Receivers, hearing testimony and interrogating those suspected of being alien enemies. The act empowered officials to fine and jail individuals refusing to answer questions regarding the whereabouts of enemy-owned property. Violation of the law was a high misdemeanor, and those caught hiding confiscable property faced a fine double the value of the property hidden as well as the regular fine and imprisonment for up to five years.[6]

The Sequestration Act also charged the Confederate attorney general with putting the law into effect. Aside from that stipulation, however, it set no parameters or limitations on the power of Receivers and grand juries to acquire the information they sought. Furthermore, its general silence on nearly all interpretive matters placed the awesome responsibility of defining the terms "loyal Confederate" and "alien enemy" entirely in the hands of local sequestration officials.[7] Moreover, unlike other federal laws passed by the Confederate Congress such as conscription, impressment, and tax-in-kind, which were administered by state

officials, sequestration proceedings were the exclusive jurisdiction of the Confederate District Courts. District Court judges thus wielded unprecedented and centralized power. As one historian has noted, "in somewhat the same sense that Louis XIV, the Grand Monarch of France, is credited with saying, '*L'etats c'est moi*,' it might also be suggested of the district judge that he was the court."[8] During times of adjournment District Court judges executed many of their duties from chambers. Among them was the duty of appointing individuals to serve as officers of the court. The courts employed many officers including the district attorneys, clerks of court, bailiffs, Receivers, and grand juries. In this regard, the makeup of the entire Confederate District Court system was based exclusively on political patronage. In North Carolina even the office of sheriff, traditionally one of the few offices for which yeomen and poor whites could vote, became an appointee of the District Court judge. Asa Biggs was the judge of the North Carolina Confederate District Court. He personally appointed every officer of the Confederate court in North Carolina, including David Schenck.

By August 1862, the administrative details for establishing and operating the court were finalized. It had concluded old business pertaining to prewar cases, rendered judgments on the admiralty docket for which it also had jurisdiction, and now turned its full attention to the business of sequestration.

Following the events associated with executing the Act of Sequestration in North Carolina, and David Schenck's role in the entire process, unfortunately is rather like tracing the path of a single thread through an intricately woven cloth. The bureaucratic machinery for facilitating sequestration was complex and many portions of the process are undetectable. With few exceptions, those Confederate court officers who kept diaries and journals during the Civil War seldom recorded the details of their involvement with sequestering alien enemy property. The identities of grand jury members were secret, and the minutes of their meetings and interrogations were destroyed after each session. Rather than keeping detailed records of all property confiscated and sold and the amount the property fetched at auction, Receivers reported to the District Court only on those properties that were sold. In this way the Confederate District Court of North Carolina placed a partial veil of secrecy over sequestration that continues to distract historians.

The court's desire for secrecy in regards to sequestrating the property of alien enemies further begs explanation. A handful of documents pertaining to Schenck's duties as Receiver still survive. When viewed alongside entries made in his diary and other surviving evidence from elsewhere in the Confederacy, a pattern of corruption and eye-popping self-interest becomes apparent.

According to Schenck's Receiver's bond, on file with the District Court in Goldsboro, he served as Receiver for the district of western Piedmont, which included Cleaveland, Catawba, Lincoln, Gaston, Iredell, and Mecklenburg Counties.[9] The district covered roughly the same area as the judicial circuit he rode only a few months before. He began his work sometime in August 1862, at the precise moment that North Carolina's economy began its rapid decline as a result of the blockade and profiteering on the home front. "[A]n inward canker worm is preying on our vitals," he complained on September 1. "Extortion, blockade and scarcity has raised the necessities of life to such fabulous prices that actual suffering exists among us, and that too among the families of absent soldiers. There are silent indications of gathering trouble from this source, which make patriots tremble."[10]

"I am engaged these days in my duties as Receiver," Schenck continued "and have recently sold $20,000 worth of real estate confiscated in my district. Lands bring very high prices. Men who have money and do not wish to speculate fear a depreciation and prefer to invest their funds in permanent property which cannot well be destroyed, and in fact the abundance of money depreciates it and correspondingly increases prices of good property."[11] According to the North Carolina Comptroller's report for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1862, the gross tax value of all property in Catawba and Cleaveland counties combined amounted to only $15,532.65. Confiscated real estate worth $20,000 encompassed an enormous amount of land and property.[12] In the adjoining district, Confederate Receiver C. N. White sold 354 acres of prime cotton land in Union County at auction for $5.00 an acre on September 16, 1862. Assuming the land Schenck seized fetched at least the same amount at auction, he would have sold some four thousand acres of land.[13]

There is more. Later that month, Schenck complained of soaring prices and the rising costs of property and slaves as the economy continued to flag. "Prices of negroes are enormous," he noted, "likely boys

bringing $2000 – other property in proportion, in fact no one will part with property but under necessity." His remarks regarding the desperate condition of the economy illustrate the fact that economic disaster was fast becoming a reality for the people around him. Yet in the midst of the economic despair rapidly enveloping the entire state, Schenck prospered. "Charles, my negro boy arrived in the cars – Col. Ramseur purchased him for me in Richmond for the sum of $1225.00. I have long desired to have just such a servant to carry on a little farm and take care of things when I am away." He continued, "I have also just purchased from brother [his brother-in-law] 2¾ acres of land on the Rocky-Branch for a pasture – which has a nice little meadow on it – it cost me $50.00 an acre. This too is a very convenient addition to my little property and one I needed much."[14]

When Schenck began his duties as Receiver, he began to complain about profiteering among merchants and manufacturers. He often couched his frustration with wartime inflation in patriotic assertions that the rampant price-gouging on the home front threatened to undermine the authority and credit of the Confederate government. He also argued that profiteers were sinners and certainly unpatriotic. "This war has taught us much of the inhumanity of man, which makes countless thousands mourn," he wrote. "Extortion and speculation are the besetting sins of our people. First it began with the manufacturers and the whole country became excited and talked of regulating prices. It was considered unpatriotic to sell yarn at 2.00 per bunch. But the thirst for gain has spread among the producers until prices are only limited by the elastic consciences of the sellers. A farmer grumbles at everything and very deliberately asks 1.25 for corn and $20. for flour, while wool commands $2.50 per pound when .25 cts was formerly a good price."[15]

Even more galling to Schenck was the fact that the principal on debts owed by Southern merchants to Northern suppliers was specifically excluded from sequestration until twelve months after a peaceful conclusion to the war. So frustrated was Schenck with this clause in the Act of Sequestration that he wrote to Confederate Secretary of the Treasury Christopher G. Memminger asking that the clause be rescinded. "I hope you will pardon an humble individual in suggesting to you a source of revenue that ought to be used," he wrote. "I refer to the vast amount of

debts now confiscated to the use of the government and which the act of Sequestration does not allow to be collected by executors [Receivers] until twelve months after peace or until ordered by Congress." He added that "money everywhere is more plenty than ever, and its abundance induces men to use it for speculation and extortion." He further argued that "merchants and Jews especially, who owe largely, instead of aiding the cause by paying these debts thus confiscated are using it to raise prices and injure the credit of the government." He suggested that the solution to this problem was to "give the District Judges a discretion to order executors [Receivers] to issue for the whole or part of the sum as may seem best." Such a discretion granted to the district judges would enable Schenck to punish those extortionist merchants and Jews that he believed were destroying the state's economy.[16]

A diary entry made several weeks later in February 1863, however, sheds additional light on another source of Schenck's frustration with profiteers, his own involvement with the practice. "I have $1600 invested in cotton at 18cts," he tersely wrote. Perhaps his annoyance stemmed more from the fact that he was not maximizing his own profits.[17] Indeed, as 1862 drew to a close, Schenck counted his blessings. He attributed his prosperity to God's blessing and was conscious to offer his thanks and unswerving devotion. "In the beginning of this sanguinary revolution, my heart trembled with fear, and I desired of God that he would give me food and raiment and spare my dear little home," he wrote. "This was all I expected, but He has been more bountiful in blessings than ever. His special Providence has guided me all through life, and I wish to record that I seek his blessing on every project in life . . . often have I been delivered of my errors; and as often convinced that His hand was working all things together for my good."[18] He continued

> [T]hough extortion and speculation have borne heavily on the whole country and I have shared in its burthens yet the promises of God have been sure and steadfast. My profession of law was laid prostrate in the beginning of the war, and I looked with gloomy apprehension to the future. There my commission on the Commissary General's staff supplied my wants, but its duties were too onerous for my strength and I resigned. Then, by Providential occurrence, I was appointed Receiver under the Act of Sequestration –

> this office has unexpectedly proved very profitable to me. I have made in the last month or two some *$1800* which puts me out of debt and leaves me a negro man and $1000 in cash, while I have good prospects for more. My next effort will be to save enough money to build me a nice house and improve a spacious lot I have bought and paid for, and I believe God will in this as other things, bless the labor of my hands and give me the desires of my heart.[19]

Simply put, becoming a Receiver had resulted in vast personal profits for Schenck.

The question that must necessarily arise is: What was the source of his financial well-being especially at a time when, as a Confederate bureaucrat, he was paid in Confederate currency which was depreciating daily? The Receivers ledger for the Sequestration Fund from the Confederate Treasury offers one clue. According to the ledger, which recorded all funds remitted to the Sequestration Fund each year by each Confederate States Receiver, David Schenck's district remitted only $3,610.24 in the year 1862. It also shows that Schenck was paid $319.58 to cover the cost of expenses incurred while executing the duties of his office.[20] There is no evidence, in other words, that the full $20,000 worth of confiscated real estate sold at auction in September was ever deposited into the Sequestration Fund in Richmond. Could it be that the Confederate District Court disbursed those and other funds liberally among the officers of the court?

Again, there is a clue. On January 1, 1863, Schenck blithely recorded in his diary, "the beginning of another year finds me in prosperity and peace; and with health, raiment and food."[21] His diary entry also included a list of all the various properties he had acquired over the previous year, which, in his estimation, was worth $9000.[22] During the following month he added, "I am entirely absorbed these times in the scheme of building me a new house and improving my premises at the end of town," he wrote, seemingly oblivious to the economic despair developing around him. "I am prosecuting my official business as Receiver to get the funds. I have $1600 invested in cotton at 18cts, and have agreed to sell my present house and lot for $2000. I want $4000 before I begin. I have just put me out a nice little orchard and am

cleaning up the grounds. I feel very proud of my enterprise and hope that God will bless me in my efforts to complete it."[23] Though limited, the evidence is clear that Schenck used his post as Receiver to become a wealthy man. Given his relatively modest salary as well as the legal requirements of the Sequestration Act, one must conclude that somehow he profited directly from the seizure and sale of "alien land" he so diligently pursued.

A closer look at the surviving evidence reveals much about the system by which Sequestration was applied in North Carolina and how Schenck could become wealthy as a result. North Carolina had twenty Receivers, which was considerably more than nearly all the other Confederate states. According to the Sequestration Fund ledger, North Carolina Receivers remitted $292,226.93 to the fund between 1862 and 1863. For reasons that are not clear, no revenue from confiscated property was remitted to the Sequestration Fund from North Carolina after 1863, in spite of the fact that petitions to the court for issuance of writs of fieri facias and venditioni exponas signed by Schenck and other Receivers well into 1864 still exist.[24] Three of the most active Receivers in the state were Schenck, DuBrutz Cutlar, and Levi M. Scott, whose remittances collectively amounted to $126,062.49, or 43 percent of the North Carolina total.[25] The Receivers ledger for the Sequestration Fund in Richmond indicates that David Schenck's district remitted $54,691.55 to the Sequestration Fund in 1863 – more than any other Receiver district in the entire state.[26] All three operated in districts where strong Unionist sentiment clashed sharply with Secessionists before the war began. This fact suggests strongly that there was a distinctly political edge to sequestration and that it was more than an effort to deprive Yankees of profits derived from the South. It suggests that Sequestration, or the threat of it, was also a loyalty test.[27]

The kind of property that Receivers went looking for also reveals much about how they viewed their mandate. While we know little about Schenck, other Receivers' dealings reveal a great deal. Receivers often targeted small family farms for confiscation, not the large tracts of commercial property typically owned by Northern investors. In December 1862, Levi M. Scott advertised the following properties in a Greensboro newspaper:

> 133 acres in the South East part of Guilford co., adjoining the lands of Henry Shoffner, Jacob Shoffner and others – also a life estate in 19 3–4 acres adjoining the first tract, known as a part of the lands of the late Samuel Coble.
>
> Two thirds of a lot of 94 acres on Hickory creek, being the Interest of Isaac Fountain in the lands of the late Isaac Murphy.
>
> The life estate of James Thornburg in 133 acres on Brush Creek and Horsepen, adjoining the lands of Joseph Thornburg, James Poe and others.
>
> 40 acres adjoining the lands of Wm. H. Brittain, R. M. Stafford and others, known as the lands of Andrew Meridith. Two small parcels adjoining the lands of Henry Foust, Peter Coble, Wm. Brown and others, known as the lands of Jacob Wheritt, one Parcel containing 6 1–4 and the other 19 acres.
>
> 46 acres known as the Beeson Mine on Deep River, adjoining the lands of Widow Beeson, J. R. Mendenhall & others. 68 acres on South Buffalo, adjoining the lands of Alson Oaky, William Walker and others, known as the lands of Smith Leonard.[28]

Receivers apparently were not the least bit squeamish about preying on the vulnerable within their districts. On January 15, 1862, Receiver C. N. White issued a garnishment on property occupied by Mrs. Adline W. White, a widow in Caberus County. On January 31, Mrs. White responded to the list of interrogatories included in the garnishment:

> In answer to the following interrogatories, I have to say, I am Indebted to my son Harvey B. White, who is residing temporarily in the state of California, a note for $624.22 due August 30, 1855 subject to the following credits have one for $22.50 dated February 18, 1856, one for $200.00 dated December 11, 1856, and one for $57.30 dated January 1, 1857. I also hold a note on my son H. B. White for $362.00 due about the 1 of April 1854, which note has since been destroyed by the burning of my house and its contents. I held said note expecting it to be set off against the note mentioned above. My son H. B. White has the one eighth interest in my dower, the land on which I now live, which interest is on the contingency of my death. The said tract of land is on the waters of Cold Water creek . . . containing 247 acres.[29]

Widow or not, Judge Asa Biggs, at the request of C. N. White, issued a writ of venditioni exponas for the property and it was confiscated and sold at auction. Harvey White, Adline White's son, was declared an enemy alien by virtue of no other fact than he was residing in the state of California.

White actually fared better than most accused of being an enemy of the Confederacy. In April 1864, William Gordon of Wilmington, North Carolina, filed a petition in DuBrutz Cutlar's office. In his petition, Gordon alleged that "lot Nos. 1.2, 3B, and No. 78 according to the plan of town, belong to J. B. Allen alien enemy who lives somewhere in the enemy lines having escaped through arms about the year 1863."[30] He added that Allen was from New Hampshire and had lived in Wilmington for many years. This information was enough for Cutlar to condemn the property, sell it at auction, and persuade the court to declare Allen an alien enemy. Less than one month after the sale of his property, J. B. Allen returned to Wilmington from behind enemy lines on the North Carolina coast, where he had been trapped for several months. Cutlar ordered the sheriff to arrest Allen, and he was subsequently handed over to the military authorities to be punished for disloyalty.[31]

The handful of studies that exist dealing with the Sequestration Act all fail to ask the one vital question that demands an answer: Who was buying the confiscated property Receivers sold at auction? In an economy that quickly fell victim to hyperinflation and rapid devaluation of its currency, who possessed enough ready capital to buy so much land and property? There are a few tantalizing clues. According to a receipt found among the DuBrutz Cutlar papers, J. B. Allen's property went to William Gordon, the man who accused him of being an enemy alien. Receipts from an auction held in Union County in 1862 indicate that Receiver C. N. White sold 354 acres of land and mineral rights on 288 other acres to Robert Hall Morrison, the father-in-law of Confederate General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson, and also owner of land adjacent to the property he purchased from White. Notably, David Schenck emerged from the Civil War owning six lots in town and several pieces of land nearby. Did he profit as well from seizing and then purchasing valuable lands? Were "enemy aliens" and the "disloyal" simply men and women in the wrong place at the wrong time? There is no apparent

evidence that Harvey White, his mother Adline White, or J. B. Allen were disloyal.

Another kind of property Receivers sought out was railroad bonds. The District Court files for North Carolina meanwhile are full of thousands of garnishments issued to attorneys who acted as railroad bond brokers for countless individuals. Those bonds were sequestered and signed over to Confederate Receivers. There is no surviving record indicating what happened to any of those bonds after they were signed over into the custody of Receivers, but the possibilities for personal profit are obvious.

Few Southerners openly spoke out against the confiscation of property and those who did were often accused of disloyalty and risked losing their own property. In this regard, it appears that a Southerner could become an alien enemy by virtue of his or her behavior. The few opponents stressed its unconstitutionality. One opponent, writing under the pseudonym "Nemo," blasted the Act of Sequestration for its fundamentally unconstitutional nature. Wrote the legally astute "Nemo": "The law should be repealed because it is unconstitutional. It is effectually, and to all intents, an *ex post facto law*, and a law impairing the obligation of contracts. It is called *retroactive*, but you cannot change the nature of a law by a name." He continued, "an act perfectly innocent, usual and universally recognized by civilized nations, as legal and honorable at the time, is afterwards declared null, and punished with forfeiture. If that be not an *ex post facto law*, and impairing the obligations of contracts, I know not what is." He further asserted that "*[e]x post facto* laws and laws impairing the obligations of contracts are, in their principles, precisely the same – one intended to apply to criminal, the other to civil transactions. Both being equally odious, they are coupled together in all our State and Federal Constitutions, and to prevent cruel injustice and secure the rights and liberties of the people are both *expressly prohibited*."[32]

Another intrepid opponent of sequestration, and the Confederate government in general, was Richmond attorney John H. Gilmer. In 1862, the Confederate District Court of Virginia served Gilmer with a writ of garnishment requiring him to reveal the whereabouts of property owned by his prewar Northern clients. Gilmer decided to fight the writ. His case went before the District Judge James Halyburton. Gilmer asserted that

the Act of Sequestration was a moral travesty and referred to it as a "bill of ravishment."[33] Gilmer crafted a cogent thesis regarding the strange ambiguity and inconsistency attached to the Confederate authorities' use of location as the primary criteria for determining citizenship. In the end, however, he argued in vain. Judge Halyburton offered a sweeping justification of Confederate authority, asserting that the "Constitution was made for citizens and friends, and not for the benefits of aliens and enemies." He also argued that the Confederate states could "make war of any kind and in any shape which the discretion of Congress would dictate."[34] With that, Gilmer was compelled to comply with the writ of garnishment. He remained under the watchful eye of the District Court for having dared question the authority of the Confederate government.

The operations of federal grand juries, the other half of the Sequestration Act's enforcement wing, are far more submerged in shadows. In accordance with time-honored tradition, grand jury notes were destroyed at the end of each jury's tenure, leaving no record of what transpired while it was convened. One set of Confederate grand jury notes have survived, however, and they reveal a darker side to the Sequestration Act's bureaucracy. Those notes are from the Confederate grand jury convened in the Eastern District Court of Galveston, Texas, and date from November 1861 to January 1862. According to historian Brian Dirck, the minutes reveal a grand jury composed of members from the upper echelons of the business and political world. During its tenure the grand jury investigated forty-nine people and interrogated untold numbers of other citizens.[35] Jury members were not content to simply search out enemy-owned property but rather probed the depths of loyalty of suspect individuals. With limitless power to prosecute its investigations, the grand jury could compel community members to supply the information it sought. In Dirck's assessment of the East Texas grand jury minutes, "the Sequestration Act created a capricious system which empowered Confederate officials to conduct extensive and nearly limitless investigations into the hearts and minds of their fellow citizens. Whether other grand juries or sequestration officials availed themselves of this opportunity is not known; but the opportunity was there, and that was the real issue."[36] Did the grand jury of western Piedmont with which David Schenck worked so closely operate in a similar fashion? Did they

seek to probe the members of their community for signs of disloyalty? Sadly, the Confederate District Court of North Carolina did its work well in hiding from contemporaries and historians alike the details of the work of its grand juries.

Notes

1. *Charleston Mercury*, July 24, 1861, quoted in Brian R. Dirck, "Posterity's Blush: Civil Liberties, Property Rights, and Property Confiscation in the Confederacy," *Civil War History* 48 (2002): 241.

2. "An Act For the Sequestration of the Property of Alien Enemies," in *Confederate Imprints*, reel 2, no. 49.

3. Ibid. There is a surprising paucity of scholarly work examining the Act of Sequestration and how it was implemented across the Confederacy and its impact on home front morale. Only a handful of works exist that examine this controversial piece of Confederate legislation. See Dirck, "Posterity's Blush"; Mark E. Neely Jr., *Southern Rights: Political Prisoners and the Myth of Confederate Constitutionalism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999); James G. Randall, "Captured and Confiscated Property during the Civil War," *American Historical Review* 28 (October 1913): 65–79; T. R. Havins, "Administration of the Sequestration Act in the Confederate District Court For the Western District of Texas, 1862–1865," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 43 (1940): 295–322; and Thomas G. Dyer, *Secret Yankees: The Union Circle in Confederate Atlanta* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

4. Dirck, "Posterity's Blush," 242.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid. Act of Sequestration, section 2, *Confederate Imprints*, reel 2, no. 49.

7. It should be noted that the Act required Receivers and grand juries to act in a "just manner" and also called upon the Confederate attorney general to establish guidelines for implementing the law, but no attorney general did so. See Dirck, "Posterity's Blush," 242.

8. William M. Robinson Jr., *Justice in Grey: A History of the Judicial System of the Confederate States of America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1941), 62. Although Robinson acknowledges the unprecedented power exercised by sequestration officials, he ultimately concludes that there was nothing untoward in the Confederate judiciary's implementation of Sequestration.

9. Receiver's Bond in Record Group 21, North Carolina District Court Records, Confederate Court Garnishment and Sequestration Wilmington 1862–1864, Box 3, RG 21, National Archives and Records Administration Southeast Regional Branch, Atlanta, Georgia. Hereinafter cited as NARA (Atlanta). David Schenck's copious diaries documenting much of his activities as a Confederate States Receiver along with the availability of additional evidence pertaining to other North Carolina Receivers is what merits a sustained analysis.

10. David Schenck Diary, September 1, 1862, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library (hereafter cited as Schenck Diary, SHC).

11. Ibid.

12. Comptroller's Report for the Fiscal Year ending September 30th, 1862, War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Chapter VIII, Volume 247, "Report of the Comptroller of Public Accounts, North Carolina, 1862," 141, 144, RG 109, National Archives and Records Administration Washington D.C., hereinafter cited as NARA (Washington).

13. District Court Records, RG21, Confederate Court and Garnishment, Wilmington, N.C., 1862–1864, Box no. 1, Folder no. 2, NARA (Atlanta). This information comes from a sales report made by C. N. White to the Confederate District Court.

14. Schenck Diary, September 24, 1862, SHC.

15. Ibid.

16. David Schenck to Christopher G. Memminger, December 28, 1862, RG 365, Treasury Department Collection of Confederate Treasury Records, NARA (Washington).

17. Schenck Diary, February 1863, SHC.

18. Ibid., November 1, 1862. Schenck forwarded money to Ramseur to purchase the slave Charles for him. Moreover, it should be noted that the pastureland Schenck bought from his brother-in-law sold for considerably more than the prime cotton land sold in Union County.

19. Ibid., December 1862.

20. War Department Collection of the Confederate Treasury Department, Chapter 10, Volume 207, Accounts of Receivers Sequestration Fund, 1862, RG 109, 631–32, NARA (Washington).

21. Schenck Diary, January 1, 1863, SHC.

22. Ibid. The Michael Schenck Family Bible at the North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina. Lucy Schenck was actually born on November 20, 1862, but there is no mention of her birth among his diary entries for that month.

23. Ibid., February 1863.

24. War Department Collection of the Confederate Treasury Department, Chapter X, Volume 207, Accounts of Receivers Sequestration Fund, 1863, North Carolina Record, NARA (Washington).

25. Ibid., David Schenck's remittances amounted to $58,301.79, Levi M. Scott $24,149.70, and DuBrutz Cutlar $43,611.00.

26. War Department Collection of the Confederate Treasury Department, Chapter X, Volume 207, Accounts of Receivers Sequestration Fund, 1863, 631–32, NARA (Washington).

27. Schenck's district included Lincoln, Iredell, Mecklenburg, Catawba, Cleaveland, and Gaston Counties. Levi M. Scott's district included Person,

Caswell, Alamance, Rockingham, and Guilford Counties; DuBrutz Cutlar was responsible for New Hanover County and two other counties (probably Brunswick and Pender Counties).

28. Levi M. Scott, Sequestration Sale Broadside, in *Confederate Imprints*, 1861–1865; reel 15, no. 849–53. Published in Greensboro, North Carolina. Newspaper unknown.

29. Adline W. White to C. N. White, Confederate States Receiver, January 31, 1862, RG21 Confederate Court Garnishment/Sequestration Wilmington Box no. 1, NARA (Atlanta).

30. Petition of William Gordon in DuBrutz Cutlar Papers, 89, Southern Historical Collection Wilson Library, University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill.

31. Ibid.

32. Nemo, *A Few Thoughts on the Confiscation Act*, No. 1, *The Augusta Constitutionalist*, Augusta, Georgia, 1861, in Confederate Imprints, 1861–1865; reel 91, no. 2792.

33. Dirck, "Posterity's Blush," 249. The transcript of the Gilmer case can be viewed in *Confederate States v. John Gilmer, Substance of the opening Argument of John Gilmer with Authorities: and the Opinions of Judge Halyburton Construing Sequestration Act, etc.* in *Confederate Imprints*, reel 15, no. 2750.

34. Dirck, "Posterity's Blush," 249.

35. Ibid., 250. In his article on Sequestration, "Posterity's Blush," Dirck asserts that Confederates used the threat of Sequestration and other forms of punishment as a stick with which to beat would-be dissenters. His article is the only study to include the Grand Jury minutes, which are located at the University of Texas Center for American History, Austin, Texas. See also T. R. Havins, "Administration of Sequestration Act in the Confederate District Court for the Western District of Texas, 1862–1865," 43, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*.

Online version at http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/publications/journals/shq/online/v043/n3/contrib._DIVL501, accessed March 22, 2011.

36. Dirck, "Posterity's Blush," 253.

PART TWO

Hell's Belles

New Looks at Civil War Women

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The Tale of Three Kates

Outlaw Women, Loyalty, and Missouri's Long Civil War

LEEANN WHITES

It would be hard to grow up in Missouri and not know of the exploits of the state's Civil War guerrillas like Bloody Bill Anderson, Jesse James, and William Clarke Quantrill. Much ink has been spilt debating whether these guerrillas were terrorists, intent on plunder and self advancement, or heroes, fighting a rearguard action to defend a Southern sympathizing population against Union occupation during the Civil War. In his book, *Inside War*, Michael Fellman has described the way some boys ended up being guerrillas in the chaotic conditions of the times. One day, Fellman suggests, they were out at night with their friends, bagging squirrels, and the next day, they found themselves swept up in the maelstrom of war, shooting men. Fellman's observation is useful because it puts us in the saddle with the boys, not the men who were the leaders, like Quantrill or Anderson, but with the boy who was always perhaps a bit wild, good on a horse, liked to ride around and shoot things with his buddies, and perhaps got into a few scrapes. A boy who on occasion behaved badly

but who, given the situation of Civil War, found himself with a different and more deadly serious target to shoot at.[1]

Now while a great deal of ink has been spilt over the meaning of the behavior of these boys and the men who led them, much less attention has been paid to their sisters. The commonly assumed place of women in guerrilla war has been that of the victim, violated by the random violence created by guerrilla war. Women's choices were apparently limited. Either they could stand by while their male relations were hung or shot and their households were robbed or burnt to the ground or they could step outside their normative gender roles and pick up a rifle or an ax and wield it themselves in defense of their homes. Either way, women were victimized, or so the thinking goes, either by their straight-out violation or by the traumatizing necessity of having to take up the role of male protector in order to attempt to ward it off.[2]

Little consideration has been given to the possibility that some young women, like their brothers, might themselves have chosen to take up outlawed behavior. In point of fact, however, just as the Civil War dramatically increased the possibility and significance of antebellum boys' marauding behavior, it also increased the possibility for unconventional behavior among young women. In the antebellum social order, outlawed behavior was gendered. While male crimes clustered around violence against others or the property of others, when women were arrested it was nearly always due to violence against themselves. So while wayward boys might steal their neighbors' apples, or shoot their neighbors' pigs, wayward girls were those who engaged in unconventional sexual behavior, at worst in prostitution. St. Louis, the largest city in the state, provides a striking illustration of the way that the Civil War expanded the possibility for such behavior among young women. From the outset of the conflict the city served as a major staging area for the Union military. Tens of thousands of troops drilled there at Benton Barracks before being sent down the Mississippi River into Confederate territory, and, sadly, tens of thousands were sent back up to recuperate in the city's five thousand hospital beds after being wounded. This large movement of men through the city during the war underwrote a huge expansion in the sex trade. And in the war's aftermath the thousands of returning troops created a continued business into the postwar era.[3]

In the rural areas of the state, the guerrilla war that cut young men loose from their households of origin and larger norming communities also opened a space for more unconventional relations with the opposite sex. What might start out as an innocent ride with a young, handsome, and dashing guerrilla could easily turn into a situation where a young woman was, in the parlance of the day, "ruined." She was perhaps more permanently marked by her violation of normative gender expectations than her brother was for riding with the likes of Bloody Bill Anderson or William Clarke Quantrill. Of course there was a double standard at work here. Only women were arrested for prostitution. Whether young men were Union soldiers or members of a guerrilla band, their behavior with these young women, while perhaps questionable, was not considered to be criminal. Certainly unconventional sexual behavior on the part of young women was not at the time and has not been to date seen as being equivalent to the military and political significance of the outlawed behavior of their brothers.[4]

But what if we take as a starting point the assumption that however disparately gendered, the outlaw behavior of both boys and girls mattered in the waging of guerrilla war? However much the war caught both young men and young women unaware and turned their behavior in directions they perhaps had not foreseen, it also gave them the opportunity to make a contribution to a war that was itself fought outside the law on unconventional social and cultural terrain. Certainly the core question that historians have asked of the male guerrillas could just as well be asked about the girls who rode with those men or who left home on their own account, some to end up in the underworld of brothels and bars along the St. Louis wharf. Was the unconventional activity of these women apolitical, oriented only toward their own personal gain (and as many would say, as with the guerillas, their own personal ruin)? Or was there, as with the guerrillas, some larger politics associated with women who stood outside the law in this fashion and the low culture that surrounded them, which has bearing on the conduct and outcome of the war itself?[5]

Historians are not much help with these sorts of questions as they have not paid a great deal of attention to the role that the outlawed behavior of women – particularly unconventional sexual behavior – might have

played in the history of the Civil War. When in doubt about the Civil War, however, it frequently pays to consider the characters in *Gone with the Wind*. Perhaps this is because Margaret Mitchell's novel is actually a fictionalized rendering of the elite white Southern oral history of the war that she heard as she grew up. Rhett Butler is Margaret Mitchell's outlaw, beginning with the way he is condemned by polite society but certainly not ruined for taking a young woman out for a carriage ride and culminating in his wartime behavior when he initially takes advantage of the profit to be made in running the blockade but ultimately proves true to the Confederate cause in its darkest hour. And certainly in Belle Watling, the madam with a heart of gold, Margaret Mitchell points to several ways in which women who stood outside respectable gender conventions could contribute to the war effort precisely because they were outside the norm. So, for example, when the ladies of Atlanta found themselves unable to provide for the soldiers out of their own funds, it was Belle Watling with her ill-gotten lucre who was able to save the day, as did Rhett. Not only did Belle Watling's source of funds prove useful to the ladies and their cause during the war but, perhaps even more importantly, it was Belle Watling's brothel that enabled Rhett to find critical cover for the vigilante activities of those same women's husbands and brothers in the war's aftermath.[6]

Of course, however true to certain aspects of the civilians' war Margaret Mitchell's novel may be, her story is still fiction. Where then might we begin a search for the contribution of outlawed women to the Civil War? How might we begin to sort out the question of the extent to which the war created the possibility for agency on their part, allowing them to become outlaws in their own right? Perhaps the place to begin would be with one of the best known of Missouri's guerrilla women, the alleged "child bride" of William Clarke Quantrill himself, Sarah Catherine King, who during the war chose to be called Kate Clarke Quantrill. We are fortunate to have an interview Kate Clarke Quantrill gave in 1926 toward the end of her long life. In this lengthy account that was published in the Kansas City *Star*, Kate Clarke gives her own version of her Civil War experience with Quantrill. She tells of how she met Quantrill in the fall of 1861 when he and his men were camping on her father's farm. He initially came to her house to talk to her father, Robert King, who was a

Southern sympathizer. But what ensued shortly thereafter was a whirlwind romance with the twenty-five-year-old Quantrill coming by every day to see the thirteen-year-old Kate, and Kate's parents becoming increasingly concerned. It is at this point in the story that Kate begins to sound like many other wayward girls. For when her parents ordered her to break off the relationship with Quantrill, she ignored them and instead started riding off into the bush with him in secret. In fairly short order, she ran away with him.[7]

For a girl who rode with a man who was so bad (Quantrill, after all, led the raid that burnt Lawrence, Kansas, to the ground and put more than a hundred and fifty unarmed men and boys to death), Kate Clarke comes off in her own narrative sounding pretty good. In her account, she is careful to tell the reader that after they ran off together, they were legally married by a preacher some six miles from her home, although this marriage has never been legally documented. She also went so far as to point out that on her wedding night she had "no idea what it meant to be married," although she seemed to know well enough that it entailed making breakfast the following morning. She then goes on to suggest that she and Quantrill led a fairly conventional life together, never mind the fact that he was one of the leading guerrillas in the state, hunted ruthlessly by the Union soldiers. According to Kate's account they spent most of the next three and a half years together, never being apart for any extended period of time until he left her in St. Louis late in 1864. Even then, she claimed that they never imagined they would be separated for more than a month or two. Her description of their life together, while admittedly somewhat makeshift (she does acknowledge for instance that they only had one permanent dwelling, and even that only a tent with a chimney), still sounds very conventional. She claims for instance that Quantrill followed her every wish in camp, making sure his men toed the domestic line. The reader can almost envision Kate Clarke Quantrill standing at the doorway of her tent wearing a white apron, although perhaps not starched, gaily waving at Quantrill as he went off to his job in the bush every morning.[8]

Even in 1926, some sixty years after the close of the Civil War, an interview with Kate Clarke Quantrill was big news. The reporter dutifully interviewed some of the still living men who rode with Quantrill to

determine if it was true, was this really William Clarke Quantrill's alleged child bride? These men vouched for the fact that this woman now known as Sarah Head was indeed the Kate Clarke Quantrill they knew from their Civil War guerrilla days. But where had she been in all those intervening years and why would she reveal herself, finally, in 1926? Certainly her story had long been told by others and it bore little resemblance to the story Kate told about herself. For example, the newspaper reporter referred to the discussion of Kate Clarke Quantrill in what were then the two classic works of the border wars, John Edwards's *Noted Guerillas*, published in 1875, and William Connelley's *Quantrill and the Border Wars*, published in 1910, simply as a way of further verifying the fact that such a person, Kate Clarke Quantrill, did indeed exist. He perhaps politely refrained from raising the much different picture that one of these two works, the one presented by William Connelley, told of Kate.[9]

For according to Connelley's 1910 history, Kate Clarke was little more than a young girl ruined by Quantrill and then left behind in St. Louis to become a brothel keeper with the money Quantrill gave her on his deathbed. Connelley relates the story of Kate King as part of a larger, telling commentary on Quantrill as a man. For according to Connelley, Kate King was not even the first woman Quantrill ruined or tried to ruin. There was Anna Walker Slaughter, another daughter of another Southern sympathizer he met through his guerrilla activities. In her case, Connelley suggests, Quantrill may have even proposed the Walker Raid, his first Civil War guerrilla action, in order to impress her. In the end, however, he lost her to a string of guerrillas, first to Bill Anderson, then to George Todd, and eventually to Joe Vaughan, who married her in 1862, but not for long. As soon as she came into her father's money upon his death in 1864, she dumped her guerrilla husband and set herself up as a madam in Baxter Springs.[10]

There is a pattern that emerges in this historiography. Those who wished to condemn Quantrill's guerrilla activities, painting him as nothing more than a crazed and lowly driven man, point to Kate King as a whore and just one of many. Connelley, for instance, in a final coup de grâce, concludes his biography of Quantrill with the story of him on his deathbed in Kentucky in the spring of 1865. He tried to do the right thing and talked about leaving his money to his sister and mother (to

whom he had never given a cent of his presumably vast plunder before), but even then he was too weak to stand up to the blandishments of the ever-conniving Kate, who showed up shortly before his demise. A man who leaves his mother bankrupt because he cannot withstand the blandishments of bad women is no man to regard as a hero, according to Connelley.[11]

And so, what were the lovers of Quantrill to say in the face of this damning account? One approach was simply to mention Kate King as infrequently as possible. So in John Edwards's favorable account of Quantrill and Missouri's guerrilla war, he says almost nothing about Kate. And what of her postwar fate? According to Edwards, Quantrill gave her the money on his deathbed, as you would your wife, after all, and she went back to St. Louis and started a boarding house. And so the rumors about Kate were born. Was she really Quantrill's legal wife? Some of his men years later vouched to the truth of that story, while others claimed she was his mistress. Did she go on to become a notorious St. Louis madam or did she eke out her days as a widowed woman running a boarding house? Perhaps the reason why in 1926, toward the end of her long life, Kate Clarke finally decided to tell her story to the reporter of the Kansas City *Star* was because she wanted to be able to weigh in on the debate over Quantrill and to set the story straight.[12]

Certainly if this 1926 interview were entirely true, there would be only one Kate, the brief Civil War child bride of William Clarke Quantrill. A young woman who may have been a bit wild – she did run away with Quantrill instead of following her parents' advice – but this Kate made good by marrying her man. And, as Kate told the reporter in 1926, despite the four men she married after him, she never wavered in the primacy of her love and her loyalty toward him. Indeed, by telling her story in this way, Kate not only exonerated herself, she served to exonerate Quantrill as well. For as much as her story is about how she was loyal to her man and thus was really a good woman, it is also a story about Quantrill and how he was loyal to her and thus was a really good man.

Indeed what Kate gave the reader in her 1926 interview was the guerrilla version of what Southern ladies gave the postbellum world in their devotion to the graves of the Confederate soldiers, their annual Memorial Day activities, or their approved histories for schoolchildren. In the

war's aftermath these women stood by their men and their decision to go to war, no matter what hardships it may have inflicted on them. They continued to honor these men even in defeat. Through their manifestations of loyalty and love, they reclaimed the honor of their men – at least in relation to them, if not in the political, military, or public order. And while this gave Kate and the ladies power, it was a power grounded in conventional gender behavior. The women's behavior, then, speaks to the power these conventions held to validate men as men, whatever their public behavior as citizens may have been.[13]

Of course, while these conventions granted that Kate and other women had a kind of power over their men, they undercut any individual agency they might have exercised in the fighting of the guerrilla war itself and instead ground their contributions in their apparent continued attachment to the normative and appropriate behavior of female dependents. But what about the story Kate is also telling about herself? For while this first Kate was very, very good in the 1926 version of how she saved her man (and herself), the truth is, she lied. In point of fact, there was a second Kate who was covered over by the omissions, indirection, and plain straight-out lies of this 1926 interview. A second Kate who in fact did return to St. Louis after Quantrill's death in the spring of 1865, and who did use his money to open what was, by 1870, a very large and profitable brothel, clearly listed in the St. Louis Population Census for 1870. Here, we find one Kate Clarke listed as being twenty-two years old (the correct age for our Kate Clarke), clearly identified as the madam of a house containing some nineteen prostitutes and two domestic servants. The City Directory locates this house of prostitution as being on 112 Sixth Street, approximately at Elm and Sixth Street, a location that a Kate Clarke was listed in the City Directory as occupying fairly continuously from 1870 into the 1880s.[14]

It is also worth noting that by 1870, this Kate Clarke declared herself to be worth $7,000 in personal estate. In her 1926 account, Kate claimed to have only received some jewels that Quantrill gave her from his various raids. Whether she started this business with those jewels or, as others have suggested, with the money she pried from his dying hands, is unclear; but either way, no one has ever suggested that the money she received from Quantrill amounted to more than $2,000, and others

have suggested much less. With a net worth of $7,000 in 1870, this Kate Clarke had to have been a very savvy teenage businesswoman.[15]

So who was this second Kate Clarke and what do we know about her? In the first place we know that she chose to use the name Kate Clarke. Obviously, if she actually was married to Quantrill, to use his last name would have been conventional, but in the context of the defeat of the Confederacy and the disenfranchisement and cultural disempowerment of Southern sympathizers in St. Louis, that choice would have been tantamount to waving a red flag in front of a bull. Much better to use Quantrill's middle name, Clarke, which Quantrill himself went by during the war when he wanted to pass unknown. So in her choice of name, Kate Clarke, she both asserts her relationship to Quantrill, because she too had traveled with him as Kate Clarke, and also indicates her continued guerrilla identity. She does not, for instance, revert back to or continue to use her "real" name of "King."[16]

In her own account, Kate Clarke does not tell us about why she chose to stay in St. Louis after Quantrill's death, and she certainly does not tell us what she did there. Instead she explains why she did not return to Jackson County. As Quantrill's widow, she claimed, the hostility people felt against him there would have caused her family too much hardship. She did not dare return. Or at least she did not dare return until 1869, when she came home in order to rebuild her family's house, which had been ruined during the war. While many houses were burnt down in the county as a consequence of the intensity of the war on the border, most of them were rebuilt in the years after the war through community effort. Kate notes in her 1926 interview, however, that her own parents' house remained in ruins because of the ostracism her family experienced. So in 1869, she returned to the area as Mrs. J. R. Claiborne and supplied the funds to rebuild her parents' house. Of course this money was not the consequence of a second marriage to a presumably wealthy man, J. R. Claiborne, as she presented herself at the time but was rather further testimony to just how lucrative her business as a St. Louis madam had become. For, in fact, J. R. Claiborne was married but to someone else, and his actual relationship to Kate Clarke was as her attorney.[17]

So while the conventional Kate of the 1926 interview covers her wealth with a conventional marriage, we not only learn from the actual

historical record that our second Kate Clarke was a madam but also that she was no ordinary madam. No, this Kate Clarke was a wealthy and successful madam, arguably one of the most successful. Indeed, by March 1873, she had moved several houses up on Sixth Street to a much larger structure that previous to her occupancy was St. Luke's Hospital, located on the corner of Sixth and Elm. She took over the property, paying $2,000 per year in rent and proceeded to make $8,000 in improvements to the interior. And how do we know this detail about Kate Clarke and her business activities? We know because on August 3, 1873, a very distinguished citizen of St. Louis, one William Greenleaf Eliot, singled out Kate Clarke, and her now even more sumptuous brothel, in order to start a war against prostitution in St. Louis, a war that he hoped would culminate in the serious undermining of the sex trade in the city. The details of her business at this time are part of the court case that ensued.[18]

William Greenleaf Eliot is perhaps best known as the founder of the first Unitarian Church west of the Mississippi. He left his Boston home in 1834 with that intention in mind. But in the course of his long career he would do much more, establishing what would help become Washington University for boys and also the Mary Institute for girls. Eliot, as his northeastern and religious reform connections might lead one to expect, was deeply committed to antislavery, protemperance, and antiprostitution, and when the Civil War came to St. Louis he emerged as an important pro-Union figure. During the war he was one of the two co-commissioners of the Western Sanitary Commission. In this role he busied himself with working his northeastern connections in order to organize huge shipments of clothing and other critical supplies, first for the soldiers but eventually also for wartime refugees that flooded into the city of St. Louis. Of course, at the very same time the underworld of St. Louis was giving some of these same destitute women refugees work as prostitutes, while lightening the soldier's pockets – and perhaps their hearts – with their services. William Greenleaf Eliot watched this growth of prostitution with mounting dismay. He was particularly concerned when after the war, in response to the growth of the sex trade, the city decided to decriminalize prostitution and to regulate it instead.[19]

How should we read the meaning of this decriminalization of prostitution in St. Louis in the war's aftermath? Was it a sort of victory for

outlawed women? Certainly the expansion of prostitution during the war had made some outlawed women wealthy. Take, for example, Eliza Haycraft, who came to St. Louis in the mid-1840s as a nineteen-year-old illiterate runaway wife and who, by 1867, had an income of $12,500, enough to be listed as one of "Our Solid Men" in the annually published list of men who earned more than $1,000 a year. Haycraft, although she never learned to read, was smart enough to acquire a vast brothel empire that she rented out to her fellow madams in St. Louis. She was also wealthy enough to provide bail for the madams and their girls when they were jailed and to hire the best lawyers to defend them when they were busted in periodic police raids.[20]

Obviously property-holding madams like Haycraft, willing and empowered through wealth and the status of being a property owner to defend the sex trade, made the possibility of constraining prostitution through periodic police busts more difficult than it had been prior to the war. A debate ensued in the St. Louis press about what was to be done in the face of the significant expansion of prostitution that had occurred during the war, turning whole blocks of the city over to the trade, encroaching on respectable homes, churches, schools, and hospitals. The solution that was adopted, the decriminalization of prostitution and its regulation instead, followed the practice adopted by the Union military in occupied areas of Tennessee during the war. After initially attempting to remove the prostitutes that flocked to the Union army camps in Nashville and Memphis and finding that the prostitutes simply returned, the military authorities turned instead to a system of regulation. Houses were taxed to pay for the costs associated with the regular weekly medical inspection of prostitutes for active sexually transmitted diseases and for the cost of maintaining a hospital for those women who were found to have active cases. This policy was adopted in 1870 in St. Louis both as a sort of backhanded acknowledgment of the power the madams and the trade had acquired and also as an effort to protect the health of men who frequented houses of prostitution and their families.[21]

Of course there were many prominent citizens, like William Greenleaf Eliot, who opposed the decriminalization of prostitution, never mind the power of property-owning madams, like Haycraft, or the threat to civilian health. Perhaps the most outspoken group in opposition to the

regulation of the trade after the ministers like Eliot were the women's rights activists. Their concern was particularly for the outlawed girls and they argued forcefully that it was gender inequity that was at the root of the problem of the sex trade. In the first place, they suggested, there was the uneven criminalization of the trade. Why were only girls prosecuted for prostitution? Were not the men who purchased sex equally outside the law? Beyond that, there was also the limited and ill-paid legal status of the occupations open to women. For most young women the only position open to them was that of a live-in domestic, a position that paid little more than room and board and offered even less in the way of personal autonomy, really only allowing time to attend church and an afternoon off a week. In the imagined gender-equal world of the women's rights advocates, the law would punish men who frequented prostitutes equally with the madams and the prostitutes. Occupations currently closed off to women would be opened and women's wages would rise as a result.[22]

The women's rights activists were undoubtedly on to something. Certainly the equal criminalization of prostitution would have undercut the trade, and the provision of viable economic choices for wayward girls would perhaps have gone a long way toward reducing the attraction or the need for wayward behavior. St. Louis in the post–Civil War era was a long way from gender-equitable practices, however. And no matter how earnestly William Greenleaf Eliot and the women's rights activists who clustered around him may have made their case, no one seriously entertained the possibility of gender equity as a response to the behavior of outlawed girls. The real debate ensued between those who advocated a return to the old system of periodic busts and those who argued for the new system of regulation. In the debate that ensued many citizens clamored for a return to the antebellum practice, which was to enforce the law against the madams and the prostitutes they employed, primarily through police raids. Prostitutes were, after all, outlaws, and while the war may have constituted a moment of unclear legal times, when many houses were disorderly in one way or another and the entire state was under martial law, it was time to return to the old order.[23]

Perhaps if the sex trade was driven simply by the madams, the antebellum system of periodic busts and the payment of fines – both over and under the counter – could have been reestablished, never mind

the behavior of renegade madams like Haycraft, however wealthy and thereby empowered to protect the common prostitute rounded up in raids. But there was also the common prostitute herself, the outlawed girl, like Haycraft and Clarke were when they started out. For as one letter to the editor reminded the reading public in the debate that ensued concerning what to do about the sex trade in the aftermath of the Civil War, it would do well to remember the outcome of the last massive St. Louis police bust of 1858. While it was true that the raid had the desired outcome of shutting down a large number of brothels, it also returned those renegade young women to the general workforce. And where did they go? They went back into domestic service, met up with other domestic servants, and their example actually served to recruit out of that domestic population a much larger workforce for prostitution once the trade expanded, as it did with a vengeance a few years later with the outbreak of the Civil War.[24]

It does not detract from Kate Clarke II's savvy as a businesswoman to note that between the expansion of the trade during the Civil War and its decriminalization in the aftermath, she found herself in a very propitious time to be a madam in St. Louis. She may have also had the advantage of the rumored wealth that Quantrill gave her on his deathbed to set herself up as a madam from the outset. She certainly found herself in the context of the fluid times of the war in St. Louis and after the war on the "winning" side of the debate over prostitution, at least until prostitution was recriminalized in 1874. The initial success of those in favor of decriminalizing prostitution may explain why Kate Clarke was herself so prominently identified as being a "whore" in the 1870 census, along with the eighteen other young women who worked for her in her brothel. Looking ahead to the 1880 census, Kate Clarke can again be found, but now in the face of the recriminalization of prostitution, she is identified as a "boarding house keeper," with a considerably reduced number of "boarders," only eight women and no live-in domestic servants. This recriminalization and reduction of prostitution was exactly what Eliot set out to do in August of 1873 when he filed a complaint against Kate Clarke the madam. He hoped the court would agree with him that her brothel was in violation of the city's antiprostitution legislation, thus beginning an overturning of the newly established system of regulation.[25]

Kate Clarke appeared in court in response to this complaint with her

trusted attorney, J. R. Claiborne, where they lost and she was fined $100. This suit was about much more than a $100 fine, however, and Kate Clarke availed herself of more, presumably better-skilled attorneys and appealed the case to the Missouri Supreme Court, where she eventually won.[26]

And so if we know that this Kate Clarke the madam was actually Kate Clarke of Civil War fame, we might ask, did William Greenleaf Eliot know that he was doing battle with the "Child Bride of Quantrill"? At first it seems like this must have been the case, that in fact this was the reason why he singled her out from all the other possible madams. But it is perhaps more likely that he simply picked her out because of her prominence as a postwar madam and never knew of her Civil War guerrilla connections at all. And we might as well ask, do we think Kate Clarke knew William Greenleaf Eliot? For while it is perhaps doubtful that Eliot knew Kate Clarke as Kate Clarke Quantrill, it is much more certain that Kate Clarke would have known who she was fighting with when Eliot lodged his complaint against her in 1873. It is hard to imagine that she would not have been familiar with the Western Sanitary Commission and known him as the director of it. By virtue of this position alone, Eliot was made one of the most prominent and powerful Unionist civilians in all of St. Louis. Or perhaps she just knew of him as a leading minister in St. Louis. And surely, if she somehow missed all that, she must have learned it once he filed his complaint. He, after all, was a known and public figure. She, on the other hand, was a woman of multiple underworlds, multiple layers of invisibility; the underworld of the guerrilla, the underworld of the madam, and finally, and perhaps most fundamentally, the underworld of the woman.

Kate Clarke had mastered the ability to manipulate these forms of invisibility early on. She, for instance, recounts in her 1926 interview that when the Union troops rode into the guerrilla camp they would just pass her by, seeing only a young girl or, you could say, seeing nothing worth seeing at all. Perhaps the very decriminalization of prostitution itself was a mixed blessing for bad girls like her; and perhaps that was the point, to finally pin them down, make them visible, force them to register and force them to be publicly examined by a doctor once a week. Certainly in her lower court trial, it became apparent that Kate

Clarke managed to be largely invisible to the authorities. Her landlord could not testify to her identity for certain because a servant always delivered the rent. The official in charge of registration could not testify for a certainty that the woman in the courtroom was Kate Clarke, in part because she was wearing a heavy veil, so no one could see her very clearly.[27]

Of course while Eliot did not know who Kate was, he most certainly did know what she represented, the continuation and even expansion of a Southern-oriented river culture that he and his fellow Northern abolitionists abhorred. Indeed Eliot's writing in opposition to the decriminalization of prostitution in St. Louis in the 1870s would contribute to the emergence of a social purity movement nationwide, a movement dedicated to the eradication of what they termed, "white slavery," the seduction of presumably innocent, decent girls into a state of degradation where, according to their way of thinking, a woman could know no loyalty to any man and were instead squarely planted on a straight road to a brief life and a miserable death.[28]

So certainly there was a Kate Clarke who was the wife or mistress of William Clarke Quantrill, that much is not at issue. And it was undoubtedly true that this Kate Clarke became the postwar madam of the 1873 Missouri Supreme Court case. But does the very existence of Kate Clarke, the notorious St. Louis madam, really demonstrate a significant role for outlaw women in the Civil War or its aftermath? Or was Kate just ruined, as William Greenleaf would argue, a white slave, and just more evidence of the perfidy of guerrillas like Quantrill? After all, even in her own 1926 newspaper account, Kate Clarke presents herself as having been a fairly conventional wife until left by Quantrill in St. Louis toward the end of the war, and then she lies by omission about her postwar fate.

But what is to be made of a third Kate Clarke who appears in the written record in the fall of 1863 in St. Louis, this time in the provost marshal records?

We turn then to St. Louis in 1863 in the midst of the Civil War. The Union provost marshal was responsible for maintaining loyalty to the Union by, among other things, busting covert disloyal activities. In early September 1863, they made the fortuitous arrest of one Robert Louden, a

notorious Confederate mail runner and steamboat burner. Before the war, Louden was a riverboat man, a pilot, and with the outbreak of the war he, like his friend Absolom Grimes, turned his knowledge of the river to the assistance of the Confederacy, carrying news up and down the river covertly from the Confederacy. Louden was also a "Southern" man in his love of the low-life wharf culture of St. Louis and was known to frequent bars and brothels. So it was perhaps no accident that Louden was captured in what was pretty obviously a brothel. This conclusion can be drawn from the interviews that the provost marshal conducted with the actual woman that he was with at the time, as well as an interview with the head of the household, presumably the "landlady," one Miss Kate Clark. The actual testimony was short and went like this:

> *A statement taken from someone identified as "Miss Kate Clarke" on October 3, 1863.*
> I reside on 6th St. near Green but shall move from there perhaps tomorrow. I am slightly acquainted with Robert Louden have seen him but once and that was on the night on which he was arrested some six weeks since. He came to my house in the evening about ten o'clock and stayed about an hour. I had no conversation with him, and don't remember ever having seen him before. He did not state to me where he had come from or what his business was. He called at my house as I suppose to see Miss Rooney (spelling of this name unclear).

Also on October 3, 1863 is testimony from Miss Mary Rooney (or Rany?):

> I reside in St. Louis with Mrs. Kate Clarke. I am acquainted with Robert Louden and have known him some eight or nine years. I last saw him at Mrs. Clarke's on the evening on which he was arrested on Sept. last. He came to Mrs. Clarke's to see me I suppose as I was the only person there with whom he was acquainted. He staid about one hour. We had but little talk together. There were two strangers with him. Young men whose names I don't recollect. I did not learn where he was from; what his business was; or where he was going. He made no inquiries of me or to any persons in town, nor did he say how long he had been in town.[29]

The testimony is strikingly similar, as though it had been rehearsed in advance. And the provost marshal just let the two women go, clearly

assuming that they were just whores. What else could explain this testimony? Who else would have a man, or men, in their house or in their room late at night that they didn't know, that they didn't talk to, for only an hour? But what if this Kate Clarke was indeed Kate Clarke Quantrill? And this neighborhood was indeed a meeting place for the Southern sympathizing underground? Certainly the address, on Sixth near Green, places the house close to the infamous brothel of Eliza Haycraft, perhaps the leading madam of Civil War St. Louis. Everyone knows that Quantrill either "sent" or "left" his child bride Kate in St. Louis when he exited the state for Kentucky late in 1864. Who do we imagine he left her with at that point? William Greenleaf Eliot? Or Southern sympathizers of a questionable persuasion?

Of course, if Kate Clarke were in St. Louis in September 1863, this flies in the face of her own 1926 account, where she claims to have been present at the planning of the Lawrence Raid that very same August and to have ridden some ninety miles, without Quantrill's knowledge or permission, to join up with him as he exited the burning town. This story seems even more unlikely than that she was already in St. Louis. The guerrillas themselves were only able to find their way once they crossed into Kansas by capturing local citizens and forcing them to show them the way, and the Union military records make it clear that the chase was hard fought, with half a dozen of the guerillas picked off. Here Kate's story is of a piece with her larger 1926 account of herself as the child bride, the fit mate for (the always honorable) Quantrill. That is to say, she is present, but not a party to the guerrillas plans, perhaps serving them lemonade while they plot. She doesn't actually take part in the discussion about the raid or the raid itself, she just appears as the guerrillas exit the burning town.[30]

So while Kate's own account seems implausible, it is possible, although there is no hard evidence, that Quantrill had already sent Kate out of the western border area, or she could herself have decided to leave the area before the raid on Lawrence. She could have left as early as July when the Union military began the wholesale arrest of the female relations of prominent guerrillas on the western border. The sisters of several of Quantrill's captains were arrested and thirteen women were imprisoned in a Kansas City jail, which promptly collapsed, killing two of them and

seriously wounding several others. Would Kate have remained to face a similar fate or did she leave town at this point? Some guerrilla memoirs claim that Quantrill returned Kate to her parents' house a few weeks after the raid in mid-September when he and his men left for Texas for the winter. But by that time, the Union military had entirely evacuated three and a half Missouri border counties in response to the Lawrence Raid. They had also burnt the houses of known Southern sympathizers to the ground. Kate literally would have had no family home and no family in the area for Quantrill to return her to.[31]

So the truth about Kate Clarke is undoubtedly closer to that of the madam Kate Clarke, who she would unquestionably become in the war's aftermath, than the saccharine story she tells of herself, as Kate Clarke, the child bride, in her 1926 newspaper interview. Indeed, if we assume that the Kate Clarke interviewed by the provost marshal in 1863 was indeed both Quantrill's "child bride" *and* Kate Clarke, the madam, we then see the way that war opened the door for outlaw girls as well as for outlaw boys. Precisely because of their marginal public standing, prostitutes like Kate Clarke of the 1863 provost marshal case could cover the disloyal activities of Southern sympathizers in St. Louis during the war and in its aftermath emerge publicly as central actors of the long cultural war.

Historians of the Civil War are now busy reframing the Civil War in a wider and chronologically longer way than we have previously understood it to be. Surely in the case of Missouri, historians have long been familiar with the way that the war was different here in what was the West, that is, not so much a matter of formal battles as informal skirmishes. And we are well aware of how the war continued on for some of those men long after the Confederacy was defeated. We need think only of the postwar exploits of Jesse James. We are perhaps less familiar with the idea that the war also continued to be fought on a cultural level by women long after it was formally lost by their men on the military field of battle. This long cultural war has most often been discussed as a war of the conventional women, that is, the Confederate ladies who stubbornly refused to accept the military and political defeat of their men and insisted upon commemorating their valor and their honor through organizations like the Ladies Memorial Associations and the Daughters

of the Confederacy. But perhaps it is also about time that we begin to see the outlawed women as engaging in their own sort of long war like their guerrilla brothers who refused to lay down their arms. Outlawed women like our own Kate Clarke, who stood and fought the forces of cultural purification in the war's aftermath in the city of St. Louis, and survived, perhaps never able to tell her own story in its entirety but for that very reason able to cover for her fellow guerrilla, William Clarke Quantrill, and to live out her own long life.[32]

Notes

1. Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri during the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 132–85. I am indebted to Virgil Hoftiezer, a descendent of Kate King, for his assistance in this research.

2. The presentation of women as victims is not limited to the guerrilla war in Missouri but is an underlying assumption of much of the wider work on the topic. For some recent examples, see Clay Mountcastle, *Punitive War: Confederate Guerrillas and Union Reprisals (*Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2009); Daniel E. Sutherland, *A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); and Robert R. Mackey, *Uncivil War: Irregular Warfare in the Upper South, 1861–1865* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004). On the traumatizing impact of women being called upon to act like men in the course of the war, see Drew Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

3. On the expansion of prostitution in St. Louis during the Civil War, see Lee-Ann Whites, *Gender Matters: Civil War, Reconstruction and the Making of the New South* (New York: Palgrave Press, 2005), 65–84. On the war's aftermath, see Sharon Romeo, "Sporting Women: Vagrancy and Women's Civil Rights in Reconstruction Era St. Louis," *Gateway* (Fall 2004): 23–32; and D. R. Sneddeker, "Regulating Vice: Prostitution and the St. Louis Social Evil Ordinance, 1870–1879," *Gateway Heritage* (Fall 1990): 20–47.

4. In St. Louis, more than 80 percent of women arrested were arrested for prostitution or running a brothel according to the published police arrest reports; for instance, see "Police Report," St. Louis Missouri *Democrat*, March 3, 1869; September 8, 1869; July 6, 1870.

5. The historical discussion of Missouri guerrillas as heroes or villains began almost as soon as the war ended. For examples of guerrillas as heroes, see John N. Edwards, *Noted Guerrillas: Or the Warfare of the Border* (St. Louis: Bryan Brand, 1877); Leslie E. Edwards, *The Devil Knows How to Ride: The True Story of William*

Clarke Quantrill and His Confederate Raiders (New York: Random House, 1996); and T. J. Stiles, *Jesse James: Last Rebel of the Civil War* (New York: Random House, 2002). For guerrillas as villains, see William E. Connelley, *Quantrill and the Border Wars* (New York: Pageant Book Company, 1909); Carl W. Breihan, *Quantrill and His Civil War Guerrillas* (New York: Promontory Press, 1959); and Albert Castel, *William Clarke Quantrill: His Life and Times* (New York: Frederick Fell, 1962).

6. Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* (New York: Avon Books, 1973 [1936]), 245–48; 794–803. Writing about prostitution during the Civil War has focused largely on the negative impact it had on the performance of the troops; see, for example, Thomas P. Lowry, *The Story the Soldiers Wouldn't Tell: Sex in the Civil War* (Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1994); and Catherine Clinton, *Public Women and the Confederacy* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1999). Historians have also noted the way that respectable women were slandered as prostitutes when spying or engaging in other covert activities for the enemy: see Elizabeth Varon, *Southern Lady, Yankee Spy: The True Story of Elizabeth Van Lew* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). There has been little discussion, however, of prostitutes as critical wartime agents in their own right.

7. Kansas City *Star*, May 23, 1926. See also Kansas City *Star*, June 5, 7, 1930.

8. Kansas City *Star*, May, 23, 1926.

9. Connelley, *Quantrill and the Border Wars,* 197.

10. Ibid., 250–54.

11. Ibid.

12. For one guerrilla account that claims that Kate was Quantrill's legal wife, see William Gregg, "A Little Dab of Unembellished History," Western Historical Manuscripts Collection, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri. See also Donald R. Hale, *We Rode with Quantrill: Quantrill and the Guerrilla War as Told by the Men and Women Who Were with Him* (Clinton, Mo.: Printery, 1974), 117–26.

13. For a discussion of the role elite Southern women played in reconstructing the honor of their men see, Caroline Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 2007); Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, The Lost Cause and the Emergence of the New South, 1865–1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 36–46; and Karen Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003).

14. U.S. Federal Population Schedule, 1870; St. Louis, Missouri, City Directories, 1870–1881.

15. U.S. Federal Population Schedule, 1870.

16. On conditions for Southern sympathizers in postwar Missouri, see William Earl Parrish, *Missouri under Radical Rule, 1865–1870* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1965). For St. Louis in particular see Louis Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2001), 307–38.

17. Kansas City *Star*, May 23, 1926.

18. Ibid. State of Missouri, *Respondent v. Kate Clarke Appellant* (October Term, 1873, at St. Louis), Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City, Missouri.

19. See Charlotte Eliot, *William Greenleaf Eliot: Minister, Educator, Philanthropist* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1904); as well as William E. Parrish, "The Western Sanitary Commission," *Civil War History* (Winter 1990): 17–35.

20. According to the daily press, Eliza Haycraft paid $11,568 in taxes on her brothel properties in 1866, while William Greenleaf Eliot paid $864 and his co-commissioner of the Western Sanitary Commission during the war, Joseph Yeatman, also a prominent merchant, paid $4,381. St. Louis Missouri *Democrat*, July 8, 1867; August 3, 1867. Of course her taxes were based only on her rents. She was reported to be worth $300,000 in 1869. Missouri St. Louis *Democrat*, July 10, 1869.

21. On Union military policy, see Lowry, *The Story the Soldiers Wouldn't Tell: Sex in the Civil War* (Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1994), 76–87. On the adoption of this policy in St. Louis, see John C. Burnham, "Medical Inspection of Prostitutes in America in the Nineteenth Century: The St. Louis Experiment and Its Sequel," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 45 (1971): 203–18; and "The Social Evil Ordinance – A Social Experiment in Nineteenth Century St. Louis," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society* 27 (1971): 203–17; as well as Sneddeker, "Regulating Vice."

22. For the women's rights position on prostitution, see St. Louis Missouri *Democrat*, February 3, 1869; February 6, 1869; February 21, 1869; and March 19, 1869.

23. St. Louis Missouri *Democrat*, April 4, 1866; April 20, 1866; February 1, 1867; February 4, 1867; and February 27, 1868.

24. St. Louis Missouri *Democrat*, April 4, 1866, 4. Surveys taken of women who registered under the new St. Louis law found that 70 percent indicated they were in the sex trade out of choice. The remaining 30 percent divided fairly evenly between abused by husband, seduced, and out of necessity. St. Louis Missouri *Democrat*, July 26, 1870; April 4, 1871.

25. Prostitution was alleged to have increased 100 percent as a consequence of the Civil War; see St. Louis Missouri *Democrat*, July 8, 1867. Official police records put the number of prostitutes to inhabitants in St. Louis at 1 to 242 or roughly 1 to 60 adult males based on the 1870 brothel registration statistics. *Prostitution and Its Management: Consideration of the License System in Europe and in St. Louis Missouri* (Louisville, Ky.: Bradley and Gilbert, 1873), 8–9.

26. *State v. Kate Clarke.*

27. Ibid.

28. Eliot took a public stance against the decriminalization of prostitution in a letter to the editor, published in the St. Louis Missouri *Democrat*, August 30, 1870. On the contribution his writings made to the origins of the social purity

movement, see Hal Sears, *Sex Radicals: Free Love in the High Victorian Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1977). For a classic period statement of "white slavery," see Clifford G. Roe, *Horrors of the White Slave Trade* (N.p.: Clifford G. Roe and B. S. Steadwell, 1911).

29. Robert Louden File, Reel no. F1363, Union Provost Marshal's File of Papers Related to Individual Citizens, 1861–1867, Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City, Missouri. See also Absolom Grimes, *Confederate Mail Runner*, ed. M. M. Quaife (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1926).

30. Kansas City *Star*, May 23, 1926.

31. Richard S. Brownlee, *Grey Ghosts of the Confederacy: Guerrilla Warfare in the West, 1861–1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958), 110–27.

32. On the chronological reframing of the war, see Margaret Creighton, *The Colors of Courage: Gettysburg's Forgotten History: Immigrants, Women and African Americans in the Civil War's Defining Battle* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), v–xi. For historical accounts of respectable women's long cultural war, see Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past*; LeeAnn Whites, *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 160–224; Cox, *Dixie's Daughters;* and *A Woman's War: Southern Women, Civil War and the Confederate Legacy*, ed. Edward D. C. Campbell and Kym S. Rice (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996), 131–64.

"Days of lightly-won and lightly-held hearts"

Courtship and Coquetry in the Southern Confederacy

ANYA JABOUR

In the closing months of the Civil War, Kate Stone, a Louisiana planter's daughter turned Texas refugee, commented on the ways in which the war had changed the courtship patterns of elite Southerners. According to this youthful Confederate, wartime courtships, especially with soldiers, were "just a piece of amusement on both sides," and both men and women casually formed engagements that they had no intention of honoring. While Kate and "most of the girls" of her acquaintance accepted and even welcomed such temporary wartime romances, her mother, in keeping with antebellum customs in which courtship was intended to lead to marriage, believed that her daughter intended to marry one of the soldiers who danced attendance on her. The younger woman scoffed at the notion, explaining, "One must not distress a soldier by saying *No* when he is on furlough. They have enough to bear. They may be going back to sudden death." Romantic entanglements as a form of Confederate loyalty did not, however, necessitate marriage. Rather,

Stone explained that soldiers were fickle creatures: "They will most probably forget you for a sweetheart at the next camp, or their love will grow cool by the time you meet again." The young women who welcomed soldiers' attentions were equally inconstant; one of Kate's friends made "a partial engagement" that she had no intention of keeping. As the war came to an end, however, Kate and her friends recognized that the casual relationships of wartime must come to an end as well. "We decided that the girls would all have to change their war customs, stop flirting, and only engage themselves when they really mean something," she stated firmly. "The days of lightly-won and lightly-held hearts should be over."[1]

Kate Stone's observations highlighted the transformative effects of the Civil War on elite white Southerners' courtship conventions. The Civil War changed elite Southerners' courtship customs in several important ways. Taken together, these changes granted elite young women in the Civil War South considerably more latitude in romantic relationships than they had possessed prior to the war.

In the Civil War South, a surge of Southern nationalism encouraged the adoption of a new set of standards for suitors. Family connections and personal wealth became less important, while military service and Confederate fervor became more important. Young women thus encountered – and formed relationships with – men from a wider range of backgrounds than in the prewar years. Moreover, they interacted with more men overall, including strange soldiers passing through whom they might never see again. Antebellum courtships had been conducted within a closed circle of friends, neighbors, and acquaintances who screened potential suitors before admitting them to the venues – from informal "at homes" in which young women entertained *en famille* to fancy parties and balls where couples endured the scrutiny of neighborhood gossips – where unmarried women and men might meet. In the Confederate South, however, courtship settings and suitors multiplied in both number and variety.

Courtship conventions also became less strict in the Civil War years. The disruptions of the war years forced elite parents to relax the customs of chaperonage, permitting young people an unprecedented level of intimate interactions with one another. Elite teenagers and young

adults took advantage of these changed circumstances to pursue pleasure rather than commitment. Flirting – suggestive interactions with no strings attached – became increasingly common. While witty banter and sly innuendo had long been a staple of relations between the sexes, displays of coquetry had been tempered by adult chaperonage, rigid rules about feminine propriety, and the widely held expectation that the intended outcome of courtship was an advantageous marriage. In the Civil War years, however, young people temporarily abandoned these codes of conduct and freely indulged in coquettish behavior. Young women flirted shamelessly with Southern soldiers and formed secret – and sometimes short-lived – engagements with them.

The absence of adult chaperonage, the rise of coquetry, and the passing of troops allowed young elites to interact in a relaxed atmosphere and increased their opportunities for intimacy – including sexual intimacy. Behaviors that had been severely limited, if not banned entirely, in the antebellum era became increasingly common in the war years. The exchange of letters and love tokens, the expression of affection in caresses and kisses, and – in some cases – extramarital sex all occurred in the context of Confederate romances. Moreover, intimacies between men and women became disconnected from serious courtship, leading to engagement and eventually to marriage, and became increasingly common in the new casual relationships that flourished in the Civil War South.

The Civil War modified courtship and encouraged coquetry by expanding the potential pool of suitors, relaxing chaperonage conventions, and granting both women and men more latitude to pursue romantic – and sometimes sexual – relationships with one another. These changes simultaneously offered women greater power within intimate relationships and increased their vulnerability. An examination of changing courtship practices in the Confederate South offers a new perspective on the ways in which the Civil War ushered in significant, if contested, changes in gender roles among elite white Southerners.

The Civil War expanded elite women's pool of potential suitors and encouraged romance with soldiers as a form of patriotism. White Southerners frequently conflated romantic relationships and Confederate

nationalism. Confederate men cast their commitment to the cause of Southern independence in terms of their responsibility to protect white women, while Confederate women assumed responsibility for supporting soldiers' morale (and morals). Poems, songs, plays, editorials, and even presidential addresses urged women to exhibit their patriotism by bestowing their affections upon soldiers, encouraging sweethearts to serve in the Confederate Army, and keeping up their spirits with love letters from home.[2]

South Carolinians Wyatt Patterson and Lottie Dye epitomized Confederate courtship. Wyatt asked Lottie to learn to play the "Secession March" for him when he returned home and to correspond with him while he was away at war "to revive my 'drooping spirits.'" He felt justified in making these requests, he explained, because "'I must go and fight for my rights, my home, and the girls I have left behind me.'" (Patterson's use of quotation marks indicated that he was repeating common, even hackneyed, phrasing.) Likewise, Georgian Loula Kendall simultaneously conformed to prevailing gender conventions and promoted Southern nationalism when she sent her fiancé, Confederate officer James Henry Rogers, then stationed in Florida, a picture of herself and a Bible to console and guide him during their wartime separation. For his part, Rogers thanked his beloved for her long love letters, which "lighten our way amid dangers and hardships," and vowed to "support and shield" his future wife from all danger. During the Civil War, Confederate soldiers claimed female admiration as their due, and Confederate girls and young women showered Southern soldiers with attention.[3]

Southern nationalism prompted significant changes in Southern courtship. For many young white women, if not for their elders, Confederate loyalty replaced family background, wealth, and manners as the standard by which to judge male companions. Although Louisianan Kate Stone denied having said that she "would not speak to any man who was not a soldier," other elite young women in the Civil War South tailored their courtships to meet wartime expectations of Confederate nationalism. North Carolinian Margaret Lea Graves, for example, initially rejected her future husband, Charles Graves, because he did not at first fight for the Confederacy, while Virginian Fannie Page Hume broke off an engagement of nearly three years with her Northern fiancé in 1861.

Confederate women rebuffed suitors who did not support the Southern cause even at the cost of their own happiness. Despite her strong attraction to Union lieutenant Simmons, with whom she enjoyed discussing literature and debating politics, Tennessean Myra Inman rejected his proposal of marriage in 1864. "He loves me. I dislike him. He is a Yank," she flatly declared in May 1864. Inman's political views vied with her growing attachment to the man who bade her farewell "to fight our friends," however, and she continued to correspond with him and to feel "rather pikered and sad" about her conundrum for several months.[4]

Confederate popular culture both reflected and promoted new standards for measuring potential suitors. Popular songs like "Soldier's Wife" and letters to the editor declaring "none but the brave deserve the fair" encouraged young women to express their political loyalties in their romantic relationships. Neither Northern men nor Southern ones who were reluctant to join the Confederate army were appropriate recipients of female admiration or affection. According to one Virginia girl, "the youth who was lukewarm in the cause or unambitious of military glory fared uncomfortably in the presence of the average Confederate maiden." An Alabama schoolgirl summed up the sentiments of many young women in her declaration that "I would not marry a coward." By contrast, men with good Confederate credentials won immediate acceptance. In 1864, South Carolinian Pauline DeCaradeuc agreed to correspond with a "Major T. A. Buford of 34th Va. Regt. Vol." because his "credentials" as an officer were "first rate": "He is now in Va., has been in all the battles recently fought in the Wilderness," she explained in her wartime diary. Similarly, Georgia teenager Loula Kendall and her friend Sallie fostered relationships with the Upston Guards at the local militia campground. Loula's descriptions of her male companions indicate that she considered Confederate service to be the most important factor in determining a young man's suitability in the Civil War South. Loula admired a lieutenant for his "handsome and commanding" presence, which made him "an ideal picture of a soldier"; she described another uniformed man as "a noble, commanding soldier," and praised yet another as "a gallant soldier." Collectively, she characterized Confederate soldiers as "noble fellows" and "gallant men." When Loula commented, "we did not condescend to receive *particular* attentions from

any but those who wore uniforms," she suggested that, at least among youthful Confederates, military service, rather than family background, professional success, or inherited wealth, had become the most important determinant of a young man's eligibility.[5]

Young Southern elites considered all Confederate soldiers eligible suitors in the Civil War South. While high-ranking officers were held in especially high regard, elite young women also expressed respect and even affection for lowly privates. Tennessean Alice Ready wrote in her diary that all Confederate soldiers deserved her love and respect. "The being a soldier entitles them to our warmest sympathy, and gratitude," she reflected. "I love them all, pray for them all." As a result, well-to-do women formed relationships with military men of lower socioeconomic status – a sharp contrast to antebellum practice. As Unionist Frances Dallam Peter slyly pointed out, the "fine ladies who before this war commenced wouldnt have touched [poor white men] with the hem of their garments" now opened their parlors – and sometimes their hearts – to dirty and bedraggled Confederate privates. Mississippian Amanda Worthington likewise remarked that men who "didn't associate with our class of society before the war" now won favor with daughters from elite families. "I love all Confederate soldiers," she declared. As Kate Cumming observed, "to be in our army is a passport" into polite society; all men in uniforms were considered "gentlemen." "These are unceremonious times," reflected Georgian Eliza Andrews, "when social distinctions are forgotten and the raggedest rebel that tramps the road in his country's service is entitled to more honor than a king."[6]

The difficulty of maintaining conventions of chaperonage during the upheaval of the war years contributed to the relaxation of social divisions. As Eliza Andrews recalled, "the exigencies of the times . . . did away with many conventions." This was particularly the case for young women refugees. Social distinctions of class, race, and gender that had previously been marked by physical separation were blurred on crowded conveyances. One Atlanta refugee traveled by boxcar to Sandersville "with women, men, negroes children & sick soldiers" all packed into the same car. Similarly, in 1865, South Carolinian Pauline DeCaradeuc commented humorously on a "funny" – and most improper – encounter she and her younger sister had had on a train as a result of close quarters.

"A funny circumstance happened on the car day before yesterday," she recorded in her diary:

> Daughter [her younger sister] & I couldn't get seats in the ladies' car & had to go in the soldiers'. We were in the shade of the door, when three officers came in, and sat ahead of us, one very coolly pulled off his coat, then his vest, then his cravat & collar, & dear knows how much more would have come off, when he turned and saw me; they were all behaving shamefully smoking, drinking, &c., when they discovered us, they seemed terribly abashed & the one in dishabille instantly retired "to dress."[7]

In addition to traveling in cramped quarters in mixed company, young women refugees often traveled without proper supervision. Prior to the war, a "male protector"—either a family member or a trusted family friend—was considered "indispensable" for even short excursions. During the war, in the absence of fathers, uncles, brothers, and cousins, many young women traveled long distances with makeshift travel companions, or even alone. Seventeen-year-old Louise Wigfall and her twelve-year-old sister traveled from Atlanta to Macon in 1864 on a "hospital train, filled with wounded, sick and dying soldiers," with only one other female passenger and an officer to watch over them.[8]

Southern women and their families attempted to maintain propriety but were forced to alter their definition of appropriate behavior. Georgia refugee Eliza Andrews's brother placed his sisters "under the protection of a reliable man" as they fled the approach of Union soldiers in late 1864, but many young women traveled without either a female chaperon or a male escort during the tumultuous war years. Virginian Nell Gray sought male companions, but they were often strangers met on the train, and she sometimes had to travel entirely alone. Increasingly, young women came to regard any Confederate soldier as an appropriate escort. As Eliza Andrews expressed it, "I knew we would never lack for attention or protection as long as there was a Confederate uniform in sight."[9]

The absence of male family members during the war led to relaxed courtship conventions throughout the South. Young women routinely recorded unchaperoned visits from and rides with soldiers during the war years. In 1862, North Carolinian Lizzie June entertained two soldiers

entirely by herself; her brothers were in the army and her mother and sister were ill. Although initially nervous about receiving two unknown men without an adult chaperon, she afterward confided to a friend, "I found them so agreeable I forgot my dread and the time passed off pleasantly enough."[10]

The high regard in which white Southerners held Confederate soldiers also contributed to less stringent guidelines for screening potential suitors. Whereas before the war parents and other adults drew potential suitors from a local pool and insisted on letters of introduction from new acquaintances, during the war young women regularly interacted with total strangers. Pauline DeCaradeuc recorded "a little episode in every day affairs" in her diary that reflected the casual nature of wartime interactions. While she strolled along a shady avenue in Augusta, Georgia, an unknown soldier sent a young slave to present her with "a most exquisite bouquet of white & pink rose buds." DeCaradeuc caught only a glimpse of her mysterious admirer, who bowed before turning a corner and passing out of her sight.[11]

Wartime travel conditions, relaxed or absent chaperonage conventions, and changed standards for appropriate male companionship combined to allow elite women considerable latitude in their interactions with soldiers of all backgrounds. Young women who had previously associated only with young men who came with proper introductions from within their own social circle now "became very sociable" with Confederate soldiers, even when "not one of us knew the other even by name." In 1864, Pauline DeCaradeuc initially felt "uneasy" when she boarded a train occupied by "a crowd of men." Soon, however, she made the acquaintance of "a young & handsome soldier" who escorted her to her seat. In addition to this soldier, a Virginia major that DeCaradeuc would later count among her correspondents, she met "a very handsome Capt.," "a soldier on crutches," and "an officer" seated ahead of her on the train – all in the absence of a female "protector."[12]

Tennessee teenager Ellen House called attention to both the novelty of corresponding with virtual strangers and the changed criteria for eligibility when she took offense when a wounded Confederate lieutenant asked her to open a correspondence with him. "I think it was right impudent of him," she wrote in her diary. "[Just] because I felt sorry for him

on account of his being a Confederate soldier & having lost a leg, was no reason why he should presume upon it and write me as if it was a matter of course I would answer it." Most young women, however, welcomed and returned the attentions of Confederate soldiers of all ranks.[13]

Changes in courtship conventions allowed and even encouraged young women to form casual relationships with Confederate soldiers. Georgian Loula Kendall is a case in point. For Loula, who was in her early twenties during the Civil War, the war years were a period of excitement and romance. As the secession crisis loomed, the young woman and her friend Sallie visited the "Upston Guards" at the local militia campground. "Oh! The batteries made by the showy uniform, the glittering buttons, and the gallant attentions of that fine looking company on our poor defenceless hearts!" she exclaimed. Over the following months, the young woman and her female friends continued to encourage the attentions of Confederate soldiers, making repeated visits to their campground, going on horseback rides and picnics with them, allowing uniformed men to serenade them, and finally seeing them off in high style. "The sad farewell is spoken," Loula wrote of one departing soldier, adding approvingly that the "noble, commanding soldier" emulated the heroes of medieval romances when he pressed "a lingering kiss" on her hand. "No gallant knight of the days of chivalry ever kissed a lady's hand with more grace," she concluded. After the soldiers' departure, Loula carried on a correspondence with at least three soldiers from her hometown, whom she described as "among the noblest of the Confederate Army."[14]

The activities Loula Kendall described – initiating visits to unmarried men, going on unchaperoned picnics and rides, engaging in regular correspondence – were all activities that would have been restricted to engaged couples, if not banned entirely, in the antebellum era. Loula's unabashed flirtations with Confederate soldiers suggest that in wartime, young Southern women interacted with men in ways that would have been considered inappropriately intimate in peacetime. While coquetry had certainly existed in the antebellum era, elite young people's interactions had been constrained by the conventions of chaperonage and by strict rules about feminine propriety. Moreover, courtship had taken place within a restricted circle of acquaintances. Young women interacted

only with men who had been approved by their parents and guardians, and only in settings supervised by adult chaperons. Engaged couples were allotted greater privacy, but only because the fact of their engagement indicated that they were following the approved path toward an advantageous marriage. In the Civil War South, however, young women and Confederate soldiers interacted in much more relaxed settings, without formal introductions, adult chaperonage, or serious intentions. Coquetry and flirtation – playful, witty, romantic, and often sexually charged exchanges intended for momentary pleasure rather than lasting commitment – became increasingly common in the Confederate South.[15]

Flirtation was endemic in the Civil War South. According to South Carolinian Sophia Haskell Cheves, who was a teenager at the time, "hearts were very tender then – and there was abundance of lovemaking" in the wartime atmosphere of "excitement and adventure . . . dear to the heart of youth." Cousins Wyatt Patterson and Lottie Dye, who later married each other, teased one another frequently about their respective flirtations throughout the first two years of the war, even placing bets about which of them would become engaged first.[16]

Although some historians contend that the Civil War hindered courtship, in many communities, the war actually increased opportunities for companionship and romance. Emma Holmes, a Charleston resident, commented on "the universal fashion of gaeity everywhere." According to many observers, the war ushered in a whirl of sociability, particularly for young people. As Richmonder Louise Wigfall noted, "it is curious to note how youth will extract gayety and pleasure out of adverse surroundings." South Carolinian Lou Wilkinson told her friend Jane Allston in 1864: "We have been quite gay up here, going to pic-nics, and dances in the evenings." Tennessean Nannie Haskins recorded concerts, parties, picnics, and even a May Festival in her wartime diary. According to Georgian Eliza Andrews, the final years of the war, in particular, were characterized by "thoughtless gayety," at least among "the young people." "It was a case of 'eat drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die,'" she explained.[17]

Wartime socializing revolved around the presence of soldiers and was thus most pronounced in urban areas. The Confederate capital boasted

an especially lively social scene. Fourteen-year-old Richmonder Louise Wigfall remarked that "social pleasures . . . were not neglected" but rather enhanced by the presence of troops, as "music and song and the dance made merry the hearts of the gallant soldier boys" who visited the capital city. In June 1863, for instance, "all the Virginia belles of the country side" attended a grand ball in the capital city to have the opportunity to socialize with General J. E. B. Stuart's men, "the flower of the chivalry of the Army of Northern Virginia." The dance took on a decidedly military tone, with "the jingling of spurs and clanking of sabres" competing with "the merry tunes of the fiddle and the banjo." Young Louise also noted a variety of picnics, dances, and "sundry delightful parties" in the Confederate capital.[18]

Charleston, South Carolina, was another hotbed of military entertainments. In her diary, Charlestonian Emma Holmes, a single woman in her twenties, frequently recorded social events involving local soldiers both in the city and at nearby military posts. In January 1861, Emma and her sister went to see the "Palmetto Guard" on parade; in April 1861, the graduating class of the military academy held a "Cadet's Ball" before leaving for the front. In April 1862, Emma spent a "delightful" day at Camp Wallace with a group of young ladies and gentlemen; later that same month, she and four other girls, after witnessing a "drill," were treated to an elegant dinner laid out in "camp fashion" at "Capt. Preston's camp."[19]

Other Southern cities and towns also boasted an active social life revolving around the presence of the military. In Atlanta, Amaryllis Bomar spent her time "flying around . . . with Lieut[enant]s & Captains." Because every community had its own local militia, watching troops drill became a new source of amusement for young women throughout the South. Young women in rural areas sometimes made special trips to visit military camps and hospitals. Ellen Louise Power, who complained, "times are so dull it is impossible to write any thing," added variety to her days by traveling with female relatives to Port Hudson to admire the fortifications and bring blankets to soldiers. Minnie Bacot, writing from Society Hill, South Carolina, told her friend Jane Allston: "Mamma and I are going down to Mars Bluff in the morning & I expect to enjoy myself amongst so many gents."[20]

Soldiers' departure for – or return from – the front was another occasion for socializing. In Charlottesville, Virginia, Lucy Wood wrote that "a great many ladies" gathered at the depot to see the soldiers off at the start of the war in April 1861. "They all seemed to imagine it was a festive occasion," she remarked. A couple of weeks later, when the soldiers returned unharmed, they were greeted with "shouts and music and the encouraging smiles and words of the ladies." Victories, of course, were another reason for celebration – and romance. Kate Stone described Vicksburg, Mississippi, in May 1862 as a scene of "excitement," where handsome uniformed soldiers, straight from a victory at Shiloh, won young women's hearts.[21]

The arrival – or imminent departure – of Southern soldiers inspired many communities, including small towns, to organize parties, picnics, and other amusements. When "several pleasant officers of the Louisiana Army" were stationed near her home, Baton Rouge resident Sarah Morgan remarked that they "made quite an agreeable addition to our small parties." Georgia refugee Eliza Andrews explained, "Albany is so full of charming refugees and Confederate officers and their families that there is always plenty of good company." In Macon, Georgia, where "young officers" often "pass[ed] to and fro on sick leave, or during periods of cessation of hostilities," one "charming matron" held "informal gatherings upon every available occasion." Tennessean Alice Ready found that a two-week period during which the Confederate army was in town made for an exciting interlude: "So much was cramed [sic] into so small a space," she wrote in her diary, "that it seems as if it were a year."[22]

The presence of the military, whether ongoing or temporary, offered young women ample opportunity to socialize with soldiers. This was an especially welcome distraction in communities left without eligible men by the war. Alice Williamson, a schoolgirl in Gallatin, Tennessee, spent her evenings "seeking & sighing for rebels." When soldiers arrived in her community, fellow Tennessean Alice Ready commented, "I think the girls here must appreciate their visits more than almost any others, because beaux are a *very* scarce article." When the Vicksburg campaign brought regiments to Mississippi, Amanda Worthington, who had previously complained of the lack of suitable escorts in her neighborhood, was delighted. "I do like to talk to soldiers & hear their adventures &

anecdotes of camp life," she reflected in her diary. Ellen Louise Power, who had previously filled her diary with brief and monotonous entries complaining of boredom and illness, was thrilled at the unexpected arrival of two soldiers from New Orleans in October 1862; they were "such nice young men," she gushed, "one of them *so* handsome."[23]

Soldiers' visits, ranging from a few hours to several months, offered young women opportunities for entertainment, excitement, and romance. General T. J. "Stonewall" Jackson made his winter headquarters at Moss Neck plantation in Virginia in 1863, where several refugee families had joined Kate Corbin's household. "This winter . . . has been like a dream to me," Kate confided to her friend Sally Munford. The "pleasant crowd" of Jackson's officers and fellow refugees enjoyed "a great deal of good music," both instrumental and vocal, as "some of the gentlemen have fine voices; and one of the best bands in the Corps is camped very close to us." By springtime, Kate had become quite enamored of "the noble old fellow and his brave troops."[24]

Virginian Amanda Edmonds, an incurable flirt, recorded many "a delightful day spent at home with the Rebels eating grapes, peaches, flirting &c." For Edmonds, the excitement of the war years was a pleasure. "I have become perfectly devoted to the Society of Rebels," she reflected in 1863. "I can look back when the war is over and recall some of the happiest moments of my life – yes, even in this terrible war with all its grief and strife. I have spent many happy days full of change, variety and romance. Excitement is the thing that just suits my fancy."[25]

Young women quickly formed numerous, if fleeting, romantic relationships with visiting soldiers. During a brief visit to relatives in Port Hudson, Louisiana, for instance, Sarah Morgan secured the affections of Private John Halsey, who presented her with a series of gifts, including a pet flying squirrel. Sarah reveled in her power over her suitor: "Think I can do pretty much as I please with 'John,'" she remarked with satisfaction, "though of course it would never do to let him, or anyone else know it."[26]

Pauline DeCaradeuc was an especially accomplished flirt. Over a two-year time span, this strikingly beautiful young woman, who lived on a plantation near the South Carolina–Georgia state line and traveled frequently to nearby cities in both states, recorded flirtations with more

than twenty different Confederate soldiers and officers in her Civil War diary. In several cases, the flirtations extended to the exchange of letters, books, and gifts – intimacies reserved for engaged couples in the antebellum period. Pauline came close to engagement with some of her suitors. On a visit to Savannah, she met John Cochran, who was there on furlough. Before returning to the front, Cochran went on a long walk with Pauline during which he confided his love for her and she presented him with a "beautiful scarf" as a token of her affection. But Pauline resisted a definite commitment. "I told him the same thing I did before, that I knew him too short a time for my heart to have been touched," she wrote in her diary.[27]

Indeed, Pauline's heart remained untouched until the war's end, although she entertained a bewildering array of gentlemen callers, nearly all of them members of the military. After returning home from Savannah, where soldiers showered her with "kind and plentiful attention, & admiration," Pauline next went to Augusta for three weeks, where she met Captain John Milledge, who "was quite devoted . . . said lots of fine and sweet things," and secured Pauline's promise of a correspondence. On her way home from Savannah, she met Colonel C. W. McCreary, who spent the entire train ride home fanning her, and when she arrived back at home, she learned that Amory Coffin, a graduate of the Citadel who lived in nearby Aiken, had professed his love for her and declared his desire to marry her. Before seeing her hometown sweetheart on a visit to Aiken, Pauline received a visit from Captain Milledge, whom she had met on her earlier visit to Augusta. He "seemed perfectly infatuated," meaningfully stating that Pauline's "*black eyes* lured him" back to her side, although Pauline "thought it a flirtation on both sides" and "*black eyes sent him off* for good, this time."[28]

Pauline next spent three weeks in Columbia, where she became "very great friends" with Albert Elmore, whose attentions became increasingly pronounced during the visit. When the time came to leave, however, Albert accompanied Pauline to the train and introduced her to a Captain Calhoun, "who proved a very attentive and pleasant escort." Before long, Pauline made another trip, first to Aiken and then to Augusta, where she danced with Captain Beauregard and "took several promenades" with Captain John McDonald. Upon returning home, Pauline en-

tertained several visiting soldiers, including Robbie Gibbes, who had recently returned from the front; the young man "amused me very much" by "playing the devoted to me," Pauline remarked.[29]

Like other young women in the Civil War South, Pauline DeCaradeuc encouraged soldiers' attentions without committing to marriage – or even to an exclusive relationship. Such behavior was commonplace in the Civil War South, so much so that in 1862 one Virginia mother of eight young women of marriageable age (if not of a marrying disposition) referred to her daughters as a "fraternity of Coquettes."[30]

Casual relationships – what Kate Stone called "silly, light love affairs" – flourished in the Confederate South. Short-lived romances between Confederate soldiers and local girls were a source of keen – if temporary – pleasure for young Southern women. In May 1865, Kate Stone received a letter from her friend Missie Morris, who reported "having a lovely time in Homer with so many soldiers camped near." But although Missie praised the soldiers in her vicinity as "a splendid-looking body of men," she also reported, "there were no engagements and no marriages from the winter's campaign."[31]

Not only casual relationships, but also casual engagements, became commonplace in the Civil War South. Both men and women avoided engagements, kept them secret, and broke them. Kate Corbin, writing from Moss Neck plantation in King George County, Virginia, to chastise her Richmond friend Sally Munford for concealing her engagement, confessed in the same letter that she had been guilty of similar "tricks," toying with the affections of several men even though she was engaged at the time. "I have been amusing myself a good deal this winter with Col. Colston," she detailed her exploits with one of her several gentlemen callers, "who has been, (as we all believed) courting Mary Page . . . who is spending the winter in Albemarle." Kate's duplicity was matched by that of her beau, who had recently announced his engagement to yet another young woman living in Richmond.[32]

In and of themselves, secret engagements were not new. Women in the antebellum era often kept their engagements secret until shortly before their weddings in order to avoid a scandal in the event that the planned marriage did not take place. During the Civil War, however, secret engagements took on new dimensions. Secretly engaged individuals car-

ried on flirtations with other people, made promises of marriage that they did not keep, and married in defiance of their parents' wishes.[33]

Keeping an engagement secret allowed both parties to pursue relationships with other people. Sometimes the parties involved explicitly specified that a secret engagement permitted inconstancy. Loula Kendall, who refused to set a wedding date and insisted on keeping her lengthy engagement to Confederate Lieutenant Henry Rogers a secret, wrote a letter to him in 1862 in which she admonished: "Neither of us are to consider this engagement *binding*, if another is loved, no sense of honor will prevent our immediately letting the other know of it – so you are still at liberty to fall in love with whom you please, without considering *me* at all in the way."[34]

Although Loula was probably simply testing her fiancé's commitment to her (the couple wed in 1863), other women made similar statements, and some men took them at their word. Atlanta refugee Imogene Hoyle's fiancé, a Confederate officer stationed in Stockbridge, Georgia, wrote that he was "having a 'gay' time up there with the girls – going to parties &c – & that he had found him a charming little sweetheart with excruciating black eyes" to divert him while he waited for his intended bride to set a wedding date.[35]

Civil War soldier Richard Johnson, separated from his fiancée Isabella MacKay during the war, regaled her with accounts of his flirtations with the young women he met as he moved with his unit from camp to camp. Describing himself as "a great lover of that fickle, deceitful, bewitching race of creatures who wear petticoats and lead poor men astray," he reminded Isabella that she herself had told him "that I might have as much fun as I wanted" before their marriage took place. "I like to know all the pretty girls along through my travels, so as to be prepared for an emergency; knowing how fickle woman is, and how apt to give a fellow the slip," he teased.[36]

Indeed, women were likely to give men "the slip" in the Civil War South. One of Virginian Lucy Wood's friends disappointed four male admirers when she suddenly and unexpectedly married a fifth suitor. "It was quite a surprise," Wood remarked, "for she had kept the matter quite private." In fact, the young woman had concealed her intentions so well that she received love letters from her other suitors even after her

marriage! South Carolina schoolgirl Floride Clemson's mother wrote to her about neighborhood gossip about Lizzie Giles, who had jilted her fiancé, Washington Baker, for a Confederate officer, apparently with her mother's encouragement. "She & her mother have both behaved shamefully," wrote Mrs. Clemson, emphatically denouncing the young woman's actions: "To think of her driving out with him [Baker], as her fiancée, while the mother bought her wedding things to marry another man!!!!!"[37]

Keeping engagements secret not only allowed the parties involved to carry on flirtations with other people, but also allowed women to break engagements with impunity. Virginian Lucy Breckinridge, for instance, carried on a clandestine relationship with a Confederate captain to whom she was briefly engaged. Within a few months, however, she lost interest in him and ended the relationship. Breckinridge kept her relationship a secret at least in part because she knew that her parents would not approve of the man in question; although her sometime fiancé was a Confederate officer, he lacked the status or the wealth that Breckinridge's parents wanted in a son-in-law. Although Breckinridge herself elected to break her unsuitable attachment, other young women took advantage of their parents' ignorance to consummate relationships in defiance of their wishes.[38]

Emma Sue Gordon and her cousin, Robert Perkins, carried on a secret courtship in spring and summer 1863. Although Gordon considered herself to be "just the same as engaged" following a flirtatious conversation in which Perkins asked her if she would live with him, the couple did not inform her parents of their intentions until nearly three weeks had passed, at which time the entire extended family arrayed themselves in opposition to what they considered a hasty match. Gordon was determined, however: "I shall marry Cousin Robin, let the world say what it will," she declared. Indeed, despite her family's pleas for at least a year's delay, Gordon and Perkins were married in October. Evidently Gordon's parents had relented, probably at least in part because the couple's secret meetings had become public knowledge and the family determined to make the best of what they regarded as a bad situation.[39]

Other couples married in defiance of parental opposition. In 1863, Wyatt Patterson exclaimed in a letter to his cousin Lottie Dye, "What

[do] you think? We had another elopement on Thursday night." Despite her "solemn promises" to her guardian to refrain from rash decisions, Mary Cunningham had stolen off "very slyly" and married her secret lover. Although "enraged" at his ward's actions, the guardian was helpless to oppose a match already made. As Patterson pointed out, "it is useless to grieve about a matter of this kind, for when it is done, it cannot be undone." Patterson's description of the situation suggested both that such incidents had become more common during the war years, and that social acceptance of such secret affairs had increased – however grudgingly – in response to the changed circumstances of the war years that made it more difficult for adults to control young people's actions.[40]

Secret engagements led not only to clandestine marriages but also to illicit sexual activity. Emma Sue Gordon and her future husband, Robert Perkins, spent many unchaperoned hours together in 1863. The pair shared embraces and kisses even prior to their engagement, although Gordon, with difficulty, resisted Perkins's "sighs" and pleas for increased contact. Once the couple reached an unofficial understanding, Gordon vigorously defended the pair's physical intimacy after they were observed during a secret rendezvous:

> It seems that Someone, I don't know who was down at the creek the other evening watching Cousin Robert & me well, I hope they were satisfied, I don't care if all the world knows it, I *did* go there to meet him, I *did* kiss him several times when we bade each other goodbye & we *did* sit together on the roots of a tree, very close to each other & his arm was around me all the time, but I am engaged to him & what do I care who knows about my meeting him –[41]

Although Gordon's diary entries suggest that the couple limited their contact to kissing and cuddling until after their marriage, even these fairly innocent activities were clear transgressions of antebellum codes of conduct.

Both the wartime suspension of adult chaperonage and the temporary presence of passing troops increased the likelihood that couples would engage in sexual activity outside of marriage. Kate Stone worried that her young male relatives might "carry their flirtations too far" while they were away from home.[42]

Julia Southall, a strait-laced resident of Columbus, Mississippi, complained that the small town had "changed a great deal" since the start of the war, "owing to the effect of having soldiers near the town." "Once renowned for its modest young ladies," the previously sedate community "can now boast of a dozen as fast ladies as any town in the Confederate states."[43]

While young women rarely admitted to – or even commented on – anything more than flirting, soldiers' accounts sometimes suggested that the relaxed atmosphere of wartime permitted an unprecedented level of physical contact. A Confederate captain stationed in Georgia observed his fellow officers with "their arms around the girls' waists or necks," while in Tennessee, commenting on his comrades' pursuit of the local girls, one Georgia cavalryman predicted, "If we Stay heare much longer in about 9 months from now thare will be more little Gorgians a Squalling through this contry then you can Shake a Stick at."[44]

While young women might deceive their suitors by agreeing to engagements they had no intention of honoring, soldiers could also deceive young women with more serious and lasting effects by inducing them to engage in sexual activity with false promises of marriage. Extramarital sexual activity had dire consequences for elite women, endangering their reputations and even, in some cases, their lives. In wartime Richmond, one woman who had become pregnant after an affair with a married man, a Confederate officer from Missouri, died as a result of complications from a self-induced abortion.[45]

In Civil War courtships, then, elite young women were simultaneously more powerful and more vulnerable than they had been in the antebellum era. Louisiana resident Sarah Morgan, who reveled in her own power over her suitors, also hinted at the potential harm to young women in an 1863 diary entry, observing that "young and inexperienced girls" were sometimes taken in by unscrupulous men's false protestations of lasting affection. "In many instances, I venture to say, [this] has caused many a warm hearted, confiding girl, to bestow her love where it was uncalled for and unappreciated," she remarked obliquely.[46]

As the war drew to a close, increasing numbers of young women determined to bestow their love on a single favored suitor rather than engaging in multiple casual relationships. Shortly after the conclusion of

the war, in July 1865, renowned South Carolina belle Pauline DeCaradeuc renounced her flirtatious ways. After attending a picnic where she "danced every dance, and as usual received a plenty of attention," Pauline professed herself weary of her coquetry and conquests. "Why do I always inspire *general* admiration," she demanded; "it is the same thing every where I go, I would much rather, a great deal, have but one or two admirers at a party, &c., and let them be agreeable and devoted, instead of having a little bit of *everybody's* attention." She soon got her wish. In August 1865, she met Lieutenant J. Guerard Heyward, recently released from a Union prison; within two months, after a whirlwind courtship, the couple was engaged. Pauline described herself as "engaged to be married, in love, at last, yes positively and terribly in love" for the first time, and "happy, happy from morn to night."[47]

Other women followed suit, often by consummating lengthy – and sometimes troubled – wartime engagements. Although she preferred to wait until after the war to marry, Lottie Dye finally agreed to marry her soldier-fiancé, Wyatt Patterson, in 1864 after he threatened to resign his commission in order to facilitate their marriage. After resisting Richard Johnson's urgent demands to set a wedding date for over a year (in 1863 he pronounced himself "perfectly deranged on the subject"), Isabella Mackay finally yielded in the spring of 1864, perhaps as much in response to his hints at affairs with other women as to his pleadings to marry her. Likewise, Atlanta resident Imogene Hoyle acceded to her fiancé's pressure to set a date for their wedding in the fall of 1864 (setting the date for June 1865), only after receiving a letter from him detailing his flirtations with the women in Stockbridge, Georgia, where his unit was stationed. "I have the *first* claim and intend to hold on to him, & if he dont *come up to the mark I'll sue him*," she asserted in a letter to her school friend, Amaryllis Bomar, adding, "I tell you it takes a girl in hand to hold on to her sweetheart these *war* times."[48]

Other reluctant brides also determined to marry at the war's end. Virginian Kate Corbin, who often expressed her distaste for marriage, engaged in numerous flirtations throughout the war, broke off her engagement at least once, and resisted her fiancé's pressure to set a wedding date for nearly a year, finally relented and married Colonel Pendleton in 1864. Fellow Virginian Lucy Randolph Page, who likewise deplored

"these hateful *love-fusses*," rejected several men during the war, broke at least one engagement, and gained a reputation as "a *flirt*," also repented her hardheartedness once the war drew to a close. "All our contemporaries are passing away," she reflected in a November 1865 letter to her closest confidante, Lucy McGuire, "& the boys & girls of another age are taking our places – I wonder Guire if we are not 'old maids' – in truth I don't at all like the idea," she confessed. Two years after the war, "frightfully oppressed by the blues," she "succumbed at last" to the blandishments of a longtime suitor and "surrendered ignominiously to Mr Cooke."[49]

The mania for marriage that some historians have ascribed to the Civil War years seems to have hit full force after the war. Women's postwar writings comment frequently on the shortage of suitors and the pressure to marry. In 1866, Minnie Bacot wrote to her friend Jane Allston about engagements and marriages in her neighborhood. "Every one seems to be getting engaged or Married," she commented, adding, "Cousin Jane told us yesterday if we did not [get] married this year, we never would, as every one is getting so poor." Charlestonian Emma Holmes commented with distaste that young people were "crazy on the matrimonial question" in the immediate aftermath of the war. Men wanted to "be married immediately without a cent in the world or any prospect of maintenance for themselves much less a family," while women "were willing now to take any offer, without regard to suitability."[50]

These Southern women's observations at the end of the Civil War – and some historians' interpretations of the war and its aftermath – suggest that wartime changes in courtship and gender roles were short-lived. Suddenly concerned about the shortage of men in the postwar South, marriage-minded young women desperately sought husbands. Young men turned to marriage for stability, reconstructing their sense of self and Southern manhood within the context of nuclear families. Other Southern women's actions – and other scholars' analysis – argue for more lasting changes. Although the young women included in this study abandoned their flirtatious ways in favor of marriage at the end of the war, other women did not. For instance, Violet Blair, who was only seventeen years old when the war ended, was a celebrated belle who reveled in her conquests throughout the 1860s. Not until the 1870s did

she pursue a serious (and lengthy) courtship, which resulted in her marriage in 1874, at the age of twenty-six, to Albert Janin, whom she had first met in 1867. Still other young women capitalized on the possibilities that the Civil War created to avoid marriage entirely and instead chose a life of "single blessedness" devoted to paid work, religious benevolence, and female friendship. Disagreement among historians about how to interpret white Southern women's experience of the Civil War – as a major watershed in gender relations or a temporary deviation from gender conventions – persists. Even my own research, for this essay and for my book on female coming-of-age, leads to contradictory conclusions about young women's attitudes toward men and marriage in the Civil War era. Perhaps it is time for historians to move beyond the question of how the Civil War affected white women and instead to probe the personal, generational, familial, and material factors that shaped women's responses to the upheavals of the Civil War period.

For at least some young, privileged, white women, then, the Civil War created new, albeit temporary, opportunities to pursue pleasure rather than seeking husbands. Relaxed courtship conventions, modified standards for measuring suitors' eligibility, reduced parental control, and increased opportunities for informal socializing allowed young women to experiment with casual relationships, ranging from suggestive flirtations to sexual encounters. While young women reveled in the opportunity to form multiple relationships with numerous suitors and exert control over their many admirers, they also proved vulnerable to white men's wider sexual experience and greater geographical mobility, and women's pleasure-seeking was tempered by the possibility of unplanned pregnancy and the threat of social ostracism. At the conclusion of the Civil War, however, they found themselves with more options than in the antebellum period. Some sought greater stability in marriage; some continued to enjoy the fun of flirtation; and some chose an independent life. Whatever path they chose, they did so with greater awareness of the pleasures and perils of heterosexual romance.

Notes

1. John Q. Anderson, ed., *Brokenburn: The Journal of Kate Stone, 1861–1868* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995 [1955]), 345, 354.

2. See Stephen Berry, *All That Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 16–18; Lesley J. Gordon, "Courting Nationalism: The Wartime Letters of Bobbie Mitchell and Nettie Fondren," in *Inside the Confederate Nation: Essays in Honor of Emory M. Thomas*, ed. Lesley J. Gordon and John C. Inscoe (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 188–208; Kenneth Noe, *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined the Army after 1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 63–86; and Giselle Roberts, *The Confederate Belle* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 42–47, 76–77 (second quotation).

3. Wyatt Patterson to Lottie Dye, January 19, 1861, July 18, 1862, May 10, 1863, Patterson-Dye Families Correspondence, South Carolina Historical Society (SCHS), Charleston, South Carolina; James Henry Rogers to Loula Kendall, October 5, 1861, December 2, 1862; Loula Kendall Rogers to James Henry Rogers, [July 8, 1862], Loula Kendall Rogers Letters, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

4. Anderson, *Brokenburn*, 142; William R. Snell, ed., *Myra Inman: A Diary of the Civil War in East Tennessee* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2000), 260–61, 279. See also Margaret Lea Graves Reminiscence, Charles Graves Papers, Southern Historical Collection (SHC), Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Fannie Page Hume Diary, November 19, 1861, SHC.

5. Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 17–18; [Constance Cary Harrison], "A Virginia Girl in the First Year of the War," *Century Magazine* 30 (1885): 608; James Marten, *The Children's Civil War* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 156; Mary D. Robertson, ed., *A Confederate Lady Comes of Age: The Journal of Pauline DeCaradeuc Heyward, 1863–1888* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992), 47; Loula Kendall Rogers Journal, September 28, 1860, August 1, October 26, 1861, Emory.

6. C. Alice Ready Diary, March 6, 1862, SHC ; John David Smith and William Cooper Jr., *Window on the War: Frances Dallam Peter's Lexington Civil War Diary* (Lexington, Ky.: Lexington–Fayette County Historic Commission, 1976), 34; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 147; Eliza Frances Andrews, *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl, 1864–1865*, ed. Spencer Bidwell King Jr. (Macon, Ga.: Ardivan Press, 1960), 120.

7. Andrews, *War-Time Journal*, 21; Imogene to Amaryllis Bomar, September 14, [1864], Bomar Family Papers, Emory; Robertson, *Confederate Lady Comes of Age*, 73.

8. For quotations, see Andrews, *War-Time Journal*, 21; and Mrs. D. Giraud Wright, *A Southern Girl in '61: The War-Time Memories of a Confederate Senator's Daughter* (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1905), 179–80. See also Myrta Lockett Avary, ed., *A Virginia Girl in the Civil War, 1861–1865* (New York and London:

D. Appleton, 1903, 1915), 43–46; Charles East, ed., *Sarah Morgan: The Civil War Diary of a Southern Woman* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 101; and Robertson, *Confederate Lady Comes of Age*, 36–37.

9. Andrews, *War-Time Journal*, 21, 50; and Avary, *Virginia Girl*, 45–46.

10. Lizzie June to Millie Birckhead, February 4, 1862, Edward F. Birckhead Papers, Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

11. Robertson, *Confederate Lady Comes of Age*, 73; see also Roberts, *Confederate Belle*, 89.

12. Andrews, *War-Time Journal*, 29; Robertson, *Confederate Lady Comes of Age*, 36–37.

13. Daniel E. Sutherland, ed., *A Very Violent Rebel: The Civil War Diary of Ellen Renshaw House* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 122.

14. Loula Kendall Rogers Journal, September 28, 1860, March 6, July 19, August 1, and October 26, 1861, Loula Kendall Rogers Collection, Emory.

15. On antebellum courtship and engagement, see Anya Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters: Young Women in the Old South* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), chaps. 4 and 5.

16. Civil War Reminiscences of Sophia Haskell Cheves, June 20, 1895, Sophia Haskell Cheves Papers, SCHS; Lottie Dye to Wyatt Patterson, November 19, December 6, 1861, February 11, March 3, 1862; Wyatt Patterson to Lottie Dye, June 22, 1861, January 4, 1862, Patterson-Dye Families Correspondence, SCHS.

17. John F. Marszalek, ed., *The Diary of Miss Emma Holmes, 1861–1866* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1979, 1994), 264, 266; Wright, *Southern Girl in '61*, 135 (quotation), 241; Lou Wilkinson to Jane Allston, July 9, 1864, Allston Family Papers, SCHS; Underwood, "War Seen through a Teen-ager's Eyes," 183; Andrews, *War-Time Journal*, 8. See also Ott, *Confederate Daughters*, 102–3; and E. Susan Barber, "'The White Wings of Eros': Courtship and Marriage in Confederate Richmond," in Catherine Clinton, ed., *Southern Families at War: Loyalty and Conflict in the Civil War South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 119–32.

18. Wright, *Southern Girl in '61*, 76, 136, 24; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 146. For more on wartime Richmond, see Barber, "'The White Wings of Eros.'"

19. Marszalek, *Diary of Miss Emma Holmes*, 6, 22, 140–41; see also 149.

20. Imogene to Armaryllis Bomar, October 6, [1864], Bomar Family Papers, Emory; Ellen Louise Power Diary, September 25 (quotation), October 11, 20, 21, November 10, 11, 1862, SHC; Minnie Bacot to Jane Allston, December 3, 1865, Allston Family Papers, SHCS. See also Amanda Virginia Edmonds Diary, June 13, 1863, Virginia Historical Society (VHS), Richmond, Virginia; Malinda B. Ray Diary, July 19, 1861, David A. Ray Papers, SHC; and Mary Maxcy Leverett to Milton Maxcy Leverett, February 24, 1862, in Frances Wallace Taylor, Catherine Taylor Matthews, and J. Tracy Power, eds., *The Leverett Letters: Corre-*

spondence of a South Carolina Family, 1851–1868 (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2000), 107.

21. Lucy Wood Diary, April 17, May 2, 1861, Lomax Family Papers, VHS; Anderson, *Brokenburn*, 101.

22. East, *Sarah Morgan*, 35; Andrews, *War-Time Journal*, 76; Wright, *Southern Girl in '61*, 194; C. Alice Ready Diary, March 3, 1862, SHC. This was also true of Unionist areas of the South. In May 1863, Lexingtonian General Orlando Willcox held a "hop," a festive ball that featured twenty-four dances. See Smith and Cooper, *Window on the War*, 29.

23. Alice Williamson Diary, Duke; C. Alice Ready Diary, February 13, 1862, SHC; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 146–47; Ellen Louise Power Diary, October 11, 1862, SHC.

24. Kate Corbin to Sally Munford, February 16, 1863, Munford-Ellis Family Papers, Duke.

25. Amanda Virginia Edmonds Diary, September 6, 1862, September 13, 1863, and October 15, 1863, VHS.

26. Roberts, *Confederate Belle*, 89; East, *Sarah Morgan*, 418.

27. Robertson, *Confederate Lady Comes of Age*, 29; see also 39–40, 41, 47, and 58.

28. Ibid., 44, 45, 51, 52, 55.

29. Ibid., 58, 71, 77.

30. Mother to Maggie Munford, August 13, [1862], Munford-Ellis Family Papers, Duke.

31. Anderson, *Brokenburn*, 337.

32. Kate Corbin to Sally Munford, March 7, 1863, Munford-Ellis Family Papers, Duke.

33. Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters*, 147.

34. Loula Kendall to James Henry Rogers, January 22, 1862, Loula Kendall Rogers Letters, Emory.

35. Imogene Hoyle to Amaryllis Bomar, November 16, 1864, Bomar Family Papers, Emory.

36. Richard Johnson to Isabella MacKay, June 5, August 7, 1863, Johnson Family Papers, SCHS.

37. Lucy Wood to Waddy Butler, January 30, 1862, Lomax Family Papers, VHS; Ernest M. Lander, "A Confederate Girl Visits Pennsylvania, July–September 1863," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 59 (April 1966): 121.

38. Ott, *Confederate Daughters*, 115.

39. Emma Sue Gordon Diary, April 19, May 15, 19, 22 (first quotation), 29, June 5, 6 (second quotation), 18, October 19, 20, 21, 1863, Perkins Family Papers, SHC.

40. Wyatt Patterson to Lottie Dye, September 26, 1863, Patterson-Dye Families Correspondence, SCHS.

41. Emma Sue Gordon Diary, April 19, May 15, 19, 22, 29 (quotation), 1863, Perkins Family Papers, SHC.

42. Anderson, *Brokenburn*, 354.

43. Jule Moore to Blannie Southall, May 5, 1863, quoting Julia Southall to Jule Moore, Southall-Bowen Family Papers, SHC.

44. Noe, "Reluctant Rebels," chap. 3.

45. Barber, "'White Wings of Eros,'" 124.

46. East, *Sarah Morgan*, 443.

47. Robertson, *Confederate Lady Comes of Age*, 83 (first quotation), 89 (second and third quotations).

48. See Anderson, *Brokenburn*, 355; and Barber, "'White Wings of Eros,'" 124, for several other engagements consummated at the end of or shortly after the war. Of course, not all women postponed their wedding day until war's end. Other women included in this study married earlier in the war, although also after lengthy engagements. Lucy Wood married Waddy Butler in 1861 after a year-long engagement; Margaret Lea married Charles Graves in 1863 after an engagement of nearly two years. See Letters and Diaries of a Civil War Bride, VHS; and Charles Graves Papers, SHC. Loula Kendall married her fiancé of two years, Henry Rogers, in 1863. See Loula Kendall Rogers Papers, Emory. Wyatt Patterson to Lottie Dye, November 17, 1863, January [14], 1864, December 14, 1864, Patterson-Dye Families Correspondence, SCHS; Richard Johnson to Isabella Mackay, January 2, [1863], June 5, 1863, August 27, 1863, September 24, 1863 (quotation), October 30, 1863, November 10, 1863, February 17, [1864], Johnson Family Papers, SCHS; Imogene Hoyle to Amaryllis Bomar, June 25, 1864, September 14, [1864], October 6, [1864], November 16, 1864 (quotation), Bomar Family Papers, Emory.

49. Kate Corbin to Sally Munford, March 7, 28, 1863, April 15, [1863], July 27, 1863, August 11, 26, 1863, September 30, 1863, October 20, 1863, October 29, [1863], November 16, 1863, November 24, 27, [1863], December 27, [1863], January 19, 1864, Munford-Ellis Family Papers, Duke. Although Kate, who had resisted marriage for so long, professed herself happy in her choice, her happiness was short-lived, as her husband died within months of the wedding—although not before impregnating his young bride. See F. A. D. to Sally Munford, October 16, 1864, and Kate Corbin Pendleton to Sally Munford, December 17, 1864. Mary Page to Lucy McGuire, n.d. (partial letter), March 13, n.d. (first quotation), December 17, 1861, March 14, n.d. (second quotation), April 2, n.d., February 17, 1865, November 14, 1865 (third quotation), June 27, 1867 (fourth quotation); see also Lucy Randolph Page Carter to Lucy Carter McGuire, January 23, 1867, Byrd Family Papers, VHS. Because so many of the letters in this collection are undated or fragmentary, it's difficult to definitely determine the duration of Mary's relationship with her future husband, but she seems to have rejected

him previously while also carrying on flirtations with other men, at least one of whom also proposed to her.

50. See Barber, "'White Wings of Eros,'" 119–20, for contemporary comments on marriage mania, concentrated in 1864–1865. Minnie Bacot to Jane Allston, n.d., 1866, Allston Family Papers, SCHS; John F. Marszalek, ed., *The Diary of Miss Emma Holmes, 1861–1866* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1979, 1994), 471. The entry is dated October 4, 1865.

Love Is a Battlefield

Lizzie Alsop's Flirtation with the Confederacy

STEVEN E. NASH

There is a formula to most Civil War soldiers' memoirs. They open with a modest statement of inadequacy in the face of taking stock of a long life. A profession of insignificance before God, and a registration of incredulity that any earthly peer beyond immediate friends and family could have any interest in these reflections, follow in quick succession. The formalities dispensed with, the veteran dives headlong into the crucible of his making, the moment when he and his fellows lived their lives to the top. When Elizabeth Alsop Wynne (or Lizzie as she was known) put pen to paper in 1916, she did so with a focus much like many veterans of the American Civil War. She needed to explain to her children and future generations how the war touched her life and her role in it. Inevitably, such reminiscing rushed memories of her school friends – "the inseparable quartette" (she, Lizzie, Madge, and Nannie) – to her mind. She was only fifteen when the war intruded upon "those golden days of girlhood." But Lizzie and her friends were "young, attractive, with beaux

galore." How did she find time to do anything, an older Lizzie wondered after reminiscing with her wartime diary, when her days were chock-full of "dashing young (or old) officers making the hours pass gaily."[1]

With that half-joking admission, Lizzie ushered her family – and at least one nosy historian – back to the most formative period of her life and the raw emotions recorded in a schoolgirl's diary. More than a half-century later, Lizzie could have distanced herself from the boy-crazy teenager captured on its pages, but she did not. Instead, like an old veteran, she seemed nostalgic for the days when *her* heart was touched with fire. Her diary, she owned, revealed a flirtatious and worldly woman, but a decidedly Confederate one, a distinction that covered a multitude of sins. One historian has suggested that Lizzie became an ardent Confederate because of her early connections to soldier support organizations. Such an interpretation carries no little amount of truth. Lizzie lived in a town where elite white women formed a Soldiers' Relief Society only one week after Virginia seceded, which they bolstered with a second patriotic organization after the first Battle of Manassas. She also shared several traits with other upper-class white women – a wealthy slaveholding family, education, and personal ties – that predisposed Lizzie and others like her to the Confederate cause. Influential as those factors were, they did not form the emotional core of Lizzie's sense of loyalty to the nascent Southern nation. Rather it was the negotiation of a world at war, full of exciting and terrible possibilities, that Lizzie Alsop recalled later in life. Like a battle-tested soldier, she reflected upon a war that propelled young white belles into a world where courtship restrictions relented and flirting was an act of patriotism. If the male soldiers thirsted for women's love and support, Lizzie's experience demonstrates that many upper-class young ladies shared a reciprocal desire. A flirtation or a courtship free from paternal supervision, with men hailed as the best representatives of a noble civilization, allowed young women like Lizzie to form strong emotional bonds with both the men in uniform and, by extension, the cause they represented. In the end, love and war both proved unfair for Lizzie as her callers fell – literally and figuratively – and left her to mourn their nation.[2]

Joseph and Sarah Alsop's fourth child, a "fat, white, dimpled baby with blue eyes," was born at a Spotsylvania County plantation on March 17,

1846. That daughter, Elizabeth, grew into a life of privilege. Her father was the richest man in Fredericksburg, Virginia, owning roughly $130,000 in both real and personal property. Among the chief beneficiaries of his wealth were his children. His two older sons – significantly older than Lizzie – studied law and medicine. Such affluence also allowed Elizabeth and her older sister Nannie to attend the Southern Female Institute, a boarding school in Richmond. Twelve slaves worked in the Alsop house and on the farm, a fact Lizzie registered immediately. Reflecting back on the circumstances of her birth, Lizzie noted that one of the first people to welcome her into the world was an "adoring 'Mammy,'" who coincidentally provided Lizzie with the account of the fat, dimpled baby's birth.[3]

A wealthy white girl of sixteen with bobbed brown curls, full lips, and a pleasant face, Lizzie looked the part of a young lady ready for her "coming out" when she commenced a journal in 1862; instead she found herself trapped in the heart of a country at war with itself. Situated along a major rail line, almost equidistant from each of the warring capitals, Fredericksburg possessed great military value. Much to Lizzie's annoyance, Northern troops occupied her hometown for the first time in April 1862. Lizzie watched anxiously as Yankee troops marched about, rumored to be heading to the Shenandoah Valley to strengthen the fight against Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson or on to Richmond. Their presence also threatened the Alsop family's property. Slavery began unraveling around Fredericksburg after the Federals arrived. On May 25, three Alsop slaves fled to the Union lines. As contemptible as this state of affairs was for Lizzie and her Confederate friends, she admitted reluctantly that things could have been worse in town. Charged by President Abraham Lincoln not to disturb Southern civilian property, occupation officers threatened their troops with stiff punishments if they disobeyed orders against molesting private property. One townswoman walking past the courthouse after the Federals seized control of the town noticed two Northern soldiers tied to a tree with a placard reading, "For entering private houses with out orders." But in the countryside where officers exercised a more tenuous command, Lizzie complained that "the Irish, Dutch, Rogues &c which compose the Federal Army" regularly pilfered Southern property, including some of her family's hogs and slaves.[4]

A defiant and confident teenager, Lizzie joined other white Fredericks-

burg ladies in dramatic expressions of contempt for Yankee rule. Much to the amusement of the soldiers, the ladies lifted their dresses and wandered into the dirty streets to avoid walking beneath the United States flag, preferring, as one protester put it, "Southern dust . . . to Northern rags." Despite such theatrics, a Wisconsin soldier saw opportunity for reconciliation in the local women. In his opinion, some "kind indulgence and gentle words will soon have the girls of Fredericksburg all right on the *union* question." He did not know Lizzie Alsop. Such self-conscious displays of opposition allowed Lizzie to channel her youthful passion into public action. For an emerging young belle, shunning Northern men was part of a young Confederate woman's duty. In private moments, it could also manifest itself in hate-filled confessions. Surrounded by enemy forces in July 1862, she watched from her family's home on Princess Anne Street, wishing that each Federal soldier might have "his neck broken before he crosses the bridge."[5]

Once the able-bodied Yankees finally did retreat across that bridge on the last day of August, Lizzie was free to return to school at the Southern Female Institute. It was the scene of some of the happiest moments of her teenage years – if not her life.[6] There she remained until winter, when the war engulfed Lizzie's hometown. On November 19, Lizzie received a letter from her sister Nannie written in such affectionate language that it heightened Lizzie's concern for her family. Nannie's tone, she was sure, stemmed from the Army of the Potomac's arrival near Fredericksburg. Massing along the opposite shore of the Rappahannock River, the federals ordered the mayor to surrender his town or face bombardment. The threat seemed all the more credible by the rapid appearance of Northern cannon along Stafford Heights. Such a display of might convinced the Alsops to join the flood of civilians out of town – and they were lucky they fled. Lizzie's family escaped the maelstrom of shot and shell that burst upon the town less than a month later. None of her immediate family was there to bear witness to the looting of the town on December 12 or the Union's dogged – and fruitless – assaults the following day.[7]

The Alsops' home suffered frightful damage. Some twenty or thirty pockmarks scarred the exterior of the house. The dining room window was blown out, and shells had shattered the rear columns, ripped

through the roof, and leveled the gardens. During the fighting, the federals converted the Alsops' home into a hospital. They ripped the drapes from the windows and bandaged fresh wounds with them. The family's fine feather beds bore gruesome bloodstains from enemy combatants. In addition, Yankees cut panels from the fine wooden dressers, smashed china, and poured kerosene over furniture, books, and other items. The loss struck Joseph Alsop as so severe that when a neighbor asked him about the damage he answered that it was easier for him to account for what remained rather than what was gone.[8]

The damage to the house exceeded that done to Lizzie's spirits. Unable to return to the family home in Fredericksburg, she rejoined her family at their Hilton plantation, where Lizzie, roughly three months shy of her seventeenth birthday, struck up active flirtations with several Confederate soldiers. As her family struggled to rebound from the losses they had suffered during the recent battle, she attended a candy stew at her uncle Tom Chandler's home. There she "carried on quite extensively" with a Confederate, Captain Green. Lizzie initiated the flirtation. Reacting to Green's praise for a fresh string of candy as a "nice rope," Lizzie quizzed whether he should like to be hung with it. Not to be bested, the captain replied, "Oh no, I never expect to be at all, unless by somebody's apron string." Green confessed that he had yet to be tied to any woman's apron strings – save his mother's – and, coyly looking at Lizzie's silk strings, remarked "that some little silk apron strings might be stronger." The pair carried on all night. Finally, he attempted to draw this flirtation beyond superficial fun by inviting Lizzie to dine with him in camp. She declined.[9]

Green was not the only Confederate man to notice the woman Lizzie Alsop was becoming. Ben Rawlings was, as she put it, her "first lover when [she] was a school girl." He was also something of a local celebrity. After South Carolina seceded in December 1860, Rawlings left home without telling his parents and traveled from Spotsylvania County to Charleston in order to volunteer his services to the South. In the ranks, he distinguished himself among his comrades, one of whom told Lizzie's aunt that Rawlings was "one of the bravest men in the world and the 'noblest of Creation.'" On January 4, 1863, Lizzie noticed Ben at church. She knew that he saw her, but he kept his distance as a colonel escorted

her to her carriage. It stung Lizzie that her old "lover" might be so cruel, but she recovered upon hearing that he had called upon her a few days later. To make amends for her rash judgment of Ben's behavior, Lizzie sent him a miniature Confederate flag as a gesture of good will. A month later, Ben sent her something closer to a love letter than a thank you note. Her brother, George, who was much older than she, was furious that Rawlings wrote his sister in language "too familiar for any gentleman to use towards any lady." Lizzie knew better. Ben loved romantic novels of heroes pining for their ladies from afar, and she dismissed his "very affectionate language" as a delusion of grandeur.[10]

Merrymaking continued through 1863, even after Lizzie's parents called her home and charged her with her youngest sister Emilie's education. Even as she assumed the role of teacher, Lizzie's thoughts remained on the fun she had with the men in uniform. On September 22, 1863, she rode with her sister and friends to Sunny Side with a male escort named Dr. Nunn. Once they had arrived and the men returned to camp, Lizzie joked with her girlfriends that she "had always promised father to be a *nun*," a promise which she now intended to keep. While Dr. Nunn made for a capital joke, he paled as a suitor in comparison to Dr. Fitzhugh, who was wounded on October 14, 1863. While recuperating in Richmond, Fitzhugh sent Lizzie and her sister Nannie some sheet music and Northern newspapers. A week later during Emilie's "Reading Class" on the "Conquest of Mexico," Fitzhugh called upon Lizzie personally. In short order, the "Conquest of beaux" supplanted the "Conquest of Mexico."[11]

The winter of 1863–1864 offered more opportunity for contact between Lizzie and the Confederate troops than any time previous. It brought General Thomas L. Rosser's cavalry brigade to her doorstep. Among Rosser's staff officers were several men that Lizzie came to know quite well. Captain Gregory stood out from the others – although it might be more accurate to say that Lizzie stood out more to Captain Gregory. It was not the first time the two had met. In late September 1863, they planned to tour the Chancellorsville battlefield, but his unit received orders to leave Fredericksburg before their trip. Lizzie noted at that time that Gregory would visit again and that he was "nice." Months passed before he returned to Lizzie's social circle, but when he did, he

was not alone. It seems the Alsop girls' reputation preceded them. Captains John W. Emmett, William N. McDonald, and others called upon Lizzie and her sisters the morning that they arrived in Fredericksburg, and other members of Rosser's staff soon followed. Southern officers became a fixture at the Alsop house. The girls and the men ate together, sang songs together, and generally spent a lot of time together.[12]

In December, she attended two parties, where she "met several old acquaintances." Her escort for the second gathering was Lieutenant Warren, who had more on his mind than Southern independence. She accused the lieutenant of being a flirt, to which he replied tartly that she had a propensity for coquettish behavior. As the night unfolded, each would live up to their reputation. Under the auspice of telling her the name of a man from Rosser's brigade with a crush on her, he escorted her to a private corner to pull candy. Next to his native Georgia, he told her, Virginia exceeded all other Confederate states. It would be even dearer to him, however, if he could have her. "I should like to transplant [Virginia's] brightest, most beautiful flower to my own state," where he might nurture and "prize it as a rare exotic." Warren confided that he might be tempted to fall in love with one of Lizzie's friends except that his heart rested in the hands of another. Lizzie resisted the bait, stating that her feelings were also otherwise occupied. "I am inclined to think he wishes to have a little flirtation," she wrote in her diary, "and I am very willing."[13]

For their part, the officers in Lizzie's diary hungered for female companionship. Much to the delight of General Pierce Manning Butler Young, Lizzie accepted an invitation to a party on January 16. Seizing upon a moment alone together, he teased Lizzie that this was "always the way, just as I was going to ask you to prom with me . . . you are so surrounded that I don't have any chance to talk with you." Alsop and Young had an interesting relationship. He, it appears, wished to court her, while she was undecided on whether the general was a "very worldly" or a "wicked" man. So she endeavored to find out. When he told her that he needed to ask her some questions that might be deemed "impertinent," she pledged to answer each one truthfully. Finally free to unburden himself, the general did not fool around: "Have you ever been engaged to any one? Have you ever been in love?" And Lizzie upheld her end of

the bargain as well, answering each one negatively. "Did you never fancy yourself in love for a little while," he pressed, "did you never see any whom you thought you could love?" Again, she answered no, which left the general incredulous and perhaps no little bit disappointed.[14]

And Lizzie Alsop knew a thing or two about worldliness. During another stint at the Southern Female Institute in the spring of 1863, Lizzie compared herself to her classmates. One student stood ready to be confirmed that Sunday, which Lizzie admired but was in no hurry to do so herself. While many of her more devout friends viewed the world as a "wilderness of woe," Lizzie embraced all that it offered. Nothing had changed by the following winter. "In the bottom of my heart," she wrote, "I believe, there is a longing, for something nobler, more worthy of my thoughts, than so much gayety." But even as she thought of her mother struggling to maintain a house through occupation and other ordeals, her attention fell more heavily, not upon her soul but on the dashing men in uniform. Captain John Jones, who she considered "rather old, but has pleasant manners, & seems to be good," escorted her home from a party and then sent word that "he would give his horse to see" her again. Captain William L. Church, a previous acquaintance, returned from Florida "looking quite as handsome as of old" and as "inclined to carry on the flirtation." According to a friend, Lieutenant Darant "talked of nothing but me." Her decision it seemed, boiled down to who she liked more, the "'Captain' or the 'Lieutenant.'"[15]

In John Esten Cooke, Lizzie added another captain to her collection. While regaling the girls on a visit to the Southern Female Institute with claims that you could read someone's personality by their lips, Cooke was put to the test. One young woman asked him what kind of lips she had, to which he responded "bread and butter." Perhaps sensing that Cooke's interests lay elsewhere in the group, another asked what kind of lips Lizzie Alsop had. Cooke's response set the students to giggling and gave Lizzie a nickname that chased her through the school's private chambers: "Kissable Lips." When it came time for another visit to end, he begged Lizzie to write to him. Throughout the morning, she resisted his advances, but after a day of entreaties to the contrary, she grudgingly agreed to respond to his letter with a final answer as to whether she would continue the correspondence. After he left for the day, she

determined that it would not continue. Cooke apparently got the message. Roughly two weeks later he told Lizzie that he refused to say that he loved her because he supposedly knew that "it would be useless."[16]

Spring saw Lizzie's world—and the war—take a significant twist. Ulysses S. Grant initiated his overland campaign against Robert E. Lee's army, and he turned Fredericksburg into a supply and medical base for Federal forces. Lizzie was not there to wish gruesome deaths upon the Union soldiers this time. Between April and May 1864, she slowly made her way back to the safety of the Confederate capital. Still, the move failed to insulate her from the hardening war encompassing her home, her state, and her region. Rumors that Grant had turned Fredericksburg into one vast hospital and that he forced Southern women to tend to wounded Yankee soldiers alarmed Lizzie, whose mother and youngest sister were now "surrounded by negroes & those who are almost their equals in station & surpass them in barbarity." News of battles and losses added to the burden created by familial concerns. May 20, 1864 brought news of General Jeb Stuart's death from wounds suffered at Yellow Tavern. On June 3, she noted the sound of cannon, which with each terrible crash, she feared, ushered "some soul . . . into Eternity."[17]

The war's further escalation in 1864 led many of the worldly young belle's army friends to contemplate Eternity themselves. The increasing death count and the declining fortunes of the Confederacy pushed Lizzie into a world where flirtatious fun was no longer without consequence. On June 8, 1864, Captain John Jones of Greenville, South Carolina, a middle-aged widower with a daughter roughly Lizzie's age, learned that his love for Lizzie was unrequited. It was an eye-opening moment for Alsop, now eighteen years old. The captain's admission of love marked another turning point in her life, and her thoughts drifted to her mother in Fredericksburg. Through the previous winter, she grew to appreciate her mother more and "love her more than any other person." Her mother patiently endured both Union occupation and the loss of her property, and as such represented both Lizzie's role model in Southern womanhood and a source of protection. Lizzie looked toward her mother's strength and realized that she could no longer shield her. Captain Jones's proposal had, in her words, "broken the ice."[18]

The deaths of several of her army suitors over subsequent weeks

added to Lizzie's new sense of the war's solemnity. One of her erstwhile suitors, Adjutant Jones, died at Trevilian Station in June. Death and marriage proposals turned Lizzie thoughts inward. It was not that she did not want to find love. As she read the novel, *A Life for a Life*, Lizzie found a fictional mirror in which she recognized herself as a sort of "child-woman." She experienced, to be sure, an accelerated path to adulthood, which made her youthful desire for fun clash with the prospect of marriage and a life like her mother's. Spurred on by the book, Lizzie gushed to her journal about romance and love. She wanted to be in love, craving a love deeper than any felt toward her family or anyone previously in her life, and now she had the suitors and greater freedom to try and realize that goal. Lizzie's ideal man would be someone she could confide in, bare her soul and innermost thoughts with, and she, in turn, could "help him bear the burden of life, to work, & to live, for him." That was what she wanted, but she quickly added something of an admission that she was unprepared for such a love. "I doubt whether I could ever lift the veil of the inner sanctuary & let anyone enter therein," she wrote in her diary, because "some emotions, some thoughts, some feelings we cannot be willing that another should know – (however dear he or she may be) – they are too sacred to let another share them."[19]

If Lizzie had been better about sharing those feelings with her "army friends," Captain Gregory may not have returned to Fredericksburg in July 1864. His purpose was not unexpected. He came for her. Lizzie claimed to have known his intentions since they took an evening walk together in Richmond, but she hoped to dissuade him from making the attempt. He asked her to accompany him on a walk to the monument to George Washington's mother, which she tried to decline. Lizzie had returned home to Fredericksburg in June to help her mother who had been confined to bed for some time due to ill health, and she told the captain that she was exhausted. Still, he insisted she accompany him on a stroll through Fredericksburg. So they walked; first to Lizzie's cousin's house, then to the monument and through the town cemetery. Again, Lizzie professed her fatigue and asked to go home. Gregory demurred. Instead, they sat near the cemetery's main walk, feeling the pressure of the past, the present, and, for at least one of them, the future. As the officer struggled to find the right words and speak them aloud, Lizzie

wished upon every star overhead that he might never succeed. Gregory had faced Yankee guns and men bent on his destruction, but he froze before an eighteen-year-old belle. Finally, he poured forth a volley or, to hear Lizzie tell it, a sputter of short, simple words. He loved her and he expressed hope that she loved him as well.[20]

His words were not a surprise. But Lizzie could not bat them away as so much coquetry. She was again, as she had with Captain Jones, turning down a man she respected, and a uniform and a role she revered. Such an awful feeling washed over her in that moment that she could not recall exactly what she said to him, only that it was something like "Captain Gregory I don't think I can." With that, the two of them fell as silent as the graves around them. The cemetery's iron gate propped the captain up, while Lizzie sat on the ground praying that it might open up and swallow her. Not a word passed between them. Gregory finally broke the silence. He was heartbroken, but *twice* he said that he accepted her answer because he had done his duty to himself. With his masculine sense of control reassured, and with Lizzie aware of how deeply she hurt him, Gregory finally consented to take her home. Few words passed between them on the return walk. She felt horrible for him, and it was in the spirit of making amends that she consented to sing a song for him before he left. Gregory requested the "Hindoo Mother" for reasons made abundantly clear by its heartfelt lament that: "Fairer hands may press thee, Richer lips may woo; But none shall ever love thee, Like thine own Hindoo." After that final song, the captain left Lizzie.[21]

Little remains secret in small towns. Fredericksburg society buzzed with rumors about Lizzie Alsop's love life in subsequent weeks. Her rejection of both Captain Gregory and Captain Jones was the talk of the town. One source reported that she would soon marry Dr. Fitzhugh. Another tongue wagged about her engagement to Mr. Beale, who squashed that gossip by saying that "there is no chance" because "Miss Lizzie says she will never marry any body in Fredericksburg." Lizzie was less than amused. Beale had told her recently that he had some questions he wished to ask her – and based on his frequent visits lasting no less than three or four hours, she believed that he loved her – but she was sure he knew to keep things friendly between them.[22]

As the Confederacy's prospects dimmed, so too did Alsop's. She had

missed her window to marry; and she no longer felt like flirting. During the Confederacy's final winter, Lizzie's mother chided her for showing an obvious indifference for Dr. Fitzhugh. Lizzie could not risk another graveyard confession, however. Enough ghosts of suitors past haunted her in her friends' teasing. One friend joked that Lizzie's rejection rendered Captain Gregory so desperate that he was chasing after some young widow. Then too many of her army friends had begun to "drop away one by one"—not falling into love or the marital state but falling forever, flirting no more.[23]

Lizzie would celebrate one more birthday in the Confederacy. Amid the well-wishing and gifts, her mind echoed birthday greetings from the year before, from those now dead. And she had to reflect that the year had made her no better a person. Two weeks later, Richmond fell, bringing her closer to religious conversion. Perhaps, she wrote somberly, we Confederates might "conquer 'through Christ.'"[24]

Lizzie's conversion in the wake of Confederate defeat marked the end of her turbulent path to womanhood. The war deprived her of a formal coming out. There was no ball to mark Lizzie's entrance into society. She charted her own way out into a changed world, unmarried but feeling no less a widow than many women who had lost loved ones. A year later, she joined the Ladies' Memorial Association of Fredericksburg, which took as its task the recovery and reburial of the Confederates who died near their town. In many ways, it was a natural extension of the war for her. She continued to love the men in gray, whose memories came calling now that their bodies lay silent. She vowed to recover and mourn these men, and rebury them in the same cemetery where she had wounded a comrade's heart. Like many battle-tested veterans, she returned to "normal" life unsure about how to continue. Her desire for love was more intense than ever, but she worried that the war had ruined her best chance to realize her heart's ambition.[25]

Patience was never one of Lizzie's most prominent virtues. But her waiting led her to Richard Henry Wynne, whom she married in 1878. A veteran of the war himself, Richard was unlike Lizzie's previous suitors. He was not an officer; he enlisted in an infantry regiment at the war's outset, but later transferred to the cavalry due to chronic ailments. Neither did he have the blessing of her family. A college professor, Wynne's

struggles to find steady work alarmed Lizzie's mother – now widowed and plagued by a declining fortune. Nevertheless, Richard and Lizzie formed a loving partnership based, among other things, upon a love for learning, an abiding Christian faith, and their Confederate heritage. Each of these loves passed to their three sons. Lizzie relished one childish fight in particular. She could not remember what caused it, but she recalled vividly how after tussling for a while, two of her young boys began hurling the most awful names they could think of at one another. "You are a Yankee," the one child sneered at his brother. "I'm not," the other cried, "I'm a Kinfederate." "Well, you are a Publican," the first yelled back. They did not grasp the full meaning of the conflict they referred to, but they knew who the "good guys" were. A few months later, Lizzie found herself trying to explain the Civil War to her youngest son. He simply could not grasp it. His mother told him about the Northern troops' destruction of Southern crops, but the boy interrupted her. "I know what the Yankees are," he exclaimed. "They are just thieves!" A smile curled her lips as Lizzie concluded that "innocent is the heart of a child truly!" Through her sons, Lizzie rediscovered a Confederate nation that brought adventure, hope, and opportunity, even if they could never fully heal the painful scars inflicted by its death.[26]

Notes

1. Lizzie Alsop Diary, June 6, 1916, Wynne Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

2. Caroline Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 15–6, 20–21, 24, 29. Historians have examined the extent, nature, and persistence of Confederate nationalism through a variety of lenses. Drew Gilpin Faust argued that Confederate nationalism was a cultural work in progress that was never quite completed. Emory M. Thomas argued that the South formed a nation through the war, but that it slowly eroded from within over the final years of the war. Gary W. Gallagher has argued that Confederate morale persisted until late in the war, most notably as Southern eyes focused on Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia for inspiration. See Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1990); Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation 1861–1865* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978); Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War: How Popular Will, Nationalism, and Military Strategy Could Not Stave Off Defeat*

(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997). Historians of women and gender have added depth to this issue. Joan Cashin has argued that Southern women formed a "culture of resignation," but she and others agree that the Civil War forced Southern women to adopt new responsibilities and roles beyond their traditional sphere. Stephen W. Berry moved the debate toward the emotional and day-to-day interactions with the Confederacy by focusing upon men's relationship with women. Lesley Gordon further explored the role that romantic love played in sustaining a Georgia couple. See Joan E. Cashin, *Our Common Affairs: Texts from Women in the Old South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Stephen W. Berry, *All That Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Lesley J. Gordon, "Courting Nationalism: The Wartime Letters of Bobbie Mitchell and Nettie Fondren," in John C. Inscoe and Lesley J. Gordon, eds., *Inside the Confederate Nation: Essays in Honor of Emory M. Thomas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005); Steven M. Stowe, "City, Country, and the Feminine Voice," in Michael O'Brien and David Moltke-Hansen, eds., *Intellectual Life in Antebellum Charleston* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986), 298–301, 311, 313–14.

3. Alsop Diary, June 6, 1916; 1860 Census data, available online at http://departments.umw.edu/hipr/www/Fredericksburg/census/1860US_1.htm. According to Lizzie's son, Edmund, her father owned over one hundred slaves spread across properties in both Spotsylvania and King George counties. See Francis Edmund Wynne Sr. Memoirs, copy in the possession of Frederick Willis Boelt.

4. Henry T. Shanks, *The Secession Movement in Virginia, 1847–1861* (Richmond, Va.: Garrett and Massie, 1934), 198–204; Lizzie Alsop Diary, May 25, May 26, 1862; Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861–1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 29.

5. William H. Washburn, ed., "The Life and Writings of Jerome A. Watrous Soldier Reporter Adjutant of the Iron Brigade" (privately published, 1992; copy in possession of FRSP), 62–63; Alsop Diary, May 26, 1862, July 2, 1862, and July 14, 1862. Women's role in negotiating occupation is the focus of LeeAnn Whites and Alecia P. Long, eds., *Occupied Women: Gender, Military Occupation, and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009). The volume asserts that occupied women were "busy and responsive" and served "as the critical bottom rail of the war of occupation." Lizzie Alsop's clash with Federal forces reinforced the dynamic of when the private became public. For more, see Whites and Long, *Occupied Women*, 6; and especially Kristen L. Streater, "'She-Rebels' on the Supply Line: Gender Conventions in Civil War Kentucky," in Whites and Long, *Occupied Women*, 88–99.

6. Alsop Diary, June 6, 1916; William A. Blair, "Barbarians at Fredericksburg's Gate: The Impact of the Union Army on Civilians," in Gary W. Gallagher, ed., *The Fredericksburg Campaign: Decision on the Rappahannock* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 147. "Southern in every feature," D. Lee Powell's

Southern Female Institute was part of a trend in Southern education designed to inculcate regional values in the Southern youth, who until then largely attended Northern schools or whose parents hired Yankee tutors. See Gregg D. Kimball, *American City, Southern Place: A Cultural History of Antebellum Richmond* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 69–70.

7. Blair, "Barbarians at Fredericksburg's Gate," 152–59; George C. Rable, *Fredericksburg! Fredericksburg!* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 83–86.

8. Alsop Diary, December 29, 1862, June 6, 1916. Lizzie listed the family's losses as roughly 40 gallons of pickle, 14 jars of lard, nearly 200 pounds of butter, plus large amounts of fish, flour, vinegar, preserves, cider, meat, vegetables, and fruit. See Alsop Diary, December 29, 1862.

9. Ibid., December 29, 1862. Lizzie's style of flirting was not uncommon. Many Southern belles flirted playfully with men but refused to commit to a relationship in order to preserve the independence they enjoyed as single women. See Anya Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters: Young Women in Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 114.

10. Ibid., May 25, 1862, January 5, 1863, February 11, 1863; Byrd Barnette Tribble, ed., *Benjamin Cason Rawlings: First Virginia Volunteer for the South* (Baltimore: Butternut and Blue, 1996), i, 7–8. Rawlings came from a family with Revolutionary War veterans' names etched in the family Bible and a strong commitment to the heroic ideal of knights serving fair maidens. Some of Ben's relatives went so far as to change their plantation's name from "Rawlingston" to "Ellangowan," which was the name of a manor in Walter Scott's novel *Guy Mannering*. See Tribble, *Benjamin Cason Rawlings*, iii, v.

11. Alsop Diary, September 22, 1863, October 4, 1863, October 27, 1863. Located six miles from Fredericksburg along the road to Spotsylvania Courthouse, Sunny Side belonged to Lizzie's grandmother. Perhaps due to its prime location, Sunny Side became the scene of much amusement for officers including Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, J. E. B. Stuart, and others during the winter of 1862–1863 when the Army of Northern Virginia made its winter camp near Fredericksburg. See Elizabeth Maxwell Alsop Wynne, *Geneologies and Traditions*, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia, 28, 30.

12. Alsop Diary, September 22, 1863, December 13, 1863, December 18, 1863; Steven H. Newton, *Lost for the Cause: The Confederate Army in 1864* (New York: DaCapo Books, 1999), 180; Robert E. L. Krick, ed., *Staff Officers in Gray: A Biographical Register of Staff Officers in the Army of Northern Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 398.

13. Alsop Diary, December 18, 1863, December 23, 1863. The phenomenon of parties and gaiety during a time of war was not unique to Lizzie Alsop. Nettie Fondren noticed a similar trend in Thomasville, Georgia. See Gordon, "Courting

Nationalism," 196–97. Drew Gilpin Faust interpreted such parties as "women's growing sense of self-interest" that marked their abandonment of sacrifice in exchange for excess in the war's final months. See Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 244–45.

14. Alsop Diary, January 18, 1864, February 14, 1864.

15. Ibid., May 24, 1863, February 17, 1864; Newton, *Lost for the Cause*, 180.

16. Alsop Diary, April 11, 1864, April 23, 1864, June 6, 1916.

17. Ibid., May 20, 1864.

18. Ibid., June 8, 1864, June 16, 1916. The pressure to marry became intense for many Southern couples like Nettie Fondren and Bobbie Mitchell, who married in 1864. Even under peaceful conditions, however, the pressure for Southern women to marry was intense. Before the war, many younger women ridiculed older suitors – such as Captain Jones who courted Lizzie – but she took a more open approach to older suitors, even if her friends teased her about it. See Gordon, "Courting Nationalism," 199; Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters*, 128, 131–32, 134–36.

19. Alsop Diary, June 27, 1864, June 28, 1864.

20. Ibid., July 30, 1864.

21. Ibid., June 8, 1864, July 30, 1864. The lyrics for "Hindoo Mother" available online at: http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/h?ammem/mussm:@field (NUMBER+@band(sm1849+461930), accessed October 21, 2009.

22. Alsop Diary, August 18, 1864, January 18, 1864.

23. Ibid., January 14, 1865, January 23, 1865, February 17, 1865, March 3, 1865. Some of these lost loves haunted Lizzie. For instance, she had a recurring dream of Stapleton Crutchfield, whose love for her she learned after his death. His memory reached from the grave to touch her shoulder, speak of love, and rekindle thoughts of possibilities extinguished by so many deaths. See Alsop Diary, February 7, 1866, March 21, 1866, May 16, 1868.

24. Ibid., March 17, 1865, April 4, 1865.

25. Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past*, 48.

26. Frederick Willis Boelt and Jean Marshall von Schilling, *Edmund Thomas Wynne and Martha Frances Curtis and Their Family* (Published by the authors, 2002), 47–48; Wynne, *Geneologies and Traditions*, 19; The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, "The Eleventh Annual Report of the President and the Treasurer," October 1916, available online at http://www.archive.org/stream/annualrepor1915a18carnuoft/annualrepor1915a18carnuoft_djvu.txt, accessed December 30, 2009; Alsop Diary, May 14, 1892, October 30, 1892; Francis Edmund Wynne Sr. Memoirs. Lizzie's young nephew Georgie objected bitterly to the union. Through bitter tears, he moaned that Wynne was too young for his dear Aunt Lizzie, who conversely he deemed too old for marriage. More

roundly, the boy protested that "he never saw anybody happier after being married." Older relatives likely fretted over the academic Wynne's inability to hold a steady or lucrative enough job capable of supporting a family. In spite of such obstacles, Lizzie finally found a man to call her own; a man that was "*all* that a woman's heart can wish for." What could she do, Lizzie asked her diary, the one remaining friend that she could rely upon for unqualified support. Elizabeth Maxwell Alsop wedded Richard Henry Wynne at ten o'clock in the Fredericksburg Baptist Church on March 20, 1878. See Alsop Diary, September 15, 1877, October 18, 1877, March 20, 1878.

PART THREE

Inside the Civil War Body

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Dissecting the Torture of Mrs. Owens

The Story of a Civil War Atrocity

BARTON A. MYERS

Colonel Alfred Pike was aggravated. For more than two months he had been hunting for a notorious deserter named Bill Owens in the central counties of North Carolina's piedmont. On Saturday evening, April 23, 1864, a posse including soldiers and civilians commanded by Pike, who was the deputy sheriff of Randolph County and also probably an officer in the county's militia, made its way to Owens's spring just across the county line in Moore County where the men sought Bill's hideout. When the soldiers inquired as to Bill's whereabouts, his wife, who was then in the process of washing clothes and monitoring her infant son, told the soldiers her husband was dead. The skeptical Confederates asked Mrs. Owens, whose name was probably Mary, to take them to the grave of her husband. At that point, she began verbally abusing the soldiers. Some of Pike's men, who were visibly angry, turned to their commander and told him that they could make her talk. When Pike ordered Mary to go with his soldiers, she refused and picked up her baby. Pike

then stepped forward and slapped Mary Owens in the "jaws" until she put down the infant. The soldiers quickly grabbed the woman, tied her thumbs behind her back, and then threw the rope over the limb of a tree where they suspended the woman's body so that her toes barely touched the ground. In what must have been excruciating pain, Mary Owens agreed to tell the soldiers all that she knew. After a few minutes of discussion, however, Pike again believed Mary lied to the posse. He and another soldier "jerked Owens wife down by the hair" and dragged the woman about fifty yards away to a fence where they proceeded to place her thumbs underneath the rails, which Pike later remembered "were flat and not sharp"; after this Mary Owens "soon became quiet and very respectful."[1]

During the last three decades, historians have closely examined many of the violations of the mid-nineteenth-century laws of war committed by the Confederate army during the American Civil War. While scholars have considered the question of atrocity, the scholarship on the issue has focused considerable attention on the role of racism as a motivating factor in many wartime massacres. The recent spate of book-length studies on the Crater at Petersburg and Fort Pillow, Tennessee, as well as a number of articles addressing the killings of unarmed and/or surrendering black soldiers at the battles at Saltville, Virginia; Olustee, Florida; and Milliken's Bend, Louisiana, demonstrate growing interest in the dark side of the war, its brutal inhumanity. When atrocities committed against unarmed white soldiers and civilians have been the subject of study as in the cases of Plymouth and Shelton Laurel, North Carolina; Lawrence, Kansas; Gainesville, Texas; or Madden Branch, Georgia, scholars have focused on the problem of mass killings. This article investigates a type of atrocity on which Civil War scholars have not focused significant attention, torture. The brutal treatment of Mary Owens offers a moment in which scholars interested in the role of the body at war and the history of atrocity can discuss the impact of torture.[2]

The torture of Mary Owens demonstrates the conditions and motivations behind a less familiar kind of Civil War atrocity. Race and slavery played virtually no role here. And despite deep economic division among North Carolina's white population, class animosity alone is not a satisfying explanation either. Rather this was politically motivated, politically

legitimated personal violence in which, to the men's minds, Mrs. Owens "deserved" to be tortured not merely as a means of extracting information but as a political punishment. Her husband was not viewed as a combatant or an irregular in this local war but as a common criminal and the leader of an outlaw gang. As the wife of such a man, Mary Owens too had suffered a sort of "political death" that made her torture possible, and the incident highlights the central and necessary role of the female body in state enforcement of unpopular Confederate military policies.[3]

William B. ("Bill") Owens was born and raised in the Good Springs neighborhood of Moore County, North Carolina, in the state's central piedmont region and lived there on his father's farm until he was at least nineteen years old. Sometime between 1850 and 1860, however, Owens, a white yeoman who recorded $100 in real and $1,500 in personal property on the eve of the war, moved next door to his own house. When he enlisted in the Confederate army in early March 1862, Owens was thirty-three, a decade older than the median age of a Confederate volunteer. It was during this same month that the governor of North Carolina had instituted a state-level draft that would place one-third of the remaining militia in the ranks, and the Confederate Congress followed this edict in April with the first national conscription in American history, which placed nonexempt men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five in the army. Even if he had not volunteered, Bill Owens would have been subject to conscription. The five-foot-nine-inch-tall Owens traveled to Asheboro in adjoining Randolph County to join the "Randolph Guards," Company B of the Fifty-second North Carolina Infantry. A year later at Gettysburg on the afternoon of July 3, 1863, this regiment was decimated as part of General James Johnston Pettigrew's command. Owens was present and mustered with his company on April 28, 1862, when the regiment formed at Camp Mangum in Raleigh, but he would desert his unit before the end of June, not remaining long enough to seek glory in the Civil War's most famous battle.[4]

Owens was married to a woman nearly eight years his senior. Mary Owens could not have foreseen what William's decision to desert the Confederate military less than two months after volunteering would eventually bring upon her. William's subsequent resolution to join the numerous men of the North Carolina piedmont lying out in the woods

to avoid the Confederate military would have fateful consequences when he became one of the most notorious wanted men in Confederate North Carolina.[5]

One possible motive for Owens's desertion after only a few weeks in the service was the threat of disease. When he arrived at Camp Mangum in late April the camp was in the middle of an outbreak of sickness, especially measles and mumps. One officer in Owens's regiment even reported that the new enlistees' eating habits were causing health concerns. Many of the new recruits ate in their tents and dropped food on the ground, which attracted vermin. The problem of sickness was so bad that by early May the *Raleigh Standard* even mentioned the outbreak of disease at the camp as a serious threat to public health. The author of the article commented "that accommodations at the camp for the sick" were "rather below ordinary" and thought that a recent order denying sick soldiers the comforts of treatment at home was "unwise and cruel." The writer did not seem to realize the difficult manpower situation the Confederacy faced in the spring of 1862 or that soldiers who went home to convalesce might never return "to offer up their lives in the common defense." William Owens may have wanted to avoid sickness at the camp.[6]

It is doubtful that boredom, malnutrition, fear of death, or another common cause of desertion among battle-weary Confederates caused Bill's defection. Owens never went on campaign, was only in the army a few weeks, and remained in camp the whole time he was in the service. Owens may have changed his mind about his decision to enlist for an even more obvious reason. He was a Unionist in political sentiment who had been forced into volunteering. Owens' enlistment came just weeks before the Confederate Congress adopted nationwide conscription, a policy that would eventually draw 21,000 men into the Confederate ranks from North Carolina, and a Confederate source estimated that an additional 45,000 North Carolinians "volunteered" once the threat of conscription became a reality. It is likely that the gubernatorial militia conscription in March 1862 and/or the debate over the passage of the Confederate Conscription Act played some role in Bill's decision to volunteer, and he may have taken the first opportunity to flee.[7] James McPherson has found in his study of soldier motivation that

North Carolina's white men generally had a lower degree of Confederate patriotic fervor than soldiers recruited from Deep South states with a higher percentage of slaveholders. Where McPherson found 84 percent of South Carolinians "avowed patriotic convictions," only 46 percent of North Carolinians did. Clearly Bill Owens was not a hardened Confederate nationalist, and his later actions as leader of a guerrilla band point toward staunch Unionist beliefs.[8]

A personal reason beyond self-preservation or political belief could also have explained his desertion: love. Mary Owens had a small child at home with her in early 1864. When she was tortured, she even held the baby in her arms to try to prevent the soldiers from attacking her. It is possible that Mary learned that she was pregnant following Bill's enlistment or that she was even pregnant before he decided to join the service. A woman alone, poor, and pregnant on a farm was certainly enough to tempt a man to desert, and it could have played at least some role in Owens's choice. For some reason, however, Bill Owens changed his mind about military service shortly after enlisting. His role in the war would quickly shift from reluctant Confederate volunteer to hunted deserter to violent Unionist guerrilla leader over the course of several months. In the spring of 1862, Bill Owens headed for home, and home became the center of a guerrilla war.[9]

A number of historians have focused attention on the central counties of North Carolina as home to a militant dissident population. William T. Auman argued in a groundbreaking study that a confluence of several factors made North Carolina's Quaker Belt a hotbed of militant resistance to the Confederacy by the summer of 1862. At the root of this dissent, Auman pointed to the draft laws; the presence of a large number of deserters and recusant conscripts; the large Unionist population, which he attributed to Quaker beliefs; Whig politics; an ambivalence toward the institution of slavery; and finally the poverty and starvation of the white population in these counties. Historians Victoria Bynum and David Brown have also addressed the high rate of desertion from the piedmont as well as the ambivalence toward slavery. Brown has argued that many individuals in this region "equivocated" on the question of loyalty and that loyalties sometimes "fluctuated" depending on family situation and local conditions. Bill Owens was not a slave-owner

and certainly fit the profile of ambivalent yeoman offered by Bynum and Brown. Whether his loyalty really changed during the war is not definite, but on paper it clearly did: he went from Confederate volunteer to wanted Unionist deserter. This combination of factors created a divided region in the Randolph and Moore counties in particular and provided a sympathetic civilian population for many deserters to hide among. By early August 1862, the problem of resistance to the Confederate government became so acute that the state's governor Henry Clark issued a specific edict for the deserters of Randolph County to return to the ranks.[10]

In the fall of 1862, a final important factor tipped the scales toward guerrilla war in the central counties: Confederate citizens elected Zebulon Vance their new governor. Vance, a former Whig from the mountain county of Buncombe, would go as far as any governor in the Confederacy to ensure the execution of the conscription law. Vance vowed "to make the state too hot to hold" any man willing to desert and resist conscription. In September 1862 Vance issued a proclamation against resistance and sent the first of four antideserter raids into the piedmont of North Carolina. The exasperated Vance extended an olive branch to the deserters of North Carolina in January 1863 when he issued a public amnesty aimed at any deserter willing to return to the army. Few men from the central counties reconsidered their choice.[11]

Even though Bill's desertion technically made him a criminal in the eyes of the Confederate government, thousands of men across the South eventually made the same decision, and it would take more than simply desertion to make Bill Owens the specific target of a massive manhunt. Owens made a series of decisions that placed him atop the Confederate government's most-wanted list. First, Owens took up arms against the Confederate government. Owens's decision to shoulder a musket is the easiest to understand given the large number of Confederate forces arrayed against the dissidents. Owens clearly had to fight in order to avoid capture and secure food, and he may have wanted to settle old scores with locals he did not like. Second, Owens became a leader of other militant dissidents. This was probably because he was an older man and perhaps because he was a man of some property among property-less men. Third, Owens succeeded in causing trouble and resisting. He and

his men lived off of and attacked important members of the Confederate community. If Owens had not emerged as a successful leader, it is doubtful that he or his wife would have become specific targets.

During the winter of 1862–1863, Bill Owens led his men on numerous raids to harass local Confederates. During many of these missions, securing guns from local inhabitants was a clear goal. For loyal Confederates these attacks amounted to "deplorable conditions of treason Rebelion Robery and incendarism." In January 1863, Jason S. Dunn, an elderly Randolph County Confederate, described how eighteen armed men came to his home and threatened his family. After demanding Dunn's shotgun, which he refused to give up, four of the men "cocked" their own weapons at him. Dunn gave the gun over in protest but was quickly warned "if I behaved myself they would before two months restore me to the Bosom of Abe Lincoln . . . but if they heard from me any more they would send me to the Devil where Secession came from and my age only saved my life." Dunn succeeded in securing the names of "13 or 14" of the attackers in the days afterward, which he forwarded to the governor. Before Dunn even finished his letter he reported that the same group had taken control of Pleasant Simmons's smith shop where they had started repairing weapons. Dunn learned that the guerrilla band's goal once they "concentrated" was to attack the Confederate Arsenal at Fayetteville.[12]

In the central counties, few deserters returned willingly and Vance decided to act again in the fall of 1863. Following the battle of Gettysburg, North Carolinians had fled major Confederate armies in droves, only adding to the ranks of men in Moore and Randolph. The repressive Confederate civil and military apparatus that hunted deserters and recusant conscripts all over North Carolina forced any who refused Vance's proclamations to take to the woods, caves, or mountains. Using every element of state power at his command, regular troops, home guard, and civil officials, Vance tried to keep a lid on dissent. The governor sent General Robert F. Hoke and two regiments, the Fifty-sixth North Carolina Infantry and the Twenty-first North Carolina Infantry, as well as a cavalry squadron into the central counties to round up recusant conscripts and deserters and quell dissent that the home guard was unable to address. This arduous five-month operation that commenced in early

September 1863 did not end until February 1864 and was one of the most extensive efforts launched during the war to round up deserters, crush recusant conscripts, and destroy resistance from Unionists.[13]

Regardless of whether Owens planned to attack the Fayetteville Arsenal, he led another high-profile attack that garnered the attention of Confederate authorities. Late on the evening of February 17, 1864, four men entered the home of Pleasant Simmons of Montgomery County demanding bacon. The men led by Bill Owens were not satisfied when Simmons ordered his daughter to bring two hams from the smokehouse for the late-night visitors. The Owens band then moved to the smokehouse to secure more meat. When Simmons and his friend and employee Jacob Sanders followed the late-night intruders to the smokehouse the deserters became angry, ordering them back into the house "or they would shoot them." Both Simmons and Sanders were men over sixty; Simmons was relatively wealthy, and both men had sent sons to the Confederate army. As men of some status within their communities, these men were not easily intimidated but returned to the house. Sanders retrieved "a gun and repeater" from the home, and he and Simmons came back outside to confront Owens's men, probably thinking that they could scare them off with a show of force. Gunfire broke out between Sanders, who "fired twice or three times," and the band of deserters. In the ensuing melee both Confederate men were mortally wounded. "Six or eight balls" were fired into the smokehouse door and one went through the front door of the house. One of the witnesses to the shooting believed that Sanders shot two of the intruders, including Bill Owens, who they believed was mortally wounded.

As soon as she saw Pleasant Simmons fall, Mrs. Simmons rushed out of the house to attend her badly wounded husband. The deserters ordered her back into the house "or they would put lead in her," charging "that they had sent their sons to the war, and they were all a d–d set of secessionists." Then one of the deserters picked up a rock and was about to smash it into the head of Pleasant Simmons. Only the intervention of Simmons's young daughter, who rushed to her father's side, prevented the man from crushing his head. The deserters then left the Simmonses' home with the "wounded and dead" from their party. According to one witness, "the yard was strewn with human gore: it stood in some

places in puddles, where the men lay." Sanders died within fifteen minutes of being shot, but Simmons lingered for nearly twenty-four hours before he succumbed.[14]

The motives behind the attack were both personal and political. The attempt to crush Simmons's head with a rock suggested personal animosity toward him in particular, not just the Confederate cause, or at the very least a furious reaction to their attempted resistance. The Confederate loyalty of the two men clearly played a major role in why these citizens were besieged by Owens's band. Furthermore, they had robbed Pleasant Simmons before, even taking control of his smith shop. The attack in February 1864 suggests that Bill Owens strongly disagreed with the Confederacy, and other statements by his group suggest strong Unionist beliefs, even support for Abraham Lincoln. Another motivation for the attack was that the deserters knew these men had food. Owens and his men needed to eat, and in their view wealthy Confederates were excellent targets.[15]

Confederate newspapers moved quickly to cast Bill Owens and his band as criminals guilty of murder, treason, and burglary. Confederates categorized Owens's actions as criminal acts, not legitimate acts of resistance in a guerrilla war, and by doing so enabled the degradation and dehumanization of Owens's wife. The line between a criminal and legitimate military act during wartime was probably not on Bill Owens's mind either, but by casting Owens as a criminal it removed the cultural restrictions of gender for the men who hunted Owens. As the frustration with hunting Owens's group in the context of widespread guerrilla conflict grew more intense, Mary Owens became a specific target as a way of capturing her notorious husband.[16]

On what was likely the morning following Mary Owens's torture, Sheriff Pike gathered a posse "consisting of nearly all the men in Asheboro and others," which included many hardened deserter-hunters. Pike was now armed with the information he needed, the location of Bill Owens's hideout. The men marched to a location two miles southeast of Jesse D. Cox's house, which was in the southeastern quadrant of Randolph County, to a clearing on the edge of the woods. When they arrived they found two separate deserter camps, but the inhabitants had fled shortly before. As the men continued the search, they found in the

woods, roughly two hundred yards from the camps, Bill Owens and his wife, "no arms about him and none of his associates to be seen." Owens had a "dangerous wound" from the confrontation at Pleasant Simmons's home two months earlier. Peter Garner, a soldier detailed from the state's conscript battalion and a veteran of other deserter-hunting operations, was the first to "beard the lion" in his den. One of the posse described the camp to a Confederate journalist as having no property except a copy of the *Raleigh Standard*. This reference probably was meant to illustrate to readers the alleged dangers of William Woods Holden's anti-administration paper. Owens was incarcerated at the Randolph County jail in Asheboro following the incident, but he would later be moved to Chatham County jail while awaiting a trial that never came.[17]

In early April 1864, the Raleigh *Weekly Conservative* recounted the grim conclusion of Bill Owens's story. After being captured and incarcerated in Pittsboro, the seat of Chatham County, and while awaiting a trial at the Superior Court there, a "party of persons unknown to the jailor" forcibly seized the keys to the jailhouse. The vigilantes subsequently carried prisoner Owens a half-mile from town and shot him to death with "four balls penetrating his body." It was a vicious end to a life of violence. Clearly, some members of the community did not want to take the chance of a U.S. Army raiding party or a band of armed, local anti-Confederates freeing "the notorious deserter, house burner, murderer" and Unionist guerrilla leader.[18]

The guerrilla war in Randolph, Moore, and Montgomery raged on after the capture and murder of Bill Owens. None in his party had been arrested and there were many other "outliers" in the region that continued to resist. In the summer of 1864, Governor Vance sent another antideserter raid into the central counties, which included eleven home guard companies. Even this measure failed to crush resistance. By early 1865 Vance requested troops from Robert E. Lee's army, and eventually five hundred men were sent into the counties. Even Peter Garner, the man personally responsible for Owens's capture, would later be killed in the violence.[19]

The use of torture in the central counties did not cease with the capture of Bill Owens. A jury at the Randolph Superior Court convicted Robert C. Gray for "an assault and battery on one Jones." Operating

in no official capacity, Gray and a small group of local men went to the home of Mr. Jones, whom they suspected of "harboring his sons who had deserted the army," and once they arrived, the men tied Jones and his young son "not liable to the service" and hauled them away from their home. They then stopped several miles away, separated the father from the son, and put a noose around Mr. Jones's neck. Finally the group "suspended him to a tree and hung him until he was senseless." Mr. Jones was apparently unconscious laying on the ground when the men finished with him and carried his body to Asheboro where they "took out a warrant against him and bound him over to the County Court." The fact that Gray was tried and convicted demonstrated that many Confederates did not agree with such heinous crimes, even if they were committed in the name of public defense. The court sentenced Gray to six months in jail for his role in the torture of Mr. Jones.[20]

Nevertheless, a clear pattern of complicity with torture by local public officials, military personnel, and Confederate civilians is found in the guerrilla war fought in the piedmont of North Carolina. Over the span of years, many people were involved in acts of inhumanity. By late 1864, Confederates seemed to recognize the counterproductivity of using pain to compel loyalty or extract information, at least at the highest level of the government. Vance eventually sent Thomas Settle, a lawyer and special investigator, to interview the men involved in the torture of Mary Owens, which was further evidence that Vance saw the increasing violence as a serious problem. Settle was shocked by the atrocity but was even more astounded that Alfred Pike came to offer a personal account of the torture and brazenly stated, "if I have not the right to treat Bill Owens, his wife and the like in this manner[,] I want to know it, and I will go to the Yankees or anywhere else before I will live in a country in which I cannot treat such people in this manner." Settle was flabbergasted, but he also realized the serious problem at the root of the torture. The men clearly believed that Vance's policies toward deserters and Unionists called for the treatment. Settle observed: "I know that your Excellency never has intended by any order to justify torture and yet in many cases where the treatment has been equally as bad as it was in Owens' case. The officers boldly avow their conduct and say that they understand your orders to be a full justification. I shall continue

to prosecute all these cases for I am sure that many things are done in your Excellency's name which you do not now nor ever did sanction." Settle, however, seemed to forget that Vance himself had issued strongly worded proclamations imploring all citizens of the state to aid his soldiers rounding up deserters by "plac[ing] the brand upon them and mak[ing] them feel the scorn and contempt of an outraged people."[21]

Harvard social psychologist Herbert C. Kelman has argued that torture in its social context is a "crime of obedience" which he defined as "a crime that takes place not in opposition to authorities, but under explicit instructions . . . or in an environment in which such acts are implicitly sponsored, expected, or at least tolerated by the authorities." Furthermore, Kelman asserts that "as long as the perpetrators believe and have good reason to believe that the action is authorized, expected, at least tolerated, and probably approved by the authorities – that it conforms with official policy and reflects what their superiors would want them to do" then it falls into this category. The Confederate government, while not explicitly sanctioning torture, allowed the chain of command to deteriorate to the point where its own government representatives felt that it was okay to torture to carry out policy and crush treasonous dissent. While Alfred Pike was not ordered to torture Mary Owens by any of his superiors, the Vance administration created an environment that tolerated multiple acts of torture and permitted men like Pike to believe that inhumanity and war crimes were justified while executing the policy of the state government.[22]

While the Confederates involved may have viewed torture as successful and legitimate because they located Bill's hideout, the act also had serious repercussions. The use of torture on Mary Owens was not a successful tactic for garnering intelligence since it led to the immediate efforts by Mary to warn her husband and all of the deserters in the area that they should move their camp. Pike admitted in his own testimony that Mary Owens repeatedly deceived his party even while they carried out their brutality. She may have not succeeded in concealing her husband's whereabouts, but her experience obviously inspired her to resist. Mary arrived in time to warn her husband, and if he had been in condition to flee, he would have escaped. The real-time intelligence was not useful enough to stop further attacks either, which continued unabated

and may have been provoked by the use of torture – information Mary Owens surely conveyed to the band.

The intersection of state power and efforts to compel loyalty were the bodies of those individuals seen by Confederate soldiers as disloyal, and torturing the body of informants became a method of enforcing loyalty and policy in this local irregular war. How best to extract information from political dissidents on the "home front," and what the appropriate use of physical violence against allegedly treasonous individuals was, were two questions that few Confederates could have contemplated when they first seceded. The story of the Owens family reveals in microcosm the violent aggression of Confederate troops frustrated with enforcing military policy and engaging in counter-irregular warfare in the North Carolina piedmont. It also clearly offers a window for investigating the motivations of those who torture and those who resist. Mary Owens's story reveals a serious gap in how Confederate soldiers and civilians interpreted official Confederate military policy toward Unionist guerrillas and Southern-born political dissidents. This gap left room for men like Alfred Pike to torture and believe he was following policy. Vance's inflammatory rhetoric at the very least suggested state-sanction of extreme acts. Without bodies on which the state could send local troops to imprison, maim, wound, inflict pain, and even torture, the state was left impotent in its attempt to compel loyalty. As powerful as the local Confederate state could be in the lives of political dissenters, it was the bodies of those dissidents – even wives of deserters with small children – that became the locus for a debate about the status of military policy and its effectiveness. For Confederates who viewed the torture as justified, the marks left on Mary Owens's body were a scarlet letter marking her as guilty of treason. Southern dissidents, on the other hand, likely viewed the marks left on her body as convincing evidence of the internal weakness and injustices of the Confederacy and the unpopularity of Confederate military policy.

Notes

1. Thomas Settle to Zebulon Vance, September 21, 1864, Zebulon Baird Vance Papers, North Carolina Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina (hereafter cited as NCDAH); Thomas Settle to Zebulon Vance, Oc-

tober 4, 1864, Thomas Settle Jr. Letters, NCDAH; *Fayetteville Observer*, May 2, 1864, published a firsthand account of William Owens's capture, which occurred on Sunday morning April 24, 1864 after the posse "on Saturday evening last received information of his whereabouts." U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population Schedule of the Eighth Census of the United States*, 1860, Moore County, North Carolina, NARA, Washington, D.C., M653, reel 906. Mary B. Owens was thirty-eight in 1860; none of the firsthand accounts identified Mrs. Owens by name. For a discussion of William B. Owens's (a.k.a. Bill Owens) wartime activities as a factor in the internal war of North Carolina's central piedmont, see William T. Auman, "Neighbor against Neighbor: The Inner Civil War in the Central Counties of Confederate North Carolina," (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1988), 151–55, 188–89, 279–80. Auman suggests that Bill Owens considered his "plundering" of local Confederates' homes legitimate acts in a guerrilla war waged by a band that he led, and he views the torture of Mrs. Owens' as a by-product of the wider antideserter campaign waged by Governor Zebulon Vance's government to control militant Unionists, recusant conscripts, and deserters in the central counties of North Carolina's Quaker Belt. Auman speculates that Mary B. Owens (who lived with Bill in 1860) was Bill Owens's sister; I have found no evidence to suggest this, and the 1850 census suggests that Mary B. Owens was not living with William B. Owens's father. While the name of the Mrs. Owens who was tortured may never be positively known, Mary B. Owens was the only other occupant of Bill Owens's home in 1860, which suggests strongly that she was his wife. Since Mary B. Owens was still of child-bearing age in the early 1860s, it further points to her as the woman tortured in 1864. Other scholars who have noted this incident include Victoria E. Bynum, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 143–44, who briefly addresses Mrs. Owens's torture in the context of ground-breaking work on the emergence of gendered forms of political and social dissent in the North Carolina's piedmont. For more on the legacy of the guerrilla war in central counties of North Carolina, see Victoria E. Bynum, *The Long Shadow of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Joe A. Mobley, *"War Governor of the South": North Carolina's Zeb Vance in the Confederacy* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 42–43, 162–63 (Mobley has noted the unusual and serious nature of Bill Owens's wife's torture); Gordon B. McKinney, *Zeb Vance: North Carolina's Civil War Governor and Gilded Age Political Leader* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 160 (he speculates that Bill Owens was "the leader" of the Heroes of America in Randolph County, a group that included a spectrum of anti-Confederate loyalties); Paul D. Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 75 (Escott identifies Alfred Pike as leader of a

local militia company; the 1860 census clearly identifies Alfred Pike as a deputy sheriff, and he likely served in both capacities).

2. A brief bibliography on Civil War mass killings and racial atrocities includes Richard Slotkin, *No Quarter: The Battle of the Crater, 1864* (New York: Random House, 2009); Alan Axelrod, *The Horrid Pit: The Battle of the Crater, the Civil War's Cruelest Mission* (New York: Carol and Graff, 2007); John Cimprich, *Fort Pillow, A Civil War Massacre, and Public Memory* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005); Andrew Ward, *River Run Red: The Fort Pillow Massacre and the American Civil War* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006); John David Smith, ed., *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Soldiers in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Gregory J. W. Urwin, ed., *Black Flag over Dixie: Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in the Civil War* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004); Thomas Goodrich, *Bloody Dawn: The Story of the Lawrence Massacre* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1992); Richard B. McCaslin, *Tainted Breeze: The Great Hanging at Gainesville, Texas 1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994); Jonathan D. Sarris, "Anatomy of an Atrocity: Madden Branch Massacre and Guerrilla Warfare in North Georgia, 1861–1865," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 78 (Winter 1993): 679–710; Mark Neely, "Retaliation: The Problem of Atrocity in the American Civil War," paper presented at Gettysburg College, Forty-first Annual Robert Fotenbaugh Memorial Lecture, 2002. Scholars of irregular warfare have focused considerable attention on atrocity at war: see Phillip Shaw Paludan, *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981). Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri during the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 188–89, has argued that even irregulars in Missouri respected the status of white female noncombatants by not "raping, killing or mutilating white women." Drew Gilpin Faust, in his *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 200, cautioned that while some women were targeted with violence they were usually targeted during guerrilla conflict and "were almost never from the privileged classes of slaveowning families." Also see Daniel E. Sutherland, *A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 211, 234; and Barton A. Myers, *Executing Daniel Bright: Race, Loyalty, and Guerrilla Violence in a Coastal Carolina Community, 1861–1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), chap. 2, which addresses revenge-killings and the impact of public displays of mutilated bodies. In the cases when scholars of the Civil War have discussed torture, it has primarily been to discuss mutilation, maiming, or strangulation of male bodies, frequently before the victims were killed. William R. Trotter, *Bushwhackers: The Civil War in North Carolina: The Mountains* (Winston-Salem, N.C.: John F. Blair, 1988), 131–33 noted that simulated strangulation and

other acts of inhumanity were used during the guerrilla war in North Carolina and East Tennessee, but like many other authors, he never employs the word "torture" or indexes specific moments when it is used. "Victims," Trotter wrote, "were sometimes hung to strangle slowly, rather than to die quickly from broken neck. And sometimes they were beaten, stabbed, or burned as they died." On the role of gender in atrocity, see Victoria E. Bynum, "Occupied at Home: Women Confront Confederate Forces in North Carolina's Quaker Belt," in Lee-Ann Whites and Alecia P. Long, eds., *Occupied Women: Gender, Military Occupation, and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009) 155–70, who perceptively argues that "tales about the occupation of the South regularly recount harassment of citizens by Yankees and deserters but rarely include women . . . who were abused by their own [Confederate] government's forces." Bynum believes the men responsible for Mrs. Owens's torture came to believe such treatment was "a simple necessity" because the women aided deserters' efforts to resist. Scholars have also recently focused increased attention on sexual violence, revising long-standing belief that the Civil War was a "low-rape" conflict; see E. Susan Barber and Charles F. Ritter, "'Physical Abuse . . . Rough Handling': Race, Gender and Sexual Justice in the Occupied South," in Whites and Long, *Occupied Women*, 49–64. One of the few scholars to address torture during the conflict is David Williams, *A People's History of the Civil War: Struggles for the Meaning of Freedom* (New York: New Press, 2005). My work here argues that equal treatment is needed for the question of torture for both men and women during the conflict.

3. For the purpose of this article, "torture" is used in the same sense as the term defined by *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1997), 1246, as "the infliction of intense pain (as from burning, crushing, or wounding) to punish, coerce, or afford sadistic pleasure." Scholarly studies of torture have also largely overlooked the issues relationship to the American Civil War. For an excellent scholarly examination of torture and its changing legal and social definition, see Darius Rejali, *Torture and Democracy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 36–39; Rejali focuses on the issue of abuse of public trust in his examination of the line between private acts of cruelty and those propagated by state actors. American Civil War torture illustrates that there is sometimes a complex line between private and state actors and their aims. Sometimes private actors were motivated, in part, by military policy.

4. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population Schedule of the Seventh Census of the United States*, 1850, Moore County, North Carolina, NARA, Washington, D.C., M432, reel 638. Bill Owens's father was also named William and he owned $250 in real property in 1850, but he held no slaves; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Schedule of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Moore County, North Carolina, NARA, Washington, D.C., M653, reel 906. See also William Owens, Fifty-Second North Carolina Volunteer Infantry, Compiled Ser-

vice Records, Civil War Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of North Carolina, War Dept. Collection of Confederate Records, RG 109, M230, reel 29; and Bell I. Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldiers of the Confederacy* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1943), 331. On the state militia conscription, see Auman, "Neighbor against Neighbor," 97; Albert Burton Moore, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy* (New York: Macmillan, 1924), 13; William S. Powell, ed., *Encyclopedia of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 740 (Camp Mangum was the principal training ground for Confederate forces in North Carolina); Weymouth T. Jordan, ed., *North Carolina Troops, 1861–1865* (Raleigh: NCDAH, 1990), 12:435; Stephen W. Sears, *Gettysburg* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 417, 429; Earl J. Hess, *Lee's Tar Heels: The Pettigrew-Kirkland-MacRae Brigade* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 54, 157–58. Owens probably fled before the Fifty-second regiment decamped for Kinston in eastern North Carolina on June 6.

5. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population Schedule of the Eighth Census of the United States*, 1860, Moore County, North Carolina, NARA, Washington, D.C., M653, reel 906.

6. Hess, *Lee's Tar Heels*, 53; *Raleigh Weekly Standard*, May 2, 1862; Jordan, *North Carolina Troops,* 12:435.

7. Auman, "Neighbor against Neighbor," 97; Walter Carrington Hilderman III, *They Went into the First Cheering! Confederate Conscription in North Carolina* (Boone, N.C.: Parkway Publishers, 2005), xv; U.S. War Department, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser. 4, vol. 3, 358 (hereafter cited as *Official Records*).

8. James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 101.

9. Stephen Berry, *All That Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), has argued that white men in the Civil War–era South were frequently motivated by their love and infatuation with women.

10. Auman, "Neighbor against Neighbor," 125, 127; Bynum, *Unruly Women*, 130–50. Bynum estimates that the desertion rate from Randolph County soldiers was 10 percent higher than the North Carolina state average of 12.2 percent. See also David Brown, "North Carolinian Ambivalence: Rethinking Loyalty and Disaffection in the Civil War Piedmont," in Paul D. Escott, ed., *North Carolinians in the Era of the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 7–36; Mobley, "*War Governor of the South,*" 43–48.

11. McKinney, *Zeb Vance*, chap. 9; Auman, "Neighbor against Neighbor," 120, 128; Zebulon Vance Proclamation, January 26, 1863, cited in Joe A. Mobley, ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance* (Raleigh, N.C.: NCDAH, 1995), 2:27–29.

12. Jason S. Dunn to E. J. Hale and Sons, January 8, 1863, Governor's Papers, Box 161, NCDAH.

13. Auman, "Neighbor against Neighbor," 143, 287–88; John G. Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 192–95 (Vance requested troops from Robert E. Lee and Lee detached Hoke with the troops); *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 29, pt. 2, 676; Jordan, *North Carolina Troops*, 13:554–58; Daniel W. Barefoot, *General Robert F. Hoke: Lee's Modest Warrior*, (Winston-Salem, N.C.: John F. Blair, 1996), 98–104.

14. *Fayetteville Observer*, February 29, 1864; *Charlotte Western Democrat*, March 8, 1864; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population Schedule of the Eighth Census of the United States*, 1860, Montgomery County, North Carolina, NARA, Washington, D.C., M653, reel 905; Pleasant Simmons [Pleasent Simmons in the census] was sixty-two in 1860 and owned $3,500 in real and $4,700 in personal property, a sizable amount; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population Schedule of the Eighth Census of the United States*, 1860, Randolph County, North Carolina, NARA, Washington, D.C., M653, reel 910; Jacob Sanders [Jacob Saunders in the census] was sixty-five years of age in 1860 and listed his occupation as carpenter, but he owned only $60 in personal property.

15. Jason S. Dunn to E. J. Hale and Sons, January 8, 1863, Governor's Papers, Box 161, NCDAH.

16. *Fayetteville Observer*, February 29, 1864; *Fayetteville Observer,* May 2, 1864.

17. *Fayetteville Observer*, May 2, 1864; Peter Garner, Peter Mallet's Conscript Battalion (Camp Guard), N.C., Compiled Service Records, Civil War Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of North Carolina, War Dept. Collection of Confederate Records, RG 109, M230, reel 14; Raleigh *Weekly Conservative*, April 5, 1864.

18. Raleigh *Weekly Conservative*, April 5, 1864; Auman, "Neighbor against Neighbor," 392–93; Bynum, *The Long Shadow of the Civil War*, 35.

19. Mobley, *"War Governor of the South,"* 48–50; Auman, "Neighbor against Neighbor," 277–78.

20. *Fayetteville Observer*, October 3, 1864; Thomas Settle to Zebulon Vance, October 4, 1864, Thomas Settle Jr. Letters, NCDAH.

21. Thomas Settle to Zebulon Vance, October 4, 1864, Thomas Settle Jr. Letters, NCDAH; Zebulon Vance Proclamation, May 11, 1863, in Mobley, *Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, 2:147–48. Vance's proclamation in May 1863 probably played a significant role in driving many civilians and civil officials toward harsher treatment of people perceived as threats to the Confederacy. According to Vance, "no crime could be greater, no cowardice more abject, no treason more base, than for a citizen of the State, enjoying its privileges and protection without sharing its dangers; to persuade those who have had the courage to go forth in defence [to desert]. . . . The father or brother who does it should be shot instead of his deluded victim." John M. Gates, "Indians and Insurrectos: The U.S. Army's Experience with Insurgency," in *The U.S. Army and Irregular Warfare*, November 2002, http://www3.wooster.edu/History/jgates/book-contents.html

(accessed October 12, 2009), argues that guerrilla conflict has frequently led to frustration, which led to torture in four different nineteenth-century conflicts including the Mexican American War, the American Civil War, the Indian Wars, and the Philippine War.

22. Herbert C. Kelman, "The Social Context of Torture: Policy Process and Authority Structure," in Ronald D. Crelinsten and Alex P. Schmid, eds., *The Politics of Pain: Torturers and Their Masters* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995), 21.

Hungry People in the Wartime South

Civilians, Armies, and the Food Supply

JOAN E. CASHIN

In the spring of 1864, a white boy known only as "Morton," residing in Scott's Hill, Virginia, felt hungry – very hungry. By 1864, many famished people lived in the states of the Confederacy. Three years of warfare had taken a toll on the regional food supply, especially in places that witnessed much fighting, as Virginia did. According to a relative, Morton satisfied his hunger with a rat pie. He caught, skinned, and boiled a number of rats, which took several days, and then baked the fillets in a pan lined with pie dough. The outcome was "an old time . . . back home pie," his kinsman related with a touch of sarcasm.[1]

We might differ with Morton's relative as to whether rat pie would qualify as an old-fashioned homey treat, if only because the consumption of rat pie did not happen very often before 1861. Almost all Americans perceived rats as a taboo food, unfit to be eaten except under the most dire circumstances. But Morton's wartime hunger and his willingness to do almost anything to satisfy it became common in the region,

especially during the second half of the conflict. That is the theme of this article: how white civilians in the Confederacy coped with hunger during the war. Historians have touched on aspects of food shortages in the wartime South,[2] and a few have mentioned in passing the military's confiscation of food from civilians. Bell Wiley's book of 1943, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, remains the fullest treatment of the military's seizure of food, although he tends to downplay the impact on civilians.[3] This essay, which is part of a larger study, aims to contribute to our knowledge of how ordinary people experienced the war as well as to our growing recognition of the weirdness of war.

But first some comments on the food supply before the war. The Old South produced enough food for most of its inhabitants, despite occasional shortages, blessed as it was with fertile land, a semitropical climate, and a long growing season. The typical white Southerner consumed a diet of proteins (usually pork) and vegetables (most often corn), supplemented by wild game. This diet, high in calories, salt, and fat, resembled the diets of most people in the eastern half of the United States and in Europe. White Southerners expended a great deal of effort on farm work – which has always required judgment, persistence, and good management – before a meal even reached the table. Yeoman farmers, their wives, and their children did field labor that was physically demanding and unpredictable, since they had to contend with the forces of nature. Yeoman farm women also slaughtered hogs, dressed beef, set hens, and, when necessary, laid down a hearth. At the top of the social hierarchy, plantation masters hunted for game, which required patience and skill, while plantation mistresses, even those with many slaves, did some work in the kitchen, as they rendered lard; boiled pigs' feet; made cheese, syrup, and preserves; and stopped up ratholes. Planters consumed a better diet than yeomen farmers, who in turn ate a better diet than poor whites, but everyone relished food as a source of pleasure, a valuable resource to be shared with loved ones, and a precious commodity to be carefully preserved as necessary for life itself.[4]

In 1861, the civilian population for the most part enjoyed their usual diets, because the Confederacy saw little sustained combat that year. Rumors of famine in the South, widely reported in the Yankee press in the spring of 1861, seem to have been false. Workers in the region labored

in 1861 much as they had for generations, cultivating fields in the spring, tending crops in the summer, and reaping harvests in the autumn, with little evidence of widespread hunger. That changed in 1862, when the hard fighting began. Fatalities increased in the white male population, the draft absorbed more white male workers, and slaves ran away. Each side fielded large armies, with hundreds of thousands of men who expended many calories on a daily basis, and they needed food. Other factors shaped the food supply, to be sure: the Union blockade, inflation, planters who refused to switch to food production, the impressment of food by the Confederate government, the damage inflicted on the transportation system, corruption among rebel officers who sold rations on the black market, and periodic droughts and floods. Yet by far the greatest pressure on the food supply came from the armies, who, by their very existence, competed with civilians for a finite amount of food. Stragglers from both armies stole food from civilians, but regular troops in uniform far outnumbered stragglers.[5]

We should bear in mind that soldiers in *both* armies needed food. Scholars have roundly criticized the Confederate government for its ineptitude in supplying food for its army, but the efficiency of the Union military has been exaggerated: it was not always the well-oiled machine. Federal supply trains broke down, got lost, were ambushed, failed to keep up with armies, or did not provide enough rations to sustain the men. In the ancient world, armies regularly plundered civilians for food as military forces traveled the landscape, but in the modern world, the purpose of the ration has been to permit armies to cross a landscape without living off civilians. In the American Civil War, the daily ration for both armies was approximately one pound of meat with twelve ounces of hard bread, some vegetables, coffee, vinegar, and salt, although Confederate rations were typically smaller, and as time passed, they shrank even more, down to about a quarter pound of bacon and a half pound of flour by 1864. Troops in both armies wanted more variety in their diets than the rations provided, and many found that they needed more nourishment than the military gave them. So they adapted. They asked relatives at home to send them food, and they stole grub from their own supply trains, from sutlers, and from the haversacks of dead soldiers. Now and then, they bartered for food with living soldiers in the other army.[6]

Much more frequently, soldiers took food from the civilian population. Military policy in both armies permitted such expeditions if there were no other supplies available, but certain protocols had to be observed. With the permission of his commander, an officer, usually a quartermaster or foragemaster, went forth into the countryside with wagons and a guard, as small as six men or as large as three regiments, and when they were done, the officer had to write up some paperwork on the foraged property. Foragers could travel for miles across the landscape for days at a time, sometimes taking all the food they discovered on farms and plantations, as one federal unit did in Lebanon, Tennessee, in 1863, while at other times, they sought out particular items, such as the Yankee troops who gathered corn and poultry from the countryside in northern Virginia in 1863.[7]

Both armies stipulated that there were limits on what foraging parties were allowed to do. Henry Lee Scott's *Military Dictionary*, published in 1861 and followed by both armies as a de facto field manual, prohibited "marauding" while foraging, and the Articles of War for both armies required in 1861 that troops who engaged in "plunder and pillage" would be court-martialed, with a possible death sentence. In 1863, Southern military regulations further declared that troops should not "waste or spoil" the houses, gardens, or fields of Confederate "inhabitants." But the two sides differed on what exactly those limits should be. The Lieber Code, instituted by the United States military in 1863, made it legal to "starve the hostile belligerent, armed or unarmed, so that it leads to the speedier subjection of the enemy." The Code also stated that private property could be seized only because of "military necessity" and the property of the "unarmed citizen" should be spared whenever possible, especially that of the "loyal citizen." So Confederate regulations gave clear guidance – food was to be taken from civilians only when necessary, with no wastage, spoilage, or needless destruction. Federal regulations did not give clear guidance, seeming to tolerate starvation of pro-Confederate civilians as a war method, or maybe only as a last resort, except when it might injure private property or unarmed individuals, especially if they were Unionists.[8]

But the inconsistencies in federal policy should not obscure the fact that soldiers in both armies routinely ignored the regulations. Troops in blue *and* gray did whatever they wanted when they got hungry. They

foraged when officers commanded them not to do it, one band of soldiers ridiculing those officers behind their backs as they headed out to find meat in Virginia. They kept foraging even if they lost their ill-gotten stashes of food, such as troops whose meat was confiscated by officers in Arkansas. They committed acts that would seem to qualify as plunder, such as shooting guard dogs so they could take milk from a dairy in Tennessee. Freelance foragers tried to avoid civilians, but when that was not possible, interactions with white Southerners could be complicated. Soldiers in both armies asked for and received provender from friendly civilians, bartered for food with civilians, or paid them for food. When civilians were unfriendly, both federal soldiers and Confederate troops simply took their food. They hijacked food from civilians they met by chance on the road, and they entered private homes to seize food from residents. They harvested crops directly from the fields, broke into meat-houses, grazed their horses in the fields, milked cows in the fields, slaughtered hogs they found in pens, wrung the heads off chickens, and drank buttermilk from a churn on a woman's front porch.[9]

Political loyalties figured in these interactions with civilians, of course. Union troops sometimes deliberately took food from whites who were defiantly pro-Confederate, while Confederates did the same with white Southern Unionists. But hunger trumped ideology, just as it trumped regulations: Napoleon's famous observation that an army travels on its stomach holds true for all soldiers in the Civil War. Moreover, officers in the two armies rarely inflicted serious punishments on soldiers who misappropriated food. They made sporadic attempts at enforcement, such as appointing a patrol to stop men from foraging or scolding men who foraged without permission. In 1864, a Yankee general arrested federal soldiers for *stealing* food from white Southerners who had already *given* food to other Union soldiers, but that was the exception to the rule. Most of the time, officers North and South chose to overlook it.[10]

The troops expressed a surprising range of opinions on the practice of taking food from noncombatants. Some federal soldiers openly enjoyed it, purloining food from civilians with glee. One Yankee soldier said he had never enjoyed himself so much, taking food and drink from civilians, since "all you had to do was to go and get it." Other Union soldiers felt remorse, one of them wondering if it was "politic or necessary" to

destroy civilian food supplies in Virginia in 1864. Confederate soldiers took food from civilians with a great deal of guilt and many apologies, but they did it anyway. One Southern chaplain rebuked soldiers for robbing women and children of food, and a member of the Southern artillery insisted that food was stolen from civilians only because of "terrible necessity." Yet Confederates could exult in their power to get food whenever they wanted. In Richmond, they broke into stores and came out "hooting" with bread and meat fixed on bayonets.[11]

The traffic in food sometimes flowed the other way, as armies, other institutions, and private individuals gave food to civilians. The Union army had more food – although we should remember that its troops sometimes went hungry – and federal policy allowed commanders to distribute the surplus to noncombatants who could not feed themselves. One officer, who witnessed the Union army handing out two hundred rations to civilians in Alabama, declared that the Bible required Christians to feed the enemy, and another officer argued that "common humanity" obliged him to assist hungry women and children in Texas. One brigadier-general decided that even "rabid female rebels" should be given something to eat. But some Union officers were unsure of government policy on this point, and others denied civilians access to food, while yet others thought noncombatants should be required to take the oath of allegiance before they were fed. Local governments across the Confederacy tried to feed the destitute, as did the privileged few who could afford to share food with their neighbors, but these measures were not enough. What is more, troops from both armies destroyed food so the other army could not have it. Civilians watched in horror as soldiers poured out flour and molasses and then walked through it or scattered vinegar, sugar, and salt across the ground.[12]

As the food supply dwindled, civilians had to adapt. A few daring souls tried to smuggle food from the Union into the Confederacy, according to newspaper reports, but that was rare. Most whites had to grapple with the food supply inside the region, so they became accustomed to eating coarse food, small portions of food, food cooked in strange new ways, and food they had once disliked, even as they daydreamed about the plentiful fare before 1861. They learned to be very thrifty when they bought food. After troops appeared, civilians concealed their food and

pleaded with soldiers, including Southern troops, not to take their food. They screamed insults when soldiers seized their food, assaulted troops who confiscated their food, and threatened to fire on soldiers, including Confederates, who foraged in their neighborhoods. Sometimes they did shoot at foraging soldiers, and occasionally they killed them. Civilians learned to fear the arrival of both armies, since both of them seized food and livestock. They refused to sell food to Southern officers who tried to pay for it (and then confiscated the food anyway), while others deliberately sold bad food, such as rancid pork, to Confederate soldiers. Civilians began bartering with each other for food, but social cohesion eventually broke down, as it has in other societies undergoing severe shortages. They stole from each other, in the city and the countryside. Food disappeared from private residences, barns, corncribs, smokehouses, and fields. In such circumstances, hoarding naturally followed, and scavenging became common. One famished woman, for example, rejoiced to find pieces of meat that had fallen off an army wagon in rural Tennessee. Beggars appeared all over the South, as they have in other countries at war, and women engaged in prostitution for food, as they have in other societies at war.[13]

Driven by their own necessity, civilians rioted for food, just as hungry people have done in other societies. These crowd actions involved thousands of people, and the number of riots grew in 1863, which seems to have been the breaking point for unbearable hunger in the civilian population. Women led most of these riots, and they constituted most of the participants. In Richmond's bread riot of April 1863, they "knocked down the men in the streets" as they entered stores to get food, "howling," one observer exclaimed. Such a radical departure from antebellum gender roles suggests how desperate these women must have been. Riots happened at all times of year and in industrial centers such as Richmond, port cities such as Mobile, and ordinary towns such as Salisbury, North Carolina. Several riots occurred in Randolph County, Alabama, where women took wheat and corn from Confederate supplies. The region saw other, less dramatic events that did not qualify as full-scale riots. In Atlanta, a white woman carrying a revolver and accompanied by about twenty females accosted a private citizen to demand some food, whereupon he agreed to give it to them.[14]

Ravenous civilians began to eat foods that had previously been considered unfit for human consumption. Human beings are omnivores, but we do not eat everything that we can eat in theory. Different cultures have different standards on what is edible, even in peacetime, but those taboos can and will collapse during a crisis. Desperately hungry people in other countries have eaten "taboo foods" or "pariah foods" such as grass, bark, leaves, tulips, insects, and various animals. Taboos can change over time, sometimes abruptly, such as the cultural prohibition against eating horse, which ended permanently in Paris during the Franco-Prussian War. Civilians broke other taboos during the American Civil War, as white Southerners ate dogs, cats, mules, and rats when other meats disappeared. They ate pariah foods during the sieges, such as in Vicksburg, where rats, mules, and cats were devoured, and in the Confederate capital, where some Richmonders were eating cats in 1863, and at least one man was arrested that year for selling puppy meat. Some civilians found it literally hard to swallow pariah foods, complaining about the toughness of horsemeat, but they ate it. The consumption of taboo foods undoubtedly happened more often than the documents reveal because many people were unwilling to admit that they had eaten things deemed to be revolting.[15]

Rats are probably the most horrifying of all taboo foods to modern readers, although this aversion is itself time-specific and culturally determined. Other writers have discovered forty-two societies across the world in which human beings in normal circumstances eat rat, which can serve as a source of protein, and many more societies in which rats have been consumed in time of famine. Jefferson Davis speculated that rats probably tasted as good as squirrels, although he evidently did not try it himself. Rat consumption in the Confederacy may have resulted partly from the sheer growth in the rodent population, observed by many civilians, and that in turn may have stemmed from the increase in the amount of garbage and the number of dead bodies in the region. Rodents became so numerous that one resident of Cincinnati began to sell rat-killing powders to the federal army.[16]

Today we know that rats carry bacteria, viruses, fungi, meningitis, rabies, salmonella, the plague, and trichinosis, and that humans can fall seriously ill after eating rats. Some nineteenth-century Americans, who

did not have our medical knowledge, nonetheless intuited that rats could be dangerous to eat. One Confederate soldier vomited when he discovered that he had consumed a rat by mistake after a comrade assured him it was a squirrel. Other troops could not bring themselves to eat rat, even after killing and frying it, although one officer claimed that it tasted better than chicken – not *like* chicken, but *better* than chicken. Civilians too managed to overcome their disgust. In Petersburg, Virginia, an unidentified "country boy" killed, skinned, and cleaned a rat, then buried it in the ground for a few days – a common nineteenth-century method of storing food – dug it up, cooked it, and wolfed it down.[17]

These measures, be they bartering, theft, riots, or the consumption of pariah foods, proved to be inadequate in filling the population's need for sustenance. Starvation has occurred in other countries for many reasons, including the impact of war, and some places such as the rural counties of central Virginia were repeatedly foraged by both armies. Although the numbers seem to have been small, starving people – not just hungry people – did appear in the Confederacy during the war. In 1863, a journalist in Virginia saw white women with "wild glaring eyes" and white children who were "wasted and languid," with "pinched" faces and "shriveled limbs," a textbook description of starvation. Healthy adults can survive for about sixty days without food, and for those who die, starving is physically painful, involving emaciation and premature aging caused by protein deficiencies, with the blank stare known as the "mask of famine" and emotional outbursts of euphoria, sorrow, and rage. Some wartime civilians on both sides found the possibility of actual starvation hard to face, but several Union troops admitted it, such as the private who observed in Tennessee in 1863 that it "looks like starvation to the Citizens." Several white Southerners acknowledged that their neighbors had died from want of food. Civilians from Randolph County, Alabama, informed Jefferson Davis in 1864 that "deaths from starvation have absolutely occurred, notwithstanding the utmost efforts that we have been able to make." Local politicians admitted the same, with the mayor of Columbia, South Carolina, stating that over a hundred people starved to death in the last weeks of the conflict in 1865.[18]

When the fighting stopped in 1865, the hunger did not automatically come to an end. For one reason, the armies did not disband right away, so the foraging continued for weeks in the spring of 1865 after

Robert E. Lee surrendered, and for another the region's infrastructure was too deeply damaged for the economy to recover quickly. In Randolph County, Alabama, the scene of wartime food riots, white women and children traveled door to door in 1866 begging for food. Further reports of starvation led the U.S. Congress in 1867 to pass the Southern Famine Relief Bill, which permitted the government to give food to the hungry. Nevertheless, most civilians were probably susceptible to illnesses that other malnourished people have experienced, particularly the very young, the very old, and men of all ages, since men have less body fat than women and suffer more acutely from hunger. The children of the war generation may have been shorter than their parents and afflicted with physical problems such as cerebral palsy that have appeared in other post-famine populations. Further historical research is needed on the war's long-term impact on the health of the civilian population.[19]

Hunger profoundly affected how white civilians remembered the war. The damage to the psyche is hard to measure, for this and other crises, but privation left a deep imprint on the minds of thousands of civilians. Many whites remembered the war as a fearful time of terrible hunger, regardless of how Lost Cause mythology tried to pretend otherwise, and some of them had a lifelong preoccupation with food, especially with foods that were scarce during the conflict. At the same time, the shared experience of privation may have underscored a sense of regional identity for many white Southerners. Morton, the boy who ate a rat pie in 1864, most likely felt a strong bond with other whites who had undergone extreme hunger. Last of all, an unflinching consideration of hunger should influence how historians think about the War. Civilians, not just soldiers or prisoners of war, went hungry, and some of them starved, as the primordial struggle for food took precedence over almost everything else.[20]

Notes

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17. Sullivan, *Rats*, 11; McCarthy, *Detailed Minutiae*, 71; Watkins, *Company Aytch*, 75; "Mule Meat," *Baltimore Sun*, August 28, 1863, 1; McCarthy, *Detailed Minutiae*, 71. Thus far I have found no evidence of cannibalism, which happened in other societies in time of famine. See Sharman Apt Russell, *Hunger: An Unnatural History* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 149–55.

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19. Hickerson, *Happy Valley*, 140–41; Mohr, *Cormany Diaries*, 554; Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War: How Popular Will, Nationalism, and the Military Strategy Could Not Stave Off Defeat* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 30; Trowbridge, *The South*, 445; Judith Giesberg, "The Fortieth Congress, Southern Women, and the Gender Politics of Postwar Occupation," in *Occupied Women: Gender, Military Occupation, and the American Civil War*, ed. LeeAnn Whites and Alecia P. Long (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 185–93; Jordan, *Great Famine*, 116–17; Russell, *Hunger*, 180, 171.

20. Kinealy, *Death-Dealing Famine*, 154; Jeanette Keith, *Country People in the New South: Tennessee's Upper Cumberland* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 8–9; Joan Givner, *Katherine Anne Porter: A Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 31. Cf. Taylor, *Eating, Drinking, and Visiting*, 103, and Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 230–31, who argue for a swift economic recovery after the war. Louis A. Ferleger and Richard H. Steckel, "Measuring the South: Health, Height, and Literary Myths," in *Slavery, Secession, and Southern History*, ed. Robert Louis Paquette and Louis A. Ferleger (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 173–74, find that white Southern men who served in World War I were as tall or taller than their Northern comrades.

The Historian as Death Investigator

STEPHEN BERRY

I learned the profoundest lesson of Civil War history from a dog-eared 1978 translation of *The Song of Roland*. As the translator Frederick Goldin explained in his introduction, the past, by its past-ness, has an "urge" to be epic. Roland, we know, is going to die. We know, when he dons his armor, that he dons it for the last time. We know he can't *not* go into battle. He does what he does because he *must*, because history demands it, because we are watching and know that it has already been done. Betrayed and defeated, Roland must helplessly lift his olifant to his lips, and blow until his temples burst. Whatever he might have hoped, his death is, from our perspective, foreordained. "Roland is the agent of an accomplished action," Goldin notes, "and we are privileged to witness [his] graceful conformity to the rule of necessity."[1]

Longstreet's sad nod, allowing Pickett to step off, has, when read from the vantage of the present, this same epic necessity. Longstreet *has to* nod; he can't help himself, not because Lee has ordered it, but

because, again, history demands it. (Longstreet may *suspect* the enormity of what's about to happen, but we *know* it, and his helplessness before providence seems that much more profound as a result.)

This is why it is almost impossible for the Civil War *not* to turn into an American *Iliad*. I can perfectly see what Pickett and his boys are up to: they're about to take canister in the face to protect one of the most repugnant institutions imaginable. And yet, by Goldin's rule, their deaths are epic, because fore-doomed, and man-boy that I am, and perverse besides, I can't help but wonder what it would be like to take a faceful of grape for something I believe in. Staring over Faulkner's "roaring rim," I am constantly in danger of being captured by the epic past, by epic Death.

And I resent it. So, a tilter-at-windmills, and a historian besides, I give myself the nod and step off, determined to find a battlefield on which I can defeat the epic-ness of Death.

Over the last year, more than three hundred Southerners have died, if not in my arms, then in my hands. Three hundred times I have watched as a woman reaches for the wrong medicine bottle and poisons herself or her infant. Three hundred times I have stood by as an act of discipline, or drinking, goes too far. Three hundred times I have done nothing as people reach the end of their rope and kick the stools out from beneath their feet. Admittedly, these are not people dying for the first time; they are people re-dying for me as I read the reports of their coroners. But historical documents have a way of telescoping the past and present because, though written in the past, they exist in the present. Thus, deaths that are old news to them, who once were, are new news to me, who still is. It is, after all, the me of the present who unfolds the next report to discover that a group of white children has purposely drowned their playmate, a slave boy, not so much out of malice, but because he is different, and a weak swimmer, and obedient, and because they have decided, without speech, to drown their own innocence. And it is equally the me of the present who watches with a kind of rage and wretched sympathy as, bedraggled and panting, they haul the body ashore and look at each other with an unspoken admission that on this day, in this creek, dark deeds, half-understood, have been committed

and witnessed too early. And finally it is me who must refold this document and set it aside. I am a professional, after all, and I have an agenda, and a deadline.[2]

I want to return to this subject of the dead (them) and the dying (us) in a moment, but for now I would simply submit that coroners' inquests are some of the richest untapped records we have of life and death in the nineteenth-century South. To be sure, in some cases, a coroner's inquest is pro forma. A jury is called and concludes that the person lying before them died "at the hands of a person or persons unknown." But in many cases the record is far richer. The antebellum coroner was not a homicide detective or a medical examiner – he was both. As a kind of "Quincy" meets "Columbo," he inspected the body and (possible crime) scene, rounded up witnesses, heard testimony, and made a recommendation. If there was cause, he would seek an arrest warrant. Far more than the sheriff, he was familiar with the strange intimacies inherent in the varied ways people go out of the world.[3]

The history of the office is interesting in itself. The coroner is as old as death and taxes – and related to both. In medieval England, if the sheriff was the king's guard dog, charged with keeping the peace, the coroner was the king's vulture, charged with scavenging the countryside in search of potential revenue. (The word "coroner" itself is derived from "corona," Latin for "crown.") Wherever disaster loosed property from its legal moorings – whether by shipwreck, fire, or act of God – wherever a coin fell from a private pocket into the public square (as in cases of buried treasure), the circling coroner was apt to descend. The medieval coroner did, as today, investigate sudden deaths, but he did so less to establish cause or criminality than to determine if the crown could turn a profit in the Reaper's wake. Where the coroner suspected suicide, the crown could claim the estate. Where the coroner found a dead Norman on the village commons (which evidently happened a lot), the crown could levy a fine called the "Murdrum," from which the word murder derives.[4]

Gradually coroners became different animals, though they have always been creatures of the state. The state is not a disinterested observer in our comings and goings, after all. It has a vested interest in us. We are, as taxpayers, its lifeblood, a fact which may explain why the titles of cor-

oners' reports imply an almost adversarial relationship with the dead: "The State of South Carolina *vs.* the dead body of William Jasper," for instance, or "The State of South Carolina *vs.* the dead body of a person unknown." The state, it seems, resents the passing even of strangers, if not as a financial matter, then at least as a bureaucratic inconvenience.[5]

But for now let's say I am more interested in the reports themselves than in the coroners who wrote them or the office that produced them. In the 311 inquests I have examined so far, I have found evidence that would support studies of antebellum abortion, child abuse, spousal abuse, master–slave murder, and slave-on-slave violence. To be sure, one might get glimpses of these same things in more traditional court records. But especially in the Old South, cases like these had a way of not quite percolating up through the court system. (And this says nothing of cases in which nothing "actionable" occurred, cases of suicide, accidental death, or "acts of God.")

To be sure, the view from a Southern coroner's office is unrelentingly bleak. No society can or should be judged wholly from its morgue, nor indeed from any single place. But surely there is something significant in knowing that if, for instance, you were a white male who died under suspicious circumstances in Spartanburg County, South Carolina, between 1840 and 1870, you most likely died of a combination of alcohol and stupidity. If it was winter, you passed out and died of exposure. If it was spring or summer, you fell off your horse and broke your neck. This reality is sad enough. Sadder still is the price your dependents paid for your right to drink yourself stupid. If you were a white female in the same county over the same time span, and the coroner came to claim you, you most likely hung yourself. And if you were a black male? Again, you most likely hung yourself. Long before Billie Holiday thought to sing about it, variegated fruit hung from the South's poplar trees. (Although to be candid, these coroners' reports are strangely precise about *what* these people hung themselves from, and it is usually not poplar. In Spartanburg, the preference was for oak or walnut.) The Old South is often remembered as a violent place, but if you asked the coroner before the war, he'd tell you it was more fair to call it a self-destructive place. Looking out his window, what he mostly saw was white men drinking themselves and their dependents to death.[6]

Now, it is possible that the suicides among blacks and white women are unrelated to male abuse and binging. On September 3, 1849, for instance, Sarah Shacleford was laundering some clothes with a friend when she suddenly stopped, excused herself, took a long handkerchief from the pile and walked into the woods where she hung herself from an unspecified tree. We will probably never know why she was doing laundry one minute and hanging from a tree the next. At the coroner's inquest Anderson Rogers volunteered that Sarah's mind had been "deranged for some time," and perhaps it was.[7]

But the word "deranged" covers a lot of territory. At her inquest, jurors used the same word to describe Jane Soseby, who hung herself on January 12, 1859. "I thought she presented some signs of derangement," noted one witness. "I have heard of her being deranged," noted another, or, at least, "[I] think [I have] seen her when she was not altogether alright." And indeed Jane was not all right. Because her husband was beating her with anything handy. "I seen one [wound] on her as if she had been struck with a stick," one witness told the coroner, "and one on her eye as if he had kicked her which she said he had done." Another witness testified that Jane had showed her "some marks or bruises on her body inflicted as she said by her husband. . . . I should suppose they were done by a good heavy hickory." (Again, Southerners grimly know their timber.) Such spousal abuse is hardly surprising; Jane's husband, and men like him, were masters of small worlds. But the indifference of Jane's community *is* a little surprising. Jane showed her wounds to at least five neighbors, admitted to all of them that she wanted to kill herself, and admitted to some that she thought she might "destroy her children [first] as they were suffering and would suffer" worse when she was gone. But the neighbors could not, or did not, intercede. And so, "no satisfaction to herself or any body else," Jane tried to cut her throat but found the knife too dull, tried to find a river in which to drown herself, but could never find it, and finally gathered up her courage with her husband's rope and went to the woods. Jane had found her exit strategy; her children would have to find their own.[8]

Like the fact that they beat their spouses, I was not surprised to learn that men and women occasionally murdered their slaves. I *was* surprised to learn how often the coroner responded. In her WPA interview, Mittie Freeman remembered the coroner as "that fellow that comes running

fast when somebody gets killed." The coroner is mentioned in many of the most famous slave narratives, including those by Frederick Douglass and William Wells Brown. The coroner, in fact, is often the only magistrate mentioned because he was the only outside law the slaves ever saw. To be sure, there were undoubtedly countless masters who murdered their slaves and effortlessly covered it up. But if the murderer was someone other than the master, or if the master failed to cover it up, there was usually an investigation, at the very least because property had been destroyed, and someone expected compensation. Reflecting on the South he was forced to flee because of his Unionism, John Aughey noted: "Of course the laws which exist in every state against the murder or torturing of slaves are about as well observed as might be laws enacted by wolves against sheep-murder, and providing that between wolf and sheep no sheep could be witness." He is partly right. But there was actually a subtle game of community standards going on. Standing over the body of a slave and surveying the grim damage, a coroner's jury was often perfectly comfortable recommending that a white be indicted. And at coroners' inquests slaves *were* allowed to testify. The actual jury nullification came later, in the courtroom, when the mangled body was not actually present and the murderer was let off. But by then he had been held up to public scrutiny; his judgment and decency had been questioned publicly and legally. It is less than justice, but it is not nothing, a fact which slaves themselves recognized. When the coroner came a-runnin', many slaves thought he might bring justice with him from some far off, saner place. And in his own *Narrative*, Frederick Douglass tells the story of an unnamed slave girl whose mistress "pounded in her skull" with a piece of firewood because she allowed the baby to wake the household. "I will not say that this murder most foul produced no sensation. It *did* produce a sensation. A warrant was issued for the arrest of Mrs. Hicks, but incredible to tell, for some reason or other, that warrant was never served, and she not only escaped condign punishment, but the pain and mortification as well of being arraigned before a court of justice." It is hard to believe that for all he'd seen of the institution of slavery, Douglass still thought it capable of any justice at all.[9]

What does not make it into many of the slave narratives, including Douglass's, is the violence that existed *within* the slave community. To be sure, the building and sustaining of communal and family bonds in

the slave quarter were acts of enormous political and psychological courage and resistance. But we must be careful never to overly revere slave life. Ignorance and violence degrade the conscience, even when you are their victim. Thus did the slaves of the Haile plantation turn their children over to Tamer, the slave nurse, on their way out to the fields, little knowing that she liked to punish the children by tying them too close to a fire – a practice that was only discovered when she finally cooked one of them to death.[10]

Life in this Faulknerian world, as you might guess, was especially cheap for children. Catherine Berry, a domestic in the R. C. Poole household, was told that she would be terminated if she was indeed pregnant. In an awful feat of endurance, she continued with her chores until, doubled over with pain, she snuck away to give birth in the potato shed. Reeling from the loss of blood, she still managed to strangle the baby and fling it into the Pacolet River, where it landed at the feet of some fishermen. I could literally multiply such stories a hundredfold. When Peggy Bedenbaugh felt her first contractions, she went out to a corner of the yard, gave birth in a hole, and covered the baby over with dirt. Luly Collins threw her baby down a well. Nancy Owens swept hers under a brush pile. All had denied for months that they were in the "family way"; all had killed the evidence; all were indicted for murder.[11]

Or take the case of Jane Arnold. On September 7, 1857, Brazeal Cox and his wife found sixteen-year-old Jane Arnold stretched out on the ground with a baby beside her, bleeding from its umbilical cord. When Arnold became aware of the couple she called out to Mrs. Cox, who wrapped the dying infant in Arnold's apron and took it into the Arnold home. Mrs. Cox then returned and asked the girl why she hadn't given birth indoors. Because her daddy was "doging" her, she said, and had cast her from the house. "She seemed to be grieving," Cox told the coroner in a model of understatement, "but [I] don't know what for, whether on the part of her dead child or the abuse of her father."[12]

Three years later, at four in the morning, a shivering Jane Arnold knocked at the door of a neighboring farm. She was cold and unkempt, but she couldn't make up her mind to stay. Instead she returned to the abandoned schoolhouse where she had taken her latest baby, born in the middle of the road, to die of exposure.[13]

While I have yet to do census searches on all three hundred of these

unfortunates, it is already clear that what we are glimpsing here is predominately the world of the poor white. Fully a quarter of the witnesses are making their marks with an "X." Glimpses of this world are rare, but potent. In 1850, for instance, while traveling the rural rim of Spring Dale, Mississippi, a country doctor named Elijah Walker stopped in for a "fine mess of melons" at a homestead belonging to Thomas Addington. "Here I beheld what I was astonished at," Walker later noted in his diary. "All the little children were allowed a seat along with the adult company, each one (there were about seven) as dirty as the earth could make them and the smallest ones with their dressing tucked up behind, exposing the posteriors, [each] with a swarm of gnats after it." Staring into the face of Southern poverty, Walker was agog. And it wasn't just the Addingtons. On court day and election day, the "strong-lung[ed]" sovereigns poured in from the forests on their broken-backed nags, and Walker's sleepy village became a maelstrom of drunkenness and commerce, camaraderie and pugilism. Who were these people, Walker sometimes wondered. "Thus live thousands," he marveled, "and as happy as queens and Kings."[14]

Of such a world, of such a people, of such stuff too was the Confederate army made; of such stuff, in part, is any army made. An army is not a moral instrument, and sympathy is the long suit of few fighting men. Glancing over a battlefield after victory, an adjutant with the Thirty-Eighth Illinois noted that "it was a sad sight and yet [not an] unpleasant one to see those infernal rebels lying on the field – Kicking like a flock of dead partridges." David Strother, with other members of the Army of the Potomac, actually pitched camp on the Antietam battlefield, right in the midst of the Confederate dead – or, rather, the Confederate mostly dead. "Many were black as Negroes," Strother remembered, their "heads and faces hideously swelled, covered with dust until they looked like clods. Killed during the charge and flight, their attitudes were wild and frightful. One hung upon a fence killed as he was climbing it. One lay with hands wildly clasped as if in prayer. From among these loathsome earthsoiled vestiges of humanity, the soldiers were still picking out some that had life left." Despite this ghoulish scene, Strother and company drank, smoked, and told funny stories, then bedded down amid the disregarded corpses.[15]

It is admittedly difficult to measure the impact of male mobilization

on death back home. There are fewer coroners' reports for the war years than there are for any four-year span. It is tempting to chalk this up entirely to bureaucratic realities: given shortages from manpower to paper, county record-keeping simply got spotty. But the cases that do survive are suggestive: no more self-hangings; no more spousal abuse; no more dead babies. The situation was undoubtedly different in counties with lower mobilization rates, earlier occupation dates, and more urban settlement, or in places where guerrilla violence cheapened life for everyone. But when men left certain sections of the South, they took Death with them, and practiced it in new ways, primarily on themselves.[16]

As a Civil War historian, this is the Death I am familiar with. I long ago lost count of how many letter collections and diaries I've read from Civil War soldiers. In the summer of 1999, I read nothing else, did nothing else. I went to the library and checked out more than a hundred volumes. I took them home, dumped them out, and read them cover to cover, one after another after another. I would never read the introductions. I'd just dig right in: 1861, 1862, the pages would flit by, and the soldier would get a little tougher, rougher, sadder. Then on page 300 or so, I'd realize we were only at Gettysburg or Chickamauga, and it would dawn on me: this kid isn't going to make it. Sometimes he would. Sometimes he wouldn't. I thought it was the perfect way to read the war: unsure, just as they were, what was going to happen to them. But at some point I began to see and to profoundly feel something I had only sensed fleetingly before: Death gives History its weight, its epic scope; Death is History's gravity, its physics, its medium, and its math. Death is the essence of history, the essence of change over time; Death is the great discontinuity, our own discontinuity, bound up and reflected in the proxies we study.

Anyone who has done work in an archive knows the Zen-like moment when you forget not merely where you are but when you are, who you are, almost *that* you are. The mood sneaks up on you, like sleep. At some point, half-bored and half-wishing you were finding something better, you unconsciously let go. At some point unknown to you, the boredom itself became narcotizing, trance-inducing, and it has ferried you down a wormhole. This fact you will only know when the trance is broken, when you snap back to the present with a feeling of temporal vertigo.

And this, I guess, is what the buffs call "period rush," but in my experience it is more of a languor, a stupefaction, a dissolution of self into the stream of time. And it is, like sleep, a little death, a preview of the vast, oceanic purgatory of nonbeing. And it is in this moment, while pulling yet another inquest from the stack, that I can feel Death itself, as Poe would have it, looking gigantically down. These coroners' reports are not like the books I read in 1999. They all end the same. They are nothing *but* endings. There is no question but the how. There is no answer to the why. Each death, taken individually, is apt to be sad and stupid. But I am taking them together, and the sheer repetition creates a pass and review of mortality's many faces; it is a great army of the undead, redeemed by its collectivity, redeemed by the momentary notice it has taken of me: "How will you die?" the army asks in unison, and I don't know. I know only that for a moment I feel bound to the infinitude of the past. I have joined the Borg, the great dead collective, and I have to admit it doesn't seem so bad.

But then inevitably the moment's gone, the wormhole closes. The spell is broken, and I don't want to pull another inquest from the stack. I am bored again. And I realize I don't like this kind of death; I don't want this kind of death. I miss the Civil War. I miss being borne irresistibly, with all my chains, back to the battlefield, where death has always made sense. Maybe Drew Faust is right; maybe kicking like a flock of dead partridges isn't a "good" death. But these boys could take it. They volunteered for it. They believed in themselves as men. They watched their regiments get cut to ribbons and fought the next day. They charged death itself.[17]

I can't do that. But I *can* pull another inquest from the stack. Someone new has died. At least it's not (yet) me. And I am the historian, the death investigator, and so I come on the run.

Notes

1. Frederick Goldin, trans., *The Song of Roland* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 14–18.

2. "The State of South Carolina vs. the dead body of George, a negro child," July 19, 1855, Kershaw County, Coroner's Inquisitions, South Carolina Department of Archives and History (hereafter SCDAH).

3. There is only one history of the coroner's office in America: Jeffrey M. Jentzen, *Death Investigation in America: Coroners, Medical Examiners, and the Pursuit of Medical Certainty* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009). On death in the Civil War specifically, see Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Thorndike, 2008); and Mark S. Schantz, *Awaiting the Heavenly Country: The Civil War and America's Culture of Death* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008). On death in the Civil War era more generally, one might profitably begin with: Gary Laderman, *The Sacred Remains: American Attitudes toward Death, 1799–1883* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996); James Farrell, *Inventing the American Way of Death, 1830–1920* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980); Nancy Isenberg and Andrew Burstein, eds., *Mortal Remains: Death in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); *Facing the "King of Terrors": Death and Society in an American Community, 1750–1990* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Lewis O. Saum, "Death in the Popular Mind of Pre–Civil War America," in *Death in America*, ed. David Stannard (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974); Martha V. Pike and Janice Gray Armstrong, eds., *A Time to Mourn: Expressions of Grief in Nineteenth Century America* (Stony Brook, N.Y.: Museums at Stony Brook, 1980); Russ Castronovo, *Necro Citizenship: Death, Eroticism, and the Public Sphere in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001).

4. R. F. Hunnisett, *The Medieval Coroner* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

5. There is a rich literature on the state's interest in our bodies that most profitably begins with Michel Foucault's concept of biopower as outlined in *History of Sexuality.* For more applied and less theoretical approaches, see, for instance, Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002); or Henrik Hartog, *Man and Wife in America: A History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).

6. These results are provocative, but preliminary. Until we know more about how the coroner functioned, we cannot compensate for all the biases present in his reports. The coroner did not investigate all deaths, for instance, only those for which the cause was uncertain. Probably he was more likely to investigate the deaths of the friendless and the poor, and more likely to investigate deaths that occurred in public rather than private spaces. Undoubtedly, elites could do much to deflect and resist a coroner's probe. Granting then that these reports give us a skewed portrait, the question becomes: skewed how? Skewed why? For more on suicide among African Americas, see David Andrew Silkenat, *Moments of Despair: Suicide, Divorce, and Debt in Civil War Era North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

7. "The State of South Carolina vs. the dead body of Sarah Shacleford," September 3, 1849, Spartanburg County, Coroner's Inquisitions, SCDAH.

8. "The State of South Carolina vs. the dead body of Jane Soseby," January 12, 1859, Spartanburg County, Coroner's Inquisitions, SCDAH.

9. Mittie Freeman interview in George E. Lankford, *Bearing Witness: Memories of Arkansas Slavery: Narratives from the 1930s* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2006), 430; John Hill Aughey, *Tupelo* (Chicago: Rhodes & McClure, 1905), 420; Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845), 24–25.

10. "The State of South Carolina vs. the dead body of Ann, a slave girl," January 2, 1844, Kershaw County, Coroner's Inquisitions, SCDAH. This case did make it into the legal system via the Magistrates and Freeholder Court where records reveal that Tamer was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to be jailed for one month and receive one hundred lashes.

11. "The State of South Carolina vs. the dead body of an infant negro girl," March 7, 1868, Spartanburg County, Coroner's Inquisitions, SCDAH; "The State of South Carolina vs. the dead body of an infant child (colored)," April 14, 1869, Kershaw County, Coroner's Inquisitions, SCDAH; "The State of South Carolina vs. the body of an infant child," July 16, 1868, Kershaw County, Coroner's Inquisitions, SCDAH; "The State of South Carolina vs. the body of an infant child of Nancy Owens," September 24, 1836, Kershaw County, Coroner's Inquisitions, SCDAH. For comparison with Northern incidents of infanticide, see Kenneth H. Wheeler, "Infanticide in Nineteenth Century Ohio," *Journal of Social History* 31, no. 2 (Winter 1997): 407–19.

12. "The State of South Carolina vs. the dead child of Jane Arnold," September 7, 1857, Spartanburg County, Coroner's Inquests, SCDAH.

13. "The State of South Carolina vs. the dead child of Jane Arnold," November 29, 1860, Spartanburg County, Coroner's Inquests, SCDAH.

14. Lynette Boney Wrenn, ed., *A Bachelor's Life in Antebellum Mississippi: The Diary of Dr. Elijah Millington Walker, 1849–1852* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004), 72, 109.

15. Arthur Lee Bailhache to brother, October 22, 1861, Bailhache-Brayman Papers, Illinois State Historical Library, quoted in David W. Rolfs, "'No Nearer Heaven Now but Rather Farther Off': The Religious Conflicts and Compromises of Northern Soldiers," in Aaron Sheehan-Dean, ed., *The View From the Ground: Experiences of Civil War Soldiers* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 132; David Hunter Strother quoted in Earl J. Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 149.

16. Again any claims about the nature of death "back home," as revealed in coroners' reports, must be treated as preliminary and speculative. Pieces of the puzzle are falling into place, however. We are, for instance, beginning to get a clearer picture of public health during the Civil War. See Lisa A. Long, *Rehabilitating Bodies: Health, History, and the American Civil War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Margaret Humphreys, *Intensely Human: The Health*

of the Black Soldier in the American Civil War (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); and Lisa Marie Herschbach, "Fragmentation and Reunion: Medicine, Memory and Body in the American Civil War," PhD dissertation, Harvard University (1997).

17. Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*.

PART FOUR

The Tortuous Road to Freedom

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How a Cold Snap in Kentucky Led to Freedom for Thousands

An Environmental Story of Emancipation

AMY MURRELL TAYLOR

On December 5, 1864, a Bostonian named Cadwallader Curry opened his newspaper and, with scissors in hand, set out to do something about the plight of slave refugees in the Civil War. He clipped an article from the *Boston Journal* that included the sworn affidavit of Joseph Miller, a Kentucky slave turned Union soldier, who recently suffered the loss of his seven-year-old son. The affidavit described how on the morning of November 23, the Millers – all slaves who fled to Camp Nelson, Kentucky, to seek freedom over the past year – were awakened by Union guards ordering that Joseph's wife, Isabella, and their four children leave the camp immediately. Told they would be shot if they did not comply, Isabella gathered her children and left the camp in frigid temperatures along with four hundred other wives and children of black soldiers. Miller went searching for his family later that evening and discovered, to his horror, that his son had been "[k]illed by exposure to inclement weather." The account apparently struck Cadwallader Curry with

force. He folded the article into an envelope, accompanied it with a letter denouncing this "case of brutality," and sent it off to Abraham Lincoln.[1]

Lincoln may not have read the clipping or the affidavit – but many others did. Miller's account traveled quickly, appearing verbatim in widely circulated newspapers in Ohio, New York, and Massachusetts, all within two weeks of the Camp Nelson expulsion. It also landed on the desks of military officials and members of Lincoln's cabinet, in the hands of abolitionist missionaries, and even in the pages of the *Congressional Globe*. It continues to circulate today among historians as an anecdote illustrating the harshness of border-state emancipation, although little is known about how influential it was at the time.[2] By March 1865 Miller's story had played a pivotal role in destroying slavery in the slaveholding border states and emancipating tens of thousands of people who, like his family, had remained legally enslaved nearly two years after the Emancipation Proclamation.[3]

Plenty of firsthand accounts documenting the hardships of emancipation could have circulated in place of Miller's.[4] Even Curry acknowledged there were "other similar occurrences" – black refugees routinely were expelled from army camps in the border states, where Union policies generally upheld state laws protecting slavery. At Camp Nelson alone in 1864, such removals occurred at least eight times before the November event.[5] But Curry, and others who latched onto Miller's account, clearly saw something different in the Millers' experience that would give it enough traction to affect the course of emancipation. It was a narrative of violence, death, and family separation, all of which would have been powerful, but perhaps the most distinctive detail in his story might be something we would ordinarily pass over as trivial: the weather.[6]

The expulsion happened on an unusually frigid day in November, and this loomed large in subsequent discussions of the Miller family's ordeal. It will also loom large in this essay, as I retell the story of the Camp Nelson expulsion and its aftermath with the weather at the center. Weather and emancipation may seem an odd match, even "weird," but as thousands of men, women, and children like the Millers migrated away from the local plantation environments to which they were accus-

tomed in slavery and made their way to new places – islands, cities, and other unfamiliar landscapes – wartime slave flight to Union army camps represented an environmental migration of sorts.[7] The life of refugee slaves also involved traveling and living outdoors, relying on the natural resources around them to meet their primary need for food and shelter and, therefore, to guarantee their survival in freedom. The weather, then, proved no small part of the daily experience of emancipation.

In the Millers' case the weather unleashed a dramatic series of events – and helped turn their son's freezing death into a powerful rhetorical weapon that jolted some very high-ranking officials into action. The cold snap in Kentucky may not have been the driving force of emancipation in that region, and slavery would have ended without it, but it did provide a key moment, a contingency, that explains how and why events unfolded as they did. Especially in the border states, where emancipation unfolded in ways that were halting, drawn-out, and uneven – entirely characteristic of the wartime setting for U.S. slave emancipation – such moments may be especially important to comprehend.[8] And in this particular story there may also be a more general message about the value of thinking about weather, and the environment more broadly, when telling the story of emancipation.[9]

The Millers could not have been surprised by the order forcing them to leave the camp that November. Joseph had lived there since the previous January, and his family arrived in October, so they had time to observe the camp's leaders.[10] They likely knew it was the Union's official position to encourage the loyalty of the slaveholding border states by discouraging emancipation there. Officials following the letter of the law, such as Brigadier General Speed Smith Fry, a native Kentuckian and local commander at Camp Nelson, routinely turned away slaves who fled there (with the exception of men enlisting in the army). And the Millers likely witnessed officers assisting masters who personally visited the camp to reclaim fugitive slaves.[11] Yet hundreds of women, children, and aging men arrived throughout the year anyway, perhaps encouraged by a competing set of signals sent by other officials more inclined to destroy slavery in Kentucky. As Joseph Miller noted in his affidavit, his family, after having fled roughly twenty-five miles from Lincoln

County, was given "the express permission" to stay in the camp by the very lieutenant who enlisted him.[12] Other officials distributed rations and permitted Northern missionaries to live at the camp and offer both material and educational assistance.[13] These sympathetic gestures prompted, in turn, near-monthly orders between March and November from more stringent officials ordering the removal of the families from camp.[14] The push and pull between the forces of protection and removal meant that the Millers had no guarantee they could stay – but no guarantee they would have to leave either.

Yet life at the camp had begun to change with the seasons, and relations between the refugee slaves and the Union army grew tense by November. As a recently arrived teacher with the American Missionary Association working to establish a school for the refugee slaves explained it, "In warm weather we got along tolerably well," but things deteriorated "when it was cold." Requests for indoor stoves went unanswered by military authorities. Then the lower temperatures put a premium on indoor space at the camp, and the refugees and their teachers arrived at the school one day before the expulsion to find "our benches outdoors, the stove broken, and the wood nearly gone – our room had been converted into barracks." The refugees had assumed interior spaces in the barracks and warehouses left unoccupied by soldiers at the camp, but the cold weather only led military authorities to begin reclaiming those places for themselves. At the same time, the refugees were squeezed out of outdoor areas too when the number of soldiers at Camp Nelson increased in preparation for a campaign into Virginia.[15]

The weather-induced pressures only worsened as temperatures dipped down to record lows by November 23. At seven o'clock that morning, a meteorological record-keeper in nearby Lexington recorded a temperature of 16 degrees Fahrenheit. One hour later, General Fry ordered the families to leave. It was an exceptionally cold day – temperatures rose to the 40s, a more typical level, the next day, and then erratically climbed into the 70s the following week.[16] "The morning was bitter cold," Joseph Miller would observe in his affidavit, "[i]t was freezing hard." Similar weather-related details are woven throughout his account. Because his son was already ill, "I was certain that it would kill my sick child to take him out in the cold." Miller tried but failed to obtain a last-minute

reprieve for his family. "When they left the tent the wind was blowing hard and cold," he noted, and after tracking the family down that evening at a meeting house in Nicholasville, six miles away, Miller noted that "[t]he building was very cold having only one fire. . . . I found my wife and children shivering with cold and famished with hunger. . . . My boy was dead."[17]

Miller dictated these weather observations three days later, on November 26, to an official at the camp. It is not entirely clear what prompted him to reach out to Camp Nelson's leadership after the way they treated his family, but the official, assistant quartermaster E. B. W. Restieaux, may have been someone Miller knew would be sympathetic. Restieaux employed hundreds of black men, and a few women, at the camp as laborers for tasks ranging from repairing roads to chopping timber, and beginning in January 1864 Joseph Miller was one of them.[18] Restieaux immediately passed the affidavit to his superior, Theron E. Hall, who wasted no time circulating its contents beyond Camp Nelson. Hall twice telegraphed General S. G. Burbridge that same day, seeking the reversal of Fry's order, and each time mentioned only one detail about the expulsion: that "[a] Child was frozen to death the day that they were sent out."[19] Hall next sent a "strong letter," this time with a copy of Miller's affidavit, to Senator Benjamin Wade of Ohio, who had visited the camp the previous summer and observed the refugee situation firsthand, asking that it be shared with the secretary of war, Edwin Stanton. But then Hall went outside the bureaucratic channels too, and essentially launched a publicity campaign, sending Miller's affidavit, along with a letter he drafted under the pen name "Humanitas," to the *New York Tribune*, which published it two days later on November 28. From there the letter and affidavit traveled to other papers across the North.[20]

That Hall launched this publicity campaign may seem preordained given that he was an abolitionist who once mingled with Frederick Douglass in his native Massachusetts and that he had previously sparred with General Fry over refugee policy.[21] But he had had eight other opportunities to act and had never responded publicly to an expulsion before—until he realized that the November event was different. "Diabolical malignity could have desired no better day on which to perpetrate this atrocious cruelty," Hall wrote in his public letter, and in case anyone

missed it in Miller's account, he added that "[t]he air was intensely chilly; the thermometer was below the freezing point all day."[22] Hall may have been eager to position himself as a sympathetic voice on the subject of freezing temperatures. The previous January, soldiers at Camp Nelson put him on the defensive when they declared him "cruel" in a newspaper for not providing enough firewood.[23] Now he had an opportunity to take control and shape the public's perception of this weather event in his favor; as he later put it privately, Miller's story became "a weapon in my hands which I wielded with all the vigor I could command."[24]

It was an effective weapon. One day after receiving Hall's telegrams, General Burbridge, an unlikely ally as a Kentucky slaveholder, reversed the removal order and ordered General Fry to "allow back all who have been turned out." Then, as Miller's affidavit moved through the press, affairs at the camp took an erratic turn when General Burbridge removed and then reinstated General Fry as commander, while Fry turned around and arrested Hall for "ungentlemanly behavior," only to release him eight hours later.[25] Then, over in Washington, D.C., Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs, having read the Miller affidavit and Humanitas letter in the *Tribune* (and probably unaware that his own subordinate, Hall, was behind the latter), ordered an investigation to make sure no quartermaster officer was "at fault" in the "unparalleled atrocities" at the camp.[26] Officials were no doubt reeling from the public glare and scrambling to find a resolution, which ultimately came when Secretary of War Stanton supported Burbridge's actions and ordered a permanent shelter established for slave refugees at Camp Nelson – a significant blow to slavery in Kentucky, as it opened the doors to any enslaved man, woman, or child seeking freedom in the state.[27]

Why Hall's "weapon" was so useful in securing what he later called a "signal victory" is not immediately obvious. The basic themes of Miller's story, after all, should have been familiar already to readers. Abolitionists across the North had, in the decades leading up to the war, increasingly relied on firsthand accounts of suffering, especially the suffering of physical pain, for their ability to persuade Americans of the moral sin of slavery and inspire action to destroy it. Some even argued that bodily integrity, and freedom from pain, was an essential human right to be protected.[28] Miller's affidavit resembled these narratives not only in con-

tent but also in style – like them, his was accompanied by the words of a white abolitionist testifying to the document's veracity.[29] His account even echoed abolitionist fiction, as the image of Isabella Miller and her children journeying into the cold resembled a pivotal scene in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in which Eliza Harris flees from Kentucky across the ice floes of the Ohio River with her young son.[30] Yet there was still one significant difference between these accounts and Miller's: his family's physical suffering at Camp Nelson, in contrast to the antebellum narratives and stories, was not caused entirely by slaveholders, and that made his affidavit more problematic.

Joseph Miller noted that his son "was killed by exposure," while Hall wrote that he "was frozen to death." Even a colleague of Hall's in the quartermaster's department adopted the same passive language in declaring that "atrocities have been committed."[31] Committed by whom? The answer – and the responsibility – were not clear-cut. These statements stopped short of attributing the incident entirely to the temperatures, reflecting, perhaps, a prevailing belief that weather was not "the chief cause of the weather's effects," as historian William B. Meyer has put it.[32] It was not an autonomous force over Americans' lives but rather an element of the natural world that could, and should, be controlled by human intervention. To some Americans this was an obligation rooted in religious faith: adverse weather events, especially those we call "natural disasters" today, were acts of God requiring atonement or, at the very least, an understanding of their moral lessons.[33] The lesson here was one of human failing – a failure to protect the Miller son from pain and suffering – and although Hall would rightly point the finger at General Fry, in his public letter he also looked more broadly to "arouse the Christian and patriotic people of the North to a sense of duty which they owe these innocent sufferers."[34]

Hall held up Miller's affidavit as an example of what happens when Northerners fail to uphold what he believed was their moral obligation to protect black Southerners from physical pain. And it also confirmed that as the war and emancipation drew slaves to new places, landscapes, even climates, that effort required tackling new environmental threats – like the weather. The Northern missionaries and teachers who flocked to camps of refugee slaves in the South at this time, in fact, often viewed

their work as seasonal in nature, with the arrival of cold temperatures prompting some individuals to get involved. "As winter approached," a Philadelphia Quaker explained, "there seemed to be an awakening to the necessities of these people."[35] Or as a member of the Society of Friends from Indiana explained it in 1864, "At first, our efforts were almost wholly directed to supplying clothing for the destitute, to protect them from the wintry blasts"; only later did they turn to education.[36] Conversely, as the winter chill gave way to spring, "suffering disappears with this fine weather," explained an aid worker in Helena, Arkansas.[37] Others likewise assured those back home that their exertions could lessen with the warmer months: "It is our opinion that after the severe weather of March, they should be thrown more on their own resources," wrote a missionary in Tidewater, Virginia.[38]

It is almost strange to hear Northerners pay such deliberate attention to Southern winters. Maybe they themselves experienced a new discomfort while there: in a region that relied less on indoor stoves than the North, there was talk about wintering in the South being a harsher existence than in the North.[39] More likely, though, something else was going on in the minds of those gathering blankets for refugee slaves. "They are as a people very sensitive to the cold," one missionary in Norfolk put it bluntly in 1863.[40] Likewise, a published appeal of the Contrabands' Relief Commission in Cincinnati declared that the "laws of climate and their own constitution" made it difficult for blacks to endure cold weather.[41] Both statements reiterated a prevailing racial belief in nineteenth-century America, one more often attributed to proslavery thinkers but nonetheless more widely spread: that there was a relationship between skin color and weather tolerance, race and climate. Thomas Jefferson famously reasoned in *Notes on the State of Virginia* that the way blacks perspire made them "more tolerant of heat, and less so of cold, than the whites."[42] The belief that Americans of African descent were better suited to hot climates became a staple justification for enslaving them; the idea that they could not endure the cold was simply its converse.[43]

Northern whites looking to protect "sensitive" Southern blacks from winter were undoubtedly animated by a degree of regional conceit too. Climate did not just help nineteenth-century Americans explain racial differences; it also went far, in many minds, toward understand-

ing regional differences. Proslavery Southerners argued that the South's "peculiar climate" of heat and humidity – something often exaggerated in uniformity and distinctiveness – made the region's attachment to slavery necessary, and its attendant social and political order almost organically grown.[44] Antislavery Northerners did not exactly abandon the basic, underlying belief in regional climatic differences in their effort to dismantle slavery; one has to look no further than to the papers of those migrating to the South, who complain frequently of "excessive heat" and the dangers of disease, and talk of returning home to the North in warm months.[45] It would take no imaginative leap for those same people to view themselves as best able, by virtue of race and region, to safeguard Southern blacks from what they knew best: the pain of winter weather.

Joseph Miller must have thought differently. He and his family were natives of Kentucky and likely accustomed to its weather patterns. They arrived at the camp with no apparent hesitation about cold temperatures – Miller and his family arrived in the winter and the fall, respectively – just like other refugees whose patterns of flight took little account of the seasons.[46] The Millers, in fact, followed in a long tradition of paying little mind to temperature when escaping from slavery: for decades before the war, runaways fled to some of the coldest climates around, not just to the North, but to Canada. This fact intrigued members of the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission (AFIC), which in 1863 was charged with studying slaves' transition to freedom, and which specifically asked those who settled in Canada how they endured the cold weather. "Our people bear the climate here very well," responded one former slave in testimony that likely surprised the AFIC. "They battle with the cold as well as the white people." Another freedman testified that "the climate agrees with me first rate. I weighed 170 pounds when I came here, and now I weigh 241." Testimony after testimony offered little to support assumptions about black vulnerability to the cold, with only the occasional acknowledgment that it took time to adjust to the weather or that, in the words of J. H. Bland, "I don't like the cold weather; but still this climate agrees with me. My health has been better since I have been here." This testimony may have directly challenged prevailing beliefs about race and climate, but the AFIC's final, published report simply dismissed such statements as "bravado" (and the transcripts of

these interviews were tucked away in the commission's internal files, where they remain today).[47]

The Millers arrived at Camp Nelson probably knowing that the coming winter would be difficult: when they left their plantation they could not bring the most essential protection – extra clothing – and Joseph Miller conceded they were "poorly clad." (Others arrived "*almost naked*," according to appalled officials.) The sheer bulk of additional garments, as well as masters who stopped what they considered to be "theft," made it difficult for any refugees to flee with sufficient garments.[48] Joseph would have received a military-issued uniform upon his enlistment, but his family, only at the camp one month before they were expelled, probably had little chance to obtain clothes from missionaries, who found it difficult to maintain an adequate inventory.[49] Other refugees at the camp employed as laborers received military-issued clothing, but they may have found, as Quartermaster General Meigs once mandated, that these items were "of inferior quality rejected by the troops."[50]

Once in camp, though, refugee families made it a first priority to secure shelter. While the Millers took up residence in Joseph's tent, other families constructed their own shelters near the camp's commissary warehouse. "In company with another man," explained another soldier at Camp Nelson, "I built a small hut wher[e] I resided with my family."[51] One missionary noted that in the two months before the November expulsion, "about fifty" of these small huts had been built by refugees, all using materials considered "unserviceable" to the military, such as scrap timber. The housing created a private space for the families – and a protection from the elements. But on the morning of November 23, when military authorities tore down and then torched every last one of those shelters while expelling the families, they destroyed the primary means by which the refugees themselves had tried to mitigate the effects of weather on their own.[52]

Yet Hall emphasized things a bit differently in his public letter accompanying Miller's affidavit and reinforced prevailing beliefs about race and cold weather instead. The Millers were "helpless human beings," Hall wrote, and the larger group of refugees, even before the expulsion occurred, consisted of "deluded creatures," "innocent sufferers," and "frail women and delicate children."[53] These characterizations were use-

ful to jolt Hall's more complacent colleagues into action and silence the advocates of removal. If the expulsion appeared to be waged against the weak, against people already vulnerable to the cold, rather than against the strong, then there could be no doubt it was an act of inhumanity—and would help place advocates of refugee protection on the moral high ground. That the people involved were women and children, already believed to be society's weakest, may have only made it easier to make this point. "Had it not been for the inhuman treatment of these poor people," Hall summed up by mid-December, "we should have had a longer struggle, but great good resulted from the evil." Yet Hall was not quite right and the struggle was not yet over.[54]

Miller's affidavit had to make one last stop first. In Washington, D.C., where the nation's political leaders had for years been debating emancipation, the document landed in the hands of one key figure: Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts. Wilson was outspoken in his opposition to slavery and, where the slaveholding border states were concerned, not content with simply sheltering soldiers' wives and children at places like Camp Nelson. So on December 13, a little over two weeks after the expulsion, Wilson introduced a new bill into the Senate that would declare all wives and children of Union soldiers "forever free." The senator had introduced similar legislation before unsuccessfully; after receiving reports of what happened at Camp Nelson, however, he believed the time was right to get this legislation passed.[55] Debate over the bill continued through January 9, when Wilson's colleague, Benjamin Wade of Ohio, entered the conversation by pointing out that no less than the Union army's manpower was dependent on this act of humanity toward the women and children. The families were, after all, not just refugees from slavery but also *soldiers'* families, and as such, the Union had an added imperative to aid them. A black man "will not enlist unless you free his wife and children," Wade explained, submitting a copy of Miller's affidavit (which Hall had sent him) into the record to explain why: he pointed out that Miller's "child had died in consequence of this hard, harsh treatment," a fate sure to keep other men from enlisting.[56]

Kentucky's two senators, for their part, did not appreciate hearing Miller's story. Senator Lazarus Powell, a slaveholder, responded that Miller's words were nothing more than a display of "sickly sentimentality,"

while Senator Garrett Davis argued that it only demonstrated why slaves need their masters' protection.[57] Yet for other senators and their constituents who hesitated on emancipation, Miller's affidavit might have been more reassuring. It tapped into a dialogue already begun among relief workers and missionaries across the nation, who chipped away at opposition to emancipation by promising Northerners that it would not bring what they feared most – the mass migration of black people to the North. "Many people fear that if the slaves should gain their freedom, they would swarm at the North. Don't you believe it," Henry Ward Beecher, one of the North's most prominent abolitionist lecturers, stated in 1861. "The black face was made to kiss the sun, and the North Pole is not suited to the skin of the blacks."[58] To Beecher, popular beliefs about race and climate could simultaneously justify white protection of slave refugees *and* offer reassurance that this protection would not permanently alter the racial makeup of Northern society. And this was something Massachusetts' governor, John A. Andrew, who later organized the famed Massachusetts Fifty-fourth regiment of black soldiers, guaranteed the next year when he rejected an 1862 government plan to relocate slave refugees into his state by questioning "the humanity of subjecting them . . . to the rigors of our Northern Sky, in the winter season, with the moral certainty of inflicting extreme suffering, resulting probably in disease and death?"[59]

This line of reasoning, coming from two of the nation's most sympathetic voices on behalf of fugitive slaves, may have been familiar to the senators considering Wilson's emancipation bill. They may have also heard it as a rationale given for efforts to colonize freed slaves in the warmer climates of Haiti and Central America during the war (over the objections of Frederick Douglass, who denounced such thinking in the pages of his newspaper).[60] Or perhaps the senators heard some of the firsthand accounts of aid workers in the field, who claimed to substantiate these theories about race and climate with actual evidence of black Southerners' refusal to move to the cold North. A Quaker in Virginia reported back to New York in 1862, for example, that when a group of women were asked about moving North, "not one appeared willing; but all seemed to shrink from the idea, and said it was too cold."[61] Likewise a representative of the National Freedmen's Association, speaking at a

Freedmen's Fund Meeting in California in May 1864, reassured his audience that "the negroes do not wish to leave the South; they do not like the cold climate and the strange faces of the North."[62] It was against this backdrop, then, that senators heard Joseph Miller's affidavit. Here was a graphic illustration of black misery in cold weather, and when linked to an emancipation effort like Wilson's bill, it may have tempered fears that newly freed slaves would flock to the North. After all, if the Camp Nelson refugees already suffered in Kentucky, hardly the coldest climate, why would they go any farther north?[63] And on the same day the affidavit was introduced into the Senate record, less than three months after the expulsion, the legislation passed the Senate by a vote of 27 to 10. A little over two weeks later it passed the House after little debate.[64]

Back at Camp Nelson, 250 of the original 400 expelled refugees had returned. They encountered a new system established in their absence in which aid societies provided clothing – and helped create an "industrial department" for women to convert soldiers' clothing into garments for the families – while the Union government supplied food rations and shelter. By the spring they took up residence in the "Refugee Home," a village of nearly a hundred cottages lined up in rows, each sixteen by sixteen feet in dimension and made to house up to twelve people. Fellow refugees built the cottages and were, this time around, paid for their labor and provided with better materials.[65] The Millers, however, were not among the cottage residents. Although they returned to camp soon after the expulsion, by early January the entire family was dead. All five – including Miller's wife, Isabella, and children Joseph Jr., Maria, and Calvin – had succumbed to illness in a three-week period culminating on January 6, 1865, the day Joseph Miller died.[66]

Miller died believing that, as one camp official reported later, not just his son but his entire family had been killed "in consequence of their exposure" during their removal from camp. Within three months of the event, 102 other refugees expelled that evening also died, and it became commonplace among the most sympathetic missionaries and officials to attribute the deaths as being "in consequence of being exposed to cold," as Reverend John Fee of the American Missionary Association reiterated. Those deaths may have been preceded by bronchitis or pneumonia, two illnesses popularly linked to cold weather exposure, and two

of the leading causes of death at the camp's Nelson General Hospital in the months after the expulsion. Miller's own service record attributed his death to the less common "remittent fever." But it is hard to know for sure, thanks to incomplete records, to what degree the exposure was directly responsible for the deaths or to what extent other diseases that raged throughout the Civil War South, which made the mortality rates at most camps notoriously high, were to blame as well. (After all, Miller's own son was already ill when he was expelled.) Still, the *belief* that the expulsion caused the death and suffering was powerful—and consequential.[67]

The Millers never achieved the freedom they sought at Camp Nelson. But the impact of their ordeal was felt well beyond their deaths, as on March 3, 1865, President Lincoln signed into law the bill emancipating the wives and children of Union soldiers.[68] According to military estimates, the law promised to free over 72,000 people, and for nine more months, until the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery in December 1865, it offered the only legal route to freedom for Kentucky's slaves.[69]

Joseph Miller's affidavit is not well remembered for its role in bringing about this stage of emancipation. It is well worth remembering his story, though, not only to better understand the day-to-day process of emancipation in the border slaveholding states, with all its twists and turns, but also to think about how something as seemingly mundane as weather can be implicated in profound change. The cold snap at Camp Nelson unleashed an important series of events and tapped into a set of beliefs about race and climate that would make aiding refugees, and ending slavery, seem all the more urgent and necessary.

What happened there should make us wonder what else we could see if we allowed not only the weather, but other aspects of the natural world, to move from the edges to the center of our lens on wartime emancipation. There are plenty of striking examples of ways in which individuals contended with nature while migrating to freedom: the refugees of Paw Paw Island, in the Mississippi River, who periodically faced rising river waters that flooded their camp and required new migrations to higher ground; the men, women, and children who fled to Craney

Island, Virginia, a landscape that isolated them from the markets necessary to make a living; the families sent to a specific spot on Island 63, also in the Mississippi River, by Union officials so that the men could make a living chopping cottonwood trees; and the people of Helena, Arkansas, who found themselves forced to live too far from adequate, healthy water sources and suffered tremendously as a result.[70] For those fleeing slavery during the Civil War, the daily experience of emancipation encompassed an ongoing series of encounters with the natural world – and with popular ideas about their relationship to it. The Miller family's story has only begun to make that visible.

Notes

I would like to thank the following people for their suggestions on various drafts of this essay: the participants in the "Weirding the War" conference, especially Stephen Berry and Megan Kate Nelson; Leslie Schwalm; Kendra Smith-Howard; Scott K. Taylor; and Chandra Manning and the members of the Nineteenth Century Workshop at Georgetown University.

1. Cadwallader Curry to Abraham Lincoln, December 5, 1864, Letters Received, ser. 2173, Department of Kentucky, Record Group (hereafter RG) 393 Pt. 1, National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA). Although the term "contraband" is more popular today to describe the individuals who fled slavery during the Civil War, its use in wartime was inconsistent and tended to vary from place to place. At Camp Nelson the term was used interchangeably with "refugee" throughout the war, so with that in mind, I will use the latter word to describe the men, women, and children who migrated there. For a general overview of the term "contraband," see Kate Masur, "'A Rare Phenomenon of Philological Vegetation': The Word 'Contraband' and the Meanings of Emancipation in the United States," *Journal of American History* 93 (March 2007): 1050–84.

2. The Miller affidavit is reprinted in full in the documentary collection Ira Berlin, et al., *Freedom's Soldiers: The Black Military Experience in the Civil War* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 137–39. For those works that cite the document in an anecdotal way, see Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 373; Marion Brunson Lucas, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky: From Slavery to Segregation, 1760–1891* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2003), 161–62; Andrew Ward, *The Slaves' War: The Civil War in the Words of Former Slaves* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), 114; Wilma King, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 138; Richard D. Sears, *Camp Nelson Kentucky: A Civil War History* (Lexington: University of Kentucky

Press, 2002), 135–36. Even I have used the Miller affidavit as anecdote only, in *The Divided Family in Civil War America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 194.

3. Kentucky, like the other border states of Maryland, Delaware, and Missouri, was exempted from the Emancipation Proclamation, and although men like Joseph Miller could become free by enlisting in the army beginning in June 1864, his family was still legally enslaved at the time of the expulsion. Reprints of the affidavit appear in *Cincinnati Commercial*, December 1, 1864, 2; *Liberator*, December 9, 1864, 3 (reprinted from *New York Tribune*, November 28); T. E. Hall to E. Davis, December 14, 1864, American Missionary Association Archives, Kentucky, Microfilm Reel 69 (hereafter AMA Archives); *Congressional Globe* 38th Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, D.C.: F. & J. Rives, 1865), January 9, 1865, 161.

4. One has to look no further than to the rich – and extensive – collection of documents compiled by the Freedmen and Southern Society Project's *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation* series (Cambridge University Press and University of North Carolina Press) to see that this is true. I am grateful to the FSSP's Director Leslie Rowland for permitting me to examine the project's indexes, which in turn aided my search in the National Archives for the documents used throughout this essay.

5. Curry to Lincoln, December 5, 1864, Letters Received, ser. 2173, Dept. of Kentucky, RG 393 Pt. 1, NARA. On the general pattern of Union expulsions of refugees, especially women and children, from army camps in this region, see Ira Berlin and Leslie Rowland, eds., *Families and Freedom: A Documentary History of African-American Kinship in the Civil War Era* (New York: New Press, 1997), chap. 4 (esp. 95–96); Leslie Schwalm, *A Hard Fight for We: Women's Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 90.

6. That historians take the weather for granted may be so obvious that it requires little substantiation here. But there are exceptions that indicate a small but emerging trend toward taking it more seriously. See, for the Civil War, Robert Krick's *Civil War Weather in Virginia* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007); and for U.S. history more generally, William B. Meyer, *Americans and Their Weather* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); David Laskin, *Braving the Elements: The Stormy History of American Weather* (New York: Doubleday, 1996); and Bernard Mergen, *Weather Matters: An American Cultural History since 1900* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008).

7. On the environmental history of slavery, and the way in which a slave's knowledge of local environments was an instrument of both the masters' control and the slaves' resistance, see Mart A. Stewart, *"What Nature Suffers to Groe": Life, Labor, and Landscape on the Georgia Coast, 1680–1920* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1996), esp. 126–36.

8. For a general discussion of the United States' wartime emancipation in comparison to other emancipations in the Atlantic world that occurred in a more protracted, managed fashion, see Pamela Scully and Diana Paton, eds., *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 2005), esp. 10–14; Frederick Cooper, Thomas C. Holt, and Rebecca Scott, *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), introduction; Eric Foner, *Nothing but Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1983); C. Vann Woodward, "Emancipations and Reconstructions: A Comparative Study," in *The Future of the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 148–49. For a transnational perspective, see Edward Bartlett Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation: The Caribbean Roots of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008).

9. The environment is not missing from studies of the Civil War and emancipation but is more likely to appear as backdrop than as an integral part of analysis. See a discussion of this in Lisa Brady, "The Wilderness of War: Nature and Strategy in the American Civil War," *Environmental History* 10 (July 2005): 421–47; Jack Temple Kirby, "The American Civil War: An Environmental View," in *The Use of the Land: Perspectives on Stewardship*, National Humanities Center, http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/nattrans/nutseland/essays/amc.htm (accessed June 9, 2009). For an exception, see Mark Fiege, "Gettysburg and the Organic Nature of the American Civil War," in Richard P. Tucker, ed., *Natural Enemy, Natural Ally: Toward an Environmental History of Warfare* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2004).

10. Miller's affidavit indicates that the entire family arrived in October, but I suspect, given labor records at the camp plus Miller's own service record, that Joseph actually arrived in January 1864 and may have left to get his family, returning again with them in October. Report of Persons or Articles Hired, T. E. Hall, File 59, January 1864, ser. 238, Records of the Quartermaster General, RG 92, NARA; Compiled Military Service Record of Joseph Miller, Co. C, 124th USCT, NARA.

11. On masters reclaiming slaves at the camp, see Theron E. Hall to Senator Henry Wilson, May 26, 1864, Letters Received by the Adjutant General, ser. 12, M619, Reel 267, RG 94, NARA. Union policy in Kentucky respected state law in the interest of appeasing loyal Unionist slaveholders and required that slaves coming into camp be turned back – even into the arms of their masters. This changed somewhat with the beginning of black men's enlistment in June 1864, but even then only potential soldiers were officially welcomed into the camps, and anyone else was still expected to return to their masters. John David Smith, "Recruitment of Negro Soldiers in Kentucky, 1863–1865," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 72 (October 1974): 364–90.

12. An original copy of Miller's affidavit is enclosed in T. E. Hall to O. O. Howard, June 22, 1865, Records of the Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, M999, Reel 7, Bureau of Refugees, Freeedmen, and Abandoned Lands, RG 105, NARA.

13. On the issuance of rations, see Capt. J. Bates Dickson, by order of Brig. Gen. Burbridge, to Capt. T. E. Hall, June 20, 1864, 74, Telegrams Sent, ser. 2168, Dept. of Kentucky, RG 393 Pt. 1, NARA; on the missionaries, see AMA Archives, Kentucky, Reel 69.

14. The orders: Capt. W. W. Woodward to Col. S. B. Brown, April [?], 1864, 54, Letters Sent, ser. 858, District of North Central Kentucky, RG 393 Pt. 2; Lt. Geo. A. Hanaford to Lt. John McQueen, May 23, 1864, Letters Received, ser. 12, M619, Reel 267, RG 94; Lt. Geo. A. Hanaford to Capt. J. H. Johnson, June 17, 1864, 235, Letters Sent, ser. 902, Camp Nelson, RG 393 Pt. 4; Brig. Gen. Speed Smith Fry to Lt. Geo. H. Hanaford, July 6, 1864, 24, Telegrams Sent and Received, ser. 904, Camp Nelson, RG 393 Pt. 4; General Order No. 14, by command of Speed Smith Fry, August 9, 1864, ser. 905, General Orders, RG 393 Pt. 4; Brig. Gen. Speed Smith Fry to Lt. Latham, August 29, 1864, 716, Register of Letters Received & Endorsements Sent, ser. 1661, Camp Nelson Provost Marshal, RG 393 Pt. 4; General Order No. 23, by command of Thos. D. Sedgewick, September 16, 1864, 87, General Orders, ser. 905, Camp Nelson, RG 393 Pt. 4, NARA; Col. T. D. Sedgewick to Major A. J. Hogan, October 29, 1864, in Richard D. Sears, *Camp Nelson, Kentucky: A Civil War History* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002), 130.

15. A. Scofield to Rev. Strieby, November 14, December 1, 1864, AMA Archives, Kentucky, Reel 69.

16. Data conveyed in a phone conversation with Dr. Stuart A. Foster, state climatologist for Kentucky and director of the Kentucky Climate Center at Western Kentucky University, which maintains an archive of historic climatological data, September 9, 2009.

17. Miller Affidavit, November 26, 1864, in T. E. Hall to O. O. Howard, June 22, 1865, Records of the Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, M999, Reel 7, BFRAL, RG 105, NARA.

18. Joseph Miller began working for the quartermaster's department on January 8, 1864, and worked at least two months (after that, the records are missing). Report of Persons or Articles Hired, T. E. Hall, File 59, January and February 1864, ser. 238, RG 92. Two other black soldiers filed affidavits about their families' expulsions – John Higgins and John Burnsides – but these were drafted two days after Miller's and neither appears to have been circulated beyond the quartermaster's department. Testimony before E. B. W. Restieaux, November 28, 1864, ser. 225, Consolidated Correspondence File: "Camp Nelson," RG 92.

19. Capt. T. E. Hall to Capt. J. Bates Dickson (Burbridge's assistant), November 26, 1864, 372, and Capt. T. E. Hall to Capt. J. Bates Dickson, November 26,

1864, 373, both in Telegrams Received, ser. 2174, Dept. of Kentucky, RG 393 Pt. 1, NARA.

20. Hall described his efforts to circulate Miller's affidavit in T. E. Hall to "My Dear Friend Davis," December 14, 1864, AMA Archives, Kentucky, Reel 69; *Cincinnati Commercial*, December 1, 1864, 2; *Liberator*, December 9, 1864, 3 (reprinted from *New York Tribune*, November 28).

21. Gregory P. Lampe, *Frederick Douglass: Freedom's Voice, 1818–1845* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998), 125; on Hall's and Fry's earlier conflict, see Brig. Gen. Speed Smith Fry to Col. Lewis Richmond, October 5, 1863, Generals' Papers: Speed Smith Fry, Box 11, ser. 159, RG 94, NARA.

22. Letter from "Humanitas," *Liberator*, December 9, 1864, 3 (reprinted from *New York Tribune*, November 28).

23. Capt. T. E. Hall to Brig. Gen. Jacob Ammon, January 15, 1864, Staff Papers: T. E. Hall, ser. 158, RG 94, NARA.

24. T. E. Hall to "My Dear Friend Davis," December 14, 1864, AMA Archives, Kentucky, Reel 69.

25. Capt. Chas. M. Keyser to J. Bates Dickson, November 17, 1864, 374, and Maj. Gen. S. G. Burbridge to Capt. J. Bates Dickson, November 29, 1864, 376, Telegrams Received, ser. 2174, Dept. of Kentucky, RG 393 Pt. 1; Capt. J. Bates Dickson to Brig. Gen. S. S. Fry, December 1, 1864, 357, Telegrams Sent, ser. 2168, Dept. of Kentucky, RG 393 Pt. 1; Brig. Gen. S. S. Fry to Capt. J. Bates Dickson, December 2, 1864, 379, Telegrams Received, ser. 2174, Dept. of Kentucky, RG 393, NARA.

26. Col. Geo. V. Rutherford, by order of Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs, to Capt. E. B. W. Restieaux, December 7, 1864, Letters Sent, ser. 9, M745, Reel 48, RG 92, NARA.

27. E. D. Townsend to [T. E. Hall?], December 2, 1864, ser. 225, Consolidated Correspondence File: "Camp Nelson," RG 92, NARA.

28. T. E. Hall to "My Dear Friend Davis," December 14, 1864, AMA Archives, Kentucky, Reel 69; An excellent overview of the abolitionist use of "suffering" accounts is Elizabeth B. Clark, "'The Sacred Rights of the Weak': Pain, Suffering, and the Culture of Individual Rights in Antebellum America," *Journal of American History* 82 (September 1995): 463–93; see also Franny Nudelman, *John Brown's Body: Slavery, Violence, and the Culture of War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 18–24.

29. See, for example, Lydia Maria Child's introduction to Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Boston: n.p., 1861); or William Lloyd Garrison's introduction to Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845).

30. See Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1852), chap. 7.

31. Miller Affidavit, November 26, 1864, in T. E. Hall to O. O. Howard,

June 22, 1865, Records of the Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, M999, Reel 7, BFRAL, RG 105, NARA; Letter from "Humanitas," *Liberator*, December 9, 1864, 3 (reprinted from *New York Tribune*, November 28); Col. Geo. V. Rutherford, by order of the Quartermaster General, to Capt. E. B. W. Restieaux, December 7, 1864, 431, Letters Sent, ser. 9, M745, Reel 48, RG 92, NARA.

32. Meyer, *Americans and Their Weather*, 15.

33. Ted Steinberg, *Acts of God: The Unnatural History of Natural Disaster in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), xix–xxii; Laskin, *Braving the Elements*, 8.

34. Letter from "Humanitas," *Liberator*, December 9, 1864, 3 (reprinted from *New York Tribune*, November 28).

35. Report of the Freedmen's Aid Society of West Chester, for the Year Ending 4th Month, 1st, 1865, Records of the Women's Aid Committee, Friends Freedmen's Association of Philadelphia Records, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College.

36. *Report of Indiana Yearly Meeting's Executive Committee, for the Relief of Colored Freedmen* (Richmond, Ind.: Holloway and Davis, 1864), 15.

37. Maria Mann to Rev. William L. Ropes, March 16, 1863, Maria Tyler Peabody Mann Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

38. W. S. Bell to Rev. S. S. Jocelyn, February [?], 1864, AMA Archives, Virginia, Reel 207.

39. Frederick Law Olmsted remarked on this during a tour of the South in the 1850s. Meyer, *Americans and the Weather*, 77–79.

40. Rev. W. S. Bell to Rev. S. S. Jocelyn, September 5, 1863, AMA Archives, Virginia, Reel 207.

41. Appeal of the Contrabands' Relief Commission, December 9, 1862, enclosed in W. H. Ladd to Sec. Stanton, December 29, 1862, Letters Received, ser. 12, M619, Reel 114 (#685L-1862), RG94, NARA.

42. Thomas Jefferson, "Notes on the State of Virginia," 1787, in Paul Finkelman, ed., *Defending Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Old South* (Boston: Bedford–St. Martin's, 2003), 49–50.

43. How Americans explained this changed by the eve of the Civil War. Eighteenth-century notions that hot climates made black people tolerant of heat gave way to a less environmentally determined view by the 1840s that emphasized "polygenesis," or the idea that races were created separate and distinct, and blacks were simply born to withstand hot climates. Conevery Boton Valencius, *The Health of the Country: How American Settlers Understood Themselves and Their Land* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 236–37. Also see Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 261; George M. Fredrickson discusses the inclination of abolitionists to think along these lines in *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914*

(New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 71. More recent environmental histories that have noted this perceived relationship between climate and race include Meyer, *Americans and Their Weather*, 23–25; Ted Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 71; Carolyn Merchant, *The Columbia Guide to American Environmental History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 46. Other works exploring the relationship of race and environmental history in the U.S. South include Carolyn Merchant, "Shades of Darkness: Race and Environmental History," *Environmental History* 8 (July 2003) http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/eh/8.3/merchant.html (accessed October 19, 2009); Megan Kate Nelson, "The Landscape of Disease: Swamps and Medical Discourse in the American Southeast, 1800–1880," *Mississippi Quarterly* 55 (Fall 2002): 535–67; Elizabeth D. Blum, "Power, Danger, and Control: Slave Women's Perceptions of Wilderness in the Nineteenth Century," *Women Studies* 31 (March/April 2002): 247–67.

44. See Mart A. Stewart, "'Let Us Begin with the Weather?': Climate, Race, and Cultural Distinctiveness in the American South," in Mikulas Teich, Roy Porter, and Bo Gustaffson, eds., *Nature and Society in Historical Context* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 240–56.

45. W. L. Coan to William Whiting, August 12, 1863, AMA Archives, Virginia, Reel 207. Conevery Boton Valencius explores nineteenth-century white aversions to moving into areas of southern heat in *Health of the Country*, 232.

46. Although the data on refugee arrivals at Union camps is spotty and inconsistent, there is no indication that flight to camps increased in any particular season, not even in the warmer months. A New York Quaker even noted in early 1864 the arrival of 1,000 new refugees "in a severe snow-storm." Report of Mary Forster Collins, *Third Report of a Committee of the Representatives of New York Yearly Meeting of Friends upon the Condition and Wants of the Colored Refugees* (New York: n.p., 1864), 16.

47. Testimony of John Kinsey, n.d. (frame 422), Testimony of John W. Sparks, n.d. (frame 383), Testimony of J. H. Bland, n.d. (frame 538) before the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission, Reel 201, and Samuel G. Howe, "The Self-Freedmen of Canada West," (frames 116–17, 120–21, 126–29, 140–43), Reel 199, both in ser. 12, M619, RG 94, NARA.

48. T. E. Hall to Rev. Strieby, May 8, 1865, AMA Archives, Kentucky, Reel 69; Lt. R. E. Hoffman to Capt. Fred A. Tencate, March 11, 1865, 452, Register of Letters Received, ser. 1661, Camp Nelson Provost Marshal, RG 393 Pt. 4, NARA.

49. Missionary letters from Camp Nelson, and from other camps in the South, read like constant requests for more clothing. See AMA Archives, Kentucky; Women's Aid Committee, Series 13, Friends Freedmen's Association Records, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore.

50. Endorsement of QM General Montgomery Meigs on Brig. Gen. W. K.

Strong to Hon. Edwin Stanton, October 25, 1862, ser. 225, Consolidated Correspondence File: "Camp Nelson," RG 92, NARA.

51. Affidavit of John Higgins, November 28, 1864, Entry 225, Consolidated Correspondence File: "Camp Nelson," RG 92, NARA.

52. Why authorities burned the shelters, rather than tearing them down and saving the wood, may have had to do with the poor quality of the materials, which were likely deemed unusable to the army. But whether it was an act solely about practicalities, or a symbolic one too, is difficult to determine. In either case, the act opened up physical space for the use of the military. Affidavit of Abisha Scofield, December 16, 1864, in Ira Berlin, et al., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation Series II: The Black Military Experience* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 715. On the destruction of shelters, see a discussion of archaeological work done at the camp in W. Stephen McBride, "African-American Women, Power, and Freedom in the Contested Landscape of Camp Nelson, Kentucky," in S. Baugher and S. M. Spencer-Wood, eds., *Archaeology and Preservation of Gendered Landscapes* (page proofs of forthcoming volume in author's possession).

53. Letter from "Humanitas," *Liberator*, December 9, 1864, 3 (reprinted from *New York Tribune*, November 28).

54. T. E. Hall to "My Dear Friend Davis," December 14, 1864, AMA Archives, Kentucky, Reel 69.

55. Wilson first introduced the legislation on May 18, 1864, but it went nowhere and was reintroduced on December 13, 1864. See S. Res. 55, S. Res. 82, 38th Congress, 1864, in *A Century of Lawmaking for the New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates*, Library of Congress, http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/ (accessed October 2, 2009).

56. *Congressional Globe,* 38th Congress, 2nd Session, January 9, 1865, 161.

57. Ibid., 162.

58. "Henry Ward Beecher on the War and Negro Catching," *Liberator*, July 19, 1861, 114.

59. John A. Andrews to Major John A. Bolles, Aide-de-Camp to Major General Dix, October 16, 1862, in Letters Received, ser. 5063, Department of Virginia and North Carolina, RG 393 Pt. 1, NARA.

60. Douglass argued that "[t]he negro has withstood under the most unfavorable conditions the rigors of this North American climate, for the space of more than two hundred years. . . . If any people can ever become acclimatized, I think the negro can claim to be so in this country." "Postmaster General Blair and Frederick Douglass," *Douglass Monthly*, October 1862, 724–25. Douglass, however, faced a formidable opposition in Northern Republicans who embraced what Mark Neely calls "isothermalism." See Mark E. Neely Jr., "Colonization and the Myth That Lincoln Prepared the People for Emancipation," in William A. Blair

and Karen Fisher Younger, eds., *Lincoln's Proclamation: Emancipation Reconsidered* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 64–65.

61. *Report of a Committee of the Representatives of the New York Yearly Meeting of Friends, upon the Condition and Wants of the Colored Refugees* (New York: n.p., 1862), 17.

62. "California for the Freedmen," *Freedmen's Bulletin*, July 1864, 4.

63. For a general discussion of how assumptions about race and climate enabled Republicans to make emancipation palatable, see Neely, "Colonization and the Myth That Lincoln Prepared the People for Emancipation," 64–65.

64. *Senate Journal*, 38th Congress, 2nd Session, January 9, 1865 (57–58), March 3, 1865 (450); *House Journal*, 38th Congress, 2nd Session, February 22, 1865, (309–11), all in "A Century of Lawmaking for the New Nation."

65. *Second Annual Report of the Western Freedmen's Aid Commission* (Cincinnati: Methodist Book Concern, 1865), 30, 32; E. Davis to Bro. Strieby, April 12, 1865, AMA Archives, Kentucky. A list of laborers hired to build the Refugee Home appears in Report of Persons and Articles Hired, E. B. W. Restieaux, File 122, March 1865, ser. 238, RG 92, NARA; John G. Fee to Bro. Tappan, February 21, 1865, John G. Fee to Bro. Strieby, March 2, 1865, AMA Archives, Kentucky, Reel 69; T. E. Hall to Capt. E. Harlan, June 4, 1865, Letters Received, ser. 2173, Dept. of Kentucky, RG 393 Pt. 1. For more on the housing and its architecture, see W. Stephen McBride and Kim A. McBride, "Civil War Housing Insights from Camp Nelson, Kentucky," in Clarence R. Geier, David G. Orr, and Matthew B. Reeves, eds., *Huts and History: The Historical Archaeology of Military Encampment during the American Civil War* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006), 136–71.

66. Albert A. Livermore Affidavit, June 26, 1865, Records of the Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, M999, Reel 7, BFRAL, RG 105, NARA

67. Albert A. Livermore Affidavit, June 26, 1865, Records of the Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, M999, Reel 7, BFRAL, RG 105, NARA; John Fee to Bro. Tappan, February 21, 1865, AMA Archives, Kentucky. The Nelson General Hospital death register is the only surviving record to help figure this out, but it is more complete in listing soldier deaths than civilian ones, so it can only be suggestive with regard to the deaths of the women and children expelled from Camp Nelson. It does show, however, that the monthly number of deaths from pneumonia increased over 300 percent between the November event and February 1865 (or from 5 of 49 deaths in November, to 18 of 65 deaths in February)—a trend that seems to point to the expulsion's unusual deadliness, except for the fact that this rate had similarly increased the previous year. Register of Deaths, May 1863–August 1865, Nelson General Hospital, Camp Nelson, Kentucky, Register 292, ser. 544, Records of Field Hospitals, RG 94, NARA. Historian Margaret Humphreys discusses the prevalence of pneumonia, and the popular

belief that black soldiers unused to the cold were especially susceptible to the illness, in *Intensely Human: The Health of the Black Soldier in the American Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 50–51; Compiled Military Service Record of Joseph Miller, Company C, 124th USCT.

68. Very little has been written by historians about this March 3 law, and perhaps it has been overshadowed by another major piece of legislation signed into law on that date – the establishment of the Freedmen's Bureau. See, for example, brief discussions in Eric Foner, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 53; Stephanie McCurry, "War, Gender, and Emancipation in the Civil War South," in William A. Blair and Karen Fisher Younger, eds., *Lincoln's Emancipation: Emancipation Reconsidered* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 137; Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 375–76. A recent exception is Amy Dru Stanley's examination of the larger constitutional and political significance of the simultaneous congressional debate over the March 3 law and the Thirteenth Amendment. See Stanley, "Instead of Waiting for the Thirteenth Amendment: The War Power, Slave Marriage, and Inviolate Human Rights," *American Historical Review* 115 (June 2010): 732–65.

69. By this time, Missouri and Maryland had already abolished slavery, so the law only affected Kentucky and Delaware. Lt. Philip Hayes of the 125th USCT calculated that if the total number of black men who enlisted in Kentucky was 28,818 by the end of July 1865, and on the average each soldier had 2½ additional family members, then a total of 72,045 would be freed by the March 3 law. Hayes to Brig. Gen. James Brisbin, July 27, 1865, Letters Received, ser. 2173, Dept. of Kentucky, RG 393 Pt. 1, NARA.

70. D. O. McCord to Col. John Eaton, July [?], 1865, M1913, Reel 1, Records of the Field Offices for the State of Mississippi ("Pre-Bureau" Records), BFRAL, RG 105, NARA; John Oliver to Rev. Jocelyn, November 25, 1862, AMA Archives, Virginia, Reel 207; Brig. Gen. Buford to Capt. Kincaid, November 25, 1863, 226–27, and Brig. Gen. Buford to Brig. Gen. L. Thomas, October 25, 1863, 182–83, Letters Sent, ser. 4664, District of Eastern Arkansas, RG 393 Pt. 2, NARA.

Rituals of Horsemanship

A Speculation on the Ring Tournament and the Origins of the Ku Klux Klan

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Transmogrify: v. *vulgar* or *humorous* [origin uncertain: See Note below.] *trans.* 1. To alter or change in form or appearance; to transform, metamorphose (utterly, grotesquely, or strangely). 2. To astonish utterly, confound. *1891.* T. N. PAGE *P'laski's Tunament* 125 "You an' I knows all discerning tunaments, 'cuz we come f'om de ole county o' Hanover, whar de *raise* tunaments" – (he referred to them as if they had been a species of vegetables) – "but we 'ain' nuver hearn de modification of a *nigger* ridin' in a tunament?" *1976.* K. T. ERIKSON *Everything in its Path* 81 "The mind that imagines a cultural form also imagines its reverse." *1989.* FELLMAN *Inside War* 189 "Manichaeanism was the most powerful subterranean American heresy."

[*Note.* Apparently, it was originally *persons* that were "transmografied," or metamorphosed.]

In the primeval spring of Confederate defeat, when the white lilacs first in the dooryard bloomed, more than eight thousand Southerners – one "incessant stream pour[ing] from the city," as a newspaper described it – whelmed an amphitheater in Memphis for a ring tournament. Spectators came alone on foot and on horseback, together in carriages and in omnibuses, alone and together in "every other kind of vehicle known to

the motion of horses and wheels." They skylarked in pageantry. They gushed in spectacle. "[H]ere are a thousand fair ladies, in whose persons stand expressed the perfection of the beauty of form," the day's herald effused from the grandstand. "Beauty moves in all their steps, it is eloquent in all their actions, it flows in their ringlets, it sits radiant on their cheeks in heavenly smiles, it laughs in the dimples of their chins, it beams in the cloudless heaven of their eyes, it throbs in the emotions of their glowing bosoms, and mingles with the moral graces of their stainless lives. [Applause.]" It was the Knight of Night Before Last, costumed in shimmering black velvet and "beyond question the most accomplished horseman we have ever seen," who won the day's prize by snaring ten of twelve rings. His "heart being too full to speak," the champion had another man approach Miss Mary Lou Hullum of Memphis, the exquisite soul of purity and virtue on the occasion, and crown her Queen of Love and Beauty.[1]

A few days later ten thousand people packed the fairgrounds for a tournament in Clarksville, Tennessee. In Mississippi that summer, local newspapers described tournaments in Looxahoma, Hernando, Senatobia, and Holly Springs, where the crush of people getting off the trains overtaxed omnibuses and forced most revelers to scramble for less comfortable means to the jousting field.[2] The streets of Huntsville, Alabama, "were alive with hundreds preparing for the spectacle"; in Tuscumbia they twittered in anticipation; the knights of Marion County raised money "for the purpose of having enclosed and protected the graves of Confederate soldiers buried at that place."[3] They were all bright occasions. Even a Northern correspondent, writing about the event in Clarksville, was awestruck by the crowd and the reported $30,000 raised for the orphans and widows of the Confederacy.[4]

Long forgotten, and merely evoking antiquarian nostalgia or Menckenite ridicule when remembered, the ring tournament has more recently been rediscovered by historians. It is hard if not impossible to deny meaning to them – to these rituals of horsemanship born in the pastoral days of antebellum innocence and revitalized in the springtime aftermath of war. Through them and in them, spectators and participants alike expressed ideal visions of manhood and womanhood, of chivalry and honor, of virtue and order. If anything defeat intensified their

meaning. Struck down by the might of their adversaries, Southerners celebrated their ideals as the unvanquished. They celebrated an already blossoming Lost Cause. They groped for something of the social and political order lost in war. Riding as *knights*, watching as *queens*, white Southerners glorified their values and, for a feast day at least, lived in a world as they dreamed the world might be.[5]

But it is easy, especially at this hindsight distance, to watch without seeing. The stunning aspect about the 1866 tournaments is not their number or popularity, catching as those elements may be. Nor is it quite their existence after surrender – that pseudo-martial tournaments came off *at all* in a conquered land – though we might puzzle at that. The crucial fact is that the ring tournament was one of the first public rituals taken up in many areas of the South after Appomattox.[6] It is tempting to say *the* first: until one is brought up short, and strikingly so, by the consecration of cemeteries and commemoration of the Confederate dead to which the tournament, as we shall see, was intimately connected. That and one other concurrent development. Enthusiasm for the joust in 1866, in the springtime of Confederate defeat, flowered in tandem with the formation of the Ku Klux Klan.[7] Between them were obvious connections of ritual. Tournament rider and night rider became knights on horseback; both were liberated by masquerade and costume; both were emancipated by assumed identities and empowered by pomposity. Those transparent parallels are merely evidence of subtler, more powerful and even subterranean forces. This is not to say that vigilante violence could not or would not have risen without the tournament; by 1866 the ring tournament was at least twenty-five years old, and already, across the South, killers were afoot and violence chronic and endemic. The key idea is that a revitalized tournament and a newborn Klan were more than different responses to the same forces.

The Ku Klux Klan took the *form* it did, when it did, in response to a summoning. The resurrection ritual that rebirthed the tournament rider was the rite by which a Klansman, or at least the idea of him, lived and moved and had his being.

Tournaments were popular in the South from the time the first seems to have been held, in Maryland in 1840, and they remained enjoyable pastimes until the advent of the automobile. (And even then at least one

bumfuzzled correspondent watched a competition between jousters joy-riding from the backseats of thoroughbred convertibles.) Horsemen rode a field that was sometimes straight, sometimes semicircular, and about 200 yards long. Carrying lances, thundering at a gallop, the riders tried to snare metal rings hanging from poles staked along the course. The trick was to balance the weight, length, and force of the lance against the power and gait of the horse. Typically, a knight was allowed three "tilts," or turns, during the competition; the horseman who took the most rings, provided he had done so with speed *and* grace, was judged the tournament champion and awarded the right to select the Queen of Love and Beauty from among the ladies who watched. A gala dinner and dancing ball usually followed.[8]

A few features warrant special notice. Tournaments were fiercely competitive, partly because they were also rites of courtship. It was generally inappropriate, before and after defeat, for a married man to crown the Queen of Love and Beauty. When a betrothed knight won the 1866 tournament in Bolivar, Tennessee, a correspondent felt compelled to butt in: "[I]f they [married men] would retain the friendship and goodwill of Tennessee's and Mississippi's fair daughters they should give up the ring altogether."[9] That the tournament was distinctly Southern, another special feature, also helps account for the competition. Riders were not so much playing at war, a point sometimes missed by bemused contemporary and even latter-day fun-pokers; they were competing to claim the cluster of masculine ideals associated with chivalry and inseparable from mastery of the horse, long since the most complete symbol of Southern masculinity.[10]

Sometimes cavalier provincialism and competition were matched gauntlets. When a graceful Northerner rode into the final round of the tournament in Clarksville, spectators who seemed bound for failure at home rule succeeded instead at establishing a home-field advantage. "The utmost unfairness was shown a rider named Hood, a Yankee," according to a "Radical" newspaper account. "[O]n attempting the final run he was greeted with derisive cheers from the assemblage, which so disconcerted the rider that he failed to win the prize. The whole affair may be considered as a successful rebel demonstration, and only shows the bitter and malignant feeling entertained by the residue of the reconstructed South

towards the North." In fairness let it be noted that if the poor carpetbagging Hood was jeered and mocked and taunted, Southerners hooted at themselves on occasion. As the "crowd was beginning to disperse" after an 1866 tournament in Meridian, Mississippi, "a man with a mask on, and grotesquely attired as a knight, appeared upon the arena on a mule, and enacted a capital burlesque, provoking great mirth and laughter. He appeared suddenly, and had the good sense to retire at the right time."[11]

Southerners returned to the pageantry of the tournament first to assure themselves that their old ideals would return in the Easter-season aftermath of a war which betokened that neither chivalry nor honor had been enough to safeguard society. In this they were engaged in a kind of cultural reconstruction that developed as the political, social, and economic one was still taking shape in 1866, but even then tilting in a new, more radical direction. To borrow one scholar's classifications for the stages of defeat, the spring of 1866 opened with ex-Confederates between dreamland and awakening: between dreamland's euphoric, cathartic release from the scourge of war, and its characteristically wishful feeling that "nothing stands in the way of a return to the prewar status quo," and an awakening to the reality that the victors will demand spoils. In dreamland, according to this interpretative morphology, the losers "place trust in the chivalry of the enemy"; awakening to the enemy's terms produces not just anger and resistance but the soul-piercing bitterness of betrayal – betrayal so keen that it is sacralized and fused with fable and legend and epic, and most evocative when expressed in saga and mythological performance. Thus it was with the ring tournament. Its euphoric, wish-fulfillment ritual beckons easy ridicule as the very turf of what Hamilton James Eckenrode lampooned as Walter Scottland. Yet it was a profound expression of awakening, its meaning sanctified by the same fairy-tale silliness that leaves us giggling in hindsight.[12]

They turned to tournaments, in a second crucial way, to resurrect themselves. The ritual of the tournament was meant to reawaken an inner sense of selfhood – a sense of the self as honorable, chivalrous, virtuous, and magnanimous – not just for the riders but for those who experienced them vicariously, and affirmed them, as spectators in crowds or newspaper readers at home. "[The] joust and tournament," Colonel H. W. Walter told the Holly Springs feasters, were "theaters of action for

all that was honorable and manly, and all that was happy and cheerful." The tournament had always liberated its participants. But the antebellum rider who chose a new persona and dressed in costume had invested himself in a mythology of sheer imagination. The self resurrected in defeat *was invested* within the mythology of experience. For whatever their assumed identities in the pageant, the postwar ritual transformed all the tournament riders into reembodied Confederate soldiers. "He [the Confederate soldier] entered the contest without asking the number of the foe, or calculating the issue of the fray," Walter said in his speech. "[H]e preferred death to dishonor, poverty to his children with honor [rather than] wealth with disgrace, and even the desolation of his country to a stain on his country's flag." Their selves were the highly idealized, highly sentimentalized versions, made one with the spirit of he who had died and through him called forth by collective vocation. The Confederate soldier was the perfection of the beauty of substance, taking form in the champion to live again as the symbol of perfect manhood.[13]

In a critically important sense, the tournament ground was funereal convocation; with only slight modification, the grand speeches were thematically and even rhetorically interchangeable with remarks delivered at memorial services and graveyard dedications across the immediate postwar South. Like the memorial dedications, the tournament ritual bespoke that while the Confederate state had been defeated, its spirit had not been. Its knights had been conquered but not vanquished. Verily these knights seemed more necessary in defeat than they had been to longed-for victory. "Of this order," one speaker in Huntsville exclaimed of the medieval knights, "none were permitted to be members who had not proved themselves high in courage, and persevering and patient in difficulty; to the widow and the orphan their aid was freely given, and innocence found in them a sure and staunch supporter; upon them was imposed supreme reverence for Deity and chivalric devotion to Lady Love." Chivalry was merely overcome, not overthrown, and it would eventually prevail by fortitude – and by restraint. "He fought desperately," Walter affirmed in eulogizing the Confederate soldier, now riding as tournament knight, "but when conquered gave his pledge of faith, and with manly, moral heroism, kept it to the letter – even after the faith plighted by the conqueror had been broken."[14]

It makes sense that the ritual of 1866 would also emphasize a shattered wasteland. The greater the desolation, the more honorable, the braver, the more virtuous, and the more chivalric those who endured it. In Holly Springs, Walter "opened his address by an allusion to the condition of our race in the 'dark ages'; the absence of any regulated system of government, the lawlessness, ignorance, and utter debasement of man." Knights, he said, had arisen to empty "the cup of human agony." But somehow it also makes nonsense. No more jarring incongruity exists in these speeches than the collision between harmony and happiness, on the one hand, and the recognition, on the other, that the South in 1866 was a place of random savage violence. The same newspapers that recounted the glorious deeds of tournament knights were full of apocalyptic stories about beasts and beastly treatment and bestial beings and their "carnivals of crime." That Landon C. Haynes, the orator at the Memphis tournament, could speak of beauty and radiance, of heaven and grace – that he could talk about *dimples* and *ringlets* and *bosoms* – seems absurd; the Memphis joust came off less than three weeks after the eruption of the worst race riot in that city's history, a "mad slaughter" in which forty-eight people were killed, seventy others wounded, and at least five black women raped. That Huntsvillians could caper about in "innocence . . . and chivalric devotion to Lady Love" when other Alabamians talked bone-chillingly about fear – "You know not who is watching you," one anxious father wrote to his traveling son – seems either phony or mawkish escapism. That Walter should insist upon the detachment of "all gloomy memories" and that his listeners be "happy and cheerful" sounds (of course anachronistically) like a pledge drive for the Society for Creative Anachronism or a Bobby McFerrin motivational seminar. It makes no sense.[15]

Victorian oppositions alone cannot make happy and cheerful they in the land of violence and butchery; nor can bloated Lost Cause romanticism make bright and innocent the days of evil and debasement. If it were only those traditional interpretations that explain, our use of them may help our understanding, but it also abets ridicule. We are hard-pressed not to snigger at their Knights of Night Before Last and their Queens of Love and Beauty, entwined with one another among the ruins. And if we think of their ritual as foolish and just a little daffy, we

also really could not avoid the conclusion that *they* were aware in their puffed-up, put-on fantasy games. The fictions created by these juxtapositions would be self-evidently silly.

Which, of course, they were. Only we have not seen far enough to be let in on the joke: for they were laughing from another world.

They saw ghosts we do not see, and that we cannot see if we watch them as spectators in placid hindsight instead of as speculators trying to see beyond. In ways we are just now learning to appreciate, they experienced a world *between* substance and spirit, a sort of postwar limbo for some, a purgatory for others, in which the living were beings proximate to the dead. Those who survived the war groped in its immediate aftermath for answers to questions and conditions half-formed or enshrouded or hidden but nevertheless sensed and felt and apprehended. A jumble of grief, anxiety, and fear shaped their senses; a consciousness of contradiction and paradox and irony shaped their perceptions: a mist of confusion, a fog of the postwar. They revealed themselves and that transitional world in the metaphors they used to describe themselves living in it. They were the *dead*, they said; the *wounded*; they were the *enslaved*. Those powerful metaphors give form to an abstruse sense of alienation; they reveal, as well, the profound sensibility by which the defeated understood themselves in *figurative* and even *transfigurative* ways. The world of the defeated was not a society fixed at one pole or the other, as a Victorian construction would have it, but a transitional society ever and unpredictably fluid. Their perceptions of the characteristics of material earth – their violent and seemingly lawless physical existence – were refractions of an inner sense of turmoil.[16]

That sensibility was Manichean – it reified ideals and made the visible seem ethereal and the invisible present. It was also a sensibility in which people could feel beautifully liberated in sorrow and devastation. In the postwar world, *silly* was euphoric, *silly* was rapturous, and *silly* was heavenly in one of the original and most spiritual meanings of the word: not foolish or banal as it is taken today, but ecstatic because he who was *silly* was he who was touched by God. The Manichean world was fundamentally, in that sense, silly. Manichaeism conceived of a primal, incorporeal conflict between Light and Dark; it construed the material world and human beings as mere physical bodies in which God-owned Spirit

was imprisoned by Satan-owned Matter. Spirit would fly home to God when Matter was obliterated – when the material world and the bodies of beings in it were destroyed. Devastation and even obliteration were purifying, a freeing of Light by the hand of God and a path to restoration of Beauty and Truth. Diametric contrasts were not absurd but *supposed*, and for that, real and deadly serious precisely because reified ideals were beatific and fragile at the same time. It may or may not be, as Michael Fellman claims, that Manichaeism remains a spiritual and cultural tremor embedded within Protestantism as the "most powerful subterranean American heresy." But something of that subterranean underworld shaped the land above in 1866, for it was a reifying language that rippled over the tournament ground and raised up jousters as revivified Confederate soldiers.[17]

Once the postwar ritual reestablished for white Southerners that their ideals were sacred, it was a Manichean mandate that they were the ones, despite defeat, who must wrest control of the postwar social order. And so it was not just the highly idealized self raised up in the tournaments – the self of charity, perseverance, patience, and restraint, duty-bound to brave might with right – but his non-self. Risen also was he who could defend the beatific and the fragile, and must, with harrowing brutality or even merciless bodily obliteration, if he were to make his way home to the Truth of sanction and the Light of beautiful fulfillment.

Some spoke emphatically if not literally about the connection. After maintaining that the motives of the tournament were innocent, and that the South had "faithfully acquiesced and intended to acquiesce in every issue legitimately involved in and decided by the war," Landon C. Haynes immediately suggested that acquiescence ended at Radical Reconstruction. "And it can scarcely now be expected . . . that the people of the South should suddenly transfer their affections personally, to those whining, canting, graceless, Godless, Christless vipers in the human form, who . . . seek to prevent fraternity and concord, and to reduce a vanquished people to servitude, and to hasten them down into an abyss of ruin unequalled in this or any other age or country. [Applause]." A reporter caught everything Haynes meant: "I noticed during its delivery he casted his eyes over the crowd to see, I am confident, if certain *loyal gents* were in hearing, and when *striking* sentiments were delivered,

he showed from his appearance, that he said to himself – did you hear that?"[18]

Loyal gents were indeed in hearing. But it is of secondary and even incidental importance to tie tournament and Klan by individual riders and places.[19] Speakers did not form or direct the Klan from the grandstand. The primary and symbiotic link between them, as forms, was in ritual. Ultimately, on tournament days, the Confederate soldier was being awakened to be transmogrified. "This is an institution of Chivalry, Humanity, Mercy, and Patriotism," read the mission statement of the Knights of the White Camellia, drawn up in 1867, "embodying in its genius and its principles all that is chivalric in conduct, noble in sentiment, generous in manhood, and patriotic in purpose." Such a summons could have been heard at any tournament in the South, just as it could have been invoked over any graveyard of the South, and of course it was. "These exercises are particularly appropriate to you, the sons of the South," Haynes told the Memphis knights, "and the lineal descendants of brave cavaliers, in whose blood still survives . . . by natural inheritance, the chivalrous virtues of your ancestors. [Applause.]" The exercises were necessary to stir the blood of the dead in veins of the living, the invocations necessary to transpose celebration and enforcement, and both invocation and exercise necessary "to protect the weak, the innocent, and the defenseless," as a Klan prescript would soon put it, "from the indignities, wrongs, and outrages of the lawless, the violent, and the brutal."[20]

The lawless, brutal violence to come is well known and, like its purposes, needs no elaboration. What needs reconsideration is the chivalric nonesuch. It is something of an article of faith that the Ku Klux Klan was founded innoxiously as a "social club" – a fraternity for the young and bored – and only later, and for that original innocence all the more grievously, developed into a kind of guerilla guild in which almost any horror was imaginable, justified by the most grotesque distortions of chivalry. "It may be," according to one authority whose supposition captures harmlessness in transition, "that that the playing of practical jokes on each other broadened into playing them on outsiders, especially Negroes." That understanding may be true; "all the evidence," says Allen W. Trelease, supports the Klan's early members in

their contention that the fraternity was "designed purely for amusement and for some time after its founding had no ulterior motive or effect." A. P. Huggins, a carpetbagger in Aberdeen, Mississippi, who later would have cause to rue what "the community seemed to laugh at," testified in 1871 that local people "treated [the Klan] as sort of a joke, they treated it very lightly. When they first commenced their operations . . . the people stated that it was only boys' fun." Yet it could be that such a claim was itself one of the earliest Klan practical jokes, a sort of fake rubber arm held out to gullible contemporaries and then clutched up by none-the-wiser historians.[21] Whatever the truth of origins, humor was the necessary and even catalytic dynamic in the transmogrification of tournament rider to night rider. That the early Klan was a burlesque is evidence of, and not proof against, the connection between them.

What begot awakening in 1866, after all, was *mockery*. The victor's spoils of war were manifested in the specter of Radical rule; the betrayal most keenly felt was the *absurdity*—the *sham*; the *farce*—of granting power to those who as slaves had no *being* to possess it and were incapable of wielding it, and to that hateful, "graceless, Godless, Christless" brood of vipers, those poisonous shape-shifters "in the human form," those Radicals whose form was cant and substance was venom. These were not mere material changes threatening white Southerners and their ideals; they were *transmutations* that ridiculed them. If, ultimately, it was dark humor that brought them to awakening, it was also laughter that made the most immediate sense to them as the artifice of self-emancipation, and transmutation that made the most sense to them as the special device of cruelty.

Dreamland mirth on tournament days summoned ideals to celebrate and honored the spirit of the gladsome Confederate soldier; awakening transformed the happy and the cheerful into the *ghastly*. The eminent sociologist Kai T. Erikson puts a finger on the matter. "The mind that imagines a cultural form also imagines its reverse," he writes. "Whenever people devote a good deal of emotional energy to celebrating a certain virtue, say, or honoring a certain ideal, they are sure to give thought to its counterpart." The insight's social psychology is also a pretty fair reckoning of parody: funny unless it's the real thing, and, if real, not humorous but hideous. We have already been exposed to the

dynamic – the 1866 tournament in Meridian where "a man with a mask on, and grotesquely attired as a knight, appeared upon the arena on a mule, and enacted a capital burlesque, provoking great mirth and laughter. He appeared suddenly, and had the good sense to retire at the right time." His good sense was his feel for silliness. Any longer and the parody would have scorned the ideals and those who cherished them. Any longer and it would not have been a parody but a mockery. The grotesquely attired knight would have become an abomination of chivalry, odious and hateful.[22]

Any longer and he would have become a Klansman.

That the Klansmen's actions *were not* chivalrous was precisely the point of the night rider burlesque – outwardly mocking not those who affirmed chivalry but those who ridiculed its life-giving, order-giving ideals. If a tournament rider personified the South and what it should be, the Klansman knighted as he was, dressed in costume as he was, and liberated by grandiosity as he was – the Klansman sworn to the protection of true womanhood as he was – demonstrated the horrors of a society in a perpetually transitional state. Although those intentions were ruthlessly manifest in violence, we should not be too quick to dismiss their practical joking. It fixed the perpetually transitional state in place. Huggins, a Federal revenue official, was surrounded one night by more than one hundred Klansmen and eventually whipped and beaten into semi-consciousness. But first he was nonesuched. His punishment, Huggins recalled, was "given by decree" and the Klan leader "pronounced it out in a very pompous manner, and said it was given at a certain place, and registered in some corner of hell." In a nether world, spirits were abroad both savage and chivalrous. You might encounter either one without knowing which was which, and the joke was on you.[23]

The burlesque was the means by which the transitional world was made real and present, and living beings brought proximate to the dead: whether or whether not fourberie or carnival intimidation had any frightening effect on its victims.[24] To spectators of a distant era who see the gag portrayed in *Birth of a Nation*, a Klansman drinking an entire bucketful of water in front of terrified freedmen might make no sense. Partly we don't believe that a freedman or someone like Huggins would have fallen for it, but we don't get it because we're not in on it. In the

ethereal postwar world, the thirsty spirits of the nether land were the wounded Confederate soldiers on the battlefields of the war, those gruesome maimed whose thirst could never be satiated; they were those grisly dying whose macabre last words were as likely as not a desperate, pleading call for water. *That* was the gag. Or the offering of fake limbs for handshakes – "the cold touch of which was terrifying": a *neat trick*, or a *good one*, as we might call it. But perhaps they were the most chilling relics of the dead because cold false limbs were everywhere in the postwar world – the mock artificial hands and legs of the wounded in the place of and in shape of what used to be, the cold surrogate limbs of dead Confederates blown apart on battlefields and now reaching from the grave. Those pranks – if not deadly as would be the violence to come – were deadly in another, transfigurative and metaphorical way. They were *of* the dead. They were understood, and meant to be understood, not just as terrorism by laughter, but as the means of transmogrification. As the celebrated racist Hinton Rowan Helper once put it in a different but related connection, they were "nojoque."[25]

The neat trick, the symbiosis, was really the mockery of themselves. We see if we play around and take loose liberty with Allen W. Trelease's characterization of humor and Klan origins. *It may be that the playing of practical jokes on outsiders broadened into playing them on each other.* It was self-mockery that summoned the form of him who was an abomination, a *ghastly*, *hideous farce*, a doubled caricature of the real version being innocently, and symbiotically, resurrected in the brightness of May Day. And it was humor that transmogrified. The weapon of the weakened and the defeated – the dead and wounded, the subjugated and the enslaved of the afterwar transitional world – became the force by which and through which they proclaimed their emancipation. For indeed real chivalry had not been strong enough to win the war, restraint and forbearance would not win the postwar, and right could not overcome might. He that became the mighty victorious was he who could do terrible things in the name of not-chivalry, he who rode only at night and came from hell and lost his self in the transitional state of night-hell. He that could win the afterwar was he who possessed no self that needed to be affirmed. The Klansman, unlike the tournament rider, was not an *individual*; as the ephemeral ghost of the disembodied Confederate soldier risen in the fog

of the postwar, he was not meant to stand alone. "When a great number of men get together under excitement," as a Mississippi editor put it in 1888, when whitecapping night riders again terrorized the landscape, all "think that which is done, is the act of the whole number, and not the single individuals that make the number."[26] The Klansman lost himself with faceless others behind the mask of the grotesque.

From the safety of the post-Reconstruction world, where might again was right, and by which time freedmen and Radicals had had the good sense to retire, Thomas Nelson Page enacted a capital burlesque. In 1891, he published "P'laski's Tunament," a short story about a feet-shuffling, head-scratching former slave called Old Hanover who is bemused by the new ways of freedom. He is tortured especially by his delinquent stepson Pulaski, whose felonies include stealing Hanover's best shirt and filching a widow's wedding ring. But Pulaski's gravest offense in the postwar world is entering a ring tournament, then winning it, then crowning an "impident gal" Queen. From these misdeeds come Page's sendup and the rest of the story. The details are important only in that Hanover is harassed mercilessly. His world is out of order. What gets the farce rolling is the idea of Pulaski invading the place blackness should never and could never be. His place dictated that he should answer to knights, not ride to victory as one. Page nibbed his quill to the heart of these rituals of horsemanship and their meaning – his quill touching deeper than the whimsy, if whimsy it was, of naming his rabble-rousing black boy after the Tennessee town where the Klan came into being. "You an' I knows all discerning tunaments, 'cuz we come f'om de ole county o' Hanover, whar de *raise* tunaments," Old Hanover says quizzically, "but we 'ain' nuver hearn de modification of a *nigger* ridin' in a tunament?"[27]

It was silly unless it could happen.[28] The mockery of it – the absurdity of a nigger holding office; the sham of a nigger owning land; the farce of a nigger winning the Queen of Love and Beauty – was hideous.

Notes

I would like to dedicate this essay to Ted Ownby, for reasons he might remember and for a few he has probably forgotten. Thanks also go to Charles W. Eagles and to Gaines M. Foster, for reasons they have *doubtless* forgotten. I am having a little fun in the epigraph – call it weird fun – with the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

The proper citations, in order, are: Thomas Nelson Page, *Elsket and Other Stories* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), 125; Kai T. Erikson, *Everything in Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), 81; Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri during the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 189.

1. Memphis *Daily Avalanche,* May 23, 1866.

2. Oxford *Falcon,* July 26, 1866; also July 5, 1866. See also Hernando *People's Press,* April 19, 1866; May 3, 1866; May 10, 1866; July 19, 1866; and August 30, 1866.

3. Memphis *Daily Avalanche,* August 1, 1866; also July 27, 1866; Montgomery *Daily Advertiser,* June 13, 1866.

4. Memphis *Daily Avalanche,* June 3, 1866.

5. I will make no attempt to cite the explosion of recent scholarship on the Lost Cause or its concussive reverberations in memory studies. The starting points on the former remain Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865–1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1981); and Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). For Civil War memory, the entryway is David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001). Two helpful overviews of the literature are Thomas J. Brown, "Civil War Remembrance as Reconstruction," in Thomas J. Brown, ed., *Reconstructions: New Perspectives on the Postbellum United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 206–36; and Matthew Grow, "In the Shadow of the Civil War: A Historiography of Civil War Memory," *American Nineteenth Century History* 4 (2003): 77–103.

6. My speculative, impressionistic observation is based on preliminary research in Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama newspapers. A compendium is compiled in Esther J. Crooks and Ruth W. Crooks, *The Ring Tournament in the United States* (Richmond, Va.: Garrett and Massie, 1936); and Hamner Cobbs, "Tournaments in the Black Belt," *Alabama Review* 20 (1967): 272–78. A definite statement in the Works Progress Administration's records lends some credence. "In July, 1866," a writer said of the tournament in Holly Springs, "the first important social event after the war took place, a tilting tournament at Powell's Grove." See Works Progress Administration, "Source Material for Mississippi History," Marshall County, Folder 1, 37, Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Hereinafter cited as WPA Source Material, MDAH.

7. David M. Chalmers in *Hooded Americanism: The First Century of the Ku Klux Klan, 1865–1965* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965) gives the date as December 1865 – significant in that rumors of a freedmen's Christmastime insurrection were widespread. Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), dates the origin from the spring of 1866.

8. See G. Harrison Orians, "The Origin of the Ring Tournament in the United States," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 36 (1941): 263–77.

9. The Bolivar correspondent is quoted in Crooks and Crooks, *Ring Tournament in the United States,* 133. See also Montgomery *Daily Advertiser,* May 2, 1866. The disgruntled sons and daughters of Rapides Parish, Louisiana, once forced married riders to hold a separate tournament at which the prize was champagne, not love. See William E. Highsmith, "Social and Economic Conditions in Rapides Parish during Reconstruction," (MA thesis, Louisiana State University, 1947), 159–60. A motif of courtship and innocence appears strikingly, and consciously, in the manuscript memoir of Hilary A. Herbert, "Grandfather Talks about His Life under Two Flags" (1903), item marked SPR4, Alabama Department of Archives and History (hereinafter ADAH). See 142–53. Ted Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), esp. 71, stresses the tournament's virile competition. The Hernando *People's Press,* May 31, 1866, provides an example, as does the Oxford *Falcon,* September 28, 1867, which notes that "several young gentlemen have been practicing" for an upcoming tilt.

10. A fuller discussion of the cluster of values associated with the horse appears in my book about a former tournament champion turned Confederate cavalry leader, Turner Ashby. See *Blood Image: Turner Ashby and the Civil War in the Southern Mind* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 17–67. The Oxford *Falcon,* November 17, 1866, reported a scheme in which Northern promoters were trying to recruit the renowned horsemen of Fauquier County, Virginia, to "go North and ride Tournament" in a traveling show.

11. Memphis *Daily Avalanche,* June 3, 1866; Jackson *Daily Clarion,* May 5, 1866.

12. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery* (New York: Henry Holt, 2001), quotes on 13, 14; but see also 1–35, 37–101.

13. Oxford *Falcon,* August 2, 1866.

14. Memphis *Daily Avalanche,* August 1, 1866; Oxford *Falcon,* August 2, 1866.

15. Oxford *Falcon,* August 2, 1866; Memphis *Daily Avalanche,* November 1, 1866. Newspapers routinely treated readers to stories about "The Beast," former Union general and Radical senator Benjamin F. Butler, and the "beastly" punishment of the jailed Jefferson Davis. Walter's ornamental speech at Holly Springs, for instance, included a few paragraphs about the recent terrible war in which the "beast of New England was in their midst." A brief but still important introduction to the disorder of the immediate postwar era is Dan T. Carter, *When the War Was Over: The Failure of Self-Reconstruction in the South, 1865–1867* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 6–23. On Memphis and violence in general, see George C. Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 33–42; and Trelease, *White Terror,* xliii–xlv. For fears of a similar "riot" breaking out

in Huntsville – that blacks would carry out threats to "kill every d —— d white man that opposed them" – see Montgomery *Daily Advertiser,* April 28, 1866. See also James Rowe to A. J. Rowe, May 28, 1866, Rowe Family Letters (LPR84), ADAH.

16. See Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008). Ease of transition is a key theme creeping into the literature of the entire period, for soldiers and civilians alike, and touching alike questions of conduct and identity. Note, as examples, Daniel E. Sutherland, *A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), esp. 9–25; and Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861–1868* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

17. Fellman, *Inside War,* 189, but esp. 132–92. I am *not saying* here that Southerners were practicing, apostolic Manichaeans; I am describing what I take to be the central organizing force of the immediate postwar world in reification. One further point bears consideration. In exploring the self-conceptions of Confederate guerrillas, Fellman suggested that the brutality of bushwhacking in Missouri forced those "brother killers" into a doubling of character. *Real me* was a law-abiding, peaceful person: generous, gracious, a subscriber to and sometimes paragon of peaceful, social ideals. *Not me* was the wartime me, a ghost of myself who could justify acts of murder and mutilation in the language of chivalry even as he was committing atrocities. *Real me* was a man in whom conscience could reassert itself in the presence of collective authority; *not me* was antisocial, liberated by youth, by assertions of bushwhacking grandeur, by the assumption of extravagant titles or glorified unofficial rank, and even by the fancy shirts and other costumes of war made for them by those they protected. Something of the same was going on in the volatile play and interplay of 1866.

18. Memphis *Daily Avalanche,* May 23, 1866; Hernando *People's Press,* May 31, 1866.

19. The most infamous example is Nathan Bedford Forrest, the Klan's first Grand Wizard; he presided over the 1866 tournament in Tuscumbia, Alabama, and was known, according to two chroniclers, for being "very energetic in promoting tournaments." See Crooks and Crooks, *Ring Tournament in the United States,* 102–3, 143, 152. In Holly Springs, one of the tournament organizers was William M. Compton, the local newspaper editor. He became the Grand Giant of the Klan in Marshall County. See the Oxford *Falcon,* July 26, 1866; WPA Source Material (Marshall County, folder 1, 33), MDAH. In Huntsville the tournament organizer would in time also become a Grand Giant. Perhaps not coincidentally, the streets of Huntsville were soon alive with hundreds of Klansmen performing in mass, militia-style drills. See Trelease, *White Terror,* 262–73.

20. "Revised and Amended Prescript of the Order of the * * *," (1867), 3, ADAH; see also the draft constitution of the Knights of the White Camellia,

marked as "Knights of the White Camellia Notebook," SPR84, ADAH. Memphis *Daily Avalanche,* May 23, 1866.

21. Trelease, *White Terror,* 11, 5, but also 14–21. The most important and comprehensive study of the Reconstruction era, Eric Foner's *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 342, follows Trelease in calling the original Klan a social club. Huggins's testimony was considered sensational at the time; it appears in the still powerful *Testimony Taken by the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States* (Washington, D.C.: n.p., 1872), vol. 1, *Mississippi,* 297. There is no denying the shared connections between the Klan and fraternal organizations, ritual, and what's coming to be called "masquerade culture." See especially Mark C. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989). Two decades after its publication, Trelease's work remains the most admirable introduction to the Reconstruction Klan. My hesitation on the matter of origins is merely that no social activity – not even the ring tournaments, as we see here; not even the "innocent" and "spontaneous" organization of Ladies Memorial Associations, as Caroline E. Janney shows – can be carved out as a sphere separate from a political and possibly paramilitary context. By Trelease's own reckoning, the Klan's transition "from a social club to a band of regulators" occurred swiftly. For a recent work on postwar violence, see Mark L. Bradley, *Bluecoats and Tar Heels: Soldiers and Civilians in Reconstruction North Carolina* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2009), esp. 95–133. See also Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

22. Erikson, *Everything in Its Path,* 81; see also 79–93. In Virginia there is evidence of a later if even more explicit connection. In 1878, a group of riders held what was called "A Carnival of the K.K.K.K.," in which the Komick Krews of Komus Klubs crowned one lucky belle the "Queen of Rags and Tags." See Crooks and Crooks, *Ring Tournament in the United States,* 51, 154.

23. See *Testimony Taken by the Joint Select Committee,* 1:277. See esp. John Mayfield's superb *Counterfeit Gentlemen: Manhood and Humor in the Old South* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2009). Humor, as Mayfield illustrates in developing the insight of Henri Bergson, "is a way of isolating one's enemies and humiliating them." But of equally special force here is Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of carnival as regeneration, "the orchestrated moment," as Mayfield paraphrases, "where society allows itself to be mocked." Bakhtin wrote: "Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth. It has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one." Mayfield, *Counterfeit Gentlemen,* quotes on 26, 108.

24. Whatever the beliefs of whites such as Charles J. Smith, who asserted that "anyone associated with the African mind can readily understand the impression [Klan tomfoolery] made i*n terrorem,*" episodes such as these were as likely as not to fool freedmen and radicals. See Smith's typescript biography of James L. Al-

corn, 27–28, in Alcorn and Family Papers, MDAH. But see also Gladys-Marie Fry, *Night Riders in Black Folk History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 110–69. As Trelease, *White Terror,* 3–13, points out, the Klan name was itself a joke that ultimately came to have powerful symbolic meaning.

25. WPA Source Material, Amite County (Folder "Reconstruction 2," 113), MDAH; Hinton Rowan Helper, *Nojoque: A Question for a Continent* (New York: George W. Carleton, 1867).

26. Quoted in WPA Source Material (Amite County, vol. 3, part 1, 225), MDAH. See also Keri Bradford, "Terror in Liberty: Death and Civil Rights in a Mississippi Community," MA thesis, University of Mississippi, 1993, 8–22.

27. Page, *Elsket and Other Stories,* 118–46, quote on 125. Page reveals without elaboration that Pulaski – originally Casimir Pulaski, the celebrated horseman of the Revolution – took his name from a former master.

28. My preliminary research stumbled across at least three tournaments organized by freedmen; it is a certainty that there were many more. See the Oxford *Falcon,* August 17, 1867; Hernando *People's Press,* August 29, 1867; and Highsmith, "Economic and Social Conditions in Rapides Parish," 160. Crooks and Crooks, *Ring Tournament in the United States,* 153, note the presence of "colored tournaments" in Maryland (and incidentally, tournaments for women). It can be presumed that freedmen also used these events for political purposes. One rider in the Rapides tournament in 1876 called himself the Knight of the Fifteenth Amendment.

The Loyal Deserters

African American Soldiers and Community in Civil War Memphis

ANDREW L. SLAP

William Sikes was in his early twenties and living in Memphis when the Civil War started. He quickly saw the conflict firsthand, explaining, "I was with the Rebel Arms with my boss Maj. Dyer who had hired me and carried me in the army with him. I was a slave at the time." At some point Sikes emancipated himself from Major Dyer, since he enlisted in the Union's Third United States Colored Heavy Artillery Regiment in December 1863. Perhaps because he was a servant for a Confederate officer, Sikes was immediately made a corporal. Two months later, though, he was reduced to ranks. Despite the demotion, Sikes stayed with the regiment and obviously worked hard, for in December 1864 he was promoted to sergeant. For some reason, however, Sikes deserted in February 1866. The desertion was not unusual, for approximately 19 percent of the regiment's soldiers deserted, which is almost three times higher than the average desertion rate of 6.7 percent for black troops. Over 10 percent of the regiment's African American noncommissioned

officers deserted. What does the desertion of William Sikes, and so many of his comrades, mean?[1]

The scholarship would make it seem easy to interpret these desertions. In one of a few passages on desertion in *For Cause and Comrades*, James McPherson states, "Desertion rates rose in the latter part of the war. Many of the conscripts, substitutes, and bounty men who made up an increasing proportion of both armies were motivated marginally if at all by duty, honor, or ideology." Bell Wiley probably gave the most succinct interpretation in his classic *The Life of Billy Yank*. After listing a few pages with entries on desertion, the index instructs, "*See also*, Cowardice." A couple of economists using statistics to examine social bonds among Union soldiers during the Civil War present an expanded assessment in their recent book *Heroes and Cowards*. According to the economists, "Some of the men were heroes, remaining with their comrades on long marches and under enemy fire. Others were cowards who deserted." They explain that "[e]ach of these men made a choice either to risk death by remaining with his company or to desert and abandon his comrades." It would be easy to label William Sikes and his comrades who deserted disloyal cowards. It would also be wrong.[2]

Some of the newest scholarship on Confederate desertion simultaneously recognizes the many quotidian reasons soldiers deserted and increasingly frames the issue in terms of competing loyalties between family and community. Aaron Sheean-Dean analyzes how low morale, dissatisfaction with the war effort, opportunity, and military conditions all played a role in soldiers' decisions to desert in *Why Confederates Fought: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia*. While examining several incidents of large-scale desertion, however, Sheean-Dean contends that "although rare, such episodes of mass desertion indicate that the men made a simple calculation: their families demanded their immediate presence." He also argues that "the line between loyalty and disloyalty continued to be fuzzy; not all men who were absent were necessarily permanent deserters." Joseph T. Glatthaar has a similar interpretation in *General Lee's Army: From Victory to Collapse*. While taking into account the many reasons Confederate soldiers deserted, he argues, "As deserters tended to be poorer than other soldiers, the hardships of war, particularly the loss of the principal breadwinner, weighed more heavily on

deserters and their families. Many also frequently had weaker bonds of community." The competition between loyalty to family – particularly if children were involved – and loyalty to a larger community was often critical to a soldier's decision to desert. In a later chapter Glatthaar reemphasizes that "[o]nce their families suffered severe hardships, the war challenged soldiers to determine where their loyalty ultimately rested, with their country and comrades or with their families." Some of the limited work done on Union desertion, however, suggests that at least in the North there was no sharp dichotomy between loyalty to family and community. Joan E. Cashin discusses many reasons Union soldiers might desert, but repeatedly stresses that "[d]eserters in the Civil War had yet another motive, common in many societies, and that was loyalty to the family and community above all else." Similarly, Robert M. Sandow shows that "intimate connections of kinship and community" enabled Union deserters to find refuge in *Deserter Country: Civil War Opposition in the Pennsylvania Appalachians*.[3]

The new emphasis on ideas of community and family in understanding desertion makes analyzing African American desertion at once both more difficult and potentially more revealing. Unlike white soldiers in the North and the South, most African American soldiers did not start the Civil War with legally recognized families. While past generations of scholars often concentrated on debating the strength or weakness of African American families, historians like Elizabeth Regosin have started to try to understand how African Americans constructed families, both conceptually and in fact, in the changing political, legal, and social environment of the mid-nineteenth century. Similarly, the concept of African American community has been a highly contested issue among historians, with generations of historians debating whether unity or conflict defined the African American community in the nineteenth century. Trying to understand the high desertion rates in an African American regiment can help provide insight into African American families and communities, two of the most important topics in African American history.[4]

The Third United States Colored Heavy Artillery epitomized the typical experiences of African American soldiers. Raised in Memphis, Tennessee, during mid-1863, most of the regiment's soldiers came from

the surrounding area. The soldiers spent the next three years dealing with hostile white Southern civilians as they garrisoned Memphis. They encountered their only battle the day after the regiment mustered out and the Memphis Race Riot of 1866 erupted. Characterizing the over five hundred soldiers in this regiment who deserted as cowards disloyal to their comrades, however, rests upon particular definitions of courage and loyalty. First, with the war long over before most soldiers deserted the regiment, it would be difficult to question their bravery or call them cowards. Second, bonds existed among many of these soldiers stretching from slavery in the antebellum period, through the Civil War, all the way to the 1890s. Desertion patterns in the Third United States Colored Heavy Artillery actually demonstrates the existence of strong African American communities in the regiment, Memphis, and the surrounding area throughout the Civil War era.[5]

The most striking pattern of the regiment's desertion figures are the many instances of soldiers from the same company deserting on the same day. While not as intense as the relationships between tent mates, Keith Wilson has found that "company loyalty . . . was significant." In this context, for 234 of the 572 total desertions, or 41 percent of the time, multiple soldiers from the same company deserted at the same time. Some of these simultaneous desertions were certainly coincidence. For example, on October 19, 1863, two soldiers with no apparent connection deserted from Company I, one from Fort Pickering and the other while out on a pass. Some rough numbers, though, indicate that simultaneous desertions were often not happenstance. The regiment existed for a little over a thousand days, so the probability that a soldier would desert on any given day was approximately one-tenth of one percent. The probability of two soldiers independently deserting from the same company on the same day is .001 to the second power, or .000001. Put another way, with each company averaging 48 desertions we would expect .048 desertions per day if they were completely unconnected. The statistical unlikeliness of so many simultaneous desertions is particularly weird in the context of the Civil War, in which desertions usually happened in ones and twos. Statistics, of course, have a notorious reputation and these could certainly be adjusted to account for many other factors. Significantly, though, examining the circumstances of the desertions actu-

ally makes it seem more likely that they were collective actions, and often suggests longstanding community bonds.[6]

According to Anthony Kaye, "Within army ranks, Union soldiers reconstituted old neighborhood ties. Many served with comrades from adjoining plantations. Fellow slaves departed their owners together and joined up in the same company or regiment." The desertion and surgeon records clearly indicate that this was common in the regiment. For instance, Jerry and David Shelton both deserted Company F on September 23, 1863, but they had other similarities. Besides sharing the same last name, both men were born in Panola County, Mississippi, and enlisted on August 27, 1863. The regimental surgeon's book shows that they took their physicals one after another. All together this suggests that they were from the same plantation and knew each other before the war. Likewise, Reuben Right and Thomas Clark were both born in Franklin County, Tennessee; enlisted in Company A on June 5, 1863; and deserted on July 19, 1863, while on guard duty on the breastworks. One of the most remarkable cases was that of John and James Alexander, who both deserted Company L on December 28, 1863. The two men took their army physicals on December 4 with only one person between them in line. More interestingly, both returned from desertion over a year later on exactly the same day, suggesting that not only did they desert together but they stayed in contact after deserting.[7]

The majority of simultaneous desertions – 58 percent to be exact – did not occur in pairs but in larger groups, making it less likely that the soldiers deserted independently. Calvin, William, and Jackson Williams all took their physicals the same day, were within six places in line of each other, and joined Company K. All three of them, along with Robert Williams, deserted on December 23, 1863. Over a third of the simultaneous desertions – 37 percent – were of groups larger than four soldiers from the same company. The largest was when fourteen soldiers deserted from Company D on the same day in February. A rough probability of those fourteen soldiers individually deserting on the same day is .001 raised to the fourteenth power. Company D's large-scale desertion in February 1866 was not unique, for ninety-two soldiers deserted the regiment that month, more than twice as many in any other month in its thirty-five months of service. Twenty-seven percent of all the reg-

iment's desertions occurred in the three-month span from January to March 1866, often with large groups of soldiers from the same company. While 41 percent of all desertions saw soldiers deserting simultaneously from the same company, this jumped to 64 percent of the desertions during this three-month period.

The circumstances surrounding this spike in both total and simultaneous desertions emphasize their collective nature and ties to communities in and around Memphis. In 1860, Memphis had approximately 3,900 African Americans out of a total population of around 23,000, or 17 percent. The number of African Americans exploded during the Civil War. By August 1865, the Freedmen's Bureau counted over 16,000 African Americans, an incredible 60 percent of the population. The numbers do not do justice to the African American community in Memphis. Many African Americans had congregated in South Memphis near Fort Pickering, where the regiment was stationed, and created a predominately African American neighborhood. The existence of such a large African American community near Fort Pickering may help explain the regiment's high desertion rates, for it gave soldiers the opportunity to desert and stay in the area by hiding in the community. In comparison, the Twentieth-ninth United States Colored Infantry was raised in Illinois, stationed in Virginia, and had a remarkably low desertion rate of 4.2 percent. Many other factors certainly affected desertion rates in units, but the proximity of a soldier to his community increased the opportunities for desertion throughout the Civil War. For example, Joseph Glatthaar explains that in the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia "those who lived anywhere near the army had opportunities to desert, and many seized that chance. Soldiers who resided great distances from the army's position had little hope of escaping to home and stayed with the army."[8]

The African American communities not only provided an increased opportunity for desertion but also seem to have played a role in motivating the spike in desertions that occurred in early 1866 as African American soldiers had good reason to see increasing threats to their families and communities. General John E. Smith was appointed the new post commander in the summer of 1865, and along with General Davis Tillson, superintendent of the Memphis Freedmen's Bureau, organized a

relocation program to force six thousand African Americans from Memphis. African American soldiers in Memphis, of which the Third United States Heavy Artillery was the largest contingent, quickly opposed the attempt to disrupt their communities. Tillson complained to Smith that "Colored Soldiers interfere with their labors and tell free people that the statements made to them by [white] soldiers sent for the purpose are false, thereby embarrassing the operations of the Bureau." Despite Smith's direct orders, African American soldiers continued to interfere with the civilian relocation program and became increasingly active in campaigning for African American rights. A sergeant in the regiment joined a delegation to the October 1865 State Colored Men's Convention at Nashville and gave the keynote address. He declared, "We came here for principles, and there will be no discension. We want the rights guaranteed by the Infinite Architect. For these rights we labor. For them we will die."[9]

Smith started to take more coercive measures to control his black soldiers in the fall of 1866. He began by implementing a 9 o'clock curfew for all black troops, and he personally visited the barracks and rode through the South Memphis saloon district to arrest violators. He eventually prohibited all African American "public entertainments, balls, and parties." The African American community protested to Tillson, who personally asked Smith to lift the prohibition. Smith not only refused but recommended folding all African American units at Fort Pickering into the Third United States Colored Heavy Artillery. The merging of the fort's African American units in January 1866 coincided with a concentrated effort by the white residents of Memphis to have the black troops withdrawn, which resulted in an increase of reported incidents between the black troops and white civilians.[10]

During the three-month span from January through March 1866, the regiment had a quarter of the desertions it suffered in its almost three-year existence. Unrest among soldiers after the war ended was nothing new, and many African American soldiers may have been particularly annoyed that they had been held in the army longer because white soldiers who had enlisted earlier wanted to go home first. In addition, Smith's refusal to lift the restrictive bans, the consolidation of African American units, and the increase in white violence appear to have been significant factors in causing the spike in desertions. Eighty-five soldiers

from the Eighty-eighth United States Colored Infantry (Eighty-eighth USCT) were transferred to Company C in early January. In the next three months eleven soldiers deserted from the company, 550 percent more than in the previous thirty months combined. Company D also had a large influx of transfers from the Eighty-eighth USCT, and they accounted for the vast majority of its record fourteen desertions on February 16, 1866. Significantly, at least eight of the fourteen deserters had been transferred from just two companies in the Eighty-eighth USCT six weeks earlier. Many of the simultaneous desertions in the period were groups of soldiers whose units – their communities – had been disbanded. The number of deserters who truly belonged to different units also significantly lowers the true desertion rate for the regiment, making it resemble much more a "normal" African American unit.[11]

The desertion rates for all African American units also needs to be reevaluated because of the extra hardships the soldiers faced. Poor treatment by the Union army exacerbated a lifetime of malnutrition common among black soldiers and caused endemic health problems throughout African American units. David Crockett insisted that poor health had caused his supposed desertion. He petitioned the government for a pension in 1913, explaining that because he was suffering with rheumatism the orderly sergeant had given him a "leave of absence until I got well. Peace had been declared, I gone out into the country, when I returned regiment was mustered out. . . . I had no mind for deserting. . . . I beg to the war department, please give the old soldier something." The government never gave the old soldier anything, even when he tried again in 1929 and his widow wrote to President Franklin Roosevelt in 1937. While Crockett's problems may have stemmed from an administrative mistake, Turner Pomey thought something more sinister was afoot. He explained, "I did not have no discharge when I left the war service on the account of the Rebel Doctor that the Yankees had captured + a great many of our soldiers was sick + I was very sick myself + every soldier that taken a dose of the Dr. medicine he died. I was just able to leave + I did so." While it is not clear if there was a "Rebel" doctor treating the troops, it may not have mattered much since the regimental surgeon wrote the War Department that "a sick negro does not seem to care whether he lives or not."[12]

The way Confederates dealt with captured African American soldiers further complicates understanding desertion, since some were made slaves instead of prisoners of war. Henry Pruett was upset that the records showed that he had deserted, and he demanded of the pension office in 1916, "I wish to ask does it not also show that I was captured and taken as a prisoner the why I was not with my regiment was captured by general Forrest's regit at Memphis Tenn on a Sunday and being a slave reared boy no education and not much sense at all only about 18 years old I did not know how to return to my regit. Now please send me blank or advise me how I may make the right application for removal the charge that is against me for desertion." While it is probably impossible to determine with certainty what actually happened, Pruett's desertion date does coincide with Nathaniel Bedford Forrest's dawn raid on Memphis that resulted in at least five hundred prisoners. Isham Knight likewise thought that the War Department had confused his capture with desertion. "I was captured by McMurry's forces + never got back to my command until after the surrender." Similar to Pruett, circumstances at least make the story possible, since there were a couple of Confederate regiments commanded by "McMurrys" that transited the area the week Knight supposedly deserted.[13]

There is also the question of what desertion meant after the Civil War had ended. Of the 572 total desertions in the regiment, 217, or 38 percent, occurred in twelve months after April 1865. It is difficult to label peace time deserters cowards, particularly when many soldiers may have been going home to protect families from white violence. Some scholars on Northern desertion contend that a lack of community caused desertion in the Union army, yet desertion in this case seems connected to strong community ties. In refuting the argument that Confederate desertions demonstrated a loss of will, Gary Gallagher has correctly argued that in contrast "northern soldiers contended with fewer worries about the safety and material well-being of their families." When analyzing African American desertion it might be more appropriate to compare it to desertion in the Confederacy, for families living in poverty and threatened by whites led many African Americans to desert.[14]

Even taking into account the transfers from other units and many post desertions, the Third United States Colored Heavy Artillery Regi-

ment still had an above average desertion rate. Comparison with some other African American units suggests that a unit's proximity to the place of enlistment was a factor in desertion. The Twenty-Ninth United States Colored Infantry Regiment was raised in Illinois, fought in Virginia, and had a desertion rate of 4.2 percent – more than a third lower than average for African American units. The Sixth United States Colored Infantry was raised in Pennsylvania, fought in Virginia, and had a higher than average desertion rate of 8 percent. James M. Paradis, however, explains that "[d]esertion statistics for the regiment as a whole are misleading. The desertion rate appears much higher when including the men who deserted from training camp, who never left Pennsylvania, and also the eleventh-hour additions to the regiment." Richard Reid likewise finds that a couple of African American regiments that were raised in North Carolina but fought outside of the state had only a handful of desertions throughout the war.[15]

Reexamining the desertion of African American troops during the Civil War also provides insight to the broader African American communities in the mid-nineteenth century. While correctly warning that the comparison cannot be exaggerated, Keith Wilson argues that the camps of African American troops "reflected some of the features of the slave communities that had developed, with varying degrees of strength, on the Southern plantations." This certainly makes sense, for many African American soldiers had been slaves just a few years earlier. The place of birth given for enlistment suggests that a majority of the soldiers in the Third United States Colored Heavy Artillery Regiment had been slaves. The correlation between soldiers deserting and slaves running away is complicated by differences. Slaves often used something called *petit marronage*, running away for short periods of time as a means to temporarily reunite with loved ones or negotiate with their owners. In contrast, only 88 of the 572 regiment's desertions, or 15 percent, ended with a soldier returning. In addition, desertions did not noticeably rise before Christmas or seem tied to the agricultural cycle. Though there are certainly differences between soldiers deserting and slaves running away from plantations, it is interesting to note that according to Peter Kolchin "[s]lave resistance can tell us much about autonomy and communality in the antebellum South. One of the most striking characteristics of

that resistance – aside from its very existence – is that it was largely the work of individuals." Yet these soldiers who had been slaves just a few years earlier often deserted in groups, sometimes quite large, and showed strong community bonds.[16]

For many of these soldiers the bonds formed during slavery lasted throughout the Civil War and for decades afterward. Isham Knight may have been unsuccessful getting a pension, but it was not due to lack of community support. Two former soldiers from the regiment testified in 1885 that he had been injured in the line of duty. One explained, "I was acquainted with him 5 or 6 years before the war and he was a stout and able bodied man. . . . I have known him ever since the war, we live about five miles apart. I see him from two to three times per month and know the effects of the wound." For William Sikes community bonds fittingly did help get a pension, since it is possible that the reason he deserted in the first place was to support or protect his fiancée Nancy, for in his pension application he wrote that he married her "right after I came out of the army." Since Sikes probably only made $120 a year as an African American sergeant, and the army was usually at least a few months late even paying white troops, the $150 to $180 average yearly wage, including housing and clothing, for freedmen in Memphis immediately after the war was probably attractive for a man contemplating marriage. Sikes and his wife spent the rest of their lives in Memphis. Though both the company books and the military service records are clear that he deserted, Sikes stated in his pension claim in 1900 that he had been discharged from the army. To support his pension claim Sikes had several veterans from the regiment testify on his behalf. All of the veterans lived in Memphis in the late nineteenth century. Most had been in the city before the war and had become noncommissioned officers in the regiment. Corporal Isaac Polk – who deserted a few weeks after Sikes – was typical. He testified: "I knew the claimant before the war. I belonged to Mrs. S. H. Brown. He was a free man. We both lived in Memphis Tenn. I saw him frequently while in the service. . . . I do not know the year when the claimant first complained of the disabilities but it was before we were mustered out." The communities that both caused and helped many soldiers to desert continued to protect them decades afterward.[17]

The Third United States Colored Heavy Artillery Regiment was not

a great military unit, but it was an integral part of long-standing African American communities around Memphis throughout the nineteenth century. The soldiers who deserted may not have been loyal to the United States Army, but they were loyal to their communities.

Notes

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1. Pension File for William Sikes, National Archives. There are disagreements over the exact percentage of deserters since historians have disagreed over both the number of deserters and the number of soldiers in the Union Army. The numbers here come from Ella Lonn's *Desertion during the Civil War* (Gloucester, Mass.: American Historical Association, 1928), 149–50, 226.

2. James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 168; Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1952, 1971, 2001), 449; Dora L. Costa and Matthew E. Kahn, *Heroes and Cowards: The Social Face of War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 10, 36.

3. Aaron Sheean-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 146–47, 91–92, 94; Joseph T. Glatthaar, *General Lee's Army: From Victory to Collapse* (New York: Free Press, 2008), 409, 439–40; Joan E. Cashin, "Deserters, Civilians, and Draft Resistance in the North," in *The War Was You and Me: Civilians in the American Civil War*, ed. Joan E. Cashin (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), 266, 279; Robert M. Sandow, *Deserter Country: Civil War Opposition in the Pennsylvania Appalachians* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 20–21. A good starting point for the debate on Confederate desertion is Gary W. Gallagher's *The Confederate War: How Popular Will, Nationalism, and Military Strategy Could Not Stave off Defeat* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 31–34. Some other recent works on Confederate desertion include William Blair, *Virginia's Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861–65* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); and Kevin Ruffner, "'A Dreadful Affect upon Good Soldiers': A Study of Desertion in a Confederate Regiment," MA thesis, University of Virginia, 1987. The best recent discussion of the literature on desertion is William A. Blair's introduction to the reprint of Ella Lonn's *Desertion during the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

4. Some of the newer works on African American families are Peter W. Barda-

glio, *Reconstructing the Household: Families, Sex, and the Law in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Elizabeth Regosin, *Freedom's Promise: Ex-Slave Families and Citizenship in the Age of Emancipation* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002); and Nancy D. Bercaw, *Gendered Freedoms: Race, Rights, and the Politics of Household in the Delta, 1861–1875* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003). Dylan C. Penningroth examines the relationship between African American families and communities in *Claims of Kinfolk: African American Community in the Nineteenth Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003). Other recent work that focuses on African American communities includes Steven Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: University Press, 2005); Susan Eva O'Donovan, *Becoming Free in the Cotton South* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007); and Anthony E. Kaye, *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009). For an excellent discussion of historiographical trends on African American families and communities see John C. Rodrigue, "Black Agency after Slavery," in *Reconstructions: New Perspectives on the Postbellum United States*, ed. Thomas J. Brown (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

5. Keith P. Wilson, *Campfires of Freedom: The Camp Life of Black Soldiers during the Civil War* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2002), 21–22, 39, 45, 64–65, 178, 185, 188, 191. Examples of major works on African American soldiers that have little on desertion include one paragraph in Dudley Taylor Cornish's *The Sable Arm: Black Troops in the Union Army, 1861–1865* (1956; reprint, Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1987), 288–89; and a few sentences in Joseph T. Glatthaar's *Forged in Battle: the Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 26, 164–65. The combination of the number of desertions and percentage of desertions in the 3 USCHA correctly imply that the unit was significantly larger than the average Civil War regiment, with a total of 3,007 men enrolled during its existence. There are a number of reasons for the large size of the 3 USCHA. First, the unit was a heavy artillery regiment, which normally enrolled approximately 2,200 men, compared to infantry regiments that often averaged around 1,300 men enrolled. Second, as mentioned later in the essay, after the war ended other units were folded into the 3 USCHA. For the size of different types of regiments see William F. Fox, *Regimental Losses in the American Civil War, 1861–1865: A Treatise on the Extent and Nature of the Mortuary Losses in the Union Regiments, with Full and Exhaustive Records on File in the State Military Bureaus and at Washington* (Albany, N.Y.: Albany Publishing, 1889), 466.

6. Wilson, *Campfires of Freedom*, 10. There are a variety of ways to manipulate the statistics to make it less or more likely that soldiers were deserting together.

For instance, many soldiers did not enlist in the first month or two the regiment formed so they would have had less days to desert, thus making it more likely they would desert on the same day because they had fewer opportunities. On the other hand, soldiers would certainly have had friends in other companies and may have deserted with them, a possibility these do not consider. The statistics are meant to be suggestive, not definitive.

7. Anthony E. Kaye, *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 199. As can be expected, there are some differences between the surgeon's book, the company books, and the military service records, which I have attempted to reconcile as best as possible. The military service records state that Reuben Right and Thomas Clark deserted on July 12, 1863, while the company book gives a date of July 19, 1863. I used the latter since that follows the chronological order in the company book of the other desertions, but it is not particularly important in this instance since in either case they deserted on the same day. While the military service records list John Alexander deserting on December 28, 1863, I have given precedence to the company books that give the date of his desertion as December 8, 1863 because it is written in two locations.

8. The exact numbers in August 1865 were 16,509 African Americans out of 27,703 total residents. George C. Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 34; Bobby L. Lovett, "Memphis Riots: White Reaction to Blacks in Memphis, May 1865–July 1866," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 9–10, 12–13; Ernest Walter Hooper, "Memphis, Tennessee: Federal Occupation and Reconstruction, 1862–1870," PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1957, 175; Edward A. Miller Jr., *The Black Civil War Soldiers of Illinois: The Story of the Twenty-ninth U.S. Colored Infantry* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 172. Glatthaar, *General Lee's Army*, 412.

9. Lovett, "Memphis Riots," 11–12, 14–17; Paul A. Cimbala, *"Under the Guardianship of the Nation": The Freedmen's Bureau and the Reconstruction of Georgia, 1865–1870* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 6, 237–78 (n. 30).

10. Lovett, "Memphis Riots," 16–18; Hooper, "Memphis, Tennessee,"178–79.

11. Tillson was transferred to Georgia in September 1865. It appears, though, that Smith did not finish rejecting all the appeals to his policies until January 1866, which is the same month that the Eighty-eighth USCT and the Second USCLA were folded into the Third USCHA.

12. Margaret Humphreys, *Intensely Human: The Health of the Black Soldier in the American Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Pension File for Joseph Dunbar (alias David Crockett), National Archives; Pension File for Turner Pompey, National Archives; H. H. Hood to the War Department, August 21, 1865, Benjamin Hood Papers, Lincoln Library.

13. Andrew Ward has a nice discussion of how the Confederates treated African

American soldiers in *River Run Red: The Fort Pillow Massacre in the American Civil War* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 295–302; Pension File for Henry Pruett, National Archives; Pension File for Isham Knight, National Archives.

14. Judith Lee Hallock, "The Role of the Community in Civil War Desertion," *Civil War History* 29 (June 1983): 134; Costa and Kahn, *Heroes and Cowards*, 102, 104; Gallagher, *Confederate War*, 33; Wilson, *Campfires of Freedom*, 191, 185.

15. Miller, *Black Civil War Soldiers of Illinois*, 172; James M. Paradis, *Strike the Blow for Freedom: The 6th United States Colored Infantry in the Civil War* (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Maine Books, 1998), 92; Richard M. Reid, *Freedom for Themselves: North Carolina's Black Soldiers in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 108, 139.

16. Wilson, *Campfires of Freedom*, 7; Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619–1877* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993, 2003), 161. Desertions averaged 16.3 per month for the life of the regiment and 19.6 during its three Decembers. The almost 20 percent increase in desertions, however, were skewed by 39 in December 1863 compared to only 10 in December in 1864 and 9 in December 1865. In addition, of the 21 deserters in December 1863 for whom I currently have enlistment dates 15 had just joined the regiment in either November or December. The percentage of deserters in December 1863 is also lower than average, only 10 percent (half of these did not return for over a year), further reducing the chances of *petit marronage*.

17. Pension File for William Sikes, National Archives; Military Service Record for Isaac Polk, National Archives. *Records of the Field Offices for the State of Tennessee, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1872* (Washington, D.C.: United States Congress and National Archives and Records Administration, 2005), 3. The pay situation for African American soldiers during the Civil War is often confusing. African American soldiers initially made $10 a month, regardless of rank, and had $3 a month deducted for clothing. After numerous long protests Congress authorized equal pay for black and white soldiers in 1864, but only if the black soldiers could prove that they had been free before April 19, 1861. As the contradictory evidence in his pension file below shows, it is questionable whether Sikes was free, and certainly whether he could prove it. In March 1865 Congress approved equal pay for all black soldiers who had enlisted with the promise of equal pay, but there is no indication that this applied to Sikes. For information on the pay of African American soldiers see Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle,* 65, 174–75. Isaac Polk's testimony that William Sikes was a freeman before the Civil War seems to contradict Sikes's self-description of being a slave. The description of Major Dyer "hiring" Sikes while he was a slave may indicate that he was a slave with a great deal of autonomy who was often hired out, thus leading Polk to think of him as a freeman. It should also be noted that Polk and Sikes made these statements in 1900, almost forty years since the start of the Civil War.

PART FIVE

Honor Is the Gift a Man Gives Himself—And Men Can Be Very, Very Generous

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The Arrest and Court-Martial of Captain George Dobson

KENNETH W. NOE

On September 14, 1862, during the Battle of Munfordville, Kentucky, Captain George Dobson abandoned his company to help carry from the field his wounded regimental colonel, who also happened to be his brother-in-law. For three days, he personally tended to the dying man, and then claimed illness as the Union army reoccupied the field. Captured and paroled twice, Dobson waited almost two months after being exchanged to report for duty. His regiment's new colonel ordered Dobson arrested and court-martialed for dishonorably deserting the colors during action, allowing himself to be captured, and remaining absent without leave. Dobson angrily fought back, asserting that he had acted honorably, both as a soldier and as a brother-in-law. Other officers including the fabled martinet Braxton Bragg proved sympathetic to his claims, and the court-martial board acquitted him. Dobson emerged from the affair bruised, but with his career and honor largely intact. While postwar events suggest that his actions continued to leave

something of a stain on the increasingly bright international genealogy of his in-laws, Dobson in the short run had preserved his honor and theirs. Understanding the Dobson trial, its results, and the memory that followed thus promises to lead scholars closer to the reality of discipline and justice in a military community steeped in honor culture, as well as the careful sculpting of the historical memory of Confederate heroes.[1]

Such considerations must begin well before the war. Born in Scotland, George Dobson in 1860 was a thirty-nine-year-old printer from Jackson, Mississippi, a father of three, and a man of modest personal means who considered himself something of a failure despite (or perhaps because of) powerful and significant connections through marriage. Dobson's wife Jane was the sister of prominent Scottish-born businessman James Smith. In Jackson, Smith had run a profitable hardware store, become active in local politics and charities, and developed a close friendship with Jefferson Davis. His eventual fortune derived from a shadier source. In the 1850s, Smith and his younger brother Robert began successfully pirating American patents. Smith purchased iron stoves in Ohio, ostensibly for use in Vicksburg, and then shipped them instead to Scotland, to which James Smith had returned. James initially simply resold the slightly altered stoves, but soon he began producing his own profitable knockoffs. By 1860, the Smith & Wellstood company not only offered stoves but also owned an iron foundry and had secured a contract to produce castings for Singer sewing machines. The Smiths were on their way to becoming millionaires on the shoulders of duped Yankees.[2]

When the war came, the trans-Atlantic Smith family offered its full support to its adopted home. James not only defended the Confederacy in the British press but sent an artillery piece and twenty-five rifles to aid in the defense of Jackson. Robert, now a reserved twenty-four-year-old and already a lieutenant in the capital's prestigious Mississippi Rifles, left the hardware store in February 1861 and soon became the Rifles' captain. Days later, he received a plum first assignment, escorting his brother's friend Jefferson Davis on the first leg of his journey to Montgomery for his inauguration. Once in camp the Rifles evolved into Company A of the Tenth Mississippi Infantry. While serving at Pensacola, Florida, under Braxton Bragg, the men of the regiment elected the popular Smith colonel after his predecessor's death. Despite his age,

George Dobson chose that moment to enlist as well. In June he joined his brother-in-law's old company as a private, pointedly riding the new colonel's horse from Jackson into camp.[3]

Skirmishes and shelling aside, the next six months at Pensacola proved monotonous and often melancholy to Private Dobson, who brooded about his unspecified "neglect and brutality" toward his wife, his "misspent life," and especially his lack of financial success. At times, he yearned to go home, to do better by his loved ones, and especially to build his fortune. Such sentiments were hardly unusual among new recruits, however, and a new thread of heady military ambition simultaneously emerged. When Bragg began to encourage his men to reenlist as three-year volunteers, Dobson expressed "no intention of doing so, at present, til I can see what I can do elsewhere. Several of the best members in our Company," he added, "have offered to join me if I would get up a Company. I would do so, and think successfully, were it not for my crippled position financially." Dobson ideally wanted to command a company in a regiment commanded by his brother-in-law, noting that most of the men of the regiment would follow the "very popular" Smith if he chose to raise a new command.[4]

In the end, Dobson got his wish, and in the old regiment. In January 1862 the Tenth Mississippi reorganized around a mixture of veteran and new troops. The men of the Mississippi Rifles – now restyled Company D – elected Dobson their captain under Smith's regimental command. Given the company's roots in the business world of Jackson – clerks, tradesmen, and students dominated its rolls – the election immediately elevated Dobson's stature at home as well as in camp, an occasion sealed by the gift of a new sword from his "friends" in Jackson. His brother-in-law was equally proud of him, advising his sister that she needed to take some of the money he was sending home to her in order to buy her husband a new uniform "suited to his present rank": clearly Dobson could not afford to buy his own.[5]

Dobson's boredom at Pensacola abruptly ended as well. After the fall of Forts Henry and Donelson and the surrender of Nashville in February, Albert Sidney Johnston's Confederate army retreated to the vital railroad junction at Corinth, Mississippi. There, Johnston and P. G. T. Beauregard anchored a new defensive line. Bragg's force quickly shifted

to Corinth. The trip proved exhausting for the newly minted Captain Dobson, who spent much of his time trying to find food and whiskey for his hungry, cold, and often wet men.[6] More difficult days followed. At Corinth, the regiment joined the brigade of Mississippi attorney and politician James R. Chalmers, attached to Jones Withers's division in Leonidas Polk's corps of the newly styled Army of the Mississippi. Shortly thereafter, the army started its arduous trek to intercept Ulysses S. Grant's Federal army at Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee. For the regiment, unused to hard marching, the next days were exhausting almost to the point of collapse. But Dobson added with some pride that he "stood it better than most of them."

On the morning of April 6, 1862, the Battle of Shiloh began. Polk's corps, third in column of battle, surged forward tardily. The largely untested officers of the Tenth Mississippi quickly revealed their rawness, only remembering to order the men to fix bayonets and load their rifles after they came under fire.[7] Yet Smith soon grasped command. "The Col.," Dobson wrote Jane, notably describing her brother with unexplained formality, "rode along the ranks and exclaimed 'Now boys, give them one volley – a yell – then give them the cold steel and give them —.'"[8] According to Adjutant E. T. Sykes, Chalmers told the young colonel that "he deserved to be a Major-General, [but then] commanded him not again to expose himself so recklessly."[9] In the fighting that followed, Smith's regiment, "led by its gallant colonel," pursued the enemy a half-mile through the abandoned Federal camps before Johnston sent the brigade to the extreme right. Before sundown ended the fighting, the brigade had engaged in what Chalmers described as five additional, separate fights.[10] The next day went differently, as the Federals took the initiative and advanced in force early in the morning. Dobson again praised Smith's actions during the otherwise disappointing day. "Nothing but the skill of the *Colonel* saved us," he wrote after the battle, "as they had us nearly surrounded and would have captured or killed us to a man, they also captured our breakfasts and burned our tents."[11]

The discouraging defeat aside, Shiloh cemented Smith's growing reputation. Bragg in particular marked the quiet young Scotsman as a rising star in the army he soon came to command. The brigade itself gained a sobriquet, the "Mississippi High Pressure Brigade." Dobson's behav-

ior in the battle remains unrecorded, in contrast, and all that is certain is that after the fight he was hospitalized for an unrecorded illness. Later events at least suggest that he had behaved competently enough.[12] He returned to camp in time to take part in the opening stages of Bragg's Kentucky Campaign. Edmund Kirby Smith's army already had penetrated Kentucky, and now Bragg struck northward from Chattanooga on August 26. By September 11 his lead elements were in Glasgow, Kentucky, in position to control both the strategic Louisville Pike and the vital Louisville & Nashville Railroad (L&N), while at the same time cutting Don Carlos Buell's lines of communication. Bragg ordered Chalmers to push on to Cave City in order to tear up track and seize the rail station's telegraph.[13]

Chalmers arrived near midnight on September 12 and soon became a silent eavesdropper to frenzied Federal communications. Most of the telegraph chatter concerned the Federal garrison at Munfordville, a dozen miles north. There, across nearly perpendicular bluffs, the L&N's imposing Green River Bridge spanned a distance of over 1,800 feet. Destruction of the vulnerable bridge would shut down the railroad for months and cut off supplies to Federal troops farther south. The Union army thus had defended it since the beginning of the war, initially from rifle pits and a two-story log stockade near the bridge. The garrison's new commander, John T. Wilder, had augmented the older defenses with stout new works including a 700-yard long rifle trench and Fort Craig, the latter equipped with four artillery lunettes. At some points in between the old stockade and the new fort, the works reached a height of ten feet. Wilder also had his men fell trees for tangled abatis and open fields of fires.

Now facing Bragg's imminent approach, Wilder desperately telegraphed his harried superiors in Louisville for help, and in so doing revealed his weakness to the Chalmers as the Confederate listened in on the wire. Later in the day, a message arrived indicating that reinforcements were on the way. Other telegrams indicated that Buell was pushing hard from the south to reach the bridge in time. At this juncture, with a window of opportunity seemingly about to close, Confederate Colonel John Scott joined the cacophony of voices confronting Chalmers. As Kirby Smith's cavalry commander, Scott had cockily demanded that

Wilder surrender to his 300 horse soldiers. When Wilder refused, Scott sent a message to Chalmers asking for help. A small garrison of raw recruits comprised the garrison, he promised, and it would fall easily.[14]

Smelling an easy and significant victory – E. T. Sykes charged after the war that Chalmers's goal was "to win a Major-General's star" – the general made up his mind quickly.[15] Without bothering to inform Bragg, he determined to attack. The brigade stumbled northward through the night and arrived south of the Union works at about dawn. Peering through an early morning fog, Chalmers blanched; the Federal works looked much more imposing than Scott had suggested. When Union skirmishers opened fire, however, the general concluded to attack. He ordered two regiments forward along with his artillery, with Smith's Tenth Mississippi to follow. When fires broke out near the bridge, he erroneously concluded that the entire garrison was retreating, and he pushed his entire brigade forward. While two regiments advanced on Fort Craig, Chalmers ordered the Tenth Mississippi to charge across three-quarters of a mile of open ground, break through the earthworks and the log stockade, and seize the bridge.[16]

Smith would obey but he loudly complained that launching such an unsupported assault was suicidal. After the war, Smith's relatives and others charged that the entire attack was merely a ruse to get the popular Smith killed. Despite heavy fire from the stockade, the regiment reached the abatis that lay in a ravine in front of the stockade before grinding to a halt. Spying a path through the felled timber, Smith waved his hat and shouted, "Follow me in!" At that moment, a ball penetrated his abdomen and slammed into his spine.[17]

Dobson watched him fall. "Obeying the promptings of my Military, as well as my natural (for he was my brother-in-law) affection for him," the captain later explained, "I assisted in taking him from the field to an adjacent house, and by consent of Dr. Westbrooke, then our Brigade Surgeon remained endeavoring to alleviate his suffering."[18] Sergeant Major William French and Smith's enslaved body servant Henry helped Dobson carry the wounded colonel off. For the next two hours Dobson tended to his brother-in-law while the Mississippians of his company and regiment remained under fire in the ravine. Regimental casualties proved heavy, with thirteen killed and ninety-five wounded. Yet they were surprisingly

light in Company D, which lost only one man killed and four wounded. Such figures suggest that Dobson's company did not play a significant role in the fight after he left them. Chalmers for his part ignored them all while vainly launching attack waves against Fort Craig. When those assaults failed, he tried a ruse, demanding the garrison's surrender. Wilder refused, but he did agree to a truce so that both sides could gather their wounded and dead. By then, Chalmers had had enough. The brigade sulkily retreated to Cave City, without Smith or Dobson. To his self-described "mortification" some of Wilder's men promptly captured and paroled Captain Dobson, allowing him to remain with Smith at the field hospital.[19]

Smith lingered an agonizing three days before dying on September 17. In the background, related events moved quickly. Bragg shifted his entire army to Munfordville and compelled Wilder to surrender. Concerned with Buell's quick approach, he briefly considered making a stand, but in the end marched toward Bardstown. The road out of Munfordville eventually led to Perryville.[20] That road, however, was not one that George Dobson took. He remained behind in Munfordville even after Smith's death, citing self-identified "Flux." He also had taken sick after the Battle of Shiloh, and would do so again just before the battle at Murfreesboro; Dobson seems to have reacted to the stress of combat psychosomatically. As it was, he was still there when Buell's army arrived hours later. Dobson once again found himself a prisoner. He remained in Federal hands until the end of October, when the Union army paroled him near Vicksburg. According to the exchange system then in place, Dobson should have reported immediately to Confederate authorities. Instead, he only returned to his regiment's camp two months later, exactly two days before Christmas. Dobson never revealed in writing where he had been all that time, only stating that "as soon as my *conscience* was satisfied that I was exchanged was anxious to do my duty and entered upon its discharge." The lack of letters home during that period suggest that he had returned home to Jackson.[21]

Dobson rejoined the Tenth Mississippi outside of Murfreesboro as another battle was brewing. He proudly reported to his wife that he "met with an enthusiastic reception from my boys."[22] He then promptly claimed illness again; a notation in his official records notes that he was "left sick in Camp Dec 28, 1862."[23] Yet whatever was wrong with him,

it was not illness alone that kept him out of the subsequent Battle of Stones' River. While the full circumstances remain foggy, an additional factor was the regiment's new colonel, James M. Walker. Unlike the Jacksonian Dobson, Walker was an outsider with a narrow base of support. A native of De Soto County in the far northwest corner of the state, he had started his military career in the Ninth Mississippi. In the same regimental reorganization of early 1862 that made Smith colonel and Dobson a company commander, the brass shifted Walker and his entire company into the Tenth Mississippi. Wounded at Shiloh, he assumed command of the regiment at Munfordville after both Smith and the regiment's lieutenant colonel fell, rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel a day later, and became colonel in mid-December.[24] Whatever the relationship was between Captains Dobson and Walker before that battle – Dobson had never mentioned him in his letters – it clearly was toxic after Dobson's return. "The abortion, our present Colonel, has led me a pretty time since I got here," Dobson later complained. "[H]is stupidity deprived me of the pleasure of leading my men at Murfreesboro; his sagacity ordered me to duty when the fight was over; his malevolence induced him to prefer charges against me for *deserting my colors* at Munfordville."[25]

As Dobson indicated in his angry final clause, on January 26, more than a month after Dobson rejoined the regiment, Walker ordered Dobson arrested. The charges stated that at Munfordville the captain did "abandon the colors, and absent himself without leave . . . until the 23rd day of December 1862." Additionally, Dobson did "intentionally and unnecessarily suffer himself to be captured and paroled by the enemy." Walker cited five potential witnesses to Dobson's dereliction: regimental major James Barr, two other company commanders, the acting regimental adjutant, and Sergeant Major French.[26] The allegations came as a shock to Dobson, who only five days earlier had written Jane that "I am in command of the Regiment half the time, and about the other half 'Officer of the day.'"[27] What actually motivated Walker to level the charges at that moment is lost to history, but Dobson claimed that Walker was trying to distract the regiment. "If Col. Walker could show as clean a record at the fight at Munfordville," Dobson fumed, "he would not now be branded by the regiment as an arrant coward. . . . he got his

position, not through merit, but fawning and sycophancy, and retains it by the same means."[28]

Dobson's initial response to his arrest was to dash off a letter to Bragg's headquarters, proclaiming his innocence and asking that the general release him. Detailing his service record, Dobson insisted that at Munfordville he had acted both as a good soldier and as a good brother-in-law in helping to carry Smith from the field. He had stayed at the hospital "by consent of Dr. Westbrooke, then our Brigade Surgeon remained endeavoring to alleviate his suffering." Captured and paroled, he returned to the regiment as soon as possible, only waiting until his conscience "was satisfied that I was exchanged." Dobson added, "I hope that my general does not suppose for a moment that I would leave the Flag of my Regiment in the face of the foe. There is Shiloh, there is Mumfordsville's [*sic*] bloody charge made by the 10th Mississippi. I can point with becoming modesty, point to these, and many other instances, and own, among my comrades in Arms the part it has fallen my lot to play."[29]

While he awaited Bragg's decision, Dobson took part in significant regimental discussions about raising a monument to Smith; clearly the old commander was missed and mourned. He also expressed confidence that Bragg would both release him and halt the trial. "If not," he wrote in a letter home, "I entertain no fears of an honorable acquittal before a Court Martial." Dobson's story also evolved subtly, at least where his long-suffering wife was concerned. He had told Bragg that the surgeon had "consented" to his request to remain with Smith. To his wife, however, Dobson insisted that the doctor had "detailed me to remain with Col. Smith and his authority is sufficient," a spurious assertion Bragg would have seen right through. Moreover, he wrote Jane that he had only left the line "*after* the fighting was all over." As for being captured the second time, by that time he was "prostrated by Flux as to be unable to leave my room."[30] The differences are telling. Dobson was more anxious to prove his courage and honorable behavior to his wife than he was to his commanding officer, even if it meant asserting that he had only remained with her dying brother under orders.

Meanwhile, Dobson's letter wound its way through channels. Chalmers notably praised Dobson in an endorsement, significantly writing that he was "regarded as one of the most gallant of [the regiment's]

officers." On February 1, Bragg himself at least partially agreed. "Not doubting that the Captain was activated by proper motives," he wrote, "he is relieved from arrest." The trial needed to go on, however. "His act of allowing himself to be made a prisoner, was not justified," Bragg continued, "and when paroled it was his duty to have reported & received orders, & not to await notice at an unknown place."[31]

The trial took place nine days later. Of the five projected witnesses, only two testified, Sergeant Major French and Captain Sykes. Both corroborated Dobson's story, and the board summarily acquitted him.[32] Despite the favorable verdict, Dobson correctly suspected that his days in the regiment were numbered. The high command planned to consolidate the battered Tenth Mississippi with the Forty-fourth Mississippi. The new regiment would have too many officers, and Dobson expected to be left on the outside with Walker remaining in the fold. He was right; Bragg personally sent him to Polk to be detailed elsewhere. That eventually meant commanding a guard detachment at Atlanta's Empire Hospital, a clear demotion for a combat officer.[33]

Yet as it turned out, his exile from the army was a short one. The consolidation never gelled, and by August Dobson once again was in command of Company D. Ironically it was Colonel Walker who seemed to lose more in the end. He had resigned in March, complaining of chronic diarrhea. James Barr, one of the proposed witnesses against Dobson who never testified, superseded Walker in command.[34] The new colonel proved friendlier; Barr's report of September 1, 1863, rated Dobson "competent & efficient." After Chickamauga, Barr cited him for gallantry. There is no record of Dobson's behavior on Missionary Ridge, but he was with the army at Dalton, Georgia, early in 1864 when he submitted his resignation. A certificate from a medical examining board certified his unfitness for duty due to the effects of frostbitten feet.[35] Dobson returned to Jackson, where he served briefly as a justice of the peace. But he seemed incapable of settling down. After the war he moved to Tampa, Florida, where he worked on a newspaper and practiced law. By 1870 he was in Houston, again employed as a printer. It was there that he died. Jane Smith Dobson promptly took her youngest child and went home to Scotland and her relatives for good.[36]

The "weird" case of George Dobson's arrest and court-martial immediately begs the question, why did the court martial board decide in his favor? Admittedly the evidence at hand a century-and-a-half later is frustratingly incomplete, yet a preponderance of what remains clearly seems to come down on the side of Colonel Walker. Dobson *had* abandoned his unit in the face of the enemy, whatever he told his wife, and as Bragg insisted, Dobson allowed himself to be captured and did not report for duty promptly after his parole. Why then was he exonerated?

Certain explanatory facts seem clear enough. For one thing, while a furious Dobson had every reason in letters home to fume and exaggerate the claims that his new colonel and accuser was both a coward and an incompetent, the events of the trial and Walker's subsequent resignation seem to confirm that his was a troubled command. Walker simply was unable to find men who would denounce Dobson despite a presumably sizable cohort of witnesses. Indeed, Dobson's peers and commanders consistently described him as a competent officer, with Munfordville the one exception. Chalmers specifically praised Dobson's gallantry, while after the war J. C. Rietti, a citizen of Jackson and one of Dobson's sergeants, remembered him as a "brave and fearless chieftain."[37]

Dobson's overall record of competence and courage would have mattered to the officers and men of the army. As Earl Hess maintains, Civil War soldiers recognized reasonable "limits of bravery." Soldiers generally were willing to excuse other men and sometimes even entire regiments who fled the field if their reputations were otherwise good, if special circumstances were involved, and if they performed honorably in the aftermath. While often derided in other circumstances as cowardice or skulking, helping a wounded relative or comrade off the field well could be one of those acceptable moments of discretionary flight, providing that other soldiers viewed it as a rare, genuine act of camaraderie, rather than simply a sneak's excuse for getting off the line, and if the man otherwise had stored up enough battlefield capital. Commanders' orders barring the practice aside, it happened regularly enough. While a captain acting in such a manner was undoubtedly unusual, the men of the Tenth Mississippi in the end concluded that Dobson had met their standard.[38]

But what of the notorious Bragg himself, who defended Dobson's motives in taking Smith from the field even when it had meant deserting his men? While he was a thorough disciplinarian and an unyielding drillmaster, Bragg was never the homicidal monster that soldiers such as the ubiquitous Tennessean Sam Watkins and later historians routinely made him out to be. Soldiers endlessly repeated stories of Bragg having men shot for minor offenses to the point that they believed that each story comprised a separate case, when in fact the numbers actually were few and the offenses significant. In that light, Bragg's apparently unusual actions in the Dobson case actually are unsurprising. Bragg openly admired Smith and apparently understood why his brother-in-law would want to assist him – thus his reference to Dobson's "proper motives." Accordingly, he released Dobson from arrest and only allowed the court-martial to occur in regard to the final charge, Dobson's tardy return to the colors. Moreover, that trial crucially took place at a unique moment, the announced consolidation with the Forty-fourth Mississippi. One can only wonder how it affected the verdict, but Dobson, presumably his judges, and even Bragg knew before the trial that Dobson soon could lose his company command anyway. Why dishonor an otherwise gallant soldier as well as the Smith family when Dobson could be quietly shuffled off to a face-saving command of no importance?[39]

Honor thus played a role in the Dobson acquittal, but not as one might initially expect. According to scholars such as Dickson Bruce, Kenneth Greenberg, and Bertram Wyatt-Brown, antebellum Southerners equated the concept of honor with status and reputation as conferred by the wider community. A man of honor was one known for certain traits that notably included courage and indeed ferocity when threatened. That is to say, it was the reputation of courage, not the reality of it, that counted. Loyalty to kinsmen was equally key; a family's honor required protection from insult, while families would carry reputations of cowardice or courage for generations because of the actions of one individual. Honesty also mattered, but as Greenberg points out, no insult was more likely to provoke retaliation than one's assertion that another man had lied. Southerners apparently lied as much as anyone in the nineteenth century, and it was the unmasking of a lie, the public denouncement of falsehood, rather than the lie itself, that could not be tolerated.

All of these factors allowed Dobson and eventually others to assert that his actions had been honorable as both a soldier and a brother-in-law even as he abandoned his men on the field of battle. Indeed, one notes the frequency with which he relied on the touchstone of honor in his defenses. To Bragg he boasted of his usual courage as a warrior, but also maintained that he honorably had acted to save not just a superior officer but a kinsman. What was more "natural"? He then had fallen ill, and he depicted the man who claimed otherwise as a base liar. Indeed, Dobson told his wife, it was Walker who was the battlefield coward, not he. Moreover, Dobson claimed that he had remained away from the army after parole for purely honorable reasons, unwilling to return to arms before officially exchanged, as he would have given his word to Federal authorities when obtaining that parole. By charging otherwise, Walker the coward again had "given him the lie" and thus put himself in the necessary position of proving his assertions or otherwise losing his honor. Dobson at that juncture was adamant that he welcomed the trial as a sort of duel that would prove both his honor and his courage.[40]

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Dobson was a member of the Smith family by marriage, and as a result his dishonor if proven threatened to become theirs. That is to say, the not-guilty verdict and its aftermath took place in the still considerable shadow of the story's most significant character, the man who was not there, the hero Robert Smith. It bears repeating that Dobson had not carried an unknown private from the field, but rather the iconic Smith, an officer James Walker could never replace. As his brother-in-law, Dobson was the last tangible reminder of Smith in the regiment. Indeed, in the army he now solely represented the entire powerful Smith clan. In late January, even as Walker was leveling charges, the men of the Tenth Mississippi were making plans to erect a memorial to their beloved fallen colonel. In memory at least, Smith was still in camp, and Dobson was his closest kinsman, the man who had risked all to save him. If the army damned Dobson as a coward for those actions, Smith, the object of that cowardly dereliction, would have been tarnished as well.

Subsequent events reinforce the conclusion that protecting Smith's honor trumped revealing Dobson's apparent dishonor. During the quarter-century following the trial, Smith's memory increasingly eclipsed that

of his ne'er-do-well brother-in-law. In the spring of 1863, while Dobson was in Atlanta, Smith's sister Herriot traveled by wagon to Munfordville to retrieve her brother's body and return it to Jackson's Greenwood Cemetery. When the war ended, wealthy elder brother James took the lead in memorializing his younger brother's life. While the men of the old regiment never followed through, a grieving James Smith obsessively erected no less than four memorials to his brother's memory. One stands in a family plot in London. Another, a tall funerary obelisk, went up in Edinburgh's Dean Cemetery. A third obelisk marks Smith's grave at Jackson. Smith placed the most imposing monument, however, at Munfordville. In 1883, he returned to America, visited Jefferson Davis, bought land just south of the Green River Bridge, and commissioned the creation of a twenty-five-feet-tall, thirty-five-ton limestone obelisk. It eventually bore the inscription "South 42' west and ninety poles distant is the place of The Sacrifice of Col. Robert A. Smith and his regiment the Tenth Mississippi on Sept. 14, 1862." With the exception of the ancient Cleopatra's Needle in New York's Central Park, it remains the largest single-stone obelisk in the United States.[41]

On September 17, 1884, the twenty-second anniversary of Smith's death, a crowd gathered at Munfordville for the monument's unveiling. The crowd aside, it was a family affair. James Smith presided, while his daughter accomplished the actual monument unveiling. Smith lauded his brother's life, compared the fight for Confederate independence to Scotland's, and praised Herriot Smith for retrieving the remains. The main speaker that day, however, was none other than E. T. Sykes, the brother-in-arms who had defended Dobson during the court-martial. During the previous year, Sykes had lauded Smith twice in the pages of the *Southern Historical Society Papers*. In the shadow of the undraped monument, Sykes recycled that hagiography, depicting Smith as a perfect Christian knight. Following a heroic narrative of Shiloh, Sykes provided an extended and detailed account of the Battle of Munfordville, detailing Smith's wound as well as the gallantry of the regiment.[42] One particular passage is striking. "On our retreat from here the evening of the 14th," Sykes intoned, "Colonel Smith was carried to a house in the neighborhood and left in charge of his body-servant Henry, the Sergeant-Major,

William French, and his brother-in-law, Captain Dobson, of his regiment." That was the only time Sykes mentioned Dobson, and the brief acknowledgment was curious. On the one hand, he made sure to exonerate his other old friend's actions by fudging the event's timing, placing it after the battle just as Dobson had maintained to his wife. On the other, Sykes gingerly avoided any discussion of the potentially embarrassing Dobson imbroglio by otherwise ignoring him. Despite the presence of Dobson's in-laws, in other words, Sykes reduced the captain to the role of a bit player named "Captain Dobson," no more important than Sergeant Major French or Henry the slave. Sykes finally had expunged the black mark on George Dobson's service record, but only by otherwise erasing the unfortunate captain entirely from the Robert Smith saga.[43]

Dobson's letters aside, that is the story that survives in popular culture, the gallant young Scotsman who died gallantly because of a jealous or at least incompetent commander. Today, the Smith obelisk and the smaller Mississippi markers that now surround it remain the only monuments at Munfordville. Smith continues to draw attention, notably in his native Scotland, where something of a remarkable Robert Smith renaissance is occurring. The One o'Clock Gun Association, founded in 1998 to promote the historic weapon fired daily at Edinburgh Castle, conducted a memorial service for Smith in September 2007 after members encountered his grave. It has subsequently announced plans to "refurbish or replace" his fading headstone.[44] Meanwhile, the Reverend Bill Mackie of the Scottish Veterans Association, a "chaplain-at-large" to the Fifth Kentucky Infantry reenacting unit, announced ironic plans in 2008 to chisel Smith's name into Edinburgh's Abraham Lincoln Monument. While the monument already bears the name of several Scotsmen who fought in the war, Smith would be the first and only Confederate. The plan has proven controversial, with some observers arguing that Smith's name has no place on a memorial dedicated to Lincoln and the Union. Not surprisingly, there have been no announced plans to add as well George Dobson's now forgotten name to the monument. He remains as obscure as E. T. Sykes left him at Munfordville in 1884, eclipsed by the shining glory of his in-laws' wealth and honor.[45]

Notes

I am grateful to Clinton Bagley of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History for first alerting me to the story of George Dobson and Robert Smith. Keith Bohannon additionally pointed me to several useful sources. Finally, comments from Stephen Berry as well as two unidentified readers sharpened my argument.

1. Stephen Berry first articulated my then vague notion that the Dobson case provides a window into a soldier community.

2. The 1860 United States Federal Census, Mississippi, Hines County, found in www.ancestry.com, reveals that he owned $1,000 of real property and only $250 of personal property. See also [John A. Ure], *The Humphrey Family's Connection with Jackson, Mississippi* (Bonnybridge, Scotland: The Author, 1989), 6–9, 17, 29, 43–50; Alastair Borthwick, *The History of Smith & Wellstood Ltd., Ironfounders* (Bonnybridge, Scotland: Smith & Wellstood, [1954], 11–28, 48–49; "ESSE Stoves," http://www.esse.com/stoves/history, accessed May 14, 2009; Collection guide, Humphreys (David Colin) Connection, Z/856.000, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Miss. (cited hereafter as Humphreys Collection, MDAH); George Dobson, Fort McRae, to Jane, October 10, 1861, and Dobson, Camp Phillips, to Jane, October 26, 1861, December 9, 1861, Humphreys Papers, MDAH; "The Monument at Munfordsville," *Southern Historical Society Papers* 12 (1884): 470. Edited versions of Dobson's letters are also found in Kent Wall, "A Scotsman by Birth: The War Letters of Capt. George Dobson, 10th Mississippi Volunteers," *North South Trader's Civil War* 21 (September–October 1994): 40–49. As an example of Smith's newfound wealth, Robert reacted to learning that he was worth a thousand pounds by buying dinner for Jackson's entire city government.

3. "Monument at Munfordsville," 471–73; Collection guide, Humphreys Collection, MDAH; Compiled Service Record, Robert A. Smith, 10th Mississippi Inf. (Confederate), National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. (cited hereafter as NARA); Compiled Service Record, George Dobson, 10th Mississippi Inf. (Confederate), NARA; J. C. Rietti, *History of the Organization, Military Service, and a Record of Battles and Marches of the Mississippi Rifles, Companies A and D, Tenth Regiment Mississippi Volunteers, General J. R. Chalmers' 'High-Pressure Mississippi Brigade," Confederate States Army, from the Organization of the Company at Jackson, Miss., January, 1858, to the Surrender of General Johnston's Army, April 26, 1865* (Jackson, Miss.: The Author, n.d.), 1–2; "The Late James Smith," *[Jackson, Miss.]* Clarion, Apr. 21, 1886; Dunbar Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803–1898, Including a Listing of All Known Mississippi Confederate Units*, Supplemental Information and New Index by H. Grady Howell Jr. (Madison, Miss.: Chickasaw Bayou Press, 2003), 209–10; Wall, "Scotsman by Birth," 41; Richard Warren, "Mississippi Rifles and Ben Bullard Rifles," *Military Collector*

and Historian 49 (Summer 1997): 86–87. Smith's company was originally designated in February 1861 as Smith's Company, Sixth Mississippi, but was shifted to the new Tenth Mississippi a month later. After additional recruiting and then consolidation in 1862, it became Company D.

4. George Dobson, Fort McRae, to Jane, July 11, 1861, October 1, 1861, October 10, 1861, and Dobson, Camp Phillips, to Jane, October 26, 1861, December 9, 1861, December 10, 1861, Humphreys Papers, MDAH; E. T. Sykes, "A Cursory Sketch of General Bragg's Campaigns," Paper No. 1, *Southern Historical Society Papers* 11 (1883): 305–6; Kenneth W. Noe, *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined the Army after 1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 74–76.

5. Robert A. Smith, Camp Phillips, to Jane, January 24, 1862, Humphreys Collection, MDAH. See also Robert A. Smith, Camp Phillips, to George G. Garner, January 11, 1862, Smith (Robert A.) Papers, Z/0622.0001 S, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Miss.; Compiled Service Record, Robert A. Smith, 10th Mississippi Inf. (Confederate), NARA; Compiled Service Record, George Dobson, 10th Mississippi Inf. (Confederate), NARA; Rietti, *Mississippi Rifles*, 3; Wall, "Scotsman by Birth," 41, 43, 45. As Wall points out, it is difficult to determine the overall nature of the relationship between Dobson and Smith.

6. George Dobson, Iuka, Miss., to Jane, March 13, 1862, Humphrey's Collection, MDAH; Wall, "Scotsman," 42; Sykes, "Bragg's Campaigns," Paper No. 1, 305, 307; Thomas Lawrence Connelly, *Army of the Heartland: The Army of Tennessee, 1861–1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 3–10, 126–42; Wiley Sword, *Shiloh: Bloody April* (New York: William Morrow, 1974), 49–84.

7. George Dobson, Corinth, Miss., to Jane, April 11, 1862, May 3, 1862, Humphrey's Collection, MDAH; Sykes, "Bragg's Campaigns," Paper no. 1, 308–9.

8. George Dobson, Corinth, Miss., to Jane, April 11, 1862, May 3, 1862, Humphrey's Collection, MDAH. Twenty years later, Sykes, "Bragg's Campaigns," Paper No. 1, 308, remembered Smith saying more: "'Soldiers, we have been ordered to charge those fellows in blue (pointing with his sword toward the enemy); I want you when I give the order to forward, to advance steadily to the top of the hill, fire with deliberation, and then *give them the bayonet*."

9. Sykes, "Bragg's Campaigns," Paper No. 1, 308.

10. U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser. 1, vol. 10, pt. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1884), 548–51 (hereafter cited as *OR*); Sykes, "Bragg's Campaigns," Paper No. 1, 308–9; Robert A. Smith, Corinth, Miss., to Sir, April 9, 1862, Smith (Robert A.) Papers, Z/0622.0001 S, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Miss.; Sword, *Shiloh*, 168, 225–31, 239–40, 283–85, 299, 305, 361–63, 367.

11. George Dobson, Corinth, Miss., to Jane, May 3, 1862, Humphrey's Collection, MDAH. Chalmers agreed, later reporting that Smith "was particularly distinguished for his bold daring, and his clarion voice could be heard above the din of battle cheering on his men," see *or*, ser. 1, vol. 10, pt. 1, 552.

12. *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 10, pt. 1, 548–51; Compiled Service Record, Robert A. Smith, 10th Mississippi Inf. (Confederate), NARA; Sword, *Shiloh*, 384–88, 391–94.

13. Sykes, "Bragg's Campaigns," Paper No. 1, 307–8; "Monument at Munfordsville," 474; Compiled Service Record, Robert A. Smith, 10th Mississippi Inf. (Confederate), NARA; Compiled Service Record, George Dobson, 10th Mississippi Inf. (Confederate), NARA; George Dobson, Dalton, Ga., to General, February 1864, Compiled Service Record, George Dobson, 10th Mississippi Inf. (Confederate), NARA; George Dobson, Corinth, Miss., to Jane, April 11, 1862, Humphreys Collection, MDAH; Kent Masterson Brown, "Munfordville: The Campaign and Battle Along Kentucky's Strategic Axis," in Kent Masterson Brown, ed., *The Civil War in Kentucky: Battle for the Bluegrass State* (Mason City, Iowa: Savas, 2000), 148–49; Kenneth W. Noe, *Perryville: This Grand Havoc of Battle* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 29–68.

14. Noe, *Perryville*, 68–69; Brown, "Munfordville," 138–52; F. E. Daniel, *Recollections of a Rebel Surgeon*, 99.

15. E. T. Sykes, "A Cursory Sketch of General Bragg's Campaign's," Paper No. 2, *Southern Historical Society Papers* 11 (1883): 467.

16. Sykes, "Bragg's Campaigns," Paper No. 2, 467; W. L. Shaw, "Hard Fighting – Franklin – Munfordville," *Confederate Veteran* 17 (1909): 221–22; Daniel, *Recollections of a Rebel Surgeon*, 99–100; Brown, "Munfordville," 152–54.

17. Sykes, "Bragg's Campaigns," Paper No. 2, 467; Brown, "Munfordville," 152–55; Compiled Service Record, Robert A. Smith, 10th Mississippi Inf. (Confederate), NARA; Borthwick, *Smith & Wellstood*, 17–18.

18. George Dobson, Shelbyville, Tenn., to Col. George G. Garner, Jan. 26, 1863, Humphrey's Collection, MDAH.

19. Ibid.; Shaw, "Hard Fighting," 221–22; Sykes, "Bragg's Campaigns," Paper No. 2, 467–68; "Monument at Munfordsville," 479; Brown, "Munfordville," 155–60; Rietti, *Mississippi Rifles*, 7; William S. Patterson Stewart, Bardstown, Ky., to Lizzie, September 28, 1862, http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mscivilw/stewartletter.htm, accessed October 26, 2009.

20. "Monument at Munfordsville," 479; Daniel, *Recollections of a Rebel Surgeon*, 101–2; Brown, "Munfordville," 161–68. See also Noe, *Perryville*, for subsequent events.

21. Compiled Service Record, George Dobson, 10th Mississippi Inf. (Confederate), NARA; George Dobson, Shelbyville, Tenn., to Jane, February 2, 1863, Humphrey's Collection, MDAH; J. M. Walker, "Charges and Specifications preferred against Capt. Geo. Dobson Co. D, 10th Miss Regt," January 26, 1863, Humphrey's Collection, MDAH; Wall, "Scotsman by Birth," 46.

22. George Dobson, Murfreesboro, Tenn., to Jane, December 26, 1862, Humphrey's Collection, MDAH.

23. Compiled Service Record, George Dobson, 10th Mississippi Inf. (Confederate), NARA.

24. Compiled Service Record, James M. Walker, 10th Mississippi Infantry (Confederate), NARA; 1860 United States Federal Census, Mississippi, Hines County; Rowland, *Military History*, 209, 214–15; Bruce S. Allardice, *Confederate Colonels: A Biographical Register* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009), 383; Brown, "Munfordville," 155; Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi*, 197–98, 211. I am grateful to Keith Bohannon for supplying me with Walker's service record.

25. George Dobson, Murfreesboro, Tenn., to Annie, February 11, 1863, Humphrey's Collection, MDAH.

26. J. M. Walker, "Charges and Specifications preferred against Capt. Geo. Dobson Co. D, 10th Miss Regt," January 26, 1863, Humphrey's Collection, MDAH

27. George Dobson, Murfreesboro, Tenn., to Jane, January 21, 1863, Humphrey's Collection, MDAH.

28. George Dobson, Shelbyville, TN, to Jane, February 2, 1863, Humphrey's Collection, MDAH.

29. George Dobson, Shelbyville, Tenn., to Col. George G. Garner, Jan. 26, 1863, Humphrey's Collection, MDAH.

30. George Dobson, Shelbyville, Tenn., to Jane, February 2, 1863, Humphrey's Collection, MDAH. See also Dobson, Shelbyville, Tenn., to Jane, January 31, 1863.

31. George Dobson, Shelbyville, Tenn., to Col. George G. Garner, January 26, 1863, Humphrey's Collection, MDAH.

32. George Dobson, Murfreesboro, Tenn., to Annie, February 11, 1863, Humphrey's Collection, MDAH.

33. George Dobson, Shelbyville, Tenn., to Jane, February 2, 1863; Dobson, Atlanta, to Jane, March 2, 1863; Dobson, Empire Hospital, to Jane, March 12, 1863, Humphrey's Collection, MDAH; Compiled Service Record, George Dobson, 10th Mississippi Inf. (Confederate), NARA; Compiled Service Record, James M. Walker, 10th Mississippi Infantry (Confederate), NARA; Rowland, *Military* History, 216, 217; Wall, "Scotsman by Birth," 47.

34. This account of Walker is based upon Compiled Service Record, James M. Walker, 10th Mississippi Infantry (Confederate), NARA; and Allardice, *Confederate Colonels*, 54, 383. Rowland, *Military History*, 216, 217, has Barr replace Smith, and then Walker rise to command only after Barr's death.

35. George Dobson, Bridgeport, Tenn., to Jane, August 4, 1863, August 13, 1863, August 28, 1863, Humphrey's Collection, MDAH; George Dobson, Dalton, Ga., to General, n.d.; I. A. Kinchloe, B. H. Riggs, and Richard E. Jackson, to General S. Cooper, n.d., and Report, September 1, 1863, Compiled Service

Record, George Dobson, 10th Mississippi Inf. (Confederate), NARA; Rowland, *Military History*, 216, 217; Wall, "Scotsman by Birth," 47. The quotation is from the unit report in Dobson's Compiled Service Record.

36. Wall, "Scotsman by Birth," 49; Collection guide, Humphreys Collection, MDAH; "Find a Grave Forums, Looking for a Grave, Harris Co Tex., 1870," www.findagrave.com/forums/ubbthreads.php?ubb=showflat&Number=341871," accessed April 7, 2009.

37. Rietti, *History*, 5.

38. Earl J. Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1997), 82–87 (quotation, 82). See also James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 8, 35–36, 59–60; Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1943; reprint ed., Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 88–89.

39. Sam R. Watkins, *"Co. Aytch," Maury Grays, First Tennessee Regiment; or, A Side Show of the Big Show* (Chattanooga: Times, 1900; reprint ed., New York: Collier, 1962), 56; "Tributes to Gen. Braxton Bragg," *Confederate Veteran* 3 (1895): 182; Peter Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die: The Battle of Stones River* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 4; Noe, *Perryville*, 23; Wiley, *Johnny Reb*, 235–43.

40. See, for example, Dickson D. Bruce Jr., *Violence and Culture in the Antebellum South* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979); Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor and Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing as a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, the Proslavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting, and Gambling in the Old South* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996); Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Kenneth W. Noe, "'Damned North Carolinians' and 'Brave Virginians': The Lane-Mahone Controversy, Honor, and Civil War Memory," *Journal of Military History* 72 (October 2008): 1089–1115. Stephen Berry, it should be noted, avers that scholars have overplayed the centrality of honor. See his *All That Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), esp. 20–21.

41. T. Otis Baker Diary, September 14, 1863, Baker (T. Otis) Papers, Z/0072.001 S, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Miss.; Borthwick, *Smith and Wellstood*, 17–18; "Monument at Munfordville," 479, 481; "Robert A. Smith," "Find a Grave Memorial," http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=5900906, accessed April 7, 2009; "A Memorial Service was held at 11.00 hrs Saturday 15th. September 2007 at the Dean Cemetery, Edinburgh," http://www.scottishveteransassociation.co.uk/ColSmith, accessed April 7, 2009; Michael Blackley, "Capital to Fly Flag for Hero of American Civil War," *The Scotsman*, http://news.scotsman.com/edinburgh.cfm?id=1039982007, accessed April 7, 2009; "Col. Robert A. Smith Monument," http://en.wikipedia

.org/wiki/Colonel_Robert_A._Smith_Monument, accessed April 7, 2009; "The Preserve > Col. Robert A. Smith Monument," http://www.battleforthebridge .org/Monument.html, accessed April 7, 2009. Smith had the property fenced, stipulating that if they wished, Mississippi families whose loved ones died in the battle could rebury them there.

42. "Monument at Munfordville"; Sykes, "Bragg's Campaigns," Paper No. 1; Sykes, "Bragg's Campaigns," Paper No. 2.

43. "Monument at Munfordville," 479.

44. Daniel, *Recollections of a Rebel Surgeon*, 100; Blackley, "Capital." See also "Memorial Service."

45. Adrian Mather, "City Honour for Soldier Killed in American Civil War" *[Edinburgh] Evening News*, May 13, 2008, http://edinburghnews.scotsman.com/ latestnews/City-honour-for-soldier-killed.4076456.jp, accessed June 10, 2009.

Soldier-Speak

PETER S. CARMICHAEL

In Henri Barbusse's World War I classic, *Under Fire*, a soldier named Baraque approaches the narrator, Barbusse, who is immersed in thought, writing in his journal about the muck and death of trench warfare. He asks the writer if his comrades will be quoted verbatim. Will they, in print, "speak like they really do, or will you tidy it up and make it proper?" "I am talking about swearwords" Baraque injects. The writer agrees that he has no intention of hiding the rough language of soldier talk, even if the readers might condemn him as a "foul-mouthed pig." Baraque is not convinced, telling the author that he does not doubt his desire to be daring, but "at the last moment you'll find it hard" and refuse to be honest. "So if you don't put it in," Baraque concludes, "your picture won't be very accurate; it's like you wanted to paint them and didn't put in one of the most glaring colours wherever it appeared." "I'll put the swearwords in," the writer retorts, "because it's the truth."[1]

When it came time to publish *Under Fire*, Barbusse lost his nerve, just as Baraque had predicted. Only a few cusswords sprinkle the pages; there is an occasional "damn," "shit," and "bastard," but no stream-of-consciousness, outer-body tirade of oath-spewing was reprinted, no slang variations of copulation recorded, and no vulgarities exclaimed – soldier mouths had been cleaned with the sanitizing literary soap of Barbusse's pen.

What exactly is lost when an enlisted man hides the ways soldiers conversed with each other? This issue is especially troubling when it comes to Civil War soldiers who seem particularly reluctant, in comparison to their more modern peers, to either describe or admit to using "hard words." The absence of the spoken word in Civil War letters could be seen as the blind spot to getting at the "real war." The long-standing search for the "real war" is a tired, scholarly campaign, one that needs to be abandoned, but the influence of social history's dated mission to find the hard reality of the past continues to influence scholarly thinking. From this approach it is tempting look at examples of soldier-speak as a way to discover the hidden but authentic experiences of the rank-and-file. This can lead to a narrow view of the spoken word as a way to recover what soldiers perceived. Speech acts, as psychologists and linguists remind us, should be studied as active mental processes rather than just a reflection of what is perceived.[2] Instead of trying to "capture" historical reality through language, I intend to look at soldier-speak as a way to analyze the cognitive world of soldiers. In other words, I want to explore *how* men thought and not just *what* they thought with an intention to locate actual ways of knowing or mental sensibilities. In doing so, I hope to get beneath, as Daniel Wickberg writes, "the social actions and apparent content of sources to the ground upon which those sources stand."[3]

Of the many ways of knowing in the United States before the Civil War, the outlook of ironic detachment stands out as a uniquely Northern framing device or sensibility, one that enabled an individual to step outside of his prescribed role or experience and look back at himself from the perspective of an outsider. The political implications of ironic detachment on Federal armies was profound, as a Union soldier was more

likely than a Confederate to find and explore the incongruities between society's expectations and judgments and how he perceived himself to be living up to those standards.[4] Locating the critical gap between self-perception and community expectations required a Union soldier to stand in the shoes of the other through sympathetic imagination. To do this, a Northerner had to conceive of the self as if he were somebody else, or he could not evaluate himself by outside standards. The sum effect of ironic detachment meant that a Union soldier was more capable and willing to take a position antagonistic to the army, to his community, and to the nation than what a Southern soldier was cognitively predisposed to do, since Confederates were hemmed in by honor, with its unyielding demand for community allegiance and approval. The mental gymnastics of a sympathetic imagination or ironic detachment heightened the critical powers of Northerners because it made them more inclined to see and feel the contradictions of their existence.

In stepping outside of themselves, many Northerners achieved a high level of critical expression through ironic detachment. This often took the form of mockery, a use of humor that often pointed inward, exposing the individual to community ridicule and shame – a step that most white Southerners refused to take because of the ethical code of honor.[5] Without the restraints of honor, ironic detachment in the North led to the development of a humanitarian sensibility, which scholars such as David Brion Davis have brilliantly analyzed in explaining the rise of a global antislavery movement. By 1861, the humanitarian sensibility had infused much of Northern society, not just abolitionist circles, with an inclination to feel the subjective experiences of someone in pain.[6] Although the humanitarian sensibility called for people to empathize with those who were suffering, Northerners were not by nature any kinder and gentler than Southerners. They could be as cruel, unforgiving, and elitist as any hard-driving slaveholder. But the presence of a Northern humanitarian sensibility encouraged mental flexibility and expansiveness through imagination. It helped sanction, moreover, individual conscience as the ultimate arbitrator of truth, even when individuals confronted incongruities between their perceptions and the expectations of society. Northerners were, as a result, more capable of thinking outside of themselves and more willing to turn a critical

eye back on the self, even if that risked estrangement from their own society.

Rather than canvass a broad sample of Civil War letters to illustrate the ways that the spoken word, ironic detachment, and a humanitarian sensibility functioned as a way of thinking among Northern veterans, I will focus on one soldier, Charles Bowen of New York, who served in the Twelfth United States Infantry from 1861 to late summer of 1864. His letters are particularly revealing when it comes to the recording of verbal expressions used among his fellow comrades. His referencing of common phrases, despite their formulaic quality, shows how everyday speech enabled men to detach themselves from the death, drudgery, and discipline of soldiering. The use of the terms "poor soldier" and "soldier boy" will receive special consideration as both phrases surface with regularity in Bowen's representation of soldier conversations. When these oral expressions are considered as shapers of events, not just reflections of war's reality, we can see how soldiers' dialogue was more than a descriptive vocabulary. "Poor soldier" and "soldier boy," when viewed as speech acts, were used by Northern soldiers to gain distance from the miseries of frontline service, but at the same time it gave them a critical perspective to engage in mockery without ever losing sympathy, to criticize without ever appearing to be seditious, and to engage in the bloody business of war without ever succumbing to pure, impenetrable hatred.

From 1862 to 1864, Charles Bowen managed to land in the tempest of every major battle of the Army of the Potomac, miraculously surviving some of the war's bitterest fighting without ever receiving a serious wound. Before Fort Sumter, Bowen lived outside of Utica, New York, as a laborer on his uncle's farm, which he left behind to enlist in the Twelfth United States Infantry shortly after Fort Sumter. He began the war full of patriotic idealism and finished the conflict as a hardened veteran disgusted with the oppressive restrictions of military life and depressed by the endless casualty lists. The hardening of Bowen into a tough-minded soldier followed a process that has been brilliantly explored by a number of historians, beginning with Gerald Linderman in his influential *Embattled Courage*.[7] Scholars who have followed Linderman's lead have mainly focused on explaining the ways veterans lost their high idealism. This line of inquiry is closely associated with the question of why

did men fight. This question, of course, has great value, but it needs to be reoriented in a new direction by asking *how* men thought and not just *what* they thought. And the study of orality offers a way of looking deeply into the cognitive process of how Civil War soldiers thought. Such an approach, I believe, will help move soldier studies away from the binary realm of classifying men in the ranks as either victors or victims over the battlefield, as either retaining their idealism or becoming disillusioned during their military service, or as either having sufficient nationalism or lacking political will to continue the fight.[8]

The speech acts recorded by Bowen show that the spoken word could shape situations, define encounters, and color the mood of a particular moment. The invocation of "poor soldier" by Bowen and his comrades, for example, injected their world with a spirit of compassion, even during moments of horrible violence and rampant despair. The use of "poor soldier" also reveals how the ontological perspective of the rank-and-file was altered by the war. Before Fort Sumter, the vast majority of Americans largely believed that life could be rendered in black-and-white terms and that their existence had coherence attributable to a higher power.[9] War annihilated such self-assuredness, largely because soldier fatalities seemed so random, so purposeless, and so inexplicable, leaving men on both sides in a state of metaphysical bewilderment. The words "poor soldier" are critical to understanding how the war's randomness convinced soldiers to see the universe as dependent on sheer luck, far outside the control of either man or God.[10]

When Bowen's regiment spent a miserable rainy night in an exposed position near Spotsylvania Court House on May 10, 1864, after a day of enduring murderous attacks, the soldiers hunkered down on the ground while Confederate bullets whizzed overhead, cutting through branches and slamming into trees. Occasionally one would find its target in a sleeping man. "Every hour or two some fellow would get hit & cry out," Bowen recalled, "but the remainder would merely look up to see who it was & say poor fellow or something like it & then go to sleep again."[11] One might detect in the casual utterance "poor fellow" that soldiers were becoming indifferent or callous to the indiscriminate killing around them. While it is true that men on both sides were able to psychologically adjust to the horrors of the battlefield, the words "poor

fellow" suggest that they could never fully reconcile themselves to the moral responsibility of taking another life. While members of the rank-and-file could admit to being causally involved in killing, "poor soldier" demonstrates, at least to some degree, the men's refusal to blame themselves as the cause of the bloody business of war.

"Poor fellow" not only extended sympathy toward the man being killed but it also implicitly deflected blame away from the enemy soldier for pulling the trigger. By describing a fallen soldier as essentially a victim, Bowen and his comrades were stepping outside of the army's attempt to transform civilian soldiers into unthinking killers. Their oral expressions of "poor fellow" signify how Bowen and his comrades had succeeded in resisting military professionalization. It also suggests how Union soldiers looked at their experience with both a critical and sympathetic eye. Northern military authorities understandably feared expressions of empathy from the ranks, for it could lead to a deeper questioning of the war at both moral and political levels, ultimately leading soldiers to the dangerous conclusion that both sides were equally culpable for all the death and suffering.[12] "Poor soldier," moreover, conveys a way of mourning in the ranks, a public release of compassionate feelings, even toward the enemy, by emphasizing that both sides were beholden to invisible, impersonal, and uncontrollable forces. In some instances, the language of luck depoliticized acts of war, freeing Northern soldiers to step outside of themselves and actually reside in the other. During the siege of Petersburg, for instance, when Confederate wounded were trapped between the battle lines, desperately crying out for relief, Bowen's superiors refused to grant a truce. Bowen accepted this vengeful policy as a necessary act of war, an inevitable response to an incident that had occurred weeks earlier when Confederate officers refused a truce to rescue dying Union soldiers. Nonetheless, Bowen, despite feeling great rage over this inhumane policy, refused to surrender to cold, unyielding, and obdurate hatred of the foe. He wrote of both the Confederate and Union wounded left to die between the lines: "It is terrible how some poor fellows have to suffer by getting wounded in such places, & no help to be had."[13]

The vocabulary of "poor soldier" gave concrete expression to the language of luck. If the men of the rank-and-file did not accept the

impersonal and unpredictable forces of war, if they were not pragmatic in dealing with the randomness of death, and if they tried to find a logical pattern of causation in the destruction of human life, they were psychologically vulnerable to the insanity of frontline service. A soldier who could put his trust in good fortune generally thought and lived for the now. This was a profound break with antebellum ways of knowing. All time in the ranks was compressed into the moment, into surviving the present, for little thought was given to the past and almost none devoted to the future. "I am fast verging into the opinion that the best plan for a fellow is to '*Let the dead bury the dead*' & think not of what is to come (in the shape of joy or sorrow in this world) but seize on the *present* for that is our own & enjoy it to the uttermost while it lasts."[14]

Although Bowen never hit the bottomless pit of disillusionment, he drifted away from much of his idealism about the cause – not just because Victorian rules of civilization were crushed on the battlefield, but because the very basis of knowledge unraveled under the duress and confusion of an incomprehensible war. The press, generals, politicians, and the people back home rarely, if ever, explained or described military events in ways that fit what Bowen or other soldiers thought they were actually perceiving and experiencing on the front lines. The idea that truth would ultimately prevail lost its hold on Bowen's mind because of the confused reporting and conflicted meanings people derived from military service. The emotional, physical, and intellectual mayhem of war sent cognitive aftershocks through both armies, rattling men who had always found comfort in the belief that an orderly universe existed in which human behavior, if not directed from above, at least possessed a clear purpose and set meaning. An unstable universe produced by war had profound implications on how Bowen thought. He was mentally disposed to see the "truth" of his existence as a grim struggle for survival, his life out of his control, and his fate in the hands of a dizzying array of uncontrollable forces inside and outside the army. "One day we are in the best of health & spirits & the next half hour may see but a mangled mop of flesh in our place," Bowen wrote on December 4, 1862. "The fortunes of war vary at every turn, a man may escape from harm from many hard fought fields only to fall in some paltry skirmish."[15] In this written expression Bowen elaborated upon the spoken word of

"poor soldier," a phrase that did more than describe war as a game of chance. He reveals a mental orientation that was not anchored by the filters of ideology, nationalism, gender, or identity but rooted in the emotional spontaneity of the moment, when the practical demands of survival unhinged solders from an accustomed way of thinking that was animated by the intellectual and moral certitude of Victorianism.

In mentally removing himself from the miseries of frontline service, Bowen revealed how the war and the military had actually entered his body, transforming him almost beyond the point of self-recognition. Although his letters were incredibly open, he struggled to explain to family and friends how the army had changed him. Words, he feared, were not sufficient in explaining how he had become a different person. The dramatic changes in his physical appearance were especially shocking, and he put more trust in the visual evidence of a photograph as a way to convince his loved ones that a different man would be returning home some day. Bowen thought the "likeness" would convey his tough-minded approach to life. "It is a sort of 'Devil may care' concern," he wrote, "but still it is a very good picture for this place, of a *rough & dirty soldier boy*, right from the ranks."[16] His use of "soldier boy" was often referenced in conversations with other comrades, according to Bowen. This is especially revealing for the phrase mocks the highly sentimentalized representations of soldiers in Northern print culture. While this literature asked people to sympathize with the individuals suffering in the ranks, most of the stories were celebrations of heroism in battle or sanitized depictions of camp, far removed from what veterans like Bowen saw with their own eyes.[17] The expression "bold soldier boy" in particular was used by Bowen and his comrades as a form of self-mockery and also as a repudiation of civilian notions that war was all glory.

In articulating these speech acts or stock phrases, such as "bold soldier boy" and "poor soldier," I am suggesting that Bowen was able to step outside of himself, to critique the war through ironic detachment, and to even mock himself without ever losing his compassion and empathy for any man, regardless of loyalty, who had the misfortune to die. His cognitive ability to detach himself and to get in touch with the suffering of others prevented the blackness of war from consuming his soul.[18] The lust of the eye had the power to blind men to their own transformation into

hardened soldiers. The phrases Bowen recorded as sayings in soldier-speak suggest that Northern soldiers could use language to save themselves from the darker impulses of blood lust. There must have been other Union soldiers like Bowen who were at heart realists, who were disposed to see grandeur and graveness in war's horrors, and who felt emotional ecstasy and depression in battle. Bowen felt these contradictions deeply at times, either unable or unwilling to resolve them, but he never lost his abhorrence of war as an unnatural act of demonic fury. The impulse to kill never mastered Bowen, but as a committed veteran, he understood in a cold and calculating way after his enlistment that he had taken an oath to violence. This commitment reconfigured the very ways he understood the world, but even during the bleakest moments of service, when his life was consumed by metaphysical confusion and doubt, he never lost the genuine love he felt for family, comrades, and country – or even sympathy for an enemy that he never hesitated to kill.

Notes

1. Henri Barbusse, *Under Fire*, trans. Robin Buss (1916; reprint, New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 155–56.

2. Peter Burke, *What Is Cultural History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Polity, 2009), 79.

3. Daniel Wickberg, "What Is the History of Sensibilities? On Cultural Histories, Old and New," *American Historical Review* 112 (June 2007): 669.

4. On the concept of ironic detachment, see Daniel Wickberg, *The Senses of Humor: Self and Laughter in Modern America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998), 98.

5. On the interplay of humor and shame in the South, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

6. On the humanitarian sensibility, see David Brion Davis, "What the Abolitionists Were Up Against," in Thomas Bender, ed., *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 22–26. On the humanitarian sensibility and its relationship to abolition, see Thomas Bender, ed., *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); and Ronald G. Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism after 1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

7. Gerald Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1987).

8. This observation draws from the insight of T. J. Lears in "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities," *American Historical Review* 90 (June 1985): 592–93.

9. For a broad treatment of the intellectual dispositions of Victorian Americans before the Civil War, see Daniel J. Singal, *The War Within: From Victorian to Modernist Thought in the South, 1919–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 3–33.

10. On the impact of the Civil War on ways of knowing, especially in regards to the belief in luck and the waning of Providence, see Jackson Lears, *Something for Nothing: Luck in America* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 143–45.

11. Charles Bowen Diary, May 12, 1864, in *Dear Friends at Home: The Civil War Letters and Diaries of Sergeant Charles T. Bowen, Twelfth United States Infantry, 1861–1864,* ed. Edward K. Cassedy (Baltimore: Butternut & Blue, 2001), 465. Bowen sent his diary entries home for his family to read.

12. On the cultural role of mourning, see Nan Enstad, "On Grief and Complicity: Notes toward a Visionary Cultural History," in *The Cultural Turn in U.S. History: Past, Present and Future,* ed. James W. Cook, Lawrence B. Glickman, and Michael O'Malley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 336.

13. Charles Bowen to his Mother, June 25, 1864, in *Dear Friends at Home*, 505.

14. Charles Bowen to Grandmother, April 6, 1864, in *Dear Friends at Home*, 419.

15. Charles Bowen to Dear Friends at Home, December 4, 1862, in *Dear Friends at Home*, 195.

16. Charles Bowen to Katie Bowen, May 11, 1863, in *Dear Friends at Home*, 263.

17. On the sentimental soldier, see Alice Fahs, *The Imagined Civil War: Popular Literature of the North and South, 1861–1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 93–119.

18. This observation draws from Viktor E. Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1959), 60.

The Civil War Career of General James Abbott Whistler

DANIEL E. SUTHERLAND

James McNeill Whistler, arguably America's greatest artist, did not fight in the American Civil War, although he might have done. He was dismissed from the U.S. Military Academy in June 1854, a year short of graduation, for excessive demerits and "deficiency" in chemistry. He failed chemistry, Whistler claimed in later years, because he had misidentified silicon as a gas on his final oral examination. Given the type of questions we know his classmates faced on that same exam, it seems unlikely he was asked, much less flubbed, such an elementary query. His claim is all the more suspicious because it had, as a later professor at West Point observed, "some prototypes in other cases of noted graduates" and in "jokes connected with celebrities." Still, Whistler reputedly declared years afterward, "Had silicon been a gas, I would have been a major-general."[1]

I wonder. Could it have happened? Could Whistler have displayed the same brilliance and audacity on the battlefield that he demonstrated

as an artist? Such questions, while hardly worth a moment's speculation in most circumstances, acquire a certain attraction, not to say fascination, when weirding the Civil War. For had Whistler fulfilled his supposed boast, he would have earned his general's stars in that contest. Granted, such "counterfactual history," as it is called, generally revolves around much grander questions, such as, "What if the Confederacy had won the war?" Yet, given Whistler's crucial role in shaping the history of modern art, it seems reasonable to ask if he could have played an equally dramatic part in American military history. Besides, such an inquiry promises to be fun, and it was Whistler himself who professed a desire to write "the fiction of my own biography."[2]

The story that follows assumes that Whistler did not fail chemistry or receive 218 demerits, the second-highest number in the entire corps of cadets in 1854. The account of his life until that moment is strictly factual, and fictitious events thereafter are based on what is known of his personality, talents, and prejudices. Likewise, the facts concerning family members, friends, and military events during the war are true, as are events, described briefly, in Whistler's life after April 1865. All quotations are authentic. In other words, there is more truth than imagination in this tale.

So, once upon a time, a boy named James Abbott Whistler was born in Lowell, Massachusetts. He seemed destined to be a soldier. His paternal grandfather, John, had fought in the British army during the American Revolution. John Whistler remained in America after the war and eventually joined the U.S. army. By 1800, he had become commandant at Fort Wayne, Indiana Territory. That is where James Whistler's father, George Washington Whistler, was born. He graduated from West Point in 1819. Four of James Whistler's uncles, including Joseph W. Swift, the academy's very first graduate, were also educated on the banks of the Hudson.[3]

By 1842, when Jemie, as nearly everyone called him, was eight years old, his father had resigned from the army, but so extensive was his reputation as a civil engineer that the Russian government hired him in that year to build a railroad between St. Petersburg and Moscow. The entire family, including Jemie, younger brother William, and older stepsister Deborah, moved to St. Petersburg. Given his father's prestigious

position, Whistler lived a privileged life in Russia. He took his first formal drawing lessons at the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts and attended exhibitions of art he never could have seen in America.

Equally, though, he witnessed imperial military reviews on the Champ de Mars and, like many adolescent boys, was enthralled by the sight of eighty thousand brilliantly arrayed soldiers, especially the elite regiments of dragoons, lancers, cuirassiers, and hussars. Russian staff officers delighted in the boy's "military ardor," although when one of them teasingly asked which of the tsar's regiment he would join, Jemie replied, "None here. I must wait to get again to my own country." His mother Anna knew that her son's fondest desire was to "become a graduate of West Point."[4]

Then, in 1849, tragedy struck. Whistler's father died of cholera. His widow and children returned to America in straitened economic circumstances. By this time, too, fourteen-year-old Jemie had outgrown his infatuation with drums, trumpets, and the dash of war. He had confided in his father, just months before George Whistler's death, that he wanted to be an artist. His patient and loving father had not entirely discouraged him, although he suggested that a career as an engineer or architect might be more suitable. He mentioned Harvard or Yale as appropriate colleges to advance his son's education. However, the expense of those schools was prohibitive after George Whistler's death. Jemie's soldier-uncles urged Anna to send him, after all, to West Point. His father's fame, the family's military connections, and influential political friends, including Daniel Webster and Henry Clay, ensured that sixteen-year-old James Whistler received an appointment to the academy from President Millard Fillmore.[5]

During his first three years as a cadet, Whistler was a chronic underachiever. At the end of his first year, he ranked forty-second in a class of fifty-two. His best subject was French, where he stood ninth in his class, but then he had been speaking French since the age of nine, when he lived on the fringes of the Russian court. He was smarter than his academic ranking suggested but lazy. He had been no more attentive to his studies as a boy. His father had regularly lectured him about the need for self-discipline and "perseverance." The only course in which Whistler excelled at West Point, ranking first in both his second and third years, was drawing, which also included painting in watercolors.[6]

But Whistler was one of the least punctual and most ill-disciplined cadets in the history of the academy. More than two hundred demerits per year was grounds for dismissal, whatever a cadet's academic achievements, and Whistler lived constantly on the edge. More than once he had to be "forgiven" excess demerits in order to maintain his standing. Never guilty of any serious infractions, such as insubordination, lying, or fighting, he was habitually late for roll call, late for meals, late for drill, and late for guard duty. He went on report for laughing in ranks, whistling in class, and "gazing about" on parade. He received demerits for a dirty musket, an untidy tent, improper alignment at drill, and poor execution of the manual of arms. His father had been famous for his practical jokes and merry ways as a cadet, but the son pushed the rules to their limits by smuggling contraband, especially tobacco and liquor, on the post and engaging in illicit activities such as playing cards and cooking in his room. He admitted to his mother, who constantly implored him to behave in a way that would honor his father's memory, that he enjoyed trying "to brave the Authorities," and found it impossible to give them full "deference & obedience."[7]

Whistler avoided dismissal because he was so likable and genuinely apologetic when he realized that he had overstepped proper boundaries. While not a natural leader, or possessing any strong desire to be one, he was popular with all but his most sober-minded classmates. They called him "Curly" because of his rich, dark brown hair, nearly always in need of being cut. He was honest, too, and unflinching when he knew he deserved a reprimand. One night, he and a rowdy friend were caught playing cards in his room. Seeing the futility of denial, Whistler confessed to the crime, which carried a punishment of eleven demerits. His partner in crime, Henry M. Lazelle, somewhat improbably, continued to deny the obvious. In the inquiry that followed, Cyrus B. Comstock, who led their class academically, reported, "Our class went on pledge for Whistler," meaning that his mates spoke up for his honesty and good character. No one did so for Lazelle.[8]

Whistler came closest to dismissal in his third year, universally dreaded by cadets, when chemistry and "philosophy" (really a course in natural science) replaced the mathematics and French courses of their first two years. Whistler nearly failed chemistry, and Colonel Robert E. Lee,

the academy's superintendent, had to "forgive" him some forty demerits during the course of the year. Lee, like so many army officers of his generation, had admired Whistler's father and was fond of his mother. He had once given the son a rare weekend furlough to visit Anna, and he had engaged in at least one heart-to-heart chat with Cadet Whistler about his low academic standing. Some political influence may also have saved Whistler. An elder stepbrother, George, had asked the governor of Connecticut, the state from which Whistler had entered the academy, to intervene in the matter of the demerits. Jemie really was a "well-behaved youth," brother George had assured the governor, with "no bad habits."[9]

Cadet Whistler received his commission as a second lieutenant in June 1855. The seventy-one members of his entering Plebe class had been reduced to thirty-four by then, with Whistler at rock bottom. His low class standing should have landed him in an infantry regiment posted somewhere west of the Mississippi River. Instead, influential friends, his father's reputation, and his unquestioned drawing skills resulted in a posting to the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey in Washington, D.C. He found his work at "the Castle," as the Survey's fortress-like quarters directly east of the Capitol was known, boring. He learned new skills at the Survey, including etching and engraving, but he found the work repetitive and unimaginative. As he spent his days drawing maps and topographical views of Boston Harbor, the Harlem River, and the Pacific coastline, he amused himself by adding what a coworker described as "clever, droll, or humorous sketches" to the borders of his work. Neither this nor his habitual tardiness endeared him to the superintendent of the Survey, retired army officer Alexander Dallas Bache, who had graduated first in his class at West Point in 1825. Bache operated his domain, which included both civilians and army and navy officers, with military precision and discipline, and he expected strict compliance from even his civilian employees.[10]

After about a year, Whistler requested, and received, a transfer. He went first to Fort Hamilton, in New York Harbor, where he continued to employ his artistic talents by drawing maps and diagramming fortifications. In early 1858, he found himself at Fort McHenry in Baltimore Harbor. Interestingly, one his civilian coworkers at the Survey had been

John Ross Key, grandson of the man who had famously watched the British navy bombard the fort in 1814. However, the Key connection had nothing to do with Whistler's posting. Rather, personal influence again played a role. The Winans family, prominent Baltimore manufacturers, had been close friends of the Whistlers ever since George Washington Whistler gave them the contract to manufacture locomotives and cars for his Russian railroad. Jemie Whistler's stepbrother George, who had recruited the governor of Connecticut to keep him at West Point, had subsequently married into the Winans family. Anna Whistler now lived in Baltimore, and she wished her solider-son to join her there.[11]

The following year, 1859, Whistler nearly resigned from the army. Having completed his four-year commitment to the nation, he felt a youthful urge to study art. He dreamed of going to Paris and living the life of a bohemian painter. Brother Willie, who would soon complete his medical studies in Philadelphia, could look after their mother. Yet, Whistler was also aware of the country's restless political mood in 1859. Though not particularly interested in party politics, he knew that the presidential election of 1860 could bring a crisis in sectional affairs. Civil war might well result, and that would mean a chance for adventure and military glory. He stayed in the army, and when, four months later, news arrived of an attempt by abolitionists to capture the army arsenal at nearby Harpers Ferry, Whistler knew that he had made the right decision. He nearly dashed to Harpers Ferry himself when he read that Colonel Lee was to lead an expedition to put down the traitors.

When war did come, Whistler found himself in a quandary. Though a son of New England, his mother, a North Carolinian by birth, had reared him on Southern cooking, tales of plantation life, and "Negro songs." He also accepted his mother's ideas about black inferiority. With slaveholding relatives in Georgia and Florida, she approved of slavery as necessary and morally justifiable. In addition, the Winans were among the leading secessionists in Baltimore, so prominent, in fact, that the family patriarch, Ross Winans, had been arrested when Abraham Lincoln declared martial law in the city.[12]

However, the deciding factor was brother Willie. After completing his medical studies, Dr. Whistler had married Ida Bayard King, a second cousin from Georgia, and settled in Baltimore. The couple moved to

Richmond, to be with Ida's family, when the war started, and it was not long before Willie was "a thorough secessionist." He sought, and eventually obtained, an appointment as a Confederate army surgeon. That settled matters. Jemie could not possibly fight against Willie.[13]

So, in early June 1861, having delayed as long as possible, Whistler resigned his commission to enter the Confederate army. He knew that Colonel Lee already commanded troops in Virginia, and more than a few of the men he had known at West Point, including John Bell Hood, James E. B. Stuart, William Dorsey Pender, E. Porter Alexander, John S. Marmaduke, and a fistful of Lees – George, Stephen, and Fitzhugh – had cast their lots with the Confederacy. Even his close friend Archibald Gracie Jr., a New Yorker, having entered business with his father in Alabama some years earlier, had joined the rebels.

The Confederates made Whistler a major. Unfortunately, they also wanted him to reprise his role in the U.S. Army by drawing maps. Assigned to a desk in Richmond, he soon chafed, as he had done at the Coast Survey. He withstood the boredom until the summer of 1862, when fortune smiled on him. Robert E. Lee, always a hero in Whistler's eyes, was finally a hero in the eyes of the entire Confederacy after his masterful Seven Days campaign. Having saved Richmond, he escaped his own leash as President Jefferson Davis's military advisor and got another chance as a field commander. Whistler immediately applied to him for a position on his staff. Even if he must draw maps, he wrote to Lee, he would rather do it with the general's army than in Richmond. Lee, always fond of "little Jimmy Whistler," and fully appreciating his desire to smell powder, arranged the transfer and his promotion to colonel.[14]

The rebel government may also have wanted Whistler out of Richmond in order to avoid scandal. Rumors about the private lives of some prominent army officers, generals included, had aroused concern among a few puritanical politicians. Most alarming, and a threat to the army's image, were tales of inappropriate sexual liaisons, sometimes with the wives of prominent civilians, sometimes with innocent women who had barely reached the age of consent. News of General Earl Van Dorn's nocturnal activities in Mississippi had most recently reached Richmond.[15]

Whistler was not a general, but he had always had a reputation as a lady's man, and he was none too discreet in his selection of partners. He

contracted gonorrhea at age eighteen while a West Point cadet. Treatment of the disease had been successful, but he was never known to be without a pretty girl. His favorite before the war had been Emma, an apparently respectable girl, known for her "large languishing deep black eyes" and "beautiful *really* beautiful rich red lips." But Anna Whistler, who knew well her son's "natural fondness for ladies society," warned Emma that she could not expect any long-term commitment from Jemie. He pursued women out of "vanity," the embarrassed mother explained; it was simply "his way." Sure enough, once in Washington, Whistler had become involved with a number of women. He referred to one of them as his "fiancée," although no marriage resulted. He also had to avoid the irate father of a young woman whose sacred "pew" he had entered.[16]

His *amours* aside, Whistler's conduct before the war had never been very military. During his days in Washington, he had frequented saloons and billiard rooms and taken up with a colorful array of confidence men and artful dodgers. He loved the theater, too, and having taken lodging very near Ford's Theater, was as likely to be found there as at the Castle. He had been perpetually in debt in those days, so deeply, in fact, that he may even have considered joining the Confederacy in order to escape his creditors. Not that it mattered, for he was soon in arrears to Richmond shopkeepers.[17]

Much of Whistler's indebtedness came from a fondness for good food, strong drink, and tobacco – he was addicted to cigarettes – but he spent much money, too, on clothes, although that was one way, at least, in which he had matured. In his teens and early twenties, Whistler had cared little about his appearance and bearing. He had been famous for his "lounging" posture, when his habit had been to sprawl or slump down in a chair. Not quite the thing for a gentleman, much less one so proclaimed by act of Congress. By 1862, Whistler had not only outgrown that slovenly habit, but prided himself on his gentlemanly manner and appearance. In civilian life, he would have been called a "dandy." As a soldier, he pushed uniform regulations to the limit. He dressed in thin-soled, patent leather shoes, soft-collared shirts, flowing neckties, and narrow-waisted jackets. Of course, he did save money on haircuts, which he still avoided like the plague. Instead, like some other officers in both armies, including Earl Van Dorn and George Pickett on the

Confederate side and George A. Custer for the Federals, he carefully coiffed and oiled his locks, which he teased into "ringlets." Adding a uniquely exotic touch was a tuft of grey hair in his forelock, a hereditary trait seen also in stepsister Deborah. His old friends in Washington had attributed the discolored hair to "wickedness," but Whistler took pride in his plume, and groomed it as carefully as he did his luxurious curls. Naturally, too, he had followed the nearly universal male fashion of growing a mustache when he left West Point, where facial hair had not been allowed.[18]

In many ways, this does not sound like a man Robert E. Lee would want on his staff, but, as mentioned, Lee had always been fond of Whistler, and Whistler had a way of endearing himself to people. He was not tall, only five feet three, but his dark hair, blue eyes, fine features, and fair complexion led many people to think of him as the "handsomest fellow" they had ever known. More than that, Whistler's sensitive nature and buoyant, affable, animated, downright charming personality seduced people. The clown and prankster of cadet days had also become an extraordinarily witty raconteur. People could not help but be amused by him. Besides, he made terrific maps, and given the problems that a lack of reliable maps had caused Lee during the Seven Days, the general had reason enough to take a chance on Whistler.

Lee soon regretted his decision, but not for reasons he could have anticipated. Whistler performed well enough on Lee's staff. He worked closely with General Thomas J. Jackson's cartographer, Major Jedediah Hotchkiss, who, like Whistler, was a Northern-born rebel with ties to Connecticut. Whistler liked Hotchkiss, too, even though he found him a bit dour. Certainly, he avoided Hotchkiss on Sundays, when the pious older man urged Whistler to attend church with him. Whistler avoided church. Mostly, though, Whistler found that he was no more happy making maps in the field than he had been in Richmond. He wanted combat, and his frequent appeals for a field command finally wore down Lee.[19]

Whistler's opportunity came, as had his transfer to Lee's staff, from dire need. The Army of Northern Virginia had enjoyed a remarkable string of victories since the spring of 1862. Save for a tactical draw at Sharpsburg, it had known nothing but victory. However, Lee had lost

an inordinate number of experienced field commanders along the way, especially at Chancellorsville in May 1863. "Stonewall" Jackson was that battle's most famous casualty, but twelve brigade commanders had also been killed or wounded. The number included Whistler's West Point classmate Francis R. T. Nicholls, who lost a foot while commanding a Louisiana brigade. Lee knew that Whistler had not a jot of combat experience, but he was at least a West Point man. So, as Lee contemplated another foray into Union territory, this time into Pennsylvania, he gave his mapmaker a chance.[20]

The question was, how could Whistler best serve? Lee and Whistler discussed this issue at length. They discounted the artillery. The science of gunnery had not been one of Whistler's strong suits at West Point. Whistler himself, despite his boyhood infatuation with Russian lancers and hussars, discounted a cavalry command, as would anyone who had known him at West Point. His poor horsemanship was nearly legendary. Spirited cavalry mounts, sensing his tentativeness in the saddle, stopped short at a canter, which sent Whistler hurtling over their heads. "Mr. Whistler," his West Point riding instructor had bellowed, "aren't you a little ahead of the squad?" Suffering this fate at the hands of a horse named "Quaker," Whistler rose painfully from the tanbark of the riding hall to declare, "My God! He's no friend." Upon joining Lee's staff, he had bought an excessively gentle horse, some said deaf and blind.[21]

That left only the infantry, and so, as Lee reorganized his army for the move into Pennsylvania, Whistler commanded a brigade in George E. Pickett's Virginia division. Rather, he helped to command the brigade. Lee did not yield to the insistent Whistler until mid-June, with the army already behind schedule. As late as June 11, Whistler was still working with Hotchkiss on a map for General Richard S. Ewell. Consequently, still uncertain of how best to use him in the field, Lee assigned Whistler to James L. Kemper's brigade, the idea being that the veteran Kemper could serve as a mentor on the march while Lee considered the best permanent command for Whistler. It was an unorthodox arrangement, but Whistler did not complain. His new assignment carried with it a promotion to brigadier general.[22]

No one enjoyed the march more than Whistler. He got on well with both subordinates and fellow officers. Pickett, who saw a bit too much of

himself in his new brigadier, was standoffish, but Kemper, who had little formal military training, relished the chance to tutor a West Pointer. The eyes of some officers narrowed when they heard that Whistler had been born in Massachusetts, but a few stories and clever observations from the new general soon put things right. Not that there much time to get acquainted. On July 1, the army suddenly lurched eastward when Union cavalry was spotted in the town of Gettysburg.[23]

Most of the army, that is, lurched eastward. Pickett's division, which had lagged far behind the head of the column, did not arrive on the battlefield until the evening of July 2. By then, the military situation had become tense. Lee had decided to throw fifteen brigades into a frontal assault against the center of the Union line. Pickett's division, assigned a crucial position in the alignment, would anchor the rebel right flank. These were not the best circumstances in which to test the mettle of the undoubtedly brave but woefully inexperienced Whistler. Consequently, Lee reassigned him to command a brigade of Floridians that, along with Cadmus M. Wilcox's brigade of Alabamians, would protect Pickett's right flank in the coming attack. Whistler, in fact, found himself positioned immediately adjacent to Kemper's brigade. What was more, the Floridians needed a brigadier. They had been commanded thus far on the campaign by Colonel David Lang, an able and brave officer, but a grade below the prescribed rate for his assignment.[24]

Lang and Wilcox had also been badly mauled in fighting the previous day, so badly, in fact, that Lee hoped to spare them entirely from the action on July 3. Unfortunately, Lee was forced to commit both brigades. Some thirty minutes into the main infantry advance, Wilcox and Whistler joined the battle, to be met by a terrible wall of artillery and rifle fire. Utter chaos ensued; the fearful noise numbed Whistler's senses. He knew enough to listen to Lang's advice as the brigade grappled with the enemy, much as an inexperienced junior officer would listen to his sergeant major, but even Lang soon lost control of the situation. "The noise of artillery and small-arms," Lang would write in his report of the battle, "was so deafening that it was impossible to make the voice heard above the din, and the men were . . . so badly scattered in the bushes and among the rocks that it was impossible to make any movement to meet or check the enemy's advance."[25]

General Wilcox, in his report, emphasized the "terrible fire of artillery." That was the part Whistler would remember. The shell burst that lacerated his head and throat left him unconscious. He also sustained broken ribs and a busted leg. Lang helped drag the general from the field. The next thing Whistler remembered, he was being evacuated by ambulance toward the Potomac River. The pain, including an unceasing headache, was excruciating as he rocked from side to side. He could not speak. When he showed no signs of improvement after reaching Culpeper, Virginia, on July 24, General Whistler was sent via railroad to Richmond. He doubtless would have received the best available medical care in any event at the capital, but as luck would have it, brother Willie, just days earlier, had been assigned to Jackson Hospital, the newest of Richmond's twenty military hospitals. Lucky, too, in that Dr. Whistler's specialty was diseases of the throat. Arranging for Jemie to be entrusted to his care, he nursed the general through the most serious of his wounds.[26]

When Willie was ordered back to the field at the end of October, the general was transferred to his mother's house in Richmond. Anna Whistler, despite her Southern roots, had been ambivalent about the war. She had spent the early part of the conflict with Northern relatives in Connecticut. However, seeing that both her sons meant to serve the Confederacy, she moved to the rebel capital shortly after Jemie joined Lee's army. She had nursed her daughter-in-law when Ida fell ill with smallpox in early 1863. Tragically, Willie's wife had died at the end of March, but now Anna could attend her general.[27]

Despite even a mother's care, Whistler remained unfit for field service in the spring of 1864. A bout of rheumatic fever, an ailment that had plagued him periodically since childhood, worsened his condition. Consequently, it was Dr. Whistler, not General Whistler, who found himself with Lee's army during the spring campaign. Assigned to the Twenty-second South Carolina Infantry, Willie was cited for bravery in tending wounded men under fire at Spotsylvania. General Whistler's bones had mended and the headaches had all but stopped by September, but also by then, Lee's entire army was trapped in Richmond and Petersburg. Whistler's hopes for glory and honor in battle had ended. Lee, concerned for Whistler's health, placed him with the engineers responsible

for maintaining the defenses of the capital. Whistler, of course, protested, but Lee convinced him that he could do the Confederacy far greater service in that capacity than in any other duty. To soften the blow, and in recognition of his courage at Gettysburg, he had Whistler promoted to major general.[28]

The Federals captured Whistler when they broke through the defenses of Petersburg in late March 1865. Paroled two months later, he made his way to Richmond to be reunited with his mother and brother. Anna wanted to put the war behind them by returning to Connecticut, but her boys bristled at the thought of living in the North. Anna persisted. If not Connecticut, why not New York City or Philadelphia? she asked. Many defeated Confederates already spoke of making their way to those two cities, which contained large numbers of Southern sympathizers. Willie could easily reestablish his medical career in Philadelphia, she urged, and in New York, Jemie might finally realize his boyhood fancy of being an artist.

Instead, the boys convinced Anna that they should leave the country entirely, as many ex-Confederate refugees were doing. Their stepsister Deborah had married a well-connected English physician in London before the war. He could help Willie set up practice there, and London would offer even more opportunities than New York to a hopeful artist. So England it was, and, as things turned out, the Whistler clan remained there, none of them ever returning to America. And things turned out well for them. Willie became a much-honored physician, Jemie one of the century's greatest artists, and Anna, thanks to Jemie's portrait of her, an iconic symbol of motherhood.

Jemie enjoyed one more opportunity for martial glory. In early 1866, some ex-Confederates in London, most of them having been involved with the development of torpedoes in the Rebel Navy Department, drew the Whistler brothers into a dodgy money-making scheme. Some of these men had known Willie in Richmond, and, of course, all had heard of the general. Their plan was to net a small fortune by selling naval weapons, mostly torpedoes and "torpedo boats," to the governments of Chile and Peru in a war against Spain. These arms dealers typified scores of ex-Confederate soldiers and sailors, restless and desirous of leaving the United States, who took advantage of their military

experience by becoming mercenaries. Most of them did so in Mexico, but a contingent of naval officers, led by Commander John Randolph Tucker, had received commissions in the Peruvian navy. Now, Jemie and Willie were bound for Chile.[29]

Except, Willie could not go. Having somehow escaped America without being paroled or signing an oath of allegiance to the United States, he was denied a passport by U.S. consular officials in London. One official commented on Willie's "very surly cast of countenance" on the occasion. Jemie was allowed to leave, and although the expedition became a fiasco, with none of the anticipated riches realized, he acquired some rewarding ideas for his paintings in the months he spent in the Chilean capital of Valparaiso. He also made a will before leaving England on the dangerous expedition. He signed the document as James Abbott *McNeill* Whistler. It was the first time he had used McNeill, his mother's maiden name and Willie's given middle name, but he would keep it for the rest of his life.

A final note. While several members of the West Point class of 1855 became general officers in the Union army, only Whistler and Frank Nicholls achieved that feat in the Confederacy, and only Whistler became a major general.

Notes

1. Elizabeth R. and Joseph Pennell, *Life of James McNeill Whistler*, 2 vols. (London: William Heinemann, 1908), 1:33; Elizabeth R. and Joseph Pennell, *The Whistler Journal* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1921), 180–81; Merlin E. Sumner, ed., *The Diary of Cyrus B. Comstock* (Dayton, Ohio: Morningside House, 1987), 150; Edward L. Hartz to father, June 18, 1854, Edward L. Hartz Papers, Library of Congress; Robert E. Lee to Joseph G. Totten, July 8, 1854, Superintendent Letter Book No. 3, 120–21, Special Collections, U.S. Military Academy Library, West Point, New York; C. W. Larned to Joseph Pennell, October 4, 1906, vol. 303, Pennell-Whistler Collection, Library of Congress. For two other explanations of Whistler's failure to pass chemistry, see Gordon Fleming, *The Young Whistler, 1834–1866* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978), 102–4; William Baumer Jr., *Not All Warriors: Portraits of 19th Century West Pointers Who Gained Fame in Other Than Military Fields* (New York: Smith and Durrell, 1941), 228–29.

2. Quotation comes from Whistler's "Notes for Memoirs" [1896], W818, Whistler Collection, Special Collections, University of Glasgow Library, Glasgow, Scotland. For an evaluation of the best-known Whistler biographies, see

Daniel E. Sutherland, "Getting Right with Whistler: An Artist and His Biographers," in Lee Glazer et al., eds., *James McNeill Whistler in Context* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2008), 169–82. For a good recent discussion of counterfactual history, as well as an example of the genre, see Roger L. Ransom, *The Confederate States of America: What Might Have Been* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005), 1–18, 288–90.

3. For general biographical information, see Fleming, *Young Whistler*; and Ronald Anderson and Anne Koval, *James McNeill Whistler: Beyond the Myth* (London: Carroll & Graf, 1994).

4. Anna M. Whistler Diary, May 31, June 5, July 1, 5, August 20–21, 1844, New York Public Library, from microfilm copy in Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.; Anna Whistler to Joseph G. Swift, September 24, 1846, Joseph Gardner Swift Letters, New York Public Library, from microfilm copy in Archives of American Art.

5. James A. Whistler, file no. 335 for 1850, United States Military Academy Applications, 1805–1866, Adjutant General Records, Record Group 94 (M688, reel 183), National Archives.

6. For Whistler's class standing during his years at West Point, see the published *Official Register of the Officers and Cadets of the U.S. Military Academy, West Point*, for 1852, 1853, and 1854.

7. For Whistler's mountain of demerits, see Register of Delinquencies, 1851–53, Records of United States Military Academy, Special Collections, U.S. Military Academy Library, West Point, New York.

8. Sumner, *Diary of Comstock*, 61, 102, 138. For published reminiscences of Whistler at West Point by classmates, see H. M. Lazelle, "Whistler at West Point," *Century Magazine* 90 (September 1915): 710; A Classmate [Tom Wilson], "Whistler at West Point," *Book Buyer* 17 n.s. (September 1898): 113–15.

9. Herman Herst Jr., "Manuscripts Gone Forever?" *Manuscripts* 17 (Summer 1965): 3–5; Kenneth W. Rapp, "More about Whistler and Lee," *Manuscripts* 18 (Summer 1966): 12–17; Douglas S. Freeman, *R. E. Lee: A Biography*, 4 vols. (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1944), 1:334–37, 343; George W. Whistler to Thomas H. Seymour, December 12, 1853, Box S, Pennell-Whistler Collection.

10. Whistler did, in fact, have a brief career at the Survey following his departure from West Point. John Ross Key, "Recollections of Whistler While in the Office of the United States Coast Survey," *Century Magazine* 75 (April 1908): 928–32; Gustav Kobbe, "Whistler in the U.S. Coast Survey," *Chap Book* 8 (May 1898): 479–80; Charles E. Fairman, "Whistler in Washington," *The Lamp* 29 (November 1904): 306–8; Marlene A. Palmer, "Whistler and the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey: An Influential Period in a Flamboyant Life," *Journal of the West* 8 (October 1969): 559–77; Hugh Richard Slotten, *Patronage, Practice, and the Culture of American Science: Alexander Dallas Bache and the U.S. Coast Survey* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1–2, 148–55.

11. The Winans connection was an important one throughout Whistler's life. Alexander Lee Levin, "Inventive, Imaginative, and Incorrigible: The Winans Family and the Building of the First Russian Railroad," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 84 (Spring 1989).

12. Georgia Toutziari, "Anna Matilda Whistler's Correspondence – An Annotated Edition," PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2002, 600–609; Frank Towers, *The Urban South and the Coming of the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 171, 174, 177.

13. Anna Whistler to James H. Gamble, June 20, 1861, November 15, 1862, June 7, 1864; Anna Whistler to James Whistler, July 11, 1861, August 3, 1861, August 19, 1861; Anna Whistler to James Whistler and Deborah Haden [ca. July 15, 1861], Whistler Collection; William McNeill Whistler File, Combined Service Records of Confederate Generals and Staff Officers, War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Record Group 19 (M331, reel 264), National Archives, Washington, D.C.

14. Jon David Blevins, "The United States Coastal Survey during the Civil War," MA thesis, University of Arkansas, 2006, 11–12; Robert E. Lee to Mary C. Lee, July 15, 1860, Robert E. Lee Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond.

15. Arthur B. Carter, *The Tarnished Cavalier: Major General Earl Van Dorn, C.S.A.* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 77, 114–15.

16. Sutherland, "Getting Right with Whistler," 176; Henry M. Lazelle to James Whistler, December 15, 1878; Anna M. Whistler to James Whistler, May 29, 1854; Anna M. Whistler to Fair Stranger, September 2 [1854], Whistler Collection; James Whistler Journal, n.d., Winans Family Papers, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore; Fleming, *Young Whistler*, 101–2; Frank L. Hunt to James Whistler, May 3, 1855, May 18, 1855, June 15, 1855, Whistler Collection.

17. Key, "Recollections," 928; Palmer, "Whistler in Coast Survey," 569–71; Fairman, "Whistler in Washington," 308; Anna Whistler to James Whistler, March 15, 1855, March 20 and 21, 1855, April 17, 1855, April 19, 1855, April 24, 1855; Frank L. Hunt to James Whistler, May 3, 1855, May 18, 1855, June 15, 1855, Whistler Collection.

18. Anna Whistler to James Whistler, June 10, 1851, July 10 and 11, 1851, August 6, 1851, August 27, 1861, Whistler Collection; Jonathan Shirland, "'A Singularity of Appearance Counts Doubly in a Democracy of Clothes': Whistler, Fancy Dress and the Camping of Artists' Dress in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Visual Culture in Britain* 8 (2007): 15–35.

19. Jedediah Hotchkiss, *Make Me a Map of the Valley: The Civil War Journal of Stonewall Jackson's Topographer*, ed. Archie P. McDonald (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1973), xv–xvi, xvii, xxi–xxii, xxv.

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PART SIX

Picking Up the Pieces

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Confederate Amputees and the Women Who Loved (or Tried to Love) Them

BRIAN CRAIG MILLER

This old coat don't fit me Mary, as it did when I
was young
Don't you remember how neatly to my manly form
it clung,
Never mind the sleeve that's empty, let it dangle
loose and free
For I am going out parading with the boys of '63.
– S. Fontaine, "Parading with the Boys of the Sixties"

With her husband, Will, away fighting the American Civil War, Emma Shannon Crutcher had a dream. She dreamed of receiving word from an army surgeon that her husband had been shot in the leg, but spared his life. Crutcher reacted to the news with "maximized joy" and noted, "Now, thought I, he will never leave me again, for he will be of no use, in the army, and – if I die, he will never marry again, for no one but me would love a lame man – he is mine now." She not only realized that her husband, as a lame man, would be dependent upon her but also acknowledged the social stigma a missing limb would play in the minds of other Southern women. Crutcher confessed the dream to her husband

in a letter and defended her reaction by writing, "But you came home and the meeting was all my imagination pictured, and I awoke, sighing that it was not reality, lameness and all. If I only regarded my own feeling without thinking of duty, I had rather take you now, lamed for life, than wait for months and maybe years longer, with the chance of [not] having you back with me." Crutcher stood prepared to accept an amputated man over the other dire alternative: no husband at all. Her dream revealed the transition in thinking that many Southern women underwent during the war in order to recognize a physically incomplete man as still a man and a loving husband. Women served as the catalyst that assisted battered men in both reconstructing their altered manhood and adjusting to the postwar societal challenges presented to a newly disabled individual.[1]

The challenges that thousands of permanently disfigured Confederate men faced during and after the Civil War, as well as those faced by their female counterparts, have been absent within the realm of scholarship.[2] Wounded, disfigured, disillusioned, and amputated men returned to a world they no longer recognized, as the American Civil War dramatically altered the Southern landscape. The masterful facade of Southern culture and masculinity had been stripped away by the hard hand of war. The brutal system of slavery crumbled under the weight of Union victory. The war sent thousands of physically altered men back to their homes with missing fingers, toes, hands and feet, and arms and legs as well as hundreds of facial and body wounds, scars, and elements of disfigurement. In many ways, scarred and amputated men faced a crisis in manhood because they could not predict how Southern society would react to their injuries. Prior to the war, scars and signs of disfigurement could be interpreted as a badge of honor for defending one's reputation or a sign of weakness for failure to uphold honor through fights and duels. Southern men internalized their own self-worth and then displayed that perception through their outward appearance, dress, manner, and actions. Following the war, families and communities accepted their wounded men as honorable veterans, which allowed the physically incomplete man to hold an honorable position in society. When men returned home, they embraced what remained of the household in order to reassert their manhood. For Confederate amputees to be perceived as

an honorable and masterful man in their own household, they needed to function as regularly as possible, despite their horrific injuries.[3]

The lives of physically shattered men cannot be explored, however, without Southern women, who are crucial in shaping the constructions and reconstructions of manhood in the postwar period. For Southern women, the Civil War challenged and redefined notions of womanhood and marriage. As George Fitzhugh, a prominent proslavery writer, noted before the war, if a woman wanted to gain the love of a man she needed to be "weak, helpless and dependent." Historian Anya Jabour has argued that young women understood "a married woman's role was one of dependence, and a wife's responsibilities came down to submitting to her husband's will." Yet, the Civil War traumatized notions of dependency, as amputated men remained dependent on a willing woman to care for their crippled bodies and maintain both their health and welfare. Prewar notions of dependency shifted, as wounded men and women now entered into a relationship on equal terms. Women also used this opportunity to assert a sense of female mastery over their wounded husbands. While women connected to wounded and amputated men gained a unique type of authority, they did not attain complete mastery across the South, as societal ideals of mastery trumped individual circumstances within households. This article will focus on the female response to amputated men, who visibly displayed their wartime sacrifices through the empty sleeve. Women responded to limbless men in both the domestic and public realms of society as nurses, benevolent workers, wives, and potential spouses. Although some women recoiled in disgust at disfigured men and failed to recognize their manliness, a majority of Southern women worked tirelessly to support and recognize the physical sacrifices of the soldiers who gave their limbs on behalf of the Confederate cause.[4]

When thousands of wounded and amputated men returned back to the home front, Confederate President Jefferson Davis called on women to take a new role within the Confederacy. In a speech in Macon, Georgia, on September 23, 1864, Davis tried reassure a disillusioned audience that the war was not lost, despite the fall of Atlanta. After justifying his military decisions, Davis told the crowd of several women that the "limping soldier" would be the aristocracy after the war. He issued a call

to the women: "To the young ladies I would say when choosing between an empty sleeve and the man who had remained at home and grown rich, always take the empty sleeve." Davis solidified, in the minds of his audience, that the amputated war veteran would hold an honorable place in society and that women had an important task in ensuring that the wounded returned as heroes rather than dishonored failures. One Southern writer in the years following the war noted, "Do you see that tender vine binding up the shattered tree and hiding its wounds? That is Southern woman clinging closer and more tenderly to father and husband when the storms beat upon him, comforting as only such Christian women can comfort." If women wanted to represent the "tender vine" that would hold together the Southern oak of manhood that had been "riven by the lightning" after the war, they needed to accept the call issued by Davis and honor the noble sacrifices of the amputees.[5]

Yet, what would happen to the women who ignored the amputated men? In particular, women experienced social exclusion from the Southern populace and in the Southern newspapers. In one instance, two women traveled by streetcar through New Orleans, when a gentleman, described as a "Knight of the Crutch," despite his amputated limb, took the women's tickets to a box at the front of the car, a traditional act of chivalry in New Orleans. Society expected the women to remain dependent on a man to carry their tickets forward. As the amputee hobbled toward the front of the streetcar, the women sat silently and ignored both the man and his actions. One eyewitness vented his frustration in the local newspaper, decrying the actions of the ungrateful women and argued that at least the man adhered to societal definitions of manhood and womanhood because he had been polite to the women, even though he lost a leg. For women to convey their true lady-hood, according to the observer, they needed to show courtesy and "delicate thoughtfulness and consideration for the comfort and convenience of others, especially the unfortunate." It appeared a social crime that the women refused to act in a cordial manner to the injured gentlemen, jeopardizing a societal perception of womanhood.[6]

The streetcar incident presents a fascinating moment where two women failed to recognize the manliness of the amputee. Granted, the women allowed the man to complete the act of chivalry, but their marked in-

difference, combined with a lack of appreciation for the act, prompted the eyewitness to harshly judge the women in the newspaper. The missing limb failed to elicit sheer sympathy, compassion, or a simple thank you. Instead, the silence exhibited by the ungrateful women revealed a sense of revulsion and ungratefulness toward a veteran who had lost a limb on behalf of the Southern effort in the Civil War. Furthermore, the eyewitness did not hold back an opinion in the newspaper. The witness concluded with a sarcastic prediction, asking, "I wonder if you two are 'Women's Rights' women? If so, how will you manage to get your 'tickets' into the ballot box independent of the assistance of a gentleman with or without a crutch?" The two women failed the test to observe Jefferson Davis and his call to recognize the empty sleeve as a marker of the new aristocracy, let alone an appropriate sign of manhood.[7]

Despite the incident on the streetcar not named Desire, Southern women embraced the opportunity to care for wounded men as both their motherly and patriotic duty. As one Confederate mother noted in 1861, "The young ladies are exceedingly anxious to imitate Florence Nightingale, and distinguish themselves in the Army." However, the hospital sacrifices emerged as a toilsome and uneasy burden to bear. J. L. Underwood, in an essay discussing a Southern woman's hoopskirt, noted, "Like the old soldier's sword it came out very much battered and worn by long service. Like the old soldier himself, it had been wounded and broken and mended and spliced until it was hardly its former self." Despite the trials and tribulations of medical care, women accepted their position as patriotic mothers and extended their assistance to the unfortunate.[8]

However, the process of amputation and the piles of limbs emerged as one of the toughest challenges for women willing to volunteer their services in medical care, and they consistently reflected on amputation in their letters and diaries. Sally Louisa Tompkins recalled "wooden legs tapping the corridors" and "so many amputations, stumps of arms and legs, some still oozing." Cornelia McDonald, a Southern woman who worked in a hospital, explained, "I wanted to be useful and tried my best, but at the sight of one face that the surgeon uncovered, telling me that it must be washed, I thought I should faint." McDonald wanted to reach deep down and find the courage to wash the wound. Instead, she staggered toward the door. As she departed, her dress "brushed up against

a pile of amputated limbs heaped up near the door." Another volunteer nurse found herself in an old warehouse in Mechanicsville, Virginia, in 1862. She remembered, "As I passed by the rows of occupied cots, I saw a nurse kneeling beside one of them, holding a pan for a surgeon. The red stump of an amputated arm was held over it. The next thing I knew I was myself lying on a cot, and a spray of cold water was falling over my face. I had fainted." The hospital matron declared her unfit for medical service and she returned home, distraught and embarrassed.[9]

Women who agreed to work in the medical arena encountered amputees on a daily basis. Josephine Crump, working in a Little Rock, Arkansas, hospital, made her rounds and discovered "a man here with a leg already in the grave, another mere boy with both arms gone trying to prop himself up to drink the nourishment his nurse had brought him, I felt the conditions of the soldiers was far more pathetic than mine." As Cordelia Scales noted in Holly Springs, Mississippi, "You can't cross a street or turn a corner, but what see wounded or sick soldiers. Some . . . their leg shot off and walking on crutches and some with their arms shot off . . . [I have] seen so much suffering lately that I feel like I could stand almost anything." Janie Smith, who lived in North Carolina, noted the horrific sights she saw, including that "under every shed and tree the tables were carried for amputating the limbs." She heard the horrific screams of the "poor suffering soldiers" who called out in agony during amputation and the sounds left a painful impression on her heart. She sacrificed her time and energy to roll bandages and send food to the soldiers around them. She noted that the experience was simply her "trial."[10]

Mary Jane Lucas, residing in Charlottesville, recalled her time working in a hospital in 1864. She said, "No one will know what the people of Virginia have suffered and what they are still suffering but they bear it with remarkable fortitude." Lucas told the story of a soldier named Barrow who lost his leg. She wrote, "He said his life had been saved by the great attention he had been shown." Barrow had one woman who "stays by him all day and at night someone takes her place." Barrow credited the women for his survival, which allowed him to return home to his wife and three children.[11]

Phoebe Yates Pember, who worked as a nurse in Richmond, Virginia,

during the war, recalled the case of a young "stalwart" soldier from Alabama who would require amputation. The attending physician gave Pember the task of feeding him in order to "give him strength to undergo amputation." She knew that the young man would have a difficult time eating anything, especially since "irritability of stomach as well as indifference to food" accompanied gunshot wounds. Pember chopped up a pound of beef and mixed it with "a half pint of water" and stirred it until the "blood was extracted" and then she added salt for taste. She did this for ten days and the soldier gained his strength and underwent surgery. Pember wrote, "After the amputation, which he bore bravely, he looked as bright and well as before, and so on for five days – then the usual results followed. The system proved not strong enough to throw out the pus or inflammation." The soldier died shortly thereafter and the nurse noted that her "heart beat twice as rapidly as ordinarily whenever there were any arrangements progressing for amputation, after any length of time had elapsed since the wound, or any effort made to save the limb."[12]

Pember actively questioned the practices of amputation throughout the war, noting that "often when a hearty, fine-looking man in the prime of life would be brought in minus an arm or leg, I would feel as if it might have been saved." Unfortunately, the conditions the men faced on the battlefield did little to help. She wrote, "Poor food and great exposure had thinned the blood and broken down the system so entirely that secondary amputations performed at the hospital almost invariably resulted in death, after the second year of war." However, Pember recalled two Irishmen who survived amputation. She clearly saw them as rather strong, noting that "it was really so difficult to kill an Irishman." One of the men "had his leg cut off in pieces, amputation having been performed three times." He later returned home, married, and settled on a profitable farm owned by his new bride in Macon, Georgia.[13]

In some cases, Southern women offered medical care to Union soldiers discovered abandoned without sufficient attention. In a small skirmish at Lockridge Mill, Tennessee, John George Bauer, a German immigrant who served under the Minnesota flag in the Fifth Iowa Cavalry, received a wound in his right shoulder. Doctors declared that Bauer needed an amputation to live. When he refused, doctors left his deformed body

lying upon a barren Southern battlefield. A "gracious southern lady" by the name of Mary Benson Lockridge took the wounded cavalryman into her home and began the arduous task of ensuring his recovery. Her Unionist sympathies even forced her to cover Bauer with a quilt in order to sneak him through Confederate lines.[14]

Beyond the battlefield and the hospital tent, some women actively participated in benevolent groups that sought to help take care of their wounded and amputated men. In New Market, Virginia, men and women gathered together in the Methodist Church at 6:00 p.m. on February 1, 1864, to gather money in order to establish "a manufactory, at some suitable point within the limits of the Confederacy to furnish artificial limbs." The audience that evening raised $650 to care for any soldiers "who may have been, or may hereafter be so unfortunate as to be deprived of a limb." In Greenville, North Carolina, dozens of women joined the Ladies Association, whose mission was "to provide hospital stores and clothing for the soldiers of the Confederacy." The group of women started on July 19, 1861, requiring their members to pay $5.20 to join. When women could not afford the high dues, they were simply encouraged to give as much as they could. The funds raised and items collected, ranging from clothing, bedding, food, and bandages, ended up in hospitals in the region to help wounded Confederate soldiers who suffered from disease, gunshot wounds, or amputation. Simultaneously, women in Warrenton, North Carolina, joined the Sick Soldiers Relief Society in August 1861, holding their meetings six times a week. Within five weeks, the women had gathered and donated "140 shirts, 54 pillow cases, 60 pairs of socks, 2 comforters, 44 sheets, 33 pillow licks and 83 towels." In Charleston, South Carolina, Margaret Ann Meta Morris Grimball wrote in her diary on July 26, 1861, "The ladies are all as busy as possible forming themselves into relief societies for the wounded soldiers, and also to prepare clothing for them in the winter, which will soon now approach."[15]

Even though women rallied behind the cause of providing relief and medical care to amputated men, would they themselves consider a wounded veteran as an appropriate mate? Would a woman stand by her amputated man? In a recent article, three historians argued that 92 percent of all women who came of marrying age in the South during the

Civil War eventually married. As the historians noted, "As for southern women, faced with the choice of marrying amputees or cripples, men from lower social classes, or no one at all, some of these women ultimately married disabled veterans." While a vast majority of women did maintain their relationships and marriages with their physically altered men, others did not, prompting legitimate concerns for some men who feared a negative reaction to their empty sleeves. Although some writers noted that "the cause glorifies such wounds" and "a hand is a bad thing to lose, but it won't hurt you among the ladies of Savannah," not everyone could overlook the physical deformities. In a letter to her sister Emma, Mary Lucas noted the lack of potential mates for her sister returning from school in 1864. She wrote, "I am afraid you will be very lonesome when you return. You will see nothing but one legged and one arm soldiers." Clearly, Lucas saw the war destroying any suitable able-bodied men for her sister to pursue.[16]

Men found themselves wondering the same thing. Walter Waightstill Lenoir, a Confederate soldier who lost his right leg at the Second Battle of Manassas in August 1862, noted in his diary that his head filled with thoughts of what he would have to give up now that he had lost a limb. He wrote, "First I thought of my favorite sport of trout fishing, which I would have to give up. Then I thought of skating, swimming and partridge hunting, my other favorite sports which it also occurred to me that I could never enjoy again." Yet, sports did not appear first and foremost on his list of sacrifices. Lenoir confessed that "before all these things I thought sadly of women; for I was not old enough to have given up the thought of women. . . . It may not seem very creditable to me that I thought first of the mere enjoyments which I was to lose with my leg. But such were my poor unworthy thoughts."[17]

The loss of a leg transported Lenoir from a world of being an independent man to one where he had to reassess dependency and accept assistance from anyone who could facilitate his survival. During his recovery, Lenoir remained dependent on Mrs. Samuel A. Chancellor, who spoke to him "in that sweet, kind woman's voice that thrills the heart of the sufferer as nothing else can, inquiring after my situation and wants." Once he returned home, his greatest fears materialized, as Lenoir did not marry and lacked any true romantic prospects. Thus, in

order to financially survive, Lenoir spent his months after departing the war dependent on some slaves who assisted him in farming. He wrote to his sister, "You know that I had made up my mind before the war that I would not be again a slave owner . . . . Circumstances have made me a slave owner." Prior to his military service, Lenoir wrestled with the morality of slavery and declared he would live an independent life without any connection to the institution. Amputation shifted Lenoir's internal perceptions about slavery and forced him to now remain dependent on other men for his health and welfare.[18]

In other cases, men focused their new sense of dependency exclusively on women, who would have to assist in the simple daily chores of life. In a poem written during the war by Dr. G. W. Bagby, "The Empty Sleeve," the author discusses Tom, a Confederate soldier who lost an arm during the war, and says that his wound would serve "as a badge of honor." Yet, Tom begins to cry, stating, "She deserves a perfect man" and also noting that he is "not worth her" in his "prime." Although Tom had an internalized fear of women not recognizing his sacrifice, men and women praised his sacrifices on the street and he returned home to "a nation's love in proud remembrance" of the sacrifice that he gave "for freedom's sake." Tom, ordered at once to return to his sweetheart, returned to a loving relationship with a "tender" and "strong" woman who committed the rest of her years to "helping as hard as she can, to put on his coat and pin his sleeve, tie his cravat, and cut his food." Because of their physical sacrifice in the Civil War, Confederate men should not fear but rather embrace their newfound dependency on women, who stood ready to serve.[19]

In some cases, men clearly realized the new burden their injury would have on their suitors and wives. During the battle of Chickamauga, Georgia, in September 1863, John Redding, a Confederate soldier from Randolph County, Georgia, received a severe wound to his leg that prompted him to return a few hundred miles home for the operation. Family members and loved ones gathered around the bedside as the operation commenced, including Miss Carrie McNeil, his fiancée. Redding survived the operation and the surgeon allowed McNeil to see her future husband before anyone else. Redding offered to end his engagement due to his amputation but his future wife refused, declaring, "No,

no, John, I can't give you up and I love you better than ever." Tom Phipps, another amputee from the same county, returned home from the war and offered to end his engagement with Miss Maggie Pharham because he did not feel he could financially provide for a family in his physical condition. Pharham refused to end the relationship, simply stating, "No, Tom, we can make a living." In both cases, the women embraced their role as caregiver and did not allow a missing limb to diminish their love for their future husbands.[20]

In another instance, a wounded soldier, with a disabled limb, called for the nurse and asked, "When do you think my wound will be well enough for me to go to the country?" The soldier requested a speedy return home, for, as he told the nurse, "It ain't the country air I'm after, but I wants to get married, and the lady don't know that I am wounded, and maybe she'll think I don't want to come." The nurse quickly corrected him, "Ah, but you must show her your scars, and if she is a girl worth having she will love you all the better for having bled for your country and you must tell her that 'it is always the heart that is bravest in war that is fondest and truest in love.'" The soldier seemed content and asked the nurse to tell him the verse again because he wanted to provide her a "pretty excuse" for the lack of communication following his injury. Although we have no way of knowing how this relationship turned out, it seems plausible that his fiancée accepted him back, especially since the concern here is a lack of communication, rather than a physically altering injury. [21]

Mary Jane Little's husband, Benjamin Franklin Little, served as a captain in the Fifty-Second North Carolina during the war and had his arm amputated in a Federal hospital following the Battle of Gettysburg. Little wrote continually to his wife, whom he called Flax, about his injury and hospital life. The relationship remained strong and stable, even though amputation had to change the prewar parameters of the relationship. The Union surgeon who performed the amputation, L. W. Oakley, wrote to Mary Jane Little and assured the wife that her husband would quickly recover and he had everything "except the presence of his family to make him comfortable." The surgeon told the absent wife, "He shall lack for nothing while under my care. I trust that you may be relieved from all unnecessary anxiety and that your husband may

be soon restored to you and his family." Little found it a blessing to be a captured soldier. As he told his wife, "I now think it for the best that I fell into the hands of the enemy. Had I not I must have been moved after my arm was amputated, which I don't think I could have endured." Little slowly recovered and ended up a prisoner in Fort McHenry. He again wrote his wife on November 25, 1863, stating, "Tell the dear little ones that papa prays to soon be permitted to take them in his arms (in his embrace as I have but one arm) and to bestow in person the kisses I now give through Mama."[22]

As we have seen, the return of amputated men shifted notions of dependency within the household for both men and women. Major General Richard Ewell suffered an injury during the battle of Groveton, Virginia, on August 28, 1862, that resulted in the amputation of his leg. During his recovery, Lizinka Campbell Brown, Ewell's fiancée, emerged as his primary caregiver. Ewell's status as an amputee had clear ramifications on his relationship with Brown. As Brown wrote to Ewell, "While I sympathize in your terrible suffering and loss, it is only womanly to remember that one of its consequences will be to oblige you to remain at home and make me more necessary to you." Clearly, Brown worried that Ewell would have had a host of women to choose from after the war, especially since he served as a Confederate officer. The empty sleeve changed everything and provided Brown with an enhanced level of personal security in her relationship because of how dependent Ewell would be on his primary caregiver. She wrote, "That whereas I thought before you ought to marry and could very well marry a younger woman, now I will suit you better than any one else, if only because I will love you better." Brown admitted that her own sympathy for Ewell's injuries heightened her feelings toward her fiancé and created a unique co-dependent relationship that only she could replicate. If Ewell returned from the war physically intact, his relationship most likely would have mirrored prewar relationships rooted in a patriarchal system. Amputation allowed a woman like Lizinka Campbell Brown to at least level the playing field in terms of equality in a relationship. The empty sleeve allowed a loving partnership to ensure both a stable marriage and a successful postwar career, as Ewell lived on and made money off his wife's farm in Tennessee. Both Ewell and his wife died within a few days of one another from pneumonia in January 1872.[23]

Several women, like Lizinka Brown, held steadfast in their relationships with their wounded men and accepted Jefferson Davis's call to care for the new aristocracy. Julia Ward, the daughter of a grandnephew of George Washington, married Colonel Sydney Thurston Fontaine of Galveston, Texas, who lost his left arm at the Battle of Yellow Bayou during the Red River Campaign in 1864. Fontaine and Ward had five children. Two different women would marry T. M. McKinney of the Twenty-seventh Mississippi, who lost his right leg at the Battle of Chickamauga in September 1863. McKinney's first wife died in 1890 and he then remarried a widow of another Confederate soldier in Mississippi. Miss A. E. Henly married Cyrus Barksdale Watson, a soldier with the Forty-fifth North Carolina who loss the usage of his right arm at the fight near Spotsylvania Court House in May 1864. A eulogy writer noted that Watson lived "in happiness and perfect accord" with his wife, until she died in 1907, leaving three daughters and two sons behind.[24]

In some cases, although women accepted amputated veterans, their extended family members found the relationship deplorable. At the battle of Corinth in October 1862, James H. Berry, a second lieutenant in the Sixteenth Arkansas, received a severe wound that resulted in the loss of his right leg. Berry spent several months recuperating at a hospital in Iuka, Mississippi, and then at the home of an aunt. He later rejoined his regiment at Port Hudson. After the war concluded, Berry agreed to marry Lizzie Quaile. However, he had little to offer his potential bride, as his granddaughter would later remember: "The war was over and the prospective bridegroom was only a young man just out of the war, with no money, no prospects and only one leg." Berry went to ask Mr. Quaile in 1865 for his daughter's hand in marriage, which was summarily rejected because "although he did not object personally to the suitor, he proposed to send his daughter to Kentucky to school, and was not willing for his daughter to be married to a man who had not much chance for means of support." Quaile's father summarily equated amputation with the prospects of an impoverished and worthless life. Berry asked if the marriage would receive approval if he could "provide a way to make a good living." Quaile sternly replied that there "was no use in holding out hope that would probably not be realized" and recommended that Berry "let the whole matter drop."[25]

Yet, Berry refused to accept the denial of marriage for Lizzie Quaile,

only seventeen years old at the time. Berry promised Lizzie that if she disobeyed her father's wishes and married him, he would eventually "buy her diamond earrings." He also promised her that she would be marrying a future governor of Arkansas. Lizzie Quaile agreed and the day after her father rejected the marriage proposal, she married James Berry at the home of his sister. Mr. Quaile refused to speak to his son-in-law or even acknowledge his presence until 1882, seventeen years later, which happened to be the year that Berry received the nomination for governor of Arkansas. Berry won the election, served one term, and then was selected in 1885 to finish the term of Senator Augustus Hill Garland, who left to serve as Grover Cleveland's attorney general. Berry served as a Senator for twenty-two years until he lost reelection in 1906 and turned his attention to marking the graves of Arkansas soldiers who died in Union prison camps. One man remembered Berry by stating, "He limped back to his state after being maimed on the battlefield for life. He spent his remaining days with the high ideals of southern manhood always before him." Berry never let his injury deter him from his life pursuits, whether in his quest for political power or his relationship with Lizzie Quaile.[26]

Not every woman enthusiastically embraced or fell in love with an amputated man. Probably no one fits into the category of trying to love an amputee better than Sally Buchannan "Buck" Preston, the love interest of Confederate General John Bell Hood, who lost the use of his left arm and his entire right leg during the war. One woman described Hood's broken and battered physique as having "body enough left to hold his soul." When Hood first noticed Preston he remarked, as a typical Kentuckian might, according to Mary Chesnut, "You stand on your feet like a thoroughbred." Initially, Preston showed minimal interest but did seem to enjoy being courted by a Confederate officer. However, one afternoon, after Hood departed, she stated, "I never cared particularly about him, but now that he has chosen to go with those people, I would not marry him if he had a thousand legs, instead of having just lost one." Preston did not show any true sympathy for an amputee early on and remained lukewarm about the relationship, especially since she had a plethora of male prospects that had all their limbs intact.[27]

Despite several women who either admired him or pursued him dur-

ing his recovery in Richmond, Hood remained focused on Preston, despite her reservations. Famed diarist Mary Chesnut described Preston as having the ability to cast "a spell upon her lovers" that resulted in them being "killed" or having "died of the effects of her wounds." Hood, aware of the flirting tendencies of Preston, remarked to Preston one afternoon, "I think I will go set a mantrap near your door and break some of those young fellows' legs, too." Hood seemed to think that Preston would not show affection to any physically altered man. Despite the realm of ambivalence conveyed by Preston, Hood enthusiastically pursued Preston as his love interest, and the relationship remained hot and cold from the fall of 1863 through the late winter of 1864, as Hood recuperated from his amputation. Although Preston and Hood materialized as a staple in Richmond's social circle, she never reciprocated any affection for Hood and even declared during a party when asked if she would become engaged to the wounded officer, "Engaged to that man! Never! For what do you take me?" When Hood heard this, he told Varina Davis, "Why wince when you would thank God for a ball to go through your heart and be done with it all?" Yet, the couple announced their engagement a few weeks later, after Hood issued Preston an ultimatum during a carriage ride. Mary Chesnut remained convinced that Preston did not love Hood but rather had mustered up some "sympathy for the wounded soldier."[28]

However, the engagement ended up on hold, as Hood received a call to serve as a corps commander with the Army of Tennessee. Preston, unsure of her feelings, responded one evening to a compliment on her hat from Hood by quickly departing the house. However, a few days later, she protected him from the rush of a crowd and handed Hood his crutches in a clear act of kindness. The rare instance of concern and affection did not alter the perceptions of Preston among the elite women in Richmond, who ostracized her for the way she treated Hood. Preston declared to the women, "Don't waste your delicacy! Sally H[ampton] is going to marry a man who has lost an arm, so he is also a maimed soldier, you see; and she is proud of it. The cause glorifies such wounds." Preston thought that bringing up Sally Hampton would alleviate social criticism and ostracism since someone in the ladies group wanted an amputee. Preston assuaged any guilt from tossing Hood aside but it

failed because the women remained supportive of Hood and found her behavior inappropriate. For the women, the types of physical injuries made little difference, as a woman named Tudy had been interested in a soldier who lost an eye. One member of the Chesnut circle stated, "What a glorious assortment of noble martyrs and wrecks – heroes I mean." The unnamed woman quickly corrected herself when she referred to the damaged men as "wrecks." While other members of her social circle may have been willing to attach themselves to a wounded or amputated man, Preston remained steadfast in her opposition to Hood, which could no longer be masked by the guise of an engagement. Yet, she remained concerned about Hood's welfare and she continually perused his correspondence, prayed for him, and wore a diamond ring as a token of affection. In the end, Preston moved on and the phony engagement officially evaporated after Hood returned to Richmond following the devastating defeats at Franklin and Nashville, Tennessee. Hood would later marry Anna Marie Hennen and father eleven children in the span of a decade.[29]

The Civil War altered Southern notions of the patriarchy through relationships between amputated men and their supportive wives. Southern society embraced a missing limb as a noble badge of sacrifice and women followed suit by maintaining relationships with their injured mates or by marrying amputated men in significant numbers. Southern society recognized some dependency on women as a buttress, rather than a hindrance, in personal definitions of male identity and self-worth. As amputees adjusted to a new form of manhood in the postwar period, so did women. Confederate women sacrificed throughout the war with their service in hospitals and in benevolent societies to assist amputated men. Once the amputees returned home, women, for the most part, continued to provide steadfast support and love that assisted men in reconstructing their shattered lives. Women ensured that amputated men would earn recognition for their injuries, while benefiting from a newly forged relationship that provided many women with more self-worth, security, and a man who now remained dependent on her for survival. Women forged the necessary crutches for amputated men to cope with both their altered physiques and an altered society constructed by victorious Union armies in the Civil War.

Notes

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1. "Letter from Evangeline to Will dated January 22, 1862," Crutcher-Shannon Papers, Eugene C. Barker Texas History Center, University of Texas at Austin.

2. One estimate for the number of Confederate amputees is around 25,000 and can be found in Dixon Wecter, *When Johnny Comes Marching Home* (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1944), 209. Union numbers are more precise, with 29,980 recorded amputation operations taking place during the war. See also Joseph K. Barnes, ed., *The Medical and Surgical History of the Civil War,* vol. 11 (Wilmington, N.C.: Broadfoot, 1991), 339; Ansley Herring Wegner, *Phantom Pain: North Carolina's Artificial-Limbs Program for Confederate Veterans* (Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 2004), ix. One recent article examined the ramifications of amputation on Union soldiers: see Frances Clarke, "'Honorable Scars': Northern Amputees and the Meaning of Civil War Injuries," in Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller, eds., *Union Soldiers and the Northern Home Front: Wartime Experiences, Postwar Adjustments* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002). For more on the experience of amputation, see Laurann Figg and Jane Farrell-Beck, "Amputation in the Civil War: Physical and Social Dimensions," *Journal of History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 48, no. 4 (1993): 454–75.

3. Laura F. Edwards offers a thorough discussion of gender, politics, and honor in her work, *Gendered Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 113–29. Edwards argues that men defined themselves as men through mastery of their wives, children, and household. For more on the definitions of manhood in the South, see Stephen W. Berry, *All That Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover, eds., *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004); Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor and Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing as a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, the Proslavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting, and Gambling in the Old South* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996); Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s–1880s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); and Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982). For more on scars as impacting a sense of manliness, see Elliot J. Gorn,

"'Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch': The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry," *American Historical Review* 90, no. 1, supp. (February 1985): 18–43.

4. Anya Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters: Young Women in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 189 and 263. For more on the experience of Confederate women during and after the war, see Jane Turner Censer, *The Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood, 1865–1890* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003); Edmund L. Drago, *Confederate Phoenix: Rebel Children and Their Families in South Carolina* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008); Victoria E. Ott, *Confederate Daughters: Coming of Age during the Civil War* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008); Jane Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Post-Emancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Laura Edwards, *Scarlett Doesn't Live Here Anymore: Women in the Civil War Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Christie Anne Farman, ed., *Women of the American South: A Multicultural Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1997); Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996); Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race and Respectability in New Orleans, 1865–1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004); and LeeAnn Whites, *Gender Matters: Civil War, Reconstruction and the Making of the New South* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

5. Lynda Lasswell Crist, ed., *The Papers of Jefferson Davis,* vol. 11, September 1864–May 1865 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 62; Rev. J. L. Underwood, *The Women of the Confederacy* (New York: Neale, 1906), 64–65; LeeAnn Whites, "'Stand by Your Man': The Ladies Memorial Association and the Reconstruction of Southern White Manhood," in Christie Anne Farman, ed., *Women of the American South: A Multicultural Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 133–49. In gender theory, the image of the "Sturdy Oak" represents men and their ability to handle impossible tasks with confidence and control. For more on the "Sturdy Oak," see Linda Lindsey, *Gender Roles: A Sociological Perspective* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1997), 227.

6. *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, January 15, 1871.

7. Ibid.

8. Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters*, 256; Underwood, *Women*, 274; Nancy Schurr, "It Is Heart-breaking to Hear Them Groan: Female Workers in Confederate General Hospitals," paper delivered at Society of Civil War Historians Meeting, Richmond, Virginia, June 18, 2010.

9. Shirley E. Gillespie, *The Lady with the Milk White Hands: A Biography of Captain Sally Loyisa Tompkins* (Chandler, Ariz.: Two Dogs, 2006), 20; Keppel Hagerman, *Dearest of Captains: A Biography of Sally Louisa Tompkins* (White Stone, Va.: Brandylane, 1996), 39; Faust, *Mothers*, 106; Underwood, *Women*, 84–85.

10. *Josephine Crump Papers*, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Librar-

ies; W. L. Kennon, "A Tribute to the Womanhood of the Confederacy, 1934," University of Mississippi Archives; Janie Smith, located at http://www.rootsweb.com/~nccumber/janlet.htm, accessed July 14, 2009.

11. "July 1864 Letter," Lucas Ashley Family Papers, Special Collections, Perkins Library, Duke University.

12. Bell Irvin Wiley, ed., *A Southern Woman's Story: Life in Confederate Richmond by Phoebe Yates Pember* (Jackson, Tenn.: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1959), 106–8.

13. Ibid.

14. John W. Graber, "One Man's Civil War," *Minnesota History* 52, no. 4 (1990): 144–45.

15. "February 1, 1864 notice," Henry Kagey Papers, Special Collections, Perkins Library, Duke University; Greenville Ladies Association Minutes, 1861–65, Special Collections, Perkins Library, Duke University; *Jacob Mordecai Papers*, Special Collections, Perkins Library, Duke University; "26 July 1861," in Margaret Ann Meta Morris Grimball Diary, 1860–1866 #975-z, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

16. J. David Hacker, Libra Hilde, and James Holland Jones, "The Effect of the Civil War on Southern Marriage Patterns," *Journal of Southern History* 76, no. 1 (February 2010): 39–70, quoted from 49; Wyatt-Brown, *Shaping of Southern Culture,* 250–51; Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters*, 271. For more, see Drew Gilpin Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narrative of War," in Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds., *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 175; Victoria Bynum, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 132; George Rable, "'Missing in Action': Women of the Confederacy," in Clinton and Silber, *Divided*, 139.

17. "Walter Lenoir Diary," Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

18. "Letter to Sister Sarah Joyce Lenoir, 27 March 1864," Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

19. "The Empty Sleeve," M. J. Solomons Scrapbook, Special Collections, Perkins Library, Duke University.

20. Underwood, *Women*, 64.

21. Ibid., 116–17.

22. "July 9 Letter to Flax," "July 9 Letter to Mrs. Little," "July 20 Letter to Flax," "November 25 Letter to Flax," in Benjamin Franklin Little Papers #3954, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

23. Donald C. Pfanz, *Richard S. Ewell: A Soldier's Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 264.

24. Gen. Clement A. Evans, ed., *Confederate Military History,* vol. 15 (New York:

Broadfoot, 1989), 402 and 536–37; "Eulogy," in Watson and Morris Family Papers #5150-z, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

25. Mary C. Berry Papers, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries.

26. Ibid.; Eulogy from member of Benton Bar Association, James C. Berry Collection, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries.

27. Mary Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, ed. C. Vann Woodward (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981), 443, 492, and 547.

28. Ibid., 430–31, 505, 510, 560; Steven E. Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals: The Failure of Confederate Command in the West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 269–70.

29. Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War,* 565, 570, 588–89, 622, and 647.

"Will They Ever Be Able to Forget?"

Confederate Soldiers and Mental Illness in the Defeated South

DIANE MILLER SOMMERVILLE

Although the cessation of fighting brought Confederate men back to their homes, the reuniting of Southern families and the resumption of life after war proved challenging as Southern men and women, affected by war, struggled to reconstitute their marriages, families, and communities. Southern men who had served in the military and who were lucky enough to have escaped death returned to the home front with physical and emotional scars that hampered a return to anything resembling a "normal" life. Of course we now recognize that veterans suffered effects of a variety of physiological and psychological ailments, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a psychological condition little studied and understood until the Vietnam War. The disorder is defined as "a delayed stress syndrome which is caused by exposure to combat and can produce symptoms of rage, guilt, flashbacks, nightmares, depression, and emotional numbing, and can lead to a variety of grave social and psychiatric problems."[1] Manifestations of PTSD – alcoholism, violence,

and mental illness – took root in the households of the postwar South and created additional challenges for life in the defeated South.[2]

Too little scholarly attention has been paid to the psychological suffering of Civil War veterans and its impact on postwar households and families. Noted Civil War historian James M. McPherson acknowledges that while much has been written about Civil War soldiers, "their postwar history has been relatively neglected."[3] Chastising social historians twenty years ago for ignoring the impact of the Civil War on its veterans, Maris Vinovskis rued that almost "nothing has been written about the postwar experiences of Civil War veterans."[4] Only one monograph to date focuses on Civil War soldiers and the effects of war on their psychological health. Moreover, disproportionate attention is paid to Northern soldiers and their experiences, leaving us with virtually no examination of the psychological experiences of Confederate veterans. Even a cursory view of sources shows what is certainly obvious to anyone with twenty-first-century sensibilities: that Confederate soldiers greatly suffered from the trauma of war. Eric Dean's important book, *Shook over Hell*, breaks new ground in challenging claims that situate the emergence of PTSD in twentieth-century wars (especially the Vietnam War) and rightly asserts that soldiers from earlier wars – namely the Civil War – suffered significant long-term psychological harm. Many of my findings bolster Dean's very original, weighty claim.

But because my focus is on the South, I take this argument further by suggesting that Confederate veterans suffered even greater psychological damage than their Union counterparts. For one thing, a higher percentage of Southern men than Northern men fought – and died – in the Civil War so more of them were exposed to battlefield trauma.[5] Confederate armies were more apt to be ill-clothed and ill-fed. Their nation and peoples experienced shortages far greater than those in the North, likely contributing to morale problems as well. Most military engagements took place in the South, which sustained widespread physical destruction in places. Many soldiers returned to find their homes demolished or in ashes, their fields in ruin. And unlike their Northern counterparts, Southern veterans and their dependents received no federal pensions to provide even minimal financial assistance.[6] Finally and importantly, Southerners lost the war. Unlike Northern soldiers who returned home

claiming victory, Southern soldiers recoiled in humiliation. The chief form of wealth, slaves, had been stripped from them along with suffrage and political rights. Southerners were now a subjected people. Trauma born of battle, personal loss, and defeat combined to make reintegration into family life challenging at best and at times impossible for soldiers.[7] Many a Southerner, like teenaged Floridian Susan Bradford, witnessed the bittersweet homecoming of male relatives and commented on the demoralized demeanor of returning soldiers: "I sit here and wonder, wonder if all the dear 'men in gray' feel as crushed and disconsolate as these? . . . Will they ever be able to forget?"[8] Some could not. Even if they could, they returned to a ruined land and a dismal future. Marietta Minnigerode Andrews explained the Southerner's outlook at war's end: "It is obvious that the emancipation of the slaves and the collapse of our whole system after the Civil War, the depletion in men, the wreckage in buildings, and forests, the years of neglect of agriculture, the penniless condition of the best element among us, and their unfitness for manual labor, would mean ruin for a long time."[9] Confederate soldiers returning to these conditions at home wrestled with the memories of battle horror and carnage from their past yet faced a present and future that was at once bleak and hopeless.

My analysis goes beyond Dean's in another way. A gendered analysis figures prominently. The war experience challenged the very essence of what it meant to be a man in the South. One's masculine identity was very much attached to values of strength, bravery, honor, and self-sufficiency.[10] War tested the mettle of Southern men like nothing they'd ever faced. Most rose to the challenge, but some did not. In the nightmare that was battle, frayed nerves sometimes gave way to paralyzing anxiety. Months of marching in muck and oppressive heat or frigid cold with sparse provisions, away from family and friends, crippled some soldiers with debilitating depression. Open acknowledgment by men of such emotions, however, was forbidden in nineteenth-century society and regarded as an expression of weakness and cowardice, the very antithesis of manhood. Southern veterans were doubly crippled, then: psychologically anguished by the fighting but also ashamed that they were failing nation, family, and comrades by exhibiting signs of what today we know as mental illness. This emotional angst placed an added

burden on Confederate soldiers, which was further exacerbated by losing the war.

The quelling of hostilities between the Union and the Confederacy in April 1865 brought welcome relief to war-weary soldiers on both sides. The reconstituting of the ideal Southern family after the war would not be effected solely by the return of the male head of household, however. The mere presence of the patriarch in the family did not signal a return to prewar gender conventions and family structures. Even in situations where Confederate men did return home and attempted to reassert their paternalistic prerogatives, the traumatic battlefield experiences assured that long-awaited reunions would be fraught with discord. For Confederate women who yearned for their male kin's return home to relieve them of their ersatz independence, the reunions often proved short-lived as Confederate veterans, beset by emotional and psychological scarring, sometimes required institutionalization, once again requiring female family members to serve as de facto household heads. In extreme cases, Southern soldiers who had escaped random death on the battlefield ended their emotional suffering by taking their own lives after the war.

After the war Southern hospitals for the mentally ill, usually called lunatic asylums, became populated with the psychological casualties of war, including veterans. A general impression prevailed in the years following the war that "insanity" was on the rise in the South. A Nashville newspaper claimed that people had gone mad by the dozens, necessitating an addition to the state asylum.[11] The president of the board of directors of the Eastern Lunatic Asylum in Virginia informed the governor in 1870 that "[i]nsanity seems to have increased since the war." With asylum beds at a premium, jails throughout the state teemed with the mentally ill.[12]

Asylum records, therefore, provide an opportunity to probe the relationship between the war and mental illness in some detail. Among the growing number of Southerners struggling with mental illness after the war were Confederate veterans, many of whom show up in asylum records. Identifying veterans among asylum patients is not easy. First and perhaps surprisingly, asylum officials seldom connected a patient's mental illness to military service. Occasionally an admission log or case his-

tory might note a patient's involvement in the war but more as a marker of time ("After he returned from the war") or to explain the source of an injury believed responsible for a patient's psychological condition.[13] Consequently, researchers must turn to other corroborative records, such as military rosters, service records, and census data. Still, a considerable number of service-age men in postwar asylums (many of whom probably served in the war) have to be excluded from this study because they cannot with certainty be identified as veterans. Therefore, the following discussion surely underrepresents the number of Confederate veterans institutionalized after the war.

The Milledgeville Insane Asylum in Georgia, which first opened its doors in 1842, was severely taxed by the increase in patients after the war. Thomas Green, superintendent and resident physician of the asylum, reported in 1867 that the facility was "greatly overcrowded" and filled "almost to capacity." In the final year of the war it had housed a total of 275 patients. Two years later the asylum's roster listed 431 patients. By 1870, the hospital could no longer admit all eligible applicants. Eighty-eight applicants had to be placed on a waiting list.[14] Among the patient rolls of the Milledgeville asylum between 1865 and 1872 were thirty-five identified as having served in the military during the war.[15] Of these, twenty-six were described as violent, as very violent, or as having attacked or assaulted persons, often family members. Admittedly, the postwar South held no monopoly on violence. In Dean's sample of Indiana veterans, 40 percent attempted or committed violent acts while another 21 percent threatened violence.[16] The small and admittedly unscientific sampling of veterans at the Milledgeville asylum suggests a higher rate of violent behavior, about 74 percent, the object of which was typically family members.

Veterans prone to violence jeopardized family stability and safety, hampering the reintegration of the ex-soldiers into Southern society. Witness the story of Alabaman William James who first showed signs of derangement just a few months after the war ended. Prior to his discharge in April, James had been confined at Camp Chase in Ohio where he was afflicted by an unspecified disease. Upon return home he showed signs of mental illness; his mind was "much disordered." James, though, persevered and put in a good crop that fall. Less than a year

later, however, he exhibited violent behavior, threatening the life of his father among others. He also threatened arson and seemed determined to end his own life by jumping into a well. Removal to an asylum, as was James's fate, was often the only course of action that would ensure the protection of family members as well as the distraught veteran.[17] Still, families appeared reluctant to take that drastic step as is evidenced by the prolonged bouts of aberrant behavior that passed before commitment to a hospital. After repeated attempts on his father's life, James Payne from Wilkinson County, Georgia, was institutionalized. Initially discharged from the army in 1863 because "his mind became affected," the family waited four years before finally committing him.[18]

Closely linked to violence was drinking, which also plagued many Confederate veterans in postwar years. Today of course we recognize that alcohol is often used by those suffering from mental illness in an attempt to self-medicate, to numb the emotional pain and erase upsetting memories. Anecdotal evidence about the postwar years suggests as much. One South Carolinian noted after the war that "Southerners were driven to drink deeply by their misfortunes, and drunkenness (with all the family misery it entails) is deplorably prevalent to this day."[19] Excessive drinking by Southern men has been well documented in the antebellum period, but after the war Southerners believed it was on the increase as a consequence of the Civil War.[20] Maria Louisa Fleet, writing in 1867, characterized men of King William County, Virginia, as "dispirited" and believed them "drinking very hard."[21]

In the nineteenth century, medical practitioners often conflated causes of mental illness with symptoms. So it was with alcohol abuse. Frequently asylum officials regarded alcoholism as the *cause* of insanity rather than its manifestation. "Intemperance habits" purportedly lay at the root of George N. Washington's bout of "insanity." Admitted to the Georgia asylum in April 1867, he had been symptomatic since his return from the war. And while intemperance was blamed, records show Washington suffered head trauma during the war on several occasions, once the consequence of standing too close to a detonated cannon at the Battle of Fredericksburg. Like many alcoholics, Washington had also become violent, even suicidal.[22]

Drinking, not a two-year stint in the Confederate army, explained B. W. Johnson's unbalanced state of mind. Officials admitting the Geor-

gia veteran to the asylum attributed his erratic and violent behavior—including shooting someone "simply because he had the same name as the Prophet Daniel!"—to alcohol. Admission records further note that Johnson's alcohol consumption was excessive; he drank a quart of whiskey at a clip.[23] In much the same way asylum officials overlooked the likely cause of Hugh Lewis's violent attacks on family members, his service in the military, instead they fastened on a drinking binge that occurred three years after the surrender, even though Lewis had shown signs of mental instability while in the Confederate army and upon returning home.[24]

Anna Maria Green, the daughter of the superintendent of the Georgia Lunatic Asylum in Milledgeville, actually met her future husband while he was a patient at the asylum receiving treatment for alcoholism. Samuel Austin Cook had served as the commissary sergeant at the infamous Andersonville prison, home to what one Union surgeon called the "most abject, pitiful mass of humanity the mind could conceive." Cook was "gentlemanly[, a] well behaved young man"—except when drinking, when he might commit serious acts of violence.[25] The married couple went on to have ten children.[26]

An enthusiastic volunteer, William Dickson "entered into the struggle with all the zeal and earnestness of his impulsive nature," serving as captain in the Sixty-third Georgia regiment. By the close of the war, however, his exuberance had given way to melancholy as he had become "deeply chagrined and depressed." For the first time in his life the twenty-five-year-old had turned to alcohol, drank excessively, and required admission to the state asylum.[27]

Asylum physicians, as well as those conveying details about loved ones' mental illness, may have been simply unwilling or unable to locate the cause of a veteran's aberrant behavior in his military service. Ascribing violence and erratic actions to drunkenness allowed a cover of sorts for ailing veterans. Rather than admit that Southern men were emotionally devastated by their firsthand experiences in battle, a concession that would likely have impugned their masculinity, civilians conspired, knowingly or not, to shield veterans' reputations. Drinking in excess remained within the boundaries of acceptable male behavior; falling to pieces in consequence of soldiering, a form of cowardice, was not.

Confederate veterans who turned to drink to numb the emotional

pain of war trauma risked damaging or destroying familial relationships, further jeopardizing stable, functional households in the postwar South. Domestic turmoil, fueled by unresolved psychological distress brought on by battle and efforts to self-medicate through alcohol, proved an inevitable by-product of soldiers returning to the home front. Marital friction, at times peppered with violence, was a predictable outcome of the adjustment attendant to such reunited but broken families. For example, Michael Keenan from Augusta, Georgia, had been an injured prisoner of war for two years and returned home only to be declared insane. Only in his early twenties, Keenan's experience as a prisoner of war, his years spent away from home, and his injury likely contributed to his failing mental condition. Yet asylum officials blamed his poor mental state on "domestic affliction." Rather than seeing marital discord as a consequence of mental stress, they saw it as a contributing factor.[28]

The commitment papers of thirty-year-old Ambrose Gibson of South Carolina reveal evidence of serious domestic strife. About twenty-one when war broke out, Gibson served in the Fourteenth Regiment of the South Carolina Infantry and was wounded three times. It wasn't until 1876, however, that he manifested severe signs of psychological stress, or at least severe enough to merit treatment. Physicians observed that his mind was at times "so far destroyed" that he had no control over himself. He had to be "under guard for self preservation" as he had threatened suicide and had a penchant for wandering. And he was violent. An internal note warned staff: "Don't try to hold him[. Y]ou will make him mad."[29] Asylum officials, however, believed Gibson's insanity stemmed from "causes" not at all related to his military experience but rather blamed "inconstancy upon the part of his wife" and separation from her.

As in the Keenan and Gibson cases, asylum officials attributed Henry Newton's aberrational behavior to "domestic troubles." The South Carolina veteran, a thirty-four-year-old druggist from Columbia, was institutionalized in 1876 when he became delusional, imagining himself a prophet and candidate for governor.[30] Unable to tend to ordinary duties of life, Newton wandered about at night and posed a threat to himself because of his access to and knowledge of medicines. It seems likelier, though, that Newton's peculiar behavior precipitated "domestic troubles" and not the other way around.[31] And once again there is a disconnect

among those around him: no correlation is made, or at least recorded, between his military experience and the manifestation of mental illness. Shifting the burden of blame at least in part to soldiers' wives, and minimizing or even ignoring the more obvious impact of military experience, preserved the mirage of male virility and strength.

The case of Edmund Bates serves to show how the war psychologically broke one man and crippled his family well into decades after war's end. An engineer, Bates operated as a blockade runner for the Confederacy. During one of his runs out of Charleston Harbor, his only son was killed in battle near Petersburg. Bates arrived home in "quite low spirits," but he returned to duty until war's end. Once home for good, he had difficulty landing gainful employment, which further depressed Bates. In four months, though, he landed a position on a steamer. But after making preparations, he determined the ship was not seaworthy and walked away from the position. Another four months elapsed before he received another offer of gainful employment, this one also working on a steamer. But as with the first opportunity, he found reason to walk away, this time fearing the ship would sink. Bates's wife, Malvina, attributed this inability to follow through with these steamer positions to having "lost all confidence in himself." Indeed, her level of concern grew considerably when she found a vial of laudanum "on his person." Her husband's explanation – he claimed to have purchased the vial in the event his steamer sunk – strained credulity when she found another vial of laudanum after he continued to be "low spirited." Threats against the family followed his bout with depression; he threatened "to destroy the whole family." Depressive behavior shifted to mania; he spent every cent to his name under the impression (perhaps delusion) that he was making $300 a week jerry-rigging steamers to use less wood. For two to three months he had "been on the go day and night," sleeping only two hours per night. Here Bates's wife alludes to a possible link between his behavior and the war. This shift in demeanor stood in contrast to the man Bates was before the war: "his natural disposition quiet and reserved." In July 1867 Malvina Bates implored physicians to examine her husband. They did, declared him insane, and admitted him to the asylum in Columbia that summer where he remained at least through 1870. While Edmund Bates's institutionalization eliminated the threat of violence and lessened

the likelihood he might take his own life, the family nonetheless suffered from his absence and his inability to provide financial support. By 1870 Malvina Bates had moved in with extended family (either her brother's or brother-in-law's home). Ten years later, a widow, she is listed as the head of household of her Charleston dwelling, which consisted of twelve members including her fifty-five-year-old sister and both of their children ranging in ages from thirteen to thirty. The mental illness of her husband, which required institutionalization, altered Malvina's life in profound ways, including living in an unconventional household structure, one in which adult females pooled their resources, and their families, to subsist without benefit of a male head of household.[32]

Not all former soldiers manifested their psychological scars in threatening behavior. A number became despondent, withdrawn, and physically weak. Just days after Lee's surrender, Captain John Mangham of Pike County, Georgia, was admitted to the state asylum. The father of four had served in the Confederate army until January 1864. It was not until that fall, however, that he began manifesting symptoms of mental illness. Officials at the asylum nodded to the "anxiety and excitement growing out of the state of the country" as an explanation for his symptoms. Although he showed no signs of destructiveness or violence, common enough among asylum inmates, he was very weak and slept little, the kind of physical and mental despondency often attributed to PTSD.[33] As the father of four, Mangham's removal to the asylum shifted the burden of caring for the family to his young wife, Rebecca.

Confederate veterans in a state of emotional turmoil frequently threatened the safety of their own family and friends. But many former Southern soldiers turned on themselves and responded to their emotional agony by resorting to self-injury. While no systematic study on suicide and Civil War soldiers has been published, Eric Dean's work on post-traumatic stress looked at a sample of Civil War veterans who entered the Indiana Hospital for the Insane from 1861 to 1920. Fifty-one percent of these either attempted or completed suicide, or were labeled suicidal.[34] My own Milledgeville sample reveals that about one-third of those veterans hospitalized were suicidal. Note, however, that Indiana veterans are tracked well into the twentieth century, a much longer period of time. Not all suicidal Confederate veterans received professional intervention.

In August 1866, just a little over a year since the war had ended, thirty-five-year-old Edward Weeks from Petersburg, Virginia, approached his eleven-year-old son, George, kissed him, and told him good-bye, explaining that he would not be with him another night. That evening, Weeks's wife saw him take morphine pills. As soon as her husband fell asleep, she sent for physicians who were slow in arriving. Too slow, for he was gone before they arrived.[35]

Twice wounded in battle, thirty-two-year-old John Williams was "constantly frightened, apprehending some injury." Chronic fear, especially the fear of being killed, is one of the most common delusions that plague combat veterans. Acting on delusions that others were trying to harm him, Williams seriously injured supposed attackers while at other times begging people to kill him, supposedly to eliminate this constant dread that plagued him day and night. The agitated state accompanying the delusions ultimately prompted him to cut his own throat.[36]

John Sharpe first entered the Georgia asylum during the war although he had been pronounced "cured" and returned to duty in October 1862. He relapsed, though, after being taken prisoner by Sherman's troops for about six months, during which time he was "very badly treated." Following his release he suffered a severe beating at the hands of nine "railroad men," prompting Sharpe to injure himself by beating one of his fingers off with a piece of iron, behavior that landed him back at the Milledgeville asylum.[37] J. F. McCrary, a twenty-two-year-old veteran from Talbot County, Georgia, threatened violence against others and attempted to hang himself. He was institutionalized in June 1866.[38] Atlanta native Osburn Seay, a twenty-two-year-old veteran, was placed in the care of the Georgia asylum after he attempted suicide by banging his head on the wall. He had served in the Confederate army for three years and was wounded in the hip in one of the war's last battles. Four years later Seay was still in the asylum.[39] Allen Smallwood had served in the Confederate army but became a prisoner of war in 1864 and was held in Indiana, where he manifested symptoms of insanity. After the war he exhibited suicidal tendencies, threatening to poison himself and cut his throat. Smallwood remained in the asylum at least through 1880.[40] Signs of mental illness earned twenty-two-year-old Albinus Snelson an early discharge from military duty. He recovered briefly but relapsed during which time he attempted to kill himself several times

by jumping from windows and setting himself on fire. In August 1871, after a five-year cycle of suicide attempts and institutionalization, Snelson succeeded in taking his life by ingesting strychnine.[41]

C. N. "Neal" Shannon, a thirty-eight-year-old grocer from Lynchburg, Virginia, vaguely hinted to friends that his suicidal impulse emanated from his combat experience, from something that happened a long time ago. He remarked that he had witnessed a member of his company in the war get "shot through with a cannon ball." He wished to die that way, too. Shannon got his wish in 1869 as he shot himself in the head with a five-shooter after staying up all night playing bagatelle.[42]

Suicide by veterans continued long after the war, suggesting some ex-soldiers suffered the effects of war trauma for years, even decades. Although he survived a serious wound at Fort Pillow, Tennessee, in 1862 that necessitated the amputation of a leg, Confederate cavalryman A. G. Ewing of Nashville committed suicide ten years later by chloroform.[43]

Post-traumatic stress disorder goes a long way in helping us understand the antisocial or self-destructive behaviors of Confederate veterans. But transitioning back to civilian life proved even more difficult for Southern men who in the years after the war, already weighted down by defeat and war trauma, faced financial ruin. Unlike the North, the South experienced extensive physical damage that made rebuilding difficult. Emancipation eliminated the chief form of Southern wealth virtually overnight. Financial difficulties, or to use the phrase of the day, "pecuniary embarrassment," also underscored the failure of men to fulfill one of the basic responsibilities of manhood: providing for one's family. Moreover, indebtedness signaled dependency, severely undermining the basis of masculine identity.[44] The combined weight of financial ruin and embarrassment on top of the festering anguish from combat memory proved too much for some ex-Confederates. A German-born watchmaker from Richmond who had served in the Virginia Infantry during the Civil War, Emil Wacker, made good on an oft-repeated threat to kill himself in February 1871 despite his wife's pleadings. Wacker replied, "I am done. It is to[o] late" and then shot himself.[45] Wacker was reported to have had "pecuniary troubles."[46]

Marietta Minnigerode Andrews described the gradual, but steady, protracted downward spiral of her father, Charles Minnigerode, a Con-

federate veteran who struggled for two decades to get himself and his family out of debt. Minnigerode had served as an aide-de-camp to General Fitzhugh Lee and was struck with a minié ball at Appomattox at age nineteen, leaving him with a limp the rest of his life. After the war, he was bedeviled by a series of business failures that left him unable to support his growing family. The family bounced around from relative to relative; young children were sent out to earn much needed money. Mounting debt forced the sale of family silver. Charles Minnigerode became depressed, anxious, and embarrassed by his failings as a provider; his wife grew impatient and frustrated. The unwelcome announcement that he was about to become a father for the eleventh time proved to be the breaking point. He committed suicide in 1888, twenty-three years after the Confederate surrender, surely a casualty of the war just as if he had died from his wound that day at Appomattox.[47]

In addition to financial ruin, some Confederate veterans fell victim to a more general malaise attributed to the "distressed state of the country," a term that seems to have implied political as well as economic distress of the former Confederacy. Colonel Robert Harper of Covington, Georgia, blew his brains out in February 1868 after becoming despondent over "the desolate condition of our country." Although suffering from ill health, the newspaper account speculated that the main source of his "mental aberration" was likely the "distressed state of the country," for which Harper had "manifested a deep concern" for some time. Like other suicide victims among Confederate veterans, he left behind a family, a wife and daughter.[48] The irony of Southern men taking their own lives is not lost. Southern men, whose identity was shaped in no small measure by their ability to provide for and protect their families, abandoned their families through their suicides and left them more vulnerable than ever.

Phillip Shaw Paludan raised a compelling question about the Civil War in an essay published in 1998: "What did the winners win?"[49] The gist of the piece is that we need to do more historical work on how the war affected families – mothers, fathers, children. A decade plus later, much work remains to be done in the social and private realm. In the spirit of Paludan's query, may I suggest that we pose – and answer – a different question: What did the losers lose? Any why did that matter?

The Civil War exacted an incalculable cost on the psychological well-being of those who fought the war, on both sides. But Confederate soldiers bore added burdens that made their emotional suffering even worse and their path to recovery more difficult. Only by developing an understanding of the nature and depth of the psychiatric casualties of the Confederacy can we fully appreciate conditions in the postwar South and how those conditions shaped the culture and the future of a defeated, dejected people.

Notes

1. Eric T. Dean Jr., *Shook over Hell: Post-Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 5. The author would like to thank participants of the Weirding the War Conference for their insightful suggestions as well as J. David Hacker and Mitchell Snay for their close readings of the essay and for the valuable feedback they offered.

2. Psychiatric ailments might also have been the manifestation of physiological injuries, such as traumatic brain injury (TBI), which often results in post-concussion syndrome (PCS), some symptoms of which mirror those of PTSD. While I recognize that PTSD has a very specific medical definition, I concede that I apply the PTSD broadly here to include those who may have suffered from other psychiatric problems. Emotional trauma among Civil War veterans also manifested in physical ailments as well, especially cardiac and gastrointestinal diseases. Judith Pizzarro, Roxanne Cohen Silver, and JoAnn Prause, "Physical and Mental Health Costs of Traumatic War Experiences Among Civil War Veterans," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 63 (February 2006): 193–200.

3. James M. McPherson, "War in Mind," The Atlantic Monthly digital edition (March 1998): 4, http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/98mar/mindwar.htm, accessed October 8, 2009.

4. Maris Vinovskis, "Have Social Historians Lost the Civil War? Some Preliminary Demographic Speculations," *Journal of American History* 76, no. 1 (June 1989): 50.

5. Vinovskis claims 61 percent of white Southern males of military age (age 13 to 43) participated in the war compared to 35 percent of their Northern counterparts. Ibid., 40. Jeffrey W. McClurken's recent book finds that about 79 percent of Pittsylvania County, Virginia, white males of military age served in a regular army unit. *Take Care of the Living: Reconstructing Confederate Veteran Families in Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 14. Orville Vernon Burton reports that South Carolina suffered the highest percentage of men killed of any state during the war. Of Edgefield County's 2,137 enlistments, 613 or nearly 29 percent were killed. Burton, *In My Father's House Are Many Mansions: Family and Community in Edgefield, South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University

of North Carolina Press, 1985), 226. About one-third of Orange County, North Carolina, soldiers died in the war. Robert Kenzer, *Kinship and Neighborhood in a Southern Community: Orange County, North Carolina, 1849–1881* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987), 78. Vinovskis points out that even though Northern losses outnumbered Southern losses by 40 percent, "the relative impact . . . on the South was much greater because of its smaller population base" ("Social Historians," 38).

6. Vinovskis, "Social Historians," 50–56; Dean, *Shook over Hell*, 143–44; Megan McClintock, "Civil War Pensions and the Reconstruction of Union Families," *Journal of American History* 83, no. 2 (September 1996): 456–80. Some Southern states passed pension laws but not until well after the war (Vinovskis, "Social Historians," 51). Virginia, for example, did not pass a pension law until 1888 although its legislature allotted funds to provide artificial limbs for veterans who lost limbs during the war. McClurken, *Take Care of the Living*, 144–70.

7. LeeAnn Whites examines this process of "domestic reconstruction" in *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender, Augusta, Georgia, 1860–1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 132–59. It is worth noting that a hostile home front receives significant blame for the emotional woes of U.S. soldiers returning from the Vietnam War and is believed by some scholars to account for their difficulty reintegrating into American society. Eric Dean remarks that Confederates returning to the home front contrasted sharply to the jubilation awaiting Union soldiers and hints this contributed to their emotional state after the war. Dean, *Shook over Hell*, 7–25, 95–96.

8. Susan Bradford Eppes, *Through Some Eventful Years* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1968), 278.

9. Marietta Minnigerode Andrews, *Memoirs of a Poor Relation, Being the Story of a Post-War Southern Girl and Her Battle with Destiny* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1927), 202.

10. Gerald Linderman makes this argument with greater depth of analysis than I can offer here in *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1987). For a gendered analysis of Southern manhood in the Civil War era consult Stephen W. Berry II, *All That Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

11. Nashville *Daily Press*, July 16, 1865.

12. Sydney Smith, President of the Board of Directors of the Eastern Lunatic Asylum, to Governor Gilbert C. Walker, in *Report of the Eastern Lunatic Asylum for the Year Ending September 30, 1870* (Richmond, Va.: C. A. Schaffer, 1870), 5.

13. Wartime and postwar official reports of the state asylums in Virginia, however, do acknowledge "the war" as a "cause" of "insanity" though it is a term broadly applied that includes the impact of the war on those on the home front. Many female patients, for instance, were diagnosed as mentally ill as a consequence of "the war." See McClurken, *Take Care of the Living*, 120.

14. Thomas F. Green, "Report of Superintendent and Resident Physician to

Board of Trustees, October 2, 1867," in *Report of the Trustees, Superintendent Resident Physician and Treasurer of the Lunatic Asylum of the State of Georgia for the Year 1866–7* (Milledgeville, Ga.: Federal Union Book and Job Office, 1868); Green, "Report of the Superintendent and Resident Physician to Board of Trustees," in *Report of the Trustees, Superintendent, Resident Physician and Treasurer of the Lunatic Asylum of the State of Georgia, for the Years 1868–69* (Atlanta: Samuel Bard, Public Printer, 1870). Georgia State Lunatic Asylum Records, microfilm series, drawer 310, box 55, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.

15. The asylum has been known by various titles over the years including the Georgia Insane Asylum, Georgia Lunatic Asylum, Georgia State Sanitarium, and, most recently, Central State Hospital. Peter G. Cranford, *But for the Grace of God: Milledgeville! The Inside Story of the World's Largest Insane Asylum* (reprint; Atlanta: Georgia Consumer Council, 1998). The number of patients admitted annually fluctuated but admissions in the late 1860s breaks down as follows: (1866–1867) 133; (1867–1868) 120; (1868–1869) 75, as noted in the Superintendants' Reports for these years. So the 35 inmates *identified* as veterans is a small percentage of those admitted, but of course service in the military is not always indicated, so noted in the text.

16. Dean, *Shook over Hell*, 165–67.

17. Georgia Department of Public Health, Central State Hospital, Medical Case Histories, vol. 3 (October 9, 1860–July 31, 1873), ref. 732, microfilm, drawer 350, box 19, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia (hereafter referred to as Georgia Asylum Case Histories), November 26, 1866, 183. Patient lists can also be found among census records, Baldwin County, Georgia, beginning in 1850. Some of these rosters are readily available through Internet sources compiled by genealogists. There is also a published two-volume work that contains patient names and in some cases residence and date admitted. Robert Scott Davis Jr., *The Georgia Black Book* (Easley, S.C.: Southern Historical Press, 1982).

18. Georgia Asylum Case Histories, March 30, 1867, 199

19. A South Carolinian [Belton O'Neall Townshend], "South Carolina Morals," *Atlantic Monthly* 39 (April 1877): 469.

20. On drinking by Southern men before the war consult Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 278–81; after the war, see Jane Censer, *The Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood, 1865–1895* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 86–87; and McClurken, *Take Care of the Living*, 125–26. On opium abuse in the South refer to David T. Courtwright, "The Hidden Epidemic: Opiate Addiction and Cocaine Use in the South, 1860–1920," *Journal of Southern History* 49 (February 1983): 57–72. On excessive drug and alcohol use in the postbellum South see Robert Somers, *The Southern States since the War, 1807–1871*, ed. Malcolm C. McMillan (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1965): 245–46.

21. Betsy Fleet, ed., *Green Mount after the War: The Correspondence of Maria Louisa Wacker Fleet and Her Family, 1865–1900* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978), 23.

22. Georgia Asylum Case Histories, April 3, 1867, 200.

23. Ibid., October 22, 1867, 222.

24. Ibid., August 25, 1868, 251.

25. James C. Bonner, ed., *The Journal of a Milledgeville Girl, 1861–1867* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1964), 4; MacFarlane, *Reminiscences of an Army Surgeon*, 73, as quoted in Dean, *Shook over Hell*, 87; Georgia Asylum Case Histories, March 28, 1867, 198.

26. Cathy Kaemmerlen, *General Sherman and the Georgia Belles* (Charleston, S.C.: History Press, 2006), 64. Anna and Samuel Cook appear as a married couple in their own household in 1870 in Albany, Georgia. By 1880 they had relocated to Scottsboro, Georgia. U.S. Census MS, Dougherty County, Georgia, 1870, ser. M593, roll 147, 471; and Baldwin County, Georgia, ser. 79, roll 133, 203.

27. Georgia Asylum Case Histories, May 9, 1869, 272.

28. Ibid., August 9, 1865, 130.

29. South Carolina State Hospital Commitment Files, 1840–1950 [1871–1881], South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina (hereafter SC Commitment Files), Commitment papers of Ambrose Gibson, May 22, 1876, patient #2424.

30. Delusions are a common symptom of PTSD. Dean, *Shook over Hell*, 100–105.

31. SC Commitment Files, 1840–1950 [1871–1881], Commitment papers of Henry D. Newton, October 3, 1876, patient #2757; U.S. Census MS, Charleston County, S.C., 1880, ser. T9, roll 1222, 345. On Newton's Confederate service see listing for "H. D. Newton," (1st Batt., S.C. Infantry, Company A), www.civilwarnps.gov, accessed March 4, 2011.

32. SC Commitment Files, 1840–1914 (misc.), Letter from Malvina Bates to Dr. Parker, Sup't of Asylum, July 1, 1867; Declaration of insanity, signed by Drs. Lockwood and Horsay [sp.?], Charleston, June 18, 1867; Acknowledgement of financial responsibility for Edmund Bates's continued hospitalization dated Oct. 5, 1870. See also U.S. Census MS, Charleston County, South Carolina, 1860, ser. M653, roll 1216, 212; Charleston County, South Carolina, 1870, ser. M593, roll 1486, 33; Richland County, South Carolina, 1870, ser. M593, roll 1507, 158; and, 1880, Charleston County, South Carolina, ser. T9, roll 1221, 15.

33. Georgia Asylum Case Histories, April 11, 1865, 127. See Dean, *Shook over Hell*, 106, 108.

34. Dean, *Shook over Hell*, 150. On other Civil War veterans who committed or attempted suicide see pages 154–60. David Silkenat's work on suicide in postbellum North Carolina finds that at least two-thirds of [white] males who committed suicide after 1865 had served in the military. David Andrew Silkenat,

"Suicide, Divorce and Debt in Civil War Era North Carolina," PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina, 2008, 81–83.

35. Petersburg (city) Misc. records, Coroner's inquests, 1826–1932 broken series, Box 32, State Records Annex, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia (hereafter LOV Annex). Two service records exist for an Edward W. Weeks, one serving in the 12th Va. Inf., Co. B as a private; the other in the 41st Va. Inf., Co. E as a private. www.civilwarnps.com, accessed March 4, 2011. There is only one Edward W. Weeks in the 1860 Virginia census records and as the 12th Va. Inf. was formed with men from Petersburg, I believe this to be the same man. U.S. Census MS, Dinwiddie County, Virginia, ser. M653, roll 1342, 208.

36. Georgia Asylum Case Histories, August 21, 1871, 298. Williams escaped from the asylum in 1873. On delusions, see Dean, *Shook over Hell*, 100–102.

37. Georgia Asylum Case Histories, April 26, 1866, 153. On the treatment and experiences of Civil War prisoners of war consult Dean, *Shook over Hell*, 81–87; and McClurken, *Take Care of the Living*, 121, 124.

38. Georgia Asylum Case Histories, June 11, 1866, 158.

39. Ibid., Oct. 9, 1866, 176; U.S. Census MS, Baldwin County, Georgia 1870, ser. M593, roll 134, 260.

40. Georgia Asylum Case Histories, April 13, 1871, 294; U.S. Census MS, Baldwin County, Georgia, 1880, ser. T9, roll 133, 229.

41. Georgia Asylum Case Histories, [n.d.], 1866, 149. Snelson was released and living in the household of fifty-nine-year-old Bethany Snelson in 1870. U.S. Census MS, Wilkes County, Georgia, 1870, ser. M593, roll 184, 263; Tad Evans, *Albany, Georgia, Newspaper Clippings, vol. 3, 1861–1874* (Savannah: privately published, 1997), August 18, 1871, 226.

42. Lynchburg, Misc. records/court records: various courts; coroner's inquests (1833–1880); Misc. papers (1877–1878), Box 640, LOV Annex; U.S. Census MS, Campbell County, Virginia, 1860, ser. M653, roll 1338, 552.

43. Columbia (Mo.) *Herald*, November 29, 1872.

44. Scott A. Sandage, *Born Losers: A History of Failure in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 193–95. Also on Southern men and debt after the war see Carol Blesser and Frederick M. Heath, "The Clays of Alabama: The Impact of the Civil War on a Southern Marriage," in *In Joy and Sorrow: Women, Family, and Marriage in the Victorian South,* ed. Carol Bleser (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 149.

45. Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, February 2, 1871; Richmond (city), Misc., Coroner's Inquests, Executions, 1879–1878/Official Oaths, 1860–1925, Box B5, LOV Annex; Manuscripts, Richmond City, Department of Health, Register of Deaths, 1870–?, Library of Virginia, vol. 8; www.civilwarnps.com.

46. Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, February 2, 1871.

47. Andrews, *Memoirs of a Poor Relation*, 30, 237–54, 258–60, 279, 281.

48. Tad Evans, comp., *Baldwin County, Georgia, Newspaper Clippings (Union*

Recorder), vol. 9, *1863–1869* (Savannah: self-published, 1994), 278, February 4, 1868; Elizabeth E. Kilbourne, comp., *Terrell County, Georgia Newspaper Clippings,* vol. 1, *1866–1872* (Savannah: privately published, 1996), 93; [newspaper not identified] Thursday, February 8, 1868. Harper served in the 7th Batt., Georgia Cavalry (State Guards), www.civilwarnps.com, accessed March 4, 2011.

49. Phillip Shaw Paludan, "What Did the Winners Win? The Social and Economic History of the North during the Civil War," in *Writing the Civil War: The Quest to Understand*, ed. James M. McPherson and William J. Cooper Jr. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 174–200.

Ira Forbes's War

LESLEY J. GORDON

On November 14, 1911, an obituary appeared in the *Hartford Daily Times* with the headline: "Death of Ira E. Forbes, Soldier Newspaperman." The obituary went on to describe Forbes as "one of the best known newspapermen in the state" but also someone "prominent in military circles" and well known for his bravery and modesty. Forbes, the paper explained, had courageously helped to save the colors of the Sixteenth Regiment Connecticut Volunteers during the battle of Plymouth. "Of the bravery of his comrades," the paper noted, "he was always eloquent; of his own exploits he was strangely reticent." [1]

Ira E. Forbes, soldier and newspaperman, did write extensively, even eloquently about his comrades and their shared Civil War experiences. But what his obituary failed to mention was the bitter controversies his publications stirred: some so painful that Forbes, one of his regiment's true heroes, found himself ostracized from his fellow veterans. Ira Forbes's war would evolve into a public and private one over memory, history,

and ownership of the story of a regiment few people know anything about today. But it was more than that. Forbes's "war" with his comrades was a bitter contest over which version of the past prevailed: one sanitized of the conflict's jarring brutalities and sufferings, versus one that refused to forget the war's terrors, failures, and divisions.

In the summer of 1862, Ira Emory Forbes was a nineteen-year-old laborer employed on a farm in Wethersfield, Connecticut, working to earn money to attend college.[2] But the Civil War was raging, and like so many men, North and South, the call of war was too powerful to resist. Forbes enlisted as a private in Company A, of the Sixteenth Regiment Connecticut Volunteers on the evening of July 21, in the town of Wethersfield, Connecticut.[3]

Forbes's only surviving wartime diary, which commences in January 1864, reveals an earnest young Northern soldier with a strong religious faith, contemplating his own salvation and that of his comrades. He routinely sought to convert his fellow soldiers, as well as other civilians with whom he interacted; even, it seems, Southerners, who were greatly concerned with their salvation.[4] He prayed daily, attended church services and prayer meetings, and took "devotion" discreetly seeking solace away from the hustle and bustle of camp, sometimes in the quiet of his tent or wherever he could find a peaceful space. He pondered his personal religious worthiness, agonized over how to stop "bad thoughts from coming into the mind," and, as many nineteenth-century American Evangelical Christians did, believed that he was somehow falling woefully short.[5] Forbes also recorded in his dairy his daily readings, which almost always included selections from the Bible, as well as religious biographies and sermons.[6]

Young Forbes too was staunchly antislavery during the war, expressing his anger and dismay that the institution had caused this bloody conflict. While encamped at New Bern, North Carolina, Forbes mused: "The more I know about Slavery, the more I abhor and detest it. It is the mortal enemy of all that is good and noble, and manly. It has degraded and impoverished the South; disenfranchised her freeman and brought upon our once happy land all the horrors of unparalleled civil war."[7]

When the Sixteenth Connecticut moved to Plymouth, North Carolina, Ira Forbes was one of a group of members in the unit who immediately

visited the contraband school located nearby and offered to help.[8] Indeed, Forbes soon began regularly teaching at the Colored School, and enjoying it, but also wanted to build a school for the poor white Southern children of Plymouth.[9]

By the time the Sixteenth Connecticut had moved to Plymouth, in January 1864, it had participated in only one large-scale engagement: Antietam. On September 17, 1862, the regiment rushed into combat late in the afternoon, just below Burnside's Bridge, into the dense cornfield of the Rohrback Farm. The unit had been in service less than three weeks, with little formal instruction in battlefield drill or combat formations. Some of the men did not know how to properly fire their rifles. The result was a fiasco. When hit with enfilade fire, soldiers panicked and ran in what one member called "Bull Run Style."[10] The Sixteenth Connecticut suffered nearly 25 percent casualties at the Battle of Antietam. It was held in reserve at the Battle of Fredericksburg, and soon after transferred to garrison duty at Suffolk, Virginia. There, the unit participated in skirmishing in and around the town, beating back the Confederates' failed attempt to retake Suffolk. The regiment's combat was limited with losses relatively low; but Suffolk seemed to improve morale. It was here that Forbes earned his promotion to corporal. The Sixteenth Connecticut's move to Portsmouth in June 1863 had been a welcome and pleasant one; their surgeon called the regimental camp at Portsmouth a "perfect village."[11]

The subsequent capture and long imprisonment of the regiment would prove the regiment's greatest test since their fateful baptism of fire at Antietam. And it tested individual men, too, including Ira Forbes. On April 20, 1864, after three days of battle, Confederate attackers wrested control of the coastal town from Union occupiers. Just before the surrender, the Sixteenth Connecticut's Lieutenant Colonel John Burnham ordered the regimental flags destroyed and the poles buried. It was one thing to have an entire unit captured; but to have one's colors seized was especially dishonorable. At some point, Burnham ordered Corporal Ira Forbes and Sergeant Frank Latimer, both members of the color guard at Plymouth, to tear the flags into shreds and distribute them to the men. These flag fragments would be saved and treasured as "sacred souvenirs."[12] The regiment was destined for Andersonville prison.

Upon entering the Georgia stockade on the unseasonably cool morning of Tuesday, May 3, 1864, Forbes proclaimed: "Of all the places of distress, misery and suffering which I have seen, this is the worst." "Everything," he wrote, "has the appearance of destitution and misery."[13] Some three hundred members of the Sixteenth Connecticut entered the stockade with Forbes in early May; and about a third of them would perish there. Forbes endured five months of incarceration at Andersonville before being moved to Florence, South Carolina. He was finally paroled in November 1864.

During his imprisonment, Forbes continued to keep his detailed diary. It was a brutal and dehumanizing experience as he endured starvation and exposure in the filthy pen, helpless to do little but try to persevere.[14] But Forbes's spirits and Christian faith remained remarkably resilient, even as the weeks turned to months and his health worsened. He had his moments of anger and bitterness toward the enemy, and even with his fellow comrades, and times when he felt distant from God.[15] He was shaken and stunned by the prison's mundane and everyday cruelties, convinced that these could be easily alleviated by their captors.[16] Yet, when doubts and dissension arose among the prisoners over why no exchange came, and whether or not the use of black soldiers had anything to do with their long imprisonment, Forbes held firm in trusting his government. "I also believe," Forbes wrote, "that the negro question and the making soldiers of them has done much to prevent exchange. Although I think the making soldiers of them is a wrong feeling, yet I deem it our duty, since they have been made soldiers to protect them as such."[17] On August 20, 1864, more than three months had passed and there was little sign of release, with the rate of death escalating. "I am really astonished," Forbes reflected, "at the amount of physical suffering human beings are capable of enduring. Never before I was placed in this abode of misery & destitution could I make anything like a correct estimation of it. Now I think I can. Perhaps I am rash in thinking so, but it does seem to me that men can not suffer much more than they do in here."[18] Four days later, though, Forbes observed that it was the mental suffering that was somehow worse for the prisoner of war: "It is with the greatest difficult that one can fix his mind studiously and intently upon a subject for a period extending a few minutes at farthest. And

again, the finer feelings, that which makes man lovly as a social being – love, affection, friendship, kindness, Sympathy, Courtesy, are being constantly deadened, rooted out from the heart & leaving the poor victim in what is truly a woful condition."[19]

Throughout, Forbes clung desperately to his religious faith, even when the pain and grief of losing so many of his friends and comrades threatened to overwhelm him. One day in late September, after he had moved from Andersonville to Florence prison, Forbes rebuked himself for feeling "quite dull and stupid." "I fear," he wrote, that "I am grieving for the boys. This will never do. I must endure my lot more like a man. I must endure all things through Christ, who strengthens me. All my hope is in God."[20] Release finally came in late November 1864.[21] When he boarded the Union transport he spotted the United States flag for the first time in more than six months. "With what feelings of joy and pride I again look upon the Star Spangled Banner. It never appeared more beautiful than it does to day. How thankful I am to God that my life has been spared until the present occasion and that I am delivered from Captivity under circumstances so auspicious."[22]

Forbes survived prison and the war to come home to Connecticut and pick up where he left off three years earlier: pursuing his education. He graduated from Yale University in 1870, followed by a year at the Yale Theological Seminary. But, rather than pursuing a life in the cloth, Ira turned to teaching, and then journalism. It is not entirely clear why, but this surely was a disappointing decision for someone so religious. His obituary states simply that his "mind took a fancy to newspaper work."[23] He also married Sarah Rhodes Short on July 18, 1872, and they settled in Hartford. Forbes began as a reporter at the *Springfield Union*, from 1872 to 1874, and then became telegraph editor for the *Hartford Evening Post* until October 1890. He assumed for several years the post of Hartford correspondent for the *New York Times* and also wrote for *The Aetna*, a publication issued by Aetna Life Insurance Company. By the turn of the century, Forbes was a staff writer for the *Hartford Daily Times*.[24]

In addition to Forbes's job as a journalist, he spent increasing time writing about his wartime experiences.[25] He joined his comrade and company-mate George Q. Whitney, who had set out to make a record of every single member of the regiment and create an individual biography

of them, both officers and men, no matter how short their term of service was or how insignificant.[26] Ira Forbes assisted Whitney by authoring some seven hundred lengthy narratives to adjoin forms Whitney created, adding his own detective work in tracking family information, stories from the war, and postwar details.[27] Forbes's work for Whitney was exceptionally time-consuming. But he clearly took great satisfaction in it.[28] At one point, he declared: "The information that has been secured is of much importance, and will give the future historian of the Sixteenth facts of boundless interest for use."[29]

However, as he continued to compose more and more sketches for Whitney, Forbes began to worry. He was no less pleased with his results: "Some of the stories" he declared, "giving the Experiences in prison, and the Escapes, have been more exciting than fiction." But when he delivered a batch of papers to Whitney one day in July 1906, he sensed his reception to him was rather cool:

> Yesterday when I took upwards of 50 new sketches to him, he expressed less appreciation of the work than I had to right to expect. I am not aware of any lack of good feeling towards the work from Colonel Frank Cheney, I was told by Secretary Whitney a long time ago that the Colonel knew of my time engaged in it, and I have a note from Colonel Cheney written during the last of June telling me that he would be glad to help me in any way he could. This was in answer to a letter from me, suggesting that it would be a good field for my efforts, the compensation to be of moderate proportions. I have received from Secretary Whitney the sum of $35.[30]

Forbes met personally with Frank Cheney, the regiment's former colonel and one of their most beloved officers, about a week later, and he seemed to be momentarily mollified that at least Cheney appreciated his work. Forbes mused: "The sketches of Sixteenth Regiment men, which I have been preparing for a number of months met with his approval and the work will be taken up again as I have opportunity. My visit was extremely satisfactory."[31] However, this gnawing anxiety, that somehow his efforts in collecting biographical information and writing historical sketches, was not appropriately appreciated by his comrades, and not sufficiently remitted monetarily, would continue to fester.

All of this came to a head in the summer of 1907 just as the date

neared for a monument to be dedicated at Andersonville to honor all Connecticut men who had been imprisoned there. The state's general assembly had provided thousands of dollars of funds to designate a special commission, choose a designer, and build the monument. Now the dedication was pending in October. Four of the five men appointed to the state commission were former members of the Sixteenth Connecticut: Frank Cheney, George Q. Whitney, Norman L. Hope, and George Denison.[32] In many ways, Connecticut's Andersonville monument was as much a memorial to the Sixteenth Connecticut as it was to Connecticut prisoners. And Ira E. Forbes, once a proud member of the regiment's color guard, would find himself at the center of controversy as dedication day grew closer.

First, there was debate brewing within the commission over who specifically would be invited to attend the dedication. Space was limited, and the cost of travel made it necessary for the Commission to restrict invitations to a hundred soldiers, their family members, and a handful of state dignitaries. Cheney stressed that only those veterans in "good health" should be "encouraged to take the trip for it is a rather hard one for old men who are not pretty strong and tough."[33] The commission had $7,500 to spend, but Cheney was worried: "We must spread out our fund so as to make it go as far as we can. I hope there will not be more applicants than we can provide for. It will be embarrassing to discriminate and decide upon who shall go and who shall stay at home."[34] There was discussion over limiting invitations to ex-prisoners who had served in Connecticut units, and not to men who had moved to the state after the war but had been incarcerated in the prison. Whitney also wanted to be sure that everyone who went on the trip behaved properly: "we think it better to not have to send any home or to put them where they can injure the reputation of the State."[35] But Forbes was alarmed to learn that certain veterans were not allowed to attend. He personally lobbied commission president Frank Cheney to change their position and include any present Connecticut resident who had been an inmate of Andersonville.[36]

Then there was Ira Forbes's own history of Andersonville.[37] Forbes had been at work, not just writing the individual biographies of his former comrades for Whitney. He had been dutifully researching his own

study of the prison and he was determined to have it published. In fact, in 1865, not long after he was freed from Confederate prison, Forbes had published a short history of the prison, including his own personal experiences in the piece. This article, "At Andersonville," appeared in Allen O. Abbott's *Prison Life in the South.* Forbes quoted from his own prison diary, recounting the scenes still fresh in his mind of the terrible ordeal he had survived.[38] Only months removed from the horrors of prison, Forbes refused to be embittered: "So far as I am concerned personally, I can forgive our bitter foes the cruelties which they have inflicted upon me. I do not desire revenge. That is the farthest thing from my heart. God will punish them for their evil deeds. They have already suffered terribly. I feel that all should now try to do whatever they can to narrow the breach which exists between them and ourselves. I have always been glad our government so nobly declined to resort to retaliation. We can not afford to be cruel. It is our highest honor to reward good for evil."[39]

More than forty years later, Forbes was still remembering and writing about Andersonville and his Civil War experiences. He had grown even more intent on forgiving his former foe, and his Christian faith, at least as revealed in his postwar diary, appears as strong as ever; but his relationship with his former comrades in arms was becoming more hostile.[40] He had been working on a complete history of Andersonville prison for years, and in the summer of 1907, the time seemed right for publication with the dedication pending for the monument and the commission active and receiving state funding. Forbes approached Whitney, Cheney, and his close friend Robert Kellogg, who remained intimately tied to the inner workings of the veterans of the regiment, to convince them of the worthiness of his study. Kellogg, who himself published his own forceful and furious account of Andersonville in 1865, tried to stay neutral and support his friend.[41] Kellogg read the manuscript "carefully several times." "It strikes me," he wrote Frank Cheney, "as being of much present interest, and of great future value. Forbes has put a [good] deal of careful, intelligent, painstaking work into the compilation of these statistics, and in the preparation of the narrative portions." Kellogg praised the manuscript's accuracy and recommended the commission publish it, predicting that the book would "not only serve to arouse

a deep and general interest in the work it has in hand, but that it will be accepted as authoritative in regard to matters involved."[42] Kellogg had further encouraged Forbes in May 1907: "You are doing a grand good work in a thorough and careful way, and it makes mighty interesting reading. There's a new generation on the stage that is beginning to take a keen interest in the details of the great conflict, and you are giving them just what they want. Keep it up."[43]

George Q. Whitney, however, was not so sure. He gave his opinion to Frank Cheney in a letter dated August 20, 1907: "I like many things about it, but some things I don't consider finished, and Forbes writes them from his own point of view, instead from authorities such as I find and he discredits the Wirz trial while I claim the Wirz trial ought as Judge Advocate thought, to have taken in those whose tool Wirz was, and were really more guilty than he." "In writing history," Whitney reasoned, "I believe in putting things as they were, not as you wish they had been."[44] Cheney had other reasons to reject it; he deemed it not in "good form to be published as part of the Andersonville trip. It is too voluminous and carelessly put together." As far as its historical accuracy, Cheney felt he could not judge since he was not at Andersonville: "I can form no opinion as the facts as stated by him."[45]

The month of September 1907 brought the brewing tensions between Ira Forbes and his former comrades from the Sixteenth Connecticut to a head and spilling out into the public. The first sally occurred when Forbes published "The History of Sixteenth Connecticut; No Butchery of Negroes" in the *Hartford Daily Times*. Forbes's article was a direct challenge to the only printed history of the regiment, authored by former Second Lieutenant Bernard Blakeslee in 1875. When describing the capture of the Sixteenth Connecticut at Plymouth, Blakeslee stated: "The rebels raised the 'black flag' against the negroes found in uniform and mercilessly shot them down."[46]

In fact, Blakeslee's allegations were supported by other Union soldiers captured on April 20. Massachusetts artilleryman Warren Lee Goss wrote: "There were about twenty negro soldiers at Plymouth, who fled to the swamps when the capture of the place became certain; these soldiers were hunted down and killed, while those who surrendered in good faith were drawn up in line, and shot down also like dogs. Every negro

found with United States equipments, or uniforms, was (we were told by the rebel guard) shot without mercy."[47]

In sworn testimony to U.S. Army officials, African American sergeant Samuel Johnson from Company D, Second United States Colored Cavalry, stated that during the Union surrender at Plymouth "all the negroes found in blue uniform, or any outward marks of a Union soldier upon him, was killed. I saw some taken into the woods and hung. Others I saw stripped of all their clothing and then stood upon the bank of the river with their faces riverward and there they were shot. Still others were killed by having their brains beaten out by the butt end of the muskets in the hands of the rebels. All were not killed the day of the capture. Those that were not were placed in a room with their officers, they having previously been dragged through the town with ropes around their necks, while they were kept confined until the following morning, when the remainder of the black soldiers were killed."[48] Major General Ben Butler was convinced of Johnson's veracity and "intelligence," sending his sworn testimony to Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant and urging him that "something should be done in retaliation for this outrage."[49] Colonel Robert Ould, Confederate chief of the Bureau of Exchange, angrily responded a few days later to these accusations, and specifically to Johnson's statements: "This is a villainous lie and badly told at that. Samuel Johnson is a bad affidavit man, whatever may be his other excellencies. If the truth is wanted, let inquiry be made of Col. Beach, or other captured officers, always excepting the chaplains."[50]

Some members of the Sixteenth Connecticut made entries, though, to their wartime dairies that appear to confirm Johnson's allegations. Sergeant Oliver Gates (Company F) wrote: "They showed the Negroes no mercy but shot some down in cold blood."[51] Private George N. Champlin (Company I) recorded on the day of the Union capture: "The Rebels killed several negro troops after they had surrendered."[52] Private Charles Johnson (Company B) affirmed witnessing the killings of more than a dozen African Americans, later recalling the words of a Confederate soldier: "'now we will show how we pay the d–n niggers for helping youns,' and in a few moments every one of them fell to the ground shot dead."[53] In 1889, Blakeslee used similar language to repeat these allegations when he authored a shortened history of the regiment for the *Record of Service*

compiled by the state's general assembly. After narrating the siege and capture of the unit, he again declared: "The rebels raised the 'black flag' against the negroes found in uniform and mercilessly shot them down. Fort Pillow was reenacted."[54]

Even Forbes himself had written publicly about Plymouth in 1865, stating: "To my knowledge, no outrages were committed upon any of our white troops, though I believe the small negro force with us fared very hard."[55] Yet now Forbes contradicted his own words and openly challenged the account of Blakeslee, who was no longer alive to defend himself.[56] In his *Times* article, Forbes flatly rejected Blakeslee's statement that "'many of us were eye-witnesses of the shooting by the rebels in cold blood of three or four hundred negroes and of two companies of North Carolina troops who had joined the army.'"[57] Forbes, apparently forgetting his own previous avowal to the contrary, insisted that the "only basis for this statement is to be found in the frenzied headlines" of the *New York Tribune*, repeated in the *Richmond Examiner*. "This story," Forbes asserted, "unsupported by any authority or historical writer, was the basis of Lieutenant Blakeslee's version in the history of the Sixteenth regiment. There is not the least historical authority to be found sustaining the charge of massacre by the rebels at the capture of Plymouth." Forbes further reasoned that despite Major General Butler's efforts to report the erroneous episode and the affidavit given by Sergeant Johnson, General Grant "dismissed it as undeserving of credence."[58] Forbes maintained: "As a matter of fact there were no colored troops in Plymouth, when the place was captured. There was a colony of colored people there and schools for the contraband. A considerable number of these negroes were in the government employ, which gave origin to the notion that they were colored troops." He added that General Wessell's own report made no mention of such horrific killings, and that Wessell would have been derelict in duty in omitting from his report violations of the laws of civilized warfare by the rebels had such violations occurred at the downfall of Plymouth. Forbes concluded: "The charge that the captors of Plymouth shot down North Carolina troops in cold blood after the capture is as baseless as the charge of negro butcheries." "The charge that Union troops and negroes were massacred under General Hoke at Plymouth," Forbes ascertained, "is wholly without foundation. It should

be removed from the *Catalogue of Connecticut Volunteers* which was published at great expense by the state in 1889."[59]

Forbes was clearly pleased when his piece on Plymouth appeared: "The article disapproving the story of Lieutenant Blakeslee that colored soldiers and North Carolinians were massacred was published in Tuesday's Times, October [September] 3. The story is so utterly without foundations that clinging to it longer will be a crime. My studies of Plymouth and Andersonville have brought nothing to light that will be of more consequence than the disapproval of Lieutenant Blakeslee's so called 'History.'"[60] But Forbes's contentment would be short-lived. That same day he received news that the Andersonville commission rejected publishing his "Andersonville Record, lack of funds being the reason."[61]

Forbes's war with his comrades had commenced. Two days later, he wrote a letter to the editor of the *Hartford Daily Times* with the headline "Vigorous Protest": "Protest should be made," Forbes proclaimed, "against the course of Commissioner Whitney of the Andersonville monument commission in ruling out a large number of Andersonville survivors in the state as participants in the trip to Andersonville in October on the ground that they were not members of Connecticut regiments at the time they were prisoners of war." Forbes alleged that discriminating against any Andersonville survivors residing in Connecticut was never the intention of the state legislators who approved the funds for the trip. He then went on to list seventeen men whom he claimed had been barred from traveling to Georgia. Forbes closed: "The ruling by Commissioner Whitney is the more to be regretted as arrangements are in progress for taking men who are not Andersonville survivors."[62] Whitney fired back the next day in the *Hartford Courant*, with his own letter to the editor. He seemed stunned. "Ira E. Forbes publishes in the *Hartford Times* of this evening a letter alleging that 'Commissioner Whitney' of the Andersonville Monument Commission is managing the commission and its trip to Georgia and is excluding certain former prisoners of war." Whitney reminded readers that he was one of five members of the commission and "whoever knows the men that no one man is going to run the rest very far from what they advocate themselves. All their action has been unanimous. Invitations were sent to all who were eligible under the law and every one who accepted and goes will be

taken without cost to them. It was necessary in order to meet an inevitable deficit to take along others, who pay $60 each and enough of these have accepted to make up the party." Whitney added: "Mr. Forbes publishes a list of men omitted, but one of the men has asked to go and is going. Mr. Forbes does not know what he is writing about and the public do not know why he writes."[63]

Two weeks after the story on Plymouth appeared, Forbes published another article in the *Times*, "Diary of a Southern Woman: Story of Andersonville." These were excerpts from the forthcoming book *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl, 1864–65* by Eliza Francis Andrews. In his introduction to the excerpts Forbes made reference to his own "northern study of the prison."[64] Forbes gave Andrews an opportunity to provide her decidedly pro-Confederate explanation for the horrors of Andersonville to a Northern audience – no less than on the forty-fifth anniversary of Antietam. In the article, Andrews's diary entry from January 11, 1865 reads: "The Yankee generals won't exchange prisoners and our own soldiers in the field don't fare much better than these poor creatures. Everybody is sorry for them and wouldn't keep them here for a day if the government at Washington didn't force them on us. And yet they lay all the blame on us."[65] Forbes greeted the article warmly: "The spirit of Miss Andrews's letter is eminently honorable and fair. Thousands of epitaphs and hard things against Southerners, as bad as the ones found in the Diary of Mrs. Andrews, can be found in Northern dairies of Northern soldiers during the war."[66]

More than four decades had passed, it was true, but the wounds were still very fresh for these former soldiers in arms. Ira Forbes, who had expressed shock and revulsion in his diary at the conditions and sufferings he witnessed and experienced firsthand at Andersonville, seemed publicly to be distancing himself from his fellow comrades and ex-inmates with his published histories of their past service. He was challenging their shared experience; not just what happened, but how it happened, and why. His comrades, who had suffered with him, nearly died with him, would not let this stand. When he appeared at the annual regimental reunion that year, the association's secretary George Q. Whitney could not bring himself to thank Forbes for the work he had done for the commission or the biographies he had completed. But Forbes would

not sit by silently: "The omission was so grave that I was duty bound to inform the Regiment of the work that [I] had accomplished, and did so in a brief statement that was received with applause."[67]

Forbes was notably absent on the trip to Andersonville to dedicate the state monument in October 1907. And he never published his history of Andersonville in book form, although portions of it did appear in the *Hartford Daily Times*. Forbes vowed that he would deposit his manuscript with the Connecticut Historical Society or the State Library. Forbes wrote defiantly: "They certainly ought to be preserved permanently. No one has made the extended inquiry that I have undertaken."[68]

By February 1911, Ira Forbes was behaving in an extremely disturbing manner. He appeared "very emotional," "confused," "childish," and without any self-control. And his temper, which he had as a young man sought to tame, had taken control of him. He was "abusive and threatening to his wife," and profane. Two of his oldest friends and comrades, George Q. Whitney and John Gemmill, signed the paperwork to commit sixty-eight-year-old Forbes to the Hartford Retreat for the Insane. He died nine months later. [69] Forbes's obituary focused on his accomplishments as a journalist and his experience at Plymouth. "His exploit," the paper stated, "at Plymouth, N.C., when the Sixteenth Connecticut was under such galling fire and when that gallant command suffered hardship of the kind that tried the souls of men, showed a bravery that stood out prominently even in a time when brave deeds and gallant action were the rule." Forbes, who died from "a complication of diseases," was, according to the *Times*, a modest man, with an unassuming manner. His obituary further described the "Special Honor" given to Forbes in carrying the regimental colors on Connecticut's Battle Flag Day on September 17, 1879. His obituary explained: "In recent years he has frequently contributed special articles to this paper which had awakened much interest, especially in the circle of veterans in which Mr. Forbes moved."[70]

"Much interest" was an understatement, to be sure. Forbes had stirred considerable controversy and divisiveness among his comrades by publishing his version of the Sixteenth Connecticut's military service, long imprisonment, and an increasingly apologetic view of the Confederate South. Nor did his obituary make any mention of his failing mental state.

Instead, his demise was an occasion to celebrate Forbes as an accomplished journalist, but more importantly, a courageous soldier in a brave Northern regiment.[71]

We may never know definitively what drove Forbes to do what he did: to revise the past and present a different version of it than that experienced by his comrades. He may have suffered from a version of post-traumatic stress disorder. Certainly he exhibited behaviors that would fit a modern diagnosis.[72] In 1906, George Q. Whitney remarked to Robert Kellogg that he wanted to confirm with Forbes some of the basic facts about saving the colors at Plymouth. But he told Kellogg that Forbes "gets so nervous in talking about it, that I am afraid of serious results if I try to discuss it with him."[73] Forbes's nervousness may have been a symptom of the trauma caused by war and imprisonment, and the developing mental debilitation that soon led to his commitment five years later. Or perhaps his Christian faith, so strong and dominant as a young man, motivated him to forgive his enemy in the postwar period. It is also worth noting that at the time Forbes began publishing some of his more pro-Confederate pieces, white Southerners were seeking to reclaim "interpretative control" of Andersonville's history. Lost Cause literature too was increasingly stressing reunification while emphasizing white supremacy, themes that play out in his version of the Battle of Plymouth. And it should be added that basic ambition, the desire for attention and financial gain, may have further motivated Forbes to publish what he did.[74]

Today, Ira Forbes's personal story has largely been forgotten, as have the specifics of his many writings. His regiment's unique, yet marginalized experiences fell into the cracks of history. But Forbes's postwar version of the past, the more apologist, nationalistic, and less bitterly partisan version of the war, would in fact prevail for a very long time.[75]

Notes

1. Ira Forbes rarely mentioned publicly his role in saving the regimental colors at Plymouth. See for example Ira E. Forbes, "Hartford in the Civil War," in Willis I. Twichell, ed., *Hartford in History: A Series of Papers by Resident Authors* (Hartford, Conn.: Press of the Plimpton Mfg Co., 1899), 228–29. Ira E. Forbes Obituary in *Hartford Daily Times,* November 14, 1911.

2. "Ira Forbes," in J. A. Spalding, *Illustrated Popular Biography of Connecticut* (Hartford, Conn.: Press of the Case, Lockwood, and Brainard Co., 1891), 187. Also Ira Forbes, "Wethersfield Men in Company A," in Ira Forbes Papers, Connecticut State Library, hereafter referred to as CSL.

3. His father Henry had died when Ira was still very young, leaving his mother Adelia to raise their five children. In 1860, Forbes was residing in East Hartford, but his enlistment papers state Wethersfield as his residence. According to the 1850 census, Henry Forbes was a thirty-one-year-old blacksmith, residing with his family in East Hartford. Ira was the eldest son of six children born to Henry and Adelia Forbes: Ira (b. 1843), Henry (b. 1844), Adelia (b. 1847), Everett (b. 1846), Harriet (b. 1848), and George (b. 1854). Forbes also referred to his "adopted Sister Mary" in his diary. See Ira Forbes Diary, February 11, 1864, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, hereafter referred as YU; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860. Population Schedule, Hartford County, Conn., accessed at ancestry.com, access date October 14, 2008. Seventh Census of the United States, 1850. Population Schedule, Harford County, Conn., accessed at ancestry.com, access date October 14, 2008; Ira Forbes Compiled Service Records, RG 94, National Archives, Washington, D.C. In his wartime diary, Forbes mentioned a sister who had died in infancy. See Ira Forbes Diary, June 11, 1864, YU, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut (hereafter referred as YU).

4. For example, Ira Forbes Diary, January 26, 27, 1864; February 10, 1864, YU.

5. For example, Ira Forbes Diary, February 7, 9, 1864, YU. Quote from Ira Forbes Diary, February 20, 1864, YU.

6. At one point, Forbes exclaimed: "What should I do without my bible?" Ira Forbes Diary, February 24, 1864, YU.

7. Ira Forbes Diary, March 17, 1864, YU. Spelling adjusted by author. Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery and the Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 2007), discusses Civil War soldiers' attitudes toward slavery and argues that there was a marked shift in attitudes, especially as soldiers encountered actual slaves or black soldiers. On March 29, 1864, Forbes returned to the subject while he read Hinton Helper's *The Impending Crisis*: "It is my settled conviction that Slavery is one of the greatest imaginable atrocities. It is an outrageous violation of the Eternal principals of justice and right, and its effects are necessarily most pernicious to all classes of society. It has brought upon our Country the most deplorable evils. It has degraded the South – disenfranchised her freeman, extorted from her sons and daughters many of their dearest and most sacred rights. I abhor it. Let it perish." Ira Forbes Diary, March 29, 1864, YU.

8. He visited the contraband school shortly after his arrival at Plymouth and declared it "under the splendid superintendence of Mrs. Freeman." Ira Forbes Diary, January 26, 1864, YU. See also the entry for January 28, 1864. Forbes, who once stated that he had "an interesting time with the good old Christian ne-

groes," but failed to view African Americans in any way equal to himself or fellow whites, seemed pleasantly surprised to discover the experience gratifying: "I find that I can be taught by these simple and earnest people very much concerning religious experience." See Ira Forbes Diary, January 31, 1864, YU.

9. Ira Forbes Diary, February 1, 2, 1864, YU. See also entry for February 8, 1864, YU. Forbes's view, at least as expressed in his diary, of the enemy before his imprisonment, was not entirely unsympathetic, but he showed little doubt about the certainty of the Union cause. Upon reading the *Raleigh Standard* one day in April 1864, Forbes commented on a speech by Georgia Governor Joseph Brown to the state legislator: "Gov. Brown is a bold and intelligent man, but wofully [sic] misguided on account of his State right principles." See Ira Forbes Diary, April 16, 1864, YU. In fact, his overall wartime view of the poor Southern whites, notably those whom he personally encountered in occupied Plymouth, was not without compassion. At one point, the corporal even gave some of his own money to residents, wishing he could do more to alleviate their plight. "At present," he wrote, "there is very much suffering in this community and the mortality among the inhabitants is truly alarming. Would to God I could do something to alleviate this misery." See Ira Forbes Diary, April 16, 1864, YU.

10. Jacob Bauer to Emily Bauer, September 20, 1862, in Sixteenth Regiment Connecticut Volunteers Papers, Antietam National Battlefield Park, Sharpsburg, Maryland. For more on the Sixteenth Connecticut at Antietam, see Lesley J. Gordon, "'All Who Went into That Battle Were Heroes': Remembering the 16th Regiment Connecticut Volunteers at Antietam," in *The Antietam Campaign*, ed. Gary Gallagher (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 169–91.

11. Nathan Mayer recalled the encampment at Portsmouth as: "The most perfect order, the most civilized condition prevailed. The tents were neatly and prettily furnished, as our Connecticut homes are, and the ground was always in beautiful condition." Mayer's 1867 recollections quoted in Bernard Blakeslee, *History of the Sixteenth Connecticut Volunteers* (Hartford, Conn.: Case, Lockwood & Brainard, 1875), 44.

12. There are many accounts of the saving of the Sixteenth Connecticut flags at Plymouth, but Ira Forbes's obituary includes it as well. It is also where the phrase "sacred souvenirs" comes from. "Death of Ira E. Forbes, Soldier, Newspaperman," *Hartford Daily Times*, November 14, 1911. One Forbes biography claims that he "volunteered for the dangerous work, and in the face of the galling fire brought them to the regiment, where the flag was divided in the presence of the colonel. After saving the Sixteenth's colors he returned to the breastworks and saved one of the national colors with the Pennsylvania troops." This source further states: "For these daring exploits he has received merited honors from his comrades in Connecticut." See "Ira Emory Forbes," *Biographical Record of the Class of 1870*, 82. Forbes was selected to carry the reconstituted flag at Battle Flag Day in 1879; Forbes explained: "That honor would have belonged to Color Ser-

geant Latimer had he survived until that time." Sgt. Latimer was the national color bearer; and Sgt. William E. Bidwell was the state color bearer during the siege. Forbes made no mention of a regimental flag. See Ira E. Forbes, "Color Guard, Sixteenth Regiment," Ira E. Forbes Collection, CSL.

13. Ira Forbes Diary, May 3, 1864, YU. Punctuation added by author.

14. It was a common but notable frustration among the prisoners that they could not fight and die in battle but instead had to wait helplessly imprisoned. One day, when Forbes saw two men dying at the gates of the prison, he observed: "I had rather see men shot down while fighting for their Country than see them dying in this manner." Ira Forbes Diary, May 6, 1864, YU.

15. Regarding doubts about his faith, see for example: "For the last few days I feel that I have been living at a great distance from my savior; that in my actions I have exhibited a spirit much unlike that of a humble, earnest Christian. I do very much that is wrong and sinful." Ira Forbes Diary, July 23, 1864, YU. By August he despaired: "The past four months seem almost like a blank for me. I do not seem to realize the importance of life. This imprisonment is terrible, but I still hope in God. In Him is all my trust and confidence." See Ira Forbes Diary, August 27, 1864, YU. Forbes's temper was something he remarked on throughout his diary, even before imprisonment. He described fighting with a fellow member of his regiment over a wash pail on July 30. See Ira Forbes Diary, July 30, 1864, YU. This incident was significant enough that his friend and company-mate Robert Kellogg also made mention of it in his diary: "Both parties got a good wetting in the mud puddle and there was a vast amount of talk about 'Christians fight' etc.' I'm sorry that Ira gave way to his temper." Robert H. Kellogg Diary, July 30, 1864, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut (hereafter referred to as CHS).

16. One day in June, as more wounded men streamed into the prison, Forbes vowed: "To put wounded men in such a place as this is decidedly murderous, and in direct violation of every human Sentiment and principle. Such conduct merits the severest censure." See Ira Forbes Diary, June 3, 1864, YU. He was determined to persevere: "We suffering in this vile place of imprisonment receive great consolation from the assurance which we all feel that our loved ones at home remember us at the Throne of Grace while they assemble themselves in the House of Prayer & Worship, and also in their individual homes." Ira Forbes Diary, July 3, 1864, YU. Another time, he noted the dead, piled onto carts, "as if laden with wood or something of no importance rather than with dead." Buried in a "shallow trench & covered with a thin layer of earth. Left to sleep in a silent earth, their last earthly resting place unknown to friends and distant dear ones, and uncared for by cruel foes." Ira Forbes Diary, July 9, 1864, YU. Sick and dying men lay helpless on the ground, exposed to blistering heat, and drenching rains, and "allowed to suffer from thirst, when by a little effort their sufferings might have been greatly alleviated." Ira Forbes Diary, July 10, 1864, YU.

And he judged the Confederates harshly for not providing any sort of religious services for the dead men: "a fact that reflects great disgrace upon the authorities in charge of prisoners." Ira Forbes Diary, August 8, 1864, YU. Drew Faust emphasizes the significance of these rituals surrounding death to Civil War Americans in her book *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 2008).

17. Ira Forbes Diary, July 12, 1864, YU. Forbes too opposed a petition that circulated among the prisons to urge the U.S. government to resume exchanges. See Ira Forbes Diary, July 19, 1864, YU.

18. Ira Forbes Diary, August 20, 1864, YU.

19. Ibid., August 24, 1864, YU.

20. Ibid., September 25 1864, YU.

21. Ibid., November 28, 1864, YU.

22. Ibid., November 30, 1864, YU.

23. *Harford Daily Times*, November 14, 1911. Forbes wrote for the *Times* for several years. He also taught at a military academy in New Hampshire for a year before he began his journalism career in 1872.

24. J. A. Spalding, *Illustrated Popular Biography of Connecticut* (Hartford: Press of the Case, Lockwood, and Brainard Co., 1891), 187; also "Ira Emory Forbes," in *The Obituary Record of Graduates of Yale University Deceased from June, 1910, to July, 1915* (New Haven: Yale University, 1915), 233–35. Not very much is known about Sarah Rhodes Short Forbes except that she was born in England in May 1848. She was apparently a devout Christian like her husband. In 1894, she can be found serving as president of "King's Daughters," an all-women prayer group that met regularly at the Fourth Congregational Church. See *Geer's Hartford City Directory* (1894): 761. The Forbeses had no children. See Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Hartford County, Conn., accessed at ancestry.com, October 18, 2009; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, ibid.

25. As early as February 1864, Forbes had mentioned beginning to record short sketches of regimental officers, and a history of the unit. See Ira Forbes Diary, February 3, 1864, YU. Forbes further described writing a "[b]iographical sketch of Capt. Tennant and Mr. Morris gives me ten dollars for that and my history of our regiment." Captain Charles Tennant had been killed at Suffolk, May 3, 1863. "Mr. Morris" was probably Chaplain John M. Morris, who hailed from Wethersfield and later co-authored *The Military and Civil History of Connecticut during the War of 1861–1865*, published in 1869. There is no specific mention of Ira Forbes at all in this publication, but Forbes later wrote in his postwar diary: "In looking over the Connecticut War Record, Morris & Benham, a copy of which is in the Connecticut Historical Society, I found this afternoon three articles which I wrote in 1865. They are Captain Charles A. Tennant, page 359, Charles G. Lee, 497, and Wm. H. Hubbard, page 509. These articles were written after I came home from the Confederate prisons and was studying at Mr.

Magill's in Old Lyme." Forbes added: "Chaplain John M. Morris of the Eighth Connecticut, one of the Editors of the Records, was one of my best friends." Ira Forbes Diary, November 2, 1906, CSL. This author, however, has been unable to match the page numbers to which Forbes refers to the published book nor find these sketches in Morris and Croffut except a brief mention of Capt. Tennant (335). Forbes also recorded "rewriting my brief history of the Company," and that he had "sketched a brief account of our Company until the Siege of Suffolk"; as well as a "brief biography" of Sgt. William Hubbard (Company B). Ira Forbes Diary, February 15, 27, 1864; also April 14, 1864, YU.

26. These materials are part of the George Q. Whitney Collection at the Connecticut State Library in Hartford. Most members of the unit have at least one sheet which included the basic biographical information found in the Adjutant General Office records, although there are many gaps and pages with only a soldier's name and no other information.

27. Forbes estimated that he had completed "700 sketches of Sixteenth Regiment men" in July 1907. See Ira Forbes Diary, July 23, 1907, CSL. The final number that he wrote is unknown.

28. Just a few examples demonstrate not only the effort he exerted but also the results. One day in 1906, he wrote in his diary: "On Saturday and Sunday I saw all of the Sixteenth men, who belong in New Haven, the visit being on behalf of the Whitney plan for statistics. While in New London two weeks ago last Sunday I saw Oliver W. Gates and obtained a good story from him. The same day, returning by way of New Haven, I visited Lieutenant Henry Bristol in Westville and was more than rewarded for the effort. Last Sunday afternoon after having found the members of the Regiment I attended — service at the old Center Church on the green." Ira Forbes Diary, March 14, 1906, CSL. The next day, Forbes was thrilled to receive a letter from Dr. Edmund Pease, who had served as assistant surgeon in the regiment, but transferred to one of the United States Colored Troop USCT units, and men in the Sixteenth lost track of him for some thirty years. See Ira Forbes Diary, March 17, 1906, CSL. Many of the veterans contacted also expressed gratitude for Whitney and Forbes's efforts. See for example Robert J. Holmes to Ira Forbes, August 15, 1906, in "Robert J. Holmes," George Q. Whitney Civil War Collection, CSL.

29. Ira Forbes Diary, June 26, 1906, CSL.

30. Ibid., July 8, 1906, CSL.

31. Ibid., July 16, 1906, CSL.

32. Whitney, Hope, and Denison were all imprisoned at Andersonville; Cheney, former lieutenant colonel of the regiment, was shot in the arm at Antietam and discharged in December 1862. He was a beloved member of the unit and very active in veteran activities, the life president of the Sixteenth Connecticut Regimental Association. The final member, Theron Upson, was in a Connecticut artillery unit. See Frank Cheney, Compiled Service Record of Union Soldiers,

Records of the Adjutant General, Record Group 94, NA; *Dedication of the Monument at Andersonville, Georgia, October 23, 1907, In Memory of the Men of Connecticut Who Suffered in Southern Military Prisons, 1861–1865* (Hartford: State of Connecticut, 1908), 17.

33. Frank W. Cheney to George Q. Whitney, March 25, 1907, Andersonville Monument Commission Papers, CSL.

34. Ibid., June 6, 1907, Andersonville Monument Commission Papers, CSL.

35. George Q. Whitney to Frank W. Cheney, August 20, 1907, Andersonville Monument Commission Papers, CSL.

36. Frank W. Cheney to George Q. Whitney, March 4, 1907, Andersonville Monument Commission Papers, CSL.

37. Forbes entitled his manuscript *Andersonville: Connecticut Men in the Old Connecticut Stockade, Roll of Present Survivors; Long List of Men, Who Died in the Prison.* He dedicated it to Lt. Col. Frank Cheney, "with genuine affection and loyalty." Most of this manuscript did, it seems, appear in Hartford newspapers. Newspaper clippings of the history, as well as additions and corrections made by Forbes himself, can be found in the Ira E. Forbes Collection, CSL. One of the longest stories that he published is "Sixteenth C. V. at Andersonville: What Men Endured at Confederate Prison." He writes: "The sufferings of 1864 in the prison were indescribable. The deathroll alone will indicate the story." Forbes does list the dead, but also provides vivid descriptions of rabid disease, paltry rations, and the calm and brave resolve of his comrades in facing death. But there is nothing in his account exhibiting any bitterness or resentment toward the Confederacy in its treatment of Union prisoners. Ira E. Forbes, "Sixteenth C. V. at Andersonville," *Connecticut Courant*, March 15, 1906.

38. Abbott had served as a lieutenant in the First New York Dragoons. Ira E. Forbes, "At Andersonville," in A. O. Abbott, *Prison Life in the South: At Richmond, Macon, Savannah, Charleston, Columbia, Charlotte, Raleigh, Goldsborough and Andersonville, During the Years 1864 and 1865* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1865), 192–206.

39. Forbes, "On Andersonville," in Abbott, *Prison Life in the South*, 206.

40. Ira E. Forbes Dairies, 1904–1908, Ira E. Forbes Collection, CSL.

41. Robert Kellogg's title reveals the basic message of his book: *Life and Death in Rebel Prisons: Giving a Complete History of the Inhuman and Barbarous Treatment of Our Brave Soldiers by Rebel Authorities, Inflicting Terrible Suffering and Frightful Mortality, Principally at Andersonville, Ga., and Florence, S.C., Describing Plans of Escape, Arrival of Prisoners, with Numerous and Varied Incidents and Anecdotes of Prison Life* (Hartford, Conn.: L. Stebbins, 1865).

42. Robert H. Kellogg to Frank W. Cheney, August 22, 1907, Andersonville Monument Commission, CSL. Kellogg defended his approval of Forbes's manuscript to Whitney a few weeks later: "My approval of Forbes' manuscript was necessarily, a general one, as I am without means here at hand to verify the de-

tails of many particular statements. I corrected some obvious errors, as you no doubt noticed, but had to leave the work of closer investigation to yourself and others." Kellogg agreed that there was hardly time for Forbes to make the kinds of extensive revisions that Whitney would want before the dedication ceremony in October, just weeks away. And Kellogg still thought it was worthy of publication and had "great historical value." Still, he wrote, "Forbes has an exaggerated idea of its value, I think. That is to say, its commercial value. If put on sale, it strikes me as doubtful whether it would pay for the cost of publication." In regards to Forbes's view of John Winder, Kellogg replied: "I think your suggestion a good one. It is not necessary to do other than present the facts regarding his character and life, and the part he bore in the treatment of prisoners. With but one man hung for participation in that great tragedy which the Connecticut monument now commemorates, I do not think our government can be held to have been 'vindictive' in its treatment of those who were activity concerned with it." Kellogg further regretted if his opinion of the manuscript had harried the colonel. Robert H. Kellogg to George Q. Whitney, August 29, 1907, CSL.

43. Robert H. Kellogg to Ira Forbes, May 24, 1907, Ira E. Forbes Collection, CSL.

44. George Q. Whitney to Frank W. Cheney, August 20, 1907, Andersonville Monument Commission Papers, CSL. Whitney also planned to have the other two commissioners and fellow members from the Sixteenth, Norman Hope and George Denison, "go over these parts with me critically." Whitney also complained: "Forbes is to me a some what disagreeable proposition. He seems to have a mania for getting money from you, but I won't stop to write about that now."

45. Frank Cheney to George Q. Whitney, August 30, 1907, Andersonville Monument Commission Papers, CSL.

46. Blakeslee, *History of the Sixteenth*, 60. Blakeslee continued: "The shooting in cold blood of three or four hundred negroes and two companies of North Carolina troops who had joined the army, and even murdering peaceable citizens (as I have personal knowledge of the killing, with the butt end of a musket, of Mr. Spruell, the man whom I boarded with, and by the way, a secessionist, for objecting to the plundering to the trunk which he had packed), were scenes of which the Confederates make no mention, except the hanging of one person, but of which many of us were eyewitnesses, was but the Fort Pillow massacre reacted." Blakeslee included accounts from several newspapers, North and South, referring to the capture, some of them mentioning the killings, and then concluded his chapter on Plymouth with an excerpt from the April 24, 1864 edition of the *New York Herald*: "My informant also acquainted me with the fact that all negroes found after the surrender, were stripped of their clothing and brutally murdered in cold blood. It must be understood that General Wessells had no colored troops at Plymouth save a few recruits for North Carolina regiments,

and the poor unfortunate blacks thus butchered were merely laborers for the government. The negroes were formed into a line, in a nude state, and fired at by the brutal soldiery, purporting to represent Southern chivalry. Nature revolts at these facts; and the plan apparently adopted by the Rebels for the future disposition of the negroes is emancipation *from*, and not *for* life."

47. Warren Lee Goss, *The Soldier's Story of His Captivity at Andersonville, Belle Island and other Rebel Prisons* (Boston: I. N. Richardson, 1872), 61. Goss published various versions of this memoir, as well as others, the first appearing in 1867.

48. Sworn testimony of Sgt. Samuel Johnson, July 11, 1864, recorded "in the field," by Capt. and Provost Marshall John Cassells, *or* series 2, 7:459–60.

49. Benjamin F. Butler to U. S. Grant, July 12, 1864, *or*, series 2, 7:459.

50. Robert O. Ould, July 16, 1864, *or*, series 2, 7:468.

51. Earlier in the same passage, Gates referred to African Americans at Plymouth as "Negroes armed," seeming to imply that their status was somewhere between official black troops and noncombatant contrabands. See Oliver Gates Diary, [May 1864], CHS. In February 1864, Cpl. Harrison Woodford (Company I) commented to his mother on the presence of African American and Southern whites, even Confederate deserters, enlisting in the Union army at Plymouth: "This is a great place for deserters & refugees & niggers to come in. The way they manage it, our fellows will go up the rivers in boats & they will come down to the shore & come abroad. They enlist in our army nearly as fast as they come in. There is one or two companies of them here now. They have a Capt. & he knows all of the country around & goes out with a few of his men to picks [sic] up these fellows. They lie around in the woods & swamps waiting their opportunity to come in." Woodford estimated: "There were about 40 white men & as many niggers came in yesterday & they said there was a great many more lying around in the swamps that wanted to come in. They are generally a ragged & rough looking set & they look very destitute." Harrison Woodford to Alma Woodford, February 20, 1864, CHS.

52. George N. Champlin Diary, April 20, 1864, CSL. Two scholars set out in 1995 to debunk the notion that there was any sort of extensive "massacre" of African Americans at Plymouth, yet after sorting through numerous accounts, both contemporary and postwar, and admittedly much of it contradictory, they rejected the claim that hundreds were wantonly killed in "cold blood." Weymouth T. Jordan Jr. and Gerald W. Thomas, "Massacre at Plymouth: April 20, 1864," *North Carolina Historical Review* 72, no. 2 (April 1995): 125–97. The authors acknowledge that there were civilian deaths, women and children even, "killed or wounded accidently," as Confederates chased them down as they fled desperately for the swamps that surrounded Plymouth (190). And they concede that African Americans in uniform as well as black male civilians were "murdered in Plymouth" on April 20 by individual Confederate soldiers; others were "executed on April 23 or 24, presumably on orders sent down from Richmond.

Forty were killed as they fled the battlefield, forty were hunted down and dispatched to the swamps, and then died under circumstances that qualify as legitimate combat" (190–91). All told, Jordan and Thomas decide: "Under circumstances of such moral, legal and practical complexity it would seem that some who died in the rush for the swamps were massacre victims and some were not. In any case, it is evident that massacre charges were inevitable." Even by the narrowest definition of "massacre," the authors conclude that "there were probably at least fifty 'massacre' victims at Plymouth" (192). See also George S. Burkhardt, *Confederate Rage, Yankee Wrath: No Quarter in the Civil War* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007). Burkhardt more harshly judges Plymouth calling it a "pogrom," and accepting the 300–400 death total.

53. Charles Johnson to George Q. Whitney, March 12, 1908, Andersonville Monument Commission Papers, CSL. Punctuation added by author. Johnson further described: "As we were marching along beside the river, they found a negro with a musket, and as he ran and jumped in a row boat they overtook him as he fell headlong into the boat, and one of the guard took his musket and plunged the bayonet clear through him into the bottom of the boat and left him there to die. We could hear his groans for a long distance below as they marched us out of the town." Pvt. George Robbins (Company K) also recalled seeing a "line of Negroes (none in uniform) and passing in front of them were planters from the neighborhood claiming their runaway 'boys,' whom each called by name out of the ranks." The next day, he heard a volley of gunfire near the town wharf and asked a Confederate guard what was happening. The guard replied: "'you'ns had a lot of niggers enlisted, and we've caught a lot that were hid out and they're shooting 'em off the dock into the river.'" See George Robbins to George Q. Whitney, March 16, 1908, Andersonville Monument Commission Papers, CSL.

54. Bernard F. Blakeslee, "History of the Sixteenth Regiment C. V. Infantry," in *Record of Service of Connecticut Men in the Army and Navy of the United States during the War of the Rebellion*, *Compiled by Authority of the General Assembly under Direction of the Adjutants-General* (Hartford, Conn.: Press of the Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co., 1889), 618.

55. Forbes, "At Andersonville," in Abbott, *Prison Life in the South*, 192.

56. Blakeslee had been admitted as an inmate to the Hartford Retreat for the Insane, and died in 1895 at the age of fifty-one.

57. Forbes, "History of Sixteenth; No Butcher of Negroes," *Hartford Daily Times,* September 3, 1907. Blakeslee never quite makes this specific statement. See above for his exact wording.

58. Ibid. Forbes assumed this writing: "The presumption is that not unreasonable that General Grant made the necessary inquires concerning the Johnson affidavit and that it was dismissed."

59. Ibid.

60. Ira Forbes Diary, September 4, 1907, CSL.

61. Ibid.

62. "Vigorous Protest," *Hartford Daily Times,* September 6, 1907.

63. "The Andersonville Commission: Plain Statement from Commissioner Whitney," *Hartford Courant,* September 7, 1907.

64. Andrews had commenced corresponding with Forbes at some point after the war, providing him with material as he prepared his history of Andersonville. Andrews was pleased when she read a piece by Forbes, commenting: "I want to thank you for your kind and dispassionate article on a subject which I know you must feel deeply." She still complained to Forbes: "But the whole thing is so pervaded with the bitter partisanship of those times and with animosities which I do not now care to reproduce." See Eliza Frances Andrews to Ira Forbes, July 18, 1907, Ira E. Forbes Collection, CSL.

65. This view, that Union prisoners' suffering at Andersonville was not entirely the fault of the Confederate captors, but instead the deliberate policy of the Union government, was the standard attitude of Lost Cause apologists. Indeed, Andrews wrote more fully in her published memoirs in 1908: "But it is hardly to be expected that men half-crazed by suffering and for the most part ignorant of their own government's responsibility in the matter, should discriminate very closely in apportioning the blame for their terrible condition. Accustomed to the bountiful provision made for its soldiers by the richest nation in the world, they naturally enough could not see the tragic humor of their belief, when suddenly reduced to Confederate army rations, that they were the victims of a deliberate plot to starve them to death!" See Eliza Frances Andrews, *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl, 1864–65* (New York: D. Appleton, 1908), 60. In another section, Andrews deemed: "The Yankees won't exchange prisoners, and our own soldiers in the field don't fare much better than these poor creatures. Everybody is sorry for them, and wouldn't keep them here a day if the government at Washington didn't force them on us. And yet they lay all the blame on us" (65).

66. Ira Forbes Diary, Sept. 17, 1907, CSL. Punctuation added by author.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid., September 22, 1907. Only part of the manuscript, including Chapters 10–16, of his History of Andersonville are at the Connecticut State Library, including at least one chapter that is decidedly apologist to the South. Overall, they mainly consist of personal stories and detailed biographies of the men from the Sixteenth Connecticut and their time at Andersonville. It is not clear for what audience Forbes wrote his history; much of it seems pitched to his fellow veterans. There are also separate pieces that he authored on varying subjects that may have been part of an intended complete history of the regiment.

69. Ira Forbes's Commitment Papers to the Hartford Retreat for the Insane are included in the George Q. Whitney Civil War Collection, CSL.

70. *Hartford Daily Times,* November 14, 1911. According to a self-biography

dictated by Forbes found in his papers at the CSL, Forbes suffered from diabetes for years, and rheumatism; the latter may have been brought on by his imprisonment.

71. Forbes was undeniably admired by his comrades. In a 1904 letter to the editor, Charles B. Leonard, former private in Company F, wrote admiringly of Forbes for volunteering to save the regimental colors at Plymouth: "As to the action of Color Corporal Ira E. Forbes, who, I believe, is connected with the press in Hartford, I can swear that he brought one of the flags of the Sixteenth Volunteers from Colonel Beach's tent to the front under fire all the time, and I salute him now and always shall for that act." *Hartford Courant*, June 6, 1904; newspaper clipping, Ira E. Forbes Collection, CSL. Further, included in Forbes papers at the CSL is a signed statement from the Connecticut General Assembly: "testifying to the ability and fairness of Cpl. Ira E. Forbes as a reporter during the present section of the General Assembly, Hartford, April 13th, 1881." Document found in Ira E. Forbes Collection, CSL.

72. Historians have largely avoided associating PTSD with Civil War soldiers and/or veterans until very recently. Eric Dean, in his provocative book, *Shook over Hell,* proposes that his sample of Indiana veterans housed at the Indiana Hospital for the Insane did in fact suffer from a modern version of PTSD. See Eric Dean, *Shook over Hell: Post-Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997). Michael Sturgis, however, carefully delineates how the diagnosis of PTSD has changed, even since Dean published his book. Sturgis lists present-day symptoms associated with "psychological combat disorders (CPD)" to include "dissociation, irritability, hyper-arousal, hallucinations or 'flashbacks,' substance abuse, suicide, violent outbursts, paranoia, and depression." Based on this list, then, it would appear that Forbes did suffer from either PTSD, or the more broadly defined CPD. See Michael Sturgis, "A Study of the Psychological Costs of the Civil War on Connecticut," paper presented at the Association for the Study of Connecticut History Conference "Connecticut at War," Manchester Community College, Manchester, Connecticut, November 14, 2009. Diane Miller Sommerville continues this discussion in her work on ex-Confederates and the postwar South in her essay in this same volume.

73. George Q. Whitney to Robert H. Kellogg, September 12, 1906, Robert H. Kellogg Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio.

74. "Interpretive control" from historian Glenn Robins who made these latter suggestions to me after reading a draft of this essay. He also pointed out the publication of James Madison Page's *The True Story of Andersonville: A Defense of Major Henry Wirz* (New York: Neale, 1908). Page, like Forbes, was a Northern soldier imprisoned at Andersonville, and authored a decidedly sympathetic view of the prison and its commander.

75. To date, David Blight has provided the prevailing explanation of national public memory of the Civil War and its aftermath. He concludes that white

Americans, North and South, unified to "forget" the divisive issues of secession and slavery in the postwar period. However, he fails to pay attention to the sorts of nuances that this paper seeks to highlight, and how even within a single Northern regiment there were debates and challenges over what version of their shared military experience would, they hoped, endure. David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002). More work has been done on Southern memory and the Lost Cause, most recently by such historians as William Blair, Caroline E. Janney, and Anne Sarah Rubin, just to name a few.

Afterword

MICHAEL FELLMAN

Taken together, these essays open a fundamental and disturbing line of questioning. What if we zoom in from grand abstractions like Honor, Duty, Freedom, and Sacrifice to focus instead on the experiences of civil war as people really suffered them? What if we do not conclude that the ends justified the means? Or, indeed, that the ends were ambiguous and the means were horrifically wounding? What if we search for many human-sized narratives rather than celebrating the grand narrative of the Redemptive Good War?

Viewed up close, this war, like all wars, dissolves into a disjointed and fearsome congeries of ragged edges. For civilians and soldiers alike, war undermined everyday cultural and emotional expectations, casting civility and peacefulness aside. The actual experience of war was like an acid that burned away predictability, calm, social bonds, and most elements of simple fellow feeling.

Even great battles, like Shiloh, which is discussed here most vividly, dissolved into something more surprising than slaughter; in the aftermath we witness not care and kindness for the wounded and dead but drunken soldiers and greedy civilians pillaging the bodies, leaving them to rot or to be devoured by wandering hordes of pigs. Honor would be written up later, from a distance. Far from concerning themselves over the wounded and fallen, the remaining soldiers developed a cult of toughness to survive and fight again. They took real pleasure in the grand vandalisms offered by the next campaign, the next fight, the next farmer's house and livestock and fences to be cut up for firewood. Later they would feud over their memories of the war, but at the time and later, they chose language that would deaden their empathetic responses while justifying themselves and condemning whoever they construed to be the others.

Back home, everything was topsy-turvy. Even well-born Southern belles would escape their chaperones and flirt – and almost certainly do more than that – with a whole succession of passing soldiers. Countless other young women of even more flexible moral construction seized their entrepreneurial opportunities to sell sex to those hundreds of thousands of horny young men traveling in packs far from the proprieties of their homes, their wives and girlfriends, their mother and sisters. In guerilla country, the women left behind were given the honorific title of "widow," whether or not their absent husbands were dead; widows were fair game for passing soldiers, and the other way around too. Because war is sexually liberating and sexy as well as horrific, it would take great effort to put the erotic genie back in the bottle afterward – one of the reasons there would be so much strident objection to the growing postwar women's movement.

Organized whoring was far from the only chance for quickly profitable business corruption. The semilegal seizure and disbursement of "enemy" property offered golden purses for get-rich-quick self-servers, as did sale of shoddy goods to the army and the seizure of horses, cattle, and cotton for resale on the booming black market. Wildfire American capitalism, essentially unregulated before the war, mushroomed into myriad new large-scale forms during the capital- and material-hungry war. After peace returned, this explosion of almost entirely uncontrolled growth

and corruption would increase exponentially over the next decades of the great barbeque of capitalist expansion.

Soldiers would loot; some would practice arson and torture, even of enemy women. Their homes and those of their neighbors destroyed by invasion, many civilians – with poor blacks suffering from the fewest options – wandered the countryside, collecting in refugee camps where, given the collapse of dependable food and water supplies, infectious diseases would sweep them away, to the general indifference of the American people. Their communities back home destroyed or threatened with destruction, their brothers killed and needing transportation back home, many soldiers deserted, individually, and also in units that were drawn from the same endangered places back home. For all of them, war was immediate, insecurities were personal, and the Cause was a far more distant end than was protecting their own families as best they might.

And what of the continual human costs after the war? What difficulties faced those men permanently wounded by the war, and their families as well? This was a pre-psychological age, and so men suffering from what we now term post-combat stress disorder believed that they just had to suck it up. But many self-medicated with rivers of whiskey, bursting out into violence, usually against their own families, who, with few public resources, were trying their best to deal with wounds, the deepest of which they could not see. Other ex-Confederates banded together in strange ceremonies of chivalry that they linked to a deeply violent and ultimately successful attack on racial reordering, one that would wrest their region from basic social change and lead to a century of serfdom for the freedmen. They called this white supremacy Redemption, and without irony. The Civil War had not produced an unequivocal victory for Liberty and Equality for all. Abolition of slavery did not connote racial justice, not for long.

These ragged tales, if local and personal, thus are not random. Taken together they point in the direction of a realistic and highly sober reassessment of the Civil War and its aftermath as lived experience. Other accounts of the African American experiences in the war, the deadly nature of military prisons, the widespread impacts of guerrilla warfare, and the damages to civilian lives, for women and children in particular,

all have been subjected to the sort of up-close narrative approach offered by these essays. Yet much remains to be done in this newly evolving exploration of the cultural and personal corrosions of the Civil War. In a sense, these essays, fascinating in themselves, are exciting progress reports of work on the way.

Make no mistake; the stakes are high in the terrain these essays explore, not merely among historians but as a political issue for all of us. For most of its history, America has celebrated its military establishment, built it up, and used it around the world as an instrument of international power. One can enter a geopolitical debate about the pros and cons of all this, but it is important to remember the historian's potential for complicity in that celebration. If the Civil War (and World War II) are portrayed as grand narratives of good wars, then war is glorified rather than questioned. Instead historians must force us to stare real war in its real face. These essays, and the wider cultural history they exemplify, take warriors and civilians not as aggregates but as individuals and look at what the concrete experience of the Civil War was for them and, by implication, for hundreds and thousands caught in similar places. As we see here, when you move up close you will not find romance and beautiful abstractions, but the obverse. To be true to our progenitors, we ought to look at their wartime and postwar lives as they actually lived them, not refuse to discuss them or dismiss them as collateral forms of damage. This very big war, in the first instance and finally, was within them, not without. We are obligated to bear witness to their lives if we are to deepen our understanding of this war among wars, one of our species' most characteristic practices.

THE WEIRDLINGS

Paul Christopher Anderson teaches at Clemson University. He's written about Turner Ashby, a Confederate cavalry leader, and is currently cooking up a book about the experience of war in the Shenandoah Valley, *Arcadia on Fire*, as well as a book about the South in 1866, *Sorrow the Living, Sorrow the Dead*. The idea in this paper is more or less representative of the idea for that book. He's a Red Sox fan, which explains his persecution complex – but does not explain the bitter resentment he feels toward his mailman, who has the annoying habit of leaving the little red mailbox flag ticked just *slightly* upward after picking up an outgoing letter, rather than precisely, properly, fittingly, professionally, and courteously at the lockdown position. That's merely obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Stephen Berry is a former professional disc golf player who is only occasionally bitter to have "fallen back" on academe. Currently associate professor of history at the University of Georgia, he is the author or editor of four books, including, most recently, *House of Abraham: Lincoln and the Todds, A Family Divided by War* (Houghton Mifflin, 2007), the Book of the Month Club main selection for March 2008. He is now at work on *Jingle-Man: The Death and Times of Edgar Allan Poe*.

Peter S. Carmichael is Director of the Civil War Institute and Robert C. Fluhrer Professor of Civil War Studies at Gettysburg College. Carmichael received his PhD from Pennsylvania State University in 1996. He is the author of *The Last Generation: Young Virginians in Peace, War, and Reunion* (University of North Carolina Press, 2005) and *Lee's Young Artillerist: William R. J. Pegram* (University Press of Virginia, 1995) and editor of *Audacity Personified: Essays on the Generalship of Robert E. Lee* (Louisiana State University Press, 2004).

Joan E. Cashin is associate professor of history at the Ohio State University where she specializes in the social history of the Civil War era. She is the author of *First Lady of the Confederacy: Varina Davis's Civil War*, now in its second printing at Harvard University Press, and *A Family Venture: Men and Women on the Southern Frontier* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991). Cashin is also the editor

of three volumes: *The War Was You and Me: Civilians in the American Civil War* (Princeton University Press, 2002); *Our Common Affairs: Texts from Women in the Old South* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); and an edition of William Wells Brown's *Clotel, or The President's Daughter* (M. E. Sharpe, 1996).

A lover of the bunt single (and thus a hardened despiser of the designated hitter), Michael DeGruccio wrote his dissertation "Unmade: Manhood in the Civil War Era" without the aid of performance-enhancing drugs. (His liberal consumption of hot sauce and cilantro remains a gray area.) DeGruccio researches and writes about gender and family in nineteenth-century America, especially the Civil War era. One theme he is currently addressing is the rise of the American Dream and its connection to Lincoln's America and the war that brought the nation to its knees. He would love to write a Civil War narrative located along or south of the Mexican border – or a history of late-nineteenth-century Mormon polygamist colonies in the Southwest and northern Mexico.

Three decades ago, when he was at the National Archives researching *Inside War*, Michael Fellman first discovered, to his unending horror, the countless ways in which ordinary Americans, soldier and civilian alike, managed to assault and terrorize one another, animated by a spirit of cunning, greed, malice, and the sheer love of destruction. None of his later work on the Civil War has led him to qualify that view of the reworked human culture of war except, perhaps, to deepen and widen his understanding of its varieties of utterly unromantic darkness. His most recent book is *In the Name of God and Country: Reconsidering Terrorism in American History* (Yale University Press, 2010). In 2011, Louisiana State University Press will publish his distinctly weird memoir/methodology/collection of essays *Views from the Dark Side of History.*

Lesley J. Gordon is professor of history at the University of Akron. She received her PhD from the University of Georgia in 1995, where she studied under Emory Thomas. Gordon is the author of *General George E. Pickett in Life and Legend* (University of North Carolina Press, 1998), co-author (with Daniel Sutherland and Michael Fellman) of *"This Terrible War": The Civil War and Its Aftermath* (Longman, 2003), co-editor (with John Inscoe) of *Inside the Confederate Nation: Essays in Honor of Emory Thomas* (Louisiana State University Press, 2005), and co-editor (with Carol Bleser) of *Intimate Strategies of the Civil War: Military Commanders and Their Wives* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

Anya Jabour is professor of history and past co-director of Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Montana. Her publications include *Marriage in the Early Republic* (1998); *Major Problems in the History of American Families and Children* (2005); *Scarlett's Sisters* (2007); and *Family Values in the Old South* (2009), co-edited with Craig Thompson, which contains her essay on same-sex love in the Victorian South. Her book *Children of the Confederacy* is forthcoming from Ivan R. Dee. Her current research is on the professional and personal lives of Southern schoolteachers.

Brian Craig Miller teaches nineteenth-century U.S. history at Emporia State University. He earned a BA in history from Penn State University and his MA and PhD from the University of Mississippi. He is the author of *The American Memory: Americans and Their History to 1877* and *John Bell Hood and the Fight for Civil War Memory* (University of Tennessee Press, 2010). He is currently researching and writing a new manuscript on Civil War amputees. On a side note, during his early years, Brian and his brother routinely reenacted Antietam in the corn section of the family garden, much to the chagrin of mom and dad.

Barton A. Myers received his PhD from the University of Georgia in 2009. He is the author of *Executing Daniel Bright: Race, Loyalty, and Guerrilla Violence in a Coastal Carolina Community* (Louisiana State University Press, 2009), which won the Jules and Frances Landry Award, given yearly by the press for their best book in Southern studies. Currently assistant professor of history at Texas Tech University, Myers is at work on a history of Southern unionists in the Civil War South.

Steven E. Nash received his PhD in 2009 from the University of Georgia, where he worked with John Inscoe. His dissertation, "The Extremest Conditions of Humanity: Emancipation, Conflict, and Progress in Western North Carolina, 1865–1880," is being revised for publication. Nash is the current book review editor for H-Appalachia.

Megan Kate Nelson received her PhD in American Studies from the University of Iowa in 2002 and has taught at California State University, Fullerton, Texas Tech University, and Harvard University. She currently teaches in the History and Literature Program at Harvard University. Nelson's first book, *Trembling Earth: A Cultural History of the Okefenokee Swamp* (University of Georgia Press, 2005) was released in paperback in 2009. Her second book, "Ruin Nation: The

Destruction and the American Civil War," will be published by the University of Georgia Press in 2012. She received five fellowships to support the research and writing of "Ruin Nation" in 2008–2009 and spent the year assessing and comparing the comfort levels of desk chairs in archives across the nation. She is also a Kentucky Colonel, an honor bestowed upon her by a college friend who holds a state office and clearly believes in the spoils system.

A descendant of five Confederate cavalrymen, all of whom managed to get captured except the one who went to feed the horses, Kenneth W. Noe is the Draughon Professor of Southern History at Auburn University. He received his BA from Emory & Henry College, his MA from Virginia Tech, and his PhD from the University of Illinois. He is the author or editor of five books on the Civil War era, and has just completed a sixth on Confederate soldiers who enlisted after 1861.

Andrew L. Slap is associate professor of history at East Tennessee State University. He is the author of *The Doom of Reconstruction: The Liberal Republicans in the Civil War Era* (Fordham University Press, 2006), as well as articles in *Civil War History* and *The Historian*. He edited a collection of essays, *The Civil War's Aftermath in Appalachia* (University Press of Kentucky, 2010). Andrew knew nothing about Appalachia before moving to Upper East Tennessee, but was both surprised and happy to learn that some of his collateral ancestors were born in Carter County during the nineteenth century and moved to Cade's Cove. Current projects include a book-length examination of the United States Army in the South during Reconstruction and a book-length social history of the United States Third Colored Heavy Artillery Regiment, which spent three years garrisoning Memphis, Tennessee, during the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Diane Miller Sommerville is associate professor of history at Binghamton University (SUNY), where she teaches courses in Civil War and Reconstruction, women's history, and the history of law, race, and sexuality. Her first book, *Rape and Race in the Nineteenth Century South* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004), received the Phi Alpha Theta Best First Book Award in 2005. She is currently working on a social and cultural study of suicide in the postbellum South. Though a Pennsylvania farm girl now living in upstate New York, she dreams of ending up in the South once more.

Rodney J. Steward received his PhD in 2007 from Auburn University, where he worked with Kenneth Noe. He is currently assistant professor of history at the University of South Carolina at Salkehatchie. His dissertation, "David Schenck and the Contours of a Confederate Identity," is currently being revised for publication.

Daniel E. Sutherland has taught at the University of Arkansas since 1989. He is the author or editor of thirteen books on nineteenth-century U.S. history. His latest project, a biography of James Abbott McNeill Whistler, has its origins in a seventh-grade class trip to the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Amy Murrell Taylor is associate professor of history at SUNY–Albany. Taylor received her PhD from the University of Virginia in 2001 and is the author of *The Divided Family in Civil War America* (UNC, 2005). Taylor has co-edited (with Michael Perman) *Major Problems in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Houghton Mifflin, 2010), and she is currently researching a social history of the "contraband" camps.

Emory M. Thomas is Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Georgia and one of the deans of Civil War studies. Among his many books are *The Confederacy as a Revolutionary Experience* (1970); *The Confederate Nation, 1861–1865* (1979); *Bold Dragoon: The Life of J. E. B. Stuart* (1986); and *Robert E. Lee: A Biography* (1995).

LeeAnn Whites is professor of history at the University of Missouri where she specializes in the history of gender and sexuality. Whites is the author of *Gender Matters: Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Making of the New South* (Palgrave, 2005) and *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender: Augusta, Georgia 1860–1890* (University of Georgia Press, 1995) and co-editor of *Occupied Women: Gender, Military Occupation, and the American Civil War* (Louisiana State University Press, 2009).

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Like her sister, the *Tennessee,* the *C.S.S. Arkansas* had been under construction at Memphis when the city fell on June 6, 1862. Unlike her sister, she had escaped, though she wasn't much to look at. Ordered to "finish and equip [the] vessel without regard to expenditure of men or money," Kentuckian Isaac N. Brown searched out and found his new command at the head of the Yazoo, four miles from dry land and farther still from anything like a naval yard. Some of the *Arkansas*'s armor was at the bottom of the river; the rest had yet to be made. Her engine was in pieces, her guns scattered, their carriages nonexistent. She was, her new captain noted, a "mere hull." But in five weeks, Brown had the *Arkansas* in something like working order. She was still incompletely armored (a fact Brown papered over with a little boiler plate for "appearance sake"). Her twin engines were not always in sync, meaning she would do an occasional slow doughnut in front of the enemy. But as she was the Confederacy's only hope of breaking the siege of Vicksburg, Brown took her out immediately, around a bend in the river, and straight into a "forest of masts and smokestacks"—the federals' entire upper fleet, more than twenty boats. In such close quarters, Brown figured, his sides couldn't be rammed and his cannon couldn't miss. We fired "to every point of the circumference," he later wrote, "without the fear of hitting a friend or missing an enemy."[1]

This, it seems to me, is a fair model for how we in the historical profession often approach an academic conference. Our papers may have been "mere hulls" a short time before, but we paper over the gaps in our defenses with a little footnote-boilerplate and we set off, guns ablazing to every point of the circumference.

This was the very opposite of what I hoped would happen in the fall of 2009 when colleagues and I decided to host the First Annual "UnCivil Wars" Conference in Athens, Georgia, where all of these papers made their debuts. Like any conference, all of us had come with our various projects at various stages needing various kinds of help, but unlike most I had this blind hope that we might all be comfortable owning up and asking for it. "If there's a chink in your armor," I suggested, "why not make that *precisely* the place where you draw our attention?

Because as far as I'm concerned, the only thing that isn't negotiable is the fact that we're all in this together."

And so I still feel. It is needless to say that this volume wouldn't exist without my collaborators. It is important to say how deeply I have appreciated the experience of this collaboration.

There are others I would thank also. Sam Thomas and Shanon Hays of the T. R. R. Cobb House helped organize the conference with their usual aplomb and great cheer. The panel comments from David Moltke-Hansen, Tom Dyer, Anne Bailey, John Inscoe, Keith Bohannon, and Kathleen Clark were stellar kickoffs to our discussions. Peggy Galis, whom I have often described as the patron saint of the history department, my fairy godmother, and the unofficial mayor of Athens, oversaw the opening reception with intelligence, pluck, wit, verve, and astounding social grace. The Watson-Brown Foundation generously funds the annual UnCivil Wars conference, and a subvention grant from the University of Georgia's Willson Center for Humanities and Arts has helped defray production costs of this book. Derek Krissoff, Nicole Mitchell, and John Joerschke at UGA Press have been unstinting in their support, both of this volume and of the series it inaugurates. My coeditor of that series, Amy Murrell Taylor, is a colleague and friend whose instinct, intelligence, and decency are unparalleled in the profession.

Ten years ago, I wrote the following in the acknowledgments section of my dissertation: "I also feel thankful for Chapel Hill itself – the little slice of Heaven on which a voracious multitude daily feed – for her red tape, her fees and fines and hellish parking, for her bars, classrooms, and coffeehouses, where I finally figured out what I wanted to do with my life."

It is only right that I now salute Athens, for her granola thrum and music scene, for her support of me and mine, for her bars, classrooms, and coffeehouses, where I finally figured out where I want to be for the rest of my life.

Note

1. "The Confederate Gun-Boat 'Arkansas' by Her Commander, Isaac N. Brown, Captain, C.S.N.," in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, vol. 3, pp. 572–79.

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